

SOS POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MBA POL.SC. 401

SUBJECT NAME: ADMINISTRATIVE THEORY

UNIT-IV

TOPIC NAME: THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Great Man Theory (1840s)

The Great Man theory evolved around the mid 19th century. Even though no one was able to identify with any scientific certainty, which human characteristic or combination of, were responsible for identifying great leaders. Everyone recognized that just as the name suggests; only a man could have the characteristic (s) of a great leader.

The Great Man theory assumes that the traits of leadership are intrinsic. That simply means that great leaders are born...they are not made. This theory sees great leaders as those who are destined by birth to become a leader. Furthermore, the belief was that great leaders will rise when confronted with the appropriate situation. The theory was popularized by **Thomas Carlyle**, a writer and teacher. Just like him, **the Great Man theory** was inspired by the study of influential heroes. In his book "**On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History**", he compared a wide array of heroes.

In 1860, Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher disputed the great man theory by affirming that these heroes are simply the product of their times and their actions the results of social conditions.

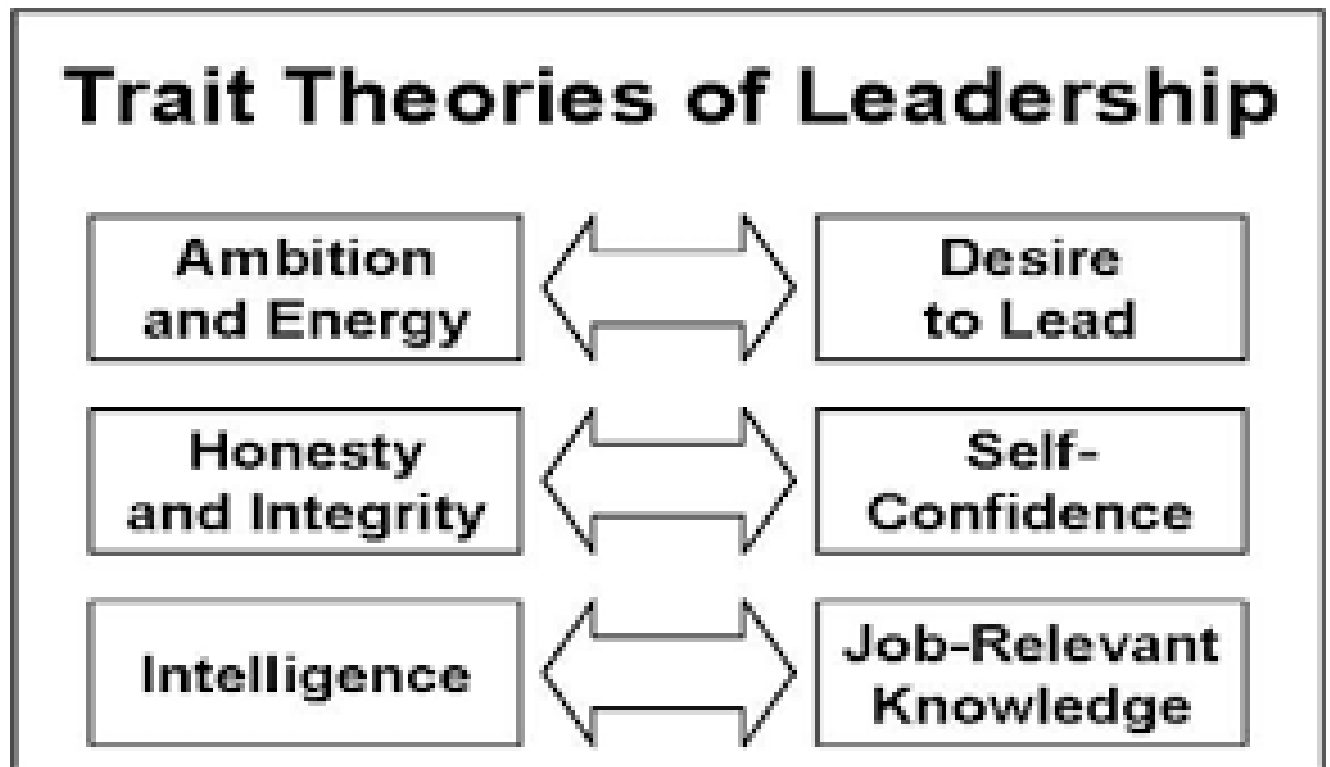
Leaders were identified by their acts and accomplishments. **Alexander** the Great conquered the known world. **Genghis Khan** then ravaged most of it. **Abraham Lincoln** freed the slaves. **Harriet Tubman** saved hundreds from slavery in the Underground Railroad. **Mother Theresa**

aided and comforted thousands in Calcutta who were abandoned by society. The theory is that these people accomplished great things because fate determined they were great people and they were simply fulfilling their destiny. Eventually the **Great Man Theory** was abandoned in favor of the theories based on behavioral science.

Trait Theory (1930's - 1940's)

The trait leadership theory believes that people are either born or are made with certain qualities that will make them excel in leadership roles. That is, certain qualities such as intelligence, sense of responsibility, creativity and other values puts anyone in the shoes of a good leader. In fact, **Gordon Allport**, an American psychologist, "...identified almost 18,000 English personality-relevant terms" (**Matthews, Deary & Whiteman, 2003**).

The trait theory of leadership focused on analyzing mental, physical and social characteristic in order to gain more understanding of what is the characteristic or the combination of characteristics that are common among leaders.



Leaders inherit certain leadership qualities and traits that make them stand out from the crowd. These leadership abilities propel them to leadership status. The trait theory focuses on these personality traits. For instance, commitment, integrity and confidence are characteristics that are usually associated with a great leader.

By linking certain qualities with leadership, you are literally limiting its scope. What about people who possess these qualities but are not leaders. On the other hand, there are many examples of leaders who don't possess these qualities but still lead the team well. Ronald Reagan summed it up brilliantly when he said, **“The greatest leader is not one who does greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do greatest things.”**

There were many shortfalls with the trait leadership theory. However, from a psychology of personalities approach, **Gordon Allport's** studies are among the first ones and have brought, for the study of leadership, the behavioural approach.

- In the 1930s the field of Psychometrics was in its early years.
- Personality traits measurement weren't reliable across studies.
- Study samples were of low level managers
- Explanations weren't offered as to the relation between each characteristic and its impact on leadership.
- The context of the leader wasn't considered.

Many studies have analyzed the traits among existing leaders in the hope of uncovering those responsible for ones leadership abilities! In vain, the only characteristics that were identified among these individuals were those that were slightly taller and slightly more intelligent!

There are wide varieties of leadership qualities and characteristics. Santa Clara University and the Tom Peters Group outlined the following leadership characteristics:

Honesty — Display sincerity, integrity, and candor in all your actions. Deceptive behavior will not inspire trust.

Competent — Base your actions on reason and moral principles. Do not make decisions based on childlike emotional desires or feelings.

Forward-looking — Set goals and have a vision of the future. The vision must be owned throughout the organization. Effective leaders envision what they want and how to get it. They habitually pick priorities stemming from their basic values.

Inspiring — Display confidence in all that you do. By showing endurance in mental, physical, and spiritual stamina, you will inspire others to reach for new heights. Take charge when necessary.

Intelligent — Read, study, and seek challenging assignments.

Fair-minded — Show fair treatment to all people. Prejudice is the enemy of justice. Display empathy by being sensitive to the feelings, values, interests, and well-being of others.

Broad-minded — Seek out diversity.

Courageous — Have the perseverance to accomplish a goal, regardless of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Display a confident calmness when under stress.

Straightforward — Use sound judgment to make a good decisions at the right time.

Imaginative — Make timely and appropriate changes in your thinking, plans, and methods. Show creativity by thinking of new and better goals, ideas, and solutions to problems. Be innovative!

Behavioural Theories (1940's - 1950's)

In reaction to the trait leadership theory, the behavioural theories are offering a new perspective, one that focuses on the behaviours of the leaders as opposed to their mental, physical or social

characteristics. Thus, with the evolutions in psychometrics, notably the factor analysis, researchers were able to measure the cause and effects relationship of specific human behaviours from leaders. From this point forward anyone with the right conditioning could have access to the once before elite club of naturally gifted leaders. In other words, leaders are made not born.

The behavioural theories first divided leaders in two categories. Those that were concerned with the tasks and those concerned with the people. Throughout the literature these are referred to as different names, but the essence are identical.

Contingency Theories (1960's)

The Contingency Leadership theory argues that there is no single way of leading and that every leadership style should be based on certain situations, which signifies that there are certain people who perform at the maximum level in certain places; but at minimal performance when taken out of their element.

To a certain extent contingency leadership theories are an extension of the trait theory, in the sense that human traits are related to the situation in which the leaders exercise their leadership. It is generally accepted within the contingency theories that leaders are more likely to express their leadership when they feel that their followers will be responsive.

According to leadership experts **White and Hodgson**, “**Effective leadership is about striking the right balance between needs, context and behavior.**” Great leaders focus on the needs of the followers, analyze the situation and tweak their behavior accordingly. Success in leadership hinges on multiple factors such as leadership style, relationship with followers and the situation.

Transformational Leadership Theories (1970s)

The concepts of transformational leadership were brought to prominence by political sociologist **James MacGregor Burns**, in the late 1970s. Burns identified two types of leadership,

Transactional: where a leader influences others by what they offer in exchange, the transaction;

Transformational: where a leader connects with followers in such a way that it raises the level of motivation and morality.

Those two words – **motivation and morality** – are important, as it demands that transformational leaders be committed to a collective good. This may be a societal good, such as starting a community center or improving air quality, or a more personalized good, such as helping direct reports reach their own potential.

Transactional theories, also known as exchange theories of leadership, are characterized by a transaction made between the leader and the followers. In fact, the theory values a positive and mutually beneficial relationship.

For the transactional theories to be effective and as a result have motivational value, the leader must find a means to align to adequately reward (or punish) his follower, for performing leader-assigned task. In other words, transactional leaders are most efficient when they develop a mutual reinforcing environment, for which the individual and the organizational goals are in sync.

The transactional theorists state that humans in general are seeking to maximize pleasurable experiences and to diminish un-pleasurable experiences. Thus, we are more likely to associate ourselves with individuals that add to our strengths.

The Transformational Leadership theory states that this process is by which a person interacts with others and is able to create a solid relationship that results in a high percentage of trust, that will later result in an increase of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, in both leaders and followers.

The essence of transformational theories is that leaders transform their followers through their inspirational nature and charismatic personalities. Rules and regulations are flexible, guided by group norms. These attributes provide a sense of belonging for the followers as they can easily identify with the leader and its purpose.

