The importance of leadership

On making it in(to) the academic arena

Claartje Vinkenburg, LNVH 2015

Theories of leadership

1. Which characteristics enable someone to be a great leader? 1920s
2. How do leader behavior or style, power, and various contingencies affect the interaction between leaders and their situation? 1960s
3. How do followers perceive leadership? 1980s
   – Ultimately leadership exists in the eye of the beholder.

(Johnson & Lord, 2007)

Academic leadership

- Little theorizing, even fewer empirical studies
  - "From the Other Side of the Academy to Academic Leadership Roles: Crossing the Great Divide" (Land, 2003)
- Distinction between formal and informal academic leadership
  - Various career routes to becoming dean / vice-chancellor
  - Scientific leadership (potential): "excellence only" (e.g. ERC)
  - Being an excellent scientist ≠ an excellent leader
- Women in academic leadership?
  - Mostly qualitative, about experiences and sensemaking

Female leadership?

- I do not believe in female leadership
- I do not want to engage in a dialogue about difference(s)
- I do not want to call for a feminization of leadership

Why focusing on differences is tricky

- 'Individuals are equally different but not equally powerful. Difference does not explain the subordination of one group to another, rather the ideology of difference is a way of enforcing subordination. The construction of "others" as different from the dominant group (who are seen as the norm) is one of the mechanisms through which power is maintained. […] So to engage in a dialogue about difference is to accept an approach which masks, and rationalizes, inequality.'

Liff (1997)

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Why calling for the feminization of leadership is also tricky…

- 'Although these positions are presented as a call for change in organizational thinking, they do in fact little more than restate existing management approaches under a different name. The dangers are very real ... insofar as their apparent valuing of some essential women's qualities maintains an illusion of opportunity and equality for women in the managerial world while obstructing critical examination of the pervasive theoretical assumptions sustaining that world.' (Calas & Smircich, 1993)

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So then what? And where?

- Let's talk about women in academic leadership, and how to get there
- And perhaps let's talk about the *female leadership (dis)advantage* (Eagly et al., 2014)
- Let's not talk about glass ceilings, glass cliffs, or labyrinths, but …

The Academic Arena

- Leadership is vital for performance and survival of the academy
- "How" formal academic leaders are selected = uncharted territory
- Talent management and development systems in place, but …
- Women and (some) minorities underrepresented

Conceptualizing the arena

- Extensive literature review of top management context (Vinkenburg et al,. 2014)
  - Contrasted with lower organizational levels / earlier career stages in terms of structure, situation, and cognitions;
- Specific to the academy
  - The role of implicit bias, normative beliefs, and discursive practices (ongoing ERC CSA projects on gender, TUDelft project 2010)

Why the arena is different:

- Structural conditions
  - High complexity, visibility, and power use
- Situational components
  - Interpersonal comparisons, emergent criteria
- Cognitive features
 - Intransitivity, bounded rationality, bias

Gender stereotypes

- ## Women are perceived as communal
  - nice, friendly, socially skilled, egalitarian
- ## Men are perceived as agentic
  - dominant, assertive, tough-minded, take charge
- ## Stereotypes have two components:
  - Descriptive & prescriptive

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"Think leader, think man"

- Male-Leader
- Female-Leader
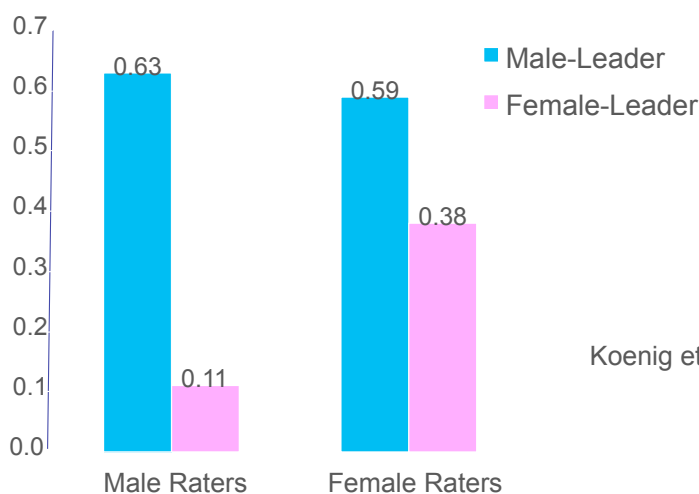
Koenig et al. (2011) meta-analysis

Male Raters: 0.63, 0.11
Female Raters: 0.59, 0.38

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Stereotypes underlie gender bias

- ## Descriptive stereotypes: *double standard*
  - Women have to be better qualified for leadership than men
- ## Prescriptive stereotypes: *double bind*
  - Women leaders who violate the prescriptions of the leader stereotype or the female gender stereotype are disliked and experience lower evaluations of their performance

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Bias in science: Raw talent

- Women are underrepresented in academic disciplines where scientists themselves believe that *raw, innate talent* is the main requirement for success, because women are stereotyped not to posses that talent
- This "field-specific ability" hypothesis was accepted, over three competing hypotheses including systematic thinking, high-end aptitude differences, and willingness and ability to work long hours.

(Leslie et al., 2015, in Science)

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A little bit of bias (small effect size: .07) adds up to cumulative disadvantage

Candidates	100 men	100 women
Entry (50%)	52 hired	48 hired
Promotion 1 (50%)	28 promotion	22 promotion
Promotion 2 (20%)	6 promotion	4 promotion
Promotion 3	1 promotion	0 promotion

Adapted from Agars (2004)

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The female leadership (dis)advantage

- The Female Advantage:
  - According to several meta-analyses, women yield superior leadership styles (i.e. more transformational, more democratic) and show more leadership effectiveness than men;

- The Female Disadvantage:
  - Both experimental and field studies show that women have less access to leadership positions compared to men, and face prejudice, backlash, and resistance when they occupy these roles.

(Eagly et al., 2014)

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Does performance pay off?
Evidence from recent meta-analyses

- Women and men do not differ (much) in performance, but they do differ in…
  - Self versus other ratings of leadership effectiveness:
    - 'When other ratings only are examined, women are rated as significantly more effective than men. In contrast, when self-ratings only are examined, men rate themselves as significantly more effective than women rate themselves' (Paustian et al., 2014)
  - Ratings of promotion potential:
    - 'Other analyses suggested that, although job performance ratings favored females, ratings of promotion potential were higher for males. Thus, ratings of promotability may deserve further attention as a potential source of differential promotion rates.' (Roth et al., 2012)
  - Rewards such as salary and promotion:
    - In high prestige settings, women performed equally but were rewarded significantly lower than men.' In such settings, including […] 'academia, performance criteria tend to be objective (e.g. research productivity), yet reward allocation decision-making is highly subjective, opaque, and adversarial' (Joshi et al., 2015).

The paradox of meritocracy

- The career system in academia is more or less explicitly build on the notion of meritocracy;
- When an organizational culture promotes meritocracy, decision makers show greater bias in favor of men when translating performance evaluations into career outcomes (Castilla & Benard, 2010).
- Under the assumption that merit is equally distributed across men and women, academia deprives itself of the top performers among women.
  - Does believing in meritocracy lead to mediocrity? (Vinkenburg, in progress)

Making it into the arena

- Moving to senior levels requires critical career passages or transitions (Charan et al., 2001).
- Acquisition of *transitional skills* (i.e., learning what is needed to make it from one level to the next) is required:
    - Ibarra et al. (2010) conceptualize leadership development in terms of the identity transitions involved.

Making it into the arena (2)

- Moving up and across the hierarchy requires the mastery of different skills (Mitchel, 1975).
    - While functional competencies and intellectual abilities are necessary for performing well at lower levels, interpersonal competencies are necessary for moving up and for performing well at higher levels (Hogan et al.,1994);
    - Operational competence over time becomes a negative predictor and intelligence is a non-significant predictor of objective career success; at the very top intelligence is not what makes the difference (Jansen & Vinkenburg, 2006).

(Im)possible selves?

- Leadership transition: gap between identity and ideal is common
- Men and women differ in strategies to bridge the gap
  - Men: imitation strategies, using a broad array of role models
  - Women: true-to-self strategies, transferring existing authentic behaviors
- Self-presentation styles during transition differ as well
  - Men "acquisitive," aggressively seeking to signal credibility (even when insecure)
  - Women "protective", modestly asserting qualified images (to avoid disapproval)
- In doing so…
  - Men build a broad repertoire of possible selves, as foundations of a new identity
  - Women are confronted with impossible selves, searching for the raw materials

(Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2007).

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Tough challenge…

- 'The task to integrate the leadership role into the core self is fraught at the outset with an inherent contradiction for the woman leader—a contradiction between her female identity and the masculine traits associated with leadership. With little support or direction, a woman leader must convey a credible image—one that strikes just the right blend of masculinity and femininity—to an audience that is deeply ambivalent about her authority' (Ely & Rhode, 2010)

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Role models? Yes, but…

- "Superwomen" can provoke upward comparison threat, not inspire self-empowerment (Rudman & Phelan, 2010)
- "Queen bees" may sting: demonstrating you are different from other women may (unwittingly) harm women in the organization (Ellemers et al., 2012)
- Becoming the "wife of the organization" is ill-advised (Huff, 1989)
- "Breadwinners" are becoming obsolete in a dual earner / dual career world: where there are very few women, men who dare to care serve as preferred role models (Herschberg et al., 2014)

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In the arena: play the game, but without the stretch

- Practice a blended leadership style that incorporates both agentic and communal behaviors
- Using moderate levels of assertiveness
- With benevolence (or individualized consideration)

(Eagly et al., 2014)

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The vision thing

- "Women lack vision" (according to senior men only!)
  - If women take employee input into consideration when making decisions more so than men, they "come to their visions in a less directive way than men do" (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009).
  - Perhaps the reason that these women do not get credit for their vision activities from senior men is due to the participative process that they are more likely to utilize.
- Inspirational motivation is the *key* component of transformational leadership needed for promotion to the highest organizational level (Vinkenburg et al., 2011)

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Navigate out of the double bind,
wield your female leadership advantage

- Let a sponsor talk about you (Ibarra et al., 2010; Hewlett, 2013)
- Practice peer promotion tactics (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010)
- Find and use your voice, cherish and show your ambition, and inspire others!

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Thank you for your attention!

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