

## The Untapped Potential of Introvert Leaders

Marina A. Pawlaczyk

Dr. Beth Leslie

Southeastern University

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Literature Review .....	6
Introvert vs. Extrovert.....	6
Myers Briggs Overview.....	7
MBTI in the Workplace .....	9
MBTI Beyond the Workplace.....	13
The Extrovert Ideal .....	14
Learned Leadership .....	15
Introverts as Leaders.....	16
Introverts Stepping Out .....	19
Successful Introvert Leaders .....	20
Methodology.....	24
Research Overview .....	24
Participants .....	24
Design and Procedure .....	24
Limitations.....	27
Results .....	27
Discussion .....	30
References .....	31
Appendix A.....	35
Appendix B.....	37

Appendix C..... 42

Appendix D..... 44

### Abstract

Academic research shows that extroverts are generally seen as more productive and effective leaders than their introvert counterparts because they possess the characteristics our society has so often revered (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2009). With the rise of the “extrovert ideal” throughout our society, introverts are left wondering what role they play when it comes to leadership (Cain, 2013). Through examples of four successful introvert leaders (Susan Cain, Warren Buffett, Laura Bush, and Bill Gates), it can be derived that it is not the personality that makes the leader but, rather, the passion, drive, and self-actualization of the individual. With greater emphasis on education, development, and training when it comes to utilizing one’s strengths innately within one’s personality, the potential of introverts, often hidden by shame, remorse, and feelings of inadequacy, will no longer go untapped.

### The Untapped Potential of Introvert Leaders and What Drives Them

- *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*
- *The Introvert Advantage: How to Thrive in an Extrovert World*
- *Self-Promotion for Introverts: The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead*
- *Quiet Influence: The Introvert's Guide to Making a Difference*

The preceding are several examples of our society's increased fixation on the notion of introversion versus extroversion. Countless books, articles, and studies are being written and conducted as a result of the release of the ever-popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, developed by Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katharine Cook Briggs, in conjunction with C.G. Jung's discovery of psychological types (Martin, 1997). The popularity does not stop there, however. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) has become progressively favored within the corporate world whether determining the best candidate for a certain position, developing effective team dynamics, or predicting management derailment tendencies in high-profile employees.

Despite the ample amount of information provided by Isabel Briggs Myers, Katharine Cook Briggs, and many other psychologists regarding psychological types, society continues to struggle to fully understand the benefits, as well as the damage, that the MBTI can cause. As a result of the unconscious rise of the "extrovert ideal" (Cain, 2013) as well as lack of knowledge regarding psychological typing, introverts have struggled with stereotypical assumptions especially in the discipline of corporate leadership. Can introverts lead if they are often considered to be shy? Can introverts be expected to motivate others when they choose not to speak up? Can introverts lead a team when they struggle being around people for long periods of time? These are only several examples of stereotypical questions introverts are faced with when

declaring their desire to be a leader. Many researchers have debated the controversial issues of whether introverts are able to lead as productively or effectively as their extrovert counterparts. However, many have neglected the fact that there are countless introverts in the past and present that are considered successful and distinguished leaders. Minimal research has been done regarding the history of these successful introvert leaders and the determination of what makes them successful despite their innate tendencies. These sequence of questions were the motivation the researcher needed to discover the true answer behind introvert leadership.

- How prevalent are introvert leaders within a college community?
- Do these introvert leaders experience invalidation/shame in regards to leading?
- What motivated these introvert leaders to step out despite feelings of inadequacy?

The research reviewed thus far has led to the belief that introverts can be successful leaders, as shown through four examples. These leaders are classified as introverts due to their innate personalities yet are set apart from their counterparts due to a burning passion for their cause, belief, or ideal. Determining an individual's passion is the jump start needed to pursue one's desired goals despite the obstacles that introversion tendencies will bring about.

## **Literature Review**

### **Introverts vs. Extrovert**

In a world focused on the "extrovert ideal" (Cain, 2013, p. 29) it is important to know the true difference between an introvert and an extrovert. According to Cain (2013), there is no definitive definition for these differing preferences (introvert and extrovert) amongst the ample research being done. Introverts and extroverts come in different shapes, sizes, and styles. However, Cain (2013) provides a few general characteristics that are typically agreed upon by researchers that can be related to each preference.

The main difference between introverts and extroverts comes down to how an individual regains their energy or recharges. Introverts, for example, gain their energy by spending time alone while extroverts gain their energy by being around others. Introverts feel more balanced and at home with limited stimulation while extroverts tend to jump right in to situations or events often causing over-stimulation. At work, introverts are typically noticed to work slower and more deliberately than their extrovert counterparts. They prefer to focus on one task at a time in a quiet space. As a result of this, their extrovert counterparts, who prefer to think out loud rather than sit in solitude, can often misunderstand their introvert coworkers. Introverts are commonly known for choosing to spend time with a few close friends rather than a large group of acquaintances. However, one of the biggest arguments Cain (2013) makes when describing introverts is that “introvert” and “shy” are not interchangeable terms. “Shyness is the fear of social disapproval or humiliation, while introversion is a preference for environments that are not overstimulating” (Cain, 2013, p. 12). This is a misunderstanding that is often made by the general population when referencing introverts.

The determination of whether an individual is an introvert or extrovert can often be determined through observation of how one chooses to relax, work, or socialize (as described above). However, there are countless quizzes, books, and charts that can also be referenced as a guide. One of the most popular ways to determine personality preference is through the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

### **Myers Briggs Overview**

Carl Jung, a renowned psychologist, first developed the idea of different temperaments and dispositions in his book from 1921, *Psychological Types* (Cain, 2013). In an effort to explain the differences amongst the people around him, Jung quickly became responsible for the

phenomenon of the terms “introvert” and “extrovert” (Martin, 1997). Since the publishing of Carl Jung’s theory, a variety of researchers and psychologists have aimed to perfect the concept of personality and the innate tendencies that vary between individuals. Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katharine Cook Briggs, desired to develop a system that would put Carl Jung’s theory into practice, making it more useful to the common people of the world. After years of “type watching,” or analyzing the tendencies and preferences of those around them, Briggs and Myers determined that men and women would be able to make better life decisions with the understanding of their own personality and preferences. Thus, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was born. It was first published and began being used in 1975 (Martin, 1997). The MBTI bibliography contained over 11,000 references in 2010, and continued to grow exponentially year after year after starting at a mere 337 references in 1976 (Martin, 1997). Terms such as *personality*, *type preferences*, *temperaments*, and *functions*, often used interchangeably throughout similar subject matters, significantly increased in popularity as a result of the MBTI. This assessment, when used and understood correctly, can be helpful in determining an individual’s strengths and weaknesses, an individual’s potential career path, and the understanding of the way an individual relates to those around them.

According to Briggs and Myers (1995), personality is examined by analyzing the four preferences of an individual, or the "consistent and enduring patterns of how we use our minds" (Martin, 1997, p. 1). Eight possible personality preferences are broken up into four sliding scales featuring two polar opposite personality functions. An individual is then able to answer a series of questions that will provide them a four letter psychological type, often referred to as one's personality type. More in-depth MBTI testing will provide a number score for each sliding scale. As the number gets higher, it reveals that an individual was consistent when



answering questions, most often gravitating to their dictated preference. When the number is lower, it shows that one may have lower consistency in answers while taking the test and thus should read over the possible personality types to determine one's best fit (Martin, 1997). There are sixteen personality types that can be determined by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, each with its own distinct characteristics, values, motivators, and learning styles.

### **MBTI in the Workplace**

With the rise in popularity of the MBTI, many companies and corporations are beginning to use this tool in the workplace. It has been shown to be very beneficial in predicting management derailment tendencies (the traits that stop the upward advancement of an employee) as well as creating more productive team dynamics. However, when not used properly it can quickly become a gateway to stereotyping, outcasting, and labeling.

**Benefits.** Jessup (2002) refers to the MBTI as a “tool with intent not to stereotype, but to allow understanding of individual preferences to facilitate all aspects of life: differences in learning and communication styles, conflict management, and relationships...” With a dominant and an auxiliary function, the two work together to create a balance, in which the dominant is the preferred function. Having knowledge of one’s dominant functions ultimately leads to the knowledge of the inferior functions which can help illuminate stress triggers due to a lack of balance. Jessup (2002) introduces the zig zag model which encourages complete balance in all functions, as well as a focus on developing and maintaining non-dominant or less preferred preferences. For example, this understanding of type and temperament of employees can help managers within an organization determine the best policy for addressing organizational change to ensure subordinates are given the proper opportunities to adapt and change. This knowledge of dominant and auxiliary functions can also allow individuals to begin stretching themselves to

work outside of their initial preference, expanding their reach, increasing their productiveness, and becoming a greater contributor to a company.

In an additional attempt to show the benefits of the MBTI in the workplace, Jessup (2002) presents the idea of purposely creating teams at work that have contrasting types in order to balance out strengths and weaknesses of individual members. This idea is backed up by Hammer and Huszczo (as cited in Sample, 2004) who found that more diverse teams have been shown to have a higher efficiency rate due to the idea that a greater knowledge of the talents and abilities that differing personalities possess leads to less conflict and misunderstanding amongst coworkers and team members.

Using the MBTI in the workplace can also lead to a greater understanding of derailment characteristics amongst management. Derailment characteristics are defined as those who have “problems with interpersonal relationships,” those that have “difficulty leading a team,” those that have “difficulty changing or adapting,” those that “[fail] to meet business objectives,” and those that have “too narrow [of a] functional orientation” (Gentry, Mondore, & Cox, 2007, p. 859). According to the individual authors, Finkelstein, Smart, and Wells (as cited in Gentry, Mondore & Cox, 2007, p. 857), derailment can often “cost their companies over 20 times an executive’s salary in direct and indirect costs.” Therefore, links to management derailment characteristics and whether those characteristics have any links to personality preferences can help countless companies avoid this pitfall. It would be beneficial for organizations to be able to recognize employees who may lead to derailment. In a recent study, managers were given the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to determine their personality profile and then were rated on a scale of 1-5 by bosses and other employees in regards to derailment characteristics within the manager. Results showed data that was unable to substantiate one type (introvert or extrovert) of manager

over the other in terms of derailment characteristics. However, derailment tendencies, or traits that stop the upward advancement of an employee, were more often viewed in managers that held intuitive, thinking, and perceiving personality types. This study proves that companies using the MBTI to assess leadership ability need to ensure that they obtain knowledge about all possible type preferences rather than assuming introversion and extroversion are the only affecting factors.

**Drawbacks.** Despite the ample benefits to using the MBTI as a tool in the workplace, there should be greater concern for the potential abuse of the MBTI instrument when used by unqualified or unethical personnel. James (2003) suggests that though the use of the MBTI in the workplace can be helpful, it must be used with great caution. Companies will often use these personality tests for leadership training and hiring services. However, James (2003) questions the validity of these results when not considering several varying factors. Small details such as a change in one point difference on the Myers-Briggs assessment can result in a complete reclassification of one's personality type. With psychologists having contrasting views in reference to extroversion and introversion and the determination of whether or not these traits are mutually exclusive or have the ability to overlap, James (2003) is hesitant to get on board with the use of personality testing within a corporation. Examples are given of business roles, such as marketing, in which managers will behave in a manner that allows them to do their job successfully despite their personality type. Ultimately, James (2003) goes against the norm and comes to the conclusion that personality assessments often provide a limited view of that individual's behavior.

Similar drawbacks are noticed by Bryan and Ashley Kennedy (2004) when using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator within career counseling. The two explain that knowing one's

psychological type can be beneficial in understanding oneself, one's strengths, and the areas in which one needs to grow. However, though useful in helping clients discover strengths and weaknesses, one's MBTI score should not dictate one's ability to do a specific job, an assumption many people make. Rather, it should provide insight as to where an individual has opportunity to grow.

According to Coe (1992), using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator within their offices as a means to select employees is a definite misuse of the tool. He claims that this is a clear misunderstanding of the MBTI. The personality assessment does not measure "how well one is integrated with one's shadow" (Coe, 1992). The "shadow" is defined as the function that is not preferred or the one that is used less often. Everyone has a shadow function, but the strength and one's ability to work within that function varies. Therefore, companies are basing their judgements of a candidate solely on their preferred function rather than their ability to work in and outside that function. Coe (1992) goes on to talk about the usage of the MBTI in team building exercises. He agrees with the research stated earlier that it can be advantageous to team work environments, leading to a better understanding and appreciation of the personalities and inclinations of individuals within the group. However, this can also lead employees to typecast or criticize others based on their personality type, ultimately stereotyping due to lack of knowledge. In order to avoid this, Coe (1992) encourages that companies using the MBTI as a vital tool within their corporation should invest in further training sessions including seminars on how to type-watch, or determine one's type simply by observing. Companies should also include sessions on how to become further united with one's shadow functions. Further research needs to be done to ensure that the misuse of the MBTI is resolved.

### **MBTI Beyond the Workplace**

With “more than 10,000 companies, 2,500 colleges and universities and 200 government agencies” taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, it is evident that the popularity of the benefits of the MBTI is being heavily utilized with young adults (Cunningham, 2012). However, the question arises whether or not the MBTI could provide greater usefulness if it began to be utilized (with proper certifications) by a younger age group.

There is little research, currently, regarding the usage of the MBTI within a middle school or high school setting. Although, the small amount of research that has been done denotes that the MBTI can assist counselors when it comes to helping students discover career and vocational interests and teachers when it comes to understandings students’ learning styles.

**Counselors.** In an effort to break the cycle of “poverty, hopelessness, crime and violence” so often found within urban, African American communities, research was conducted at Community High School, located predominantly in an African American community, to determine if the results of the MBTI could assist counselors and teachers when providing information to students regarding their career and vocational interests (Peeke, Steward, & Ruddock, 1998). An individual’s typology, or personality type, can “serve only as an indicator of where counselors might begin in the process of increasing adolescents’ self awareness of values, interests, and identification of typology-associated professions” (Peeke, Steward, & Ruddock, 1998, para. 42). Having the opportunity to take the MBTI in high school, the students located in this urban environment will have access to tools necessary to help pinpoint their individual strengths and weaknesses, thus providing a starting point when looking at colleges, vocational schools, and other work settings that are available to them.

**Teachers.** In an effort to provide additional information of the psychological types of gifted adolescents, a study was conducted including participants from a residential academy for adolescents that were identified as academically gifted (Cross, Speirs, & Cassady, 2007). Imperative implications were discovered that will allow teachers to enhance the classroom for these gifted students. “A similarity between gifted students’ and teachers’ personality types enables teachers to provide the type of instruction that appears to fit with gifted students’ learning styles” (Cross, Speirs, & Cassady, 2007, para. 2). A mismatch of personality types can lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and a lack of challenge for the student. By providing teachers with “professional development sessions that give an overview of the four broad dimensions of personality and their indication of learning style preference” can help teachers implement a variety of lesson plans and instructional strategies into their curriculum in an effort to effectively satisfy a wide group of students (Cross, Speirs, & Cassady, 2007, para. 3).

As shown, the MBTI can be beneficial to students in both middle and high school as well, when used correctly and ethically. This tool can allow students to realize and understand the differing strengths and weaknesses among their peer groups rather than simply struggling with society’s appeal towards the extrovert and the “extrovert ideal” (Cain, 2013).

### **The Extrovert Ideal**

As a result of the “extrovert ideal” (Cain, 2013), our society has become increasingly fixated on the idea of personality, charisma, and charm. Academic research shows that extroverts are generally seen as more productive and effective leaders than their introvert counterparts because they possess the characteristics our society has so often revered (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2009). According to Cain (2013), extroversion is literally a part of our DNA. The genetically transmitted trait of extroversion is found to be more prevalent in Europe and America

than Asia or Africa. According to researchers, this seems appropriate considering travelers (generally more extroverted) would be the ones in which the populations of Europe and America descended. Throughout history, Cain (2013) discovered that there has consistently been a reverence to those that were able to take charge and take action - ie. Greeks (known for their oratory skills), Romans (known for their abounding social life), and our founding fathers (known for their ability to go against the grain and fight for freedom). America quickly became a nation focused and obsessed with the idea of personality, charisma, and charm. Cain (2013) worries, however, whether or not society began to sacrifice the concept of being true to ourselves as we moved closer and closer to this “Culture of Personality” that is fixated on the allure of extroversion (Cain, 2013, p. 33).

With extroversion on such a high pedestal and thus extrovert leaders looked on as more successful and effective, introverts struggle to prove themselves in a world dominated by talking (Grant, Gino & Hofman, 2009).

### **Learned Leadership**

According to Doh (2003), leadership is becoming an important aspect of business and management research and education. Top U.S. business schools are now offering a broad range of leadership classes, and journals relating to leadership are increasing in significance. Doh (2003) conducted interviews with various management educators from across the United States as to whether or not leadership is a teachable trait. Though the selection of interviewees was limited, all those who were interviewed believed that leadership could, in fact, be learned. Kim Cameron (as cited in Doh, 2003), a professor of organizational behavior and human resource management at the University of Michigan Business School, states that “if leaders are born not made - and if no one can teach anyone else to improve - let’s start investigating leadership in the

biology lab rather than in the business world” (p. 59). Many of the educators agreed that leadership could be taught given that the student was a willing recipient and that the student was able to put leadership into practice. Opinions varied when interviewees were asked who can be taught leadership, but they agreed that recipients who are self-motivated and actively seeking leadership positions to develop their skills are the best pupils. Several of the educators believed that leadership had innate abilities, but overall it could easily be taught to anyone willing to learn and put forth the effort.

Another interview and survey done by Holmes, McNeil, & Adorna (2010) reveals the perceptions of student athletes regarding leadership traits. With a voluntary sample of 33 students, focus groups were formed to encourage freedom of expression when answering survey questions. Athletes from various sports were then asked questions ranging from the qualities of a good leader and the qualities of the best and worst captain. Favorable leadership characteristics that were given included those that would communicate with team members and speak up at meetings. These leaders would lead by example and behave responsibly. Other characteristics mentioned included trustworthiness, responsibility, and experience. These are all traits that can be learned or improved upon. One interviewee, a captain of the girls’ soccer team, did not initially seek out the position of leadership. She stated, “I didn’t want to be a Captain. I didn’t have what it takes...I thought Captains had to be rowdy. I didn’t have a choice and I learned a lot” (Holmes, *et all*, 2010, p. 455). This goes to show that leadership can be learned when an individual is given the opportunity to develop the necessary talents.

### **Introverts as Leaders**

Introverts are often faced with four main challenges that can make it difficult to reach a leadership role within a company (Kahnweiler, 2009).



***Stress.*** Introverts tend to overload on work because they have a hard time saying no. With an inability to stand up and set limitations for themselves, they can often become overworked. Introverts also need to ensure that they are taking time out for themselves to escape people exhaustion. Without this, stress levels can soar.

***Perception gaps.*** Introverts are often pre-judged as rude or insensitive because they aren't ones to speak up right away. They can be seen as slow-thinkers as a result of their need to process information before giving feedback.

***Career de-railers.*** Introverts aren't ones to bring attention on themselves, so in a competitive business, it can be difficult for them to sell themselves and their hard work to attain promotions and new jobs. Because introverts are often overstimulated by large crowds and intimidated by small talk, networking can be a struggle. With networking being such a big component to the achievement of new jobs, this can be a big weakness.

***Invisibility.*** Introverts struggle with the feeling of being invisible. Ideas are often not heard or are taken lightly. As a result of these challenges that many introverts face, it is vital for them to develop the skills necessary to counteract the challenges and turn their innate nature into a strength.

Despite these struggles and obstacles, Kahnweiler (2009) posits that many successful executives are revealed to be introverts. Approximately 50 percent of the population are introverts and about 40 percent of the executives are introverted. Kahnweiler (2009) does not view introversion as a problem to be solved but rather a strength that needs to be developed. As an introvert, it is important to take the time to develop leadership characteristics and learn how to turn the quiet, reserved nature into a strength for a company. In agreement, Cain (2013) goes on to explain that society has put an overvalue on extrovert leaders. Giant personalities are not

necessary to be a good leader. A lot of leading within a corporation is done within small meetings rather than huge conferences. Yes, there are times when a leader must be able to speak in front of large crowds, but it is done much less often than society seems to think.

Sixty-five percent of senior corporate executives view introversion as a barrier to getting ahead in the corporate world (Grant, *et. all*, 2009). However, an experiment conducted by Grant, *et al* (2009) shows that in some cases, introverts may be a better fit to lead. When conducting a lab experiment including 163 college students that were put in groups to see how many t-shirts they could fold in 10 minutes, groups with proactive followers folded, on average, 28 percent more shirts under an introvert leader. However, when a proactive follower spoke up under an extrovert leader, the leader appeared threatened and would shut out any suggestion of improvement by the follower. This study shows that though introverts have to overcome much bias in society, when it comes to leadership, there are instances where introverts are proven to be the more effective and productive leaders.

Additional evidence indicating that personality cannot be used to determine one's ability to lead is through a study done by Hinkley (2005). After surveying 1,200 managers, James Kouzes and Barry Posner (as cited in Hinkley, 2005) discovered five characteristics that are consistently found in successful leaders: (1) challenging the process; (2) inspiring a shared vision; (3) enabling others to act; (4) modeling the way; and (5) encouraging the heart. Hinkley formed a hypothesis that states there will be a "significant, negative correlation between introversion and leadership scores" (Hinkley, 2005, p. 15). Forty subjects, half male and half female between the ages of 18 and 25 years were asked to complete a Jung typology test and the Student Leadership Practices Inventory, assessing the individuals' rating on the five characteristics found in successful leaders. Results did not show any significant relationship

between introversion and extroversion and the leadership quality of the individual. Society must re-examine the stereotype that has been put on introvert leaders. In addition, introverts need to be willing to step out and step up to the extrovert bias that is so prevalent within society.

### **Introverts Stepping Out**

The ability to step outside of one's comfort zone simply to pursue a passion is supported by a new field of psychology referred to as Free Trait Theory (Cain, 2013). This theory, developed primarily by Brian Little, a former professor at Harvard University, dictates that both fixed traits and free traits can coexist. Fixed traits refer to the innate tendencies that an individual is born with, while free traits refer to the choices that an individual makes despite his or her natural inclinations. According to this theory, individuals are able to "act out of character in the service of 'core personal projects'" (Cain, 2013, p. 209). Simply put, introverts are able to act like extroverts for "the sake of work they consider important, people they love, or anything they value highly" (Cain, 2013, p. 209).

According to Little (as cited in Cain, 2013), even though acting outside of one's nature is a possibility, it is vital to ensure that one has several "restorative niches" (p. 219), or a place for one to return to their true self. Little (2013) refers to this balance as a Free Trait Agreement. This agreement acknowledges that individuals will "act out of character some of the time - in exchange for being [themselves] the rest of the time" (Cain, 2013, p. 221). A lack of balance for introverts can lead to feelings of becoming overwhelmed, stressed out, and exhausted, thus rendering them useless in pursuing their "core personal projects" (Cain, 2013, p. 209).

### **Successful Introvert Leaders**

With approximately 40 percent of executives being introverts, it should not be surprising when big name leaders, from varying walks of life, such as Susan Cain, Warren Buffett, Laura

Bush, and Bill Gates are revealed to be introverts (Kahnweiler, 2009). Examining the lives of these four flourishing leaders has shown a common denominator behind their willingness to step out and lead. Each individual carries with them a passion and a desire for their specific cause that gave them the confidence to step outside their comfort zone and overcome the obstacles and barriers that often hinder introverts from becoming leaders in the spotlight.

**Susan Cain.** Widely known for her book, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, and the TED Talk that goes along with it that currently has over 10 million views, Susan Cain has quickly distinguished herself as an introvert leader. After 7 years of introvert research, a time of “total bliss,” (Cain, 2012b), Cain now refers to herself as an “oxymoronic creature” (Cain, 2012b) because she is currently doing what her book advises not to. She is foregoing her natural desire of solitude and reading and is choosing to step into a new world that includes interviews, TED Talks, and book signings. With over 21 interviews under her belt in just one day, Cain quickly discovered she was going to need additional help. She decided to join Toastmasters, “a worldwide organization whose members meet weekly in local chapters to practice public speaking” (Cain, 2012b, para. 8). Cain (2012b) knew the idea of speaking in front of hundreds and thousands of people was not an easy task for an introvert like herself, but she chose to receive the proper instruction needed through Toastmasters along with an additional speaking and acting coach to ensure that her passion and belief behind her book was well received. When asked why, Cain states, “...partly because I believe it’s healthy for all of us (extroverts included) to stretch occasionally beyond our temperaments. Mostly because, for the sake of a book on the value of quiet, I’m willing to make a little noise” (Cain, 2012b, para. 17).

**Warren Buffett.** According to Schroeder (2008), Warren Buffett, from a young age, had a passion for making money. At age six, Buffett went door to door in his neighborhood selling packs of chewing gum. The eagerness to sell continued even during family vacations. Opposite of his father, Warren was interested in money first and politics second. He hung around his father's office at the Omaha National Bank any chance he got. It was here that Warren would spend time with his two uncles and take in all the sights and sounds of a stockbroking firm. He fell in love with the numbers on the "big screen" and was determined at a young age to figure out the pattern they seemed to follow. Warren's meeting with Sidney Weinberg, the senior partner of the investment bank Goldman Sachs, was the beginning of his love for investments and making money. Buffett went back to Omaha with a new dream in hand and was now old enough to lay out the plans needed to achieve it. He picked up the book, *One Thousand Ways to Make \$1,000*, and delved in. He was fascinated by the concept of compounding money and how quickly a small sum could turn into a fortune. However, despite his innate business sense, Buffett was not socially adept. He was often viewed as either shy or standoffish. Though he had a few close friends, social interaction was not Warren's strong point. In an effort to turn this around, Warren discovered Dale Carnegie's, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and took it to heart. However, like most things, Warren wanted numbers to prove that these "rules" would work. Buffett would follow the rules laid out and then keep track of the results. He found that they worked! By the time Warren made it to high school, he had made several new friends, joined the Woodrow Wilson golf team, and was no longer seen as offensive to others. His passion to make money and sell, had to be partnered with a good reputation with people, and Buffett gained this through dedication to overcome obstacles to achieve his passion. By senior year, Warren had found business in old pinball machines. He placed one machine inside a barber shop for a test

run and soon made enough to buy multiple machines for barbershops all around town. Within no time, he was making a small fortune. This young, passionate introvert, quickly discovered the hurdles he needed to jump in order to make his dreams come true - dreams of making mounds of money.

**Laura Bush.** Famously known as the wife of former President, George W. Bush, Ford (2008) reveals that Laura Bush started as a young girl who loved to read. She was often more satisfied in the presence of towering books than the presence of multiple people. In second grade, Laura discovered her passion to be a teacher. This passion continued in college at Southern Methodist University, where she majored in elementary education. After graduating and taking a position as a second grade teacher, Laura quickly discovered her love for reading and literacy and pursued a masters degree in library science at the University of Texas in Austin. After meeting and marrying George W. Bush, Laura's life was about to be radically changed. Laura was extremely supportive of Bush's dreams and passions despite her lack of interest in politics and her quiet nature. However, Laura soon discovered the benefits of being in the limelight with her husband. She had a knack of using her new found position to pursue her own dreams and passions. Laura lobbied for state funding for reading, literacy, and early childhood development programs. She continued pursuing these social causes by serving as a spokesperson and promoter of the teaching profession. She also hosted a White House Conference entitled "Preparing Tomorrows Teachers" in which Laura brought together university and business leaders to discuss teacher preparation and professional development of teachers. Laura Bush continues to be an advocate of public education, early childhood development, and libraries despite her natural tendency to avoid the spotlight.

**Bill Gates.** According to Gate & Lowe (1998), Bill Gates was a hyperactive, young boy who was constantly seeking a challenge. Gates' love for computers started with the help of the Lakeside School Mother's Club. In 1967, the mothers used proceeds from a fundraiser to install a small computer terminal for students to experiment on. Gates quickly become engrossed in this new technology. By eighth grade, Gates was earning money on the side as a computer programmer. He fed his desire to learn more about computers by joining the Lakeside Programmers. He was quickly kicked out, however, when the others saw him as too immature. Shortly after, the other students realized what an asset Gates was and invited him to join again in which he promptly agreed. This time, however, Gates would be in charge. As the group began to outgrow this single computer, the Mother's Club developed a new plan for them. The boys would hitch rides to the Computer Center Corporation office in which they searched for programming errors in return for free time on a new Digital Equipment Corporation computer. Through this opportunity, Gate gained business sense. He discovered the term *bankrupt* as the company they had been working for went under and were now left to find another computer to fiddle with. This began Gates' dream to own his own software business along with his buddy, Paul Allen. Though Gates maintains a quiet and reserved nature, he is continually referenced as a successful introvert leader as the former chief executive and chairman of Microsoft, the world's largest personal-computer software company, which he co-founded with Paul Allen.

In essence, investigation into the lives of these four promising leaders, as well as further research in regards to introversion and extroversion, reveals that passion for a cause, belief, or ideal is an effective driving force that can prompt introverts to step into challenging circumstances that their natural inclination may have originally avoided. Further research on this subject matter can provide insight and further understanding into the best ways to assist

introverts to find their passion and develop them as leaders. As a result, corporations, businesses, and society as a whole will be able to benefit from talents and abilities that were once hidden.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Overview**

The following research has been conducted in an effort to determine if there are any similarities in the reasoning of introverts who choose to step out of their comfort zone and into leadership roles despite common obstacles (ie. shame, inadequacy, shyness, criticism from others). Further knowledge in this area can provide ways in which introverts can be encouraged to step into leadership roles that may previously have been avoided, allowing new talents and abilities to be utilized.

### **Participants**

Participants in this research were recruited through a mass email sent to all student leaders, staff, and faculty at Southeastern University. Students were deemed “student leaders” by their active participation within an on-campus student leadership program such as the Department of Spiritual Formation (DSF), the Department of Student Experience (DSE), and the Department of Student Learning (DSL). The pool of voluntary participants was then narrowed through a sequence of surveys each denoting specific stipulations such as holding a leadership position, being an introvert, and experiencing high levels of invalidation and/or inadequacy.

### **Design and Procedure**

The Southeastern University Institutional Review Board granted approval for this research. Participation was completely voluntary and consent was obtained with the inclusion of a “Voluntary Consent for Online Survey” form. This form was included in the email distributed to the volunteers and described the purpose of the survey, the expected length of each survey, as



well as the contact information for any further questions or concerns. Through their participation in the survey(s), participants declared their agreement to the terms. To entice greater participation, each stage of surveys included a random drawing for a \$10 Chick-Fil-A gift card. No other compensation was offered to the participants.

As stated previously, participants for this research were chosen based on their status at Southeastern University (student leader, staff, and/or faculty). The sample pool was then narrowed through a sequence of surveys each denoting specific stipulations such as holding a leadership position, being an introvert, and experiencing high levels of invalidation and/or inadequacy. A total of three surveys were sent out to designated participants in one week intervals providing ample time for completion. Data was obtained through these surveys throughout October and November 2014.

Approximately 600 individuals received the initial survey, Survey #1 (see Appendix A) and were given the opportunity to voluntarily take part in the research. The first survey consisted of demographic questions as well as questions indicating one's previous and/or current leadership positions. This survey also included a third-party link ([humanmetrics.com](http://humanmetrics.com)) that allowed participants to take the official Jung Typology Test in order to determine their MBTI score (see Appendix B). There was an available place for individuals to enter their MBTI score into the survey.

After one week, the data results of the 100 individuals who chose to participate was collected. (Due to user error and/or incomplete surveys, only 73 individuals' data results were permissible.) Participants were then separated based on their answers of previous and/or current leadership positions as well as their MBTI score. Individuals that were denoted as an introvert, an "I" in their MBTI score, that had also previously held or were currently holding a leadership

position were then asked to take part in Survey #2 (see Appendix C). Thirty-nine individuals met this criteria and received the link to Survey #2 immediately following the collection of data. This survey consisted of The Introverted Leader Detox, existing literature that was originally developed by Andy Johnson of Price Associates. Permission for the usage of this survey within my research was received via e-mail by Andy Johnson, himself. This survey was designed to gauge the level of inadequacy and/or invalidation that can be often associated with introvert leaders.

After one week, the data results of the 27 individuals who chose to continue participation was collected. Participants were then separated based on their answers to the questionnaire. Individuals who answered positively (showing signs of inadequacy and/or invalidation) to four out of 7 of the questions, and have a tendency of feeling inadequate and/or invalid greater than 50 percent of the time, were then asked to take part in Survey #3 (see Appendix D). Sixteen individuals met this criteria and received the link to Survey #3 immediately following the collection of data. This survey consisted of the Introverted Leaders Research Methodology, existing literature that was created and conducted by the South Central Strategic Health Authority and the Welsh Government. Usage for this survey was granted via their website with the requirement of acknowledgement. The questionnaire asks about the impact introversion has on the individuals' career both positively and negatively, as well as any support, education, or training that either helped or hindered the individual as an introvert leader.

After one week, the data results of the 7 individuals who chose to continue participation was collected. These results consisted of paragraph responses that were then read, evaluated, and categorized into the "Results" section of this thesis.

### **Limitations**

Although this research was attentively prepared and conducted, there were several limitations that may have slight impact and/or influence on the findings. First, the population sampled for this research is a very small representation of introvert leaders on a college campus or within society as a whole. More time and access would have allowed for the opportunity of a greater sample size that could have included other universities and corporate environments. This would provide a more appropriate representation of introvert leaders. Second, because of the time constraint, this research did not allow for in-depth questioning of the participants (ie. one-on-one interviews). This would have ensured that questions given were being fully understood by the participant prior to their answering and may have resulted in less answers such as, “I don't know” or “n/a.” In addition, the opportunity for the participant to expound on their answers would have been available for greater understanding from the researcher. Third, the questionnaires being sent out as three separate surveys affected the results as there was a decrease in participation after each individual survey. The immense workload of many student leaders, staff, and faculty on campus may have discouraged participants to take part in all surveys presented to them. Had all the surveys been combined into a longer questionnaire that could be taken in one sitting, the results from a larger sample size may have provided a better generalization to deduce from.

### **Results**

The MBTI results of the volunteers showed a near 50/50 split between introvert and extrovert participants. The introverts, however, took the majority at 53 percent while the extroverts represented at 47 percent. Of the 53 percent of introverts who chose to participate, all but one (97 percent) deemed themselves as either previously holding a leadership position or currently holding a leadership position. Examples of leadership positions were then given

including the following: Assistant Professor, Resident Assistant, Chief Financial Officer, Dean, and Pastor.

Of the twenty-seven introvert individuals who chose to continue participation, over half (59 percent) showed feelings of inadequacy regarding their leadership ability. These individuals answered positively (showing signs of inadequacy and/or invalidation) to four out of seven of the questions which results to having a tendency towards these feelings greater than 50 percent of the time. Levels of this tendency, however, did not reach higher than 71 percent (answering five out of seven of the questions positively) in any one individual.

Additional short answer questions were provided to the seven individuals who were deemed introverts, showed feelings of inadequacy, and chose to continue participation. When asked about the negative affects that introversion has had on their leadership ability, three individuals claimed that their introversion has often led to misperception and misunderstanding from those around them. Individual #2 states, “Sometimes this tendency [introversion] has been perceived as being aloof from others needs and concerns.” Individual #5 expresses that the misperceptions of their introversion has possibly cost them “opportunities to advance in the workplace.” This notion mimics Individual #4’s concern that they will “not stand out as much, due to [their] introversion” which will cause them to “miss out on future opportunities.” Individual #6 deals with coming across as “indifferent because [they are] not extroverted in [their] expression of [their] actions and emotions.”

When asked what personal strategies were developed to combat these negative misconceptions, the majority of the participants agreed that it is important to push yourself outside your comfort zone as well as take time to re-energize alone. Individual #1 finds themselves “constantly pushing [themselves] beyond what is comfortable” as Individual #2

chooses to “speak up in meetings even if [they] don’t feel it is always necessary.” On the other hand, through “relaxation exercises and thorough preparation,” Individual #3 is able to gain the energy necessary to combat any public event. Individual #4 ensures their ability to “be more present when interacting with others” by taking the necessary “time to re-energize alone.”

Referencing the helpful education, development, and training for introverts, the opportunity to simply practice in areas such as public speaking and working with teams was a common denominator among many of the responses. “Being placed in contexts where team projects are required” has helped Individual #2 become more flexible when it comes to working with other personalities and styles. For Individual #3, “training in the discipline of acting has been particularly helpful...to learn how to control feelings of fear and tension in public situations.” Individual #6 agrees by refusing to “turn down opportunities for public speaking, even though it can be uncomfortable.” Practice is the key for many of these introvert leaders.

Unhelpful education, development, and training has been associated with education and leadership systems that have a heavy bias towards extroverts. “...most systems of leadership seem to be built around extroverted leaders and usually may not have intentional space created for valuing introverted leaders” (Individual #1). Many “tasks and educational emphases...tend to disregard the importance and validity of introverted team members” (Individual #2). With this extrovert bias so prevalent in society and education, it can be even more discouraging when introvert leaders meet successful leaders who are clear extroverts. “These interactions have supported the misconception that extroverts make better leaders” (Individual #4).

When asked to address what could have been of greater help as an emerging introverted leader, many of the individuals agree that a greater understanding and awareness of personality types is necessary. With the “recent emphasis on personality styles,” these concepts need to be

addressed and “incorporated more into various organizational context” (Individual #2). This could be done when working on a team or in group projects as Individual #1 explains. “It would be very helpful for everyone to learn about each other and introduce each other to personality types and leadership preferences” (Individual #1). It might even be advantageous to have “some type of leadership personality course taught in the classroom during the middle or early high school years” (Individual #3). This knowledge could increase the confidence of introverts and decrease the misconception “that leading should be left to the loudest” (Individual #3).

### **Discussion**

Though the answer of what in particular drives introvert leaders to step beyond their innate comfort zone was not adequately answered due to limitations on the researcher’s part, I believe a greater idea and concept was discovered through this research. It is possible the American education systems needs to begin thinking about the necessity, along with the mental and emotional capacity, of addressing the differences of personalities at a younger age. It shows from previous research stated as well as through the current research study, that students need to be encouraged to find opportunities to practice skills outside of their comfort zone as well as find opportunities to refine their strengths. It is vital that the coming generations are not misled with the concept that one personality type is better or more favorable over another. Instead, there needs to be an emphasis on the importance of varying personalities to bring about differing ideas and thoughts. It is only then that we are able to truly benefit from every individual’s talents and abilities.

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## Appendix A

## Survey #1

1. What is your MBTI score? (Please copy and paste this link into your browser to take the online assessment to determine your MBTI: <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp>)
2. Are you currently or have you ever been in a leadership role?
  - Yes
  - No
3. If yes, please list your leadership titles.
4. What is your first name?
5. What is your last name?
6. What is your age?
  - 18 to 24
  - 25 to 34
  - 35 to 44
  - 45 to 54
  - 55 to 64
  - 65 to 74
  - 75 or older
7. Are you male or female?
  - Male
  - Female

8. What is your status at Southeastern University? (If you hold various statuses at SEU - Please choose that status that you are most apart of.)

- Student
- Staff
- Faculty

## Appendix B

Jung Typology Test - [humanmetrics.com](http://humanmetrics.com)

4. You feel involved when watching TV soaps  
**YES NO**
5. You are usually the first to react to a sudden event, such as the telephone ringing or unexpected question  
**YES NO**
6. You are more interested in a general idea than in the details of its realization  
**YES NO**
7. You tend to be unbiased even if this might endanger your good relations with people  
**YES NO**
8. Strict observance of the established rules is likely to prevent a good outcome  
**YES NO**
9. It's difficult to get you excited  
**YES NO**
10. It is in your nature to assume responsibility  
**YES NO**
11. You often think about humankind and its destiny  
**YES NO**
12. You believe the best decision is one that can be easily changed  
**YES NO**
13. Objective criticism is always useful in any activity  
**YES NO**
14. You prefer to act immediately rather than speculate about various options  
**YES NO**
15. You trust reason rather than feelings  
**YES NO**

16. You are inclined to rely more on improvisation than on prior planning  
**YES NO**
17. You spend your leisure time actively socializing with a group of people, attending parties, shopping, etc.  
**YES NO**
18. You usually plan your actions in advance  
**YES NO**
19. Your actions are frequently influenced by emotions  
**YES NO**
20. You are a person somewhat reserved and distant in communication  
**YES NO**
21. You know how to put every minute of your time to good purpose  
**YES NO**
22. You readily help people while asking nothing in return  
**YES NO**
23. You often contemplate the complexity of life  
**YES NO**
24. After prolonged socializing you feel you need to get away and be alone  
**YES NO**
25. You often do jobs in a hurry  
**YES NO**
26. You easily see the general principle behind specific occurrences  
**YES NO**
27. You frequently and easily express your feelings and emotions  
**YES NO**
28. You find it difficult to speak loudly  
**YES NO**
29. You get bored if you have to read theoretical books  
**YES NO**

30. You tend to sympathize with other people  
**YES NO**
31. You value justice higher than mercy  
**YES NO**
32. You rapidly get involved in the social life of a new workplace  
**YES NO**
33. The more people with whom you speak, the better you feel  
**YES NO**
34. You tend to rely on your experience rather than on theoretical alternatives  
**YES NO**
35. As a rule, you proceed only when you have a clear and detailed plan  
**YES NO**
36. You easily empathize with the concerns of other people  
**YES NO**
37. You often prefer to read a book than go to a party  
**YES NO**
38. You enjoy being at the center of events in which other people are directly involved  
**YES NO**
39. You are more inclined to experiment than to follow familiar approaches  
**YES NO**
40. You avoid being bound by obligations  
**YES NO**
41. You are strongly touched by stories about people's troubles  
**YES NO**
42. Deadlines seem to you to be of relative, rather than absolute, importance  
**YES NO**
43. You prefer to isolate yourself from outside noises  
**YES NO**
44. It's essential for you to try things with your own hands  
**YES NO**

45. You think that almost everything can be analyzed  
**YES NO**
46. For you, no surprises is better than surprises - bad or good ones  
**YES NO**
47. You take pleasure in putting things in order  
**YES NO**
48. You feel at ease in a crowd  
**YES NO**
49. You have good control over your desires and temptations  
**YES NO**
50. You easily understand new theoretical principles  
**YES NO**
51. The process of searching for a solution is more important to you than the solution itself  
**YES NO**
52. You usually place yourself nearer to the side than in the center of a room  
**YES NO**
53. When solving a problem you would rather follow a familiar approach than seek a new one  
**YES NO**
54. You try to stand firmly by your principles  
**YES NO**
55. A thirst for adventure is close to your heart  
**YES NO**
56. You prefer meeting in small groups over interaction with lots of people  
**YES NO**
57. When considering a situation you pay more attention to the current situation and less to a possible sequence of events  
**YES NO**
58. When solving a problem you consider the rational approach to be the best  
**YES NO**



59. You find it difficult to talk about your feelings  
**YES NO**
60. You often spend time thinking of how things could be improved  
**YES NO**
61. Your decisions are based more on the feelings of a moment than on the thorough planning  
**YES NO**
62. You prefer to spend your leisure time alone or relaxing in a tranquil atmosphere  
**YES NO**
63. You feel more comfortable sticking to conventional ways  
**YES NO**
64. You are easily affected by strong emotions  
**YES NO**
65. You are always looking for opportunities  
**YES NO**
66. Your desk, workbench, etc. is usually neat and orderly  
**YES NO**
67. As a rule, current preoccupations worry you more than your future plans  
**YES NO**
68. You get pleasure from solitary walks  
**YES NO**
69. It is easy for you to communicate in social situations  
**YES NO**
70. You are consistent in your habits  
**YES NO**
71. You willingly involve yourself in matters which engage your sympathies  
**YES NO**
72. You easily perceive various ways in which events could develop  
**YES NO**

## Appendix C

## Survey #2

1. I often wish I was less introverted.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. I frequently feel a sense of inadequacy as a leader that is connected to being an introvert.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. I am highly critical of myself and my leadership style.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. People around me have told me that introverts can't be leaders.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. I have been criticized as a leader for my introvert traits.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. The level of shame (a sense that something is wrong with me) that I feel about my introversion is:

- None
- Minimal - Not much of an issue
- Moderate - Sometimes an issue
- Large - Frequently part of my experience
- Debilitating - Hard to function at times

7. I believe that extroverts are better leaders.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. What is your SEU e-mail address?

## Appendix D

## Survey #3

1. How has your introversion affected your leadership and/or career both **positively** and **negatively**? Please give examples. You may, for example, wish to consider any impact on: others' perceptions of you - relationships with others (including subordinates) - your profile - your standing - your 'visibility' - your energy - your stress level.
2. What personal strategies have you developed in response to your introversion? Please describe.
3. What support, education, development, or training has been particularly helpful to you as an introverted leader?
4. What support, education, development, or training has been particularly unhelpful to you as an introverted leader?
5. Is there any support, education, development, or training that might have been helpful to you as an introverted leader?
6. If you are willing to be contacted to follow up on any of the comments you have made, please enter your name and e-mail address below. You will have the option of doing this via e-mail, or on the telephone, whichever you prefer. Initial contact will be made by e-mail.
7. What is your first and last name?
8. What is your age?
  - 18 to 24
  - 25 to 34
  - 35 to 44
  - 45 to 54

- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older

9. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

10. What is your status at Southeastern University?

- Student
- Staff
- Faculty