

What Makes a Great Leader?

Emily Janzen - October 18

Leaders are everywhere. We encounter them daily in our work, our schools, our communities, and in our families. However, just because there are many people in leadership roles doesn't mean that they fit them well. Many people are talented, many people are competent, but truly incredible leaders are few and far between. Recently, through exploring the stark descriptions of humans nature and savagery in the novel, *Lord of the Flies*, I have come to my own conclusions about authority. In my opinion, the reason great leaders are so hard to come by is because most lack the balance of critical leadership traits.

One of the undeniable parts of good leadership is a strong foundation. In *Lord of the Flies*, we see from the moment our main character, Ralph, is introduced, he has a commanding presence. If we break this apart, we can see the reasons for this are that he stays dead set on his mission, has a clear vision that is bigger than just him, and taps into the unique abilities of the others boys to achieve it. Although these foundational traits are just traits displayed by a fictional character, they apply to real leadership too. Take Bill Gates for example, an individual who has been a figurehead in both the worlds of technology and philanthropy. His great achievements of Microsoft and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation were not accidents however; they were deliberate

methods of executing clear visions that saw change on a global scale. Gates has also always enlisted the help of those around him, with the foundation encouraging people to join them and make their own unique change rather than to simply donate.

Once a leader has solidified themselves, a second trait is necessary, which is the ability to build from their foundation, and do this for others. In the novel, we see Ralph demonstrate this by transforming from an indecisive and reckless individual to a responsible and strong leader, and doing it with the interest of the other boys in mind. We can also see this trait in real life leaders with examples such as woman's education rights activist, Malala Yousafzai. Determined to inspire change after the extremist Taliban group banned girls in her community from going to school, she started taking a stand in her community. Despite coming close to death for her efforts, she was determined to grow her leadership in the name of every girl struggling in the same way she was, and eventually found herself travelling the globe with millions of supporters.

Considering all of this, I have come to realize that I am not a great leader. I have powerful visions, have learned to value synergy, and have even worked to include more emotion in my decision making process. However, through examining great leadership, I realize that I lack something; a focus on what my team members actually want. It's not

just about making the best thing together, it's about making the thing that's the best for us together.

"Malala's Story: Malala Fund." Malala's Story | Malala Fund, www.malala.org/malalas-story.

What Inspires Violence?

Emily Janzen - October 25

What is violence? To put it simply, it's an act of extreme aggression that's not an emotion, but rather a display of one, and something that every child, adult, group, and society on this planet is capable of. Commonly, there is at least one of four distinct traits found within a violent individual. One of these is anger or frustration, with violence being the explosion of emotions too intense to be kept at bay. Another is fear or vengefulness, with the wronged individual feeling their best option is to retaliate against their oppressor. Third, is thirst for power, with violence being utilized as a means of manipulation to achieve desires. Finally, violence can stem from a lack of positive behavioural reinforcement, with an individual growing up in an environment where violence is the norm.

All humans experience the aforementioned emotions, but not everyone is violent; why is this? In reading the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, I have been able to determine an answer. In the story, we follow the lives of stranded boys Ralph, Piggy, and Jack as they fight against the wilderness and each other for survival. As the boys face trials, each of

them experience violence-inducing emotions, but their individual ways of responding are drastically different. Jack, the tribe's lead hunter, demonstrates violence regularly when he is frustrated, vengeful or lacking control, lashing out at the meek Piggy or brutally slaughtering pigs. Ralph, the tribe's leader, often feels the same intense emotions as Jack, but will hold them back in favour of keeping the peace. Piggy, the tribe's intellectual, has a mild personality and is not competing for power, which leads him to never display violence even when frustrated. Each of these boys live life virtually the same way on this island, so what leads to these varying results? The answer, is self-control.

The level of self control one has is based on three factors; their nature, their immediate surroundings, and their experience. We can see that Jack, the most violent of the trio, has a volatile and irresponsible personality, and has been denied leadership in the tribe situation due to Ralph's superior abilities. This leads to little self control. When we look at Ralph, we can see that his age and experience leading the tribe prevent him from letting his emotions get out of control like Jack, but this also comes easier due to his stable personality. Then, when we consider Piggy, we can see he is the farthest removed from the power struggle, and on top of this has age, experience and a gentle personality, all leading to great self control.

In conclusion, every person, whether they are a child or adult, has the capability of violence. However, referring to the levels of aggression found in the characters of *Lord of the Flies*, we can determine that not everyone is violent, as most have the self- control to take preventative action.

Jacobson, Sheri, et al. "What Are the Causes of Violence & How to Respond?" *Harley Therapy™ Blog*, 11 Oct. 2019, www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/causes-of-violence-how-to-respond.htm.

How is Power and Control Part of Tribes?

Emily Janzen - November 1

Are you an individual? Do you make your own decisions? Could you survive completely on your own? If you ask the average person, you'll get the confident response of "Of course I am, of course I do, and of course I could!". This is because many perceive that they are already living this reality. Most people go about their day in full confidence of the autonomy of their choices and their capability as an individual, believing fate to belong to no one but themselves. While an element of this thinking is excellent for achievement, one must be aware that it is not the full picture. In every moment of our lives that we spend with other people, some form of external control will influence us. No matter where the influence comes from, be it parents, friends or colleagues, there is no doubt that power controls us when we are part of a tribe.

This conclusion is well-supported by the novel "*Lord of the Flies*" by William Golding. In the book, we constantly see external influences bringing great

opportunities and detriment to the boys. For example, in the story's beginning, little action is taken until Jack utilizes the power of exciting ideas to entice the boys into building the fire. This power takes control of their better logic, and they become enthralled with this dangerous task, even when it gets out of hand. Soon after this, we see power bring about control again when it helps to prevent conflict in the tribe, with Jack's violence being held at bay by Ralph being the one wielding the authority. We also see power allowing the members of the tribe to experience a form of freedom, with Ralph's control over the shelter and fire and Jack's control over hunting relieving the rest of the tribe of worry and responsibility. In any tribe where power is present, these types of control will take hold.

However, control does not always bring about benefit. This is made apparent as early as in the first chapter, where the unchecked power over the group which Jack and Ralph possess is used to oppress others, such as when they take Piggy's glasses. Control also quickly becomes the culprit of conflict, as the reason why things start to fall apart is due to the struggle for leadership between Jack and Ralph. Both boys continuously display the amount of power they have in hopes of maintaining or gaining more control, and eventually this gets out of hand. It are these forces that split the tribe, and leave the other boys powerless against the poor leadership decisions that start to be made on both sides, such as when Simon is attacked.

Like every human group on this planet, the boys in *Lord of the Flies* are constantly influenced by the beast of power and control, for better or for worse. They simply can't escape it, for when you are part of a tribe, the beast will follow you wherever you go.

Would *Lord of the Flies* Be Different if all the Characters Were Female?

Emily Janzen - November 8th, 2019

A significant difference between my dad and I is our gender. I realized this when we discussed and compared our approach to high school. Whereas I carefully plan everything I do, he stated he and his friends "commonly found themselves in bad situations that could have been avoided with a little forethought" (Janzen, 2019). I also thought of my relationships, of how I met people then that I am still good friends with. Contrastingly, he said that "my friendships were always changing, because often they were based on common interests" (Janzen, 2019). I quickly connected these points to the characters of *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. It occurred to me that the degree of savagery described within this book might have been influenced by the all-male cohort, and that things could have been different with females. Science has

shown that girls have biologically different brains than boys, which leads to different decision-making processes, social structures, and motivations.

One change that I think would happen in all-female story would be regarding decision-making. Early in the story, the boys decide to make a fire, which is agreed upon through shouting "A fire! Make a fire!" and "at once half the boys were on their feet" (Fire on the Mountain, 2012). A possible explanation for this reckless action, according to the Army and Navy Academy's website, is because "in males, the prefrontal cortex, a center of decision making in the brain, is still incomplete at age 12" (Rodriguez, 2019), and that "messages between the brain and body tend to move more quickly and with less impulse control in males." (Rodriguez, 2019). I think this story would have changed greatly if everyone was female, because the oldest would have complete prefrontal cortices and higher impulse control, preventing major plot points such as the little ones dying in the fire.

Another change that I think would have happened in an all-female story would be the tribe's structure. The male social mentality in the book can be perfectly summed up by what Jack says while holding his feast; "I gave you food... and my hunters will protect you from the beast. Who will join my tribe?" (A View to a Death, 2012). He and the other boys on the island believe that there is to be one leader who protects the

group and provides resources, instead of survival being a collective effort. The website Psych Central gives a potential explanation for this by stating that “male-male friendships are side-to-side, fostered and maintained through shared activity” whereas “female-female friendships are face-to-face, fostered and maintained through intimacy, communication, and support” (Bates-Duford, 2018). This implies that the tribe splitting up and the events following could have been avoided if all the characters were girls due to them having much closer, more co-dependent relationships.

The final difference that I think would be in an all-female *Lord of the Flies* would be the character’s motivations. In the book, we see that even the closest friendships, such as that of Ralph and Piggy, and most valiant actions, such as Simon volunteering to head back to Piggy alone, are driven by internal needs instead of those of others. The Army and Navy Academy describes a possible reasoning for this being because males are “less motivated biologically to please parents, teachers, and peers as they establish and maintain relationships.” (Rodriguez, 2019). Alternatively, girls put relationships and others at the forefront, which we can see in the real-life example of the Carrico Sisters Case. These sisters, eight and five years old, found themselves lost in the California wilderness for two days after wandering off a trail. They were safely rescued however, which according to their mom is because they “did the right thing... they stuck together and they pulled themselves through. They saved each

other." (Sisters, 2019). The parallels between this story and an all-female *Lord of the Flies* are undeniable, and makes me think that girls in this situation would put much more value on protecting each other.

Due to the differences in decision-making, social structures, and motivations, I think that an all-female *Lord of the Flies* would have turned out drastically different.

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