
Introduction

Few problems of interest to behavioral scientists have as much potential relevance to the problems of society as the study of leadership. The effective functioning of social systems ranging in size from the local PTA to the United States of America is assumed to be dependent on the quality of their leadership. This assumption is reflected in our tendency to blame a football coach for a losing season and to credit a general for a military victory. While one can identify many factors influencing organizational effectiveness, some of which are outside the direct control of those in positions of leadership, the critical importance of executive functions and of those persons who carry them out to the survival and effectiveness of the organization cannot be denied. Any knowledge that the behavioral sciences could contribute to the identification, development, and enhancement of leadership in organized human endeavor would be of immense societal value.

For several decades sociologists and psychologists have carried out research on the process of leadership. Most textbooks in social psychology include at least one chapter on the subject, and the contents of the academic journals reflect a continued interest on the part of researchers. Opinions differ, however, on the social impact of this work. It would be hard to defend the thesis that leadership research and theory had a substantive impact on the behavior of leaders or the ways in which they were recruited, selected, and developed.

The probable reasons for this state of affairs include the inherent complexity of the processes involved, ambiguity in the conceptualization of leadership, difficulties in measuring behavior, and inevitable "value" questions concerning the standards by which leadership outcomes are to be assessed. In this book, a fresh look is taken at certain of the traditional problems of leadership, such as the con-

ceptualization and measurement of differences in leadership style and specification of situations that require different styles. The approach to be taken is suggested by the second part of the title of the book—decision-making.

Decision-making is central to many scientific disciplines. Much of human behavior is simply a reflection of the decisions people make, and the processes that regulate and control these choices or decisions are central to any discipline that purports to understand and predict human behavior. Some disciplines, such as economics, statistics, and operations research, approach decision-making from a normative standpoint with a fundamental interest in how choices or decisions should be made. Others, including psychology, sociology, and political science, are fundamentally concerned with understanding and predicting human behavior, including those areas of behavior that are the result of human choices and decisions.

An understanding of the decision-making process is critical not only for the explanation of individual behavior but also for the behavior of complex organizations. March and Simon (1958) were the first scholars to attempt to explain the behavior of organizations in terms of their decision-making processes, and their effort was subsequently extended by Cyert and March (1963). A key concept in both analytical frameworks is that of a “program” (a term borrowed from computer science), which embodies the observed regularities in activities generated by a class of environmental stimuli. Receiving particular attention both by March and Simon and by Cyert and March are programs that govern the processes of problem-solving and decision-making within organizations. The mechanisms incorporated within such programs are largely borrowed from theories concerning information processing within individuals and include such activities as searching for alternative solutions, giving sequential attention to goals, and changing the level of aspiration.

It can be argued, however, that the processes of problem-solving and decision-making when carried out by organizations are different from the same processes carried out by individuals in at least one fundamental respect. Organizational decision-making involves both cognitive and social processes. The events that intervene between the identification of a problem (or occasion for decision-making) and a solution or decision are both intrapersonal and

interpersonal. It is the interpersonal or social aspects of decision-making that are of most direct relevance to processes of leadership. The leader not only makes decisions but also designs, regulates, and selects social systems that make decisions.

The particular intersection of leadership and decision-making to be explored in this book can now be identified. We are interested in the way in which leadership is reflected in social processes utilized for decision-making, specifically in leaders' choices about how much and in what way to involve their subordinates in decision-making. Let us consider an example to illustrate this connection between leadership and decision-making. Assume that you are a manager who has five subordinates reporting to you. Each of these subordinates has a clearly defined and distinct set of responsibilities. One of them resigns to take a position with another organization. Due to a cost-cutting program recently initiated within the organization, which makes it impossible to hire new employees, you cannot replace him with someone else. It will be necessary for you to find some way of reallocating the departing subordinate's responsibilities among the remaining four in such a way as to maintain the present workload and effectiveness of the unit.

The situation described is representative of many faced by persons in positions of leadership. There is some need for action—a problem exists and a solution or decision must be forthcoming. You, as leader, have some area of freedom or discretion (there are a number of possible ways in which the work can be reallocated), but there are also some constraints on your actions. For example, you cannot solve the problem by hiring someone from outside the organization. Furthermore, the solution adopted is going to have effects on people other than yourself. Your subordinates are going to have to carry out whatever decision is reached.

One could examine your behavior when confronted with this problem in purely cognitive terms. Normatively, one could “arm you” with a set of rules for solving problems of this kind. These rules may take the form of an algorithm that would assure selection of the optimal set of work assignments from the total set of possibilities, or it could take the form of heuristics for reaching a satisfactory solution to the problem. Descriptively, one could obtain from you a protocol of your thoughts as you generated and evaluated alternative solutions to this problem and from such

observations attempt to formulate a model of your decision-making processes that could subsequently be tested against your behavior in other similar situations.

Underlying such cognitive approaches is the conviction that a leader is a problem-solver or decision-maker—that the task of translating problems into solutions is inevitably *his* task. Alternatively, one can view the leader's task as one of determining the mechanism or process by which the problem is to be solved. A major portion of his job is to determine what person or persons should take part in the solution of the problem.

In the situation described, one can envision a number of possible decision-making processes that could be employed. You could make the decision by yourself and announce it to your subordinates; you could obtain additional information from your subordinates and then make the decision; you could consult with them either individually or collectively before making the decision; or you could convene them as a group, share the problem with them, and attempt to reach agreement on the solution to the problem. These alternatives vary in terms of not cognitive but social processes—specifically, the amount and form of opportunity afforded subordinates to participate in the decision.

Two theoretically distinct sets of questions can be asked concerning the manager's choice of a decision process. One contains the normative questions as to which process *should* be used to make the decision. The other consists of the descriptive questions concerning which decision-making process *would* actually be used.

It should be emphasized that we are separating two issues that have seldom been clearly differentiated by those studying leadership behavior. The first is the evaluation of the consequences for the organization of a leader adopting a particular behavior or leadership style, and the second is the study of processes that generate the behavior of the incumbents of leadership roles. In the former, the outcome could be a normative model in which the leader's behavior is the independent variable and the organizational consequences of this behavior are the dependent variables. An outcome of the latter could be the development of a descriptive model in which the leader's behavior is the dependent variable and individual characteristics and situational factors are the independent variables.

The main body of the literature on participation addresses itself

to the normative question of what is effective managerial behavior. Most social psychologists and other behavioral scientists who have turned their attention toward the implications of psychological and social processes for the practice of management have called for greater participation by subordinates in the problem-solving and decision-making process. Pointing to evidence of restriction of output and lack of involvement under traditional managerial systems, they have argued for greater influence in decision-making on the part of those who are held responsible for decision execution.

The normative issues relevant to the effectiveness of participative management are the subject of chapters 2 and 3. Among the questions considered are the following: Should leaders adopt the same decision process regardless of the nature of the situation? If not, what situational properties should affect their choices among alternative decision processes? Chapter 2 begins with a brief review of the empirical evidence concerning the consequences of participation. Reconciliation of the discrepant findings reported there is not an easy task. It is made complex by different empirical interpretations of the term "participation" (Strauss 1963) and by great differences in the situations in which the word is applied. From the evidence considered, it appears highly likely that an increase in the participation of subordinates in decision-making may increase productivity under some circumstances but decrease productivity under others.

To identify the situational conditions which determine the efficacy of participative management, it is necessary to specify the decision-making processes which it entails and to examine the various mechanisms by which it may influence the extent to which the formal objectives of the organization are attained. Accordingly, in chapter 2, a taxonomy of leadership behaviors is presented, with discrete alternatives expressed in terms of the extent to which subordinates have an opportunity to participate in decision-making. The same chapter includes the definitions of a set of situational variables that existing empirical evidence suggests should be considered in evaluating the alternative consequences of these decision processes. Chapter 3 introduces a normative model, incorporating those situational variables, that purports to show which decision process should be used in different situations. We then apply the model to a set of specific cases to illustrate its operation.

In the next three chapters of the book (chapters 4, 5, and 6), we turn our attention from normative to descriptive issues. Our goal is an understanding of how leaders do behave. The approach adopted is different from that employed by previous investigators in the sense that leaders' behavior is assumed to be attributable to individual differences, situational variables, and the interaction between them (Cronbach 1957). Our empirical methods permit an examination of the relative contribution of these variables to the explanation of leaders' choices among different decision processes.

Chapter 4 presents evidence that leaders do use different decision-making processes for different situations, and it describes a set of studies designed to reveal some of the situational factors which affect how much the leaders' power is shared with their subordinates. In these studies, leaders were asked to describe a problem they recently had to solve, to answer a set of questions designed to reveal specific properties of the problem and its social context, and to indicate which decision-making process they used in solving the problem.

Chapter 5 deals with the same issue but uses a different methodology. Managers were asked how they would behave in each of a standard set of situations presented in the form of case studies. Each of the case studies contained different situational characteristics, and the selection of cases conformed to the specifications of an experimental design. This procedure provided considerable methodological advantages over that used in chapter 4 and permitted the determination of the relative importance of individual and situational differences in managers' choices of decision processes. In chapter 6 the possibility of using the set of case studies as a test of leadership style is examined. The scores that can be obtained from a person's responses to the case studies are described and compared with other tests of leader behavior.

Since the situational variables used in the descriptive analysis of leader behavior are identical to those used in the normative model, it is possible to compare the behavior of any given leader or set of leaders with that of the model. This comparison is made in chapter 7. Similarities and differences between the model's behavior and that of industrial managers are presented in an effort to determine the changes in leader behavior that would occur if these managers voluntarily used the normative model as the basis for selecting their methods of making decisions. We have developed as

part of this analysis a number of comparative individual-difference measures that indicate the degree to which the individual's behavior correlates with that of the normative model.

Discrepancies between how a leader does behave and how he should behave are potentially relevant to the development of technologies for leadership improvement. Chapter 8 deals with one of the technological "by-products" of the research program. It describes a new approach to leadership development that includes a method of providing individuals with feedback concerning their leadership style from their reports of how they would behave in standardized cases. Initial evidence concerning the effects of the leadership-development program is presented.

In chapter 9 we reexamine the normative model in the light of our findings and present a revised model that encompasses a wider range of decision-making situations. Alternatives for further elaboration and development of models of this type are discussed in the context of their potential uses.

Central to all the research reported in this book is the role of situational differences as determinants of the choice of a decision process. In this emphasis we have departed from the mainstream, which has focused on individual differences as determinants of actual behavior and has advocated a highly participative decision style as optimal for all situations. For this reason, in a concluding statement in chapter 10, we have attempted not only to summarize our major findings but also to relate them to other approaches to the study of leadership.