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DETERMINANTS OF LEADER

BEHAVIOR

Fred E. Fiedler

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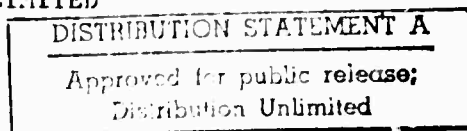
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PERSONALITY AND SITUATIONAL DETERMINANTS
OF LEADER BEHAVIOR¹

Fred E. Fiedler

University of Washington

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between such behaviors as the leader's consideration and structuring and two key variables of the Contingency Model. The variables, the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) score and the "favorableness" of the leadership situation, interact in a highly consistent manner in affecting these leader behaviors. The evidence that leader behavior depends, in large part, on the interaction of LPC and situational favorableness indicates (a) that we should avoid defining leadership style on the basis of leader behaviors, and (b) that the prediction of leader behavior must be based on the joint effects of personality and situational factors.

PERSONALITY AND SITUATIONAL DETERMINANTS
OF LEADER BEHAVIOR

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The behavior of leaders has been an important and early focus of social psychological research. Carter and his associates (Carter, et al., 1951), Bales (1965) and Cattell (1951) are but a few of the more prominent workers in this area. Many others have contributed to the measurement of leader behavior, and have developed methods for investigating how the leader's behavior influences the performance as well as the satisfaction and morale of group members. Of particular importance has been the work of Shartle and his associates at Ohio State University, which eventuated in the now well-known leader behavior dimensions of Consideration and Initiation of Structure in Interaction (see Stogdill & Coons, 1957).

These studies as well as most others in the area have led to a convergence of findings which point to two major classes of leader behaviors on which supervisors and managers as well as others in leadership positions can be meaningfully described. These are (a) the concern and effort directed toward establishing and maintaining good interpersonal relations, high morale, job satisfaction, etc., and (b) the concern with performance which expresses itself in directing and structuring the group effort toward the common goal.

The hope of earlier studies was to identify specific leader behaviors which would be related, if not causal, to effective group performance as well as member satisfaction so that leaders might then be trained to engage in these behaviors.

These hopes were disappointed. A review of the available literature by Korman (1966) showed that leader behaviors did not correlate consistently with group effectiveness. No consistent relations emerged between the structuring behaviors of the leader and either effectiveness or member satisfaction. And while a moderate and consistent relationship appears to exist between considerate behavior and member satisfaction, it must be kept in mind that satisfied employees are more likely than unsatisfied employees to describe their supervisor as considerate. A study by Halpin (1955) had shown that the effective leaders of air crews were both structuring and considerate, while this was not true of leaders of educational institutions. Fleishman and Harris (1962) had found an interaction between consideration and structuring leader behaviors on group satisfaction. However, these findings were not replicated in other investigations. It is, therefore, clear that we are dealing with a complex problem.

In brief, there can be no doubt that the consideration and the initiation of structure dimensions and similar behavior categories describe important leader behaviors. At the same time there is disappointingly little empirical evidence that these dimensions affect performance (Korman, 1966; Campbell, et al., 1970). Why these behaviors do not predict, or correlate with, group performance represents a major theoretical problem.

One clue which might assist us toward a satisfactory explanation is the finding that situational factors and certain personality attributes interact in determining leadership effectiveness (Fiedler, 1967, 1971). Could similar interactions determine leader behaviors?

Consistency of Leader Behavior

Before we can address these problems we must first ask whether there is consistency in leader behavior over different situations. Writers in the field have generally spoken of autocratic, structuring, task-centered leadership styles, or of such styles as democratic, employee-centered, considerate. By personality style--or leadership style--we generally mean a trans-situational mode of relating and interacting with others. If there is such a thing as, for example, a "considerate leadership style" or an "employee-centered leadership style," then we should expect that the individual with this leadership style should behave in a relatively more employee-centered or considerate manner than leaders who are not so rated, regardless of the situation. But if the same leaders are autocratic or job-centered in one situation, but democratic or employee-centered and considerate in another situation, they clearly do not have a particular leadership style which manifests itself in these behavior categories. To speak of considerate or democratic leaders, or of job- and employee-centered leaders, may then be unwarranted and misleading.

It is, of course, obvious that the behavior of leaders, or for that matter, the behavior of anyone else, will to some extent depend upon the situation. People behave differently at funerals than at cocktail parties. The problem at issue is whether (a) the tendency to behave in a considerate, employee-centered manner is an attribute of the leader's personality, and therefore properly considered to be his leadership style; or (b) whether the leader's personality and the situation interact, and the person who is considerate under one condition tends to be

relatively less considerate under other conditions. If the latter is the case, it will have major implications for current leadership theory as well as our currently widespread attempts to train people to become more considerate or human relations oriented in their interactions with subordinates.

Everyday observation suggests that some supervisors are quite considerate and concerned for the feelings and welfare of their men when all is going well, but they become tense and inconsiderate toward subordinates when they are under pressure. In contrast, we frequently see supervisors who are aloof and distant, if not truly inconsiderate, under routine conditions, but quite considerate and employee-centered under conditions of stress and emergencies. If these are not isolated instances but represent a lawful relationship, then it seems likely that we are dealing with an interaction between the situation and relevant personality attributes. The problem, then, is to identify the relevant personality attributes as well as the situational factors which determine how individuals in leadership positions will behave.

Personality and leader behavior. What, first of all, is a "relevant personality attribute?" As far as this inquiry is concerned, it is a reliable personality variable of the leader which affects such other important types of group behaviors as performance.

One variable of this type is the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) score. This score has been extensively used in a large number of leadership studies and it is a key variable of the writer's Contingency Theory of leadership effectiveness (Fiedler, 1967). It is obtained by asking an individual (a) to think of all the people with whom he has ever worked,

and (b) to describe the one person in his life with whom he found it most difficult to work on a common task. This description is made by marking a set of 16- to 20-items of an eight point bi-polar scale of the Semantic Differential type (see Osgood, 1952). The LPC score is simply the sum of item scores, with the "good" pole of each item scale giving a high score.

A high LPC score, indicating that the individual described his LPC in relatively favorable terms, is interpreted as reflecting a basic motivation to be related to others. A low LPC score is interpreted as reflecting a motivation for task accomplishment. Note that high LPC has been interpreted by various writers as conceptually similar to consideration, while low LPC has been interpreted as similar to initiation of structure. As we shall show, such an interpretation is clearly not warranted by the empirical evidence, and it is quite inconsistent with the theoretical position underlying the current interpretation of LPC.

The relevance of LPC for the present inquiry lies in the well-substantiated findings which show an interaction between LPC and situational favorableness in affecting group performance. The majority of studies have found that low LPC leaders tend to perform better in very favorable as well as in unfavorable leadership situations, while high LPC leaders tend to perform better in situations which are intermediate in favorableness (Fiedler, 1971). It is not unreasonable to expect, therefore, that we should find a similar interaction between LPC and situational favorableness in determining leader behavior.

Situational Favorableness

The favorableness dimension is conceptually defined as the degree to which the situation itself gives the leader power and influence in

his group. This dimension has been operationalized in a number of ways. It is most frequently defined on the basis of three component dimensions: (a) the degree to which the leader feels accepted by his group (the "group atmosphere" score); (b) the degree to which the task is structured; and (c) the degree to which the leader position has power and influence.

The importance of the situational favorableness dimension is not too surprising in retrospect. It is one thing to tackle a leadership task when one has complete control over the situation: e.g., the captain of a navy ship. It is quite a different story when the leader's influence is minimal; e.g., the disliked chairman of a volunteer group which has been asked to devise a new school bussing policy.

The remainder of this paper will deal with the interaction of the leader's LPC score and various situational factors in determining the behavior of the leader. These results have been not only in the studies which are described but a number of others as well (e.g., Fiedler, O'Brien, and Ilgen, 1966; Nayar, Touzard and Summers, 1968; and Ninane and Fiedler, 1970; etc.).

Interaction between LPC and Situational Favorableness

The Dutch Study (Fiedler, Meuwese and Oonk, 1961). The first study which suggested an interaction between LPC and situational factors was conducted in Holland. In this experiment, four-man groups were given creative tasks (e.g., writing three different stories about the same TAT card). The groups were assembled either with appointed leaders or without appointed leaders, and either homogeneous in terms of religion and regional sub-culture or heterogeneous. Homogeneous groups with appointed leaders are considered a more favorable leadership situation

than heterogeneous groups with emergent leaders. The sessions were tape recorded and content analyzed. However, it was not possible to differentiate the leader from group members on the basis of the recordings, and the analyses were based on total interactions, irrespective of who made various comments. It is nevertheless reasonable to expect that the contribution by leaders would be greater than that by members, and that the content analysis would, therefore, reflect the leader's behavior to a greater extent than the behavior of members.

These analyses suggested that the high LPC groups (i.e., groups led by high LPC leaders) made more comments related to the task in the relatively favorable situation (appointed leader, homogeneous group), but more comments related to the maintenance of interpersonal relations in the unfavorable situation (emergent leader, heterogeneous group). Groups led by low LPC leaders made relatively more comments related to group maintenance in the favorable situation but more comments related to the task in the unfavorable situation.

ROTC (Meuwese and Fiedler, 1965). A second study utilized ROTC cadets who were assigned to 54 three-man groups and given creative tasks under three conditions of stress. These were (a) "low stress," where the leader's and the members' anxiety was minimized; (b) "interpersonal stress," where conflict among group members was experimentally generated; and (c) "external stress," which was created by having a very formal task situation in which a high ranking officer faced and continually evaluated the group during the entire period of interaction. The high LPC leaders under the less stressful conditions (low stress, high group atmosphere) tended to be concerned with the task while the low LPC leaders tended

to concern themselves with relation-maintaining statements. In the least favorable situation (external stress, low group atmosphere), the high LPC leaders were concerned with the relationship while the low LPC leaders were concerned with the task. This, of course, supported the findings of the Dutch study (see Figure 1). Each point on the Figure is based on nine groups.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Belgian navy teams (Fiedler, 1966). A third study was conducted with Belgian naval force personnel. This involved a large field experiment in which three-man teams performed structured as well as unstructured tasks under different conditions of situational favorableness. Specifically, half the groups were under the leadership of a petty officer, half under the leadership of a recruit; half the groups were culturally homogeneous while half were heterogeneous in culture and language; and half the groups began with a structured task while the other half began with an unstructured task. Moreover, half the groups were of relatively high intelligence while the other half were of relatively lower intelligence.

After each task session, the group members described their leader on a number of rating scales. These scales were factor analyzed and yielded clusters which could be interpreted as "motivating and involved leader," "considerate," "noncritical and not aggressive," "directive and structuring." Since all clusters were positively intercorrelated and interpreted as indicating "intensity of interaction," the cluster score was then correlated with LPC. The present analysis was confined to homogeneous groups since the stereotypes held by each language group toward the other tend to obscure other ratings. In these homogeneous

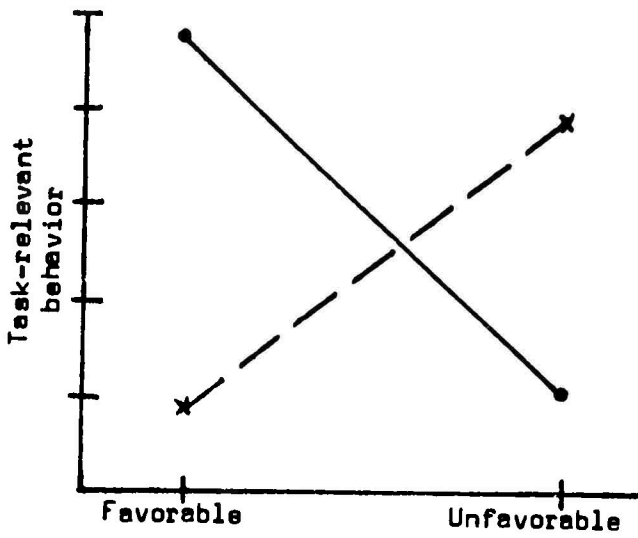
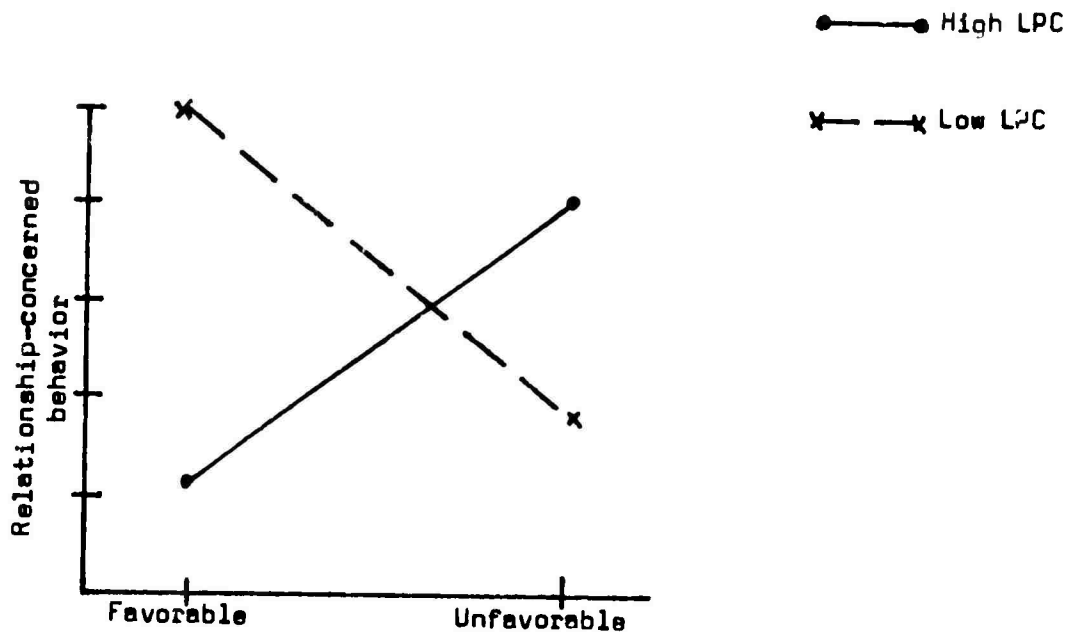


Figure 1. Behavior of nine high and nine low LPC leaders in favorable and unfavorable situations of the ROTC study (Meuwese and Fiedler, 1966).

groups, the correlation between leader LPC and behavior was negative in the favorable situations while the correlation was positive in the unfavorable situations. In other words, the low LPC leaders had close relations with their groups in the favorable situation while the high LPC leaders had close relations in unfavorable situations. This again supports the findings of the Dutch and the ROTC studies.

The findings from the three studies described above were reported in 1967. They raise several important questions. First of all, how generalizable are these results? Second, what other personality or situational factors play a part in determining leader behavior? The remainder of this paper addresses itself to these questions.

Subsequent Research on the LPC-Situational Favorableness Interaction

Psychology class project. An experiment by Sample and Wilson (1965) investigated the behavior of 14 leaders whose teams had been assigned to conduct a small laboratory study in a psychology class. The students were not aware of the fact that they themselves were the subjects. The experiment involved the design of a class project (planning), running rats through a maze (running), and writing the report (writing).

Shirakashi (personal communication) noted that the three sub-tasks could be scaled in terms of their structure. Running the experiment could be seen as the most structured aspect of the task, i.e., conducting the experiment; writing, the next most structured, and planning the study, the most unstructured. He then reanalyzed the Sample and Wilson data and found that the six low LPC leaders made more positive social-emotional responses in the running phase and fewest in the planning phase. In contrast, the eight high LPC leaders made most task relevant

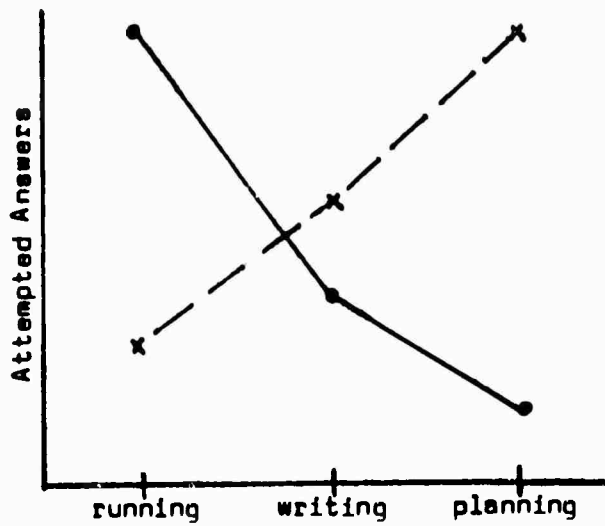
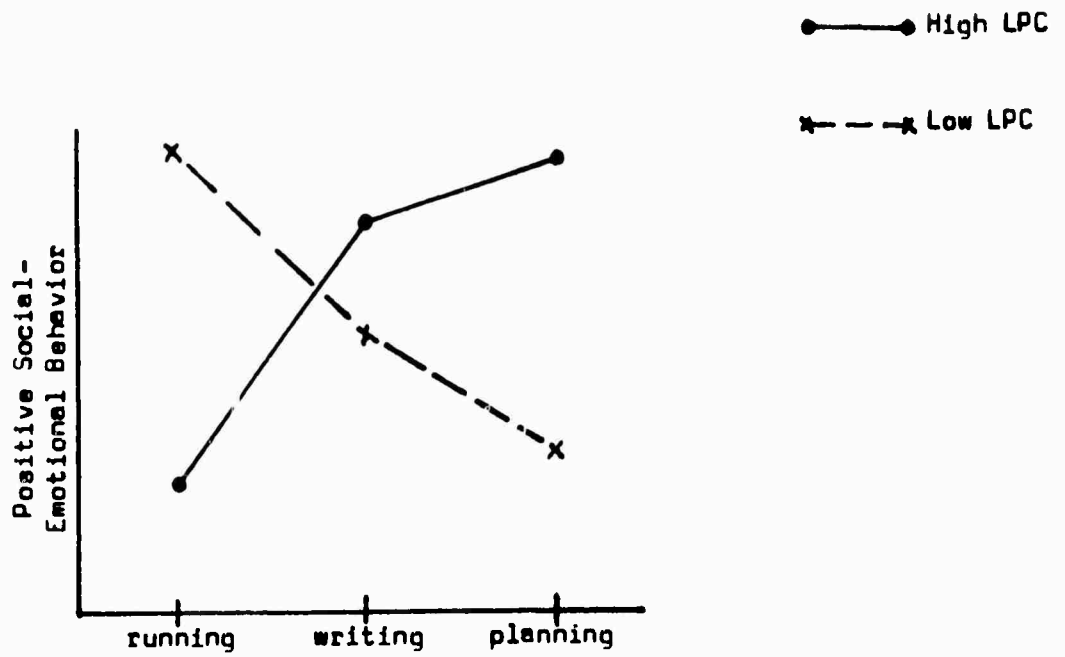
remarks ("attempted answers") in the running phase and fewest in the planning phase. These data are presented in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

School principals. Hawley (1969) investigated relations between LPC scores of elementary school principals and the leadership behaviors as described by their staff members. Leadership behaviors were measured by a 12-factor leader behavior description questionnaire and these factor scores were pooled into two factors, the first of which Hawley labelled "person oriented," composed of "tolerance of uncertainty, tolerance of freedom, consideration, and demand reconciliation." This factor has negative loadings on production emphasis and initiation of structure. A "system oriented" factor consisted of "initiating structure, production emphasis, persuasiveness, role assumption, and representation." Principals were divided into those with high and with low Group Atmosphere (GA) scores. These GA scores have been shown to measure the leader's perception of the group's support and loyalty. A high score thus reflects a more favorable situation than does a low score.

The results showed that high LPC principals with low Group Atmosphere scores were described by their teachers as more person oriented (.45, N=13); low LPC principals, also with low GA scores were described by their teachers as more "system oriented" (-.53, N=13, $p < .05$). The corresponding correlations for principals with high group atmosphere scores were -.04 (N=14) for high and .27 (N=14) for low LPC leaders.

Culture training. Chemers (1969) conducted an experiment in which 48 American leaders (24 high and 24 low LPC) worked with Iranian members in an experimental group task situation. Half the American leaders were



Sample & Wilson (1965) data
reanalyzed by Shirakashi

Figure 2. Comparison of behaviors by high and by low LPC leaders in three phases of an experimental task involving a class project of running a rat maze study.

given Culture Assimilator training (Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis, 1971). This program was designed to make the leader more aware of cultural differences and to make him better able to cope with problems arising as a result of these cultural differences. In other words, the Culture Assimilator should increase the favorableness of the leadership situation. This should make the high LPC leader more secure and, therefore, less concerned with his interpersonal relations. The low LPC leader should become less concerned with the task and more concerned with pleasant relations.

Chemers obtained various ratings of the group climate and of the leader after completion of the group tasks. As can be seen from the z-scores on Table 1, the groups with trained leaders had significantly more positive feelings toward group and leader when led by low LPC persons, but more negative feelings when led by high LPC persons. No differences appeared in the untrained groups. Thus, here again, the high LPC leaders in the favorable situation were less considerate than were the low LPC leaders, while there was no difference in groups in which the leader had received no training.

Insert Table 1 about here

Air Force instructors. Finally, in a field experiment by Ayer (1968), 33 Air Force instructors were given the task of leading small case discussion groups under various conditions of stress. The stress was induced by having the leader's superior officer come into the room to listen and to either make approving or else disparaging negative gestures indicating that the leader was performing poorly. In the control

Table 1**INTERACTION OF TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP STYLE ON
SEVERAL MEASURES OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS**

Scale	Culture		Geography		F	p
	High LPC	Low LPC	High LPC	Low LPC		
Member Ratings of:						
Group Atmosphere	-.354*	.118	.091	-.029	5.00	.05
Leader's Consideration Behavior	-.366	.342	.033	-.216	11.00	.01
Evaluation of Leader	-.403	.205	.037	-.001	6.73	.025
Climate: Liking for Situation	-.421	.231	.002	.017	6.27	.025

*Cell entries are in z-scores, with .00 indicating the mean for the group and positive or negative entries indicating positive or negative deviations from the mean in various criterion scores.

condition there was no superior officer in the room and, of course, no positive or negative feedback.

The behavior category in this study which is most akin to consideration, consists of supportive leader statements. As can be seen, the low LPC instructors made a somewhat larger number of statements in this category than the high LPC instructors in the relatively anxiety-free situation but decreased in the more stressful situations in which low LPC instructors made significantly fewer statements of this type than those with high LPC scores.

Contrary to the previously presented findings, the low LPC leader showed significantly more concern with the task than did the high LPC leader in the low anxiety condition but somewhat less than the high LPC leader in the situation in which anxiety was experimentally generated (Figure 3). While this is clearly a post-hoc attempt to explain an apparent inconsistency, it should be noted that this study was conducted in the context of a training seminar. These situations have as their primary purpose the contribution to the competence and growth of the group member rather than, as in most studies, the contribution directly to the effectiveness of the organization by group output. A recent review of the research on the Contingency Model (Fiedler, 1971) has pointed out that these training situations appear to call for different leader motivations and perhaps also different leader behaviors.

Insert Figure 3 about here

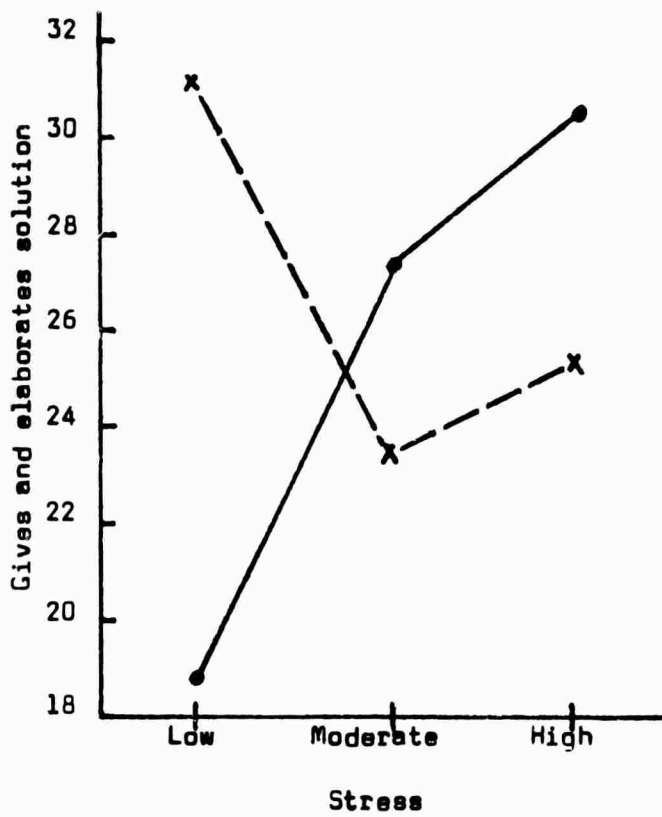
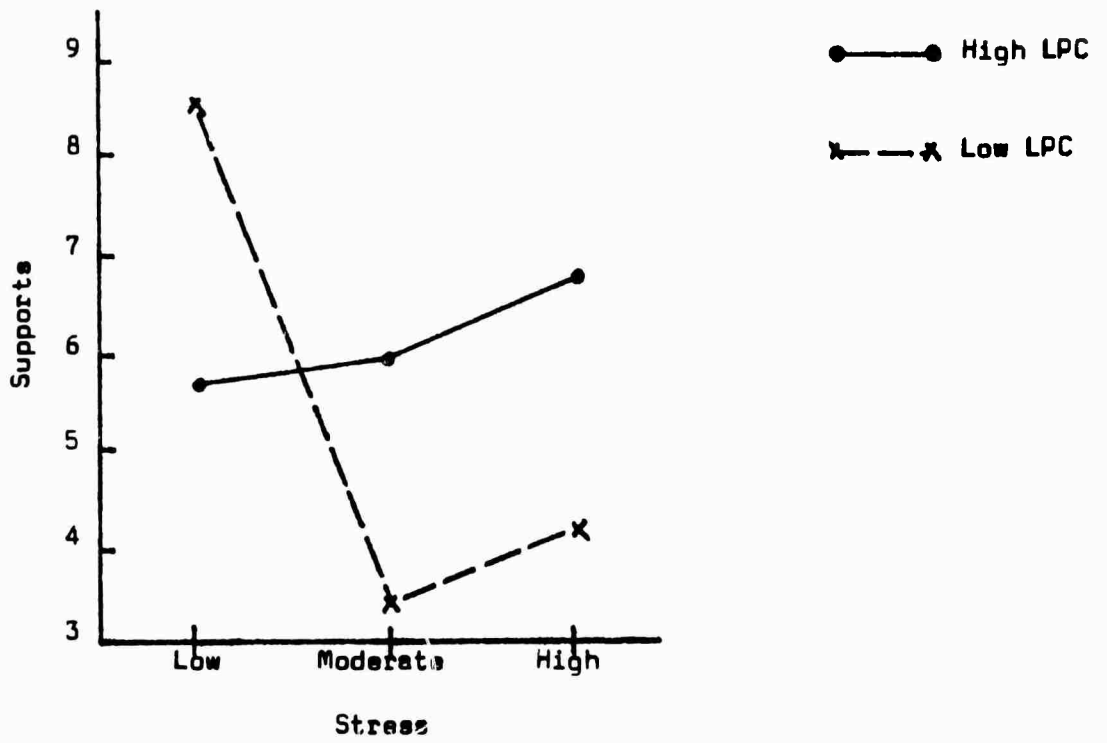


Figure 3. Comparison of two behaviors by air force instructors with high and low LPC scores under high and low stress conditions.

The Interaction of LPC and Intelligence on Leader Behavior

A further complication is introduced when we also take into consideration the leader's intelligence. Our understanding of these interactions is quite rudimentary. On the other hand, it seems worthwhile to draw attention to these findings in order to provide hypotheses for further studies of this extremely interesting problem. It should, of course, not be surprising that the leader's intelligence affects his behavior. Intelligence may be seen as a resource which enables the individual to understand and structure tasks, which enables him to deal more effectively with his environment and thus remove the threat and anxiety which might be experienced by the relatively less well endowed person.

Data from two studies are here briefly presented. While the interactions are statistically significant, the amount of variance accounted for is relatively slight. Needless to say, we are, as always, in need of larger samples and a broader selection of group situations. Hopefully, these shortcomings will be overcome in due time.

The ROTC study. As described earlier in this paper, 54 three-man groups of ROTC cadets worked under varying conditions of stress. The data are here collapsed over stress conditions. The leaders were divided into those with relatively high, moderate, and relatively low intelligence, although all were, of course, college students who had been selected into the ROTC program. The sessions were tape recorded and rated.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the leader's consideration behavior is significantly affected by intelligence as well as by the leader's LPC

score. High LPC leaders with low intelligence are more considerate than low LPC leaders with low intelligence. While the interaction between intelligence and LPC on structuring behavior is not significant, it may be of interest in testing further hypotheses.

Insert Figure 4 about here

The Belgian Navy study. In a further analysis of the Belgian Navy study, the leaders were divided into two groups on the basis of their intelligence. As already indicated earlier, the group members described the leaders after each task session. These task sessions as well as the other conditions (group homogeneity, position power of the leader, task structure) are here collapsed.

Three graphs are shown which exemplify the interaction between leader LPC and intelligence. Figure 5a shows a significant interaction on the degree to which the leader's behavior is seen as helpful and supportive. This graph shows that the intelligent high LPC leader is highly supportive while the less intelligent leader with high LPC is relatively unsupportive. The opposite results appear for the low LPC leaders. Here the intelligent leader is quite unsupportive while the less intelligent leader tends to be supportive. Figure 5b shows the same types of relations for the group members' esteem for the leader, i.e., the degree to which they describe him in relatively favorable terms. Figure 5c shows the degree to which the leader rates himself as anxious and tense. Considering these data in combination, we find that high LPC leaders who report that they are tense are seen as supportive and pleasant while low LPC leaders who are tense and anxious

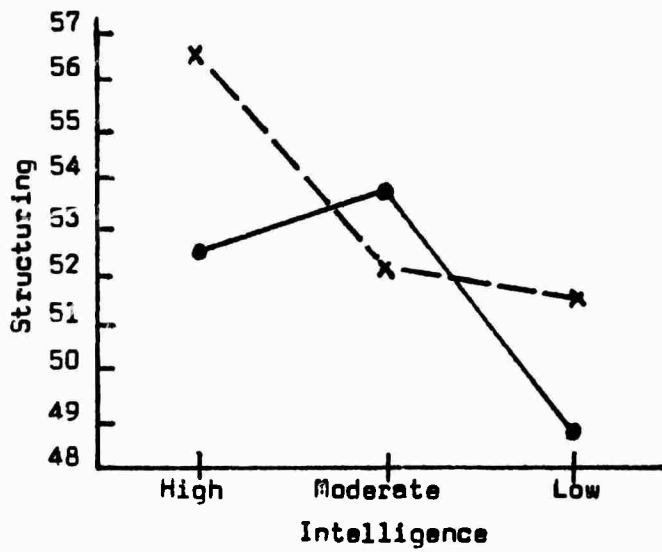
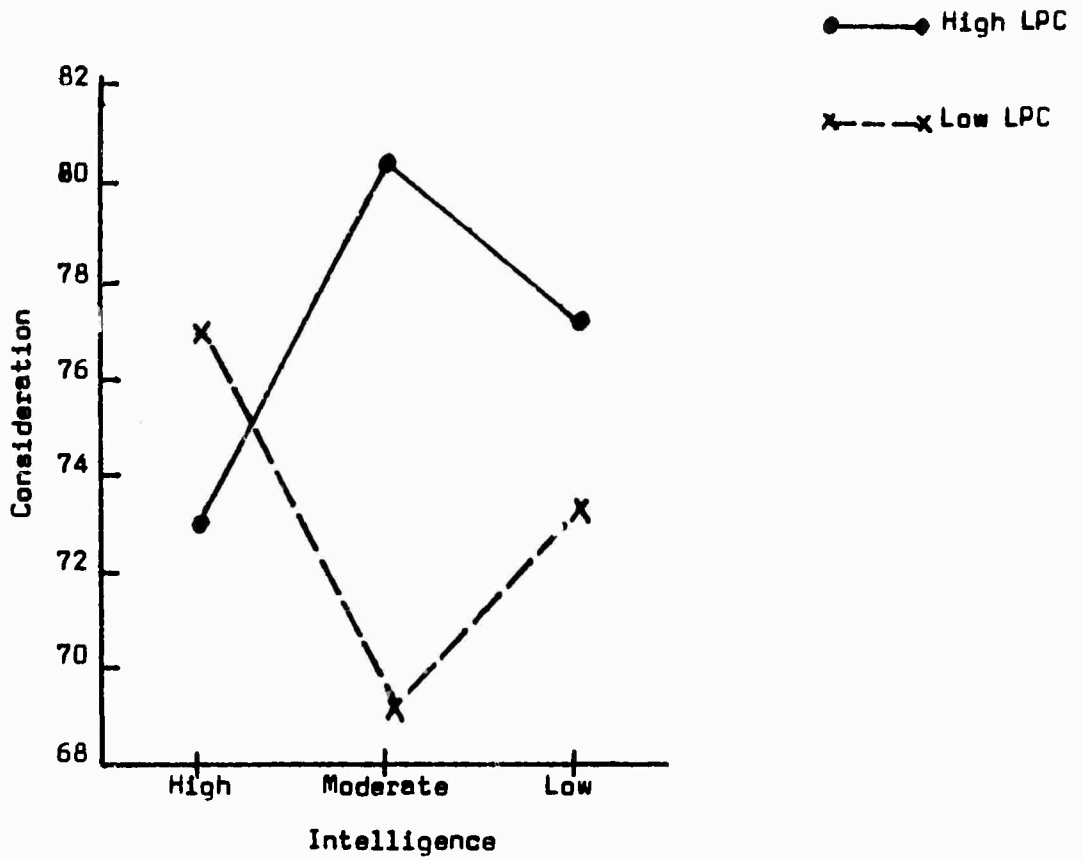


Figure 4. Comparison of leader behaviors by high and low low persons with high and moderately high intelligence (ROTC study).

are seen as unfavorable and not supportive. These results are quite consistent with the interpretation that intelligence might be seen as affecting the situational favorableness as subjectively experienced by the leader.

Insert Figure 5 about here

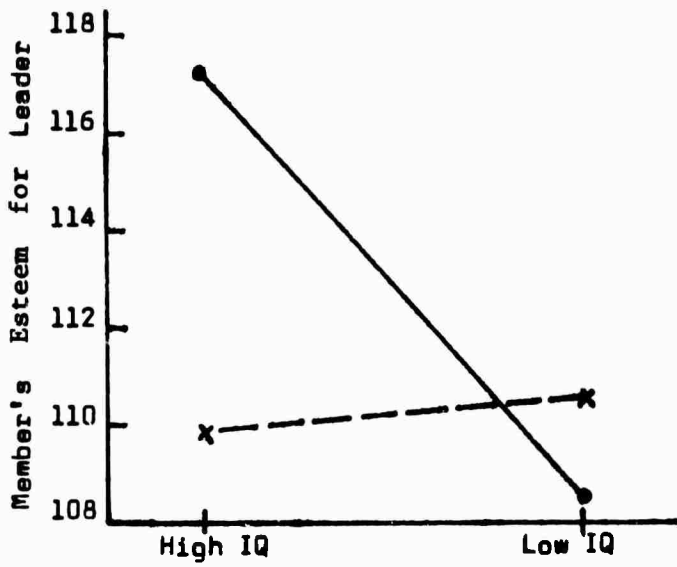
Discussion

The studies which have been presented thus far make it abundantly clear that there are no overall "considerate" or "structuring" leadership styles. Rather, the behavior of leaders on these two important dimensions depends in substantial degree upon the individual's personality (measured by LPC) and the favorableness of the situation. By and large, high LPC leaders tend to behave in a task relevant manner in favorable situations and in a considerate manner in an unfavorable situation. Low LPC leaders tend to be considerate in favorable situations and structuring and task oriented in unfavorable situations.

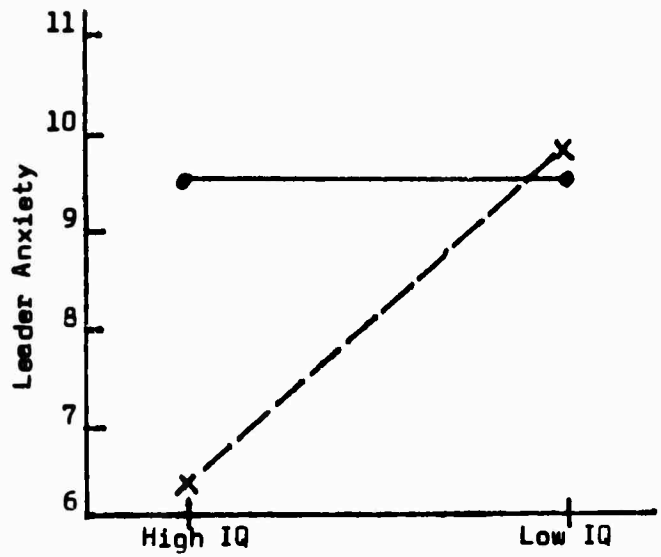
What might these results mean for the interpretation of the elusive LPC score? We find that the behavior of high and of low LPC persons changes in a consistent manner as the favorableness of the situation increases or decreases. This suggests that different behaviors are evoked by the situation as it becomes less favorable, hence, less controllable and more threatening. We visualize each individual as having a hierarchy of goals which he seeks to attain. It then seems reasonable to assume that he will first seek to secure the goal which

●—● High LPC

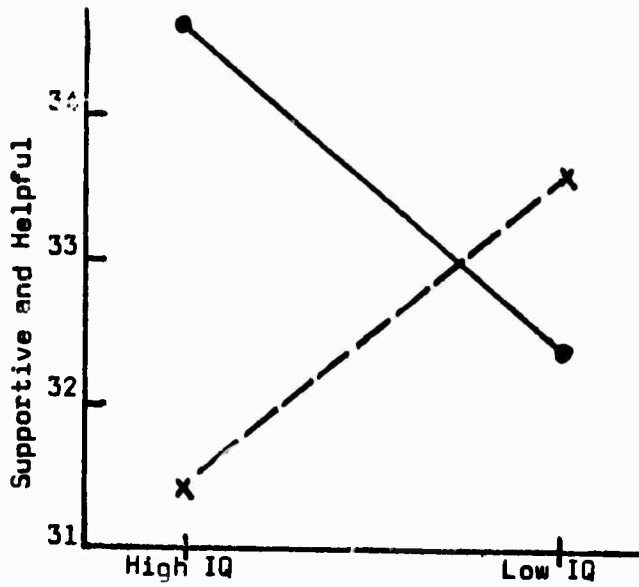
×--× Low LPC



5b



5c



5a

Figure 5. Comparison of leader behaviors by intelligence and LPC (Belgian Navy Study).

is most important to him if he is faced with a choice; i.e., if the situation makes it unlikely that he will be able to achieve all his goals, i.e., it is more important for me to eat than to see a movie. If I cannot do both, I will look for food rather than for a movie. This type of formulation is implicit in most personality theories and quite explicit in some (for example, Freud, Lewin, Rogers, Maslow).

If such a hierarchy does exist in the goal structure of individuals, then it seems reasonable to assume that the choice of different goals will call out correspondingly different behaviors which are likely to achieve these goals. As we have seen, in difficult situations the high LPC leaders become more concerned with their relationships while the low LPC leaders become more concerned with the task. We hypothesize, therefore, that the more basic or important goals of the high LPC person are in the area of being related to others, while the more basic goals of the low LPC person lie in the area of task accomplishment.

Why, then, should the high LPC person behave in a task-relevant manner and the low LPC person behave in a relationship-relevant manner when the situation is favorable?

To answer this question we must look to findings which have, up to now, been difficult to understand. We found, for example, that the high LPC persons tended to describe themselves as somewhat more self-oriented on B. M. Bass' orientation inventory (1960) than did low LPC persons, while the low LPC persons described themselves as more interaction-oriented than did the high LPC persons (A. R. Bass, Fiedler, and Krueger, 1964).

These descriptions appear at first glance to contradict the usual interpretation of high LPC as being relationship-motivated and low LPC

as task-motivated. Similarly, an unpublished study by Nealey (personal communication) asked students to imagine that they were foremen charged with making a very poorly performing group more productive. They could either choose to concentrate their efforts on making the interpersonal relations better in the expectation that the performance would then automatically improve, or with concentrating on the task in the expectation that the interpersonal relations would take care of themselves. The high LPC persons opted for concentrating on the task while the low LPC persons opted for concentration on interpersonal relations. These findings recently appeared again in a subsequent sample of managers (unpublished study).

We often forget that an individual who is asked to describe himself on a paper and pencil questionnaire generally tends to think of himself as he is when he feels in charge and control of the situation rather than when he is relatively helpless, anxious, or out of control (see Fiedler, 1970). The Nealey results can be viewed as tending to support the Bass, Fiedler and Krueger findings that the individual in the paper and pencil situation thinks of himself as he is in favorable situations while he may act quite differently in unfavorable situations. The high LPC person sees himself as concerned with the task. The low LPC person is concerned with the relationship. It is then reasonable to hypothesize that the secondary goal of the high LPC person is related to self-enhancement and prominence which he can obtain by playing the role of the task leader in the highly favorable situation. The secondary goal of the low LPC person is likely to be a pleasant interaction with group members and others; and this he can achieve by playing the role of the good fellow in very favorable situations.

It should, of course, be clear that a situation which might be quite threatening to one person may present relatively little or no threat to another. One example suggested by preliminary results is the important difference in the intellectual resources which the leader brings to the task. In situations which require problem solving or intellectual task performance, the intelligent task-motivated leader tends to withdraw from the relationship. Instead of relying on his group members, he devotes himself to the solution of the task. This is a reasonable action if the leader believes that he can do the job better by himself. On the other hand, the task-motivated leader with limited intellectual resources may not feel confident enough to do the job himself. He will then solicit the assistance of his group members. The goal may well be the same, but the behavior of the intelligent and the less intelligent leaders differs.

We also appear to find a systematic difference in the behaviors of relationship-motivated leaders who differ in intelligence. The intelligent leaders in very unfavorable situations devote themselves to the maintenance of good interpersonal relations. However, the relationship-motivated leaders of low intelligence appear simply to give up under these conditions. They tend to withdraw both from the task and from the relationship. These findings have appeared in our studies a number of times, but unfortunately the number of cases available in each of the cells is invariably too small to permit more than tentative conclusions which are here advanced as hypotheses.

In summary, this paper attempted to draw attention to the personality and situational determinants which promise to contribute to the

prediction of leader-member interactions. We have found results which seem quite consistent over a range of different studies. Our findings clearly do not exhaust the conditions which might affect leader behavior. They should, however, serve as useful hypothesis for further research on this important problem.

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