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Call the Stars by Name:
An Exploration of Leadership Theory and Application

I credit who I am as a leader to the infinite number of environmental and personal influences that have shaped my personality and my perspective. I have been fortunate enough to grow up in a place characterized by diversity where being surrounded by different lifestyles through all stages of life has given me an open-minded outlook. On the opposite side of the nature versus nurture coin, I have grown up in a large family where I have a younger biological sister, but also an older step-brother and a younger half-brother in addition to countless aunts, uncles and cousins. Regardless, I have an “oldest child” mentality: I can be cautious and controlling, and I am most definitely an achiever (Voo). Furthermore, I identify as an ENFP personality type. I am emotionally sensitive and receive energy from hearing other people’s stories about their passions. At the root of it all, I am a people person. While I strive to emulate the leaders I have seen get tasks done effectively, my leadership style leans more on the side of high relationship orientation. My values and behaviors as a leader stem from this people-centered frame of mind and keep my grounded.

The three institutions that have provided me with an abundance of leadership opportunities are the Episcopal Church, Camp Allen, and marching band. Throughout my time in these entities, I have managed to find myself in leadership positions because I have always

considered leadership to be an end goal in whatever organization I am in. I progress by educating myself and gaining confidence, and eventually, I put myself out there for leadership roles.

Leadership is the next step beyond being a participant, and I never want to settle for offering less of myself than I can.

While I was still in high school, members of my home church saw enough maturity and insight in me to elect me as a member of our church vestry, which operates as a steering committee for the church. I was able to observe the organizational backbone that held together our church and witness the behind-the-scenes decisions that kept our church moving ahead in a healthy direction. At Camp Allen, I was chosen to lead a high school weekend retreat where I chose the staff, planned the activities, and delegated tasks to my staff members before and during the retreat almost by myself. I had an adult advisor, but the vision for the weekend was my own. It was gratifying to have my hand in every part of the event and see everything come together in a beautiful for the participants and the staff. At the same camp, I was offered a job as a member of the Senior Staff team, which is a group of college students that live at camp all summer and lead new summer camp sessions each week. After reflecting on how much I had grown over the summer, I decided to put my name in the running for a spot on the leadership team. Fortunately, I was given a position and have spent the semester conducting interviews, selecting staff, and planning our teambuilding retreat. This opportunity has given me the chance to put together a team of capable young adults that want to carry out the vision we have set as a leadership team, and I am extremely excited to see how we all function as a group. In high school marching band, I was selected to be a section leader for two years. That experience taught me the value of being able to motivate and communicate with all different kinds of people. I was also able to explore my teaching abilities, and quickly recognized teaching is one of my strengths. The key to being a

successful teacher lies in thoughtful word choice, a skill I constantly work to refine. After being a member of the Spirit of Houston marching band for two years, I have yet again felt the call to a leadership position and have set my sights as high as the position of drum major. While I am grateful for all of the leadership opportunities I have been presented, I do not yet consider myself an accomplished leader, and I view these opportunities as chances to further myself as a leader. Being a leader is different from being in a leadership position: it is a lifelong commitment. You can learn how to be a better leader while not in a leadership position, but the position is where you get to exercise and polish what you have learned.

When I began thinking about the leaders I try to model myself after, it only made sense that I would turn to these three important aspects of my life. My peer leader comes from the activity in which most of my close peers are involved: marching band. Nathan Coronado is the president of the Beta Sigma chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, a national honorary band service fraternity. Outside of the fraternity, he is a senior music education major. Regardless of being elected as chapter president, Nathan proved himself as a leader when he guided our chapter while we were placed under investigative hold and later suspension in response to an ambiguous anonymous allegation made to our national headquarters regarding the actions of a few brothers. He was not totally instated as president when he had to assume responsibility of the situation, and I believe he handled it very well. He communicated with all the correct people in a time-efficient way and did all that he could to make sure we were informed. Once we learned about the steps we needed to take to get off suspension, he made completing those tasks top priority and kept all of us on track. Having him at the helm ensured that we became an active chapter again as soon as possible, and I can speak for the chapter when I say we are extremely grateful. The process suited him well because when asked about what type of leadership positions he

prefers, he said he excels when the situation requires immediate action. He also managed to keep the chapter calm throughout the whole process, which he notes as a necessity when he approaches challenges. Nathan is inspired by the brothers who came before him and will gauge his success by the number of people who want to step up to leadership positions in the years following his term.

Nathan's role as the president of a fraternity easily connects him with the Leader-Member Exchange theory. While he values all of his brothers, he has a different dyadic relationship with each of us. He would not treat a new brother the same way he treats a brother he has known for years. Furthermore, not all brothers serve the same role. Some brothers only show up for required service; other brothers have specific positions like vice president of membership have "expanded and negotiated role responsibilities," (Northouse, 163). These vice president and chair positions form our executive committee along with the president, secretary, parliamentarian, treasurer, and historian. According to Nathan, the purpose of the executive committee is to keep everyone up-to-date on pertinent information within each position and plan out the upcoming meeting. In this way, the fraternity is divided into an in-group and an out-group. However, the in-group is not exclusive. All executive committee meetings are open to the chapter, so anyone can be included. On a more general note, our recruitment process loosely resembles Graen and Uhl-Bien's phases of leadership making (Northouse, 166). Our prospective members start off in the stranger phase and move into the acquaintance phase as we get to know them better during the membership education process. Once they are initiated as brothers, they can be considered partners and the relationships they have established with the brothers grow stronger.

As a teenager who grew up at the same Episcopal church since before I was born, I was heavily involved with our youth group. Subsequently, I spent a lot of time with our youth minister Suzy Spencer and soon began to consider her my mentor. What I admire most about Suzy is she never stops growing as a leader, and even gives others the space to use their gifts and become leaders themselves. She learned the latter lesson when she directed a session of summer camp this year and let others take the wheel as she assumed a more laidback role. In regards to the former statement about further education, Suzy goes above and beyond what is required of her, including participating in a three-year ministry training program called Iona School that is typically reserved for priests and deacons. She has educational and career experience in management, so she possesses impressive organizational skills and views challenges as opportunities to view situations from a new perspective. When Suzy is in charge, you can rest assured that if she does not have a plan right away, the situation will still be under control. As a youth minister, she also supports and encourages members of the youth group so that they feel like they are a part of something worthwhile. Suzy classifies herself as an extreme extrovert, and uses that to her advantage. She is directive, but would never delegate a task to someone without providing the motivation and tools necessary to get the task done.

Throughout our interview, Suzy often used the word “team” when referring to her leadership style. That being said, connecting her with team leadership seemed to be a natural fit. More specifically, I likened her leadership style to Hill’s Model of Team Leadership (Northouse, 291). Suzy works diligently inside and outside our youth group to ensure that it is headed in the right direction. Internally, she works with the families of youth group members to develop a vision for the upcoming year. She says she works best when she is able to have a team working towards a common goal. She also makes sure that all activities planned for the year tie back into

the core values of the group and provide the members with a sense of fulfillment. As a faith-based organization, she makes modeling the principles of a Christian life her top priority. She promotes the youth group throughout the church well in the hopes that the members will stay committed for many years, as I did. Externally, she advocates for the youth group throughout our church community to encourage involvement and fundraising so that we can go on mission trips and provide scholarships for members in financial need. She started up a pseudo-stock market where church-goers could “invest” in the youth group as we went out and did mission work. Suzy organizes the youth group as a team, which allows her leadership style to be successful.

My aspirational leader is Drew Day, the summer camp director at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas. I had the opportunity to work under Drew as a member of the Senior Staff team over the summer and have truly been amazed by who he is as a leader. I have had fewer interactions with him compared to my other two leaders, however I have been able to observe him in a more condensed time frame, which I believe gives me a more clear idea of his leadership style. Having the ability to work under him has been a wonderful experience, but work is not Drew’s top priority. In fact, he considers his job to be 1% of his life, and the rest is comprised of his faith and his family. Being a husband to his wife and a father to his two child while also being a man of God is his number one job, and subsequently, he believes that his behavior and attitude in his personal life flows into his work life because leadership is a part of who he is. Drew describes himself as an adaptive introvert because summer camp is a place where issues are encountered with children as well as adults, and Drew must approach every situation differently and change his skillset to fit the needs of the issue. While he admits to being more task-oriented, Drew strives to be more about people, and as one of his subordinates, I can say he is doing a great job.

Before our interview, I knew that serving others was one of his core values because it shows through in his leadership style. Our interview only confirmed what I already knew: he fits the textbook definition of a servant leader. He constantly puts others first, and even said he wants the people under him to be better at their jobs than he is as his. What struck me most about his interview was that he said he views people for what he believes they can be, not who they currently are. He also works to recognize other people's gifts and piece them together in order to maximize results. I picked five of Greenleaf's 10 characteristics of servant leadership to spotlight, even though I believe he exemplifies all of them (Northouse, 221). He exhibits awareness by pointing out strengths in other people before they even know them themselves. He has foresight because he has held his position for over a decade and can predict outcomes of camp life situations accurately. He is a steward of the summer camp ministry, and more specifically, the ministry of Senior Staff. He takes responsibility of the organizations and lifts them up to achieve more. His desire for his followers to surpass him shows that he is committed to their growth. Lastly, he helps form the Senior Staff team year after year and encourages relationship development that will withstand the test of time. He demonstrates the model for servant leadership step by step: he establishes the culture (to which his followers are receptive), he displays all of the listed servant leader behaviors (such as putting followers first, behaving ethically, and creating value for the community), and the organizations produce high quality performance as a result of his leadership (Northouse, 225). Drew is an excellent role model, and as a leader, I strive to achieve the high standard he has set by lowering himself.

Leadership is nearly impossible to pin down to a single definition, so it needs to be understood on a case by case basis. However, at the root of every definition is a set of core values. I have managed to reduce my five core values to an acronym I call *PERCH*. The word

itself does not mean anything, but the acronym stands for perceptivity, enthusiasm, responsibility, confidence and honor. Perceptivity is having the insight to recognize problems even if they are not verbally expressed. It takes understanding the followers inside and out to be perceptive and know when to take action. Enthusiasm literally means to have a lively interest in something. It goes beyond positivity and crosses into the territory of passion and drive.

Responsibility is the acceptance of the duties and tasks I am charged with as a leader. I need to keep myself and my followers accountable in order to reach specific ends. Responsibility also includes taking ownership when I have made a mistake. Confidence is all about self-assurance and being comfortable in your own skin. It is the value I need to work at the most because I am prone to self-doubt. It requires the ability to act on my strengths and back off when I reach my limits. Finally, honor encompasses many values in itself. It represents respecting the dignity of my followers while holding them and myself to a high standard of integrity. It also acknowledges that as a leader, I set an example and must therefore conduct myself in an honorable manner.

These core values have provided the outline for who I want to be as a leader and more simply, as a person.

Instead of trying to summarize my leadership philosophy in a single statement, I have reduced it down to three principles with the implicit understanding that leadership is a role that requires a certain set of skills based on the field, and being a leader is a lifelong developmental process. First and foremost, capitalize on what you are given. You must play with hand you are dealt when it comes to your own personal strengths as well as your followers' gifts. Learn how to work with, not against, yourself. The same goes for your followers. When you recognize their strengths, you can utilize them in a way that is beneficial for the organization. Get to know your followers and respect them like the valuable assets they are. Secondly, be receptive and

responsive. Be prepared to be on the receiving end of issues, complaints and concerns, and look out for problems that are not explicitly clear. Once you have addressed the problem, take action in a timely and competent manner. Lastly, prioritize progress from the inside out. In other words, if you are looking to move the organization forward, start by making sure the needs of your followers are satisfied first. According to leadership expert Simon Sinek, “when a leader makes the choice to put the safety and lives of the people inside the organization first, to sacrifice their comforts and sacrifice the tangible results, so that the people remain and feel safe and feel like they belong, remarkable things happen,” (Sinek). These three guiding principles are the framework of my philosophy that I am still working to refine in my own leadership experiences.

I am currently a sophomore communications majoring studying print media journalism. The biggest relevant issue facing the journalism field in regards to leadership is the same issue faced by many industries: lack of women. According to a recent study by the Women’s Media Center, female journalists are making fewer bylines, writing fewer articles about crime or world politics (instead reporting on health and lifestyle issues), and are being outnumbered by male opinion writers. Janet Elder, an executive deputy manager at The New York Times, attributes this gap to the incompatibility between the demands of a high-ranking journalistic positions to the demands of motherhood and family life. The time commitment alone makes raising children extremely difficult (Sullivan). Though it is certainly no easy endeavor to balance work and home life, Christa Carone, chief marketing officer at Xerox, offers some advice on how to make the task more bearable. She suggests being an outstanding employee in order to rise quickly through the ranks and earn flexibility in your position. She also stresses the importance of knowing yourself and your priorities and being honest when you have reached your limit, as well as understanding the company culture and knowing when jobs are not the right fit (Carone). I am

still a student and I have years before I enter the work force and even begin considering starting a family, but I know what this generation of young women is up against. Fortunately, our attitude towards women in leadership positions is shifting towards something more accepting and more conducive of allowing women to thrive in their field.

As often as I find myself in leadership positions, I am still working towards being an established leader. The first task is learning how to effectively work with my personality. As I mentioned before, I am an ENFP, and I want to continue to explore how to use those traits to maximize my own personal success. I also want to maintain a healthy balance between organization and chaos. I want to better manage myself and find systems where I work best so my creativity can flourish and I can be excited about my work while allowing others to do the same. Lastly, I want to meet the needs of my followers in a practical way and encourage them to be leaders within their own spheres of influence. Understanding my followers on a deeper, more meaningful level is worthwhile for its own sake and also for the sake of the organization. I want to be uplifting and accommodating in a way that allows my followers to achieve their own personal goals. I want to leave a legacy that reveals itself through the people that have worked with me and under my care. I am in an exciting time in my life where leadership is becoming more than just “the next step.” I am becoming more aware of how I present myself and how I manage people. As I continue to grow, I will never stop looking to the leaders in my everyday life for guidance. Even though I am learning how to use my strengths to my advantage, I will never rely on myself alone. Leadership is a two-way street: you cannot expect to be a leader if you fail to respect your followers. I will never take for granted the leaders who have come before me and the organizations that have given me so much, and I will continue striving for the highest in all that I do.

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Interview Questions

- How do you respond to being considered a leader?
- In what types of leadership situations do you feel most effective?
- Who are some leaders you admire?
- How do you respond to challenges that arise while in leadership positions? Out of leadership positions?
- What techniques do you try to employ when leading?
- How do you view the relationship between leader and follower?
- How do you gauge your success as a leader?
- Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert?
- Describe a time when you had to adapt your default leadership style to match the situation
- What has lead you to positions of leadership?
- Would you say you're more task oriented or relationship oriented?
- What inspires you to become a better leader? How do you go about improving yourself?
- How would you describe your leadership style "in a tweet"?
- What attributes do you value in your followers?
- How would you say other people describe you or have described you in the past?
- How does your personality outside of leadership roles differ from in leadership roles?