

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROLE MODELS FOR FUTURE EXECUTIVES: DOES GENDER MATTER?



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INTRODUCTION

The Leadership Gender Gap is a persistent issue constituting a loss of economic potential. One important reason for the occurrence might be the lack of female role models. Previous research has shown positive effects of same-gender role models especially in male-dominated areas such as leadership. Up until now, knowledge is limited with respect to the question of how individuals actively search, define and evaluate role models by themselves. Furthermore, the individual perception and expectations towards a (non-stereotyped) role model for leadership careers have not yet been evaluated sufficiently.

OBJECTIVE

We examine undergraduates' decision criteria for choosing a specific role model. Additionally, we shed light on the individual perceptions of role models regarding leadership attributes and expected benefits of the aspirants. Our study contributes to the understanding of criteria and functions of role models for young talents especially for women.

Are there genderspecific differences in the choice of role models of undergraduates with regard to leadership attributes?

Discussion of gender-specific differences from two perspectives:

- (1) Future executives and their different demands on role models
- (2) Role models and their disparities in description and function

MATERIAL

The research data stems from 222 transcripts of undergraduates' oral presentations on the question "Who is my role model?" in the study program for Business Administration at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences.

METHODOLOGY

We perform a quantitative and qualitative content analysis based on a deductively as well as inductively designed system of categories:

- (1) The theory-driven categories are primarily based on the Role Identification Theory, Gibson's Role Model Construals¹ and the Conger-Kanungo Scale of Charismatic Leadership² appearing in the following codes (*extract*):

Role Model Construals¹

- positive/negative
- global/specific
- close/distant
- up/across-down

Leadership Attributes²

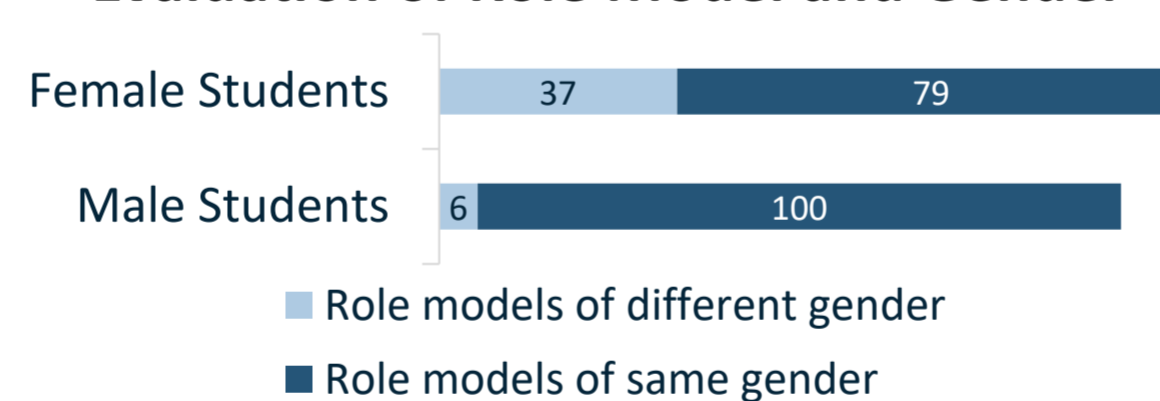
- Strategic vision and articulation
- Sensitivity to the environment
- Personal risk
- Unconventional behavior
- Sensitivity to member needs

- (2) The data-driven categorization of the role models' functions is conducted inductively by the research team applying the Key Components of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)³ according to Hill/Thompson/Williams.

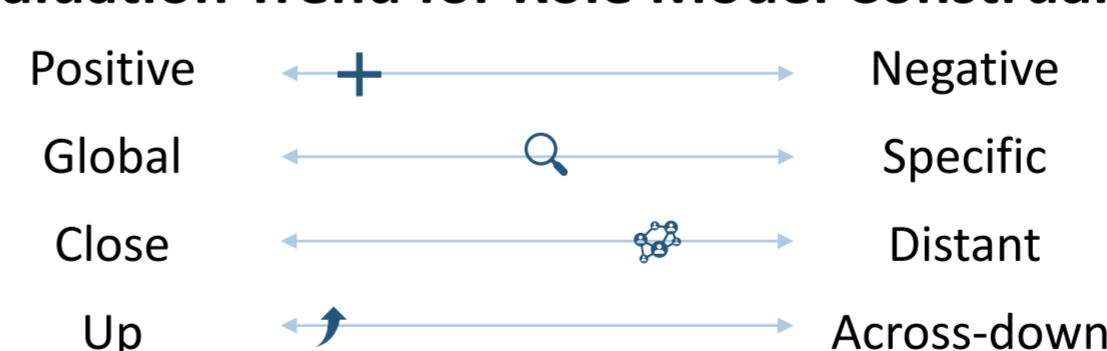
Subsequent coding and analysis of the raw material also follows the CQR, as the research team discusses the results with researchers who were not involved in the initial code development to achieve a unified version as the best representation of the data.

FIRST RESULTS

Evaluation of Role Model and Gender



Evaluation Trend for Role Model Construals



Inductive Categories of Role Models' Function (*extract*):

- Financial independence
- Climbing up the hierarchy
- Personality development*
- Skills acquisition
- Pursue own interest/passion*
- Achieve something foreign defined
- Doing good for the society*
- Work-family-balance

* overproportionate share

LITERATURE

¹ Gibson, Donald E. (2004): Role models in career development: New directions for theory and research. Journal of Vocational Behavior, Volume 65, Issue 1, 2004, Pages 134–156.

² Conger, Jay A./Kanungo, Rabindra N. (1998): Charismatic Leadership in Organizations. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

³ Hill, Clara/Thompson, Barbara/Williams, Elizabeth (1997): A Guide to Conducting Consensual Qualitative Research. Counseling Psychologist, Volume 25, Pages 517–572.