

Theory Overview:

A person's traits or attributes that distinguish a person's ability to be a leader. A trait can be individual differences that a person possesses, such as "personality, temperament, motives, cognitive abilities, skills, and expertise" (Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader, p. 104, 2004). People choose leaders based on the traits they possess. That people are born with certain traits that help them be a better leader than others.

(Dugan, pg. 96-100, 2017)

Strengths:

Proves that leaders are not just born

Lists description of traits which can help targeting learning opportunities

Weaknesses:

_Debates over what traits are important, also disagreement over what traits are innate versus learnable

Recognizes influences from situational and environmental contexts but leaves out addressing influences from broader social systems

Key Terms:

Distal Attributes: Engrained attributes that are hard to change (personality or cognition)

Proximal Attributes: Malleable and easy to change or learn (emotional intelligence or communication skills)

Competencies: Traits that are requirements for doing something

Great Man Phase: action orientation, aggressiveness, charm, commanding personality, courage, intelligence, intuition, judgement, persuasiveness

Situational Phase: achievement, communication skills, dominance, drive, masculinity, persistence

Revival Phase: ability to learn, achievement, agreeableness, charisma, cognitive ability, dominance, openness, physical traits

My Own Thoughts:

I do not agree with this theory. I do not believe that people are born with traits that make them better leaders than others. Some of the defining traits are charm, dominance, masculinity, and physical traits, which all remind me of traits that could define a white man in America. There have been many leaders in my life that do not look or possess "typical leadership" traits, but that did not stop them from being a great leader. One of my previous professors would wear revealing clothing, had bleach blonde hair, and her eyebrow was pierced. She was nothing short of an amazing leader. She proved that she really cared about each of her students and helped us succeed in her class. If I was using the traitbased leadership theory mindset, from day one, I would have judged her by her appearance and would have not given her a chance.