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## Personality, Preferred Leadership Style and Principal Preparation

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**Abstract:** *This study identifies the preferred leadership styles of students enrolled in principal preparation programs and compares the styles identified by traditional public school teachers and charter school teachers who seek principal certification. Participative leadership and Goal Oriented leadership were identified as the predominant styles. Seventy-five per cent of teachers of traditional public schools identified one of these styles and 81% of teachers from charter schools identified one of these styles indicating both groups have similar preferred styles. Surprisingly, few of the participants in either group of the study were aligned with Visionary Leadership or Change Leadership. Although people have a preferred leadership style based on personality traits, it is possible to learn the skills needed for other leadership styles. The results of this study indicate emphasis should be placed on developing visionary leadership skills and change leadership skills. Hoyle (2007) emphasized the importance of understanding why some of our educational leadership program graduates fail to be successful in the field. While it is important to realize that school leaders must have good managerial skills as well as good leadership skills this research indicates students come to leadership preparation programs with a predisposition to learn management skills. Based on this research, it may be that educational leadership programs are not recognizing the need to provide specific learning approaches that lead to the development of transformational leaders.*

**Keywords:** *Personality, Preferred Leadership Style and Principal Preparation*

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University principal preparation programs are constantly challenged to “make a better principal.” The online Educational Leadership program at the University of Texas at Tyler begins this quest by introducing students to leadership theories and reflective practices. Consequently, students participate in a series of personality and preferred leadership style assessments as self-awareness activities to promote reflection and dialogue. This collected data also affords the faculty with an opportunity to study the correlation between personality and preferred leadership style of our students and the development of transformational leaders.

Additionally, as a newly minted online program designed for aspiring administrators in Texas schools, UT Tyler Educational Leadership has seen dramatic changes in both the number of students in the program, as well as an expanded reach to districts across the state. In particular, the program has seen large numbers of students from charter schools. Since charter schools represent a grand educational experiment, the data from the student assessments provided the Educational Leadership program an opportunity to compare and contrast aspiring administrators from traditional public schools and public charter schools. Do these students represent two different populations or are these students similar in leadership preparation needs?

Charter schools are being proposed as a possible solution to lagging achievement in traditional public schools and to promote local initiatives. One of the main purposes of these schools is to “encourage different and innovative learning methods.” This raises the question whether teachers who are attracted to this innovation and then seek principal certification have different characteristics of leadership style than teachers from traditional public schools who seek principal certification.

## Literature Review

Given the seriousness of our charge to prepare school principals, the review of literature focuses on the significance of transformational leadership to school success, along with the factors of leadership personality and leadership styles that are important to school leadership. Finally, the review examines leadership of charter schools.

## Transformational Leadership

With student achievement as the primary goal of all schools, it is important to examine the principal's influence in raising achievement. Research suggests that principals do have an indirect influence on student achievement as they give guidance encouragement and inspiration to people in their organization. While the teacher remains the most important factor in student achievement, principals provide the second-most influence on this area (Leithwood, Seashore- Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). It is the principal who sets the climate and agenda that form the foundation to create a school with powerful teaching and learning for students.

According to James MacGregor Burns (1978) seminal research on leadership, he identified two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders exchange one thing for another and this does not engender long-term support. Whereas, transformational leaders look for potential motives and seek to satisfy higher level needs possessed by the followers. The result of transformational leadership is the development of relationships that:

- 1) produce mutual stimulation and elevation.
- 2) convert followers into leaders.
- 3) develop leaders into moral agents.

Thus, all organizations seek to have their organizations led by transformational leaders.

How a principal leads influences the likelihood that school reform efforts will succeed or fail (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003). For example, Marks and Printy (2003) report that transformational and shared instructional leadership positively influence school performance, as measured by the quality of instruction and student achievement through the engagement and development of teachers. Transformational leadership also increases staff motivation, commitment and empowerment (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002), engagement (Silins et al., 2002), and perceived efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Perhaps even more importantly, transformational leaders will benefit the school as a whole as the organizations forms around shared goals with well-developed networks and a culture of collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Silins et al., 2002), and program coherence (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2001).

## Leadership and Personality

Preferred leadership styles are closely related to personality type. (Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009). Empirical research found significant correlations between aspects of transformational leadership and personality traits, or preferences, indicating that although leaders can be systemically developed there are dispositional factors, and gender biases, that contribute to perceived effectiveness (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan,

1994; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2009; Judge & Bono, 2000; & Northouse, 2007). In fact, a recent meta-analytic review of personality concluded that the Big Five personality dimensions are quite highly related to effective leadership (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Werner, 2002). Therefore, some leadership researchers have concluded that perhaps some aspects of transformational leadership actually are heritable and personality does make a difference (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2009,). In addition, the characteristic of extroversion was found to be the strongest and most consistent correlate of transformational leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004). Given, that current principals of Charter Schools identify transformational leadership as needed in order to provide effective leadership in this relatively new setting, it could be anticipated that those seeking leadership positions in these schools would display this characteristic.

The Kiersey Temperament Sorter is a 70 item personality survey that identifies a personality type based self-report. Temperament is a configuration of observable personality traits, such as habits of communication, patterns of action, and sets of characteristic attitudes, values, and talents. It also encompasses personal needs, the kinds of contributions that individuals make in the workplace, and the roles they play in society. Dr. David Keirsey has identified mankind's four basic temperaments as the Artisan, the Guardian, the Rational, and the Idealist. According to Keirsey (2012),

Each temperament has its own unique qualities and shortcomings, strengths and challenges. What accounts for these differences? To use the idea of Temperament most effectively, it is important to understand that the four temperaments are not simply arbitrary collections of characteristics, but spring from an interaction of the two basic dimensions of human behavior: our communication and our action, our words and our deeds, or, simply, what we say and what we do.

[http://www.keirsey.com/4temps/overview\\_temperaments.asp](http://www.keirsey.com/4temps/overview_temperaments.asp)

Using this approach, people can be divided into either concrete or abstract communicators. People who talk mostly about the facts and realities of everyday life are concrete in their communication. People who tend to talk about ideas and theories are considered abstract communicators. Of course, everyone talks about all of these ideas, but generally, peoples' communication falls into one of these two distinct categories.

The second broad category develops from how people act, what they do. Some people's actions focus on using the most effective and efficient means possible to accomplish goals. They do not focus on rules or proper channels to accomplish goals. These are considered utilitarian. Others tend to select cooperative and socially acceptable actions to accomplish goals. They want to do the right thing within the established rules. They follow rules of conduct and acceptable patterns. "These two ways of acting can overlap, certainly, but as they lead their lives, **Utilitarian** people instinctively, and for the most part, **do what works**, while **Cooperative** people **do what's right**" (Kiersey, 2011, emphasis in original). These categories are used to identify the four basic temperaments listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Four Temperaments with Behaviors

	Concrete	Abstract
Utilitarian	<b>Artisans</b> speak mostly about what they see right in front of them, about what they can get their hands on, and they will do whatever works, whatever gives them a quick, effective payoff, even if they have to bend the rules.	<b>Rationals</b> speak mostly of what new problems intrigue them and what new solutions they envision, and always pragmatic, they act as efficiently as possible to achieve their objectives, ignoring arbitrary rules and conventions if need be.
Cooperative	<b>Guardians</b> speak mostly of their duties and responsibilities, of what they can keep an eye on and take good care of, and they're careful to obey the laws, follow the rules, and respect the rights of others	<b>Idealists</b> speak mostly of what they hope for and imagine might be possible for people, and they want to act in good conscience, always trying to reach their goals without compromising their personal code of ethics.

Each of these temperaments brings strengths and challenges to leadership.

## Charter School Leadership

Charter schools are being proposed as a possible solution to lagging achievement in traditional public schools and as a tool to promote local initiatives. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), "charter schools are subject to fewer state laws than other public schools with the idea of ensuring fiscal and academic accountability without undue regulation of instructional methods or pedagogical innovation" (TEA, 2012). One of the main purposes of these schools is to "encourage different and innovative learning methods. TEA, 2012" This raises the question whether teachers who are attracted to this innovative milieu and then seek principal certification have different characteristics than teachers from traditional public schools who seek principal certification.

In a 2010 study by Garza, principals of Charter Schools in Texas identified transformational leadership defined as passionate, charismatic and motivational leadership, as the leadership style needed for successful Charter Schools. According to Griffin and Wohlstetter (2001), the two distinct areas of leadership evident regardless of where the charter schools were organized are managerial leadership and instructional leadership. The charter schools that are more independent from their district schools were more consumed by managerial decisions than those charter schools more dependent on their district (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). A large portion of a charter school leader's day is spent addressing managerial decisions such as finances and following the district, state, and federal policies. Other managerial decisions of a charter school leader are insurance, meals, staffing and other areas such as security, custodians, substitutes, and student transportation. Charter school leaders spend a large portion of their day on these managerial decisions, and the smallest part of a charter school leader's time goes to teaching and learning issues (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001).

Transformational leadership is identified in the literature as necessary for successful school reform in traditional public schools. Charter school principals also identify transformational leadership as essential in this innovative approach to educational reform. Educational leadership preparation programs are challenged with developing leaders who are successful in both these realms. It is important to understand the students enrolling in these programs in order to design programs that will address the needed knowledge, skills and dispositions to lead successful schools.

Research Questions:

1. In an online educational leadership program, are the personality characteristics and leadership profiles of students currently teaching in charter schools different from the personality characteristics and leadership profiles of students currently teaching in traditional public schools.
2. In an online educational leadership program, are the leadership profiles of students consistent with that required for transformational leadership?

## Methodology

A convenience sample of 105 students enrolled in a graduate course on leadership as part of the coursework required for certification as principal completed the Kiersey Temperament Sorter (KTS) to identify their personality type. Seventy-seven students enrolled in the program were currently employed on a traditional public school campus, and twenty-eight of the students were currently working in charter schools. Of the twenty-eight students working on charter school campuses, nineteen of them were not native English speakers and had moved from Eurasia to the United States as college educated adults to teach in charter schools. All of these students had been in the United States at least four years and were seeking principal certification.

The KTS is a forced-choice format, online questionnaire containing 70 items. The KTS distinguishes between the four dichotomous indices of psychological type through the use of four scales: Extrovert/Introvert (EI), Sensor/Intuitior (SN) , Thinker/Feeler (TF), and Judger/Perceiver (JP). The KTS is part of a wider family

of instruments designed to operationalize and to develop Jung's (1971) theory of psychological types. This wider family includes, for example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; Myers & McCaulley, 1985) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005). The KTS was found to have satisfactory internal consistency in a study by Waskel and Coleman (1991). Using a sample of 331 university students in the USA, they found that the KTS indices showed Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of 0.74 (EI), 0.89 (SN), 0.87 (TF), and 0.88 (JP). More recently, Fearn et al. (2001), in a study among 367 university students in the UK, found that the KTS indices showed Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of 0.68 (EI), 0.73 (SN), 0.74 (TF), and 0.82 (JP). From the studies surveyed it may be concluded that the KTS indices are generally internally consistent, showing Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients above the level deemed satisfactory by DeVellis (2003) of 0.65.

## Findings

### Personality Type

The majority of students from both traditional public schools and charter schools identify themselves as **Guardians** (Table 2). Guardians make up about 45% of the general population (Kiersey, 2011). Both groups scored somewhat higher than those in the general population on this scale. Fifty-seven per cent of students from traditional public schools identified themselves as Guardians, while 64% of students from charter schools selected Guardian. Guardians are natural leaders who will provide stable, dependable leadership for the school. Practical, disciplined and trustworthy, they will keep things running smoothly. However, they do not easily adapt to change and is somewhat cautious in adopting innovations.

The second largest type in both groups is the **Idealist**. Idealists only make up about 20% of the general population (Kiersey, 2011). In this study, 21% of students from charter schools identified themselves as Idealist, but 30% of students from traditional public schools self-identified as Idealist. Idealists are most attuned to the greater good and values. They are good in social relationships and are often drawn to teaching or other social service positions. As leaders, they seek to encourage others to be the very best they can be. They tend to regard problems as opportunities and enjoy finding creative solutions. They strongly prefer cooperative relationships to achieve goals and may be uncomfortable with conflict. This discomfort with conflict may limit their effectiveness in highly conflicted schools, but their unique abilities to bring people together provide some balance.

**Rationals** only represented a small part of the population of students in educational leadership preparation. Only 11% of students from traditional public schools identified themselves as Rationals and 14% of students from charter schools. In the general population, only 5-10% self-identify as Rationals (Kiersey, 2011). Rationals tend to be pragmatic and independent. As leaders, they are the most likely to adopt an autocratic stance. However, because they focus on problem-solving they make good strategic leaders. They trust logic and will work hard to accomplish a goal. They are not rule followers and will find the most efficient and effective way to solve a problem.

**Artisans** make up 30-35% of the general population (Kiersey, 2012); however no students from charter schools identified themselves as Artisans and <3% of students from traditional public schools saw themselves as Artisans. Artisans are unconventional and bold. As leaders they make good troubleshooters focusing on the here and now and the excitement of solving problems. They prize freedom and tend to seek fun and excitement.

The Chi-Square test for independence comparing each group to the general population found a significant difference between the group of charter school students and the general population ( $p=.03$ ). However, the difference between the students from traditional public schools found no significant difference ( $p=.77$ ). This suggests these two groups of students are different in terms of personality type.

**Table 2.** Personality Types

	Traditional Public Schools n %	Charter Schools n %	General Population %
Guardian	42 57%	18 64%	45%
Idealist	22 30%	6 21%	20%
Rational	8 11%	4 14%	5%-10%
Artisan	2 <3%	0 0%	30%-35%

### Personality Characteristics

In addition to the four personality types identified by Kiersey, there are eight scales that give more specific information about the person. Keirsey provides these definitions:

1. How you are energized (Extrovert vs. Introvert)
  - An **Extrovert** is energized by the outer world of people and things
  - An **Introvert** is energized by the inner world of thoughts and ideas
2. What you pay attention to (Sensing vs. Intuition)
  - A **Senser** focuses on facts and the five senses
  - An **Intuiter** focuses on what might be and the sixth sense
3. How you make decisions (Thinking vs. Feeling)
  - A **Thinker** tends to use reason and logic
  - A **Feeler** tends to use values and subjective judgment
4. How you live and work (Judgment vs. Perceptions)
  - A **Judger** prefers to be planned and organized
  - A **Perceiver** prefers spontaneity and flexibility

**Table 3.** Personality Characteristics

	Traditional Public School	Charter School	General Population
Extrovert	81%	57%	65%
Introvert	19%	43%	35%
Senser	43%	43%	75%
Intuiter	57%	57%	25%
Thinker	43%	29%	50%
Feeler	56%	71%	50%
Judger	100%	100%	55%
Perceiver	0%	0%	34%

Chi-Square comparison of student preference from the traditional school group with with the general population there was no statistical significance ( $p=.498$ ). When students from the charter school group were compared with the general population, there was no significant difference ( $p=.92$ ).

Students from traditional public schools were more likely to be extroverts than students from Charter Schools. This is of importance because extroversion was found to have the highest correlation with transformational leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004). Another important finding is that all students from both groups saw themselves as Judger rather than Perceiver. Since planning and organization are requisite skills for both teaching and school leadership, this is an encouraging finding.

## Leadership Style

While everyone has the ability to use a variety of leadership style, people tend to have a “natural” style based on their personality type. Eight leadership styles have been proposed based on the sixteen personality types identified by Kiersey (Team Technology, 2011). These leadership styles are the preferred style of that personality type. Students in this study were aligned with six of these eight styles (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Leadership Style Based on Kiersey Personality Type

	Traditional Public School	Charter School
Participative	51%	43%
Change oriented	0%	0
Visionary	3%	7%
Action oriented	3%	0
Goal oriented	24%	38%
Executive	19%	14%
Ideological	0%	0
Theorist	0%	0%

The predominant style identified by both groups was Participative Leadership. The Participative Leader is people-oriented, a motivator who builds personal relationships. The students from traditional public schools were slightly more likely to be participative (51%) than the students from Charter schools (43%), but both groups were well represented by this style.

The second most preferred style was Goal Oriented. On this style, the Charter School students were somewhat more likely to select this style (38%: Charter School; 24% Traditional Public School). Goal Oriented Leaders observe, listen, clarify goals, and establish realistic expectations.

Executive Leadership style was selected by 19% of students from traditional public schools and 14% of students from charter schools. This style organizes, makes plans, sets measurable goals, coordinates work of different people, and manages resources.

Visionary leadership was identified by only 3% of students from traditional public schools and 7% of students from charter schools. Visionary leaders develop long term vision, produce radical ideas, foresee the future, and anticipate what is outside current knowledge. This is the style most closely aligned with transformational leadership.

Action oriented leaders take action, produces result, lead from the front, set an example, and does what is asked of others. Only 3% of students from traditional public schools indicated this was their natural leadership style, while no students from charter schools self-identified this style.

## Discussion and Implications

Educational leadership programs are creatures of the State. Their primary mission is to assure a continuous supply of highly qualified educational leaders for the state’s educational institutions. In this vein they are charged with ‘training’ prospective educational leaders with the technical skills required to perform the various functions of the principalship. These functions are the associated with the management tasks required to operate an efficient educational organization. Tasks such as pupil and personnel management, fiscal services, plant management fall into this realm. Frequently, state certification examinations address these functions. Thus, it is incumbent upon educational leadership programs to provide the ‘training’ and experiences to correlate with the job tasks one performs as a principal.

However, the more traditional role of institutions of higher education is not to 'train but to 'educate' its students. One component of classical education is the development of conceptual skills in students such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making. These are skills that transcend the immediate position and can be applied through out an individual's career irrespective of the position or changing circumstances. The reality is that it is impossible for an educational leadership program to address all of the issues an educational leader will face during his or her career. Therefore, the ability to think conceptually should be the educational leadership program's driving force in the development of future educational leaders.

The first research question explored: In an online educational leadership program, are the personality characteristics and leadership profiles of students currently teaching in charter schools different from those of the students teaching in traditional public schools. The findings suggest that the two groups of students, from traditional public schools or charter schools, are statistically different in terms of personality type, but not in personality characteristics. Leadership styles identified by the two groups, while not indicating significant difference does not always translate into not important (Ziliak & McCIskey, 2009). The two groups show some differences that may impact principal preparation programs. Students who currently teach in charter schools tend to be more reflective and rely on inner resources for energy suggesting the need for multiple reflective activities in every course. These students are more likely to self-identify as Guardians indicating a leadership style that is trustworthy and practical but not comfortable with change indicating a need for activities that challenge the status quo and encourage innovative thinking.

The implications are that if an educational leadership program wants to educate and not merely train future educational leaders it must provide students with opportunities to develop their conceptual skills. This can be accomplished through in class and field based experiences. In class experiences should provide students with open-ended experiences that do not necessarily have a right and wrong answer. Activities such as simulations and case studies provide open-ended scenarios for students to address. As these experiences are debriefed in class it provides students an opportunity to hear other students thinking processes, which helps to refine their own metacognitive thinking.

Field-based experiences are a staple of most educational leadership programs and provide students with hands on leadership and management experiences. Perhaps, the most beneficial aspects of these experiences is not completing the activities but reflecting on the insights derived. These reflections can be kept in a professional journal and address insights about people, the principalship and personal perceptions about one's own beliefs, values and feelings. These journals can be shared with the professor and allow a professional dialogue to occur. This process allows students to refine their analytical abilities and develop their conceptual skills.

The second research question asks whether students in online classes have leadership styles consistent with transformational leadership. According to Murphy (2002) educational leadership programs should focus on transformational leadership, moral stewardship, principal as educator/instructional leader, and principal as communicator/community builder. Fullan (1992) clarifies the meaning of transformational leadership as follows: "Transformational leaders...focus on changing the culture of the school. They build visions, develop norms of collegiality and continuous improvement, share strategies for coping with problems and resolving conflicts, encourage teacher development as career-long inquiry and learning, and restructure the school to foster continuous development" (p. 7). This study indicates that students come into leadership programs with preference for participative leadership, goal-oriented leadership and executive leadership, but they do not come with the visionary, action-oriented leadership preference that is necessary for transformational leadership.

The philosophy and design of most educational preparation programs reflect the vision and understanding of leadership for a changing society. Transformational and shared leadership are represented among "best practices" as the preferred model for reframed preparation programs along with a driving focus on instruction and the success of all children. However, visionary leadership, associated with transformational leadership is not a clear preference for many beginning students in principal preparation. Thus programs of principal

preparation must incorporate activities and opportunities for students to develop the skills and dispositions for visionary leadership.

Research on the process of developing transformational leaders is limited and most is related to business. Avolio and Chan (2008) in a meta-analysis of the leadership development research looking at the past 80 years, found that only 200 studies out of 12,500 focused on transformational leadership development and most of those addressed short term intervention of one or two days. Principal preparation programs have the time to work on a longer timeframe of leadership development and are structured around the learning process itself. Thus the focus shifts to transformational learning as the key to developing transformational leaders.

A transformational leadership approach has the potential to engage all stakeholders in the achievement of educational objectives. The aims of leaders and followers coalesce to such an extent that it may be realistic to assume a harmonious relationship and a genuine convergence leading to agreed decisions. Transformational learning is the vehicle that leads to transformational leadership.

What then is transformational learning? Habermas (1971) identified three kinds of knowledge: instrumental, practical, and emancipatory. Instrumental knowledge is cause-effect and scientific knowledge. Practical knowledge focuses on meaning and interaction between people rather than causality. Emancipatory knowledge is self-knowledge gained through reflection and perspective transformation. Transformational learning is centered in this emancipatory knowledge.

Merriam (2007) stated that "Transformational Learning is about change, dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live" (p123). In a principal preparation course this takes the form of providing a catalyst that will allow students to identify their own assumptions, challenge these assumptions through self reflection, engage in critical debates about differing perspectives, and apply this new learning. The culture the professor establishes in the classroom is critical to transformational learning. Modeling self-reflection is essential. By openly questioning and reflecting, the professor establishes a class norm that encourages students to engage in self-reflection both inside and outside the classroom.

The catalyst for transformational learning may take many forms. One useful form identified by Cranton (2003) is the metaphor. One example of such an activity is found in a study by Linn, Gill, and Sherman (2007) where students were asked to provide a metaphor for the principalship. The responses ranged from being a parent, bull riding to unpredictable and capricious weather. All of these metaphors carry underlying assumptions that can be identified, explored, and debated in order to identify the learning lens and/or to affect personal change in beliefs and consequently behavior.

Another method would be to use a case study that allows examination from multiple perspectives, for example, the faculty, the student, the principal, the community. It is important to note here that simply analyzing the case study is not sufficient. Analyzing the study would bring forth instrumental knowledge and practical knowledge. Only if students proceed to identify personal assumptions behind the perspectives and engage in discussion of these perspectives can they begin the journey to transformational learning. These metacognitive activities require instruction that takes students beyond informational and practical learning while inviting emancipatory learning for future leaders.

## Summary

Hoyle (2007) emphasized the importance of understanding why some of our educational leadership program graduates fail to be successful in the field. While it is important to realize that school leaders must have good managerial skills as well as good leadership skills this research indicates students come to leadership preparation programs with a predisposition to learn management skills. Based on this research, it may be that educational leadership programs are not recognizing the need to provide specific learning approaches that lead to the development of transformational leaders.

With the opportunity to analyze the collected data from several perspectives, this study has become a catalyst for department dialogue in our constant reassessment of where we are going and how are we going to get there. Valuable research not only presents answers; it raises questions for deeper reflection and further investigation.

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