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*I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System.*

Leading the Followers and the Joiners

Categorizing other human beings can be very difficult. While any group of people may share some set of traits, they are still typically very different from one another. For this reason, when asked if they are described as a Leader, Follower, or Joiner, most people will say they can fit multiple roles, depending on the given situation. Despite the inherent elasticity of these roles, I believe I can be well described as a leader. Not only do leaders have to understand how Followers and Joiners think, they also have to be able to make up for any disparities present in the other groups; leaders have to be able to make decisions for a group or settle disputes as they arise. My experiences in leadership positions, and my social, outgoing personality give me the confidence required to lead any group of people in need.

I was in my high school’s marching band throughout my high school career. I started on clarinet, then, in my junior year, became the Drum Major of the band. A Drum Major is essentially the student head of the band, who conducts on the field and helps lead the students behind the scenes. My two years as Drum Major gave me tons of valuable leadership experience, wherein I learned how to get things done while still making things entertaining. Any marching band is rife with complaints from both the students and the administrators; the students believe they are overworked, and the administrators believe the students are easily distracted and lazy. Being a student leader meant learning to understand where each side was coming from, and to help alleviate tension for everyone involved. By positively motivating the students and by complimenting their hard work in front of the faculty, the other student leaders and I managed to diffuse some of the frustrations present in the band. Later that season our band went to win Nationals in Allentown, Pennsylvania, so I’m inclined to think we were doing at least a few things correctly.

In my life I have found myself in the center of various social groups. I have introduced more people to each other than I could ever hope to count. The optimist in me says this is because of my generally social, outgoing demeanor. I believe this trait is invaluable for leading a group of people; no one wants to follow somebody they dislike, or someone who they cannot talk to. I am very capable of listening to peoples’ needs, and doing my best to accommodate them in any way I can, even when I don’t know them very well, if at all. The ability to listen to others’ feedback and worries and react to it on the fly is very helpful, and is usually indicative of a good leader.

Being a leader also means knowing when to step up, and when to step down. A good leader can take charge, or stand in the sidelines depending on where there are needed most. It is for this reason that many people who would be viewed as Leaders might consider themselves Followers or Joiners; they are capable of doing any of the above. There are many times where a member of a group is more qualified than its leader to lead it, but feels that they can be more useful in some other role. Having the humility and grace to fill any role needed in a group is a sign of great maturity. I aspire to be this way; not only do I know how to manage a large group of people and how to settle disputes between group members, but I know when I am needed in front and when I am needed on the sidelines. I can only try my best to continue improving upon my leadership skills, and this group project is another chance to do exactly that.