Between You and Me: What Women Tell Women About Working in Communication

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FIU School of Journalism and Mass Communication
March 31, 2016

2016 Conference for Undergraduate Research at FIU
Women make up a larger part of the labor force in communication fields, but not in terms of high corporate positions.
Research Questions

RQ 1: How do women in leadership positions in communication fields discuss issues of inequality of the sexes?

RQ 2: How do female communication leaders wish to prepare women to be leaders in these fields?

RQ 3: What solutions related to creating gender parity can be culled from these talks?
Methodology

Transcribe and analyze 13 talks by female communication leaders FIU’s Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication (kopenhavercenter.org)
Methodology

May 2013 to October 2015

Textual analysis of roughly 12 hours of video or audio; lecture notes; and presentations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010)

Grounded approach in creating thematic analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Berkowitz & Eko, 2007)
Overarching Themes

Group Empowerment

Identity & Purpose in Field

Issues & Perceptions at Work

Taking Chances

Future Solutions
Group Empowerment

Group empowerment among women lacking in communication fields

Speakers said women tend to take on the burden of tasks alone

Speakers encouraged collaboration to empower women

“It’s my job as a leader is...to look at the people I have working with me now, not for me, with me. How do I get them to be creative and innovative and go in a direction they may not think they are even capable of going in- because that’s what [my mentor] did for me.”

Liz Roldan, News Director for WFOR-TV/CBS4
Identity and Purpose

Speakers said women tend to compare their “truth and purpose” with others.

Comparisons influenced by social norms in fields. Women then forced to make choices about “work/life balance.”

“The reality is that overall a lot of the strengths of being a woman are all strengths in the workplace. We’re nurturers. We’re bridge builders. We’re problem solvers.”

Mindy Marques, Executive Editor of Miami Herald
Issues and Perception

Speakers said women face immense gender bias in the workplace. Women viewed as nuisance/aggressive v. Men viewed as self-assured/assertive.

“...women who are in leadership positions are often labeled as demanding, bossy, domineering, arrogant, emotional, self-promoting. These are the same leadership behaviors [that] when practiced by a woman get one set of labels and when practiced by a man get another...”

Carolyn Bronstein, Associate Professor of Communication at DePaul University
Taking Chances

Speakers said that women traditionally not encouraged to “take chances”

Women forced to find opportunities to learn new technologies, be versatile

Women must “sit at the table”

“The potential is enormous. To me, the greater question is whether you feel three things. A: That change is really possible, B: Even more important, that it’s your responsibility to bring that change. ... and C: Those tools are available... I think great things are happening based on technology that enables civic participation.”

Geneva Overholser, Senior Fellow at the USC Annenberg Center for Communication Leadership and Policy
Discussion

RQ 1: How do women in leadership positions in communication fields discuss issues of inequality of the sexes?
Systemic obstacles block women from advancing into leadership roles

RQ 2: How do female communication leaders wish to prepare women to be leaders in these fields?
Women are able to address power inequalities

RQ 3: What solutions related to creating gender parity can be culled from these talks?
Increase mentorship programs, integrate leadership skills into SJMC education, provide advanced technological training
Next Steps

Future research should examine differences between gender identities, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and age.

Related whitepaper to be released at April 21 event.

*Feminist Media Studies* submission.
References


Textual Analysis in text: (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010)

Thank You & Questions