

ABSTRACT

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The Relationship Between Leader Behavior and Gender
Attitudes toward Potential Female Public School Superintendents
As Perceived by Superintendents and Selected School Board Members
(Major Professor: Howard Smith, Ed. D.)

Against a background of literature indicating that women are underrepresented in the public school superintendency, the researcher studied the effects of gender bias and sex role stereotyping in employing public school superintendents. The primary purpose of this investigation was to study the relationship between leader behavior and attitudes toward women who aspire for superintendent positions. Standard probability levels were used to test the theoretical models. The sample consisted of male and female superintendents and school board members drawn from a national distribution of two survey questionnaires via mail correspondence. The research design was defined as survey research. Statistical comparisons were made using personal, educational, and organizational attributes of school board members and public school superintendents. Questionnaires were sent to school districts that had employed female superintendents. *The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire-Short Form (LBDQ-Short Form)* (Stogdill, 1963) and the *Women as School District Administrators (WASDA) Survey* [American Association of School Administrators (AASA), 1981] were utilized to obtain the needed information. The data were primarily quantitative since both instruments incorporated a Likert-type procedure and were additive. Three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the theoretical models. The theoretical models, in general, were accepted (failed to be rejected), however, there were statistically significant factor interaction effects. Statistically significant mean differences were found in the perceptions of potential female superintendents. Overall, the data showed that gender attitudes were positive with respect to the leadership potential of aspiring female superintendents. High mean scores on consideration and initiating structure indicated that women in this study were accepted in the position of superintendent. Male superintendents and school board members showed low mean scores on descriptive traits. The female respondents indicated that women minimize the effects of traditional gender-specific stereotypes on their capability of performing successfully. It is anticipated that gender will continue to be a salient issue for aspiring female applicants in pursuit of superintendency positions. The findings contribute knowledge that may facilitate more accurate decision-making and communication between women and men; thus, helping to lessen the constraining factors that have served as potential stumbling blocks for female educators who have aspired for superintendencies in public education.