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**LEADER EFFECTIVENESS:
VALIDATION OF THE VROOM-YETTON NORMATIVE MODEL
OF LEADERSHIP**

BY

©

JOHN A. TANASICHUK

A THESIS

**SUBMITTED TO
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
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FOR THE DEGREE OF**

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FALL, 1993



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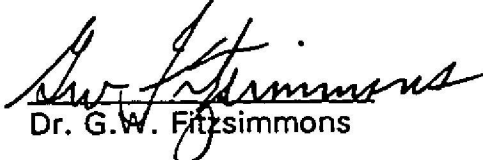
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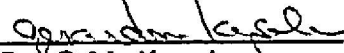
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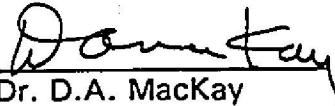
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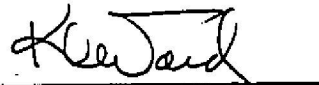
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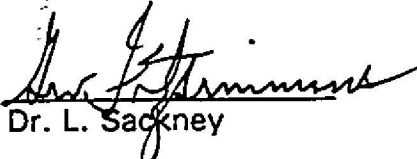

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Dedication

To my wife, Stella, for her late nights and early mornings of untiring support, love, and encouragement helping to make the vision and dream become a reality.

To Dan for his quiet patience, understanding and computer knowledge.

To Catherine for her hope, and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

"What effect does a leader's decision-making behavior have on organizational effectiveness?" Leaders make decisions that have impact on the entire organization, its performance and its results.

Consequently, the construct of leadership is important because of its critical impact on organizational effectiveness.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate decision-making aspects of leadership behavior and the extent to which the Vroom-Yetton Normative Model of Leadership (1973) contributes toward leadership effectiveness and leadership development. Thus, the relationships between leader decision-making behavior, leadership effectiveness, leader demographics and organizational variables are investigated. Leadership effectiveness outcomes are measured with the Bass and Avolio Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

A total of 55 leaders and 253 followers from government and non-government organizations participated in this correlational field study. Although findings provide some empirical support for the model, practical applicability of the model is limited.

The model does describe leader behavior. However, the use of the model to prescribe appropriate decision-making behaviors cannot guarantee more effective decisions or leaders.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a construct of particular concern in the field of organizational psychology. An amorphous phenomenon, the concept of leadership has intrigued us since people began studying organizations (Wheatley, 1992). Leadership is one of the most observed, yet least understood, organizational concepts. Leadership is important because of its significant consequences on organizational effectiveness.

Decision making, as one of a leader's tasks, is an important skill or process which is integrally related to leadership effectiveness and, consequently, to organizational effectiveness. A leader, by virtue of his/her position or knowledge, makes decisions that have impact on the entire organization, its performance and its results. Effective leaders, consequently, make effective decisions. By frequently making rapid decisions, leaders run the risk of making less than ideal decisions. Accordingly, a leader's decision-making behavior will affect the behavior of organizations, simple and complex. Without leadership effectiveness, there is poor organizational performance. Furthermore, a leader's ultimate responsibility is to be effective (Drucker, 1985).

For years a prevailing maxim of leadership has been that leadership is "getting work done through people". As Katz and Kahn (1966) pointed out, without followers there can be no leaders. Therefore, followers as well as leaders are critical components of leadership research. Because leaders typically work within organizations, a leader's effectiveness is measured in terms of his/her contribution to organizational effectiveness.

Leadership and leader decision-making behaviors are critical to organizational well being. Given that followers as well as leaders are critical components of leadership and organizational effectiveness, the question arises, "to what degree does the effectiveness of a leader's decision-making behavior affect overall organizational effectiveness?" This is an important question because leader decision-making often provides an organization with strategic direction, requires allocation of resources and is not easily reversible.

The Vroom-Yetton Normative Model of Leadership (1973) is a well researched, general, situational leadership model that accommodates decisions involving both individual and group problems. The model has the flexibility and responsiveness to be applied in a wide range of organizational contexts. While considerable research has examined the Vroom-Yetton model's ability to enhance leader decision making, little research has attempted to investigate the model's relationship to leader and organizational effectiveness.

The purpose of the current research is to investigate the decision-making aspects of leadership behavior and the relationship of the Vroom-Yetton (1973) model to organizational effectiveness. Thus, organizational effectiveness is measured in terms of the following leadership effectiveness outcome variables: 1) leader effectiveness 2) follower satisfaction, and 3) follower amount of extra effort.

If a relationship between the Vroom-Yetton (1973) model and organizational effectiveness can be established, the model may contribute to leadership development and subsequent organizational effectiveness. The current study, taking into account the leader-follower relationships, employs a research design which uses leaders and

intact work groups. These leaders and work groups were selected from different administrative levels within various types of organizations. The organizational outcome effectiveness variables used in the investigation were provided by both leader self-ratings and their respective followers.

Research Questions

Leadership is often viewed as "downward influence", that is, leader influences followers to improve individual and organizational performance and to create a common sense of purpose (Bass, 1981). Much of the literature on leadership addresses the normative issue of effective leader behavior. The current investigation examines the behavior of leaders in complex organizations and specifically attempts to answer the following descriptive and normative questions: 1) "How do leaders behave?" 2) "Does leader behavior affect organizational effectiveness?" 3) "Do demographic variables influence leader-behavior and effectiveness?" 4) "Does organizational variation influence leader behavior and effectiveness?"

A great deal of leadership effectiveness research has focused on individual leaders. The focus of the current investigation is on individual leaders and the effect their behavior has on individual followers and intact work teams. This study also measures the perceived effect the leader has on organizational effectiveness. Most importantly, the current investigation examines the relationship between a leader's conformity to the Vroom-Yetton normative model of leadership and subsequent effects on individual, group and organizational effectiveness. By way of placing the current investigation in a larger research context, a thorough review of Vroom-Yetton research is necessary and is provided in the following

chapter.

The third chapter outlines the purpose of the current investigation and the research questions. In the fourth chapter, descriptions of the subjects, instruments, data collection and analysis are provided. The fifth chapter presents and discusses the data analysis. In the final chapter, Vroom-Yetton model limitations, leadership development implications, future research possibilities and concluding comments are presented.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Defining Leadership

Leadership and leadership issues lend themselves to the practical application of psychological theory. Leadership, as a concept, is often used as a general description of what leaders do (Duke, 1989). Leaders usually occupy positions of leadership and are generally assumed to have some influence over the effectiveness of the position they occupy and the role they play. Katz and Kahn (1966) assert that leadership is a relational concept implying two terms: the influencing agent and the person influenced. Yukl (1989) broadly defines leadership as an interactive process of influence which involves the determination of group or organizational objectives and motivates task behavior in pursuit of a desired end state. Leadership, as such, is then conceptualized as a social influence process of interpersonal behaviors between the one who leads and the one who follows.

Leadership is a renewable resource that organizations can take advantage of in increasingly more competitive times. It is widely assumed that leaders have the responsibility to exercise leadership in their organizations and that their ability to fulfill this role will have important consequences for the effectiveness of the organization. Organizations that consider leadership development a priority and maintain the necessary infrastructure will have a long-term competitive advantage (Deluga, 1988). Any knowledge that the psychological and behavioral sciences could contribute to leadership development would be of immense value.

Decision Making

Decision making is arguably one of the most crucial aspects of leadership. Leaders, by virtue of their role, must continually make decisions and their ability to make successful ones is widely believed to be an important contribution to their organization's effectiveness. Drummond (1992) cites studies suggesting that leaders spend at least fifty percent of their time dealing with the consequences of bad decision-making, time which should be devoted to innovation, planning and other leadership functions. Enabling leaders to be better decision makers has considerable potential for improving organizational effectiveness (Tjosvold, Wedley & Field, 1986).

Since one cannot effectively examine all aspects of leader behavior simultaneously, Vroom and Yetton (1973), selected the leader's role in the decision-making process because 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 decision are central to any discipline that purports to understand and predict human behavior" (Vroom & Yetton, 1973, p. 4)."

"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" (Vroom & Yetton, 1973, p. 4).

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. Decision making within organizations involves both cognitive

and social processes; and it is the interpersonal or social aspects of decision-making that are of most direct relevance to processes of leadership. This relationship between leadership and decision-making became the focal point of Vroom-Yetton research. Primarily, Vroom and Yetton were interested in the way which leadership is reflected in social processes utilized for decision-making. Specifically, they focused on leaders' choices about how much and in which way to involve followers in decision-making; i.e. the degree to which he/she encouraged the participation of his/her followers in solving problems or making decisions. Throughout this study, the terms "followers" and "subordinates" will be used synonymously.

In decision making, the leaders' task is one of determining the mechanism or process by which a problem is to be solved. A major aspect of a leader's job also is to determine what person or persons should take part in the solution of the problem. There are numerous decision-making processes to choose from. The alternatives vary not only in terms of cognitive but also social processes - specifically, the amount and form of opportunity afforded subordinates to participate in the decision.

Participative Decision-Making

Many social psychologists and other behavioral scientists who have turned their attention towards the implications of psychological and social processes for the practice of leadership have called for greater participation by followers in the problem solving and decision-making processes.

Vroom and Yetton (1973) addressed themselves to the normative question of what is effective leader behavior. This led Vroom and Yetton

to have an interest in the psychological and social process implications resulting from the practice of leadership calling for greater participation by followers in the decision-making process. They argue for greater influence in decision-making on the part of those who are held responsible for decision execution. The research results about leadership and participative decision making have been inconsistent. This inconsistency in the research is usually attributed to the complexity of interactions between the leader, followers and situational factors involved as well as the inability to differentiate the variables entailing participation. Nonetheless, the issue in the study of leadership concerning the degree and consequences of participative decision-making processes is still important (Leana, 1986). Vroom and Yetton felt it was important to develop guidelines around the circumstances under which participation in decision making may contribute or hinder organizational effectiveness. Vroom and Yetton sought to develop a normative model identifying the situational conditions which determine the efficacy of participative management. Their intent was to incorporate situational variables into the decision-making process and show which decision behavior should be used in different situations.

Central to the Vroom and Yetton (1973) research is the role of situational differences as determinants of the choice of a decision behavior. This emphasis is a departure from the mainstream, which has focused on individual differences as determinants of actual behavior and has advocated a highly participative decision style as optional for all situations. The Vroom-Yetton model identifies the situational conditions which determine the efficacy of participative management and evaluates the alternative consequence of various decision processes.

Leadership Theory: A Conceptual Framework

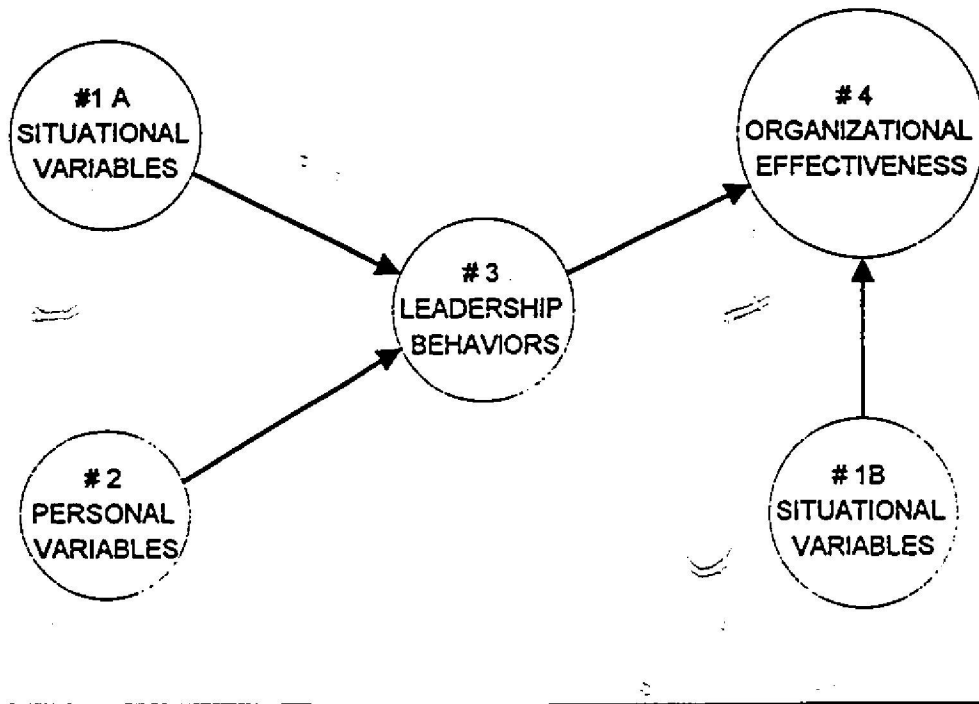
The leadership conceptual framework influencing the Vroom and Yetton research is depicted in Figure 1 and presents the principal classes of variables relevant to the analysis of the leadership process.

The key variable in the Figure is labeled #3, Leader Behavior -- the action or behavior exhibited by the leader in the course of carrying out his/her leadership role. The decision process used by the leader is one, and only one, of the variables that might be used in the analysis of such behavior. Traditionally, industrial/organizational psychological research has focused on leader behavior as the *dependent variable* and situational and individual difference as the *independent variables*. As illustrated in Figure 1, there is a strong *a priori* basis for believing that the way a leader behaves (#3) is a function of the situation with which he/she is confronted (#1A) and of relatively stable properties of the person including personal values, attitudes, and beliefs (#2). This is consistent with Lewin's (1951) view that behavior is a function of the interaction between a person and the environment.

In contrast to focusing on situational and personal variables, Vroom and Yetton (1973) focus on organizational and situational variables in understanding the conditions under which leaders should encourage the participation of followers in decision-making. With reference to Figure 1, leader behavior (#3) becomes the independent variable and organizational effectiveness (#4) becomes the dependent variable. Relevant processes are organizational as well as psychological. The concern here is with understanding the consequences of the leader's behavior for the effectiveness of the system in attaining its external objectives. Organizational effectiveness (#4), as illustrated in Figure 1,

Figure 1

A Conceptual Framework of Leadership



is a function not only of the leader's behavior (#3) but also of situational variables (#1B). The effects (of #1B on #4) are either the direct result of situational properties on organizational effectiveness or an interaction of situational variable with leader behavior. While the effectiveness of an organization is not solely dependent on the behavior of the leader, Vroom and Yetton emphasize that the leader's behavior must be adapted to situational demands. Their normative-model is built on the interaction between leader behavior (#3), in terms of decision processes, employed by the leader, and situational variables (#1B), expressed as problem attributes. Vroom and Yetton, in formulating the model, replace the global concept of organizational effectiveness with a more specific concept of decision effectiveness. The following literature review will consider historical and current approaches showing both similarities and differences from Vroom and Yetton.

Personality Traits

Three major conceptual trends in leadership analysis have been identified (Heller, 1971). The first characterizes leadership as a personality trait in terms of ability, behavior, perceptions and attitudes. The assumption of this approach is that individuals have varying quantities of traits which differentiate them from others. It is assumed that differences in leadership ability are not only potentially measurable but also determine the effectiveness of the leader. Trait theories of leadership look for correlations between traits and particular measures of leadership performance to differentiate between the personal characteristics of leaders and non-leaders and between effective and ineffective leaders. This creates a technology by which the relative amounts of leadership possessed by different people could be measured,

and individuals with the largest amount of the trait are selected as leader (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

The concept of leadership as a personality trait assumes that organizational effectiveness is affected in a direct manner by a leader's behavior which is determined solely by his/her personality traits. This approach has been criticized as an oversimplification of the process of leadership (Stogdill, 1948). It is generally assumed that trait studies fail to identify core leadership traits, although the notion of "trait" has broadened to include knowledge, abilities, dispositions, and value commitments (Coombs, 1988). The personality conceptualization of leadership, however, overlooks the possibility that organizational effectiveness might also be influenced by situational factors and that individual differences in leadership must be evaluated in relation to the situation (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Leader Behavior

The second major conceptual trend in analyzing leadership focuses on the behavioral correlates of effective leadership, specifically, the pattern of a leader's interaction with subordinates. The primary emphasis here is on behavioral dimensions and characteristic behavior-patterns of leaders in the workplace. Stable relationships between leaders' behavior and criteria concerning their effectiveness are not obviously significant for leader selection, but such relationships could have importance for leader development and training. Knowledge of the behavior patterns that characterize effective leaders provides a rational basis for the design of programs to instill these behavioral patterns in actual or potential leaders (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Coombs (1988) describes two major research studies, conducted in

the mid 1940's at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan that attempted to develop behavioral dimensions of leadership. These studies assumed that different leadership characteristics would result in varying levels of effectiveness in terms of employee satisfaction and performance. This marked the beginning of concern with "organizational" leadership, in which leadership was measured, at least in part, by subordinate performance and attainment of organizational goals.

McGregor's Theory Y, Likert's System 4, Ouchi's Theory Z, and Blake and Mouton's 9-9 Leadership Style are all theories of leadership style which reflect a conceptual focus on leader interaction and behavior. All share a view that there is one best approach to managing - usually involving decision making by consensus and delegation - that is universal in its application. Likert's (1961, 1967) findings are representative of this behavioral approach. He reported substantial evidence supporting three conclusions with respect to effective leaders. First, effective leaders tend to have relationships with their followers that are supportive and that enhance the latter's sense of personal worth and importance. Second, effective leaders use group rather than person-to-person methods of supervision and decision-making. Third, effective leaders tend to set high performance goals. Referred to as Likert's leadership principles, these three conclusions regarding effective leaders are not concrete leader behaviors; they are a general blueprint for action rather than a detailed blueprint, which would of necessity have to take situational factors into account.

The search for "effective" leader behaviors assumes that organizational effectiveness is a simple function of leader behavior.

This represents a significant advance over the personality trait approach in as much as it considered the actions of the leaders rather than their personal traits as influencing the effectiveness of organizations. However, such an approach still fails to address the possibility that organizational effectiveness is a product of the joint effects of both leader behavior and situational variables including interactions between leader behavior and the leadership situation.

Efforts to determine the "best" type of effective leader in all situations has produced diverse and inconsistent results. Inconsistency of this type tends to suggest that an effective pattern of leader behavior in one situation may not be effective in another situation. This leadership-in-context paradigm led to the development of contingency theory, which focuses on discovering the situational variables which interact with leader behavior to result in leadership effectiveness.

Contingency Theory

The third and most recent conceptual trend, categorized as situational theory and characterized as contingency models (Heller, 1971), postulates that leadership exists in the context of an organizational environment. From such a perspective, analysis of situational demands is prerequisite to understanding the process of leadership. The nature of the group, its prevalent norms and values and the critical issues are recognized as implicated in the leadership process. This, in turn, influences the type of leadership appropriate for the situation.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) provided one of the first theoretical orientations of situational contingency models by presenting an interactive model of leadership. The supervisor, the followers and the