

# What Motivates an Individual to Lead and Engage in Leadership Development?

**Sharon E. Norris**

*Spring Arbor University, USA*

## WHAT MOTIVATES AN INDIVIDUAL TO LEAD AND ENGAGE IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?

Leadership in organizational environments has been linked with individual, group, and corporate success (Adair, 2010a). Leaders set the tone for the organization through the creation of a compelling vision as well as the capacity to motivate and inspire others (Daft, 2008). Baldoni (2014) argues the most effective leaders have passion for what they do, ambition, competence, credibility, and confidence. Leadership takes place interpersonally and institutionally (Selznick, 1957), but leadership is not limited to those individuals serving in the highest-ranking roles within an organization (Senge, 1996). Leadership occurs within work units, groups, teams, and among supervisors, mid-level, and top-level managers, as well as when individuals interact with an organization's external environment. Individual with strong efficacy beliefs and the motivation to lead commonly emerge as leaders within organizational environments; and as such, these individuals actively engage in formal and informal opportunities for leadership development (Rosch & Villanueva, 2016). Felf and Schyns (2014) state, "Leadership roles require appropriate personal initiative, that is, being self-starting, taking charge, being goal-oriented, and being persistent" (p. 860).

Oftentimes, executives and the strategic managers of an organization begin their career journey as emergent leaders. According to Hong, Cantano, and Liao (2011), "An emergent leader is someone who is not designated as a leader but emerges as an informal leader of a group by exerting influence on group processes and group goal achievement" (p. 322). It has been argued that emergent leaders possess different traits and characteristics as compared with individuals who do not become leaders (Aamodt, 2016). Wickham and Walther (2007) explain, "Unlike assigned leaders, where the given role precedes the leaders' behavior, emergent leaders may arise through the enactment of behaviors or characteristics, and perceptions by partners of those enactments, that garner leadership recognition" (p. 4). Emergent leaders gain support and are accepted as leaders by others typically as a result of their active communication behaviors such as being involved, seeking others opinions, and initiating new ideas (Northouse, 2013; Fisher, 1974). Discovering what motivates an individual to get involved and positively communicate with a desire or willingness to lead as well as engage in leadership development are the overarching questions of this study.

The characteristics that influence an individual's decision to seek and accept leadership roles as well as those who pursue leadership development opportunities describes the *motivation to lead*. Motivation to lead is a theoretical framework that explains the influence of individual differences on leader behavior (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). According to Chan and Drasgow (2001), motivation to lead is "a dynamic construct that is partially changeable through social learning processes and experience" (p. 496). A key assumption is that motivation to lead "can change to some extent in a learning process as leaders acquire experience and training" (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007, p. 506). One's motivation to lead is considered malleable and may be influenced by a variety of factors such as general cognitive ability, values, personality, and

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attitudes, as well as through leadership development and experiences (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Guillen, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015; Hendricks & Payne, 2007). What motivates an individual to lead, engage in leadership development, and persist in leadership roles is explored, and specifically this chapter presents motivation to lead, leader efficacy, and thought self-leadership as characteristics of leader emergence and key outcomes of effective leadership development.

## MOTIVATION TO LEAD

Motivation to lead (MTL) is an individual-differences construct developed by Chan and Drasgow (2001), which “can be conceptualized and measured in terms of three correlated factors, namely affective-identity MTL, noncalculative MTL, and social-normative MTL” (p. 494). Chan and Drasgow define *affective-identity* MTL as those individual who like to lead others. *Social-normative* MTL describes those individuals who choose to lead out of a sense of duty. *Non-calculative* MTL refers to people who are not calculative about the costs of leading relative to the benefits. Chan and Drasgow explain motivation to lead “affects a leader’s or leader-to-be’s decision to assume leadership training, roles, and responsibilities and that affect his or her intensity of effort at leading and persistence as a leader” (p. 482). Guillen, Mayo, and Korotov (2015) argue, “one must be truly *motivated to lead* to persist in the leadership role despite the challenges leaders face in modern organizations” (p. 802).

Motivation to lead is considered a reasoned action because what individuals think influences what they do. Motivation to lead can be understood using the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) where one’s perceived behavioral control influences the development of behavioral intentions and actual behavior. As people formulate intentions, or what they intend to do, salient beliefs are taken into account, which influences what people do and what they want to do. Ajzen and Albarracin (2007) explain, “As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behavior, and greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be an individual’s intention to perform the behavior under consideration” (Ajzen & Albarracin, 2007, p. 5). According to Fishbein and Azjen (2010), an individual’s behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs, influence their attitude toward a particular behavior, its perceived norm, and perceived behavioral control. Together, these beliefs exert influence on intentions, which affect behavior. Regarding, a person’s motivation to lead, affective-identity MTL is influenced by an individual’s behavioral beliefs toward leadership. Social-normative MTL is influenced by an individual’s normative beliefs regarding one’s duty to lead, and non-calculative MTL is influenced by an individual’s control beliefs specifically regarding the perceived behavioral control to engage in leadership without counting the costs relative to its benefits. Similarly, Hong et al. (2010) argue, “MTL conveys behavioural intentions based on the valence, norms, and altruistic nature of leadership” (p. 322). Guillen et al. (2015) report the affective dimension of MTL is the strongest predictor of leadership potential (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) and leader emergence (Hong, 2005).

“Values are the ways that people describe their beliefs and expectations, what they want or do not want” (Cunningham, 2001, p. 30). Kark and Van Dijk (2007) explain, “Individuals, including leaders, hold different values and give prominence to certain values over others” (p. 503). Hence, Kark and Van Dijk posit there is a self-regulatory focus to motivation to lead and suggest “MTL could stem from various motives and, in some instances, could be aroused by the wish to do what “one ought to do”, to fulfill the expectations of others, or to avoid criticism” (p. 506). In other words, what people value and believe influences what they want, or need, which motivates the development of intentions, resulting in

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