LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING:
CONTEMPORARY THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE COLLEGIATE SCENE

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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INTRODUCTION

The concepts of leadership and decision-making are almost inseparable. To discuss one without the other is very difficult. The very existence of the decision-making process indicates that some sort of leadership is present to aid in the process. These two concepts are the backbone of the functioning of various systems ranging from the United States government to a local small town booster club. The importance of these concepts is immense. Though various factors influence any organizational system, the significance of the leadership function and decision-making process cannot be denied.

It is the hope of the writer that, in this paper and the accompanying case studies, various models depicting leadership styles and decision-making processes can be presented. It is the hypothesis that no one style or process is always right; rather an individual must be able to adapt to different situations and apply that style or process which he feels fits the situation. This ability, it is maintained, is what separates the effective leader from the others.

PART I: THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

The trend in the United States today is toward more individual freedom and initiative in leadership and decision-making. More participation in the decision-making process is being allowed by business and industry. The day of the dictator-type leader is almost gone. This trend is posing an interesting question to leaders of today. How much participation
Forces in the Situation

The most important point here is that the manager must try and look at the situation objectively. He/she must consider what effect the decision will have upon the organization, the work-group, and himself/herself. Along with these, he/she must take into account the element of time. How successfully a manager is able to analyze these forces will determine his/her success as a leader. The person whose perceptions are the keenest will be one step ahead in the decision-making process.

Even though the trend is toward participative management (moving toward the right along the continuum), there has been no concrete evidence to prove it to be a consistently superior style. Various studies have shown it is associated with greater satisfaction among subordinates, but it does not necessarily correlate with greater productivity. Generally, laboratory studies have shown that the authoritarian approach is the best where efficiency is the goal and the situation involves routine problem solving. The participative style is usually found to be best when a creative solution is needed. This leaves those participating more satisfied with the ultimate decision.

The biggest criticism of this single line continuum is that only one dimension is present. Most research groups agree that at least two dimensions are needed to describe a manager's leadership style; the two dimensions have been termed consideration and structure. Consideration is simply the concern for others. A participative leadership style is very characteristic of people who have high consideration levels. The second dimension is termed structure. A person who is high in structure is very interested in achieving organizational goals. Planning, assigning tasks,
and emphasizing production are all characteristics of a person with a high structural level. These two dimensions, developed by Edwin Fleishman, have become very useful in describing leadership behavior.

Many other studies have used these dimensions or ones similar to them as guidelines. Fred Fiedler's Contingency Model uses dimensions similar to these as a basis for his theory. Fiedler's theory (1967) states that the effectiveness of a group is contingent upon the relationship between leadership style and the degree to which the group situation enables the leader to exert influence. Many scholars question the validity of Fiedler's studies, but a large number of people are subscribing to or creating variations of it. In his book, Fiedler describes the two styles of leadership with which his theory deals.

One of these is a leadership style which is primarily task-oriented, which satisfies the leader's need to gain satisfaction from performing the task. The other is primarily oriented toward attaining a position of prominence and toward achieving good interpersonal relations.¹

The following illustrates Fiedler's hypothesis.²

EXHIBIT II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-oriented style</th>
<th>Relationship-oriented, considerate style</th>
<th>Task-oriented style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Assumed Similarity or Least-preferred Coworker scores</td>
<td>High Assumed Similarity or Least-preferred Coworker scores</td>
<td>Low Assumed Similarity or least-preferred Coworker scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable Leadership Situation</td>
<td>Situation intermediate in favorableness for leader</td>
<td>Unfavorable leadership situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


²Ibid., p. 14
If one analyzes the two styles in terms of group situations, the task oriented leader is more effective when the situation is either very favorable or very unfavorable to the leader. The relationship oriented leader is more successful in situations which are near the midpoint of the two extremes.

One of the main concerns of a leader is the favorableness of the situation. In this instance, favorableness can be defined as the degree to which a situation will enable a leader to influence a group's behavior. A situation's favorableness is determined by three factors: task structure, leader-member relations and position power. Fiedler describes the ideal situation for a leader:

It is when the group to be led is faced with a clearly outlined task (high task structure), when it has great respect for its leader (good leader-member relations), and when the leader has a considerable amount of reward coercive and legitimate power. . . .

Of these three factors, leader-member relations is the most important. It is the only factor which is determined in part by the leader. Task structure and position power are determined by the organization. If a leader is accepted and respected, he will have little trouble exerting his influence over his subordinates. Since most groups' purposes are to perform some particular task, task structure is very important. The task itself can be very structured or unstructured. A highly structured task would be one involving an assembly line. In this case, the leader would have the complete support of an organization behind him. The rules would be very enforceable. An example of an unstructured task would be that of a committee chairmanship. Here

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can be raised regarding a decision by a person: the normative question regarding what process should be used to make a decision, or the descriptive question which decision-making process would actually be used.

The normative and descriptive models have been utilized in developing one of the more recent theories regarding the decision-making process. The Vroom-Yetton model, designed by Victor Vroom and Philip Yetton is like Fiedler's contingency model in that they both assume that different situations call for different actions. The two theories differ in that the Vroom-Yetton model attempts to define the situational possibilities and all the possible alternatives.

Vroom and Yetton take a somewhat different view of the relationship between leadership and decision-making.

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.4

A leader can envision his role in two ways. Being the leader, he/she must accept the role as decision-maker. It is his job to evaluate a problem and arrive at a solution. In the alternative view, the leader's task is to determine which process should be used and which person or persons should participate in the decision. The leader's task is to determine how the problem will be solved and not what the solution will be.

One of the most difficult questions to answer when dealing with decision-making is that of the degree of participation by subordinates in the process. Vroom and Yetton have developed a set of guidelines which can be used to determine the amount and type of participation needed. These guidelines distinguish seven different approaches to decision-making.

### EXHIBIT III

**Decision Methods for Group and Individual Problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Problems</th>
<th>Individual Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Al.</strong></td>
<td>You solve the problem or make the decision yourself, using information available to you at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All.</strong></td>
<td>You obtain the necessary information from your subordinates, then decide the solution to the problem yourself. You may or may not tell your subordinates what the problem is in getting the information from them. The role played by your subordinates in making the decision is clearly one of providing the necessary information to you, rather than generating or evaluating alternative solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cl.</strong></td>
<td>You share the problem with the relevant subordinates individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group. Then you make the decision, which may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cll.</strong></td>
<td>You share the problem with your subordinates as a group, obtaining their collective ideas and suggestions. Then you make the decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clll.</strong></td>
<td>You share the problem with your subordinates as a group. You generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement on a solution. Your role is much like that of chairman. You are willing to accept and implement any solution which has the support of the entire group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen by the table, the degree of participation increases at each level. The table goes from a completely autocratic style at Al to a laissez faire style in D1. Any problem to which the above methods are applicable can be further defined by the eight problem attributes which Vroom and Yetton have developed. The attributes have been designed in yes-no questions to enable the leader to more easily grasp the real issue he is looking for. Exhibit IV defines these attributes.

EXHIBIT IV

Basic Considerations Underlying the Normative Method

Problem Attributes

A. If decision were accepted, would it make a difference which course of action were adopted?

B. Do I have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?

C. Do subordinates have sufficient additional information to result in a high quality decision?

D. Do I know exactly what information is needed, who possesses it, and how to collect it?

E. Is acceptance of decision by subordinates critical to effective implementation?

F. If I were to make the decision by myself, is it certain that it would be accepted by my subordinates?

G. Can subordinates be trusted to base solutions on organizational consideration?

H. Is conflict among subordinates likely in preferred solutions?

If a leader takes the time to answer each of the questions in the table, it should assist him in his decision-making process. It should be pointed out that the majority of the questions are concerned with a leader's decision. The more consideration a leader gives his subordinates, the more likely they will accept his decision.

It is interesting at this point to compare the Vroom-Yetton model to those discussed earlier.

The Tannenbaum-Schmidt model lends itself to such a comparison. The first four situations on the continuum are similar to that of Vroom's Al and All. At this point in both models, the decision is being presented to the subordinates. They have little or no chance to express any feelings regarding it. Situation 5 on the continuum is similar to Cl and Cll. For the first time, the problem is being presented to the subordinates. Although they are not directly involved in the final decision, their viewpoint has been heard. Gll of the Vroom model resembles situation 6 and 7 on the continuum. Here the leader is allowing the subordinates to participate directly in the decision-making process. In this situation, the leader is determining who will participate in the decision rather than actually participating himself.

Vroom and Yetton have also developed a decision-making tree utilizing the decision methods and problem attributes discussed earlier. The tree serves as a general classification scheme which a leader can use to diagnose a problem. The complexity of the tree makes it difficult to discuss in a paper of this scope. Further discussion of this model is presented in Vroom's-Yetton's book entitled Leadership and Decision-Making.
One of the difficulties that can be seen in Vroom's model is that the leader must make judgements about the characteristics of any problem which he/she faces. As long as the leader correctly perceives the situation, the model will serve him/her well. If there are major inaccuracies in his/her perception, the model will decrease in its usefulness.

Probably the most impressive characteristic of the Vroom-Yetton model is its practicality. By using the model, a leader is able to rationally determine the most effective way to solve the problem. This model can be used in "real world" situations rather than just theoretically. The model can be changed as new evidence is reported.

One final point which deserves consideration is the degree of structure of a situation with which a leader is faced. There are times when the situation may be so structured that the leader's behavior and hence his decision-making process is completely dictated by situational demands. When analyzing behaviors and styles, one must be aware of the possibility of this occurrence. When this does occur, the leader may have to perform out of his typical leadership style in order to meet the situational demands.

This leaves the basic questions as to what leadership style and decision-making process a leader should actually choose. Each of the models discussed exhibits a different viewpoint of which a manager can make use. An understanding of each of the models will increase a leader's choices when he/she is to make a decision. The better understanding a leader has of himself, the more effective he can become as a leader. It is the author's conclusion that an effective leader does not have just one leadership style; rather an effective leader
is capable of adapting to a given situation to maximize his outcomes. He/she should be able to behave in many different situations and perform in various leadership styles when it is necessary. Finally his/her decision-making process should be the one that most closely approximates the situational needs.

PART II: CASE STUDIES OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The success of many campus organizations rests with the leadership that is displayed by those who head each respective organization. Through these case studies it is hoped that two things will be accomplished: the first is to point out many of the problems which exist on a campus such as Ball State; the second is to analyze the leadership styles from which many of these problems resulted. It is the belief of the writer that a greater awareness of different leadership styles and how they can be displayed in different situations would result in increased efficiency and enjoyment for those involved in campus organizations.
CASE I
AN EAGER BEAVER

Each winter, a student is chosen to chair the next year's homecoming steering committee. The committee consists of seven students, each in charge of a separate area concerning the homecoming weekend. Joe Alt was chosen as the 1977-78 homecoming chairman. As is required of each chairman, Joe had served on last year's steering committee in charge of publicity. The chairman's job is to oversee all planning, organization and completion of the Homecoming Weekend. The majority of the planning for Homecoming takes place in the spring of the preceding year. Meetings are held once a week and usually last for approximately two hours.

Joe was excited about his new position. His previous experiences with campus organizations had been as a subordinate, rather than as the leader. This would be his first chance at actually leading a group. Of course, he thought that this year's Homecoming was going to be the best ever.

Since Homecoming involves the alumni to a great deal, Dr. Jones, the Alumni Director, usually sits in on the meetings. So he could make arrangements to attend the weekly meetings, Dr. Jones asked Joe when the meetings were to be. Without asking anyone else, Joe said that they would be held from 10:00 a.m. to noon. He felt that this would prevent any scheduling problems.

One of the main events of Homecoming is the Homecoming Show, held on Saturday night following the football game. Wanting to be well prepared for the first meeting, Joe went through the talent agency book and picked out ten names that he thought would be good to bring. Most of the names were in the area of jazz. Joe had been a jazz fan for many years and thought that once people heard a good jazz group, they would certainly like it.
On Thursday, before the meeting, Joe received a phone call from Mayor Hudson. The purpose of the call was to convince Joe that the parade route should start at the downtown area and go down Wheeling to McGalliard. This would allow the customers of the businesses along Wheeling and the Northwest Plaza to view the parade. It would cause a greater traffic problem, but Mayor Hudson assured Joe the city could handle it. Joe thought it sounded like a good idea, especially since it would improve relations with the city so he told Mayor Hudson to go ahead with the idea.

The meeting on Saturday morning went rather well, Joe thought. At the meeting, Joe outlined the things he had done. He also presented the list of names he thought would be good for a concert. Most of the people just listened, not really knowing what to say. Joe interpreted this as the group showing its satisfaction for what he had done. Afterwards several members complimented him on the amount of work he had done. Three or four members were rather confused as to what role they were actually going to play. They complained to each other privately, but did not mention anything to Joe.

Questions

1. What role did Joe feel he was to play as chairman? What role should Joe have played do you feel?

2. What was his rationale behind his actions prior to the first meeting?

3. In this case should the advisor been contacted? Why or why not?

4. What leadership qualities was Joe displaying?

5. Why did several of the members compliment him while others were confused about the way he acted? Which way would you have acted?

6. Would you change Joe's actions in any way? If so how?

7. Were Joe's actions in the best interest of the group and in getting the goal's accomplished?
CASE II
NOT A LIFESAVER

The Student Programming Board was lucky enough to have as its president, Dave Foreman, an experienced campus leader. Dave had been active in student government and had served on numerous committees. Many thought that Dave's leadership experience would pull the relatively young Programming Board together.

The board had not done anything substantial for over a year. The members were very lax in attendance and did not seem to be dedicated to the purpose of the board. Because of the lack of programming that the board had done in the past, most of the campus did not really know what the board was trying to accomplish.

The board consisted of nine members, the majority of whom had been appointed by the Student Body President. Often these appointments were based on "political" affiliations rather than on qualifications. Nevertheless, the people were usually qualified, but needed some motivation to get them to perform up to the level of their capabilities.

Dave is a very good speaker and usually makes a good first impression. He has a lot of contacts on campus, which can be very beneficial.

A typical Programming Board meeting consists of Dave asking for various committee reports. During this time, he does much of the talking, giving suggestions on how things should be done. After this period, time is set aside for planning for future events and determining what the board would like to see in programming events.

Dave feels that it is his responsibility to contact the different agents and make the final plans. When he is questioned about the progress of various possibilities, he can never be pinned down for an answer.
After half a year with Dave as president, the problem still exists of the Programming Board's not having any extensive programming. The majority of the student body still does not know what the Programming Board is supposed to do.

Questions

1. On what might the selection of Dave as president been based?

2. Is the appointment of the board by the Student Body President acceptable for this situation? If not, what better methods are there.

3. What role did Dave assume as president. Does this differ from the role that he should have assumed? If so, how?

4. Was it Dave's failure as president, the board's lack of motivation or something else which resulted in a lack of programming?

5. As a board member, what could you as an individual do to improve the board's situation?

6. What would an advisor's role in this situation be?

7. Is responsibility effectively delegated here? Is it delegated at all?
CASE III
ONE OR THE OTHER

You are currently president of a campus organization. The previous executive council selected you for this position. As president, you are called on to make numerous decisions in a short period of time. You are expected to provide leadership and direction to the people in your organization. Recently, you received an offer to take an internship in a large department store in the marketing department. Since this is your major area of study and would be a once-in-a-lifetime chance, you have decided to accept the offer. This internship will require you to be away from campus during Winter Quarter, thus you will have to resign as president of the organization.

It is your responsibility to fill your spot with someone capable. Immediately reporting to you are two vice-presidents. Each has shown indications that he should be able to handle the job. It is nearing the end of the quarter, and there is no chance of getting the group together. The decision could produce hard feelings between members of the organization. You must make the decision.

Questions

1. How will you go about making the decision?
2. How will you explain your choice to the candidate you didn't choose?
3. What factors should be taken into consideration for a decision of this nature?
4. In this instance, what role should an advisor play?
5. Should you consult with anyone else and if so, who?
CASE IV
TOO FEW DOING TOO MUCH

The men of Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity have made great strides in improving their chapter in the last three years. They have over seventy members, and rank high in scholastic achievement. The fraternity has sponsored an "Olympic Games" as a part of Greek week.

The fraternity has at most five brothers who consistently organize and plan the majority of things the fraternity does. They are also the ones who do the so-called "dirty work." The president is very devoted to the fraternity. He tends to feel that he always knows what's right. The president tends to always feel he has to personally watch over any activities that occur. This could be because he doesn't trust anyone's ability to get things done.

The five highly active brothers are all good students, but their involvement in the fraternity and with campus activities has tended to hurt their grades. In order to maximize the fraternity's growth, more people have to become involved.

Questions

1. Is the brothers' lack of participation due to their apathy or to the president's attitude?

2. What motivates the four others who participate frequently?

3. What might cause the president to act in the manner he does?

4. What do you think the attitude of the chapter is to these five people?

5. Does there appear to be any recognition for a person when he does do something?

6. Does responsibility have to be delegated in order to be assumed or taken?
CASE V
ONE STEP TOO FAR

John Robbins had served on the Student Activities Board for the past year as secretary. All of the board members would agree that there was no harder worker than John. No matter how busy he was, John always found time to attend all of the board's functions. John was the type of person who was very well liked, but had to really work to get his grades.

During the year, John expressed an interest in running for the presidency of the board. Although there were several more qualified people on the board, none were interested in sacrificing the time needed to devote to the presidency. The office of President of the Activities Board required a great deal of time and personal devotion. The president has to make a great number of decisions. Many times, he is not able to contact very many of the members to get their opinion.

When the election was held, John was selected. Many people did not think he could be firm enough, but there was really no one else from which to choose. Since John was going to have a strong group of officers working with him, it was felt everything would work out fine.

As in all organizations, it usually takes a few meetings for the new president to become oriented to his job. John was no exception.

The first several meetings were run rather shakily. John had trouble controlling the group and was very hesitant on decisions from the chair. At times he appeared as if he really didn't know what was going on. It was becoming evident that he was slowly losing control of the group. John also missed several of the board's activities because he had other things to do.
Many members were beginning to look toward the vice-president regarding organizational matters. Some people were saying that John had been promoted past his capabilities. Since John still had the majority of his term of office left there was discussion of what would happen to the organization if his present behavior continued.

Questions

1. How important is John to the board?

2. Should he have been selected just because there was no one else to choose from? Was there any other alternative but to select him?

3. What should the board do regarding John's lack of leadership?

4. In this situation the vice-president is being put in an increasingly difficult role. How do you think he should react to it?

5. If John were to try to regain control of the group, how could he go about doing it?

6. Since the board does have a strong group of officers, can they still survive if John continues as he is doing?
CASE VI

IT'S ALL IN WHOM YOU KNOW

The National Honorary, Phi Alpha Kappa, had been at the State University for a number of years. It had always been one of the most prestigious organizations on campus. Since it is a national honorary, the standards had always been very high. To be selected for it was quite an honor.

In the past few years, a great number of engineering students had been admitted. Many of them were some of the top students on campus, but some did not quite meet the high standards of the others in the organization. There were some students who were extremely qualified who had applied, but were not admitted.

The selection process of Phi Alpha Kappa was designed so that the existing members would determine how the applicants were to be reviewed and then they would proceed to select them. The applicants were judged equally in two categories; leadership and scholarship. Even though names were not known when the applications were reviewed, most people could tell by a person's activities who they were. The engineers were ranking fellow engineers very highly in both categories while they tended to grade the others much more strictly.

It was now to the point where the engineers outnumbered any other area of study by so many that they could admit or keep out anybody they wanted to. Many of the other people in the group were getting upset about this practice and numerous cliques were developing. The rivalry between different groups was becoming ridiculous for an organization of this type.
Greg Brand had recently been chosen president of Phi Alpha Kappa for the upcoming year. Although not an engineering major, he was a close friend of several and seemed to be respected by the entire group. Greg was aware of the problem, but could not determine what he could do about it. He knew that if the group wanted to retain its prestigious position on campus, this situation would have to be corrected.

Questions

1. In Greg's situation, what is a realistic leadership role for him to take? Outline various alternative roles and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

2. How might the leadership have lacked in the past?

3. Should Greg try to change things around immediately or do it gradually? Why?

4. Since the group has various cliques, what might Greg do to bring them back together?

5. Considering that the members of Phi Alpha Kappa are supposed to already be leaders on campus, what does this situation indicate about their personalities?

6. In an honorary of this type, what kind of selection process would fairly evaluate an applicant's leadership abilities?
CASE VII

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, WILL THE TOUGH GET GOING?

The Student Entertainment Board consists of ten students. The board is responsible for bringing entertaining events to campus. Included in these events are concerts and plays. Each member is selected for a two-year term, and approximately half the board is up for selection each year. This year's board is comprised of some of the top leaders on campus. Elected as president of the board for the upcoming year was Mary Jones. During the past year, Mary had served as president of her sorority and had participated in several other campus organizations.

As she began her term of office, it was evident she hoped to develop a strong committee structure. After the committee chairmen were chosen, all the work for that committee was placed in their hands. When questions concerning an aspect of the board were posed to Mary by students or administrators, she referred them to one of the chairman.

During each meeting of the board, Mary asked for a very brief report from each chairman. If there were questions regarding anything, Mary would ask the whole group to decide on it. If Mary was forced to make a decision during the week, she would contact as many board members as possible before giving an answer. At the following meeting she would ask for the approval of the board on what she had done.

The members of the board seemed to be happy with Mary's performance, but some wondered what would happen if a crisis occurred and Mary was forced to make a series of decisions by herself.
Questions

1. What kind of leadership style was Mary displaying?

2. What do you think would happen if a crisis occurred? How would Mary behave?

3. Even though the board members appeared to be satisfied with Mary's performance, do you feel this was the most effective way to run this organization?

4. Would you suggest any changes in Mary's leadership style?

5. What effect did Mary's committee structure have on her behavior?

6. Analyze Mary's behavior when she was in charge of the meetings?


