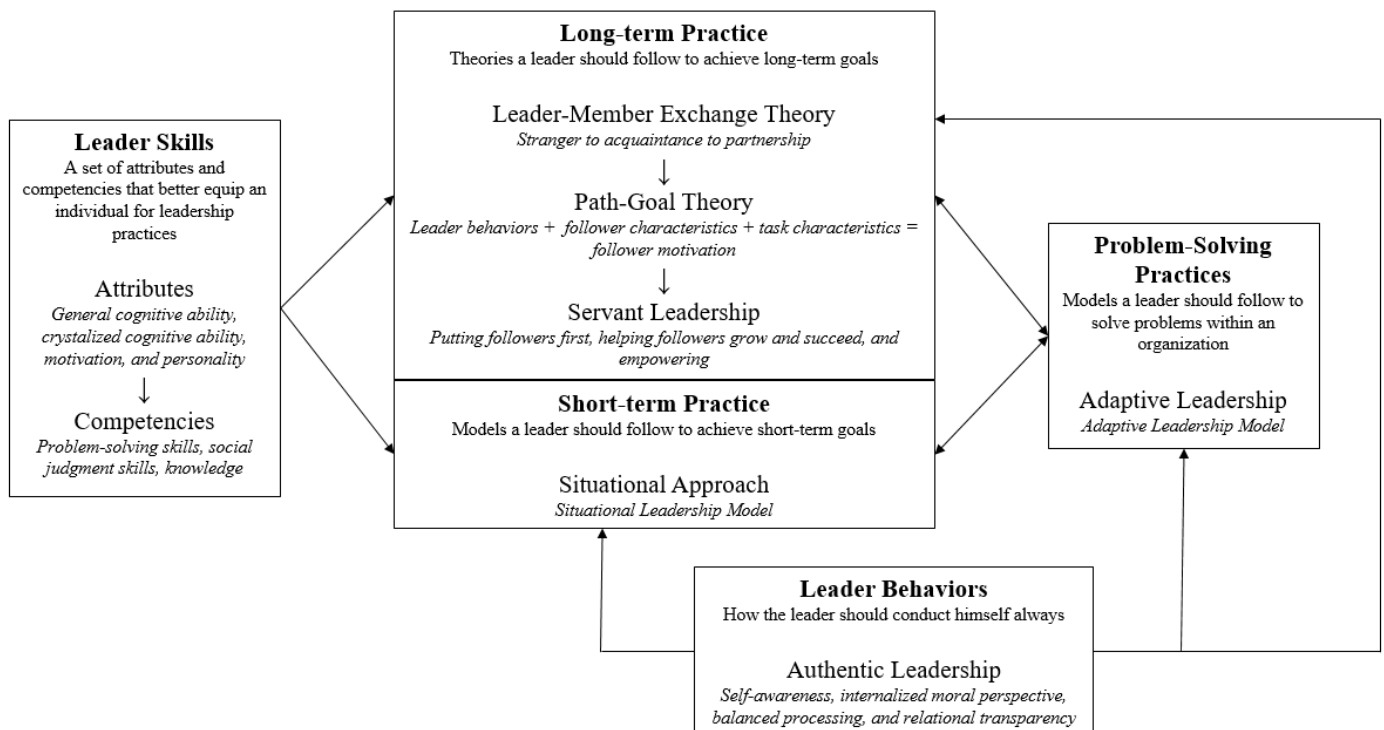Michelle Tran

PSID: 1371574

HON 3330

December 7, 2016

Leadership Theory into Practice

In my Leadership Reflection 3, I used Northouse's definition of leadership as a basis of my own definition. "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse 6). In addition to adding a skills component and stressing a code of ethics and authenticity in leadership, I define leadership as a long-term endeavor composed of short-term technical objectives designed for the organization and individual followers to grow. Below is a model I developed in order to accomplish my leadership goals.

Long-term Practice
Theories a leader should follow to achieve long-term goals

Leader-Member Exchange Theory
Stranger to acquaintance to partnership
↓
Path-Goal Theory
Leader behaviors + follower characteristics + task characteristics = follower motivation
↓
Servant Leadership
Putting followers first, helping followers grow and succeed, and empowering

Short-term Practice
Models a leader should follow to achieve short-term goals

Situational Approach
Situational Leadership Model

Leader Skills
A set of attributes and competencies that better equip an individual for leadership practices

Attributes
General cognitive ability, crystalized cognitive ability, motivation, and personality
↓
Competencies
Problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, knowledge

Problem-Solving Practices
Models a leader should follow to solve problems within an organization

Adaptive Leadership
Adaptive Leadership Model

Leader Behaviors
How the leader should conduct himself always

Authentic Leadership
Self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency

The model analyzes the leader based upon the Skills Approach, creating the expectation that the leader has attributes that would aid in the development of problem-solving skills, social judgement skills, and knowledge. In the long-term practice, the leader must practice Leader-Member Exchange Theory in order to develop a dyadic relationship with his followers. Once he learns each follower's characteristics, he can then match them to certain tasks based on the task characteristics using Path-Goal Theory. If the follower expresses a desire to lead, the leader should practice Servant Leadership and provide the follower opportunities to lead. Alongside the long-term practice, the leader must use the situational approach in his short-term practice in order to accomplish technical tasks. The leader would utilize the Adaptive Leadership Model to address any adaptive challenges that may arise. Throughout the leadership model, the leader must exhibits the traits of an authentic leader.

The model expresses two major characteristics: it is heavily relationship-orientated and it emphasizes authentic leadership. These characteristics are a result of my own experiences in leadership, particularly as a team leader in the Bonner Leaders Program. Particularly as a data team leader in the Bonner Leaders Program, my mission is to mobilize a group between ten and forty students to collect and analyze data. However, I learned that my passion is actually developing my followers. I know many of my followers on an individual basis; I learn how they work with others, what they are passionate about, and what their ambitions are. I do my best to provide them with opportunities that will allow them to work in a group they will feel comfortable with, addressing a task in which they would be able to utilize their passion and further them in their long-term goals. As a leader, I also learned to convey the characteristics of an authentic leader, particularly the characteristic of relational transparency. I believe that if I make my intentions apparent then I will decrease the amount of misunderstandings between me

and my followers, the core of my leadership model. My leadership model does have potential challenges. My dyadic relationship with my followers often grow into a friendship. This becomes an issue when friendship get in the way of task completion. In addition, task completion can also suffer under my follower-centric approach if careful task planning is not done beforehand. For this assignment I selected three leaders whom I identified with due to their leadership situation, but we differ based on our approach to leadership. I used this assignment as an opportunity to learn from these leaders and to perhaps adjust my leadership model accordingly.

My peer leader is Serrae Reed. Serrae is a third-year mechanical engineering major at the University of Houston. She is also a student leader within the Bonner Leaders Program and the project head of my Bonner project, the Writing to Inspire Successful Education (WISE) program. As the current project head, Serrae founded the program as a second-year student and has built the program to what it is today from its inception. She has worked on the day-to-day operations of the project as well as creating a vision for the project. She was the person who allowed me to create the data team within the WISE program in order to incorporate a research aspect to the project. Serrae enjoys problem-solving, both in her engineering discipline and as the leader of the WISE program. I chose Serrae as my peer leader because we are close in age. We are both in similar points in our career as we are both students pursuing an undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) degree. We both have chosen to participate in and lead a service project that is not orientated towards our career field. In addition, we are both minority women pursuing a career in a STEM field. In 2015, a report from the National Student Clearinghouse showed a decline of women pursuing a bachelor's degree in STEM between 2004 and 2014, with the sharpest drop from 23 percent to 18 percent in the field of

Computer Science (Rampbell). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that in 2009, women held only 24 percent of all STEM jobs (Beede). Even so, the number of women who hold jobs within the STEM field often choose to leave after facing workplace harassment (Williams). I interviewed Serrae in hopes of learning more about the how she faces the challenges of leading a group of her peers, balancing service and academics, and rising above prejudices within her discipline.

In the interview, Serrae says there are three determining factors that compels her to accept a new project: (1) the project will help her develop a new skill, (2) the project fits in with the time she has available, and (3) the project will contribute to her resume. Serrae concedes that sometimes she makes an exception to the third rule if the project is a hobby she is willing to invest time in. As far as tackling problems, Serrae is task-orientated. She makes a plan based on the desired outcome. She considers her strengths to be her ability to problem-solve and her attention to detail. She identifies her weakness as being too focused on the process that she forgets to adapt to new challenges. She also views herself as a kind yet distant leader who creates a safe environment for followers to express their concerns, but reaffirms that she is still the leader. She values relationships, but they are not the focus of her leadership.

Serrae's leadership style incorporates qualities of four leadership approaches, styles, and theories: Path-Goal Theory, Leader-Member Exchange Theory, Authentic Leadership, and Servant Leadership. Path-Goal Theory best describes the manner in which Serrae divides tasks among her followers. She mentioned in her interview that she takes note of what motivates each individual. She describes some people as "loud," who like the attention and the power that comes from the responsibility of certain tasks. Others she describes as "fun," who will do any tasks as long as they get entertainment from it. There are also "quiet" individuals who are often

motivated by the desire to accomplish something. She matches followers' characteristics to task characteristics, all the while removing obstacles and providing support (Northouse 116-117). Serrae practices Leader-Member Exchange Theory in the form of in-groups and out-groups. While she describes herself as a kind yet distant leader, within the iWISE project there are a certain number of individuals that act as her trusted advisors. Many of these individuals become part of the in-group due to "expanded and negotiated role responsibilities" (Northouse 140). Serrae also exhibits Authentic Leadership in that her core values, particularly rooted in her faith, is conveyed through her vision, her work ethic, and her relationships (Northouse 197-198). Lastly, Serrae is a servant leader, as she became a leader to better serve others. She also works to empower her followers to become leaders themselves, as she had done for me (Northouse 234-235).

My mentor leader is Chuong Tran, my father. My father is a stimulation software engineer, working for a contracting company to NASA. He formerly developed software for robot arms used in space and currently develops software for spacecraft. Growing up in 1970s Vietnam, my father found his passion in electronics. He fondly recalls going to a friend's family-owned electronics repair shop after school to tinker with all the gadgets as a way to take his mind away from his always hungry stomach and the war-torn issues of the country. Although he excelled in school, he decided to drop out of high school before the Fall of Saigon in order to earn a technical degree and avoiding the draft. At age fifteen, he became the head of the household of eight children after his father fled the country to avoid prosecution for fighting for against the communist regime. After coming to the United States under refugee status, my father earned his degree in Computer Science and Electronics while working two jobs to provide for his family. I chose my father as my mentor leader in part because he is in the field I hope to

someday find a career in. He has always been supportive of my decision to pursue computer science and is someone who guides me in my studies. He is someone who has also instilled in me my life's mission: to make the world a better place for future generations of people. I interviewed him in hopes of gaining more insight into effective leadership in the field of computer science.

Like Serrae, my father had a definitive list of factors that would compel him to take on a new project: (1) the project gives him the opportunity to gain a new experience, (2) the project gives him the opportunity to gain a new skill, or (3) the project offers monetary compensation. To him, success is solely determined by reaching the objective whether that is meeting a deadline or staying within the budget. He identifies his strength as tenacity and hard work. He identifies his weakness as his temperament and how he is often lead by his emotions. He describes the necessity of having a close relationship with followers and maintaining an open environment in which people would be willing to talk about their concerns and struggles. He references imposter syndrome, or the fear that an individual's accomplishments are insufficient and he will soon be exposed as an imposter, that is common in the field of technology. He comments that building a community within the team in which everyone is comfortable with sharing their strengths and weaknesses is necessary in order for the team members to work with one another in a complimentary manner.

My father's leadership style incorporates qualities of five leadership approaches, styles, and theories: Path-Goal Theory, Leader-Member Exchange Theory, Authentic Leadership, Servant Leadership, and Adaptive Leadership. He also exhibits the quality of grit as described by Angela Duckworth. Like Serrae, my father practices Path-Goal Theory. However, unlike Serrae, who matches follower's motivations to task characteristics, my father matches follower's

strength and weaknesses to task characteristics (Northouse 118-119). My father also practices

Leader-Member Exchange Theory in the form of the dyadic relationships he forms with his

followers (Northouse 139). This individualized relationship, he claims, is necessary for each

follower on the team to trust you with their insecurities. My father models Authentic Leadership,

particularly in the form of relational transparency (Northouse 203). He believes that by keeping

his intentions clear, he will reduce misunderstandings his followers may have of him. My father

is a servant leader, in that he believes that he believes in helping followers grow and succeed as

he has done for me (Northouse 232). My father also creates a constant holding environment, as

described in Adaptive Leadership as "a space where people can address adaptive challenges that

confront them" (Northouse 261), for his followers. The need for this space is a result of the

creative yet high pressured (due to Imposter Syndrome) work that goes into the field of

technology. As my father's life story suggests, he also exhibits the quality of grit, described by

Angela Duckworth as "combination of passion and perseverance that made high achievers

special" (Duckworth 8). His dedication to his education in technology despite hardships is proof

of his passion and perseverance.

  My aspirational leader is Dr. Andrew Hamilton. He is the founding director of the

University of Houston Bonner Leaders Program and the Associate Dean of the College of

Natural Science and Mathematics. Dr. Hamilton is a first generation college graduate. He

pursued his undergraduate career at Berea College in Lexington, Kentucky. Berea College is

unique in that it charges its students no tuition. Instead students are required to serve ten hours a

week on campus or in the community. In Dr. Hamilton's case, he founded an adult literacy

program that ran for several years, even after his graduation. The education he acquired at Berea

College shaped Dr. Hamilton's future devotion to service. Unlike both Serrae and my father, I

did not chose Dr. Hamilton as my aspirational leader because I believe I would find myself in a similar position in the future. I chose Dr. Hamilton as my aspirational leader solely for the reason that I believed that I had a lot to learn from his style of leadership, in particularly how he unifies a group under a single vision of service.

In his interview, Dr. Hamilton listed three determining factors he uses to decide whether to take on a new project: (1) the project will provide funding for an initiative or it will is a study that will be published, (2) the project will help a student, and (3) the project will help build infrastructure for an initiative. For Dr. Hamilton, success is measured not only by the completion of tasks, but by the change in others' mentalities. He says, "You know you've won when you hear someone adopt the language of your vision." The key to motivating people is adopting a clear and consistent narrative of the vision and offering a method of how the vision can be realized. He identifies his strength as his drive, claiming that it is his enthusiasm and energy that rallies people behind him. He identifies his weakness as impatience, citing that he often fails to follow through on the day-to-day tasks. However, he also notes that knowing one's weakness is valuable in that one can better safeguard against one's weakness with the help of other people. In Dr. Hamilton's case, he works with people who are better at managing the day-to-day tasks for him.

Dr. Hamilton's leadership style incorporates qualities of three leadership approaches, styles, and theories: Leader-Member Exchange Theory, Transformational Leadership, and Servant Leadership. Dr. Hamilton practices Leader-Member Exchange Theory in that he forms a dyadic relationship with his followers (Northouse 139). He often connects with a number of his followers on a personal basis, and learns of their concerns and ambitions within the context of the organization. He also maintains an in-group and an out-group in that there are certain

individuals whom he prefers and trusts. Followers within the in-group generally become part of the in-group as a result of gaining extra roles within the organization (Northouse 138). Dr. Hamilton is also a transformational leader. He often inspires people through the use of the four I's: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. In the interview, he stressed the Idealized Influence by shaping a clear and consistent vision. He also mentioned Inspirational Motivation. For others to have faith in his abilities, he must be prepared to work harder than anybody else and setting the bar himself (Northouse 167-169). Lastly, Dr. Hamilton is a servant leader. Of the three determining factors he listed that determine whether he takes on a new project, the second factor is "helping a student." Dr. Hamilton puts followers first. In addition, he concluded the interview by saying that his hope as a leader is to make followers into leaders themselves (Northouse 234-235).

For this assignment, I intended to use the interviews as an opportunity to learn from three leaders in my life. I chose Serrae, my father, and Dr. Hamilton as my leaders because while we share similarities, we all have different approaches to leadership. My three leaders and I often share the same leadership theories although we may use the theories in different ways. Although I identified Serrae and my father to be task-orientated rather than relationship-orientated, I was surprised to discover how much thought they put into developing their followers. The two theories that were consistent throughout all three leaders and myself is Leader-Member Exchange Theory and Servant Leadership, two relationship heavy theories. I suspect that many of these similarities stem from the fact that I unconsciously adopted many of my leader's values and practices. I must have learned the idea of matching a follower's motivations to task characteristics from working under Serrae within the iWISE program. I must have learned to always maintain relational transparency from my father and our common disdain for being

misunderstood. I must have learned the concept of making followers into leaders from Dr. Hamilton during my time in the Bonner Leaders Program. Despite the similarities, I learned something unique from each interview. From Serrae, I learned that the key to leading my peers is to maintain boundaries. I can be friends with my followers, but they must recognize that in certain situations I must prioritize the task at hand. From my father, I learned that the often forgotten key to success in the field of technology is to build a community of team members. By maintaining a holding environment, followers will not be afraid to speak out about their weaknesses, concerns, or insecurities. From Dr. Hamilton, I learned that followers are motivated by a vision—one that is clear and consistent—and by the promise that that vision can become a reality. I will use this knowledge to become a better student leader. As a data team leader, I will now set clear expectations of when and to what standard followers should complete tasks. As a professional in the field of technology, I will remember to create a holding environment in which my followers will feel safe to share their insecurities. Both as a leader now and in the future, I will practice creating a clear vision and convey to my followers a way for that vision to become a reality.

Works Cited

Beede, David, Tiffany Julian, David Langdon, George McKittrick, Beethika Khan, and Mark
     Doms. "Women in STEM: A Gender Gap to Innovation." *Women in STEM: A Gender*
     Gap to Innovation (2011): n. pag. *ESA Issue Brief*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Aug.
     2011. Web. 03 Dec. 2016.
     <http://www.esa.doc.gov/sites/default/files/womeninstemagaptoinnovation8311.pdf>.

Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. 1st ed. N.p.: Scribner, 2016.
     Print.

Northouse, Peter Guy. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 7th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE
     Publications, 2015. Print.

Rampell, Catherine. "Women Falling behind in STEM Bachelor's Degrees." *The Washington*
     Post. WP Company, 27 Jan. 2015. Web. 03 Dec. 2016.
     <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2015/01/27/women-falling-behind-
     in-stem-bachelors-degrees/?utm_term=.0e442ac0f6cc>.

Williams, Joan C., and Kate Massinger. "How Women Are Harassed Out of Science." *The*
     Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, 25 July 2016. Web. 03 Dec. 2016.
     <http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/07/how-women-are-harassed-out-of-
     science/492521/>.