

TITLE: Self-Perceived Characteristics of Leadership Behaviors of Male and Female Secondary Principals in Detroit Public Schools

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OBJECTIVE: To determine if secondary principals in the Detroit Public School System differ by gender in perceived characteristics of leadership behavior.

METHODOLOGY: Ninety-four secondary principals were asked to complete the LPI via a written request, and a total of 74 responded (80% response rate): 37 female and 14 male middle school principals and 12 female and 12 male high school principals. In addition one principal in each category was interviewed.

KEY FINDINGS: No significant differences were found between males and females or between middle and high school principals for the leadership practices of Challenging, Modeling, or Encouraging. On the leadership practice of Inspiring there was a significant interaction effect: For females there was no difference between middle and high school principals but male middle school principals had higher schools than did high school male principals. While there was no difference by gender on the leadership practice of Enabling, the responses of high school principals were significantly higher than those from their middle school counterparts.

“The most obvious difference between the male and female principals in the interviews was how they viewed their role as supportive to teachers. Male principals spoke of policies, procedures, supplies and objectives, while females were less concrete and spoke of teamwork, social activities, asking for input and suggestions, staying in touch, and helping teachers with classroom management” (p. 46).

However, the author concludes: “that there are common characteristics between male and female principals...(and that they are)...more alike than different from each other because few differences were found by gender (male and female) and by grade (middle and high school) in the univariate analysis of variance tests” (p. 51-2).