Leadership has always carried a strong and powerful connotation to me; it meant someone in a high position with great power, an authoritative person making large amounts of money and someone extremely successful. However, as I went through this course I realized that leadership maybe a great word, but my unrealistic movie style definition of it has changed. A leader is a human being with faults and virtues, someone who has worked hard to get to this position and works harder to keep it. I also realized that I have been a leader many times in my life, as an older sister responsible for my siblings, as a teacher in front of my class, and most importantly as a mother to my two young children.

The question of whether I choose to be a leader or not is not very clear to me. I do not wish to be a direct leader because I do not think I can handle that kind of pressure yet, (I am hoping that one day I will become dean of a girls college in Saudi Arabia, but not any time soon as I need to build myself first). However, being an indirect leader is something I live every day, and work hard to keep.

Trying to define a leader is very difficult for me because I do not think there is one perfect fit. I realize this because as I went through the program and talked about different model cases, each was unique and authoritative in their own way. At the same time, others shared some similar qualities but were on the contrary cases list. One quote that really spoke to me in class helped me clear this matter up, “One of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you are but what you’re perceived to be by others” (Edward L. Flom, CEO of
Florida Steel). To me this meant that your interaction with, relationships and how you are perceived by others, specifically followers, shapes your leadership status.

The above statement helped me realize the importance of followers in the leader’s life, and that is how I define a successful leader, one who has a successful definition of the leader-follower relationship. This does not mean I will base my ability to be a leader on my followers, but instead it means that I must work hard to bridge any gaps between myself as a leader and my followers. Below I discuss some of the important qualities I would like to see in myself in order to better become a leader.

**Lead by Example- In the spotlight**

Something that is missing in many of the leaders I have dealt with is the idea of a leader who inspires people to follow by being the best human he/she can be, leading by example. As a leader one should be aware of his/her position, and thus do the best that they can do in those settings whatever they maybe. I am not advocating that all leaders have to be saints, but that they must be aware of the figure they are portraying and do their best so that followers can learn from them and do the same. This is a very complicated issue because I don’t see leaders as “godlike” figures, they are human and therefore make mistakes and err, but what I am trying to absorb in myself is that one should realize that with power comes responsibility, and the power of leadership, no matter how small your role as a leader may be, comes with the responsibility of having people looking up to you.

I think that this is important to me because as I look through all my model cases I realized that the cases I choose are people who lead not necessarily saint lives but lived their lives happy, hard working, compassionate, helpful and human. Ahalm still comes to mind as a leader who

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Comment [GG2]: Precisely. What we show others is what defines us in their eyes. How we relate to people informs their perceptions.

Comment [GG3]: Or, if not “up” to you, at least they look “to you” because they trust your guidance.
was successful in inspiring me, as a follower, to better myself at work and in life. She lived her life by following her heart and brain, she was able to combine the two and create a person others could look up to and follow, and I hope one day to be able to inspire others to be their [best].

I think that my weakness here lies in my fear of people accusing me of living my life as ‘un-Saudi’, even if I have not done anything wrong. In a culture like Saudi Arabia, a woman carries a lot of stigmatism, there are always watchful eyes, and mouths quickly ready to tarnish. A Saudi woman has certain roles to portray prescribed to her by society, and anyone trying to change that can face great hardship. Therefore, I feel that my goal of becoming a change agent or even trying to be an inspiration for female change agents in Saudi comes with a lot of baggage. However, there is change taking place in Saudi, and although it is slow and sometimes unrecognized I need to seize this opportunity (I do not know how, but I know now is the time and I think that’s [important]).

**Relationship Building: BFFs?**

I find that building relationships helps foster growth; many times I have seen an unreachable leader, who works as the higher part of a system and the followers in the lower part, without ever meeting just casually hearing of one another. I wonder how anything can get done without connection, dialogue and relationship building. How can one grow and learn whether as a leader or a follower if he is walking around alone, deaf and blind? I think in such situations leaders are feared and many times misunderstood, and usually hated or revolted against. There needs to be a connection because that is how trust is built; ideas are shared and learning takes place- all of which lead to growth and success. I do not think that this means a leader needs to be [comment 4][comment 5][comment 6].
‘best friends’ with all his followers, but someone they can talk to, discuss things, share ideas, and feel comfortable with in the work environment.

The hard part for me is how to build relationships when many times there are clearly marked lines between a leader and a follower (as to my experience). I think the answer lies in communication, being available and being approachable, these were all qualities I found in my model cases and qualities I do see in myself, I just need to work on them to make them stronger and become more confident of myself.

Knowledge Sharing - We are all in this together

Keeping knowledge to oneself is no way to bloom and sometimes I feel that it’s a dog eat dog world. This concept of knowledge sharing also goes into the idea of building relationships; however, it is one I must stress on individually because of its importance. As a leader one should emphasize the importance of sharing information and knowledge, and help those around him/her understand the values and goals of the organization in order to create a better ‘fitting’ environment for all. It is not a one sided river either, the sharing of information and knowledge needs to follow from all those involved. I believe this could be a hard thing to do because there need to be the creation of a comfortable, understanding and respectful environment.

I feel that I am in the process of bettering my knowledge sharing. When I first joined the work force, I was an innocent bystander; I watched carefully and never fully participated unless asked to because I was not confident. However, by working on my Masters and PhD degrees in the United States I am in the path of knowledge sharing. I have been awarded a scholarship to attend universities, which I might not have been able to do on my own, then bring back my knowledge and share it with my organization to create better opportunities for female nurses in
Saudi. Thus, I feel that so far my organization has helped in creating an environment of sharing; I only hope it is still there when I return.

Be Prepared- on your marks, get set… umm are you ready?

As a leader, one needs to be prepared at all times. What does it mean to be prepared? To be prepared as a leader is very different than being prepared for anything else, that is because I don’t think one can be prepared for what might come with his/ her leadership position. So then, what does it mean to be prepared? I guess the answer is to have a clear understanding of the goals and vision of the group and be able to answer any questions concerning them, to admit the need for help when you need it, to be brave enough to ask questions, and to realize that you don’t always have all the answers, you’re only human after all.

Being prepared also means knowing your limits (i.e. when you are right or when others are), it means creating a balance between fighting for what you believe in and knowing when it is not right to fight. One must remember that not all people will see things in the same way all the time, and I think this is a great way to learn as it is important to see things from different lenses and perspectives, there are many points of view and none are wrong. I guess, in conclusion, being prepared is the ability to accept different circumstances and ideas and work with them to create a successful environment. Being prepared as a leader means accepting that you will never be completely prepared.

Creating a balance between heart and mind- you are not alone

My upbringing as a Muslim Saudi has taught me to always remember that God is watching. Keeping this in mind means one must act whole heartedly with best intentions, to help and do because you want the best in your life and in the life of others, to try and spread good by
being good. With that in mind I find it hard to steer from my course, to hate for too long, or to cheat others.

I believe that creating a balance between the heart and mind can lead to successful leadership, the heart being ethics and morals, and the mind being knowledge. With this combination one will continually grow by constantly clarifying to himself/herself what is important, frequently trying to improve and incessantly trying to better ones environment.

**Reflection- stop, drop, and role**

One of the most difficult and most important aspects I have learned from this program is reflection, a concept so simple in definition, yet the hardest for me to master. I have struggled with this idea of reflection because it is something new to me. Growing up I was always told to repeat what my elders, teachers, leaders said. Very rarely was I asked to think for myself. However, upon entering the PhD program, I found that the whole worth of a course comes from what I learned and take away from it as an individual, and I realized this is how true growth takes place.

As clear in my portfolio, this concept was one that has caused tremendous growth in me and one I continually struggle with. Could it be that thinking on my own was the right way? I believe this is so because I can see some results in myself, from being independent to truly thinking things through and deciding what’s best for me and my environment. I see reflection as the corner stone of good leadership, one must stop, thing and act accordingly. By doing so one can stress what is important, eliminate what has not worked and gives him/ herself the opportunity to try different things out and work things through. My only problem is, I need to

Comment [GG12]: If we could all remember this simple thing.
work on it harder, to incorporate it in my way of life, which is something I am currently working on.

Final Thoughts

After sorting things out for this assignment, I realized that I have some work to do. The qualities I have mentioned in this paper are some of the important qualities of leadership that I wish to possess some day, and I am currently working on. I guess the trick here is how to work on changing or trying to possess characteristics? I think it takes a lot of self discipline, personal mastery, and most importantly reflection. Not an easy task, but one I think I can do, (there is another quality, self-confidence).

As for my future, I wish to continue to be a leader to those in my life, as well as a role model to my future students and colleagues. I do wish to be a leader one day (hopefully, one that is looked at as a good leader) and I hope that I can make a difference in Saudi Arabia. Although I am completely comfortable in my role today, I need to work hard, aspire high and master the qualities I have mentioned above in order to accomplish my goal of being a change agent for Saudi women. I know that there is a long road ahead of me; there will be great resistance and struggle but I will take pride in whatever accomplishments I make knowing that I was a leader, even if indirect, to some, and that I have somehow inspired someone.

On a final note, I cannot help but wonder if these qualities can apply to anyone seeking a leadership role or simply to me and my situation? I do not wish to generalize, and I am sure that there are other important qualities I did not mention. Either way, those qualities mentioned above are important to me because I saw the difference they made in me and who I chose as model case of a successful leader.

Comment [GG13]: Reema, I think you are being a bit too hard on yourself here. This paper suggests you can practice reflection without too much difficulty (and remember, it’s how you’re perceived). Reflection, mindfulness, presence are all lifelong pursuits. They keep revealing new things. You are well on your way as a reflective practitioner. It is the content of those reflections that are still working themselves out. That’s Wheatley’s journey. It doesn’t end. Be fascinated by becoming.

Comment [GG14]: I can’t speak to the self-confidence, but I can reiterate that you’re farther along than you give yourself credit for. You’re not in the deficit position you think you’re in.

Comment [GG15]: This last paragraph is a great representation of my last comment. The attributes you identified in this paper are yours. Others in the class have others that matter to them. So in answer to your question, the quest applies to anyone, just not the attributes. However, if we identify a few to learn to master, then others will reveal themselves over time and provide us with new opportunities for continued growth. But a finite set? That does NOT apply to everyone. It’s more personal than that.
Reema, this is a terrific paper because you laid out your challenges between self and other. When you think of who you can become as a leader, think of Ahalm, not what is in a book. Pick an attribute or two about her that you’d like to work on and start there. You won’t become her, but your foundation will be in her and will honor your feelings toward her. They will be your base and will be passed to other Saudi women. As I’ve tried to suggest, I see a very thoughtful student in you. I put you in a handful of leadership positions during the course in the small groups to observe how you would react. You are capable of bringing others along. In other words, they followed. Celebrate and go from there.

You’ve met my expectations for an A in this course.