PEARSON NEW INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Joining Together
Group Theory and Group Skills
David Johnson   Frank Johnson
Eleventh Edition

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Traits versus Relationships versus Context versus Chance

While there have been many attempts to downplay the importance of traits in the success and effectiveness of leaders, this perspective never disappears. There seems to be a bias, at least in Western societies, toward attributing events as being caused by individuals. Yet there are multiple objections to the **trait approach to leadership.** One defines leadership as a relationship existing between leaders and followers—no followers, no leader. A second objection views leadership as being determined by social forces, social movements, and changing social values. Leaders play out roles designed for them by these broad social forces. John W. Gardner (1990), for example, believed that leaders should be viewed as an integral part of a social system and cannot be separated from the historic context in which they arise, the setting in which they function (e.g., business, education, politics), and the system over which they preside (e.g., political, educational, economic).

Finally, there are theorists who believe that sheer chance may determine whether individuals become leaders. Leaders may emerge simply because they are in the right place at the right time. The invention of a new technology, a decision made by a business to sell part of the company, a plague that decimates a society, may all result in unique opportunities for leadership by whoever is present at the time.

Perhaps the question is not whether individual traits determine leader effectiveness. A more appropriate question is, "Under what conditions will individual traits influence leader effectiveness?"

Trait Theory of Leadership

Strengths	Weaknesses

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Perhaps Benjamin Franklin became a leader through his style of relating to others. Franklin was noted for his charm, conversational skills, humor, wisdom, and kindness. But was Franklin's leadership style the same as George Washington's or Thomas Jefferson's? Even casual observation of leaders in action reveals marked differences in their styles of leadership. *Style* refers to the way in which something is said or done. It is usually contrasted with the *substance* of the statements and actions. The style with which an action is executed can carry as many messages as does the substance of the action itself—style affects its legitimacy and credibility.

Three main styles of leadership have been identified: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. **Autocratic leaders** dictate orders and determine all policy without involving group members in decision making. **Democratic leaders** set policies through group discussion and decision, encouraging and helping group members to interact, requesting the cooperation of others, and being considerate of members' feelings and needs. **Laissez-faire leaders** do not participate at all in their group's decision-making processes.

Aggressive acts were more frequent under autocratic and laissez-faire leaders than they were under a democratic leader. Hostility was thirty times as great in the autocratic groups than in either of the other two: Frequently one group member was made the target of hostility and aggression until he or she left the group, and then another member would be chosen to perform the same function. Nineteen of twenty members liked the democratic leader better than the autocrat, and seven of ten liked the laissez-faire leader better than the autocrat.

The pioneering study of whether leadership styles do in fact make a difference in group functioning was conducted by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939). Although the study has many shortcomings, it demonstrates strikingly that the same group behaves in markedly different ways under leaders with different leadership style. This study focused on groups of ten- and eleven-year-olds who were led by three adult leaders, each of whom adopted a different leadership style for a specified period. When the groups were under an autocratic leader, the children were more dependent on the leader and more egocentric in their peer relationships. When rotated to a democratic style of leadership, the same children took more initiative and responsibility, were friendlier, and continued to work when the leader was out of the room. Their interest in their work and in the quality of their product was higher. Aggressive acts were more frequent under autocratic and laissez-faire leaders than they were under a democratic leader. Hostility was thirty times as great in the autocratic groups as in either of the other two. Nineteen of twenty group members liked the democratic leader better than the autocrat, and seven of ten liked the laissez-faire leader better than the autocrat.

Since this classic study a number of researchers have investigated the relative impact of democratic and autocratic leaders on group functioning. In reviewing these studies, Stogdill (1974) noted that neither democratic nor autocratic leadership could guarantee increased productivity but member satisfaction is more strongly associated with a democratic style of leadership. Satisfaction with democratic leadership tends to be highest in small, interaction-oriented groups. Other studies have compared permissive, follower-oriented, participative, and considerate leadership styles with restrictive, task-oriented, directive, socially distant, and structured leadership styles. After reviewing the studies in each of these areas, Stogdill (1974) concluded:

1. Person-oriented styles of leadership are not consistently related to productivity.
2. Among the work-oriented leadership styles, socially distant, directive, and structured leader behaviors that tend to maintain role differentiation and let members know what to expect are consistently related to group productivity.

3. Among the person-oriented leadership styles, only those providing for member participation in decision making and showing concern for members' welfare and comfort are consistently related to group cohesiveness.
4. Among the work-oriented leadership styles, only the structuring of member expectations is related uniformly to group cohesiveness.
5. All of the person-oriented leadership styles tend to be related to member satisfaction.
6. Only the structuring of member expectations is related positively to member satisfaction among the work-oriented leadership styles.

Thus, the most effective style of leadership (i.e., it promotes group productivity, cohesiveness, and satisfaction) is showing concern for the well-being and contributions of group members while at the same time **initiating group structure** by clearly defining one's role as a leader and what one expects from the other members.

Two major shortcomings of the style approach to leadership are that different styles are effective under different conditions, and an unlimited number of styles may be identified. Certain conditions exist, for example, under which autocratic leadership seems more effective (such as when an urgent decision has to be made). In other conditions, a democratic style may be most effective (such as when considerable member commitment to the implementation of the decision needs to be built). Conditions even exist in which the laissez-faire style seems best (such as when the group is committed to a decision, has the resources to implement it, and needs a minimum of interference to work effectively). Because different **leadership styles** are required in different situations, even with the same group, the attention of many social scientists has moved to **situational approaches to leadership**. But before considering such approaches, two other theories of leadership are briefly discussed.

In support of the style theories of leadership, however, is the notion of equifinality, which posits that there are many different ways that a person, group, or organization can behave and still achieve the same outcome. Equifinality implies that different leaders can behave in their own quite idiosyncratic and unique ways and still achieve the same outcome. Rather than trying to tailor their behavior to the situation, leaders may know how they prefer to operate and what they

are able to do easily and well, and engage in those behaviors and still get key leadership tasks accomplished.

Style Theory of Leadership

Strengths	Weaknesses

INFLUENCE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

A leader is a man who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do, and like it.

<div align="right">Harry S. Truman</div>

Leadership is the ability to decide what is to be done, and then to get others to want to do it.

<div align="right">Dwight D. Eisenhower</div>

"Leadership appears to be the art of getting others to want to do something that you are convinced should be done."

<div align="right">Vance Packard, *The Pyramid Climbers*</div>

Benjamin Franklin may have been an outstanding leader because he knew how to influence people. **Leadership** is influencing other group members. An influence approach to leadership implies that a reciprocal role relationship exists between leaders and followers in which an exchange, or transaction, takes place. Without followers there can be no leader, and without a leader there can be no followers. As Homans stated, "*Influence over others is purchased at the price of allowing oneself to be influenced by others*" (1961, p. 286). The leader receives status, recognition, esteem, and other reinforcement for contributing his or her resources to the accomplishment of the group's goals. The followers obtain the leader's resources and ability to structure the group's

activities toward the attainment of a goal. The leader provides structure, direction, and resources. The followers provide deference and reinforcement. Because both the leader and the followers control resources the other desires, each influences the other's behavior.

The interdependence of leader and followers has been demonstrated by a number of studies. Leaders tend both to talk more than other group members and receive more communications than do other group members (Zander, 1979). The person who talks the most in the group is the most likely to emerge as leader (the average correlation between participation and leadership is 0.65) (Burke, 1974; Stein & Heller, 1979). A member's proportion of talking time increases as his or her perceived leadership status increases and as members' support for his or her leadership increases (Bavelas, Hostoft, Gross, & Kite, 1965; Pepinsky, Hemphill, & Shevitz, 1958; Zdep & Oakes, 1967). Quantity of participation is seen as a sign of motivation, involvement, willingness to share resources with the group, and seriously trying to contribute to the group's goals (Sorrentino & Boutillier, 1975). The compliance of members is greater when a leader justifies his or her demands as being good for the group, has the power to punish members who do not do as he or she has asked, and has a legitimate right to make demands of subordinates (Michener & Burt, 1975). The success or failure of the group does not seem to affect a leader's ability to influence, nor does approval of him or her by subordinates.

Viewing leadership as a reciprocal influence between a leader and a set of followers does not mean that good leadership is based on domination. Hitler, for example, defined leadership as the ability to move the masses (through persuasion or violence). Ho Chi Minh believed a good leader must learn to mold, shape, and change the people just as a woodworker must learn to use wood. Both views are erroneous. Leaders do not influence through domination and coercion. The influence of leaders is directed toward persuading group members to cooperate in setting and achieving goals. Leadership, thus, is the art of ensuring that group members work together with the least friction and the most cooperation. This often means that leaders need to persuade and inspire members to follow the leader's views of what needs to be done in order to achieve the group's goals.

Influence Theory of Leadership

Strengths	Weaknesses

ROLE POSITION/GROUP STRUCTURE APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

Perhaps Benjamin Franklin was known as a leader simply because he was appointed to various leadership positions. The **role position approach to leadership** posits that a person becomes a leader when he or she is put in a position of authority. Within groups, leadership begins with the formal role structure that defines the group's hierarchy of authority. **Authority** is legitimate power assigned to a particular position to ensure that individuals in subordinate positions meet the requirements of their organizational roles. Because organizations demand that subordinates obey their superiors when performing their roles, a person with authority influences his or her subordinates. In short, the person who is directly above you in the authority hierarchy is your leader.

There are, however, few leaders in an authority hierarchy who do not also have a boss. Thus, to the person's subordinates the person is a leader, but to the person's superiors the person is a follower. This reality means that individuals in formal leadership positions must continuously balance acting as if their own leader need not know what they are doing and mindlessly passing on to their subordinates whatever direction is given by their superiors. Very little research has been focused on balancing the roles of leader and follower simultaneously.

There are at least three problems with the role position approach to leadership. (1) Individuals are appointed to high-authority positions for a variety of reasons, not all of which have to do with leadership ability. If one wants to know who is likely to occupy a position of formal leadership, the place to look is the opportunity structure of the society. As is frequently noted, if you want to be king, your best bet is to be the son of a king or queen. (2) The theory does not explain how the leader can engage in nonleadership behaviors and how the subordinates can engage in leadership actions. Not all of the appointed leader's actions are leadership behavior. In addition, subordinates can provide leadership. (3) The role behavior of subordinates is influenced by outsiders who have no direct authority over them.

Authority-Position Theory of Leadership

Strengths	Weaknesses