

Leadership & Sexuality

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Abstract

It is clear that the understanding of leadership is not only expressions of skills set, meaning all the tasks you are handling in a workplace, it is also about how you handle relationships. Leadership is unavoidable also about power, the capacity to influence people, in the world and organizations (Northouse 2010). However, since leadership occurs in groups with the intention to get followers' attention to reach a common goal, this is ultimately a process of communication; How well can you convey people to join your mission and vision? How can you create the necessary financial resources? What is your viewpoint on conflicts? How are you being when you need to handle relationships that get problematic, tense and stiff?

All these questions start from the awareness of how you are being in relationships. Hence, leadership can be seen as a journey of self-growth in how an individual is able and capable to handle self (intrapersonal perspective), processes of change (development perspective) and relationships (interpersonal perspective) (Eagly 2005; George 2013; Walumbwa et. al. 2008). Self-awareness is, therefore, an important key component in this process. Self-awareness includes the capacity to reflect and question your own beliefs, knowing about your core values, being able to feel and express emotions and understanding your motivations and goals. Ultimately it is about learning who you are on a very deep level, being aware and trusting your own feelings (Kernis 2003).

The ability to perceive and express emotions, how to use emotions and how to facilitate thinking by using emotions, became on the agenda within the psychological research field that aimed to measure the concept of emotional intelligence (Caruso & Wolfe 2004; Goleman 1995, 1998; Mayer & Salovey 1995, 1997; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2000). Although it's questioned what role emotional intelligence actually plays for people being successful at home, school and work, Northouse (2010:24) argues that "it is clear that people who are sensitive to their emotions and the impact of their emotions on others will be leaders that are more effective." However, as stated by Northouse, we still need more research in order to know how emotional intelligence relates to leadership.

While it's clear of the vital role empathy and self-knowledge plays in effective leadership, the emerging field of social neuroscience (i.e what happens in the brain when people interact) is shining a light on new truths of what makes a good leader. Leading effectively seems to be less about mastering skills and more about developing a genuine interest in people and impact them in a positive feeling (Goleman & Boyatzis 2008). It's in this context the present study can be viewed as the capacity to bond and create genuine connections comes from the self-knowledge of personal power. I'm arguing that in order to fully understand leadership power, we need to go to the real source of personal power – in the understanding of how sexual exploration develops leadership consciousness in the sense of understanding what it means to truly connect with another human being. I would argue that herein lies the leaders' true power, in the power of connection. While previous sexuality research usually highlights aspects of sex differences, identity and various sexual dysfunctions, gender aspects and differences, the lack of pleasure and orgasm etc., this study bring on a new perspective by bringing up how conscious sexuality practices become an indicator of leadership consciousness in the understanding of power.

The background for this paper is based on my own experiential journey in the subculture of conscious sexuality and the findings how personal growth and leadership becomes the result of new perceptions of the reality. How can we understand the journey of inner transformation that individuals go through in the reinvention through sex exploration? In what way is this new awareness impacting leadership and the notion of power?

The quest for this exploratory study is to discover, identify and articulate how a conscious sexual experience is impacting leadership on an internal and external level. The term will be further discussed in the paper. The study is based on 10 qualitative interviews with men and women in various leadership positions that responded to the call - to be interviewed about their sexuality and leadership. The interviews were gathered around three basic questions; In what way sexual practices had impacted the relationship to; 1) self, 2) the environment, and 3) personal growth and leadership. The results illustrate how interpersonal skills become a result of an advanced learned experience through the sexual practice. As we know, communication takes place also through non-verbal messages through the tone of voice,

facial expressions, gestures and body language. The experience of a conscious sexuality practice cultivates the individual in the ability of listening and understanding non-verbal messages, as such paving the way for an increased emotional intelligence. Since all relationships start with the relationship you have with yourself, the respondent describes how exploring edges out of their comfort zone cultivated them in the ability to surrender out of control in the full permission to be seen in their authentic self. The experience gave the genuine feeling of what it means to be connected or disconnected. Evidently many people in our societies are disconnected from body, soul and feelings, we could argue that sexual practitioners take the interpersonal skills to the next level, as such creating an awareness in how power is felt being ab/used, either by themselves or others. I would argue that due to the new perception of what's possible to create through intimate connection, it takes my interviewees into a whole new understanding of how to be in social relationships. That is what also is building their strength and power as corporate leaders. Therefore, this interdisciplinary study takes on a whole new approach which combines the research field of leadership with the area of sexuality.