

Does My Boss's Gender Matter? Explaining Job Satisfaction and Employee Turnover in the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Substantial literatures exist examining public personnel turnover and the role of gender in public management. We bring these two strands of research together to test hypotheses concerning the impact of manager gender on the job satisfaction and turnover of public sector workers. In particular, we test whether manager gender influences satisfaction and turnover per se versus the competing claim that *gender congruence* between managers and employees, regardless of gender, is the relevant construct. Using data from a nationally representative sample of public school teachers and principals and employing a fixed effects design that implicitly compares male and female employees in the same school, we find evidence that supervisor gender matters for satisfaction and turnover. We also find important effects of gender congruence, which appear to be driven by lower satisfaction and greater turnover among male teachers with female principals.

High levels of employee turnover often impose significant costs on organizations. Costs related to turnover can take the form of money spent to recruit for and fill vacant positions, resources devoted to training, and, perhaps most importantly, lost human capital. Recognizing these costs, the literature on private sector organizations and management has devoted significant time and energy to understanding the factors that cause someone to quit his or her job (for reviews, see Cotton and Tuttle 1986; Shaw et al. 1998). Though the volume of research is considerably smaller, scholars have also become increasingly interested in the predictors of turnover and turnover intention in the public sector (e.g., Kellough and Osuna 1995; Lewis 1991; Moynihan and Pandey 2008). It is important to understand the myriad correlates of public sector turnover not only because of organizational costs but also because these organizations must compete to retain talented workers with salary and pecuniary incentives that are often lower than private sector competitors (Ingraham, Selden, and Moynihan 2000). Relatedly, low levels of job satisfaction are problematic for organizations because they increase the likelihood that employees will engage in counterproductive behavior and decrease the probability that they will positively contribute toward organizational goals (Spector 1997).

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Although the turnover and satisfaction of all public sector employees have implications for public organizations, the turnover of public servants with particular demographic characteristics has important consequences for public policy. Particular demographic groups are underrepresented across different public agencies, and a substantial body of work demonstrates that the descriptive representation of particular groups affects the types of benefits that clients receive during policy implementation (Meier 1993). The lack of female and male representation in different bureaucracies affects the extent to which public organizations assist female or male clients (Dee 2007; Keiser et al. 2002; Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006; Wilkins and Keiser 2006). It is particularly important, therefore, to examine turnover with a focus on gender.

Existing theory provides different expectations for how the gender of managers influences turnover intentions (see Burke and Collins 2001; Eagly and Carli 2007; Eagly and Johnson 1990; Riger 1993). On the one hand, research demonstrates that men and women have different leadership styles and suggests that subordinates of both genders identify with and prefer one of these. Some work suggests that they prefer the more democratic feminine style, whereas other scholarship argues that both men and women expect managers to take on more masculine and authoritative qualities. From these perspectives, the supervisor's gender, and accompanying leadership style, is what matters, though which gender will be preferred by employees is a point of disagreement.

On the other hand, other research suggests that it is not the gender of the manager, and the accompanying leadership style, that is important per se for turnover, but the gender congruence between the manager and the employee (e.g., Schein 2001). This work, from a variety of disciplines, demonstrates that shared gender improves communication, fosters advocacy, and creates shared experiences and values, which improves employee/supervisor relationships and reduces turnover.

To our knowledge, no empirical work exists that examines these different hypotheses about turnover in the public sector. Thus, we test these different hypotheses in a nationally representative sample of 34,000 teachers in 6,500 local education organizations. The data set contains detailed information on both organizations and individuals (i.e., teachers and principals), allowing us to examine gender alongside a rich set of control variables. The data also include information on teachers' work decisions over 2 years. When exploring the determinants of turnover, we can, therefore, model *actual* quits rather than the intention to leave, which is often the only dependent variable available to scholars working with cross-sectional data. Although there is evidence that intent is a good predictor of actual turnover (see Mobley 1977), using the former as a proxy for the latter introduces measurement error; the use of actual turnover allows a more robust analysis.

LINKING THE LITERATURES ON MANAGER GENDER AND EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

The literature on turnover and satisfaction is quite large, particularly in the private sector, and we do not attempt to provide a comprehensive review here (see Moynihan and Pandey 2008). Instead, we highlight a sample of important studies of organizational and individual predictors of turnover to situate our analysis of the role of gender.

Determinants of Employee Turnover and Satisfaction

Organizational determinants of employee quits are quite varied. Previous work suggests that human resource policies (see Durst 1999; Ezra and Deckman 1996; Shaw et al.

1998) and clear advancement opportunities (Lee and Whitford 2008; Selden and Moynihan 2000) reduce the likelihood that an employee will leave. This work complements other research that shows positive correlations between employee retention and better pay and benefits (Blau and Kahn 1981; Kim 1999; Shaw et al. 1998).¹ Previous work has also highlighted numerous individual-level predictors of turnover intention. Studies consistently find that older employees who have been in a position longer are less likely to turnover (Kellough and Osuna 1995; Lewis 1991; Lewis and Park 1989; Moynihan and Landuyt 2008). Workers with higher education also appear to be consistently more likely to express intent to leave private sector employment (Cotton and Tuttle 1986), though the finding does not appear robust to all public sector applications (Curry, McCarragher, and Dellman 2005).

Findings regarding differences in turnover rates among men and women are mixed. Traditional work suggested that women were significantly more likely to quit than male counterparts (Moynihan and Landuyt 2008). Other work has shown, however, that job-specific factors, such as pay and advancement opportunity, significantly mediate the observed impact of gender (Kellough and Osuna 1995; Lewis and Park 1989). Interestingly, the most recent work in this area finds evidence that women are now *less* likely to leave public organizations than men and argue that changes in labor force participation partially explain the result (Moynihan and Landuyt 2008).

A host of studies have also approached the turnover question from a “values” perspective, arguing that the way employees feel about the organization or the public service influences the intent to leave. Scholars have long suggested that those with a greater sense of commitment to the public service, their organization, or their coworkers are less likely to leave (Arthur 1994; Balfour and Wechsler 1996; Bertelli 2007; Lee and Whitford 2008; Maertz and Griffeth 2004; Mor Barak, Nissly, and Levin 2001; Naff and Crum 1999).²

Recent work on commitment and turnover or satisfaction more generally has heavily emphasized the “fit” between the employee and the organization and/or the employee and their supervisor. The former focuses on the degree of value congruence between the individual and the organization in which they work (see Elfenbein and O’Reilly 2007; Moynihan and Pandey 2008). This framework assumes that organizations and individuals are more compatible when the interaction of the two benefits both or when they have similar fundamental characteristics (Grissom and Keiser 2011; Kristof 1996). This compatibility, particularly in terms of values, has been shown to reduce turnover intention in private, public, and third-sector organizations (Kim and Lee 2005; Moynihan and Pandey 2008; Verquer, Beehr, and Wagner 2003).

The latter highlights the importance of the supervisor–employee relationship in explaining why particular employees remain in their jobs while others leave. Most importantly for our purposes, scholars investigating the impact of perceived organizational support—a key dimension of the fit between an individual and his or her employer—on the intention to leave a job have increasingly suggested that perceived supervisor support is an important antecedent (e.g., Allen, Shore, and Griffeth 2003; Brough and Frame 2004; Grissom 2011a; Smith 2005). Additionally, turnover research in both the public and the private

1 Though see Lewis (1991) for evidence that federal government turnover remained relatively stable during a period of declining relative public sector wages.

2 Lee and Whitford (2008) argue for an interaction between loyalty and material benefits, such as advancement opportunity.

sectors has long included attitudes about supervisors in indices of job satisfaction used to predict quits (see, e.g., Birdseye and Hill 1995; Dunnette, Campbell, and Hakel 1967; Grissom 2011b; Karsh, Booske, and Sainfort 2005; Shader et al. 2001; Singh 1998).

Despite the recognition that the fits between person and organization and person and supervisor are strong predictors of turnover, research in this area has not sufficiently explored the ways in which the gender of the supervisor or gender congruence (or incongruence) between an individual and his or her direct supervisor may influence the decision to leave an organization. The literature reviewed in this section suggests that there is a variety of reasons to believe that managerial gender may influence this fit in a way that influences public employee satisfaction and turnover.

Though existing literature consistently suggests that managerial gender should matter for turnover, it leads to different expectations regarding the specific nature of that impact. Research on role congruity and management styles focuses our attention on the gender of the manager alone. In contrast, insights from the theory of representative bureaucracy and identity theory focus our attention on the congruence between the gender of managers and the gender of frontline bureaucrats. Here we review these two perspectives and discuss hypotheses that these perspectives suggest.

Managerial Gender, Turnover, and Satisfaction

The literature on role congruity and leadership styles suggests that the gender of the supervisor impacts the work lives of frontline workers. This literature, however, is complex, offering conflicting expectations about the impact of the gender of the supervisor, with some work predicting workers will turn over less often and be more satisfied under male supervisors and others predicting lower turnover and more satisfaction under female ones. A fair amount of literature suggests that turnover should be lower and satisfaction higher when organizations are led by women.

In some of these studies, gender is a proxy for leadership style and that style serves as the independent variable, but in others, it is the actual sex of manager, regardless of style, that is shown to have an empirical relationship with employee attitudes. For example, some argue that the types of management associated with the female style, such as a democratic style of leadership and the development of cooperative relationships (Eagly and Johnson 1990; Riger 1993), are valued by employees of both genders and that, contingent on other factors, the evaluations of both men and women are more positive when managers of either sex adopt a female style (Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky 1992; Gutek and Cohen 1987; Williams 1989). However, a meta-analysis of leadership effectiveness studies concludes that female managers were found to be slightly more effective than their male counterparts, though it is important to note that the differences were small and subordinate evaluations were only one component of the meta-effectiveness measure developed in the study (Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani 1995). Nonetheless, this literature suggests that both male and female employees will be more satisfied and less likely to turn over when their supervisor adopts a feminine style or is female.

Other research suggests, however, that employees expect leaders to be male and associate good leadership with “male styles” of management, which are said to be more aggressive, autocratic, and directive. The alignment of these social role stereotypes with male qualities may cause employees of both genders to systematically view women as less effective, to evaluate women more poorly, and to be less willing to work for them (Eagly

and Carli 2007; Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman et al. 1989; Schein 1973, 2001). As we will argue later in this section, some assert that these stereotypical beliefs have remained consistent among men but are no longer held by women, but there is some empirical evidence that may contradict that assertion. For example, surveys indicate that men and women are more likely to prefer a male boss over a female one (Gallup 2010), and men and women report higher levels of distress and physical symptoms when working under a sole female supervisor than under a male supervisor or under a mixed gender leadership team (Schieman and McMullen 2008). Contrary to the work discussed above, therefore, this research suggests that both men and women will be less likely to turn over and more likely to be satisfied when their supervisor is male.

Although the two strands of gender literature come to contradictory conclusions about *which* supervisor gender is likely to predict lower turnover among employees, both arrive at a firm conclusion that supervisor gender should matter in the turnover decision. As noted above, gender is at times used as a proxy for leadership styles, but often the actual sex of the manager is what is shown to correlate with attitudes. As a result, we restrict our hypothesis to the relationship between supervisor gender and employee turnover and satisfaction, acknowledging that underlying any observed relationship may be an unmeasured difference in leadership styles between the genders. Recognizing the different conclusions regarding which gender should elicit the most positive reactions from employees, we test the nondirectional expectation that:

H₁ Supervisor gender will be a significant predictor of employee turnover and satisfaction.

Gender Congruence, Turnover, and Satisfaction

Multiple theoretical perspectives suggest that gender congruence between managers and employees may impact employee turnover and satisfaction. For example, numerous studies in relational demography have examined the degree to which ethnic and demographic similarities or dissimilarities affect relationships between subordinates and superiors, as well as individual perceptions and actions in work groups. These studies test the expectation that dissimilarity in demographic characteristics suggests a difference in attitudes or goals, and thus, individuals assume negative outcomes from interactions with those who do not share their characteristics (see, e.g., Riordan 2000). The data for these studies range from city governments to retail chains and even undergraduate work groups. These studies test a variety of demographic characteristics including race, gender, age, education, time in an organization, and organizational rank. Studies in this field have examined the relationship between demographic similarities and an individual's reaction to work groups (Goldberg, Riordan, and Schaffer 2010), the demographic similarities between subordinates and superiors, and the effect of those on the perceptions of a supervisor's leadership abilities (Goldberg, Riordan, and Zhang 2008). These studies have also explored whether surface or deep-level similarities are a better predictor of agreement between supervisors and subordinates about the quality of their relationship (Kacmar et al. 2009). Generally speaking, this body of work suggests that demographic similarities in the supervisor–subordinate dyad have a positive impact on employee perceptions, though some have shown that similarity in relational norms may have a greater effect on some attitudes, such as perceptions of managerial trustworthiness (Lau, Wong, and Eggleton 2008).

The theory of representative bureaucracy also suggests that congruence in demographic characteristics helps to create the shared values between person, manager, and

organization that previous work on turnover and satisfaction has suggested are important. People with similar demographic characteristics, such as sex, race, ethnicity, and class, share common experiences, which in turn creates common values and attitudes (Bradbury and Kellough 2008; Dolan 2000; Saltzstein 1979, but see Meier and Nigro 1976). To the degree that value congruence is an important determinant of job satisfaction and turnover, we should expect that gender congruence should affect whether or not employees are satisfied and whether or not they turn over.

Aside from creating value congruence, gender congruence may have an impact on turnover intention and job satisfaction because congruence may make it more likely that supervisors will act as “advocates” for people in their organizations who share their gender (Bradbury and Kellough 2008; Nicholson-Crotty, Grissom, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011; Selden 1997). In acting as advocates, they may be more likely to make sure those employees are treated well and given benefits. Research has shown that minority supervisors are more likely to feel they should work to undo the past discrimination of minorities and increase the representation of minorities in their organizations (Selden 1997). If a similar kind of activation occurs with respect to gender, we might expect that supervisors will work to ameliorate organizational discrimination and increase the representation of people who share their gender by making sure they receive more organizational benefits. Insofar as organizational benefits are important predictors of turnover and satisfaction (Grissom and Keiser 2011), we should expect gender congruence to have an impact.

In addition to relational demography and representative bureaucracy, theories in sociology such as similarity/attraction theory (Byrne 1971) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) suggest that employees who share the gender of their managers will have better overall experiences in their organization. Similarity on dimensions such as gender promotes compatibility, interpersonal attraction, and identity reinforcement, whereas dissimilarity creates incompatibility, discord, and alienation. Scholars have also developed and tested more specific manager–employee similarity arguments, suggesting, for example, that managers are likely to communicate more effectively and have fewer misunderstandings with demographically similar employees (Barnlund and Harland 1963; Lang 1986; Triandis 1960). Additionally, managers may make better role models and mentors for employees with similar demographic characteristics (Thomas 1990). Finally, research suggests that similar individuals are more likely to share social networks and may, therefore, enter work relationships with more similar expectations and greater levels of mutual trust and cooperation (Alesina and La Ferrara 2000; Bernstein 1992; Costa and Kahn 2001). All these factors should contribute to job satisfaction and turnover decisions.

The similarity paradigm has produced accurate predictions regarding the impact of gender congruence in a variety of organizational roles and settings. Research suggests that men and women are both more likely to hire employees that share their gender (Carrington and Troske 1998). Once hired, gender match increases the likelihood of promotion and career advancement (Chused 1988; Cohen, Broschak, and Haveman 1998). Scholars have also found that having a supervisor of the same gender decreases role ambiguity and increases employee satisfaction in some cases (Tsui and O’Reilly 1989).³ It is important to point out here that gender is often assumed to be a proxy for other individual characteristics

3 One unpublished study of private sector organizations has directly tested the relationship between employee–manager gender congruence and voluntary turnover and concluded that both men and women are less likely to quit their jobs when they have a manager of the same gender (Guiliano, Leonard, and Levine 2005).

or behaviors in these studies, but the empirical relationships uncovered by the authors cited above are typically between the sex match of supervisors and subordinates and the attitudes of the latter.

Taken together, the literature above suggests several theoretical mechanisms that would cause gender congruence between managers and subordinates to positively affect frontline workers. Supervisors and employees of the same gender may enter their relationship with higher levels of shared expectations and trust. Employees may perceive interactions with supervisors of similar gender to be more positive. Finally, supervisors may advocate more actively, and/or work harder to retain and promote, employees of the same gender. These factors, in turn, seem highly likely to improve employee perceptions of the organization and the person–organization fit that have been consistently shown to influence satisfaction and turnover (Moynihan and Pandey 2008; Wright and Davis 2003).

We expect, therefore, that frontline workers who share the gender of their managers will be more satisfied and more likely to remain in the organization. Again, we restrict our expectations to the actual sex match of supervisors and subordinates (which we can measure), but acknowledge that the gender of the manager and the employee may reflect behavioral characteristics or leadership/work styles (which we cannot measure) that actually drive the observed relationships. Specifically, we suggest that:

H₂ Gender congruence among supervisors and employees will increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover.

Differences in the Impact of Gender and Gender Congruence among Men and Women

Finally, the literature suggests that the effects of supervisor gender and gender congruence may differ according to the gender of the employee. When researchers began examining the potential divergence between gender and manager stereotypes, evidence suggested that both men and women associated successful leadership with typically male characteristics (Schein 1973). Eventually, studies began to suggest, however, that women's ascription of inherently male qualities to the leadership role had diminished, but men's stereotypic beliefs appeared stable (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, and Schein 1989). Following almost 30 years of research on the subject, Schein (2001, 684) concludes that "men have continued to see women in ways that are not complimentary vis-à-vis succeeding in positions of authority and influence."

The continued association of leadership traits with masculine characteristics among men suggests that the gender of the supervisor may matter for men but not for women. If men continue to expect managers to adopt masculine leadership styles, they may be more likely to be dissatisfied under a female manager because those expectations are not met. Alternatively, if female employees do not believe that "good" managers must be stereotypically masculine or feminine, then their satisfaction and turnover decisions will be unlikely to be affected by manager gender or any perceived role incongruity arising from it. Although studies have not directly examined the impact of perceived role incongruity for men with female supervisors on satisfaction, they have examined the effect on performance evaluations. This body of work has long suggested that it results in biased evaluations (Bass 1990), providing evidence that male employees consistently evaluate female managers more critically than females do (Sinclair and Kunda 2000) and that women leaders are judged more negatively by men even when their management style is stereotypically

masculine (Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky 1992). Based on this literature, we test the final expectation that:

H₃ Gender congruence among supervisors and employees will have a larger impact on satisfaction and turnover when employees are male.

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

We test these different hypotheses regarding the relationship between manager gender and gender congruence and turnover and satisfaction by examining survey data of public school teachers. Turnover in public schools is an important policy topic, spawning dozens of studies (for a review, see Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley 2006). It is also a particularly important bureaucracy in which to examine the relationship between gender and turnover, and satisfaction. One reason is the growing salience of educational achievement for boys. Over the past decade, there has been increasing concern over the performance of boys in the classroom relative to their female counterparts. There is some empirical support for these concerns, including evidence that girls tend to get higher grades, are less likely to be held back, and are more likely to enroll in college, though there is evidence that the gender achievement gap differs markedly depending on race and other factors (Mead 2006; Pollack 1998). Nonetheless, the perceived problem is sufficiently large to have garnered the attention of large school systems (e.g., New York City Public Schools) and the US Department of Education, which have advocated single-sex classrooms as a potential solution (Medina 2009).

Some advocates suggest that recruitment and retention of male teachers is one of the best methods for closing the widening gap between the performance of boys and girls (Hayes 2002; Platten 1999). Evidence exists that gender matching significantly improves student performance (Dee 2006, 2007; but see Ehrenberg, Goldhaber, and Brewer 1995; Nixon and Robinson 1999), though these potential benefits may be mitigated by the high turnover rates among male teachers. Scholars suggest that these differential turnover rates are due, at least in part, to the gendered nature of education organizations and the teaching profession and to the gender role conflict that arises for male teachers as a result (Wolfram, Mohr, and Borchert 2009). This explanation accords well with work suggesting that a poor fit between individual and organization leads to higher turnover (Moynihan and Pandey 2008).

Principals in US public schools, who serve as the direct supervisors for teachers, are still predominantly male. In recent decades, however, women have become significantly more likely to occupy managerial positions in education organizations, and they now make up approximately half of elementary and secondary principals. As schools seek to retain male teachers, it is important to understand if they are more likely to do so with male or female principals.

DATA

The data on schools used in this study were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the Department of Education. Approximately every 4 years, NCES conducts the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to collect information on the state of the nation's public schools. The data collection includes surveys of teachers and school administrators at every sampled school. Unique identifiers allow the survey responses to be linked to one another and to administrative data on student demographics and other school

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Female teacher	0.76		0	1
Female principal	0.46		0	1
Teachers gender congruent with principals	0.53		0	1
Female teachers with female principals	0.37		0	1
Female teachers with male principals	0.39		0	1
Male teachers with male principals	0.16		0	1
Male teachers with female principals	0.08		0	1
Dependent variables				
Teacher satisfaction	3.48	0.74	1	4
Teacher turnover after 1 year	0.14		0	1
Moved to another public school	0.07		0	1
Left the teaching profession	0.07		0	1

Note: Based on $N = 33,900$ teachers. Estimates adjusted for sampling weights.

and district characteristics. Data for this study come from the restricted-use files from the 2003–04 administration of SASS. Importantly, the data collection is designed to be nationally representative. Survey weights supplied with the data are used in all analyses to preserve this representativeness. Descriptive statistics for the teachers and principals included in the analysis are provided in the Appendix.

During the academic year following the 2003–04 SASS data collection, NCES returned to each sampled school to gather additional data, particularly pertaining to the work status of teachers who responded to SASS in the previous year. This additional data collection, called the 2004–05 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), allows for longitudinal analysis of teachers' work decisions. Using only public, noncharter school teachers in regular schools (i.e., not focused on a special program or population) for whom full information is available in both SASS and TFS results in analytic sample of approximately 34,000 teachers in 6,500 schools. All estimates utilize survey design weights to take into account the complex stratified sampling design employed by SASS/TFS, making estimates reflective of underlying population characteristics.

Dependent Variables

We focus on two dependent variables: teacher satisfaction and teacher turnover. Teacher satisfaction is measured using teachers' responses to the statement, "I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school." Teachers indicate the extent to which they agree with this statement on a four-point scale: *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. We recode responses so that higher values indicate greater agreement. In general, SASS teachers report a high level of job satisfaction, with the mean response in our sample equaling 3.48. This and other key descriptive statistics for the sample are shown in table 1.

Measurement of teachers' propensity to turn over comes from data gathered as a part of TFS. To initiate the TFS data collection process, NCES contacted school principals at the beginning of the 2004–05 academic year with a list of the previous year's SASS teacher respondents from their schools. Principals were asked to identify the whereabouts of each

teacher on the roster, indicating whether he or she continued to teach in the same school, continued teaching but in another school, had left teaching, and so forth, using 10 possible categories. NCEES then followed up with a subsample of teachers, approximately 10% of the original SASS sample, to verify these designations and collect additional information. Since our analysis does not take advantage of any other TFS data besides the information on whereabouts, we use the data collected from the principal rosters to operationalize turnover so that we can take advantage of the much larger sample sizes these data entail. One drawback of the use of the larger sample is that our turnover measure does not differentiate between voluntary and involuntary turnover, since this information is only available for the small subset of teachers.⁴

One concern that arises from the use of these “unverified” data is the presence of measurement error. However, we combat this potential problem in the main turnover analysis by dichotomizing the principals’ estimates into a simple designation of *still in this school* or *no longer in this school*. Teachers falling into this second category are coded as turning over. This classification scheme should reduce measurement error concerns, since it is likely that principals respond reliably to whether or not the teacher continues to work in their school. Moreover, because turnover is a dependent variable, measurement error is less problematic, since any remaining measurement error will be captured by the regression residual. In our data, 14% of teachers turned over in the year between the SASS and TFS administrations, an estimate that is consistent with previous work (e.g., Ingersoll 2001).

Teacher and Principal Gender

To investigate the impact of the respective genders of principals and teachers on teacher-level outcomes, we used gender information collected by the SASS principal and teacher questionnaires.⁵ Nationally, women make up the overwhelming majority of the teacher workforce (76%). However, this supermajority does not carry over into the principal’s office; women fill slightly fewer than half (46%) of principal positions in the public schools. One implication of the asymmetry of female representation in teaching and administration is that female teachers are less likely than male teachers to be supervised by a *gender-congruent* principal, that is, a principal of the same gender. In general, 53% of teachers have gender-congruent principals. However, this fraction includes only 49% of female teachers while accounting for 66% of male teachers. Stated another way, as illustrated in table 1, whereas female teachers are equally likely to be supervised by a man or woman, male teachers are approximately twice as likely to have a male principal as to have a female principal.

For several reasons, we use the sex of the principal and the teacher as an indicator of gender rather than the value or behavioral set that can reflect the socially constructed definition of that term. Many of the studies that we draw upon to develop hypotheses about the impact of male or female supervisors on employees do the same. Some measure leadership

4 Other analysis suggests that the amount of involuntary turnover in teaching is very small relative to voluntary turnover (Ingersoll 2001).

5 We coded teacher and principal gender from information provided on their respective SASS questionnaires. In the tables we present, we code female teachers and principals as indicator variables (female = 1, male = 0). We also code congruence as 1 if either both are male or both are female and 0 otherwise.

or behavioral traits associated with different genders, but most examine the relationship between sex-defined gender and employee attitudes. We are unable to measure leadership or behavioral traits in our data and are, therefore, compelled to measure gender with sex. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the traits associated with different genders, rather than the simple distinction between male and female, likely underlie any relationships we observe. We do believe, however, that sex is a suitable proxy for gender because significant deviation from the gender traits typically ascribed to the sexes will bias the results against our hypotheses. In other words, if female principals regularly take on male characteristics and vice versa, then it should make relationships between gender and gender congruence and employee satisfaction and turnover harder to observe.

Control Variables

A large body of research has illustrated the importance of individual and place characteristics in influencing such outcomes as a teacher's decision to stay in or leave a school (Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley 2006). These overlap significantly with the predictors suggested by the literature on turnover in other public sector organizations (e.g., Kellough and Osuna 1995; Moynihan and Landuyt 2008). Thus, an extensive set of covariates is included in the models to guard against potentially confounding factors. These covariates can be grouped into three categories: teacher characteristics, principal characteristics, and school characteristics. An advantage of running the models at the individual teacher level is the ability to control for covariates at all three levels.

Teacher characteristics include indicators for whether the teacher is African American (8%) or Hispanic (6%); whether the teacher holds a regular certification (88%), as opposed to another form, such as a probationary certification; and whether the teacher holds a Master's degree (47%). They also include age and years of teaching experience, which is operationalized as a series of indicator variables denoting different experience categories (e.g., 1 year or less, 2–3 years, 4–5 years, and so forth). Making the variable ordinal in this way is common particularly in the literature on teacher turnover, which consistently finds the relationship between experience and turnover to be U shaped (e.g., Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 2004). The average teacher has 13.2 years of experience, though the distribution is very right skewed.

We also control for a set of manager characteristics. We include indicators for African American (12%) and Hispanic (6%), holding a Master's degree (57%), and holding a doctorate (10%). We also include age and two measures of principal experience: years serving as the principal in the current school and years of teaching experience prior to becoming a principal. The mean of the former is 4.3 years, whereas the mean of the latter is 13.2 years. These measures are included to account for potential differences in male and female principals that might predict their management behavior or how they are perceived in the principal position. In the sample, male principals have more experience as principal in the current school (4.7 to 3.9 years) and less experience as teachers prior to becoming a principal (12.0 to 14.7 years) than their female counterparts. Similarly, a control variable is included for self-reported hours worked in the typical week. The mean overall is 60.7 h, with women reporting working moderately longer hours (61.5) than men (60.1).

School characteristics include the fraction of students who are African American, Hispanic, and eligible for free or reduced price lunch, a measure of student poverty. Prior research has found that schools with large numbers of minority and poor students have

Table 2
Employee Satisfaction and Turnover as a Function of Manager and Employee Gender

Dependent Variable	Job Satisfaction		Turnover After 1 Year	
	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) OLS	(4) OLS
Female teacher	.035** (.017)	.042** (.018)	-.020** (.008)	-.024*** (.009)
Female principal	-.039** (.017)	-.056*** (.019)	.013 (.008)	.022** (.009)
Gender congruence		.030* (.017)		-.017** (.008)
Constant	3.711*** (0.090)	3.697*** (0.092)	0.238*** (0.040)	0.246*** (0.040)
Observations	33,900	33,900	33,810	33,810
Adjusted R ²	0.040	0.040	0.034	0.035

Note: Standard errors clustered at the school level shown in parentheses. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$. Sample sizes rounded to the nearest 10 in accordance with NCES nondisclosure rules. All models include teacher, principal, and school characteristics. Teacher characteristics include the following: black, Hispanic, teaching experience, teaching experience squared, age, holds regular certification, and holds Master’s degree. Principal characteristics include the following: black, Hispanic, years experience in this school, years of teaching experience prior to becoming a principal, holds Master’s degree, holds doctorate, and average total hours worked per week. School characteristics include the following: fraction of students who are black, fraction of students who are Hispanic, fraction of students who are free or reduced price lunch eligible, school enrollment size, elementary school, middle school, urban, and rural.

greater difficulty retaining teachers (Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 2004; Ingersoll 2001). We also include school size plus indicator variables for the level of the school (elementary, middle, or high) and its location (urban, suburban, or rural).

MAIN RESULTS

The goal of the analysis is to test the respective impacts of supervisor gender and employee-supervisor gender congruence on important employee outcomes. Our main results are derived from multivariate regression analyses of satisfaction and turnover, both of which are estimated at the teacher level by ordinary least squares (OLS), with standard errors clustered at the school level to adjust for the fact that the data contain multiple observations from teachers within the same school.⁶

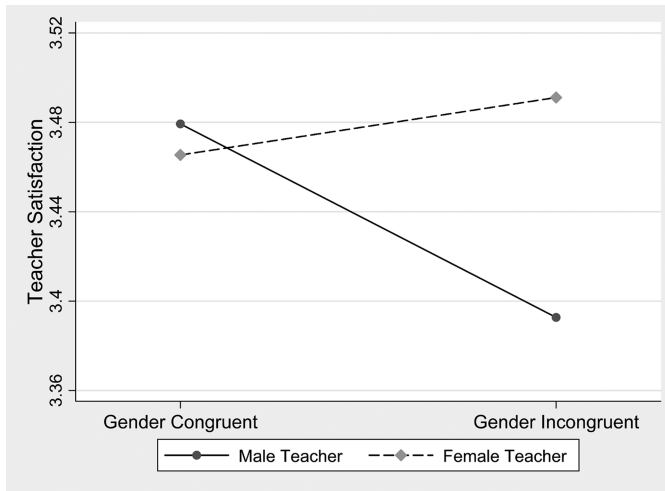
Teacher Satisfaction

The first question for this study is how manager gender or gender congruence between managers and employees influences satisfaction. Theory offers competing hypotheses about whether (1) employees of both genders will prefer a female versus a male manager or (2) employees will prefer a manager of their same gender.

The results are shown on the left side of table 2. Column 1 shows the results of estimating job satisfaction as a function of teacher and principal gender but without including gender congruence. The results suggest that female teachers are more satisfied than male

⁶ Note that when the dependent variable is the probability of turnover, this estimation becomes a linear probability model. Linear models, rather than ordinal or simple logit or probit models, are estimated for turnover to ease interpretation and to facilitate comparison with the school fixed effects models shown later in the article. The main results are robust to this choice of specification, which is a typical result (Wooldridge 2002).

Figure 1
Gender Congruence and Teacher Satisfaction



teachers, on average. The difference is statistically significant at the .05 level but small, equaling approximately one-twentieth of a standard deviation in the satisfaction distribution. There is also evidence that supervisor gender correlates with employee satisfaction, with teachers expressing less satisfaction under female principals. This coefficient is again substantively small, though it is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Column 2 shows the result of adding gender congruence to the model. The gender congruence coefficient is positive and statistically significant at the .10 level (two-tailed test), suggesting that workers are more satisfied when they are supervised by a manager of the same gender. The magnitude of this coefficient ($\beta = 0.03$) is relatively small, again equaling about one-twentieth of a standard deviation in satisfaction. Still, it suggests that teachers who are gender congruent with their principals are marginally more satisfied in their jobs than teachers who are not congruent.⁷

Perhaps more interesting than this average effect, however, are the differences we see when we use the gender and gender congruence coefficients to calculate predicted job satisfaction by gender congruence for men and women, holding all other variables in the model at their means. We plot the results of this analysis in figure 1. The figure uncovers two substantively important observations. First, predicted job satisfaction is virtually identical for gender-congruent male teachers and gender-congruent female teachers. Second, female teachers have somewhat higher predicted satisfaction under male principals (incongruent) than female (congruent) ones, but this difference is small and, in fact, statistically indistinguishable from zero (test not shown). In contrast, male teachers with

⁷ For brevity, coefficients for the control variables are not reported, though the full models are available from the authors. These variables perform in ways that are largely consistent with prior research. Teachers are less satisfied in schools with larger numbers of minority and low-income students. Hispanic teachers are more satisfied, as are older teachers. Experience appears statistically unrelated to satisfaction. Teacher satisfaction is increasing in principal experience but is lower for schools with older principals or principals who are African American.

female principals are significantly less satisfied, on average, than male teachers with male principals; the difference is about 0.09 points on the four-point satisfaction scale. As the figure shows, they are also much less satisfied than female teachers with male principals. In short, gender-congruent male teachers and female teachers in either category all have similar average job satisfaction levels, other factors held constant, but male teachers supervised by principals of the other gender are much less satisfied.

Teacher Turnover

The second half of table 2 presents a similar set of analyses for the probability that a teacher leaves his or her school in the year following the SASS administration. Because of the close relationship that prior studies have observed between job satisfaction and turnover, we would expect to find a similar set of results. One general observation is that the turnover results are both consistent with the satisfaction results and a good deal stronger.

Column 3 gives the result without gender congruence. As predicted from the satisfaction results, lower turnover is observed for female teachers. In fact, the coefficient ($\beta = -0.020, p < .001$) suggests that turnover among women is about two percentage points lower than among men, a large difference given that average turnover in the sample is only 14%. Working for a female principal is associated with somewhat higher turnover ($\beta = 0.013$), though this partial correlation is not statistically significant at a conventional level ($p = .12$).⁸

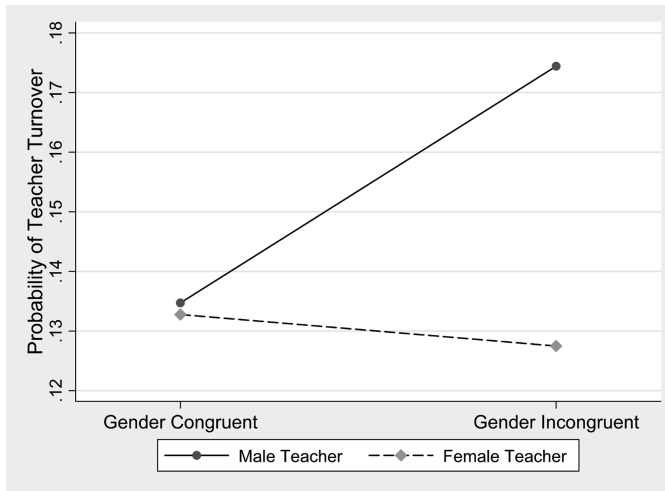
Adding gender congruence in column 4, we find that male teachers' generally higher propensities to turn over are moderated by the gender of their supervisor. The coefficient on gender congruence is quite large ($\beta = -0.017, p < .05$) and indicates that average turnover rates are substantially lower for employees who match genders with their supervisors.⁹

Considering the coefficients in column 4 together suggests a pattern of predicted turnover rates for male and female teachers by gender congruence that is similar to those observed for job satisfaction. These patterns are illustrated clearly in figure 2. As with job satisfaction, predicted turnover rates for male teachers with male principals are very similar to those for female teachers in both congruence categories; in fact, none of these three groups are statistically distinguishable from one another at conventional levels (not shown). In contrast, male teachers with female principals have much higher predicted turnover rates than the other three groups, on average. In particular, men with gender-incongruent principals have rates that are four percentage points higher than men with gender-congruent principals ($p = .01$). They are also approximately five percentage points higher than those of female teachers for both types ($p < .01$ in both cases). For both satisfaction and turnover, the differential effect of supervisor gender congruence is concentrated among male employees.

⁸ We also tested whether satisfaction in fact mediated the relationship between supervisor gender or gender congruence and employee turnover. We found evidence of partial mediation, but the mediating effect was surprisingly small. This result suggests that supervisor gender and gender congruence may impact employee work decisions through other avenues, such as role model effects or helping the employee see greater opportunities for advancement, that do not operate through job satisfaction. This area would be a fruitful one for further analysis.

⁹ Again, coefficients for control variables are omitted from the table, though full models are available upon request. These coefficients show significantly higher rates of turnover in schools with larger numbers of African American students and in smaller schools. Turnover is also higher among less experienced teachers, teachers without regular certifications, and teachers with less experienced principals. Also, schools with Hispanic principals have higher turnover than other schools.

Figure 2
Gender Congruence and Teacher Turnover



FURTHER EVIDENCE FROM MODELS WITH SCHOOL FIXED EFFECTS

Although the models corresponding to the results shown in table 2 include a long list of control variables, there is reason to be concerned that the estimates are affected by omitted variables. For example, it is possible that male and female teachers and principals are systematically assigned to or choose to work in different kinds of schools. In particular, suppose that because of discrimination or access to networks, men are more likely to be given desirable assignments both teaching in and managing high-functioning schools. In this case, we might observe that male teachers appear to be more satisfied or less likely to leave under male principals, but this effect would be driven not by any impact of gender but by selection on a characteristic—school functioning—that is unobservable to the analyst. This omitted variable is a source of bias and would lead to an incorrect interpretation of the results. As another example, suppose that women are more likely to possess management skills or abilities that are conducive to school improvement. As a result, districts tend to allocate female principals to schools with large numbers of low-achieving students. If there are any differences in female teachers' propensities to seek or be offered jobs in those same schools and if management skills affect teacher outcomes, a spurious interaction between principal and teacher gender could arise.

Following Grissom and Keiser (2011), we take advantage of a compelling feature of the SASS data to combat this omitted variables bias problem. Because the data contain multiple teacher observations in most schools, we can include a school fixed effect and identify the impacts of gender congruence between teachers and principals from within-school differences between male and female teachers. Our argument is that variation in outcomes within the same school that is correlated with gender congruence with the principal must come from differences in the work experiences of teachers of different genders.

This school fixed effects approach is a powerful estimation strategy in this context. By using only the variation *within schools* to estimate the impact of gender congruence

between principals and teachers on outcomes, we hold constant a multitude of other factors that could influence teachers' perceptions of their jobs and their work decisions, including the number of student discipline problems within the school, the level of student achievement, the degree of parental involvement, and the quality of human and monetary resources available to the school. It also holds constant differences in principal characteristics such as management ability or prior preparation. Accounting for influences that are common to all teachers within a school removes them as potential sources of bias.

There is a significant trade-off to this approach. The school fixed effect strategy also holds constant the principal's gender, since only one principal is present in each school. As a result, it cannot identify supervisor gender effects separately from gender congruence effects and thus cannot be used to directly test Hypothesis 1. However, by modeling employee satisfaction and turnover separately within male- and female-led organizations, we can get some leverage on supervisor gender effects within the school fixed effects strategy, at least with respect to any *differential* impacts of gender congruence that is related to the gender of the manager.

Revisiting Employee Satisfaction and Turnover

The results from the school fixed effects models are grouped together in table 3. The teacher satisfaction results are on the right. Column 1, which includes teachers in all schools in the analysis, shows a null relationship between teacher satisfaction and gender congruence when comparing men and women in the same school. This result suggests that the positive relationship between satisfaction and gender congruence shown in column 2 of table 2 results at least in part of unobservable characteristics of schools or principals. However, although there is no statistically significant effect of gender congruence ($p = .24$), the magnitude of the coefficient, although less precisely estimated, is very similar to the coefficient shown in table 2. Taken together, these results suggest weak support for a link between supervisor gender and employee satisfaction.

Column 4 shows a similar model for teacher turnover. Here the results are more consistent with those observed previously. The model shows a negative and statistically significant coefficient of even larger magnitude than the gender congruence coefficient shown in the comparable column in table 2 ($\beta = -0.023, p < .05$). Within the same school environment, teachers who are gender congruent with their principals are substantially less likely to turn over than their incongruent peers. Given that the average turnover in the sample is just 14%, the two percentage points associated with having a gender-congruent supervisor is quite a large effect.

Satisfaction and Turnover in Male- and Female-Led Organizations

The other columns in table 3 give the fixed effects results when the models are run separately for schools headed by male and female principals.¹⁰ Columns 2 and 3 examine teacher satisfaction, first for schools with male principals and then for schools with female principals. Both gender congruence coefficients are statistically insignificant, though we

10 We also ran OLS models without school fixed effects separately by principal gender and obtained very similar results to those shown here. The one important difference was the larger and statistically significant coefficient on gender congruence in the teacher satisfaction model for schools with female principals ($\beta = 0.064, p < .05$).

Table 3
School Fixed Effects Models of Employee Satisfaction and Turnover

Dependent Variable	Job Satisfaction			Turnover After 1 Year		
	(1) All Schools	(2) Male Principals Only	(3) Female Principals Only	(4) All Schools	(5) Male Principals Only	(6) Female Principals Only
Gender congruence	.027 (.022)	-.007 (.022)	.058 (.038)	-.023** (.011)	.003 (.010)	-.050** (.020)
Constant	3.406*** (0.048)	3.440*** (0.051)	3.411*** (0.077)	0.306*** (0.026)	0.241*** (0.029)	0.353*** (0.042)
Observations	33,900	22,260	11,640	33,810	22,190	11,620
Adjusted R ²	0.159	0.145	0.162	0.143	0.124	0.150

Note: Standard errors clustered at the school level shown in parentheses. Sample sizes rounded to the nearest 10 in accordance with NCES nondisclosure rules. All models also include teacher characteristics, including black, Hispanic, teaching experience, teaching experience squared, age, holds regular certification, and holds Master's degree. Models 1 and 4 also include teacher gender. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$.

note that the relatively low p value in column 3 ($p = .14$) might approach conventional levels if the sample of teachers in female-led schools was as large as the pool in male-led schools. Also, the differences in the coefficients for gender-congruent teachers under male and female principals are generally consistent with the conclusion that gender congruence is more relevant for teacher satisfaction under female principals than male ones. However, the Chow test for equality of the coefficients between columns 2 and 3 does not show strong evidence of a statistical difference between the two types of schools ($\chi^2 = 1.26, p = .26$).

This conclusion that gender congruence has differential effects according to supervisor gender is strongly supported in the teacher turnover models, however. The gender congruence coefficient shown in column 5 is not statistically different from zero, suggesting that there are no discernible differences in turnover rates between male and female teachers in the same school under a male principal. In female-led schools (column 6), however, we see a much different picture. Here the gender congruence coefficient is large and significant ($\beta = 0.0540, p = .012$). This coefficient implies that, within the same female-led school, male teachers have turnover rates that are five percentage points higher, on average, than those of their female colleagues. Again, given that the average turnover probability in the sample is 14%, this correlation is a substantial one. The Chow test for equality of the coefficients in models 5 and 6 suggests that the two coefficients are statistically different from one another ($\chi^2 = 5.48, p = .02$), providing further evidence that the importance of gender congruence for employee turnover is specific to schools with female principals.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We began this essay arguing that the impact of managerial gender on public employee satisfaction and turnover had received relatively little attention and was, therefore, poorly understood. We also suggested that it was a subject ripe for inquiry both because of the recent focus in the turnover literature on employee/supervisor fit and because of the potentially significant ramifications for diversity in the public sector. The question also poses an interesting theoretical puzzle because the literature on gender and management broadly defined suggests many different expectations about how the gender of supervisors will impact the job satisfaction and turnover of employees. Some theory leads to the expectation that employees are most affected by whether or not their supervisor is male or female, whereas other theory leads to the expectation that it is congruence in gender between supervisors and subordinates that matter the most, and still other work suggests that gender congruence might be important for men but not women.

The models discussed above provide a nuanced set of findings regarding the impact of manager gender on teacher satisfaction and turnover. First, the results indicate that, on average, women are more likely to be satisfied and less likely to leave a position than their male colleagues. This finding comports well with the literature on education personnel, which suggests that retaining male teachers is a significant problem for schools around the nation. Additionally, the results confirm conclusions in the turnover literature that women are becoming less likely than men to leave the public service (see Moynihan and Landuyt 2008).

Second, the results show that teachers, on average, prefer working for male principals. On the surface, this finding is consistent with the body of theoretical work in gender and management that suggests that employees tend to favor characteristically “masculine” leadership styles (see, e.g., Schein 1973), though we do not examine leadership styles

directly. A closer examination of the gender and gender congruence results together, however, points to the conclusion that this preference is not shared by both men and women equally. Female teachers' outcomes are quite similar under both male and female principals. They are also similar to male teachers who work for men, implying that gender congruence does not matter much in male-led schools. In schools with female principals, however, congruence matters. Male teachers' satisfaction is lower in those schools, and their turnover propensities are higher. Moreover, the fixed effects results indicate that this difference cannot simply be attributed to, for example, differential sorting of teachers and principals by gender into more or less difficult work environments. Even in the same school, if the principal is female, men tend to have lower satisfaction and higher turnover than their female colleagues.¹¹

In other words, *something* about the male teacher–female principal dyad leads to lower satisfaction and higher turnover. We need further research to identify the factors driving this result. Perhaps women manage men differently from women in important ways, or perhaps they do not manage men differently but would benefit from doing so. Alternatively, perhaps male teachers are less willing to accept women as leaders or, more accustomed to men in positions of authority, have a harder time adjusted to work situations in which gender incongruence is present. Pinpointing the mechanism is necessary for identifying ways to combat the patterns we uncover, which for schools will become increasingly important both as women continue moving into principal jobs at high rates and calls grow louder to find ways to hold on to qualified men in the classroom. At a minimum, however, the findings highlight potential challenges for female managers in supervising male employees and for organizations supporting female managers in those relationships via training and other resources.

Aside from its inability to get inside the supervisor–employee relationship to identify causal mechanisms, the study faces several other limitations. For example, since our data do not differentiate between voluntary and involuntary turnover, we cannot rule out that differences in patterns in these two turnover types might partially explain our results. Another limitation is the use of a single-item measure of satisfaction. An index based on multiple constructs whose reliability could be assessed would be preferable, but this approach was not possible with the available SASS data. Also, although the school fixed effects analysis provides one nice comparison, the cross-sectional nature of the survey data prevent us from using the kinds of quasi-experimental approaches to establishing causality that might be available with a longer data panel. Investigation of these results with longitudinal data, which would allow for the observation of the same male and female teachers under principals of different genders, for example, would be a useful direction for future research.

More broadly, the study suggests that, at least in organizations where male employees are the minority, gender congruence matters and more so for men than women. Because of occupational segregation by gender, this observation has important implications for the study of many public agencies. Social work, health, and other services, including public services, are dominated by women (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Egeland and Brown 1988). As the economy shifts from one based on manufacturing (typically dominated by men) to

11 Given that the OLS results show that female teachers' outcomes are similar regardless of the principal's gender, it appears most likely that this difference can be attributed to increased turnover for male teachers rather than decreased turnover for females.

one based on services, pressure exists for men to enter traditionally dominated female occupations such as teaching, health, and social work to avoid simply leaving from the labor market (Nixon 2009). This shift gives our results heightened importance. Although more investigation is needed to determine whether our results generalize to service occupations such as nursing or social work, our study suggests that supervisor gender and gender congruence are important variables to explore in human resources research.

Appendix

Table A1
Descriptive Statistics for Control Variables

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Teacher characteristics				
Black	0.07		0	1
Hispanic	0.06		0	1
Regular certification	0.89		0	1
Holds MA	0.47		0	1
Total years experience	13.32	10.02	0	54
Age	43.36	11.05	22	94
Principal characteristics				
Black	0.099		0	1
Hispanic	0.047		0	1
Years experience as principal in this school	4.398	4.847	0	39
Years teaching experience	13.186	6.975	0	41
Holds MA	0.6		0	1
Holds doctorate	0.08		0	1
Hours worked in average week	59.524	12.19	1	160
Age	50.142	8.145	27	81
School characteristics				
Fraction black	0.144	0.243	0	1
Fraction Hispanic	0.14	0.231	0	1
Fraction free/reduced lunch	0.426	0.28	0	1
Size (in 100s)	5.637	4.225	0.04	45.82
Elementary school	0.624	0.484	0	1
Middle school	0.16	0.367	0	1
Urban	0.218	0.413	0	1
Rural	0.291	0.454	0	1

Note: Based on a sample of 33,900 teachers in 6,530 schools used in the analysis. Sample sizes rounded to the nearest 10 in accordance with NCES nondisclosure rules.

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