

Trait Approach

2

DESCRIPTION

Of interest to scholars throughout the 20th century, the trait approach was one of the first systematic attempts to study leadership. In the early 20th century, leadership traits were studied to determine what made certain people great leaders. The theories that were developed were called “great man” theories because they focused on identifying the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders (e.g., Catherine the Great, Mohandas Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Joan of Arc, and Napoleon Bonaparte). It was believed that people were born with these traits, and that only the “great” people possessed them. During this time, research concentrated on determining the specific traits that clearly differentiated leaders from followers (Bass, 2008; Jago, 1982).

In the mid-20th century, the trait approach was challenged by research that questioned the universality of leadership traits. In a major review, Stogdill (1948) suggested that no consistent set of traits differentiated leaders from nonleaders across a variety of situations. An individual with leadership traits who was a leader in one situation might not be a leader in another situation. Rather than being a quality that individuals possess, leadership was reconceptualized as a relationship between people in a social situation. Personal factors related to leadership continued to be important, but researchers contended that these factors were to be considered as relative to the requirements of the situation.

The trait approach has generated much interest among researchers for its explanation of how traits influence leadership (Bryman, 1992). For example, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) went so far as to claim that effective leaders are actually distinct types of people. Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986) found that traits were strongly associated with individuals’ perceptions of leadership. More recently, Dinh and Lord (2012) examined the relationship between leadership effectiveness and followers’ perception of leadership traits.

The trait approach has earned new interest through the current emphasis given by many researchers to visionary and charismatic leadership (see Bass, 2008; Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015; Nadler & Tushman, 2012; Zaccaro, 2007; Zaleznik, 1977). Charismatic leadership catapulted to the forefront of public attention with the 2008 election of the United States' first African American president, Barack Obama, who is perceived by many to be charismatic, among many other attributes. In a study to determine what distinguishes charismatic leaders from others, Jung and Sosik (2006) found that charismatic leaders consistently possess traits of self-monitoring, engagement in impression management, motivation to attain social power, and motivation to attain self-actualization. In short, the trait approach is alive and well. It began with an emphasis on identifying the qualities of great persons, shifted to include the impact of situations on leadership, and, currently, has shifted back to reemphasize the critical role of traits in effective leadership.

When discussing the trait approach, it is important to define what is meant by traits. Traits refer to a set of distinctive characteristics, qualities, or attributes that describe a person. They are inherent and relatively unchanging over time. Taken together, traits are the internal factors that comprise our personality and make us unique. Because traits are derived from our personality and are fundamentally fixed, this chapter will not emphasize how people can use this approach to develop or change their leadership. Instead, the focus of the chapter will be on identifying leaders' traits and overall role of traits in leadership.

While research on traits spanned the entire 20th century, a good overview of the approach is found in two surveys completed by Stogdill (1948, 1974). In his first survey, Stogdill analyzed and synthesized more than 124 trait studies conducted between 1904 and 1947. In his second study, he analyzed another 163 studies completed between 1948 and 1970. By taking a closer look at each of these reviews, we can obtain a clearer picture of how individuals' traits contribute to the leadership process.

Stogdill's first survey identified a group of important leadership traits that were related to how individuals in various groups became leaders. His results showed that an average individual in a leadership role is different from an average group member with regard to the following eight traits: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability.

The findings of Stogdill's first survey also indicated that an individual does not become a leader solely because that individual possesses certain traits. Rather, the traits that leaders possess must be relevant to situations in which the leader is functioning. As stated earlier, leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in another situation. Findings showed that leadership was not a passive state but resulted from a working relationship between the leader and other group members. This research marked the beginning of a

new approach to leadership research that focused on leadership behaviors and leadership situations.

Stogdill's second survey, published in 1974, analyzed 163 new studies and compared the findings of these studies to the findings he had reported in his first survey. The second survey was more balanced in its description of the role of traits and leadership. Whereas the first survey implied that leadership is determined principally by situational factors and not traits, the second survey argued more moderately that both traits and situational factors were determinants of leadership. In essence, the second survey validated the original trait idea that a leader's characteristics are indeed a part of leadership.

Similar to the first survey, Stogdill's second survey identified traits that were positively associated with leadership. The list included the following 10 characteristics:

1. Drive for responsibility and task completion
2. Vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals
3. Risk-taking and originality in problem solving
4. Drive to exercise initiative in social situations
5. Self-confidence and sense of personal identity
6. Willingness to accept consequences of decision and action
7. Readiness to absorb interpersonal stress
8. Willingness to tolerate frustration and delay
9. Ability to influence other people's behavior
10. Capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand

Mann (1959) conducted a similar study that examined more than 1,400 findings regarding traits and leadership in small groups, but he placed less emphasis on how situational factors influenced leadership. Although tentative in his conclusions, Mann suggested that certain traits could be used to distinguish leaders from nonleaders. His results identified leaders as strong in the following six traits: intelligence, masculinity, adjustment, dominance, extraversion, and conservatism.

Lord et al. (1986) reassessed Mann's (1959) findings using a more sophisticated procedure called meta-analysis and found that intelligence, masculinity, and dominance were significantly related to how individuals perceived leaders.

From their findings, the authors argued strongly that traits could be used to make discriminations consistently across situations between leaders and nonleaders.

Both of these studies were conducted during periods in American history where male leadership was prevalent in most aspects of business and society. In Chapter 15, we explore more contemporary research regarding the role of gender in leadership, and we look at whether traits such as masculinity and dominance still bear out as important factors in distinguishing between leaders and nonleaders.

Yet another review argued for the importance of leadership traits: Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991, p. 59) contended that “it is unequivocally clear that leaders are not like other people.” From a qualitative synthesis of earlier research, Kirkpatrick and Locke postulated that leaders differ from nonleaders on six traits: drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge. According to these writers, individuals can be born with these traits, they can learn them, or both. It is these six traits that make up the “right stuff” for leaders. Kirkpatrick and Locke asserted that leadership traits make some people different from others, and this difference should be recognized as an important part of the leadership process.

In the 1990s, researchers began to investigate the leadership traits associated with “social intelligence,” which is characterized as the ability to understand one’s own and others’ feelings, behaviors, and thoughts and act appropriately (Marlowe, 1986). Zaccaro (2002) defined social intelligence as having such capacities as social awareness, social acumen, self-monitoring, and the ability to select and enact the best response given the contingencies of the situation and social environment. A number of empirical studies showed these capacities to be a key trait for effective leaders. Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2017) included such social abilities in the categories of leadership traits they outlined as important leadership attributes (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the traits and characteristics that were identified by researchers from the trait approach. It illustrates clearly the breadth of traits related to leadership. Table 2.1 also shows how difficult it is to select certain traits as definitive leadership traits; some of the traits appear in several of the survey studies, whereas others appear in only one or two studies. Regardless of the lack of precision in Table 2.1, however, it represents a general convergence of research regarding which traits are leadership traits.

Over the past 10 years, interest in leader traits has experienced a renaissance. Zaccaro, Green, Dubrow, and Kolze (2018) found that basic personality traits and capacities contribute to who emerges as a leader and one’s effectiveness as a leader.

What, then, can be said about trait research? What has a century of research on the trait approach given us that is useful? The answer is an extended list of traits

TABLE 2.1 Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986)	Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2017)
intelligence alertness insight responsibility initiative persistence self-confidence sociability	intelligence masculinity adjustment dominance extraversion conservatism	achievement persistence insight initiative self-confidence responsibility cooperativeness tolerance influence sociability	intelligence masculinity dominance	drive motivation integrity confidence cognitive ability task knowledge	cognitive ability extraversion conscientiousness emotional stability openness agreeableness motivation social intelligence self-monitoring emotional intelligence problem solving

Sources: Adapted from "The Bases of Social Power," by J. R. P. French Jr. and B. Raven, 1962, in D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory* (pp. 259–269), New York, NY: Harper and Row; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader (2004).

that individuals might hope to possess or wish to cultivate if they want to be perceived by others as leaders. Some of the traits that are central to this list include intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Table 2.2).

TABLE 2.2 Major Leadership Traits

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intelligence• Self-confidence• Determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrity• Sociability
--	---

Intelligence

Intelligence or intellectual ability is positively related to leadership (Sternberg, 2004). Based on their analysis of a series of recent studies on intelligence and various indices of leadership, Zaccaro et al. (2017) found support for the finding that leaders tend to have higher intelligence than nonleaders. Having strong verbal, perceptual, and reasoning abilities appears to make one a better leader (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015). Although it is good to be bright, if the leader's IQ is very different from that of the followers, it can have a counterproductive impact on leadership. Leaders with higher abilities may have difficulty communicating with followers because they are preoccupied or because their ideas are too advanced for their followers to accept.

In a study of the relationship between intelligence and perceived leadership in midlevel leaders from multinational companies, Antonakis, House, and Simonton (2017) found that the optimal IQ for perceived leadership appeared to be just over one standard deviation above the mean IQ of the group membership. Their study found a curvilinear relationship between IQ and perceived leadership—that is, as IQ increased, so did perceived leadership to a point, and then the IQ had a negative impact on leadership. Stated another way, it is good for leaders to be intelligent, but if their intelligence scores become too high, the benefits appear to taper off and can become negative.

An example of a leader for whom intelligence was a key trait was Steve Jobs, founder and CEO of Apple, who died in 2011. Jobs once said, “I have this really incredible product inside me and I have to get it out” (Sculley, 2011, p. 27). Those visionary products, first the Apple II and Macintosh computers and then the iMac, iPod, iPhone, and iPad, revolutionized the personal computer and electronic device industry, changing the way people play and work.

In the next chapter of this text, which addresses leadership from a skills perspective, intelligence is identified as a trait that significantly contributes to a leader's acquisition of complex problem-solving skills and social judgment skills.

Intelligence is described as having a positive impact on an individual's capacity for effective leadership.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is another trait that helps one to be a leader. Self-confidence is the ability to be certain about one's competencies and skills. It includes a sense of self-esteem and self-assurance and the belief that one can make a difference. Leadership involves influencing others, and self-confidence allows leaders to feel assured that their attempts to influence others are appropriate and right.

Again, Steve Jobs is a good example of a self-confident leader. When Jobs described the devices he wanted to create, many people said they weren't possible. But Jobs never doubted his products would change the world, and despite resistance, he did things the way he thought best. "Jobs was one of those CEOs who ran the company like he wanted to. He believed he knew more about it than anyone else, and he probably did," said a colleague (Stone, 2011, p. 40).

Determination

Many leaders also exhibit determination. Determination is the desire to get the job done and includes characteristics such as initiative, persistence, dominance, and drive. People with determination are willing to assert themselves, are proactive, and have the capacity to persevere in the face of obstacles. Being determined includes showing dominance at times and in situations where followers need to be directed. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) expanded the concept of determination and conducted research on "grit," which measures the degree of perseverance toward goal attainment. Leaders with grit recover quickly from setbacks, not letting obstacles impede their success (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Dr. Paul Farmer has shown determination in his efforts to secure health care and eradicate tuberculosis for the very poor of Haiti and other third world countries. He began his efforts as a recent college graduate, traveling and working in Cange, Haiti. While there, he was accepted to Harvard Medical School. Knowing that his work in Haiti was invaluable to his training, he managed to do both: spending months traveling back and forth between Haiti and Cambridge, Massachusetts, for school. His first effort in Cange was to establish a one-room clinic where he treated "all comers" and trained local health care workers. Farmer found that there was more to providing health care than just dispensing medicine: He secured donations to build schools, houses, and communal sanitation and water facilities in the region. He spearheaded vaccinations of all the children in the area, dramatically reducing malnutrition and infant mortality. To keep working in Haiti, he returned to America and founded Partners In Health, a charitable foundation that raises money to fund these efforts. Since its founding, PIH

not only has succeeded in improving the health of many communities in Haiti but now has projects in Haiti, Lesotho, Malawi, Peru, Russia, Rwanda, and the United States, and supports other projects in Mexico and Guatemala (Kidder, 2004; Partners In Health, 2017; see also Case 10.1, page 272).

Integrity

Integrity, another of the important leadership traits, is the quality of honesty and trustworthiness. People who adhere to a strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions are exhibiting integrity. Leaders with integrity inspire confidence in others because they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do. They are loyal, dependable, and not deceptive. Basically, integrity makes a leader believable and worthy of our trust.

In our society, integrity has received a great deal of attention in recent years. For example, as a result of two situations—the position taken by President George W. Bush regarding Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction and the impeachment proceedings during the Bill Clinton presidency—people are demanding more honesty of their public officials. Similarly, scandals in the corporate world (e.g., Enron and WorldCom) have led people to become skeptical of leaders who are not highly ethical. In the educational arena, new K–12 curricula are being developed to teach character, values, and ethical leadership. (For instance, see the Character Counts! program developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics in California at www.charactercounts.org, and the Pillars of Leadership program taught at the J. W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development in Georgia at www.fanning.uga.edu.) In short, society is demanding greater integrity of character in its leaders.

Sociability

A final trait that is important for leaders is sociability. Sociability is a leader’s inclination to seek out pleasant social relationships. Leaders who show sociability are friendly, outgoing, courteous, tactful, and diplomatic. They are sensitive to others’ needs and show concern for others’ well-being. Social leaders have good interpersonal skills and create cooperative relationships with their followers.

An example of a leader with great sociability skills is Michael Hughes, a university president. Hughes prefers to walk to all his meetings because it gets him out on campus where he greets students, staff, and faculty. He has lunch in the dorm cafeterias or student union and will often ask a table of strangers if he can sit with them. Students rate him as very approachable, while faculty say he has an open-door policy. In addition, he takes time to write personal notes to faculty, staff, and students to congratulate them on their successes.

Although our discussion of leadership traits has focused on five major traits (i.e., intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability), this list is

not all-inclusive. While other traits indicated in Table 2.1 are associated with effective leadership, the five traits we have identified contribute substantially to one's capacity to be a leader.

Until recently, most reviews of leadership traits have been qualitative. In addition, they have lacked a common organizing framework. However, the research described in the following section provides a quantitative assessment of leadership traits that is conceptually framed around the five-factor model of personality. It describes how five major personality traits are related to leadership.

Five-Factor Personality Model and Leadership

Over the past 25 years, a consensus has emerged among researchers regarding the basic factors that make up what we call personality (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987). These factors, commonly called the *Big Five*, are neuroticism, extraversion (surgency), openness (intellect), agreeableness, and conscientiousness (dependability) (Table 2.3).

To assess the links between the Big Five and leadership, Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002) conducted a major meta-analysis of 78 leadership and personality studies published between 1967 and 1998. In general, Judge et al. found a strong relationship between the Big Five traits and leadership. It appears that having certain personality traits is associated with being an effective leader.

Specifically, in their study, *extraversion* was the factor most strongly associated with leadership. It is the most important trait of effective leaders. Extraversion was followed, in order, by *conscientiousness*, *openness*, and *low neuroticism*. The last

TABLE 2.3 Big Five Personality Factors

Neuroticism	The tendency to be depressed, anxious, insecure, vulnerable, and hostile
Extraversion	The tendency to be sociable and assertive and to have positive energy
Openness	The tendency to be informed, creative, insightful, and curious
Agreeableness	The tendency to be accepting, conforming, trusting, and nurturing
Conscientiousness	The tendency to be thorough, organized, controlled, dependable, and decisive

Source: Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 1216-1229.

factor, *agreeableness*, was found to be only weakly associated with leadership. In a more recent study, Sacket and Walmsley (2014) found that *conscientiousness* had the highest correlation with overall job performance, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and counterproductive work behavior (negative correlation). It was found to be the most frequently assessed trait in job interviews for a variety of occupations.

Strengths and Leadership

Very closely related to the traits approach is the more contemporary emphasis on strengths and leadership. The idea behind strengths leadership is that everyone has talents in which they excel or thrive and leaders are able to recognize and capitalize on not only their own strengths but those of their followers as well. A strength is defined as an attribute or quality of an individual that accounts for successful performance. Strength researchers (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Rath, 2007) suggest that strengths are the ability to consistently demonstrate exceptional work.

The seminal research in this area has been undertaken by the Gallup organization, which has spent more than 40 years identifying and assessing individual strengths or “themes of human talent” and designing and publishing the StrengthsFinder profile, now called CliftonStrengths assessment, an online assessment of people’s talents and potential strengths. Talents are similar to personality traits—they are relatively stable, fixed characteristics that are not easily changed. From talents, strengths emerge. Strengths are derived from having certain talents and then further developing those talents by gaining additional knowledge, skills, and practice (Rath, 2007).

In the strengths perspective, extraordinary individuals are “distinguished less by their impressive ‘raw power’ than by their ability to identify their strengths and then exploit them” (Gardner, 1997, p. 15). MacKie (2016) suggests that our leadership capability is enhanced when we are able to discover our fully utilized strengths, underutilized strengths, and weaknesses.

Strengths have also been of interest to researchers in the field of positive psychology who look at the best aspects in people, rather than their weaknesses. Most notably from this area of study, Peterson and Seligman (2004) developed an inventory of character strengths called the Values In Action Classification (see Table 2.4).

Based on this classification, an individual’s strengths can be measured using the VIA Character Strengths Survey, which includes 24 strengths organized under six basic virtues. This survey identifies individuals’ top five character strengths as well as a rank order of their scores on all 24 character strengths. It takes about 30 minutes to complete and is available free at www.viacharacter.org.

TABLE 2.4 VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

Classification	Strengths
WISDOM & KNOWLEDGE <i>Cognitive Strengths</i>	1. Creativity 2. Curiosity 3. Open-mindedness 4. Love of learning 5. Perspective
COURAGE <i>Emotional Strengths</i>	6. Authenticity 7. Bravery 8. Perseverance 9. Zest
HUMANITY <i>Interpersonal Strengths</i>	10. Kindness 11. Love 12. Social intelligence
JUSTICE <i>Civic Strengths</i>	13. Fairness 14. Leadership 15. Teamwork
TEMPERANCE <i>Strengths Over Excess</i>	16. Forgiveness 17. Modesty 18. Prudence 19. Self-regulation
TRANSCENDENCE <i>Strengths About Meaning</i>	20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence 21. Gratitude 22. Hope 23. Humor 24. Religiousness

Source: Adapted from *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, by Christopher Peterson, 2006, pp. 142-146.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in studying the way character strengths can be utilized to improve leaders and leadership in organizations. For example, Sosik, Chun, Ete, Arenas, and Scherer (2019) studied the character strengths of a sample of more than 200 U.S. Air Force officers and found that

character strengths played a pivotal role in fostering leader performance and psychological flourishing. When leaders demonstrate high self-control along with high levels of honesty/humility, empathy, and moral courage, it appears to benefit their ethical leadership, psychological functioning, and role performance. In another study, Sosik, Gentry, and Chun (2012) assessed data for 191 top-level U.S. executives of for-profit and nonprofit organizations and found that the character strengths of integrity, bravery, and social intelligence were positively related to executive leader performance. In addition, they found integrity contributed the most to explaining the differences in executive performance. These studies, as well as others, underscore the importance of understanding character strengths and the role they play in leadership.

Emotional Intelligence

Another way of assessing the impact of traits on leadership is through the concept of emotional intelligence, which emerged in the 1990s as an important area of study in psychology. It has been widely studied by researchers and has captured the attention of many practitioners (Caruso & Wolfe, 2004; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1995, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000; Shankman & Allen, 2015).

As the two words suggest, emotional intelligence has to do with our emotions (affective domain) and thinking (cognitive domain) and the interplay between the two. Whereas *intelligence* is concerned with our ability to learn *information* and apply it to life tasks, *emotional intelligence* is concerned with our ability to understand *emotions* and apply this understanding to life's tasks. Specifically, *emotional intelligence* can be defined as the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to effectively manage emotions within oneself and in relationships with others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000).

There are different ways to measure emotional intelligence. One scale is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000). The MSCEIT measures emotional intelligence as a set of mental abilities, including the abilities to perceive, facilitate, understand, and manage emotion. In general, the MSCEIT appears to have acceptable content validity and reliability (Boyatzis, 2019); however, a review of research on emotional intelligence found that the emotional intelligence levels in people assessed using this measure seem to be declining over time. Some posit that this may be due to initial studies of emotional intelligence overstating the findings (Gong & Jiao, 2019).

Goleman (1995, 1998) takes a broader approach to emotional intelligence, suggesting that it consists of a set of personal and social competencies. Personal competence consists of self-awareness, confidence, self-regulation, conscientiousness, and motivation. Social competence consists of empathy and social skills such as communication and conflict management.

Shankman and Allen (2015) developed a practice-oriented model of emotionally intelligent leadership, which suggests that leaders must be conscious of three fundamental facets of leadership: context, self, and others. In the model, emotionally intelligent leaders are defined by 21 capacities to which a leader should pay attention, including group savvy, optimism, initiative, and teamwork.

Unlike other traits we've discussed in this chapter, there is evidence that emotional intelligence is not a fixed characteristic; it can be improved through training that focuses on enabling leaders to label their emotions and then regulate them (Ashkanasy, Dasborough, & Ascough, 2009). One experiment compared leaders who received training to those who received no training (a control group). Those in the trained group exhibited improved emotional intelligence competencies and significantly improved outcomes: lower stress, higher morale, and improved civility (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Likewise, a meta-analysis of 58 studies of emotional intelligence training that included control groups showed a moderate positive effect for the training (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019).

Goleman and Boyatzis (2017) articulated four broad aspects of emotional intelligence: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. They suggest that individuals can improve their emotional intelligence by engaging in a combination of personal reflection and seeking feedback to the following questions:

What are the differences between how you see yourself and how others see you?
This can help you to understand how your self-perception might differ from your reputation.

What matters to you? The areas of your emotional intelligence that you want to improve on should reflect the feedback you've gotten as well as your personal aspirations.

What changes will you make to achieve these goals? Identify specific actions to take to improve.

Many organizations also see emotional intelligence as a trait that can be changed and have adopted emotional intelligence training as part of their leadership development. For example, FedEx's Global Leadership Institute has an emotional intelligence training program for new managers that challenges these leaders to focus on the following every day at work:

Know yourself—increase self-awareness of emotions and reactions

Choose yourself—shift from unconscious reactions to intentional responses

Give yourself—align moment-to-moment decisions with a larger sense of purpose

A key principle of the training is that “emotions drive people, [and] people drive performance.” FedEx has tracked the improvements in managers’ emotional intelligence and reported an 8% to 11% increase in competencies due to the training—a statistically significant difference (Freedman, 2014).

In addition, the U.S. Army developed a brief internet-based training program for enhancing emotional intelligence. Because military personnel serve under dangerous and emotionally stressful conditions, the training was designed to help reduce the development of depression, anxiety, and/or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The training helped service members strengthen their emotional flexibility, adaptability, and coping by improving the ability to understand and control their emotions (Killgore, 2017).

There is a debate in the field regarding how big a role emotional intelligence plays in helping people be successful in life. Some researchers, such as Goleman (1995), suggested that emotional intelligence plays a major role in whether people are successful at school, home, and work. Others, such as Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) and Antonakis (2009), made softer claims for the significance of emotional intelligence in meeting life’s challenges. A major review of leadership research identifies “emotions in leadership” as a general category but does not specifically mention emotional intelligence (Dinh et al., 2014). It appears that emotional intelligence is not considered mainstream in leadership research. At the same time, Kotsou, Mikolajczak, Heeren, Grégoire, and Leys (2019) determined that the studies that have been done on the efficacy of emotional intelligence training have not included follow-up research to determine the long-term effects of such training.

A review of the literature by Ashkanasy and Daus (2002) summarizes what we can safely conclude: Emotional intelligence is distinct from, but positively related to, other intelligences (such as IQ). It is an individual difference; some people have more emotional intelligence than others. Emotional intelligence develops over a person’s lifetime and can be improved with training. Finally, it involves abilities to effectively identify and perceive emotion and the skills to understand and manage emotions.

In summary, emotional intelligence appears to play a role in the leadership process. The underlying premise suggested by the emotional intelligence framework is that people who are more sensitive to their emotions and the impact of their emotions on others will be leaders who are more effective. As more research is conducted on emotional intelligence, the intricacies of how emotional intelligence relates to leadership will be better understood.

HOW DOES THE TRAIT APPROACH WORK?

The trait approach is very different from the other approaches discussed in subsequent chapters because it focuses exclusively on the leader, not on the followers

or the situation. This makes the trait approach theoretically more straightforward than other approaches. In essence, the trait approach is concerned with what traits leaders exhibit and who has these traits.

The trait approach does not lay out a set of hypotheses or principles about what kind of leader is needed in a certain situation or what a leader should do, given a particular set of circumstances. Instead, this approach emphasizes that having a leader with a certain set of traits is crucial to having effective leadership. It is the leader and the leader's traits that are central to the leadership process.

The trait approach suggests that organizations will work better if the people in managerial positions have designated leadership profiles. To find the right people, it is common for organizations to use trait assessment instruments. The assumption behind these procedures is that selecting the right people will increase organizational effectiveness. Organizations can specify the characteristics or traits that are important to them for particular positions and then use trait assessment measures to determine whether an individual fits their needs.

The trait approach is also used for personal awareness and development. By analyzing their own traits, managers can gain an idea of their strengths and weaknesses and can get a feel for how others in the organization see them. A trait assessment can help managers determine whether they have the qualities to move up or to move to other positions in the company.

A trait assessment gives individuals a clearer picture of who they are as leaders and how they fit into the organizational hierarchy. In areas where their traits are lacking, leaders can try to make changes in what they do or where they work to increase their traits' potential impact.

Near the end of the chapter, a leadership instrument is provided that you can use to assess your leadership traits. This instrument is typical of the kind of assessments that companies use to evaluate individuals' leadership potential. As you will discover by completing this instrument, trait measures are a good way to assess your own characteristics.

STRENGTHS

The trait approach has several identifiable strengths. First, the trait approach is intuitively appealing. It fits clearly with our notion that leaders are the individuals who are out front and leading the way in our society. The image in the popular press and community at large is that leaders are a special kind of people—people with gifts who can do extraordinary things. The trait approach is consistent with this perception because it is built on the premise that leaders are different, and their difference resides in the special traits they possess. People have a need to see their leaders as gifted people, and the trait approach fulfills this need.

A second strength of the trait approach is that it has a century of research to back it up. No other theory can boast of the breadth and depth of studies conducted on the trait approach. The strength and longevity of this line of research give the trait approach a measure of credibility that other approaches lack. Out of this abundance of research has emerged a body of data that points to the important role of various traits in the leadership process.

Another strength, more conceptual in nature, results from the way the trait approach highlights the leader component in the leadership process. Leadership is composed of leaders, followers, and situations, but the trait approach is devoted to only the first of these—leaders. Although this is also a potential weakness, by focusing exclusively on the role of the leader in leadership the trait approach has been able to provide us with a deeper and more intricate understanding of how the leader and the leader's traits are related to the leadership process.

The trait approach has given us some benchmarks for what we need to look for if we want to be leaders. It identifies what traits we should have and whether the traits we do have are the best traits for leadership. Based on the findings of this approach, trait assessment procedures can be used to offer invaluable information to supervisors and managers about their strengths and weaknesses and ways to improve their overall leadership effectiveness.

Last, the trait approach helps organizations identify leaders and select individuals for leadership training programs. Organizations often use a battery of personality tests when selecting and placing people within their organizations. For example, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience are effective traits for sales positions (Frieder, Wang, & Oh, 2018). Personality traits can be used to screen employees, once hired, who will benefit most from leadership training. For example, one study found that extraversion, agreeableness, intellectual curiosity, and emotional stability were positively related to both self-ratings and director ratings of leader development in a training program (Blair, Palmieri, & Paz-Aparicio, 2018). Thus, traits offer a way to predict who will succeed in certain positions and who is best suited to leadership development.

CRITICISMS

In addition to its strengths, the trait approach has several weaknesses. First and foremost is the failure of the trait approach to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits. Although an enormous number of studies have been conducted over the past 100 years, the findings from these studies have been ambiguous and uncertain at times. Furthermore, the list of traits that has emerged appears endless. This is obvious from Table 2.1, which lists a multitude of traits. In fact, these are only a sample of the many leadership traits that were studied.

Another criticism is that the trait approach has failed to take situations into account. As Stogdill (1948) pointed out more than 70 years ago, it is difficult to isolate a set of traits that are characteristic of leaders without also factoring situational effects into the equation. People who possess certain traits that make them leaders in one situation may not be leaders in another situation. Some people may have the traits that help them emerge as leaders but not the traits that allow them to maintain their leadership over time. In other words, the situation influences leadership.

Leader traits also may interact with the situation in that certain traits may predispose a person to assume leadership roles in organizations. For example, leaders with higher openness to experience may thrive in the innovative, energetic environment of a high-technology start-up company, but once that company is established and running on a routine, they may begin to feel stagnant, negatively affecting their performance. Yet, research on traits has not incorporated the situation (Zaccaro et al., 2018), including such factors as the leader–member relationship, team characteristics, or organizational culture that enhance or constrain the influence of traits on performance.

A third criticism, derived from the prior two criticisms, is that this approach has resulted in highly subjective determinations of the most important leadership traits. Because the findings on traits have been so extensive and broad, there has been much subjective interpretation of the meaning of the data. This subjectivity is readily apparent in the many self-help, practice-oriented management books. For example, one author might identify ambition and creativity as crucial leadership traits; another might identify empathy and calmness. In both cases, it is the author's subjective experience and observations that are the basis for the identified leadership traits. These books may be helpful to readers because they identify and describe important leadership traits, but the methods used to generate these lists of traits are weak. To respond to people's need for a set of definitive traits of leaders, authors have set forth lists of traits, even if the origins of these lists are not grounded in strong, reliable research.

Research on traits can also be criticized for failing to look at traits in relationship to leadership outcomes. This research has emphasized the identification of traits but has not addressed how leadership traits affect group members and their work. In trying to ascertain universal leadership traits, researchers have focused on the link between specific traits and leader emergence, but they have not tried to link leader traits with other outcomes such as productivity or employee satisfaction. For example, trait research does not provide data on whether leaders who have high intelligence and strong integrity have better results than leaders without these traits. The trait approach is weak in describing how leaders' traits affect the outcomes of groups and teams in organizational settings.

A final criticism of the trait approach is that, other than for emotional intelligence, its usefulness for leadership training and development is limited. Even if definitive traits could be identified, teaching leaders to improve these traits is not an easy process because traits are not easily changed. For example, it is not reasonable to send managers to a training program to raise their IQ or to train them to become extraverted. While there is some evidence that the trait of emotional intelligence may be improved with training, it is unclear whether these effects are long lasting. The point is that traits are largely fixed psychological structures, and this limits the value of teaching and leadership training.

APPLICATION

Despite its shortcomings, the trait approach provides valuable information about leadership. It can be applied by individuals at all levels and in all types of organizations. Although the trait approach does not provide a definitive set of traits, it does provide direction regarding which traits are good to have if one aspires to a leadership position. By taking trait assessments and other similar questionnaires, people can gain insight into whether they have certain traits deemed important for leadership, and they can pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses with regard to leadership.

As we discussed previously, managers can use information from the trait approach to assess where they stand in their organization and what they need to do to strengthen their position. Trait information can suggest areas in which their personal characteristics are very beneficial to the company and areas in which they may want to get more training to enhance their overall approach. Using trait information, managers can develop a deeper understanding of who they are and how they will affect others in the organization.

CASE STUDIES

In this section, three case studies (Cases 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) are provided to illustrate the trait approach and to help you understand how the trait approach can be used in making decisions in organizational settings. The settings of the cases are diverse—directing research and development at a large snack food company, being head of recruitment for a large bank, and a profile of entrepreneur Elon Musk—but all of the cases deal with trait leadership. At the end of each case, you will find questions that will help in analyzing the cases.

Case 2.1 CHOOSING A NEW DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

Sandra Coke is vice president for research and development at Great Lakes Foods (GLF), a large snack food company that has approximately 1,000 employees. As a result of a recent reorganization, Sandra must choose the new director of research. The director will report directly to Sandra and will be responsible for developing and testing new products. The research division of GLF employs about 200 people. The choice of directors is important because Sandra is receiving pressure from the president and board of GLF to improve the company's overall growth and productivity.

Sandra has identified three candidates for the position. Each candidate is at the same managerial level. She is having difficulty choosing one of them because each has very strong credentials. Alexa Smith is a longtime employee of GLF who started part-time in the mailroom while in high school. After finishing school, Alexa worked in as many as 10 different positions throughout the company to become manager of new product marketing. Performance reviews of Alexa's work have repeatedly described her as being very creative and insightful. In her tenure at GLF, Alexa has developed and brought to market four new product lines. Alexa is also known throughout GLF as being very persistent about her work: When she starts a project, she stays with it until it is finished. It is probably this quality that accounts for the success of each of the four new products with which she has been involved.

A second candidate for the new position is Kelsey Metts, who has been with GLF for five years and is manager of quality control for established products. Kelsey has a reputation for being very bright. Before joining GLF, she received her MBA at Harvard, graduating at the top of her class. People talk about Kelsey as the kind of person who will be president of her own company someday. Kelsey is also very personable. On all her performance reviews, she received extra-high scores on sociability and human relations. There isn't a supervisor in the company who doesn't have positive things to say about how comfortable it is to work

(Continued)

(Continued)

with Kelsey. Since joining GLF, Kelsey has been instrumental in bringing two new product lines to market.

Thomas Santiago, the third candidate, has been with GLF for 10 years and is often consulted by upper management regarding strategic planning and corporate direction setting. Thomas has been very involved in establishing the vision for GLF and is a company person all the way. He believes in the values of GLF, and actively promotes its mission. The two qualities that stand out above the rest in Thomas's performance reviews are his honesty and integrity. Employees who have worked under his supervision consistently report that they feel they can trust Thomas to be fair and consistent. Thomas is highly respected at GLF. In his tenure at the company, Thomas has been involved in some capacity with the development of three new product lines.

The challenge confronting Sandra is to choose the best person for the newly established director's position. Because of the pressure she feels from upper management, Sandra knows she must select the best leader for the new position.

Questions

1. Based on the information provided about the trait approach in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, if you were Sandra, whom would you select?
2. In what ways is the trait approach helpful in this type of selection?
3. In what ways are the weaknesses of the trait approach highlighted in this case?

Case 2.2 RECRUITING FOR THE BANK

Pat is the assistant director of human resources in charge of recruitment for Central Bank, a large, full-service banking institution. One of Pat's major responsibilities each spring is to visit as many college campuses as he can to interview graduating seniors for credit analyst positions in the commercial lending area at Central Bank. Although the number varies, he usually ends up hiring about 20 new people, most of whom come from the same schools, year after year.

Pat has been doing recruitment for the bank for more than 10 years, and he enjoys it very much. However, for the upcoming spring he is feeling increased pressure from management to be particularly discriminating about whom he recommends hiring. Management is concerned about the retention rate at the bank because in recent years as many as 25% of the new hires have left. Departures after the first year have meant lost training dollars and strain on the staff who remain. Although

management understands that some new hires always leave, the executives are not comfortable with the present rate, and they have begun to question the recruitment and hiring procedures.

The bank wants to hire people who can be groomed for higher-level leadership positions. Although certain competencies are required of entry-level credit analysts, the bank is equally interested in skills that will allow individuals to advance to upper management positions as their careers progress.

In the recruitment process, Pat always looks for several characteristics. First, applicants need to have strong interpersonal skills, they need to be confident, and they need to show poise and initiative. Next, because banking involves fiduciary responsibilities, applicants need to have proper ethics, including a strong sense of the importance of confidentiality. In addition, to do the work in the bank, they need to have strong analytical and technical skills, and experience in working with computers. Last, applicants need to exhibit a good work ethic, and they need to show commitment and a willingness to do their job even in difficult circumstances.

Pat is fairly certain that he has been selecting the right people to be leaders at Central Bank, yet upper management is telling him to reassess his hiring criteria. Although he feels that he has been doing the right thing, he is starting to question himself and his recruitment practices.

Questions

1. Based on ideas described in the trait approach, do you think Pat is looking for the right characteristics in the people he hires?
2. Could it be that the retention problem raised by upper management is unrelated to Pat's recruitment criteria?
3. If you were Pat, would you change your approach to recruiting?

Case 2.3 ELON MUSK

When he was 12, Elon Musk created and sold his first product. That video game, *Blastar*, was the start of Musk's meteoric entrepreneurial career, which has seen him take on everything from electric cars to space travel to alternative energy.

Musk grew up in South Africa, the son of an engineer and a Canadian model. In grade school Musk was introverted and often bullied, but at 15 he learned how to defend himself with karate and wrestling. He moved to Canada at 17 to

(Continued)

(Continued)

attend university and three years later left Canada to attend the University of Pennsylvania where he earned degrees in economics and physics. In 1995, only two days into a PhD program in energy physics at Stanford, Musk dropped out to launch his first company, Zip2, with his brother Kimbal. An online city guide, Zip2 provided content for websites of both the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Four years later, Compaq Computer Corporation bought Zip2 for \$307 million.

The Musk brothers then founded X.com, an online financial services/payments company, which became PayPal. Three years later, eBay acquired PayPal for \$1.5 billion.

Now a billionaire, Musk started Space Exploration Technologies Corporation, or SpaceX, in 2002 with the intention of building reusable spacecraft for commercial space travel. A year after launching SpaceX, Musk became the cofounder, CEO, and product architect at Tesla Motors, dedicated to producing affordable, mass-market electric cars as well as battery products and solar roofs. He also launched several other side projects, including establishment of The Boring Company devoted to boring and building underground tunnels to reduce street traffic, becoming cochair of the nonprofit research organization OpenAI with the mission of advancing digital intelligence to benefit humanity, and development of the Hyperloop to create a more expedient form of transportation between cities.

But unlike his earlier ventures, both SpaceX and Tesla had considerable challenges. In 2008, Musk was nearly out of money after SpaceX's Falcon 1 rocket, of which he was the chief designer, suffered three failed launches before it finally had a successful one. Meanwhile, Tesla was hitting speed bump after speed bump in the development of its vehicles, hemorrhaging money, and losing investor confidence as well as orders from customers who were unhappy with the long wait time to get their vehicles.

Musk faced these challenges the way he did as a bullied school kid: head on. "Leaders are . . . expected to work harder than those who report to them and always make sure that their needs are taken care of before yours, thus leading by example," he said (Jackson, 2017).

At SpaceX, Musk continued to innovate, and the company accomplished a stunning number of achievements including successfully having rockets land safely back on earth after launches, transporting supplies to the International Space Station, and developing a rocket that could carry heavier payloads. By 2019, SpaceX had 6,000-plus contracts, worth \$12 billion, with NASA and other commercial satellite companies. The company, which says its ultimate mission is to foster interplanetary life, is planning a cargo mission to Mars in 2022 (Space Exploration Technologies Corp., 2020).

Many credit SpaceX's success to the unified culture at the company created by its fairly flat organizational structure and the fact that, despite its growth, the company still maintains a start-up mentality and feel.

"It's an incredible place to work," said one engineer. "There's a great sense of connectedness between everyone. Everyone's got the same goal in mind. Everyone's working super hard to deliver a product successfully. It's amazing when it all culminates in launch" (*Mind & Machine*, 2017).

Dolly Singh, the former head of human resources at SpaceX, said, "The thing that makes Elon Elon is his ability to make people believe in his vision" (Snow, 2015). Jim Cantrell, SpaceX's first engineer, added, "He is the smartest guy I've ever met, period. I know that sounds overblown. But I've met plenty of smart people, and I don't say that lightly. He's absolutely, frickin' amazing. I don't even think he sleeps" (Feloni, 2014).

But to turn Tesla around, Musk had to roll up his shirtsleeves. The company, which was four years behind on the production of its Model 3, was under severe public scrutiny from investors and industry analysts. After missing one deadline after another, Musk restructured the organization in April 2018 and took over as the head of engineering to personally oversee efforts in that division. In a 2018 Twitter post, Musk said that to meet production goals, it was time to "divide & conquer, so I'm back to sleeping at factory." By the end of June 2018, Tesla had met its goal of producing 5,000 Model 3 cars per week, while churning out another 2,000 Model S sedans and Model X SUVs (Sage & Rodriguez, 2018).

Musk has been described as an unconventional leader, even by Silicon Valley standards. He is a prolific tweeter in which he comments on everything from building cyborg dragons, to jokes about bankruptcy, to mixing Ambien with red wine (Davies, 2018). He has graced magazine covers and goes on talk shows and appeared on animated television shows *The Simpsons* and *South Park*. His peculiar sense of humor was on dramatic display when he launched his own red Tesla Roadster sports car into space atop the first SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket. At the same time, some of his behavioral quirks have also become liabilities.

In a public earnings call with investors and financial analysts, Musk attacked two analysts for asking what he called "bonehead" and "dry" questions that he refused to answer, resulting in Tesla's stock value plunging 10% (Davies, 2018). When his efforts to assist in the rescue of 12 young soccer players and their coach from a flooded cave in Thailand were criticized as self-aggrandizing rather than serious, Musk responded with a tweet calling one of the divers involved in the rescue "pedo guy," insinuating he was a child molester (Levin, 2018).

In August 2018, Musk wrote on Twitter that he was considering taking Tesla private and that he had the necessary funding "secured" to do so. As a result,

(Continued)

(Continued)

Tesla's stock price immediately shot up, gaining the attention of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which investigated and ultimately fined Musk \$20 million. Less than two weeks after that episode, Musk gave an emotional interview with the *New York Times*, in which he alternately laughed and cried in a display that left many questioning his mental state and sent Tesla investors into sell mode with their stock (Crum, 2018).

Not long after that interview, Musk changed his mind and said Tesla would remain a public company. He followed that decision with an appearance on the *Joe Rogan Experience* podcast during which he smoked what was said to be a marijuana-laced cigarette (Davies, 2018).

"The reason Elon seems to attract drama is that he is so transparent, so open, in a way that can come back to bite him," his brother and Tesla board member Kimbal Musk told the *New York Times*. "He doesn't know how to do it differently. It's just who he is" (Gelles, 2018).

After all of the drama in 2018, there were many concerns about where Tesla would go in 2019. The answer? Tesla ended 2019 on a high note, with a record stock price topping out at more than \$400 per share.

"It's been quite the turnaround for Musk since his 'funding secured' tweet debacle of last year," one analyst noted. "Tesla's stock has been one of the top performers of the second-half of the year and Musk is proof that you can take on the SEC, smoke weed on podcasts, call people pedo guy and still run a \$70 billion company" (Crum, 2018).

Questions

1. How does Musk exhibit each of the major leadership traits (Table 2.2)? Which of these traits do you believe he is the strongest in? Is there one where he is weak?
2. Describe how Musk has exhibited each of the Big Five personality factors. Which of these factors do you think has the most correlation with Musk's success as a leader?
3. Shankman and Allen (2015) suggest that an emotionally intelligent leader is conscious of context, self, and others. How would you characterize Musk's emotional intelligence using these three facets?
4. If you were asked to design a leadership training program based on the trait approach, how could you incorporate the story of Elon Musk and his leadership? Around which of his traits would you structure your training? Are some of his leadership traits more teachable than others? Discuss.

LEADERSHIP INSTRUMENT

Organizations use a wide variety of questionnaires to measure individuals' traits. In many organizations, it is common practice to use standard trait measures such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. These measures provide valuable information to the individual and the organization about the individual's unique attributes for leadership and where the individual could best serve the organization.

In this section, the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) is provided as an example of a measure that can be used to assess your personal leadership characteristics. The LTQ quantifies the perceptions of the individual leader and selected observers, such as followers or peers. It measures an individual's traits and points respondents to the areas in which they may have special strengths or weaknesses.

By taking the LTQ, you can gain an understanding of how trait measures are used for leadership assessment. You can also assess your own leadership traits.

Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ)

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure personal characteristics of leadership and to gain an understanding of how traits are used in leadership assessment.

Instructions: Using the following scale, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the 14 statements when viewing yourself as a leader. After you complete this questionnaire, it should be completed by five people you know (e.g., roommates, coworkers, relatives, friends) to show how they view you as a leader.

Key: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Articulate: Communicates effectively with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | Perceptive: Is discerning and insightful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | Self-confident: Believes in oneself and one's ability | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Self-assured: Is secure with oneself, free of doubts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | Persistent: Stays fixed on the goals, despite interference | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | Determined: Takes a firm stand, acts with certainty | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | Trustworthy: Is authentic and inspires confidence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | Dependable: Is consistent and reliable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | Friendly: Shows kindness and warmth | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Outgoing: Talks freely, gets along well with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Conscientious: Is thorough, organized, and controlled | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Diligent: Is persistent, hardworking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | Sensitive: Shows tolerance, is tactful and sympathetic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | Empathic: Understands others, identifies with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Scoring

1. Enter the responses for Raters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the appropriate columns as shown in Example 2.1. The example provides hypothetical ratings to help explain how the questionnaire can be used.
2. For each of the 14 items, compute the average for the five raters and place that number in the "average rating" column.
3. Place your own scores in the "self-rating" column.

EXAMPLE 2.1 Leadership Traits Questionnaire Ratings

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Average rating	Self- rating
1. Articulate	4	4	3	2	4	3.4	4
2. Perceptive	2	5	3	4	4	3.6	5
3. Self-confident	4	4	5	5	4	4.4	4
4. Self-assured	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5. Persistent	4	4	3	3	3	3.4	3
6. Determined	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
7. Trustworthy	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
8. Dependable	4	5	4	5	4	4.4	4
9. Friendly	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
10. Outgoing	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	4
11. Conscientious	2	3	2	3	3	2.6	4
12. Diligent	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
13. Sensitive	4	4	5	5	5	4.6	3
14. Empathic	5	5	4	5	4	4.6	3

Scoring Interpretation

The scores you received on the LTQ provide information about how you see yourself as a leader and how others see you as a leader. There are no “perfect” scores for this questionnaire. The purpose of the instrument is to provide a way to assess your strengths and weaknesses. This assessment can help you understand your assets as well as areas in which you may seek to improve. The chart allows you to see where your perceptions are the same as those of others and where they differ.

The example ratings show how the leader self-rated higher than the observers did on the characteristic *articulate*. On the second characteristic, *perceptive*, the leader self-rated substantially higher than others. On the *self-confident* characteristic, the leader self-rated quite close to others’ ratings but lower.

A low or moderate self-rating (3 or below) on a trait may indicate that you have had little opportunity to develop this part of your personality or that your current work or school setting does not require you to exercise this trait. A high score (4 or above) suggests you are aware of this trait and use it often. How similar or dissimilar your self-ratings are from others’ ratings may be affected by whom you chose to evaluate you, how long these people have known you, and the contexts in which they have observed your behavior.

SUMMARY

The trait approach has its roots in leadership theory that suggested that certain people were born with special traits that made them great leaders. Because it was believed that leaders and nonleaders could be differentiated by a universal set of traits, throughout the 20th century researchers were challenged to identify the definitive traits of leaders.

Around the mid-20th century, several major studies questioned the basic premise that a unique set of traits defined leadership. As a result, attention shifted to incorporating the impact of situations and of followers on leadership. Researchers began to study the interactions between leaders and their context instead of focusing only on leaders' traits. More recently, there have been signs that trait research has come full circle, with a renewed interest in focusing directly on the critical traits of leaders.

From the multitude of studies conducted through the years on personal characteristics, it is clear that many traits contribute to leadership. Some of the important traits that are consistently identified in many of these studies are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. In addition, researchers have found a strong relationship between leadership and the traits described by the *five-factor personality model*. *Extraversion* was the trait most strongly associated with leadership, followed by *conscientiousness*, *openness*, *low neuroticism*, and *agreeableness*. *Conscientiousness* was found to have the highest correlation with overall job performance, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and counterproductive work behavior (negative correlation) and to be the most frequently assessed trait in job interviews for a variety of occupations.

Another recent line of research has focused on *emotional intelligence* and its relationship to leadership. This research suggests that leaders who are sensitive to their emotions and to the impact of their emotions on others may be leaders who are more effective.

On a practical level, the trait approach is concerned with which traits leaders exhibit and who has these traits. Organizations use personality assessment instruments to identify how individuals will fit within their organizations. The trait approach is also used for personal awareness and development because it allows managers to analyze their strengths and weaknesses to gain a clearer understanding of how they should try to change to enhance their leadership.

There are several advantages to viewing leadership from the trait approach. First, it is intuitively appealing because it fits clearly into the popular idea that leaders are special people who are out front, leading the way in society. Second, a great deal of research validates the basis of this perspective. Third, by focusing

exclusively on the leader, the trait approach provides an in-depth understanding of the leader component in the leadership process. Last, it has provided some benchmarks against which individuals can evaluate their own personal leadership attributes.

On the negative side, the trait approach has failed to provide a definitive list of leadership traits. In analyzing the traits of leaders, the approach has failed to take into account the impact of situations. In addition, the approach has resulted in subjective lists of the most important leadership traits, which are not necessarily grounded in strong, reliable research.

Furthermore, the trait approach has not adequately linked the traits of leaders with other outcomes such as group and team performance, which makes this approach not particularly useful for training and development for leadership because individuals' personal attributes are largely stable and fixed, and their traits are not amenable to change. While there is some evidence that the trait of emotional intelligence may be improved with training, follow-up studies have not been conducted to determine the long-term effects of such training.