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### Personal Theory of Leadership

Leaders are defined and chosen from a multitude of characteristics and situational factors. For example, one person might be a strong leader in one group setting, so they could choose to lead. In another setting the same person may feel the need to follow. These situational factors in all groups and projects play much more of a significant role than other theories give credit to, so this theory will combine specific personality traits that make influencers choose to lead rather than follow, with a focus on the situation of the project and the group.

One situational factor that will definitely determine what kind of leader will rise is the size of the group. While some people love the idea of leading a large group of people to the desired goal, other leaders would prefer getting to know each person in their group on a more personal level and would rather lead a smaller team. Factors that really affect this external force is their **strengths** and **motives**. Someone who would prefer to lead a large group would probably have a strength of significance, because they would enjoy standing and leading in front of many eyes. That's because these leaders are driven by big goals, big outcomes, and their image.

Another common trait for people who enjoy leading large groups of people are those who are incredibly outgoing in the fact that they would rather make a lot of friends rather than having a steady, small group of close friends. One example of a leader that arose from a big group is our cohort lead, Leah Ervin. She chose to lead a large group in the SELF program, probably because she values having a say when it comes to activities for the larger body and because she cares

about helping out a lot, rather than a little. Would the cohort have been only ten people, I believe a different leader would have taken the title. A main strength that someone who enjoys leading smaller groups would probably have would be Individualization, mainly, because a leader of a smaller group has to be more inclined to find the strengths of each individual to maximize efficiency in that smaller group. These leaders value striving to meet more personal objectives as smaller projects are usually more personal. Leaders of small groups will always have a passion for what they are working on because if they do not they can probably just switch to another project, unlike people who are in charge of larger groups. One example of a leader stepping up in a smaller group is Grant Henry, who definitely stepped up as a leader in our group theory project. He paid attention to each person in the group and was the best at motivating each person because he knew us all personally. This is the perfect example of someone who truly enjoys leading smaller groups, rather than larger ones. Grant Henry did not even run for cohort lead, but he was really good at organizing the project with less people.

Another situational factor that I believe definitely affects what type of leader that pops out is the length of the project. Donald Trump and Grant Henry differ as leaders in the fact that Grant's project timeline was incredibly short (only a month or two) while Donald Trump will end up serving in office for four whole years. The timeline of the project definitely greatly affects who will choose to lead. Some people make the common mistake of thinking that the same leaders who lead large groups will serve longer and those who choose to lead small groups will always want to lead for a shorter period of time, but this could not be farther from the truth. Size and timeline definitely do not always correlate. Length of leadership very much so depends on two things: **passion** and **need**. If a leader truly feels passionate about the project, they will

feel inclined to lead for long periods of time. People will rarely commit long periods of time towards something they hate. In a short-term project, even if a leader does not feel a lot of passion for the project and if there is a need for a leader they will stand up and serve for a short period of time. An example of this would be in the Case Study project when, BLP member, Emily Hull stepped up to the plate and partially led the project in the beginning; not because she felt a lot of passion towards escape rooms, but because she needed a good grade on that project. After the first week when we were more organized and she felt better about getting a good grade, she stopped leading and I led the project the remainder of the time; not out of need, but out of passion because I have a lot of interest towards business and public speaking, and I wanted to make sure we had a good project to present in the end, even though it took me a lot more time than it could have.

Not only do situational factors such as the size and the scope of the group affect the leader, but also the members of the group will have an enormous effect on who decides to lead. For example, freshmen in the SELF program do not get to help lead/plan the high school design competition because there are other people in the group that are more inclined to lead this project. A person could be a leader of one group and not the next just based on the members of the group and how those people make that person feel. This factor really depends on **skill** and **empowerment**. An engineer will probably not be the leader of a marketing project because they do not have that skill set. On the other hand, a marketer, in the same project, might not lead the group because they do not feel empowered by the people on their team. A personal example of this would definitely be when Lori Eckhardt chose to lead an exercise-Zumba group in Self Hall. Lori saw a need to have more exercise/stress relief in the Engineering Learning Community and

stepped up to the plate to lead. She probably did this because she felt empowered by people in her work-out group. I seriously doubt she would lead Zumba classes for Olympians because they would probably not make her feel empowered. This factor of empowerment, or acceptance in the group, is so important for leaders, and it so often goes unrecognized.

So far, this paper has primarily focused on discussing three situational factors that will naturally select the right leader for the right task; but fundamentally, what truly makes a leader powerful is their underlying driving forces. Really, what makes each leader effective is what makes them unique, it is the *internal forces*. These personality traits, these driving values, these



things truly make the person who they really are: these are the characteristics that make people leaders. I have already discussed how these traits will affect leaders and the group they choose to lead, so now I will discuss more in depth what these traits mean to me and how I interpret them in myself and in my life, truly making this my *personal* theory of leadership.

Two of my major strengths from the strength assessment are Competition and Learning. I have definitely seen both of these traits in myself more in the past year than any other part of my life. Of the forty girls in the Women in Computing Club (WIC), only sixteen get to go to the Grace Hopper Celebration, which is a ginormous conference for women in technology with thousands of companies looking for interns from all over the nation. Companies like Instagram, Target, Apple, and so many others go to the Grace Hopper Conference, and it is a major three day event full of learning, women, and technology. I knew I had to go, the only problem was that I had to be in the top sixteen point earners to be eligible. This drew out my Competition strength and I became so involved in the club, that I developed a passion for it, and now I serve as the Treasurer. After weeks and weeks of participating at WIC events and meetings I was finally eligible to attend the conference. This experience in my life truly demonstrates the leadership model. I immediately joined the club because of my strengths, it was basically a competition to learn. After that I truly did develop a passion for the club and all the people that we serve. My motive was to give back to the people that had done so much to help me succeed in WIC. There was a need in the fact that I needed a group to truly integrate me and help me with my career in computing, and I had the skill to keep up with our coding outreach program. Finally, and honestly, most importantly for me, I feel empowered by the ladies in Women In Computing. I feel empowered to speak my mind, to voice my opinions, and to lead. Overall that is truly why I decided to step up.

In review, my personal theory of leadership starts with the actual *person* and their internal reactions to external forces. I believe that these reactions to external forces are what truly makes leaders. What makes my theory different is that I feel it truly includes all different types

of leaders, even those that do not get a lot of credit, where it is due. It is easy to point out an outgoing person that automatically volunteers to lead everything and call them a leader, but it is much harder to identify the people in the background that lead every single day of their lives but in smaller projects and in smaller ways. Even though these people are harder to see, I believe they are leaders, nonetheless, and it is these people that do not often enough get recognized that I tried to focus my theory on. This understanding of leadership and group development from ENGR 111, I plan to use as I progress through the SELF program and through life as a leader using internal factors to make decisions as a developed leader in my cohort.