

XXX

THE FINNISH “FAMOUS FIVE” IN TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTY LEADERS’ RESPONSE STYLE

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Abstract Politicians’ television interviews have been central in Finnish election campaigning since the 1960s. Earlier studies of the electoral debates have shown that the influence of the Finnish communication culture and political system on politicians’ communication styles could be readily identified. Before the Finnish municipal elections of 2021, the Finnish Broadcasting Company organized separate television interviews for all leaders of the parliamentary parties. This chapter reports on five of these interviews, focusing only on the leaders of the parties represented in the national government. This means the Finnish “Famous Five,” namely the government led by five female party leaders. The chapter concentrates on Finnish politicians’ responses in the interviews. The analysis is based on the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse and the model of Finnish political television discussion. The aim is to characterize Finnish political interviews and develop a method for interview analysis. The results show that in the television interviews the Finnish “Famous Five” performed both in the style customarily seen in Finnish politicians appearing on television and also in a way indicative of new nuances in politicians’ television performance. It was also possible to consider differences in the response styles of party leaders.

XX.1 Introduction

The Finnish government, popularly referred to as the “Famous Five,” took office in December 2019. This government is led by five female party leaders, all except one of them being in their early 30’s. It is internationally unprecedented for a government to be led by young women. Furthermore, Prime Minister Sanna Marin (34 years old) was at that time the world’s youngest serving prime minister. Since then, one of the party leaders has changed, but she, too, is a woman and under 40 years old. Here we consider the television interviews of these five party leaders during the Finnish municipal election campaign 2021. The aim is to analyze their communication styles as interviewees. Is this new generation of female politicians following a traditional communication style of Finnish politicians or can new features be identified in their communication?

Politicians’ television interviews have a long history in Finland. The first television programs related to elections were broadcast in 1960, before the municipal elections (Pitkänen, 2014). Before that, these programs had already been broadcast on radio and they served as a model for the television programs. Right from the beginning there have been two types of programs: television debates or discussions, and interviews with individual politicians. The 1966 parliamentary elections are known as the first “television elections” in Finland. Until the late 1980s, the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) – public service – had sole rights to make such programs and they were also meticulously regulated. The commercial channel MTV did not gain the rights to broadcast election programs until the 1990s, when programs also began to assume various forms and emphases. Since then, the number of such programs has increased even as the number of

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channels has increased, thus there is a growing number of different election programs on Finnish television.

Finnish politicians were reportedly apprehensive about their first television appearances, and they were already trained in appearing on television in the 1950s. Pitkänen (2014) researched the history of Finnish election programs and how the press reported on them. He claims that the newspapers' way of writing about these programs changed in the 1980s. At that time, the papers began to write about the personal qualities of politicians and to analyze their clothing, appearance, and argumentation. The politicians were no longer evaluated by factual competence, but also their persona, communication styles, and performances became an element in assessing their competence.

Election programs on television are still typical and frequently watched on Finnish television channels. These programs have established their position in election campaigns and it can be said that they are the most avidly followed events during campaigns. They have also been reported to influence some voters' voting decisions (Isotalus, 2017). The interviews with party leaders have been an established part of election campaigning for over sixty years on Finnish television. The style and communication in these have changed over the decades but the basic interview has always been the same: journalists ask questions and politicians respond.

XX.2 Communication Styles of Finnish Politicians on Television

The communication styles of Finnish politicians on television programs have been studied from numerous perspectives. However, it has been more common to analyze politicians' television appearances in debates or electoral discussions than in interviews. Earlier studies have in any case shown that communication styles in Finnish electoral programs differ in many ways from those observed in other countries. Finnish communication culture and the political system have therefore been assumed to influence politicians' communication styles on television.

One of the first studies to contemplate the television appearances of Finnish politicians more widely was that by Sallinen-Kuparinen (1987), who showed that the impression of politicians' ethos on television can change according to their communication style. She also noted that Finns appreciated politicians who were calm and restrained, which seemed to be almost opposite to the observations on presidential candidates in the U.S.

Isotalus (2009) maintained that the Finnish political system is reflected in Finnish political television programs in many ways. One of the important elements is that Finland has a multi-party system, which differentiates these programs from those in countries with a two-party system. There are currently nine parties in the Finnish parliament and five of them together form a coalition government. The party leaders are therefore well aware that they must be able to cooperate with other parties after the elections and hence avoid making excessively critical comments in order to retain an opportunity for coalescing. On the one hand, the confrontation between the parties in a multi-party system is not as sharp, clear, or polarized as in a two-party system; there is always more than one opponent to a party. A voter must also choose from several parties and not only between two of them. On the other hand, a party needs to differentiate its profile so as to be able to stand out from the other parties.

It has previously been claimed that consensus policy is deeply rooted in the Finnish political system, which is why there is less challenging of opponents in Finland than in many other countries (Karvonen & Paloheimo, 2005). However, this appears to have changed radically during the past few years and challenging is nowadays typical in Finnish political discussions. For example, many Finnish members of parliament have commented that Finnish parliamentary debate has actually become too aggressive and harsh. However, it is impossible to say whether this is also apparent in television interviews. Thus, it would be interesting to analyze the tone in which the

party leaders talk about the other parties – whether they try to be more confrontational or to maintain good relationships.

The characteristics of Finnish communication culture have been analyzed in several studies and these characteristics have also been found in political television programs. For example, Sallinen-Kuparinen (1986) observed that in Finnish culture the function of discussion is often to maintain harmony, which means that role of communication is more to create harmony than to provoke arguments. Also, the American scholar Carbaugh (1995) noted a preference in Finland to avoid themes that are contentious or conflictual. According to the same studies, Finns also reportedly avoid attacking the opponent's opinion, because this is easily seen as an attack on the opponent as a person, the bond between speaker and message being close in Finnish culture. The results from the political television programs reinforce these viewpoints because Finnish politicians seem to use attacks only rarely and express disagreements indirectly in television discussions (Isotalus, 2009, 2011).

Sallinen-Kuparinen (1986) moreover described Finnish communication culture as listener-centered, meaning that Finns easily prefer the role of listener and there is a reluctance to emphasize the role of speaker. Wilkins (2005, 2009) used the term "matter-of-fact" to describe Finnish communication culture, because the Finns value a matter-of-fact communication style in public situations and issues are deemed more important than persons. Earlier studies on electoral programs corroborate such observations.

Isotalus and Aarnio (2005, 2006) considered Finnish electoral programs over several years and elections. Their purpose was to describe the most typical and at the same time to identify the main elements of these programs in Finland because the earlier studies were mostly from the U.S. and their results did not seem compatible with Finnish programs. They developed a model of Finnish political television discussions in which expressions of disagreement and agreement are at the core. Expressions of disagreement are probably very common in all political discussions, but in the Finnish discussion expressions of agreement also played a central role as they provide opportunities for future cooperation. The party's position in either government or opposition influenced the way politicians articulated their agreements and disagreements. Further, the personal relationships between party leaders seemed to influence these expressions.

According to the Finnish model (Isotalus & Aarnio, 2005, 2006), the second typical form of interaction in these programs was the three forms of discourse which are at times connected: discourses oriented to past, present, and future situations. The most typical way for politicians to take part in the discussion is through discourse oriented to the present, in which case a politician analyzes the prevailing political situation, stresses a need for change in the present situation, or defends the current development. The politicians' styles in using these forms of discourse seem to differ; for example, a party leader may be more future oriented than others. It could be assumed that younger politicians would favor discourse oriented to the future over discourse oriented to the past, and that older politicians would behave in the opposite way as they have a longer political memory and more past experience. Further, the younger politician could be more inclined to challenge present and past policies.

The analyses applying this model show that its basic forms serve to describe the typical interaction in Finnish electoral programs fairly well (Isotalus, 2009, 2010). Analyzing these forms has also served to identify different communication styles among politicians.

Nuolijärvi and Tiittula (2000), for example, analyzed Finnish and German political television programs and compared the communication styles seen in these. Their main observation is that, positively seen, a culture of dispute is characteristic of German political television programs. According to their results, confrontations are considered indispensable in a democracy, and these must be resolved by disputation in German. By contrast, Finnish political programs do not include dispute and the discussions are in general more restrained. These authors note that disagreements are naturally also expressed in Finnish programs, but less bluntly. In conclusion, studies on Finnish

communication culture make clear that it has many characteristics which are then reflected in communication on the electoral television programs.

XX.3 The Functional Theory of Campaign Discourse

One of the most used theories in research on political television discussions is the functional theory of campaign discourse. William L. Benoit (2007, 2014) has been the main developer of the theory and it has been used especially in studies on the U.S. presidential campaigns through analyses of entire campaign's discourse, most often of television debates. The theory has more recently been applied in many different countries and it has proven to be a practical approach to communication analysis in various political contexts (e.g., Benoit & Benoit-Bryant, 2013). The main conclusion in these international studies has been that some features of political campaign discourse cross national borders and cultures. However, to our knowledge it has not been applied at all in the context of political interviews.

The theory sees campaign discourse as inherently instrumental, a means to a desired end: securing enough votes to win the election. According to the theory, the discourse can take only one of three forms: acclaim, attack, and defend. First, politicians may acclaim their positive characteristics or their policy positions. Second, politicians may attack their opponents by addressing an opponent's undesirable character or policy position. A successful attack increases the attacker's net favorability by reducing the desirability of an opponent. Defense is the third potential function of discourse. If a politician decides to respond to attacks, he or she will mount a defense. It attempts to restore or prevent additional damage to a politician's perceived preferability.

Functional theory argues that these three functions – acclaim, attack, and defend – are likely to occur with different frequencies. One of the main principles of the theory is that the campaign discourse may occur on grounds of both policy (issue) and character (image). In other words, politicians try to persuade voters of their preferability in terms of policy and character. Further, the policy utterances may address three topics: past deeds, future plans, and general goals.

Functional theory is well suited to simplifying the forms of campaign discourse and has proven an excellent analytical tool (Isotalus, 2017). Benoit (2007) considers that one advantage of functional theory, for example, is that it categorizes statements in a more multifaceted way than do many other analyses. Another advantage is that it can be applied to a variety of political campaign messages.

On the other hand, the Finnish model developed by Isotalus and Aarnio (2005, 2006) started from the criticism of the functional theory. They find that the functional theory was developed to analyze campaigns such as presidential campaigns, where the character of a candidate is crucial. Further, the theory seems to be more appropriate in a two-party system, where the winner is always absolute, while in a multi-party system it may sometimes be difficult to find only one unambiguous winner. Additionally, the theory seems to include suggestions of forms of interaction that are culturally bound, because, for example, attacking in political discussions seems to be more common in some countries or expressed more indirectly in others.

Paatelainen, Croucher, and Benoit (2016) analyzed Finnish presidential debates applying functional theory. They showed that the theory is also partly applicable in the Finnish context because in the Finnish debates, too, there were, for example, more acclaims than attacks and defenses. Further, policy was discussed more than character. On the other hand, most of the attacks were mounted by interviewers rather than by other candidates. Some turns were not amenable to characterization according to the theory.

Isotalus (2011) also applied this theory to Finnish electoral programs. He observed that in these programs among Finnish politicians the most common form of discourse is defense, but that this is not a function of attacks from other politicians. Rather, politicians defend themselves against interviewers' questions that might be somewhat confrontational. In this study, acclaim was the

rarest form of discourse, and policy was a more common topic than character. The results, indeed, showed that Finnish electoral programs differed clearly from the American presidential debates. Further, one fifth of the turns were not amenable to categorization according to the theory, which means that the three main functions of the theory do not comprehensively describe Finnish political discussions.

Isotalus (2010) also found that combining these two models could be fruitful or the most suitable model to analyze at least Finnish political television programs. For example, the Finnish model does not address turns in which politicians talk about themselves or express their own thoughts. Therefore, some kind of category of self-disclosure could be appropriate, because they cannot be seen as pure acclaims either. The functional theory does not seem to consider discourse oriented to the present, that has been shown to be a very typical form of talk for Finnish politicians. Furthermore, expressions of agreement seem to be crucial in Finnish culture, but they do not have a category in the functional theory – this, despite that it has already been shown that, for example, Barack Obama used a lot of expressions of agreement in the American presidential debates (Straub, Beller, & Hunt, 2012).

Earlier research shows that political television programs vary from culture to culture, and both political systems and communication cultures can influence them. However, at the same time, some characteristics in these programs can be surprisingly similar worldwide. Yet differences must also be taken into account in developing the analysis models of these programs. Earlier studies on electoral programs have paid more attention to television debates and discussion, especially presidential debates; thus, it is reasonable to pay more attention to interviews with politicians during election campaigns.

XX.4 Gender and Image in Finnish Politics

Political leadership has indubitably been a predominantly male prerogative. Although women's representation in leadership roles has increased, they remain significantly underrepresented in elite leadership positions. Therefore, the Finnish government led by five female party leaders is exceptional and something unprecedented globally. This already reveals that gender equality in Finnish politics is fairly good by international standards. Mäkelä et al. (2015) mention that Finland has long been considered a model country for gender equality and women have traditionally also taken an active part in politics. Their study, however, showed that the Finnish newspapers often publish decidedly one-sided and gendered representations of both political culture and gender.

Earlier international studies show that gender matters somewhat in television interviews and in the response styles of politicians (e.g., Brownlow et al., 2003; Suleiman & O'Connell, 2007). When women began to aspire to leadership positions in Finnish politics, it was apparent that in electoral programs they were interviewed differently than men. Ruonala (1998) noted that female candidates were interviewed more politely than male candidates and they were asked about issues that were familiar to them whereas men were asked about issues more broadly. It appeared that female candidates were not taken seriously enough in the interviews.

The general attitude towards female politicians, however, has changed radically in recent years. Niemi (2014) observed that the Finnish media took different views of female and male candidates when competing for party leaderships. Female candidates were considered to have an advantage over men in their media skills, interest, and media attraction. Women were also often related to images of diligence, propriety, and cooperative ability. Thus, women's chances to reform the party's image were often seen as very good. This may also explain why so many parties in Finland are currently led by women.

Being a young woman seems to be a good starting point for a positive image nowadays in Finnish politics. Isotalus and Almonkari (2011) studied the images of political leaders

by analyzing how the Finnish press describes and evaluates them. The evaluations and descriptions of politicians were divided into five main categories: professional competence, communication skills, maintenance of political relations, characteristics and behavior, and inspiring confidence. For example, concerning communication skills, the press evaluated that political leaders are too often verbose, non-specific, rambling, dysfluent and suffer from a lack of openness, colorfulness, and charisma in public speaking contexts. Among the positive features of political leaders the words credible, charismatic, clear and understandable were mentioned most frequently. The descriptions of politicians' characteristics and behavior varied enormously and they were often even contradictory. Therefore, according to the data there seemed to be two opposite ideals of a political leader (Isotalus, 2017). The first of these is called crowd pleaser, who is brave, enthusiastic, fresh, with a sense of humor, emotional, charismatic, colorful, and representative. The second ideal type is a matter-of-fact politician, who is hardworking, intelligent, moderate, thoughtful, responsible, and focused on work. The problem is that ideally a political leader should represent both of these types simultaneously, which is probably impossible because they represent opposite ideals. Furthermore, this data also showed that a politician should at least not be too old and female gender was seen positively.

XX.5 Aim and Method of the Study

The purpose of the chapter is to analyze Finnish political television interviews. The chapter concentrates on Finnish politicians' speech in interviews, focusing only on the role of the interviewees as well on their answers. Earlier research on Finnish politicians' communication on television has mainly focused on electoral discussions and debates with interviews hardly being studied. Therefore, in the chapter, the models i.e., the model of Finnish political television discussion by Isotalus and Aarnio (2005, 2006) and Benoit's (2007, 2014) functional theory of campaign discourse used in the earlier studies on television debates are applied this time to interviews. The use of these familiar models makes it possible to identify the features of communication that are characteristic of Finnish politicians in television election programs because comparison to earlier studies is possible. With both models, it has been possible to identify characteristics that seem to be typical of Finnish culture. Moreover, the purpose is to test how these models could be used in the analysis of interviews and whether it would be possible to develop a new method for future analysis by combining these models. The aim is also to describe the response styles of the party leaders according to the analysis and in this way to outline how response style could be related to politicians' images.

The data was collected during the campaign before the Finnish municipal elections in 2021. Although municipal elections are essentially local, they also attract a lot of attention in the media at the national level in Finland. The same parties have candidates in the municipal elections and in national elections; thus the parties and their leaders also have a central role in campaigning. The Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) organized a series of interviews where eight party leaders were interviewed individually. This chapter considers five of these interviews, focusing only on the party leaders and parties that are in the government meaning "the Famous Five." The female party leaders analyzed were Prime Minister Sanna Marin (Social Democratic Party, interviewed May 20, 2021), Annika Saarikko (Centre Party, interviewed May 25, 2021), Maria Ohisalo (Green League, interviewed May 24, 2021), Li Andersson (Left Alliance interviewed, May 26, 2021), and Anna-Maja Henriksson (Swedish People's Party, interviewed May 27, 2021). The same two interviewers Jyrki Hara and Sanna Savikko, male and female respectively, interviewed all of them with each interview lasting 30 minutes.

The analysis was based on the transcriptions. First, the data was read closely to see what sort of classification was initially feasible. Next the categories to be used were chosen from earlier models. According to the model of Finnish political television discussions, we first considered

from the answers whether they were oriented to past, present, or future situations. As these were individual interviews it was not deemed reasonable to concentrate on expressions of agreement and disagreement. Instead, we scrutinized expressions of relations with other parties or party leaders. Secondly, the functional theory of campaign discourse was applied and the main functions, namely acclaims, attacks, and defenses were analyzed from the interviews. The idea was originally to use the subcategories and to consider whether the discourse occurred on grounds of policy or character, but for these data this was found to be impracticable. All responses by the party leaders were classified according to the discourse time-orientation and the three main functions. Based on this analysis, the differences in party leaders' communication styles were also considered.

Through close reading it was noticed that a turn might include features of different categories. For example, a longer turn might begin with reference to past situations and end up with an illustration of the future. Nevertheless, a turn was classified as a whole and according to only one category, depending on what category seemed to be dominant. Although the interviews were equal in length, they included different numbers of responses, varying from 51 to 70 in an interview depending on their length. The data included 279 classified responses. First, the frequencies of each class were counted. After that, the percentages of different classes were calculated in order to compare the classes between the party leaders. The comparison revealed what is typical for the respective party leaders' response styles

XX.6 Results

The five television interviews with five Finnish party leaders were analyzed from four perspectives. First, to ascertain whether the answers of the party leaders were oriented to past, present, or future; second, to determine how the responses could be classified for attacks, defenses, or acclaims. After that, these two classifications were combined. Further, we considered whether it was possible to use these classifications to describe the communication styles of the party leaders. In all parts, the results of the classification are substantiated with qualitative observations and illustrated with examples.

XX.6.1 Time-Orientation in the Responses

The interviews studied included all three forms of time-oriented discourse. The most typical form was the orientation to the present with 60 per cent of the responses falling into this category. In their responses the party leaders typically analyzed the current political situation, social problems, and the reasons for them. More than half of all party leaders' turns were oriented to the present and for one of the leaders, as many as three out of four.

One third of the responses were oriented to the future. A typical turn oriented to the future described the situation after a forthcoming reform or situation aimed at or achieved. Some variations between the party leaders were discernible in the amount of this discourse, varying between 20% and 37% of turns. In the following example, Sanna Marin describes a future situation:

Sanna Savikko (IR): This proposal strictly stipulates the public sector obligation to provide adequate services, so are you driving private organizations off the field? Are you depriving them of their opportunities to function?

Sanna Marin: It is about ensuring that the public sector is responsible for the provision of services, but equally in the future, companies and third-sector operators will be able to deliver these services (Party leader interview, May 20, 2021).

Discourse oriented to the past was used least in these interviews, but all the party leaders had at least a couple of such turns. Because all the study's interviewees represented parties currently

in the government, most of the responses oriented to the past referred to what this government had already decided. Only a few responses were related to a time further back in the past.

According to the Finnish model, it is also reasonable to pay attention to whether there are expressions of relations with other parties or party leaders. However, the analysis revealed that this was not a fruitful perspective in this case as many didn't use this sort of expressions at all and a party leader at most had six such expressions. In these expressions, they mentioned what they had agreed with other parties in the government or how their views differed from those of some party currently in the opposition. The party leaders seemed bent to avoid talking about the other parties rather than to express their attitude towards them because the journalists' questions included more mentions of other parties than did the party leaders' responses. This data did not permit interpretations of what the party leaders think about the other parties in the government or opposition or what kind of relationships they have with each other.

XX.6.2 Functions of Responses

All party leaders' responses were classified according to their functions as attacks, defenses, or acclaims. The defenses were the most typical category, with two-thirds of the turns. In most cases, a journalist's question included an attack, a doubt, a hint of something, or an accusation against which a party leader had to defend herself or her party. The next example is a typical question-and-answer pair:

Jyrki Hara (IR): You are committed, as I recall, to the government program that outlines that corporate taxation will not be increased?

Li Andersson: Quite a lot of other things have changed since this government program was formulated, looking now at the economic policy solutions done in the negotiation of budget frame and as a party we have also continuously said that when these key economic policy outlines are opened up, we will also bring the tax proposals to the table. And now the government is also looking into these tax reforms (Party leader interview, May 26, 2021).

For all party leaders, defense was the biggest category, varying from 55 to 73% of turns. Additionally, a small number of answers was classified as defensive although they were more like neutral and informative responses than unambiguous defenses, as they were much closer to defenses than to acclaims or attacks. Because of these cases, it would be reasonable to consider a fourth category in this classification in future analyses. In these responses, the party leaders, for example, provided more information on an issue or clarified a term; therefore, the category could be called "informing."

One third of the responses included a sort of acclaim. Concerning this category, there was more variation between the party leaders. One of them expressed acclaim in only one fifth of her turns while another had almost half of her turns in this category. Thus, there were differences in how much the party leaders brought out the positive aspects of their parties or were able to turn their responses to the general aims or principles of their party. Here is an example of the first one:

Sanna Savikko: But do you hope for such things?

Maria Ohisalo: Well, let me revert to the EU recovery tool that every Green MP voted for, by the way and the Greens are certainly a party that can be fully trusted on these EU issues, but... (Party leader interview, May 24, 2021).

In four interviews out of five, there were questions about polls and the backing of the parties. In two of the interviews, the backing of the party was also related to the personal position of a party leader with a suggestion that lower backing is a party leader's fault. The party leaders answered these

questions with a defend or an acclaim, so that acclaims relating to the present were the most typical way to respond. Next we present an example of how a party leader turns her response to a critical question to an acclaim for the party.

Jyrki Hara: If we face facts through the polls, then the result was actually 17.5 per cent in the last municipal election. If I remember right, you set it as your goal when you became party leader. Now the polls show 11.7 per cent. How big is the panic in the party? Less than three weeks to the election.

Annika Saarikko: The nomination of candidates was a tremendously important stage for us, and it excited me very much, and I think that, considering the support figures, it looked as if this election had already been scripted for the Centre Party. Considering that, our group of candidates is broad and it is the largest of all the parties in Finland. They are the ones who in the last instance will do the campaigning (Party leader interview, May 25, 2021).

According to the functional theory, the third category is attack. The findings, however, exhibit no unequivocal attack. In these interviews, the only object of such an attack would be the interviewer, so that it is understandable why the party leaders did not do this. An earlier analysis (e.g., Isotalus, 2011) showed that this category merits extensive consideration and therefore all expressions of unambiguous disagreement with or critical comments regarding interviewers' questions were classified as attacks. Although attacks were considered extensively in this category, it accounted for only two per cent of turns. In any case, this category would be more appropriately be described as disagreement than as attack. Here is one of the most direct criticisms of an interviewer's question:

Jyrki Hara: You are keen to increase taxes and you want municipal tax to be progressive, so the current flat tax. Are these yours, or the question is if the concerns expressed by economists about the detrimental effects of high taxation are nonsensical in your mind?

Sanna Marin: This was now your interpretation as interviewer that taxation is being increased. When taxation is made more progressive it will not need to be increased (Party leader interview, May 20, 2021).

In the functional theory, the main functions have subcategories, so that attacks, defenses, and acclaims emphasize either character or policy. Concerning these interviews, it was not feasible to analyze the subcategories because there were only a couple of turns which could be seen to concern a character and some party leaders had no such responses at all. The responses were related to policy issues or to a party represented in a program.

XX.6.3 Combining the Models

When these two classifications are considered together, it emerges that the party leaders' most typical responses were defense, concerning present policies. Two-fifths of turns fell into this group, the largest category for the four party leaders with one of them having over half of her turns in this category.

Defense relating to the future and acclaims relating to the present were also fairly common. Both categories account for one-fifth of the turns. There were, however, differences between party leaders. For one of the party leaders, present-oriented acclaims were the most used type of response. On the other hand, three party leaders used future oriented defense more than present-oriented acclaim. Eighty per cent of all turns fell into these three most used categories.

About ten per cent of turns were acclaims related to the future. Four per cent were defensive responses related to the past and another four per cent were acclaims related to the past. The findings included no attacks oriented to the past. Combining these two models ultimately revealed more differences between the party leaders.

XX.6.4 Communication Styles of Party Leaders

We next considered what differences these classifications revealed in the communication styles of the party leaders studied, beginning with Prime Minister Sanna Marin. What was salient in her communication was that she had more defenses than any of the other interviewees. This may result from her position as prime minister because she is responsible for all the government's decisions and is therefore bound to defend them all. She attacked only four times – still, more than the others. The attacks in this case were turns in which she started a response by criticizing a question or by expressing unequivocal disagreement. An example of these:

Jyrki Hara: You emphasize public services, you oppose outsourcing and cuts, you advocate tax increases, you repeatedly clash with business life. Yes, that is pretty consistent left-wing line compared to the earlier SDP, if I may say so, if Antti Rinne's term of office is not taken into account.

Sanna Marin: Now you (i.e., the interviewer) are perhaps exaggerating a little bit and being selective because if we look at business or business activities, then the government has also implemented a very business-friendly, pro-business policy, pro-industry policy, and pro-employment policy. That is, there has been some looking through rose-colored glasses to avoid looking at the facts of what we have done in government (Party leader interview, May 20, 2021).

Sanna Marin had fewer turns classified as acclaims than any of the others. Most of her talk was oriented to the present, but she had a good number of future-oriented turns. She also had more future-oriented defenses than any of the others. To sum up, her response style can be described as very defensive, but she was also ready to state a question being unfair. Her answers concerned present and future situations, and she tried to change her responses less than the others to party acclaims. She has generally been described as a practical politician and this analysis supports this image. Further, her role as prime minister may have affected her responses.

Annika Saarikko represents the second biggest party in the government. Her interview included more acclaim responses than any of the other interviewees studied. Almost half of her responses fell into this group. Most of these acclaims were present oriented. As with the other interviewees, her largest category was defense, but unlike the others she had more oriented to the future than to the present. She had also more turns oriented to the past than most of the party leaders, but this was only twelve per cent of all her responses. Her communication style could thus be described as positive because she had so many acclaims, but no attacks. Her defenses were also more oriented to the future, with a positive, future-oriented tone in her speech. Here is an example of how Annika Saarikko responded to a question with an acclaim:

Sanna Savikko: Annika Saarikko, you are going into to these elections with the slogan "The Centre Party – The domestic." Why would the Centre Party be any more domestic than the rest of Finland's parties?

Annika Saarikko: If we start first with the history of the party then we are truly a domestic party. No real interface with Europe such as the Right and the Left have. And yes, I hope that the Finns have known us in history and will know in the future about defending Finnish things, such as food and energy (Party leader interview, May 25, 2021).

Maria Ohisalo is the leader of the Green League. Her speech was more future oriented than most of the others. There were also more acclaims than in most other interviews, especially those oriented to the future. The interviewers asked her about climate change and environmental issues more than they asked the others; therefore, solutions and changes for a better environmental future were emphasized in her responses. Her communication style was also fairly positive and future oriented although it also included numerous defenses. Here is an example of Maria Ohisalo making an acclaim oriented to the future:

Sanna Savikko: It may be that, but the ore deposit may be a much greater chance economically?

Maria Ohisalo: That is why, among other things, we in the government are working on a reform of the Mining Act that will take better account not only of the views of local people, but also of these other local livelihoods. It can't be that one livelihood can be prioritized over everything else, and especially with the environment still being destroyed at the same time (Party leader interview, May 24, 2021).

The next party leader is Li Andersson, whose discourse was more oriented to the past than the others although she had no more than nine turns describing past policies. Her other categories were very close to average; for example, one-third of the turns were acclaims and two-thirds involved defense. Her answering style was thus quite varied and the closest to the average communication style in spite of slightly more focus on the past, as the following example:

Sanna Savikko: You said when you published your local election program that Corona must not be an excuse for expenditure cuts. What did you mean by this?

Li Andersson: It means that no hasty decisions should be made under the guise of Corona. As a good example, the city of Helsinki, which last autumn, when they decided on the budget for this year, decided on 22 million cuts to education, even though the municipality made a surplus of several hundred million last year (Party leader interview, May 26, 2021).

Anna-Maja Henriksson represents the smallest party. She is also the most experienced as a politician and a party leader, being some twenty years older than the other female party leaders studied. Her communication style revealed a discourse oriented more to the present than anybody else. She also had almost as many defenses as Sanna Marin. Therefore, more than over half of her turns were both defenses and oriented to the present. There were also quite many present-oriented acclaims, but the other categories were smaller than the average. There were no attacks. To sum up, her communication style could be described as defensive and docile, responding with defense, acclaim, and argument, describing the prevailing political situation without directly opposing the interviewers' perspectives. In this example, Anna-Maja Henriksson responds defensively:

Sanna Savikko: This was already investigated in 2018 by a working group and at the time it was found to be impossible, precisely concerning this voting rights and tax matter under the current legislation. How is it that there is something now...

Anna-Maja Henriksson: Legislation can be changed if the Parliament so considers. I would say that perhaps it has become salient during Corona that we have also seen that there is an idea that you can live and work remotely. But it doesn't suit everyone, but it's still an option (Party leader interview, May 27, 2021).

7. Discussion

This chapter reported the analysis of the response styles of five Finnish party leaders called “the Famous Five,” from the perspective of the models that were used earlier in the analyses of Finnish electoral debates and discussions. Because the communication of Finnish politicians in television interviews has so far been little studied, the aim was to find an approach enabling a comparison of the results with those of earlier studies that could reveal the possible cultural characteristics of communication in the interviews. Additionally, a method of analysis was developed.

The results suggest that it is very typical for Finnish politicians to use defense in their responses, also in interviews. The great number of defenses is explained by the interviewers’ questions that often include an element provoking defensive responses. This same phenomenon has also been observed in Finnish television debates (Isotalus, 2011; Paatelainen et al., 2016). The second typical feature for Finnish politicians in television interviews is that their responses commonly analyze present policies. For example, it is very typical to explain the reasons for a current political situation or what current social problems the politicians should solve. This kind of discourse has already been observed to be common in Finnish electoral programs (Isotalus & Aarnio, 2006), but it is difficult to ascertain using only the functional theory (Isotalus, 2010).

Despite the most common discourse types, an important result was that one third of all responses were acclaims and also oriented to the future. Earlier analyses yielded partly contradictory results on acclaims (Isotalus, 2011; Paatelainen et al., 2016). However, here the results reinforce the view that acclaims related to an individual’s character are rare in Finnish political culture. Instead, acclaims related to policies seemed to be more common than in some earlier studies. The frequency of acclaims and future orientation may suggest that the young female party leaders have partly different response styles from those of earlier Finnish politicians. The analysis also revealed that the party leaders avoided comparing parties and talking about other parties; instead, they directed their responses to acclaims about their own parties’ political actions.

Combining two analytical models seemed to be fruitful and showed potential for future development. Either of these models alone would have yielded much less about response styles, but together they created a more multifaceted picture of politicians’ response styles. Using both models made it possible to consider differences in the party leaders’ response styles, while with only one model the comparison would not have been so comprehensive. The analysis also showed that the combined model would need some modification, at least when used for Finnish television interviews. First, attacks were not observed at all from these interviews, and it is reasonable to expect that they are very rare in politicians’ individual interviews in general because it is not very advantageous for politicians to attack an interviewer on television. Therefore, according to these results it would be useful to replace the category of attacks with “expressions of disagreement.” Although there were expressions of disagreement in the interviews, expressions of agreement seemed to be lacking. The category of agreements has previously been deemed characteristic of Finnish television discussions, but it is lacking in the interviews because there are no other politicians with whom to express agreement.

Secondly, concerning the analysis of interviews it would be useful to add a fourth category to the functions (attack, defend, and acclaim) as not all responses necessarily fit into these three categories, not originally developed for the analysis of interviews. For example, in this case, defense was widely categorized but some of these responses were clearly not very defensive. They were rather neutral statements, differing distinctly from attacks and acclaims. The fourth category could be called informing or explanatory because at least in the present data corpus there were responses more like explanations for questions such as “what is this?” or “what does it mean?” Additionally, the idea of the functional theory that politicians’ turns concern either policy or character did not work here because the party leaders’ responses were related only to policy.

The many earlier international studies concerning television interviews with politicians have focused on more detailed, linguistic analysis of communication than undertaken in this chapter. Those studies described thoroughly and in various ways the different types of questions

and responses (e.g., Feldman, Kinoshita, & Bull, 2017; Tilney, 2015). The present chapter considers the response styles at a slightly more macro-level and the analyses are based on the rhetorical approach. The outcome of the analysis is a more holistic perspective on party leaders' response styles. In this analysis, it was possible, however, to find something specific in every party leader's response style. Two of the party leaders differed from the others in that they had more future-oriented acclaims than the others; the impression in their responses was that they wanted to describe a positive future for the voters. One of the party leaders was defensive and docile in her answers and another had more past-oriented responses than the others. The prime minister had to defend and explain the present political situation more than the others, but she also clearly indicated if an interviewer's questions were too leading. Thus, the results show that the position of the prime minister as head of the government was also reflected in her responses. The response styles also seem to build different images for the party leaders interviewed. However, the studied party leaders seemed to rather reinforce the image of a matter-of-fact politician than a crowd pleaser in these interviews.

The Finnish Famous Five performed in the television interviews in the style usually seen from Finnish politicians on television and in a way that suggests new trends in politicians' television performance. First, they talked solely about policies, not persons, so that the character of a party leader was not emphasized. Therefore, they exemplified the matter-of-fact communication deemed typical of Finnish public contexts (Wilkins, 2005, 2009). They were also more harmonious than argumentative. Further, the high number of defenses used has already been observed to be typical in Finnish political television discussions. On the other hand, they had more future-oriented speech with positive tone and less past-oriented speech with disagreements than has been observed in earlier studies. This may suggest new trends in politicians' communication styles or it may be because most of the party leaders were young females, therefore it would be interesting in future studies to compare the results to interviews with Finnish older male politicians. Additionally, the positive future-oriented communication style very likely further reinforces the positive image of young female politicians compared to a style characterized by attacking and looking back. Secondly, this may refer to a political view and may have an ideological basis, because, for example, populist female politicians have been found to speak about the past in a positive way and to actually reveal nostalgia in their speech (Mason, 2010), while the leaders of the liberal and left-wing parties studied had no similar longing for the past or need to return to an earlier state of society.

The main limitation of the study is that only five interviews were analyzed and there are no earlier studies with which the results could be directly compared. However, the earlier theoretical frames were applied here in a new way and in a new context. The development of a new analytical tool with which to study television interviews with politicians can be considered successful. More applications of the analytical tool and more studies on television interviews are needed in order to confirm the observations reported here. However, the results point out a positive trend in Finnish politicians' communication style and reinforce the view that communication and political culture play an important role in how politicians communicate in television interviews. For example, they concentrated on policies, not persons, so that the character of a party leader was not emphasized as is habitual in Finnish communication culture and their communication was more harmonious than argumentative in relation to other parties, which is typical in the Finnish political system.

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