

## What is your stereotype of a leader?

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We all have stereotypes about leaders and how people lead. These stereotypes start early. Think about when you were six. Who were the leaders in your life at six? Surely, your parents. Probably teachers and coaches. Older siblings too. *When we're six we generally think of "leaders" as people who make the rules and tell us what to do.*

When we're about twelve, we start thinking of leaders differently. We begin to notice the different qualities or characteristics that make the leaders in our friends group a leader. Perhaps they were outgoing. Or talkative. Risk-takers. Organizers. *When we're 12, we start to think that leaders are popular. They are people we like and want to be around (and follow).*

Right now, who are the leaders at Widener? President Wollman. Faculty. The captain of a sports team or the president of a fraternity or sorority. *All these leaders have a title. They are in a position of leadership.*

The point of this paper is that our perceptions of leadership -- and who is a leader -- has changed from when we were 6 to 18. *Moreover, our perceptions of who is a leader will continue to change.*

The truth is that everyone has different **negative stereotypes** about leaders. While not all leaders are jerks or arrogant, some people think that's what leaders are. Not all leaders are charismatic, but most people report they think leaders need to be outgoing.

When I was 18 the stereotype I had about leaders were that they were all men. I went to an all boy high school and almost all my teachers were men. My coaches were men. My religious leaders were men. Leaders were men! I am 63 now, and for decades I've thought differently about who is a leader. But back then the "leaders are men" stereotype held me back about thinking differently about leadership.

Here's another stereotype I had about leadership. I thought leaders had to be tall. I don't know why I had that stereotype, but here's one potential reason: when I was six all the "leaders" in my life were taller than me (e.g., parents, teachers). I guess I got use to "looking up" to leaders. But today, I know that height has nothing to do with leadership.

Some people think leaders are smarter than those they lead -- that they have more "intellectual firepower." The research does not show this, but many people persist in thinking there is a strong relationship between IQ and leadership. The truth is that EQ (emotional intelligence) is a lot more important than IQ when it comes to being an effective leader.

Finally, there is a stereotype that leaders need to be physically good looking. They need to be physically fit. Yet what do these qualities have to do with leadership?

Here's my point: *We all have stereotypes about leaders. These stereotypes may be holding us back from thinking about leadership differently. More critically: What are your leader stereotypes?*

## ASSIGNMENT

To complete your post-workshop reflection please go to Your Assignments and click on the post-workshop reflection template. You will be prompted to respond to three questions (the questions are listed below).

Before writing and submitting your reflection, please read and follow the guidelines below:

- ***What was the topic or theme of this workshop (60 words)?***  
In your own words, what you think was the point of the paper above?
- ***How does this topic connect to my own experience (60 words)?***  
This is where you should reflect on a stereotype or stereotype(s) you have about leaders. You cannot use any of the stereotypes used above.
- ***Why is it important for leaders to know and practice what this topic is about (60 words)?***  
Reflect and write about why it would be important for leaders to know that everyone has "leader stereotypes."