Is Leadership Gendered?: Examining the Cases of 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Winners
Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakkol Karman

Caitlin Young & Paige Cassidy

2011 Nobel Peace Prize Co-Recipients

Tawakkol Karman  Leymah Gbowee  Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

Tawakkol Karman

- Became involved in grassroots activism as a university student
- Member of Islah, Yemen’s most prominent Islamist party
- One of the first women to be elected to Islah’s higher decision-making council
- Founded Women Journalists Without Chains (WJWC) to protect writers, photographers, and aspiring female journalists from oppressive censorship of Ali Abdullah Saleh’s regime
- Challenged political officials determined to exclude women from public life
- Instrumental in propagating Arab Spring in Yemen

Leymah Gbowee

- Was about to enter university when Liberian civil war erupted – inter-ethnic struggle between Taylor regime and rebel factions
- Liberian people endured harassment and violence; women particularly affected
  - Sexual assault and rape
  - Forcible marriage to rebels
  - Forced labor
  - Witnessed recruitment of sons into army, abduction and murder of fathers and husbands, use of daughters of sex slaves
- Served as a social worker in the Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (THRP) – helped women and children heal physically and psychologically from war experiences
- Founder of Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)
  - Originally formed for women to talk about and overcome damage of war
  - Group of 20 women began to gather and pray together – beginning of Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign
  - Effort to create women-only movement for peace
Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

- Minister of Finance under President William Tolbert from 1979 to 1980
- Tolbert deposed and executed in 1980 by army sergeant Samuel K. Doe’s regime
- 1985 – ran for seat in Senate; won but refused to take office as Doe falsely claimed to have defeated opponent from her political party
- Doe began arresting his political opponents, including Sirleaf; imprisoned for a period of 7 months
- Conflict arose in 1989 as Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson competed with one another to unseat Doe; Taylor came out ahead
- Taylor led with a dictatorial style and became known for his brutality
- 1996 – Sirleaf vs. Taylor for presidency; Sirleaf finished second
- 2003 – Taylor forced to step down on account of international pressure
- National Transitional Government of Liberia – Sirleaf selected as chair of Governance Reform Commission; worked to reform and reorganize governing structures
- 2005 – government stable enough to hold elections; Sirleaf elected as president
- Founding member of International Institute for Women in Political Leadership

Is Leadership Gendered?

From where do women draw their authority?

What motivates women to protest?

What is the most opportune time to do so?

What are gender-specific barriers to a woman’s pursuit of a leadership position?

How do public opinions of male and female leaders differ?

How do women’s styles of leadership differ from those of men?
Weber’s Three Types of Legitimate Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Authority</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>Authority based upon the belief of the extraordinary capabilities of the leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Tradition is the basis of the leader’s legitimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal-Rational</td>
<td>Formal processes are the basis of legitimacy and bureaucratic structure</td>
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Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf: A Charismatic Leader

- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf:
  - “Her charisma is thus of ordinary or everyday quality and she represents the wise ‘Old Ma’ associated with more stable, good old times” (Gerdes 2015:456).
  - “...Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, affectionately known to her countrymen as the ‘Iron Lady,’ was said to bring a ‘motherly sensitivity’ to post-war torn
  - Represented a beacon of hope to her people, especially women, upon election as president
  - May not have fulfilled expectations yet, but reforms still in progress
  - Authority may be considered ‘patrimonial’ or ‘neopatrimonial’ as she fulfills a somewhat motherly position and assumes a somewhat personal responsibility for the welfare of her people (Gerdes 2015:448)
  - Democratically elected by a sweeping majority --- her authority could be considered somewhat legal-rational as well
- Charisma often favored during periods of transition as leader expected to have capability to restore social order; instability that almost inevitably ensues is temporarily accepted (Gerdes 2015:448)
Why Do Women Protest?

- **Relative deprivation theory** – dissent arises when a woman’s capabilities (socioeconomic and political, as facilitated by the government) do not align with her expectations (Murdie & Peksen 2015:182)

- Her expectations may arise from her observation of the capabilities of her male counterparts or of women outside of her country (Murdie & Peksen 2015:182)

- Feelings of relative deprivation greater in states that do not honor women’s internationally recognized rights (Murdie & Peksen 2015:182)

When Do Women Protest?

- Individuals must have confidence that movement will have successful political outcome (Murdie & Peksen 2015:184)

- Resource mobilization: “...the size and resources available to organized social groups influence their strategies and, in general, the preexisting NGO structure within a polity will influence the behavior and activities of a movement” (Murdie & Peksen 2015:183).

- Political opportunity: “...political opportunities and social and cultural structures help to encourage collective action” (Murdie & Peksen 2015:184).

- Women’s interests incorporated into construction of a new state in post-apartheid South Africa (Seidman 1999)

- The construction of a new state provides the political opportunity necessary for women to address their needs in addition to those of the general populace **concurrently**

- Johnson-Sirleaf: participation in Governance Reform Commission during Liberia’s transition period and later ascension into presidency

- Karman: Arab Spring’s relative success in Tunisia and Egypt; overthrow of Saleh would warrant a period transition; ‘insider’ position in Islah

- Gbowee: WIPNET – encompassed multiple West African nations; membership increased into the thousands
What Barriers Do Women Face in Pursuing Positions of Leadership?*

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<tr>
<th>Barrier Type</th>
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<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Official rules of the political system</td>
<td>No longer formal regulations as much as a ‘glass ceiling,’ more closely related to cultural beliefs about a woman’s place in the political scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Women’s positions within different social systems (i.e. level of education, participation in workforce, etc.)</td>
<td>Sirleaf and Karman received university degrees; “…education levels are associated with increased protest participation” (Murdie &amp; Peksen 2015:183); Sirleaf’s education her governmental employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Gender stereotypes and gendered beliefs about politics</td>
<td>Women are a marginalized group in both Yemen and Liberian politics are viewed as a “man’s world”; “…female candidates will place greater emphasis on feminine gender characteristics when the electorate is dissatisfied with the current political leadership…the strength and effectiveness of national women’s movements affect women’s electoral prospects” (Thomas and Adams 2010:109).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*As Defined by Thomas & Adams 2010

How Do Public Opinions of Male and Female Leaders Differ?

- “Once women enter races, gender stereotypes influence how the public and the media perceive candidates and how individual candidates present themselves. Male candidates are more likely to be viewed as strong, assertive, and confident, while women are more likely to be viewed as compassionate, sensitive, and empathetic (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kahn 1996)* (Thomas & Adams 2010:111).
- *Frames* associated with women in politics (i.e. women as “peacemakers” or “agents of change”) (Thomas & Adams 2010)
- Aligns with cultural barriers mentioned previously
How Do the Leadership Styles of Women Differ from Those of Men?

• Institutional, structural, and cultural barriers pose unique challenges to be overcome
• One such strategy is to exploit social networks
• “During the election campaign [2005], Johnson-Sirleaf built a network of supporters based on formerly established personal connections and strategic considerations” (Gerdes 2015:458)
• Much like what was observed with Ella Baker (Payne 1989)
• “…studies presented by several psychologists validate that women’s leadership styles differ from their male counterparts—as being more democratic, inclusive, participative, and transformative…” (Perkins et. al. 2013: 86)
• Leadership style and origin of authority very closely intertwined

Is Leadership Gendered?

Q: From where do women draw their authority?
A: Authority drawn from their public perception as charismatic leaders during periods of political turmoil.

Q: What motivates women to protest?
A: Realization of inequalities and their relative deprivation

Q: What is the most opportune time to do so?
A: When political opportunity arises and resources are available and readily-mobilized

Q: What are gender-specific barriers to a woman’s pursuit of a leadership position?
A: Assumptions about women and their proper place in politics and society in general

Q: How do public opinions of male and female leaders differ?
A: Men viewed as strong, assertive and confident; women viewed as compassionate, sensitive, and sympathetic; seen as having different strengths

Q: How do women’s styles of leadership differ from those of men?
A: More democratic, inclusive, participative, and transformative

In referring to the above questions, it becomes clear that the answer to our overarching question, “Is leadership gendered?” is a definite yes!
References


