**Introduction**

Leadership, on a broad scale, is often grouped into two main categories: transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership emphasizes task completion and is based on extrinsic reward motivation systems. Transformational leadership is that which we normally associate with great leaders, those who “[induce] followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations… of both [leader] and follower…” (Kumar, 2014). These types of leaders must be able identify and act on not only their own, but also their followers’ values and motivations. To do this, they must be emotionally intelligent, possessing awareness of their own feelings, the ability to regulate those emotions, strong motivation toward goals, empathy toward others, and skill in social interactions (Goleman, 2004).

The Late British Prime Minister Winston Churchill embodied this combination of traditional leadership and emotional intelligence. Famous for his ability to rally the British public in wartime, Churchill is widely regarded as an exemplary leader who transformed his followers and the system in which he lead. Aside from his effective strategic and political contributions, Churchill was a personable and charismatic leader who, by embodying several key traits of emotional intelligence, was able to guide a nation during unprecedented times of distress.

As a young leader just beginning my career, I feel it important to develop my own emotional intelligence. When I compare myself to a leader like Churchill, I am able to recognize my own strengths reflected in him while also noticing where my leadership style deviates.

**Self-awareness**

Self-awareness includes not just understanding your own emotions, but also being able to identify the cause of these feelings. Leaders who possess self-awareness are able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as well as remain humble (Goleman, 2004).

Winston Churchill was known for his humility. He understood himself to be a part of his larger community, saying “We are all worms but I do believe I am a glow worm,” (in personal correspondence Churchill, 1906). This understanding allowed him to forge a connection with his followers by identifying their motivations and values as complimentary to his own. Through this connection, Churchill was able to identify how his actions impacted those around him. His office aids noted several occasions that, following an emotional outburst, Churchill would apologize saying “Don’t mind me, it’s not you – it’s the war,” (as cited by Mattone, 2016). This level of self-awareness allowed Churchill to better understand himself as well as his role as leader.

I am similar to Churchill in this regard. I too have high levels of self-awareness and certainly lean toward humility over arrogance. Like Churchill likening himself to a glow worm, I favor self-deprecating humor while remaining confident in my ability to achieve whatever I set out to do. To me, this is the most basic and most important trait of emotional intelligence. Without an awareness of self, it seems unlikely that a leader would be able to fully process the needs of his or her followers and thus would be unable to address them.

**Self-regulation**

Emotionally intelligent people must not only be aware of their emotions, but also be capable of controlling them. This extends beyond refraining from outbursts, including flexibility to change and accountability. Self-regulation should not extend so far as to compromise a leader’s basic values, because a clear understanding of these amplify emotional intelligence.

Churchill certainly knew his values and stuck to them strongly. He believed in the importance of unwavering honesty: “The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is,” (as cited by Mattone, 2016). This dedication to his values came at the expense of other self-regulatory qualities. He refused to compromise in his communications and found straddling issues in order to placate the public repugnant (Hayward, 2004). He declined to be “impartial as between the fire brigade and the fire,” (as cited by Hayward, 2004). This refusal to moderate his beliefs negatively impacted his leadership capabilities. As his peer, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith observed, “[Churchill] is impulsive and borne along on the flood of his all too copious tongue… [degrading] public life more than anyone of any position in politics,” (as cited by Hayward, 2004).

In this way, I differ from Churchill. I cannot recall a time when I have spoken without first considering how my ideas and actions will impact my peers. Before I speak in group settings, I find myself carefully moderating what I am going to say and how I am going to say it. While this approach can limit conflict, I am often perceived as distant and removed from situations. People might not accuse me of being brash or thoughtless, but my overly regulated public appearance can seem calculating, cold and unfriendly. As a leader, this is an ineffective way to convince my followers that I am worth supporting and working for. While very different from Churchill’s leadership style in appearance, the underlying lack of emotional intelligence works similarly to undermine my leadership ability. To be a more effective leader, I should find the middle group between complete self-regulation, and Churchill’s proclivity toward uncensored expression.

**Motivation**

Emotionally intelligent leaders are highly motivated, pursuing goals with energy and persistence (Goleman, 2004). They are intrinsically driven and hold high standards, working tirelessly for more than money or status. This doesn’t mean that such leaders are hyper-critical. Instead, emotionally intelligent leaders like Churchill exhibit “optimism, even in the face of failure,” (Goleman, 2004, 3).

While Churchill’s enthusiasm might have been perceived as brash and unbecoming, it exhibited a high level of motivation. Churchill refused to give up, once urging a diplomat to “Continue to pester, nag and bite. Demand audiences. Don't take NO for an answer,” (as cited by Hayward, 2004). Churchill carried this energy to by public, encouraging the British to “… just [keep buggering on].” This proclivity toward optimism, even in the face of World War II, is indicative of his quality as a motivated leader.

I am deeply impressed by Churchill’s level of persistence. While I wouldn’t consider myself a pessimistic person, I do take no for an answer. I see the value in accomplishing a goal, but I also like to play it safe. If someone in a position of authority says no or even hints at the unlikelihood of the desired outcome, I’m likely to drop the idea. I will often settle for a less thorough or exciting outcome. Were I to emulate Churchill’s unwavering motivation, I most certainly would have a much broader range of experiences, failures and successes.

**Empathy**

Empathy is broadly explained as the ability to interpret the world from someone else’s point of view. For leaders this trait is often overlooked, but its value cannot be overstated. Churchill recognized the importance of the careful consideration of his follower’s feelings in the decisions that he made. While Churchill was seen by some as rude, his employees described a man who “…worked hard himself, drove them equally hard, but did so with humor and kindness, alert to their personal needs and quick to apologize for any outburst of anger,” (as cited by Hayward, 2004). The brusqueness of his communications largely came from a respect of those he served. He argued that to tell it any other way would be a disservice to the British public.

I admire Churchill’s concern for his followers. Second to self-awareness, this is a leadership trait that I most hope to encompass in my leadership style. By incorporating empathetic decision making in my everyday interactions, I could increase my influence as a leader while also improving the quality of my leadership decisions.

**Social Skills**

While Churchill had his critics, he was a socially skilled leader. His position as a skilled orator and winner of a Nobel Prize in literature indicated his status as a master communicator. His long career in government taught him to manage change and resolve tremendous conflicts through diplomatic solutions. These skills allowed him to “channel his determination to the British people, and generally strengthen their resolve through enthusiastic encouragement and praise…” (Mattone, 2016).

Social skills are perhaps my largest barrier as a leader. Instead of resolving conflicts, I tend to avoid them at all cost. This fear of conflict dramatically impacts the quality of my interpersonal communication and limits me as a leader. Had Churchill operated under this same style, it’s quite possible that World War II would have been lost.

**Conclusion**

As someone who has barely begun her leadership journey, it seems impossible to measure myself against such an institution of transformational leadership. As a man who unequivocally changed history, Winston Churchill was an undeniably great leader. That being said, this examination of emotional intelligence and its role in shaping leadership styles has revealed that, even in legends like Churchill, there is room for improvement. This is the lesson that I have taken; one’s leadership style is never fully formed and can always be improved.

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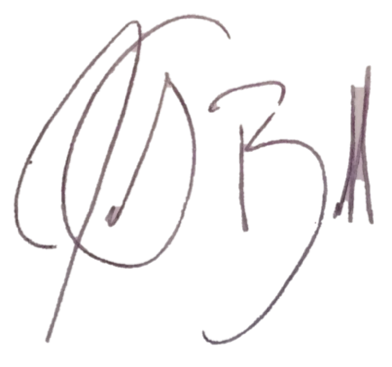
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Honor Code

On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance.



Julia DeBell