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### Title

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTROVERSION AND TEAM LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTROVERSION AND TEAM  
LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to inform introverted individuals on how they can best lead a team of people. Leadership is often viewed as an individual who has the potential to influence, inspire, and integrate effective tasks onto their followers so that a goal can be met. Introverted people have the ability to adjust into an extroverted world so that they can properly execute the big roles on a team or at a job (“The Hidden”, 2010). Extroverts are often seen as more effective leaders because of their qualities of being outspoken and bold (Praet, 2018). This essay will reveal the situations in which introverts will be the best choice to have as a leader. The literature review will clearly emphasize the characteristics and personality traits an introvert has and how they have to adapt to be an effective and successful leader. Introverted people are ideal as a leader in a group of driven and self-motivated employees (“The Hidden, 2010”). Being a leader for an organization means having to oversee the entire business, having to speak in front of others, and not being afraid to stand up for yourself and the people you represent. By conducting interviews, reviewing relevant literature, and relying on some personal experience, this essay will help introverts feel more confident taking on the role of leader and help inform them regarding the work that must be done to accomplish their goals.

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## **Introduction**

Ever since I can remember, I was always told “You’re so quiet” or “Why aren’t you talking?” and this eventually led to me questioning aspects about myself as well. As I grew older, I noticed that I was very reserved, I only felt comfortable talking to people I know, and I was never the one to raise my hand in front of the class. I started asking myself why could I not be bold, loud, brave, or outspoken? I have always wanted to know the feeling of having confidence like these same people who are outspoken and bold. I have also always had the urge to be a leader whether it was in a school game or in a class project. I enjoy being under pressure and know how to manage difficult situations. It is the courage and confidence that I lacked in order to truly showcase my full potential as a leader, and this is something I have learned as an adult and over time. After so many years of feeling like my qualities were not a valued aspect of leadership, I have come to realize and learn that the unique qualities that others viewed as negative are actually my strengths; and the term to describe one very specific aspect of my personality is introversion.

An introvert is defined as a person who is shy or reserved (“Introvert”, 2022). It can also be said that an introvert is a person who regains their energy by being alone whereas an extrovert is a person who can regain their energy by being in a group of people. Introverted people enjoy time by themselves and usually will not be the first one to talk or present themselves in front of an audience. With this said, though I have many of these introverted characteristics, I have also always enjoyed leadership in any form that it came with. It can be having a leadership position in school or simply being the ‘leader’ or ‘one in charge’ of all of my little cousins. I looked forward to being in that position. It is quite odd that I have both of these qualities, yet I never knew how it can affect my effectiveness as a leader. With all of these characteristics, you would probably

think that introverts are not the best fit to be a leader because a leader must be bold, brave, and not afraid to speak in front of others. In fact, “In studies, extroversion is consistently ranked as the most important trait a leader can have” (The Hustle). Most often, introverted people are not categorized as leaders nor would someone assume that their leader is an introvert. But as I have come to realize, introverts like myself can definitely be successful and effective leaders.

### **What is a leader?**

There are leaders in many, if not all, situations. There will always be that person who immediately takes initiative and is not afraid to start leading the group towards a common goal. A leader is needed in all situations in order for the end goal and the steps leading up to it are met. A leader can be someone that you look up to, someone who inspires you, someone that you respect, and someone who wants and does the best for you. A leader must communicate and negotiate with several people multiple times throughout their day in order for an organization to run smoothly. A leader does not only negotiate finances, but also connections with other organizations in order to make the best decision possible. When there is a problem or issue, the leader must immediately step in and solve the issue in a timely manner. In a situation where there is no leader, employees are confused, none of the work gets done, and overall the project or assignment fails. Yet, society tells us that a leader is someone who is “motivated by power, energetic, male, tall, facially mature, and perceived as intelligent” (Hogan). These are mostly extroverted characteristics with the exception of being a male and tall. Males have always been seen as more powerful or in other words leaders of the group. It has been shown that though you may have all of these characteristics, this does not prove that you can lead your team to success (Hogan).

Some of the basic qualities a leader must possess are being communicative, respectful, brave and compassionate. As a leader, you have many people looking up to you and trusting you that if they ever need something you are willing to step up and assist them. A leader must be brave enough to deliver both good and bad news to their employees. Unfortunately, there will always be disappointing information to deliver, and as a leader you must be able to deliver it with compassion. With that said, a leader must be compassionate and humble. People do not want to admire someone who is pretentious or who is always bragging about how great they are. Personally, I admire those who remain humble, respect those around them no matter their position in the organization, and those who have perseverance. Another characteristic a good leader should have is to be understanding. As a leader, you should understand where your followers are coming from. They will not have the same experience and knowledge as you do. It is your responsibility to understand them and be patient with them in order for them to grow and learn.

Not all leaders are good leaders, though. I have explained what a good leader should be like, now let us discuss what a bad leader does. A bad leader will be confused about the project and its end goal. It is up to the leader to know exactly what needs to be done. Leaders determine the end goals and objectives of the project, and in the condition that the leader does not have these answers, neither will the team. Not having clear and constant communication will lead the team and overall project to failure. If the team is confused, the project will not get completed. Most often, you do not get to choose who your leader is, which is why having a good relationship with them is important, but listening and giving feedback is even more important so that they get to know you as an employee and you get to know their leadership style.



## **Introverts as Leaders**

What I have come to find out is that a person who tends to be more quiet and shy can still, in fact, be an effective leader. It all depends on the situation they are put in and with what type of employees they are working with. Some situations call for more extroverted people to lead the team. This can mainly be during projects that call for constant hands-on help from managers or constant reminders on what the task for the day is. Extroverted people will enjoy and be their best when they are around other people. An extroverted leader would fit best in this situation because they already have those loud and bold qualities. If the team needs help with the project, an extroverted person will easily be able to step in and assist.

On the other hand, introverted leaders fit best in a project where not much assistance is needed directly from the leader. Some projects and employees work best when they are told what their responsibilities are. They will only come to their leader when there is an issue or when the task is completely done. Just because a leader is not always checking up on their team members or is not directly involved in the project, this does not make them a bad leader. These types of situations and projects are the perfect fit for an introverted person.

There are situations and jobs that are not as simple as assigning one project to a team and leaving them alone or staying on top of them. Most often, top leaders will have to manage multiple teams at once or manage the leaders who are in charge of specific teams. In this case, neither an extrovert nor an introvert is better for this situation. What I will say is that an extrovert may find this a bit easier to accomplish and can immediately jump into their job. An introvert will take time to adjust, feel the surroundings, and finally find the confidence within themselves to be able to take on the job at their full potential. “Recently, researchers analyzed a database of 17k executives and found that, while a charismatic person was more than 2x as likely to be hired

as a CEO, this didn't correlate with a better performance once they were hired. In the same study, introverted leaders far outperformed expectations. While introverted leaders aren't as outwardly bubbly as extroverted leaders, they are more attuned to emotional cues and sensory details" and this proves to us that introverts can be leaders (The Hustle, 2021). Because an introvert pays attention to specific details, they will stand out more in those situations rather than an extrovert.

## **Experiences**

### *Personal Experience*

I have always known that I possess the basic leadership skills. Throughout my school career I was able to showcase these skills according to the situation. Each year I learned something new and grew in those skills while gaining experience. As I continue to grow and pursue higher education, I am also trying to figure out what my purpose in life is and learn who I am as a leader every day. I have already mentioned that I struggled understanding how myself, an introvert, yet also a leader, was able to balance these qualities and surprisingly enjoy it as well. From past leadership experiences and with the help of higher education, I have learned a few things that have helped me become a better leader and figure out in which situations I feel most comfortable in. As Atamanik says, "If there is a poor fit between a manager's personality and their work environment they may feel less satisfied, less engaged and less productive" leading to poor leadership (Atamanik). This is why it is important to allow introverts to take their time to feel out the environment so that they get comfortable. With that said, as a leader, you must also be aware of the situations you are getting yourself into.

### Summer Internship

During the summer of 2022, I took on a management position internship at a retail store. My role was to learn all the basic duties of a store manager including any type of paperwork that

needs to be completed as a manager. Going into it, I felt confident and excited about finally getting a position in management which is the career I want to do long term. I told myself I would listen, learn, and apply any past and new knowledge that I receive. I took the first few days to learn all of the basic duties of a manager on a day to day basis. Because I am such an introverted person, I naturally wanted employees to come up to me to introduce themselves. This is what I am used to from school and other jobs that I have had. I quickly came to realize that these other employees did not feel the need to introduce themselves because they were confused about my role at the store. They knew nothing about me, what my experience was, how long I was staying, and so forth. I took the initiative because I felt like this is what a good manager should do and introduced myself to the employees. I completed this by walking up to them and saying “Hi, my name is Samantha, I don’t think we’ve met yet.” I would then go on to ask about their role and start a conversation with them. I also explained what I was doing in their store as well so that we were both on the same page. Though this is not something I would normally do, I knew that as a manager, this was a good start in order to connect with my employees. I was forced to step out of my comfort zone and it made me feel uncomfortable at times. What I have come to learn is that this is not a bad thing, rather it made me grow as a person and I saw how this small initiative changed the attitude in a positive way between me and the other employees.

One major setback and issue I constantly ran into is feeling uncomfortable and out of place to tell my employees what to do. I felt bad because I never want to come off as being a dictator. In other words, I do not want to be harsh, be strict, or be rude. I always try to be positive and happy all the time so that I spread that type of energy into the workplace. I want people to have a good sense of my character so that when I have a job to do, they know where I’m coming from. I truly believe that the main issue here is that I did not feel comfortable telling other

employees what to do when they probably have more experience than me and know the store better than I do. It felt wrong to do and it took me quite a while to realize that I got this position for a reason and I am capable of my duties. I doubted myself for a long time and I can say that it affected my performance. So, what I have learned from this and what I have come to realize is that confidence is key. I need to feel confident in my responsibilities no matter my age or my experience compared to others. As an introvert, confidence in my work is something that I lack because I often compare my work with others. I do not like to speak up and ask for help. I would rather stay quiet and just accept internally what I am capable of. In terms of being a leader, this is not going to lead me to success. I must be bold and brave so that my employees know who I am and they know my character. At the end of the day, it is my job that I am trying to execute and I need to make sure that my boss or my leader is satisfied with my work. “Introverts are more influenced by punishments than by rewards, and they are more sensitive than extraverts to social prohibitions” and I see this in my work (Lockhart). I am more concerned that I will do something wrong and get punished for it than actually worried about the outcome. Yet, this pushes me to do my best so that there are no punishments. As for confidence, I need to remind myself that it is okay to make mistakes and to not know it all. This does not mean I am not able to fulfill my duties nor does it mean I am not qualified as a leader. This is something that I am currently working on so that it does not affect any future leadership position that I may pursue.

During my time here at the internship, there was another intern who had the same role as I did. We both had the same responsibilities as for leadership, but he was assigned to a different department than I was. We would start our shift together by reading emails and checking where the store was in terms of numbers, but eventually we each stayed in our own department. This intern, Jose, had the exact opposite personality than me. He was loud, very social with everyone,

confident, and he did not struggle with fitting in. The other employees knew him by the end of the first week and I could tell immediately he was definitely an extrovert. This made my experience that much harder because I really had to work hard to put myself out there to talk to others. In my head, I constantly compare myself to him and wondered why it did not come easy for me. Jose has been with the company for over two years now so he knows all of the logistics and has knowledge in each department. It was not fair to compare myself because we have different experiences and different personalities. Nonetheless, from an outside perspective, you can see the major difference in personality between the both of us. This is where I worry because as an employer, first impressions are crucial. If I can not come off as confident and talkative as they want, they will not offer me the job. Jose got offered a position once he graduated to come back and be a full time manager. I, on the other hand, did not get that offer. My boss recommended that I just put myself out there a little more and work on being able to talk to other people comfortably. In this situation, my shyness got in the way of my future. With that said, I learned a lot from this experience and I can already notice a difference in my leadership style in terms of being introverted. I cannot wait to see how else I will evolve and what else I can learn.

### Organization President

In the month of May of 2022, I officially started my role and position as a president of this organization on my college campus called Mujeres Unidas. We are an organization that talks about the struggles of Latina women in higher education, but our main focus is uplifting women overall. I knew I was capable of taking on this role, but I was worried that my shy, introverted side would show too much. Taking on this role meant being the face and committing to making the best decisions for this organization. This was a lot of pressure, but a lot of people believed in

me. Many people told me that they wanted me to be the next president and reminded me that I was the perfect fit for this position. So now comes June when the real work gets started.

The first obstacle I had to overcome which interfered with my effectiveness as a president was realizing people are now looking up to me for guidance and will follow my steps. When members walked up to me to ask questions, I had to quickly realize that I am their go-to person and I have to be ready to talk to multiple people throughout the day. Being an introvert, I really enjoy my space and my alone time. When I get too overwhelmed, it is usually because there are too many people around or I just need a social break. While this is still okay and normal, as a president or a leader, you will be recognized everywhere on campus. There will be people who come up to me to ask about our next meeting, our fundraiser, etc. Even if I do not feel like talking, I have to put that aside and have my game face ready. This comes with the responsibility of being a leader.

Though it has only been a few months, something else that I have noticed is that I tend to get shy around people I am not comfortable with. Though this may seem normal to most people, when you are in a group of new members trying to get more information on Mujeres Unidas, staying silent is not okay, especially when you are the face of the organization. People are waiting for you to speak up, start a conversation, and overall your energy will really reflect on the organization. Positive and loud energy will be immediately noticed. This is something I am still working on which is basically making sure that I am always ready to speak up whenever someone else cannot. Another thing that can help me with this issue is to remain calm and remind myself to not get nervous when others are around. I can forget that we are all human and make mistakes, and even a leader is not perfect.

## Other's Experiences

For this next part, I interviewed my high school friend who categorizes herself as an introvert. Based on the definition given earlier, I would agree that she is an introvert. Jessica has held leadership roles, but her biggest and longest role has been being a big sister to four younger sisters. I asked Jessica to explain how being introverted has helped or hurt her leadership roles and skills.

“From a young age, being introverted has shown to help me with my success instead of limiting me. Something that has always been sought after in students is the ability to listen and do work in a non disruptive, efficient manner. Those who were able to do it were seen and set as examples for the rest of the class to follow. Interconnected with this is the position placed on an introverted student to ensure they are meeting the standards of what it takes to be seen as a leader by peers. This carries on in various extracurriculars, at home and in the workplace. Under various circumstances the ability to lead has come up and a combination of skills has allowed me to excel in these situations without being limited by my introverted personality.

“In my household, education holds high value, and when it was seen that I was succeeding in school, there were responsibilities placed on me due to the fact that I had a strong sense of leadership. Once again I was placed as the example, this time to my younger siblings and helping lead them has allowed me to exercise these skills in my everyday adult life. In this circumstance, I had to ensure I spoke out and had my voice heard and understood in an authoritative way. This was more difficult for me since it is something I don't usually do. This is what created the foundation for me to slowly begin to push myself and enforce the leadership quality I had all along.

“ At work I am patient, I get my work done efficiently, and I build strong connections with those around me to ensure my workplace is comfortable for who I am as a person. I work at Joann’s, a fabric and craft store.. Because I work in a more relaxed environment, my introverted personality is showcased and appreciated by others. I am allowed to not be so upbeat all the time and our customers tend to be creative and chill people. I can get along easily with customers so I don’t tend to be shy with them. At the end of the day, I think my introverted qualities have helped me succeed in the workplace” (Jessica Verduzco).

This comes to show that introverted people are, in fact, able and willing to be a leader. There are different situations that may be better for introverted people, but if you really want to push yourself and go outside of your comfort zone in order to achieve your dreams as a leader, it is very possible.

### **Literature Review**

People will thrive in certain situations based on the circumstances. This goes for both introverted and extroverted people. “The Hidden Advantages of Quiet Bosses” discusses the advantages and disadvantages in which an introvert and extrovert are in when it comes to situations. The article explains that an introvert will succeed in a group full of people who are motivated and do not need to be reminded what to do. As an introvert, they know how to listen and pay attention to detail. Because of this, they will listen to what their employees or followers need and do just that (“The Hidden”). On the other hand, extroverted people succeed best when their employees need a little extra push or just need more help on a project. They enjoy being in the room with others and being able to stand out is what they do best. The article mentions that if an extroverted leader is paired with too many non-proactive employees, they may butt heads because they are fighting for attention. If there are too many loud and empowering voices in one



room, one may get heard more than another. For example, if the leader is trying to show their employees how to do a certain task and there is another extroverted person in the room, they may want to join in and add their personal opinion. I'm not saying that adding insight and voicing your own opinions is a bad thing, but it can certainly get overwhelming and people will get lost in the background.

In this article, "Leadership Reflections: Extrovert and Introvert Leaders.," the author focuses on more of a bigger picture as far as realizing the needs of an organization. A leader should be placed in a position where they are best fitted, but at the same time the organization must see where they need the most assistance. The leader should fit the organization. A leader should know their leadership style and preferences so that when an organization is ready to hire or recruit, they know where they fit best. This article, similar to the last, emphasizes the importance of situations and how leaders should be placed for the betterment of the overall organization ("Leadership").

The article, "The Failure of Introverts to Emerge as Leaders: The Role of Forecasted Affect." *Personality and Individual Differences*, in summary, researches the idea that introverts do not emerge as leaders because of the fact that they overestimate how 'bad' it is to act as an extrovert. This reminds me of an article I have read previously which states that introverted people have the capability to act extroverted. Although they do not want to or will not do it on their own, they definitely have the ability to do so. This article does a study on introverted people and they concluded that introverts can develop ways to make things enjoyable. The reason they fail to emerge as leaders is because they believe the situation will be unenjoyable (Spark).

Introverts are making assumptions about situations that they have not even been in yet. As an introvert, you will shut down opportunities such as public speaking, career fairs, etc

because of the fear of meeting and talking to new people. But, if you have never practiced or tried public speaking, you will not know that you are not exceptional in it. From personal experience, I would never be the one to volunteer to speak in front of a room full of people, but as I have come to find out, I am actually very persuasive and do not get as nervous as I thought I would. Just because an introvert believes they will not like something does not mean they will not because they have not tried it. Introverted people jump to conclusions which stops them from taking on opportunities.

### **How to Break the Shell**

Throughout the years of leadership experience that I have, I have learned each year something new about myself. I have learned to surround myself with people who are always looking for something better, people who have goals, and with people who will encourage me to be my best. I have realized that it has come down to those three things. Though my introverted qualities will always be within me, as long as I have a good support system and I have confidence, then I am able to reach my goals. I am very fortunate to have parents that care about me, support me physically, emotionally, and financially and I will forever be grateful for that. They taught me how to be independent from such a young age because I was in charge of doing my own homework, getting myself ready for the next day of school, and so forth. They taught me how to be responsible because they showed me the consequences of when I slack off for a bit. I am respectful towards others because my parents taught me the importance of that. These are all leadership qualities that eventually evolved me to the person I am today. This is why I say to surround yourself with positive people. My group of friends were always the people in my Honors classes. We went through high school together and eventually all helped each other apply for college. These were friends that had similar goals as I did.

As for confidence, this comes with time. There will be good days and bad days, but as far as leadership goes, always be positive and always believe in yourself when you are in that position. As I've connected confidence with introvertedness, I have come to realize that they can be intertwined. Introverts tend to not have the same confidence as others because they don't have the courage to speak up or ask for help. When one has confidence it is because they have full knowledge and information on a particular subject. They feel comfortable speaking on behalf of the situation. Introverted leaders may tend to shy away from situations or topics they are not familiar with. This is why having people who will encourage you to be your best is helpful because you always get a constant reminder to why you wanted to be a leader in the first place. These are the type of people who will push you to apply for the job, push you to do something that may be uncomfortable but you know it is good, and will always be there as you are accomplishing all of your dreams.

### **Future Plans**

As I have mentioned, leadership is something that I have known I have always wanted to do. I would say that I was born to be a leader and I was able to notice from such a young age that I enjoy it. It was my introverted side that got in the way of my leadership abilities. In elementary school I always wanted to be the 'line leader' and I enjoyed being the leader in my group project. In middle school, as I matured and started my teenage years, I got more shy and timid to be around people. As my introverted qualities developed, my desire to be a leader sort of shut down because I did not know how to handle my emotions or how to navigate it. In tenth and eleventh grade I became interested in becoming more involved in my high school. I was a part of the Associated Student Body for two years and joined the Yearbook class for two years as well. Being introverted still got in the way during these years because I always wanted to take on a

vice president or president role, but I was too shy and not confident enough to do it. In college is where my desire and belief in myself came back. As I met friends, became more involved, excelled in classes, and so forth I am now doing what I love and am meant to do.

As I finish up college and continue to pursue another degree, my dream goal is to have my own business one day, more specifically my own brand. Makeup is another one of my passions because of the creativity, confidence, and expression that it allows me and others to accomplish every day. If one day I can be the CEO of my own makeup brand, I will have fulfilled my dreams and my younger self would be so proud. In order to reach my goals, I will be having several long meetings with other people where I am forced to be social, I will be put on the spot, I will be a speaker in a room full of people staring at me, and so much more. I will surround myself with other leaders and entrepreneurs that I look up to in order to better myself.

## **Conclusion**

After having these certain experiences in my life and as I learn more and more as I get older, I come to realize that my introverted personality has made me who I am today. Though I have had to push myself more than ever, it got me to where I am today and I really believe that I am going on the right path to succeed in my dreams. The purpose of this thesis was to inspire and motivate other introverted high achievers to not give up. Our shyness, quietness, and reserved personality will try to get in the way of our success, but we find a way to overcome it. It is our perseverance that will get us through the hard times of doubting ourselves.

A leader can be anyone that you trust, that you look up to, that motivates you, and so on. My mom is my leader and role model. She is someone who wants to see me succeed, wants to see me accomplish my dreams, and will be there to push me. My mom does not give up on me even during the hardest times. I aspire to be like my mom one day. I would love to be the leader

she has been to my brothers and I to my future kids. I have leaders all around me that I learn from.

It is important to have a leader in your life. They can be in your family, at your work, or in your personal life. Whether they are introverted or extroverted, it is important to make sure they are leaving a positive impact on your life. Being a leader is really all I have wanted to do for my entire life. I enjoy when I can help others and share my knowledge and be able to pass it down. It lets me know that I am doing okay and I am making the most out of this life. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for me, and I can not wait to be such an amazing leader like those around me.

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