

Stogdill again cautioned that the value of a particular trait or set of traits varies with the organizational situation.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in examining leadership traits. A review by Kirkpatrick and Locke identified a number of personal traits that distinguish leaders from non-leaders, including some pinpointed by Stogdill.¹⁰ Other studies have focused on followers' perceptions and indicate that certain traits are associated with people's perceptions of who is a leader. For example, one study found that the traits of intelligence, masculinity, and dominance were strongly related to how individuals perceived leaders.¹¹ Others have found that charismatic CEOs are perceived to be more effective than other leaders, even though there is no evidence showing they actually are.¹² In summary, trait research has been an important part of leadership studies throughout the twentieth century and continues into the twenty-first.

Exhibit 2.1 presents some of the traits and their respective categories that have been identified through trait research over the years. Many researchers still contend that some traits are essential to effective leadership, but only in combination with other factors.¹³ For example, charisma, like other traits outlined in Exhibit 2.1, can certainly be associated with effective leadership, but not every effective leader has charisma, and many good leaders don't have any charisma at all. A few traits typically considered highly important for leadership are optimism and self-confidence, honesty and integrity, and drive.

Optimism and Self-Confidence Emerging research points to a positive outlook as one key to effective leadership.¹⁴ **Optimism** refers to a tendency to see the positive side of things and expect that things will turn out well. Numerous surveys indicate that an optimistic attitude is the single characteristic most common to top executives. People rise to the top because they have the ability to see opportunities where others see problems and can instill in others a sense of hope for the future. Leaders at all levels need some degree of optimism to see possibilities even through the thickest fog and rally people around a vision for a better tomorrow. One leadership researcher has

Exhibit 2.1 Personal Characteristics of Leaders

Personal Characteristics

Energy
Passion
Physical stamina

Intelligence and Ability

Intelligence, cognitive ability
Knowledge
Judgment, decisiveness

Personality

Optimism
Self-confidence
Honesty and integrity
Enthusiasm
Charisma
Desire to lead
Independence

Social Characteristics

Sociability, interpersonal skills
Cooperativeness
Ability to enlist cooperation
Tact, diplomacy

Work-Related Characteristics

Drive, desire to excel
Responsibility in pursuit of goals
Persistence against obstacles, tenacity

Social Background

Education
Mobility

Optimism

a tendency to see the positive side of things and expect that things will turn out well

Sources: Bass and Stogdill's *Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Management Applications*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1990), pp. 80-81; and S. A. Kirkpatrick and E. A. Locke, "Leadership: Do Traits Matter?" *Academy of Management Executive* 5, no. 2 (1991), pp. 48-60.