Female Political Leaders: Male Communication Styles?

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Overview

1. Introduction
2. Male and Female Leadership Styles
3. Male and Female Communication Styles
4. Case studies:
   – Margaret Thatcher
   – Hillary Clinton
   – Angela Merkel
   – Kristýna Kočí

Introduction

- History: female leaders = rare
- Elizabeth I, Maria Therese, Victoria
- 20th century – more women in leadership positions
- Male vs. female leadership/communication styles?
- Do women leaders have to adopt male leadership/communication style?

Male and Female Leadership Styles

- early leadership scholars (Burns, Gardner) – no distinction in gender
- 90s – "Women and Leadership" chapters, books
- Obstacles for female leaders – "glass ceiling"
- Differences in leadership style
          – differences in communication (leadership = specific form of communication: Hackman, Johnson 2004)

Male and Female Leadership Styles

Men
- task-oriented
- autocratic, direct approach

Women
- Relationship-oriented
- Democratic, empowerment, cooperation

Male and Female Communication Styles

- Stereotypes about men and women: men and women are from different planets (Gray 1994), represent different cultures (Tannen 1992)
- Tendencies to a certain behaviors (hunters x gatherers)

Communicating Gender
(Suzanne Romaine 1999)

- women "persistently seen as Others"
- subordinated group
- "their ways of communicating and behaving are described as deviant and illogical in relation to some other norms of behaving, which define the socially powerful" (Romaine, 1999:10)
- *housewife, working mother, mankind* "househusband", "working father", *womankind* = "women as distinguished from men"

Male and Female Communication Styles - examples

- Power relations   Solidarity
- Hierarchical, power-based   Consensus-based
- Individual   Inclusion, sharing
- Direct   Indirect
- Report Talk (Tannen 1992)   Rapport Talk
- In private: "mute men"   "talkative women"
- In public: "talkative men"   "silent women"
- Expressing concepts   Expressing feelings
- More frequent interruptions   Active listening

Female Political Leaders

- Women in politics:

  Rwanda 56.3%, Sweden 44%

  Germany 32.9%

  UK 22.5%

  Czech Republic 22%

  US 17.8% …… Egypt 2%, Qatar 0%

- Why not more? (safe environment, men´s club)

Margaret Thatcher

- charismatic, "Iron Lady"
- persistent (in actions, in views)
- courageous (divisive decisions)
- vision – change (economy, finance, traditional values)
- explain ideas in simple images and language – convey what she believed in a convincing way

Margaret Thatcher

"In politics if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman."

"Defeat? I do not recognise the meaning of the word."

Margaret Thatcher

Hillary Clinton

- leadership in turbulent times
- learn from mistakes made, make adjustments
- listening and empathy
- resilient
- masculine communication style (direct, lawyerly)

Hillary Clinton

- "If I want to knock the story off the front page, I just change my hairstyle"

Angela Merkel

- "disciplinarian" of the EU
- cool, controlled vs. sense of humor
- consistent, patient
- no big visions articulated, no passions
- intelligent, always well-prepared, all options in detail
- East German – deep dislike of any ideology

Angela Merkel

- Forbes: second most powerful figure in the world

"we will do it step by step"

Kristýna Kočí

- member of the Czech Parliament
- new "Public Affairs" Party
- accused the party leader of bribing other party members – loyalty
- recordings revealing "strong" language – male politicians communication style?

Kristýna Kočí

Conclusions

- "What we must try to change are the conventional uses of language in sexist ways. Otherwise, we get trapped in a circular argument: Men have power because men define meanings and men define meanings because men have power". (Romaine, 1999, 6).

- In communication: willingness to communicate, to overcome differences

- In leadership: support more women to leadership positions