

TITLE The Influence of Subordinates' Perceptions on Females in Leadership Roles in a Southern California Superior Court

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this research was to examine the role of subordinates' perceptions of leadership styles, practices and behaviors of female and male leaders.

METHODOLOGY

The sample population included court management personnel and their subordinates in a Southern California Superior Court Management System. The participants were superior court personnel, female and male, in management leadership roles and subordinates who have reported to a male or female or both in the last five years. Leadership roles were included within the following classifications: Exempt Unit, Contract, Management Employees and Supervisory Unit. Subordinates roles were included within the following classifications: Support Services Unit, Professional Unit, Interpreters Unit, Reporters Unit, and Contract Employees. The sample size consisted of seven court managers (six females) and 49 subordinates (43 females and six males). The number of years the subordinates had been with the court ranged from one to 20-plus years, and in their current positions between one to 20+ years. Leaders reported being in their current position between two-to-20+ years, and spending between one-to-20+ years in their current leadership position. Respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self and Observer forms), and internal reliabilities for the LPI ranged above .80.

KEY FINDINGS

Forty-six subordinates responded about their female leaders and three subordinates responded about their male leaders. Generally, the responses of subordinates who had male leaders showed greater variability than subordinates of female leaders on all five leadership practices. The leadership assessments provided by female subordinates were generally higher on all five leadership practices compared with their male counterparts (irrespective of the gender of their supervisor). Female and male leaders self-report were roughly the same for Model, Enable and Encourage, while females were somewhat lower on Inspire and Challenge than their male counterpart. These reported differences are descriptive in nature because the disparities in sample size by gender did not allow for statistical analyses.

Again, while not subject to any statistical analysis, the perceptions of how subordinates viewed their female leaders was very close to how the female leaders saw themselves, while there seemed to be a notable gap between how the subordinates perceive their male leader and how that male leader perceived himself.