Gendered leadership

Sara Louise Muhr

Professor (mso), Department of Organization
Academic Director, BiS Platform for Diversity and Difference
Equality is an important value in the Danish society, right?
So, what's the fuss...?

• 7 % female directors in the 1200 largest companies

• 6 % female chairmen of the board in the same companies

• In more than half (52 %) of the same companies there are NO female board members

• 14 % women in C-suite

• 16 % gender pay gap, 30 % among CEOs, 6,6 % among newly educated candidates, 2,6 % among our students

➢ Denmark now ranks no 95 on World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report
The usual explanations

• Women don’t have the competencies…

• Women don’t want to…
There is also a third one...

• Women are prohibited by gendered power structures, bias and stereotypes...
Because, research is clear!

- Women (and other minorities) are consistently evaluated lower than (white) men
- Women (and other minorities) systematically receive shorter, less-praise worthy letters of recommendation
- Females leaders are judged to be less likable and not as good a parent as male leaders
- At the same time, men experience bullying and harassment if they choose an active caretaker role or a caretaker profession (stay-at-home-dad or nurse)
Why...?

• Explicit bias
• Unconscious/implicit bias
Why...?

• Explicit bias

• The views and opinions that we are *consciously aware* of, for example our attitude towards a particular political party

• Explicit attitudes are typically measured by *self-report questionnaires*
Why…?

• Unconscious/implicit bias

• Those views and opinions that we may not be aware of. They are automatically triggered when we encounter different people or situations.
Where does unconscious bias come from...?

• Unconscious bias is a result of mental processes (cognitive bias)

• **Information-processing short cuts**: intuition, common sense, gut-feeling

• **Social categorisation theory**: the way our brains categorise other people for expedient and efficient decision making
The problem is that biases produce stereotypes

• Unconsciously we build categories based on historical and cultural definitions of difference

• We assign people to different predefined boxes depending on who we think they are

• These categories decide what we view as ‘normal’ and ’abnormal’
  • And what we notice and don’t notice

• We do this everyday, all the time… all of us…
The usual mistakes…

• Be careful with women initiatives
• Women are not from Venus and men are not from Mars
• Avoid a helping discourse
• Its not (only) about women!
The usual mistakes…

• Meritocracy is an illusion
• Diversity does not come from a good heart
• Work-life balance is not just for women (with children)
• Fake news! Get your facts correct!
• Don't fix the women!
A good way to start is to start blocking your biases...

- Advertise positions externally
- Anonymise and de-personalize the applications
- Use an application form
- Use a diverse hiring committee and interview individually
- Use – and place demands to – head-hunters
- Transparency! Salary, hiring processes, promotions
- Representation: If not in management, then in artefacts, guests, experts and speakers