

Learning Outcomes / Reflection Paper

Old Dominion University

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1. From the Forbes 100 Most Powerful Women assignment, I learned the various challenges associated with having an intersectionality of minority identities, I learned that in leadership one must be strategic in their approach to addressing diversity, and I learned what it looks like for an African American woman to navigate spaces at the top. My Forbes 100 Paper focused on the success of Rosalina Brewer, the 43rd most powerful woman in the world according to Forbes 2019 Ranking List. Brewer's perseverance enabled her to move up despite navigating the challenges of having two minority identities as an African American and woman. Even when serving as a keynote speaker for corporate meetings, people have underestimated Brewer off of their first impressions and mistaken her for serving at an entry level position instead of Chief Executive Officer of Sam's Club and Chief Operating Officer of Starbucks. I learned to carefully reassess any implicit biases I may have toward what leadership looks like at the top. Leadership doesn't look like a gender, race, or ethnicity, it looks like an individual who possesses character strengths such as perseverance, confidence, and competitiveness: traits that Brewer exercises in her everyday role. I not only learned how effective these traits are when entering spaces as a minority, but I also learned that educating others on the previous statement should be done strategically. In a 2015 interview with CNN, Brewer made a statement regarding diversity and the media twisted it accusing her of being racist. When holding high positions, there is a good chance that this type of accusation can occur. I learned to be mindful in my future university administrative positions when addressing diversity to make statements that don't leave room for this type of allegation and to refrain from judging someone based on their identities.

I can use what I learned from my research on Rosalind Brewer to exercise a sense of sensitivity in my approach to diversity, especially while navigating the field of student affairs administration where the field is social justice focused and where there is a larger representation of women in leadership positions. In the 2019 Forbes 100 Most Powerful Women List, only two were African American women. While working for Old Dominion University's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Planning Committee and the University of North Carolina Greensboro's Division of Student Affairs, I found that African American female students at both Minority Serving Institutions identify as the most involved population in recent academic years. As a student affairs professional, much of my day will revolve around working with student leaders. Once I get in a position to supervise student leaders, there is a high chance that I will have to supervise this specific population. Having competence on the struggles Brewer had to face while climbing to the top of the corporate ladder with only a bachelor's degree has equipped me to help future African American female students to develop their leadership skills through emphasizing the positive effects of having perseverance, confidence, and competitiveness. I not only can help them develop, but I can also be in a position to make sure that I don't leave out the women pursuing high positions in the field or treat them differently. As a male, I unfortunately hold a level of privilege over women due to society's idea of what leadership looks like, but at the Vice President level over a division of student affairs at a higher education institution, I will have the power to change that narrative and not show favoritism toward a specific gender, be strategic in my approach to addressing diversity, and effectively practice diversity by cultivating an inclusive climate conducive to equitable accessibility to success.

2. From the Field Study Report, I learned the importance of mentorship in leadership, I learned the effects that having children could have on women and their leadership styles (ques. 5, pg. 6), and I learned how to navigate uncomfortable spaces as a leader (ques. 7, pg. 7). For this assignment, I interviewed Sarah Jane Kirkland who serves as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the CIVIC Leadership Institute. Sarah Jane pointed out so many aspects of leadership that are essential in becoming an effective leader, but one statement that stood out was her advice in regards to mentorship, “Allow young professionals to spread their wings and be on the front end of things is essential in leadership. As a leader, you think you have to be the face, but no. Empower your followers to be the face and work together.” Empowerment is the key to good mentorship because it allows employees and supervisees to grow from this characteristic of leadership. Another part of the interview with Sarah Jane that stood out was her advice to approaching uncomfortable spaces. She indicated that uncomfortable spaces show up in two different ways: when tasked to facilitate a topic that’s uncomfortable or when asked to speak about a personal / private issue. Her advice was to be transparent in both situations, letting the audience know that it’s an uncomfortable topic and making sure that I have ‘something in my back pocket’ when preparing for these speaking events. Lastly, Sarah Jane enlightened me on the effects that having children has on her leadership style. One day her daughter was playing on the playground and hanging upside down. Sarah Jane indicated that she was more worried than her husband when seeing this. This incident and similar events with her daughter, allows her to see the unforeseen circumstances of a situation in leadership more than it did before she had a child.

I can use what I learned in my interview with Sarah Jane Kirkland to empower my future supervisees, to be competent in my approach with women who have children that will work under my leadership, and to be prepared in uncomfortable spaces. When I work my way up the ladder in my field, I now have a strong idea on how to effectively mentor those who fall under my leadership. In my role as the Speaker of the Senate for Old Dominion University's Student Government, I tried to serve as a mentor to the +48 Senators who fell under my leadership. I'd often find myself taking on tasks on my own without delegating them to Senators, which wouldn't benefit their development. Had I spoken with Sarah Jane prior to entering this role, I would have spent more time to empower them to take on those tasks without me. I now know to emphasize empowerment in my future professional roles where I have mentors. As I prepare to lead in a field that is made up of majority women, I now have an idea of the potential effects their children may have on the way they operate in their role. I have to be mindful of this if a future female employee leads their students in a way that's different from my style as a male. Lastly, when approaching uncomfortable situations in my field, I must be prepared to be transparent and have something in my back pocket for all types of questions. I'm ready to use statements like, "Thank you for asking that," or "This is an uncomfortable topic for me, but," when preparing to serve on panels or facilitate a discussion on an uncomfortable topic. There is a high possibility that I may have to facilitate uncomfortable discussions between undergraduate students when constructing an undergraduate leadership development course that prepares students to serve in the capacity of a Resident Assistant this fall at Clemson University.

3. From the Butterfly Video, I learned how to empower and equip those under my leadership through coaching, I learned not to cut off my follower's developmental

process early, and I learned how important it is for me to reassess my approach in solving problems. There were some powerful quotes in this video that made me rethink how I view leadership. One way that I've previously attempted to empower others prior to watching this video was by giving the answers to their problems. People often come to me to solve their issues and I often give them the answers. This act defies the principle of coaching in empowerment. When an effective leader empowers someone else through coaching, they teach them how to fish instead of giving them the fish. When this analogy was used in the video, it resonated with me and ever since, I've reassessed my approach in the problem solving process. During the last few weeks of my service as a Resident Assistant for Dominion and France House at Old Dominion University, I was able to assist a few of my residents with some of the problems they were facing. I used the 'teach them how to fish' theory to resolve these problems. One of these issues required a level of patience as it contributed to the individual's holistic development. This particular resident was stressed out about balancing their workload and personal life. Although I knew the solution was to exercise proper time management skills, I put the lessons from this video to practice and challenged them to come to the solution on their own. In the long-term, it worked out for the good by challenging them to find the solution on their own through proposed questions. Through this resident's struggle in searching for the solution and my reserved assistance, they were able to improve and resolve their issue of being overwhelmed. At the end of the video, a quote from Malcom Gladwell stated, "A lot of what is most beautiful about the world arises from struggle." Ever since watching this video, I made a commitment to put this principle to practice.

I can use what I learned from this video in my role as the Graduate Assistant for Clemson Home's Learning and Development to supervise the five undergraduate Resident Assistant Educators by teaching them how to fish, by patiently supporting them in their development, and by carefully approaching problem solving issues that will arise in their residential leadership roles. This upcoming fall semester, I am equipped to give my supervisees the capacity to solve their own problems by getting them to explore their own situation. Being a Resident Assistant Educator means that they have to exercise their leadership role while many of their peers will be required to follow their instructions. This requires patience because they may not understand how to approach problems or resolve issues on the first few tries. As a supervisor, I can't give them the answers to all their situations, but I must patiently support them by allowing them to find solutions through trial and error. The lesson from this video particularly about the butterfly can also help me as a Master's student at Clemson if I find myself struggling on an assignment or if I face potential challenges in my Graduate Assistant role to design and implement a development strategy designed to educate and support 240 student staff and 22 graduate staff members in University Housing. I must commit to persevering through those potential challenges by not taking shortcuts in this transition from undergraduate level coursework to graduate level coursework. It's easy for one to take shortcuts in an uncomfortable situation just because they may not want to endure the process, but I'm willing to endure that struggle to ensure that I receive efficient growth.

4. From the Sandberg Video, I learned how important the expansion in career choices for women is in today's society, I learned the challenges that women face versus men when given the opportunity to move up in an executive, essential, high-demanding role. Sheryl

Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, who was the speaker in this video shared so many statistics that shed light on women representation at the top. Some of these facts include; out of 190 heads of states, only 9 are women; out all representatives in parliament, 13% are women; at the corporate-chief level board seats, 15% - 16% are women and this percentage has sustained since 2002; even in the non-profit sector, there are only 20% women at the top. Much of the low representation at the top can be attributed to the various challenges women have to face, like deciding between professional success and personal fulfillment. A study was done with married senior managers; $\frac{2}{3}$ of the married men in these positions have children while $\frac{1}{3}$ of the married women have children. This shows that women disproportionately have representation at the top executive levels of leadership due to the choices they have to make between professional advancement and personal fulfillment. This isn't the only obstacle I learned that women face when rising to the top in leadership. Statistics have proven that women systematically underestimate their own abilities. Women tend to negotiate significantly less than men when being offered a job immediately after college: 57% men negotiate, while 7% women negotiate their starting salaries. One of the reasons that women fail to negotiate is because they often second guess their capability to succeed. Sandberg stated that when women get awarded, they attribute their success to other people while men tend to take all the credit. One last statement that Sandberg made to expand my competence on why women face more obstacles than men when rising to the top was that "Success and likeability are positively correlated for men, and negatively correlated for

women.” This statement was powerful in that it revealed how difficult it is for women to make it to the top.

I can use what I learned in my role as a future Vice President of a University to be mindful of my privilege as a male when entering spaces at the top, to be adamant about keeping qualified women in the workforce and getting them to sit at the table, and commit to furthering the success of women in the workplace. As I prepare to work in the field of student affairs in higher education administration that is made up of majority women, I now have contextual understanding behind the struggles they face as parents and as a minority in the highest levels of leadership. When I collaborate and develop partnerships with neighboring businesses I must commit to advocating for female students so that they will have just as equal opportunities as men after graduation. When entering meetings with staff who may identify as majority women, I desire to implement strategic plans that will keep them in the workforce by exercising flexibility when addressing family conflicts. Because women too often have to decide between professional success and personal fulfillment, I don't want my administrative division to restrict them to choosing between the two. The reason women face choosing between these two options often revolve around their desire to have a family or care for newborns. In today's society, more women than men are often stuck at home from work to take care of children which prevents a speedy matriculation from the bottom to the top of their professional levels of leadership. My goal is to cultivate a working environment that makes room for women to simultaneously experience professional success and advancement along with their personal fulfillment (starting families, having children, etc.). This means expecting reasonable work hours, creating virtual

opportunities to work in cases of family emergency or paternity leave, and providing inclusive seats at the table that doesn't discriminate against gender, race, or ethnicity.

5. From the Leadership Style, I learned how my character strengths contribute to my leadership style, I learned the positive characteristics of my leadership style, and I learned the negative characteristics of my leadership style. After taking the Clifton Strengths Finder Test multiple times, I've found that the characteristic 'WOO,' which stands for winning others over, consistently shows up as my top strength. This strength enables me to use my interpersonal communication skills to connect with the people I lead.

Developing these connections helps me to become an effective Servant Leader. I learned in my research that servant leaders are those who believe every person has value and deserves civility, trust, and respect. This leadership theory aligns with my character strength and leadership style. I've also found myself to be a visionary leader, one who commits to working toward a collective goal with those under my leadership. This style requires one to be imaginative, inspirational, and possess a high level of emotional intelligence; all of which I embody in my leadership style (Jeffrey, 2019). I learned that visionary leaders are inclusive, inviting others to make the vision of their own. I found this to fit my style because of my desire to spread inclusivity in all that I do. My inclusive characteristic also enables me to be a transformational leader; one who enhances morale and motivation among followers by leading by example. This transformational leadership style, visionary style, and servant leadership trait has shown up in my undergraduate student leadership positions, will be strengthened in my leadership roles at Clemson

University this fall, and will continue to be displayed in my future professional roles in the decades to come.

I can use what I learned from this assignment to approach leadership in a more strategic way. My Bachelor of Science Degree in Leadership from ODU has already placed me in a position to quickly climb to the top quickly. My first position after college requires me to design, enhance, and implement Clemson Home's Resident Assistant Leadership Institute (RALI), which aligns with the competencies and structure of their Residential Experience Model. When tasked to facilitate workshop sessions in this program, I know that in order to be successful, I must remain consistent in my servant, visionary, and transformational leadership style. If I sustain my servant leadership style, I will be prepared to meet the needs of my audience and followers. When exercising my visionary leadership style I will be able to develop a sustainable-long term plan that inspires my students and helps them learn because they'll be consistently reminded of the overarching goal that we're working toward. When I continue to exercise my transformational leadership style, I'll be in a position to be open-minded, resolute, persistent, bold, and optimistic, causing me to attract the talented students who are passionate about their work in residence life and the residents they'll serve. Because this role requires me to create and implement the Resident Assistant Leadership Institute, I must be flexible and mindful in my approach to their development. I understand that not every student will respond well to a servant, visionary, or transformational leadership style, so I must explore other leadership styles that are the most effective when structuring the Resident Assistant Leadership Institute. I plan to do this by taking accountability if I need assistance on finding the best approach, by staying connected to the former graduate assistants who operated in this role, and by meeting the

expectations of my supervisor. My visionary leadership style instills the drive in me to work toward an overarching goal, and as I commit to fulfilling the mission and vision of Clemson University's Department of Housing and Residence Life, I'll use my visionary leadership style to transformatively serve the students I'm assigned to lead.