Personal Statement of Leadership Philosophy

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Leadership has never been a topic with much appeal to me; it seems to be an innate ability you either have it or you do not. I considered myself to fall into the latter category. I thought leaders were sort of a necessary evil. Usually, I prefer to work independently, accomplishing tasks as the need arises. In some instances, leaders seem to impede me from doing things the way I think they should be done. If, however, I do not carry out their request, the system may break down or there may be discord. Therefore, I acquiesce and carry out the directive. This has made the majority of my interactions with leaders positive; I can usually anticipate what needs to be accomplished and fulfill their demands. As I near completion of this course, however, I can see that leadership is much more than issuing edicts. It is a process of relationship building, creation and promulgation of vision, and a system of cultural and symbolic meanings. I have also come to believe it is possible to learn to be a leader, or at least gain insights as to how the process works.

After considering the literature and numerous theories we have studied, I find myself most drawn to the team or relational leadership approach. This leadership style emphasis the importance of collaboration. Members work together to create methods by which to solve problems for the benefit of all. This theory is not hierarchical in nature. Instead, all members are though of as equal and worthy of consideration. Differences are respected and embraced. Diversity among group members adds value as it increases the likelihood of creating new ideas and possible solutions (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (1989), state that relational leadership is “inclusive, empowering, purposeful, ethical, and process oriented” (p. 21-22). Furthermore, Komives et al. emphasize three major components that comprise the relational model: knowledge of one’s self and others; attitude
through recognizing the benefit of embracing differences and valuing all points of view; and the skill of listening, creating coalitions, and civil discourse.

Through my assistantship I have had the pleasure of working in groups that utilize the team/relational approach, and I have seen its benefits. Each member of the group is free to express his or her ideas without fear of rejection—all suggestions are welcomed and valued. Members may feel comfortable to add their concerns or reservations with regard to certain issues without having to be overly concerned with offending others since it is a positive, supportive environment. The group can move forward to accomplish the goal rather than being bogged down by the showmanship of hierarchical leaders or personal agendas. When consensus is reached, each member can feel comfortable with the results since all were equally involved in the decision-making process.

Since I have personally experienced all the team/relational approach has to offer, this is how I intend on leading in the future. My leadership will not subjugate others; it will empower and strive to create mutual agreement through mature, reasoned conversation. The focus will be on the end rather than the means which can devolve into individual political maneuvering. My position as leader will be akin to a facilitator, mediating the collaborative process.

The fact that I identify with the team or relational approach is not a surprise since it calls for less rigidity and values diversity and collaboration, which are often characteristics associated with female leadership. Since I too value these qualities as a woman, I should have little problem adhering to its central tenets.

Admittedly, I did not expect to find a theory to which I could relate, but the existence of the team/relational theory has piqued my interest in the subject of leadership and made me
realize it does not have to be a top-down, strictly hierarchical process. This gives me comfort and the confidence to take the approach I believe best complements my personal style.
References
