Lessons for a Rural Female Superintendent: Gender, Leadership, and Politics

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**Abstract**

Two years before my coauthor and I began this narrative inquiry, as the school superintendent of a rural community, I failed to fire a malicious football coach and resigned shortly thereafter. I floundered for a few months and then decided to pursue a doctorate in educational administration. Soon I met a professor, now my coauthor, who offered me the opportunity to explain what had happened in terms of socially constructed gender roles. We investigated 40 post-World War II urban, suburban, and rural female superintendents whom my coauthor and other scholars had interviewed. After theming their stories into five prototypes we wove these collective representations into my personal narrative and found that operationalizing any political agenda necessitated being aware of how a school community views acceptable womanhood, because it determined how the female superintendent was received. Had I adopted my stakeholders’ notion of female demeanor, more school patrons may have heard me. Yet, for me and other superintendents the feasibility and ethics of what might be seen as outright manipulation will forever loom on the horizon of politics, gender and the superintendency.

**Full Text:**

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consideration and discussion because of professional, political, cultural, and personal realities of the twenty-first century. Women and men have been, are, and should be leaders. Gender must be considered to determine how each leader can reach maximum potential and effectiveness. The FourCe-PITO conceptual framework of leadership is designed to help guide leadership development and education.

The present chapter uses this conc Cities Where Women Rule: Female Political Incorporation and the Allocation of Community Development Block Grant Funding. Politics & Gender, Vol. 10, Issue. 03, p. 313. CrossRef. Over the course of the last thirty years, women have made significant strides toward gender equity in politics. The percentage of women serving in state legislatures has risen from 8.1% in 1975 to more than 24% in 2013 (CAWP 2013). Not surprisingly, this increase of women in politics has sparked many questions and much research about the impact of women in public office (Carroll 2001).