**[3 Leadership Theories Explained](https://blogs.baylor.edu/hannah_sulver/2015/12/01/3-leadership-theories-explained/%22%20%5Co%20%223%20Leadership%20Theories%20Explained)**

[DECEMBER 1, 2015](https://blogs.baylor.edu/hannah_sulver/2015/12/01/3-leadership-theories-explained/) / [HANNAH\_SULVER](https://blogs.baylor.edu/hannah_sulver/author/hannah_sulver/) / [0 COMMENTS](https://blogs.baylor.edu/hannah_sulver/2015/12/01/3-leadership-theories-explained/#respond)

Leadership has been studied by scholars for many centuries because not all great leaders arise from the same circumstances. There are many opinions and theories about leadership because it is such a broad concept/term, but three of the main leadership theories are

1. the Great Man Theory,
2. the Trait Theory, and
3. the behavioral Role Theory.

The Great Man Theory was first proposed by Thomas Carlyle and says that leaders are born and not made and that great leaders will arise when there is a great need. This theory was rooted in early studies of leaders already in place. For much of history, leaders were naturally born in to families already in power. Much had to do with the aristocracy and royal lineages which resulted in the notion that people not belonging to the elite class were rarely considered great leaders. If someone from a lower class became a leader, it was because they fought their way to that position. This theory also discusses that women were rarely regarded as leaders in communities and beyond. Throughout history, women have been considered secondary to males which has left them out of leadership positions. Another leadership theory is the Trait Theory. The Trait Theory states that people are born with certain traits suited to leadership and that people who are good leaders have a particular set or combination  of traits that make them good leaders. Under this leadership theory, many scholars will talk about skills as well. A trait is “a distinguishing quality or characteristic” such as dependability or self-confidence. A skill is “the ability to do something well”. Some skills are acquired over time, but some skills are natural at birth which makes them closer to traits. The Trait Theory says that traits and skills can be developed over time, and that one can develop into a leader when they discover their inherent traits and skills as well as invest in new ones. The behavioral Role Theory says that people define roles for themselves and others based on social learning and reading, form expectations about the roles that they and others will play,  subtly encourage others to act within the role expectations they have for them, and act within the roles they adopt. This theory explains behavior based leadership. The best way to lead people is understanding people. This theory states that a good leader is aware of him/herself and the people around them. They take social cues and signals from the environment about their role in any situation and behave accordingly. All of these theories explain leadership in its complexity, but the truth is that good leaders embody all of the theories. A person can be born in to any leadership situation, but if they do not have well developed traits and skills, they will not be effective. Similarly, a person can have excellent traits and skills, but if they can not read where they are needed in a situation, then their traits and skills will fall short of what is needed. All of these theories and many others combine to form what builds a good leader.

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