

Interview with David Gergen

Political Commentator

Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, MA

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Laura Liswood, Introduction: It's a parable book. It's about leadership. It's the elephant and the mouse. If you are the elephant or the mouse in the group, what is it that you know about or think you need to know about? For the mouse, the answer to that is everything. What often I say is feminine intuition is actually non-dominance. But the actual thesis behind it is both animals have great leadership skills. The elephant is assertive, doesn't care what other animals think about it. These are great skill sets.

Generally speaking, non-dominant groups don't necessarily develop dominant group skill sets as much, and dominant groups don't work very well with non-dominant skill sets. What I am saying is that you should develop the skill sets of the elephant because they are great skill sets. We know more about our dominant skill sets more than the non-dominant. The notion of the large country vs. the small country is applicable. What does that do to us? Where does that get us as a large country?

David Gergen: You have to be able to play it both ways. And I wonder whether the people who are in the bottom of the dominant groups are also at the top of the non-dominant group. There are different gradations; the welfare state was so rich a tapestry of differences. Not just an elephant or mouse, maybe a kangaroo and other kinds of animals. It has to do with subculture [garbled].

Liswood: The height of the scheme of the structure...So your guidance. So it's like if you are the investment banker. If you are the investment banker, you are put in the position where...What does that do to you as CEO, what does that do to you as president? Everyone knows what color tie you wore today or any day. But very little about... [garble]

Gergen: Well, I think that the really good leaders are the ones that do notice. And the other ones... I remember when John Eisenhower came and had dinner with the Nixon's [machine being moved - garbled]. Something about having a general, humans. But I do think that great leaders all stressed and they are all punchable.

Liswood: That would seem to play itself into...

Gergen: I think that is probably right. I have noticed that, what politicals believe deeply [laughter]...It is also a concern.

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