

## THE DEAN AS INTROVERT

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### I. INTRODUCTION

**Y**OU might be thinking about becoming a dean. You wonder about whether you have what it takes, what you could offer to a law school, and what contributions you could make to advance the mission of a law school. There are many reasons to become a dean, and you probably know them already. If you are thinking about it, you are probably already an associate dean enjoying (usually) the challenges and opportunities offered by being an administrator. You are probably an effective teacher and scholar. You likely enjoy working with faculty, staff, and students, and are good at problem solving. But you might be unsure whether you have the personality to be a successful dean. In particular, if you are an introvert, you might question your ability to be an effective leader.

The common wisdom is that law deans are outgoing people with an easy ability to engage others in conversation and make small talk. In a world sometimes divided into extroverts<sup>1</sup> and introverts, many people think that deans are extroverts and that if you are not an extrovert, you should not think about becoming a dean. I am an introvert and a dean; they are not mutually exclusive. As an introvert, I know there are many reasons to want to be an extrovert because outgoing people are often seen “as smarter, better-looking, more interesting, and more desirable as friends.”<sup>2</sup> Although the stereotype of a successful leader is an extrovert, in at least one article, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet were both mentioned as introverts.<sup>3</sup> Other introverts reportedly include Eleanor Roosevelt, Christina Aguilera, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin, David Letterman, and

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1. There is controversy about the spelling—is it extrovert or extravert? I choose to use extrovert. Patricia T. O’Conner & Stewart Kellerman, *Extrovert or Extravert?*, GRAMMARPHOBIA (Jan. 11, 2016), <http://www.grammarphobia.com/blog/2016/01/extrovert-extravert.html>. See also Scott Barry Kaufman, *The Difference Between ExtrAversion and ExtrOversion*, SCI. AM., <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/the-difference-between-extraversion-and-extroversion/> (last visited Jan. 30, 2017) (“Folklore has it that when Carl Jung was once asked which was the correct spelling—ExtrAvert or ExtrOvert—Jung’s secretary wrote back something like, ‘Dr. Jung says it’s ExtrAverted, because ExtrOverted is just bad latin.’”).

2. SUSAN CAIN, QUIET: THE POWER OF INTROVERTS IN A WORLD THAT CAN’T STOP TALKING 4 (2012).

3. John Rampton, *23 of the Most Amazingly Successful Introverts in History*, INC. (July 20, 2015), <http://www.inc.com/john-rampton/23-amazingly-successful-introverts-throughout-history.html>.

Emma Watson.<sup>4</sup> Although none of these people are or were law deans, it's unlikely they would be considered too introverted to be successful.

## II. WHO AND WHAT IS AN INTROVERT?

The usual understanding about introverts is often not positive. We are thought to be shy, to be socially awkward, and to prefer being alone over being with other people.<sup>5</sup> This is not actually true.<sup>6</sup> While some introverts may be shy, others are not. Introverts are not necessarily shy or awkward, and we often like and enjoy spending some time with other people. A more accurate description may be that introverts need time alone to recharge after social situations, while extroverts get their energy from being with other people.

To determine if you are an introvert, try this fun test.<sup>7</sup> As a disclaimer, on the twenty-three-question test, I answered “yes” to twenty-two questions. Perhaps the most telling question to determine if I was an introvert was question #8: “Giving a talk in front of 500 people is less stressful than having to mingle with those people afterwards.”<sup>8</sup> And yes, #8 was among the questions to which I answered “yes.” I am a decided introvert.

If you take any of the many available tests and find out you are an introvert, you may be curious what percentage of the population are like you. Unfortunately, statistics about introverts are not clear. One estimate is that one-third to one-half of the population are introverts,<sup>9</sup> while another estimation puts it at about twenty-five percent.<sup>10</sup> One reason the number of introverts is not really known is, according to at least one expert, because we have set the ideal as extrovert, and many people pretend to be extroverts.<sup>11</sup> Many people are surprised to discover that some people in leadership positions are introverts—perhaps because they judge such leaders based on one-on-one interactions. In my experience with one-on-one encounters, many introverts will come across as

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4. Laura Schockner, *16 Super Successful Introverts*, HUFFINGTON POST (Aug. 13, 2013, 8:50 AM), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/08/15/famous-introverts\\_n\\_3733400.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/08/15/famous-introverts_n_3733400.html).

5. If you look for a reference in popular culture for introverts, think *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. *THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER* (Summit Entertainment 2012).

6. Carl King, *10 Myths About Introverts*, THE CREATIVITY POST (June 13, 2012), [http://www.creativitypost.com/pop-culture/10\\_myths\\_about\\_introverts](http://www.creativitypost.com/pop-culture/10_myths_about_introverts).

7. Carolyn Gregoire, *23 Signs You're Secretly An Introvert*, HUFFINGTON POST (June 23, 2015, 8:36 AM), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/20/introverts-signs-am-i-introverted\\_n\\_3721431.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/20/introverts-signs-am-i-introverted_n_3721431.html). See also Chloe Chong, *A Quick Test to See Whether You Are an Introvert, Extrovert or Ambivert*, LIFE HACK, <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/like-introvert-extrovert-ambivert.html>; *Ambivert*, QUIET REVOLUTION, <http://www.quietrev.com/ambivert-results/> (last visited Feb. 12, 2017); Scott Barry Kaufman, *Will the Real Introverts Please Stand Up?*, SCI. AM. (June 9, 2014), <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/will-the-real-introverts-please-stand-up/> (providing a more scientific, and less entertaining, explanation of an introvert).

8. Gregoire, *supra* note 7.

9. CAIN, *supra* note 2, at 3.

10. MARTI OLSEN LANEY, *THE INTROVERT ADVANTAGE: HOW QUIET PEOPLE CAN THRIVE IN AN EXTROVERT WORLD* 15 (2002).

11. CAIN, *supra* note 2, at 9.

friendly, sociable, and warm, an impression that is mistaken for being an extrovert.

The definition of an introvert is actually quite complicated.<sup>12</sup> One writer believes that the difference between extroverts and introverts is all about energy, explaining that introverts gather energy by reflection and that they need quiet time to do this, while extroverts gather by being in stimulating situations and by spending time interacting with other people.”<sup>13</sup> And while we tend to divide the world into extroverts and introverts, there is some support for the idea that a group of “ambiverts” also exists.<sup>14</sup> There is now more science about the difference between introverts and extroverts,<sup>15</sup> and the dividing line between introverts and extroverts is less clear and may actually be more of a continuum.

### III. INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS AS LEADERS

Both extroverts and introverts can be effective leaders; each has their strengths. The stereotype, however, appears to be that extroverts must be better leaders and this may lead to the common misconception that all successful leaders are extroverts. In addition, a majority of senior executives believe introverted leaders are liabilities. Only a small minority saw the advantages of an introverted leader.

Many extroverts are attracted to leadership positions and display many of the skills that get them hired as leaders. Indeed, many leaders *believe* that they are extroverts.<sup>16</sup> In fact, “[s]tudies show that 96 percent of leaders and managers report being extroverted.” An article in *Harvard Business School Working Knowledge* indicates that while many people may think that the most effective leaders are extroverts, introverts can also be very successful in leadership positions.<sup>17</sup> Both extroverts and introverts can be capable leaders, but the success

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12. Tyler Tervooren & Emily Lundberg, *What the Heck Is an Introvert, Anyway?*, RISKODOLOGY (Oct. 14, 2016), <http://www.riskology.co/what-is-an-introvert/>.

13. Mairi Mackay, *Introverts' Secrets of Success*, CNN (last updated Nov. 7, 2014, 5:32 AM EST), <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/06/business/introverts-secrets-of-success/>.

14. See Chong, *supra* note 7. See also Kaufman, *supra* note 7; Becca Martin, *10 Everyday Things Only Extroverted Introverts Will Understand*, THOUGHT CATALOG (Jan. 30, 2016), <http://thoughtcatalog.com/becca-martin/2016/01/10-everyday-things-only-extroverted-introverts-will-understand/>.

15. See Jennifer Granneman, *The Scientific Reasons Why Introverts and Extroverts are Different*, HUFFINGTON POST (Mar. 11, 2016), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-scientific-reasons-why-introverts-and-extroverts-are-different\\_us\\_566eedf6e4b011b83a6be33a](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-scientific-reasons-why-introverts-and-extroverts-are-different_us_566eedf6e4b011b83a6be33a) (describing the way people respond to the neurotransmitter dopamine); Joseph Bennington-Castro, *The Science of What Makes an Introvert and Extrovert*, GIZMODO (Sept. 10, 2013, 2:31 PM), <http://io9.gizmodo.com/the-science-behind-extroversion-and-introversion-1282059791> (discussing differences in brains).

16. Bryan Elliott, *The Reason Introverts Make Better Leaders*, HUFFINGTON POST (Oct. 23, 2015, 3:03 PM), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bryan-elliott/the-reason-introverts-mak\\_1\\_b\\_8365272.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bryan-elliott/the-reason-introverts-mak_1_b_8365272.html).

17. Carmen Noble, *Introverts: The Best Leaders for Proactive Employees*, HARV. BUS. SCH. WORKING KNOWLEDGE (Oct. 4, 2010), <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/introverts-the-best-leaders-for-proactive-employees>.

of either may depend on how the employees react to different leadership styles in the organization.<sup>18</sup> One writer believes that introverts can be very effective leaders because of five introvert-specific traits: (1) they think first and talk later; (2) they focus on depth; (3) they exude calm; (4) they prefer writing to talking; and (5) they take “timeouts” to fuel their creativity.<sup>19</sup> Others believe that introverts are capable leaders because they are prudent, learn by listening, leverage their quiet nature, have humility, can manage uncertainty, and can work alone.<sup>20</sup>

The qualities that introverts bring to leadership positions are often overlooked. According to one expert, “although extroverts show many of the strengths people associate with leadership—like decisiveness—the less obvious leadership qualities that introverts display can be more important in day-to-day teamwork.”<sup>21</sup> One study showed that introverted leaders may listen to and implement suggestions of others more than extroverts. This, in turn, may encourage employees to be more proactive and take more initiative in the workplace.<sup>22</sup> According to an article in *Forbes*,<sup>23</sup> introverted leaders exude calm, they think first and talk second, and they focus on depth. Additionally, with introverted leaders “[y]ou really see a pattern of being conscientious, wanting to do a good job, being creative, good at problem solving. They’re really good at one-on-one kinds of work.”<sup>24</sup> The leadership qualities introverts have are many, but they may differ from extroverts in their leadership style. Although extroverts are more likely to seek and obtain leadership positions, they are not necessarily better leaders than more introverted people.

Although the stereotype of the outgoing, gregarious, extroverted leader still exists, recent scholarship tends to sing the praises of introverts, or at least give introversion a more positive spin. The upsides of being an introvert include that they may work more slowly and deliberately; they have great concentration; they are not impressed with wealth or fame; they may be quite sensitive; and they tend to have a very strong conscience.<sup>25</sup> Scholars even claim introverts have a “propensity for balanced and critical thinking; and they feel comfortable empowering others.”<sup>26</sup> There is also a plethora of advice books about being an

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18. CAIN, *supra* note 2, at 56.

19. Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, *Why Introverts Can Make the Best Leaders*, FORBES (Nov. 30, 2009, 3:39 PM), <http://www.forbes.com/2009/11/30/introverts-good-leaders-leadership-managing-personality.html>.

20. See Jeff Boss, *6 Truths on Why Introverts Make Great Leaders*, ENTREPRENEUR (Oct. 2, 2015), <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/251177>; Jacquelyn Smith, *Here’s Why Introverts Can Be the Best Leaders*, BUS. INSIDER (Sept. 4, 2014, 3:35 PM), <http://www.businessinsider.com/why-introverts-can-be-the-best-leaders-2014-9>.

21. Mackay, *supra* note 13.

22. CAIN, *supra* note 2, at 57-58.

23. Kahnweiler, *supra* note 19.

24. *Id.* (quoting Marti Olsen Laney).

25. CAIN, *supra* note 2, at 11, 14.

26. Jeffery Hayzlett, *Why Introverts May Be Better at Business than Extroverts*, ENTREPRENEUR (May 20, 2016), [https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/276137?utm\\_source=HearstNewspapers&utm\\_medium=related&utm\\_campaign=syndication](https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/276137?utm_source=HearstNewspapers&utm_medium=related&utm_campaign=syndication).

introvert, so a quick search on Amazon.com can reveal that introversion is getting a new look.<sup>27</sup>

The skills that an introvert brings to being a dean are important. While it may be true that the characteristics extroverts possess result in them being chosen more frequently for leadership positions, introverts provide great value as leaders too. According to the experts, introverts are great listeners and there is no such thing as listening too much to faculty, student, or alumni concerns. Most of a dean's work, especially today, is about managing uncertainty, and introverts are supposed to excel at handling uncertainty. Uncertainty is constant within the dean's job. How is the budget? How are admissions going? What will the bar passage rate be? What kind of jobs will our new graduates get? Deans deal with these questions every day.

Introverts also may also be more skilled in one-on-one situations. I like to think that some of my best moments have been dealing with difficult issues, one-on-one or in small groups, with students or faculty. Deans, like all lawyers, need to be good at providing creative solutions to problems. This is a very valuable leadership skill and one that introverts are supposed to possess.

#### IV. BEING AN INTROVERTED DEAN

If we accept the proposition that extroverts can work the room well, are decisive, are talented public speakers, and are more charismatic than introverts, how does an introvert actually function in public fora as a dean? While it is easy to think of a dean spending lots of time in crowded rooms, most of a dean's work is not just working a crowd. Talking with faculty, especially one-on-one or at faculty meetings, does not tax the introvert, although it may be difficult for reasons totally unrelated to being an introvert.

Much of a dean's work is not dependent on being an extrovert. However, deans do a lot of socializing with students and alumni, and deans are responsible for extensive fundraising. These activities are possible as an introvert, but if it causes concern, some planning might be necessary.<sup>28</sup> You can even find toolkits for introverted leaders online.<sup>29</sup> And wouldn't online toolkits be better for an introvert than sending him or her to an in-person class where he or she would have to meet new people and network? Consider a class in leadership or fundraising. For many of us introverts, an online class on one of those subjects might be preferable to the personal interaction and networking in an in-person class.

Many prospective and new deans fear fundraising. I have to admit that it was scary for me at first too; but now, meeting with alums is one of the best parts

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27. See AMAZON.COM, <http://www.amazon.com> (last visited Feb. 28, 2017) (enter "Introverts" in search bar).

28. See Glenn Leibowitz, *6 Essential Networking Survival Tips for Introverts*, INC. (May 10, 2016), <http://www.inc.com/glenn-leibowitz/6-essential-networking-survival-tips-for-introverts.html>.

29. See, e.g., *A Toolkit for Introverted Leaders and Their Coaches*, INTROVERT LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT, <http://www.introvertedleaders.co.uk/> (last visited Feb. 28, 2017).

of my job. Think of it this way—you have the privilege to meet with alums, talk to them one-on-one, and hear their stories. That is wonderful and interesting—even for me, a declared introvert.

Harder for me are the larger receptions where I need to “work the room.” If left to my own devices in that kind of setting, I would run away. But meeting and greeting large numbers of people is my job. It may be that because it is my job, as opposed to mere socializing, I have found that I can do it. I do not love it, but I can do it. Note that I would never personally attend a large party to meet new people. If, in my personal life, I actually attended a large party, it would be to see people I already knew, while an extrovert might attend such parties to meet new people. I have nothing against new people, and occasionally I meet some I really like and would like to see again—but it is not my reason for going. But dealing with large receptions and group events as a dean is my job, and it is also something I can do and often do. After any large gathering where you must do more than sit in the corner and look at your cell phone, you may be exhausted. You may want to get into bed and pull the covers up over your head or read a book. But the large gathering was successful, and no one knew you were an introvert.

In planning your day as an introverted dean, you will need to look at the time you must spend with other people. If it is most of the day, although mostly dealing with small groups or individuals, you know exhaustion may be awaiting you, resulting in just wanting to go home. If you have a large event scheduled, you might need some down time after it. Down time for me does not need to be long—but it must be quiet. Often, I can arrange my schedule so that the events that are difficult and taxing for me are not scheduled back-to-back and, therefore, I am able to enjoy some down time between such events. For example, when I am traveling for work and I know I will be meeting lots of people, I try to take advantage of the down time on airplanes for energy-generating activities like reading or watching a movie.<sup>30</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

There are many wonderful reasons to become a dean. The work can be challenging, satisfying, and fun, and deans get to contribute to the future of their institutions and the people in it. Notably, being a dean can be very hard work, and the rewards are not always evident. However, introverted deans can be very effective leaders, and being an introvert should not cause good leaders to ignore the opportunity of becoming a dean.

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30. I have what I refer to as my emergency headphones, so if I am seated on an airplane next to someone very chatty, I put in my earphones. It doesn't matter whether I am actually listening to anything, but it sends a signal to the person next to me that I am not talking.