LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND BEHAVIORS

Key Points

1 The Army and Leadership

2 Leadership Theory

3 The Army Leadership Requirements Model

The test of a leader lies in the reaction and response of his followers. He should not have to impose authority. Bossiness in itself never made a leader. He must make his influence felt by example and the instilling of confidence in his followers. The greatness of a leader is measured by the achievements of the led. This is the ultimate test of his effectiveness.

GEN Omar Bradley

Introduction

The Army believes that the situation you face, your experience, your skills, and your problem solving approach all affect the outcome of an event. That's why the Army places such a heavy emphasis on training. In your Cadet education now and in your experience as an officer later, you must consider the wide range of situations you will encounter. You must be able to apply your values, tactical expertise, and technical skills to lead fearlessly.

Leadership is one of the most complex human behaviors. There is no one single way to view leadership. If you want to be an effective leader, therefore, you will find it useful to study more than one leadership model or theory. That's a good reason to study history and military tactics. While sociologists, psychologists, strategists, historians, and business analysts have made significant progress in learning about leadership, there remains no single universally accepted formula for creating a great leader.

The Army recognizes several leadership styles. As a leader-in-training, you need to understand different leadership theories and styles. Consider the leadership strengths of good communication, interpersonal relations, follow-up, and constant improvement demonstrated in each of the following vignettes.

Earning Your Pay

During World War I, while inspecting a certain area, GEN John J. Pershing found a project that was not going well, even though the second lieutenant in charge seemed to have a pretty good plan. General Pershing asked the lieutenant how much pay he received. On hearing the lieutenant's reply of "$141.67 per month, Sir," General Pershing said: "Just remember that you get $1.67 per month for making your plan and issuing the order, and $140.00 for seeing that it is carried out."

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Good Leaders Ask Questions

2LT Christina Ortega has been a military police platoon leader for almost eight months. When she first came to the platoon, it was a well-trained, cohesive group. Within two months of her taking charge, she and her platoon deployed on a six-month rotation to support operations in Bosnia. The unit performed well, and she quickly earned a reputation as a leader with high standards for herself and her unit.

Now redeployed, she must have her platoon ready in two months for a rotation at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC). She realizes that within that time she must get the unit's equipment ready for deployment, train her Soldiers on different missions they will encounter at the JMRC, and provide them some much needed and deserved time off.

As 2LT Ortega reflects on her first eight months of leadership, she remembers how she took charge of the platoon. She spoke individually with the leaders in the platoon about her expectations and gathered information about her subordinates.

She stayed up all night completing the leadership philosophy memorandum that she gave to every member of her platoon. After getting her feet on the ground and getting to know her Soldiers, she assessed the platoon's ethical climate using the ethical climate assessment survey (ECAS). Her unit's overall ECAS score was very good. She committed herself to maintaining that positive ethical climate by continuing the established policies and by monitoring the climate periodically.

Having completed a major deployment and having received a recent influx of some new Soldiers, 2LT Ortega decides to complete another ECAS. She heads to the unit motor pool to observe her Soldiers preparing for the next day's training exercise. The platoon is deploying to the local training area for the "best squad" competition prior to the ARTEP [Army Training and Evaluation Program] evaluation at the JMRC. "The best-squad competition has really become a big deal in the company," she thinks. "Squad rivalry is fierce, and the squad leaders seem to be looking for an edge so they can come out on top and win the weekend pass that goes to the winning squad."

She talks to as many of her Soldiers as she can, paying particular attention to the newest members of the unit. One new Soldier, a vehicle driver for SSG Smith, the 2nd Squad Leader, appears very nervous and anxious. During her conversation with the Soldier, 2LT Ortega discovers some disturbing information.

The new Soldier, PFC O'Brien, worries about his vehicle's maintenance and readiness for the next day. His squad leader has told him to "get the parts no matter what." PFC O'Brien says that he admires SSG Smith because he realizes that SSG Smith just wants to perform well and keep up the high standards of his previous driver. He recounts that SSG Smith has vowed to win the next day's land navigation competition. "SSG Smith even went so far as to say that he knows we'll win because he already knows the location of the points for the course. He saw them on the XO's desk last night and wrote them on his map."

2LT Ortega thanks the Soldier for talking honestly with her and immediately sets him straight on the proper and improper way to get repair parts. By the time she leaves, PFC O'Brien knows that 2LT Ortega has high standards and will not tolerate improper means of meeting them. Meanwhile, 2LT Ortega heads back toward the company headquarters to find the XO.

She finds the XO busily scribbling numbers and dates on pieces of paper. He is obviously involved and frantic. He looks up at her and manages a quick "Hi, Christina," before returning to his task. The battalion XO apparently did not like the way the unit status report (USR) portrayed the status of the maintenance in the battalion and refused to send that report forward. Not completely familiar with the USR, 2LT Ortega goes to the battalion motor officer to get some more information. After talking to a few more people in her platoon, 2LT Ortega completes the ECAS.

Critical Thinking

What "lessons learned" do the two young second lieutenants in these vignettes have in common?

You must be able to underwrite the honest mistakes of your subordinates if you wish to develop their initiative and experience.

GEN Bruce Clarke

The Army and Leadership

Leadership is not a term that's easily or simply defined.

For decades, scholars, business leaders, and organizational researchers have continually refined the definition of leadership—based on their findings and experience, and the latest real-world models and situations. The variety of their theories about leadership stems from leadership's multidimensional nature.

In its continual search for improvement and for the most efficient and effective leaders, the Army also began to reevaluate its application of leadership principles. The Army drew on several contemporary leadership theories from business and academia to develop its own leadership framework and definition of what leadership entails.

Today, the Army defines leadership as *influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.*

Examining some of the different perspectives and theories of leadership in this and the following sections will help you understand the complex nature of leadership and gain insight into a subject critical to your success in the Army.

Leadership Theory

A good place to start any survey of leadership theory is with the overarching model proposed by organizational researcher Gary Yukl. His work comprehensively reviews many of the leadership elements and theories experts in the field have developed in recent years. Becoming familiar with these theories will help you to better understand the Army Leadership Requirements Model and improve your leadership skills.
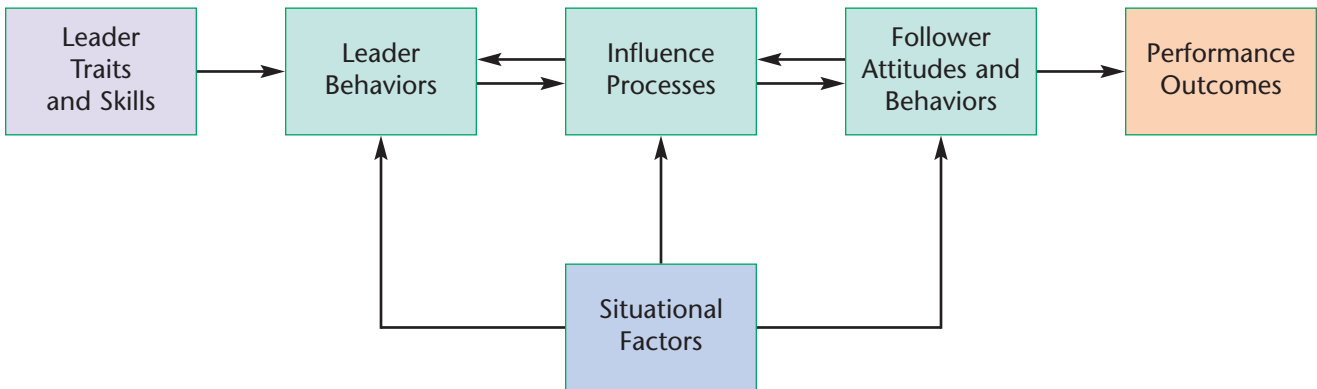
Figure 2.1 Relationship Among Leadership Variables
Taken from Yukl, 2006

Trait Theory

trait

a distinguishing quality or personal characteristic

Leadership **trait** theory focuses on the leader's values and beliefs; personality; need for achievement or acceptance; orientation to power; gender; confidence; and mental, physical, and emotional attributes. Early leadership trait theory assumed that people were born with specific traits and that some traits aligned with strong leadership. People with the "right" traits would become the best leaders. But how do you identify the common traits of good leaders? That was one of the many questions surrounding the study of leadership—questions that led to further research.

From about 1930 until 1950, research methods for studying social and psychological issues were not as sophisticated as they are today. When psychologists tried to replicate the studies, for example, they were not always successful. Researchers knew their inquiries were important because they seemed to point to the correlations between traits and leaders. But the inability to obtain the same results when repeating the studies raised further questions. Why couldn't researchers scientifically replicate these results?

Some researchers pointed to the inherent difficulty in measuring a human personality trait. How do you effectively and consistently measure confidence or loyalty, for example? Still further questions arose about the impact of the particular situation or the followers' attitudes on the leader's behavior and performance. Research into these and other issues led to the birth of additional leadership theories in the 1950s and 1960s. One key idea that led to new thinking about leadership was **behavioral theory**.

Behavioral Theory

behavioral theory

a leadership theory that considers the observable actions and reactions of leaders and followers in a given situation

As the questions about how to measure traits continued to challenge trait theory, researchers began thinking about measuring behavior. While you can't easily measure confidence or loyalty in a person, they noted, you can define a behavior or a set of behaviors that seem to embody the trait. Researchers define behaviors as *observable actions,* which makes measuring them more scientifically valid than trying to measure a human personality trait.

Behavioral theory contains some very different assumptions from trait theory. Trait theory assumes that a leader is *born* with specific traits that make him or her a good leader. Behavioral theory, on the other hand, assumes that you can *learn* to become a good leader because you are not drawing on personality traits. Your actions—what you *do*—define your leadership ability.

Two Key Studies

Both trait and behavioral theory contained significant limitations. But two important studies in behavioral theory at the University of Michigan and the Ohio State University became famous in the next generation of leadership research. These studies identified two key behavioral categories—*orientation toward task* and *orientation toward people.*

The Michigan Studies

The Michigan studies, which began in the late 1950s, found three critical characteristics of effective leaders. First, they identified *task-oriented* behavior in managers who did not do the same types of tasks as their subordinates. This group of managers spent time planning, coordinating, and overseeing their subordinates' execution of tasks.

A second type of leader exhibited *relationship-oriented* behavior. These managers concentrated on the task results, but also developed relationships with their subordinates. They were supportive and focused on internal rewards as well as external rewards.

The third style of leadership was *participative leadership.* Here, the manager facilitated rather than directed, working to build a cohesive team to achieve team results rather than focusing on individuals.

The Ohio State Studies

The Ohio State studies also examined leaders' *task* versus *people* orientation. These studies dubbed task-oriented behavior "initiating structure," and people-oriented behavior "consideration."

Managerial Styles

Later work on leadership theory by R. R. Blake and J. S. Mouton used task versus people orientation to chart a person's leadership "style." The result is what researchers call the Managerial—or Leadership—Grid (Figure 2.2).
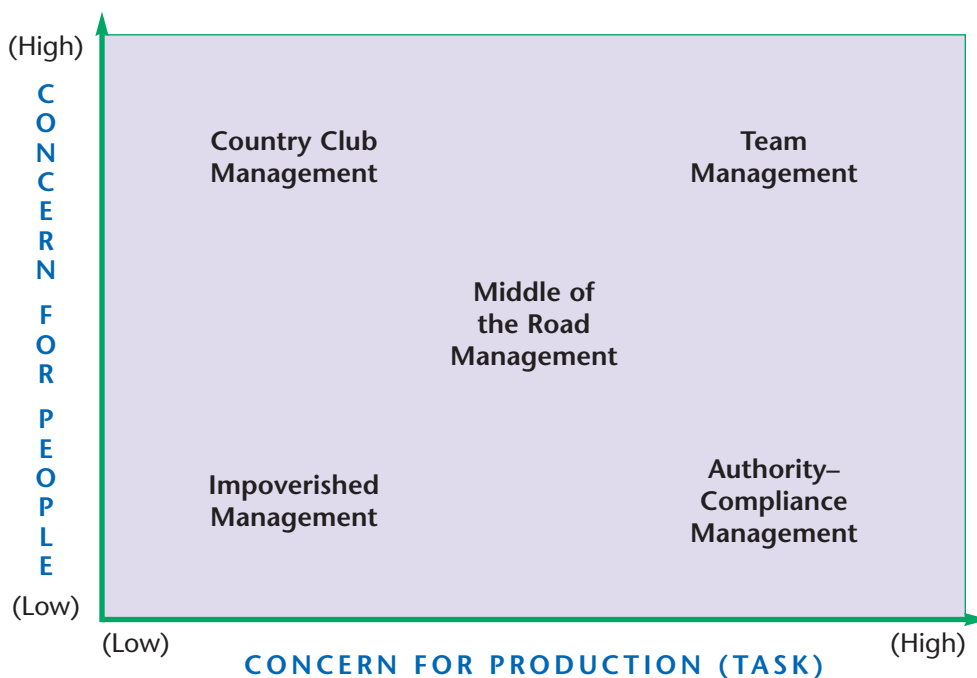

Figure 2.2 The Leadership Grid

These leadership styles and their key characteristics are:

Country Club Management—These managers exhibit a high concern for people and building a friendly environment. They have a lower concern with the task and with getting things done.

Middle-of-the-Road Management—These leaders have minimal focus on people and task. Their main concern is preserving the status quo. They do what must be done, but do not set high standards or raise the bar for performance.

Authority-Compliance Management—These managers have a high concern for task and emphasize productivity and efficiency at all times.

Impoverished Management—These managers take a lazy approach to leadership. They have little regard for people or task and are very poor managers.

Team Management—These leaders are the most effective managers. They are highly focused both on people and task and they maintain high performance standards.

This theory of leadership styles led to research on leaders' use of *power* versus *influence* to accomplish tasks and obtain results. This and similar models give you several lenses through which to view leadership. While there's not a universal approach or set of traits that defines a good leader, you can adopt a specific approach (task versus person) to influence or direct your subordinates, depending on the situation you face.

Moving forward from this foundation, researchers have developed several other useful leadership models. Among those you will study here are transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and contingency or situational leadership. As you consider these other models in this and future sections, compare them with the Army leadership framework.

Transformational Leadership

In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers such as J. M. Burns and B. M. Bass defined **transformational leadership** theory. Transformational leadership grows out of the assumption that people will follow a leader who inspires and motivates them.

In this theory, the leader motivates and inspires by developing a compelling vision, selling that vision, and focusing on developing relationships with followers as a teacher, mentor, and coach. The transformational leader engages subordinates by spending a great deal of time building trust and demonstrating a high level of personal integrity. The ultimate goal—as the name says—is to transform followers' goals, vision, and sense of purpose, molding them into a cohesive team.

This type or style of leadership often focuses on the "big picture" and on concern for people and their individual needs.

Transactional Leadership

Another leadership model, **transactional leadership**, assumes that people are motivated strictly by reward and punishment. This style generally does not appeal to the values, morals, or other intrinsic characteristics of most people. The transactional leader is highly focused on task, provides very clear direction, and oversees productivity in detail. When a subordinate fails, the next step is a penalty or punishment.

The introduction of the *task* versus *people* orientation and the idea of leadership styles are widely accepted today. The model does have a downside, however: It does not consider other potential factors that may influence outcomes and therefore affect leadership effectiveness. While a two-dimensional task-versus-people perspective might be a helpful way to talk about leader behaviors, it by no means tells the whole story about leadership. Research continues to this day on these important questions, and this has led to additional new theories of leadership.

transformational leadership

management that inspires followers by focusing on the common vision, team building, and high performance through personal relationships

transactional leadership

management that motivates followers by focusing on reward and punishment, productivity, and results

Contingency Theory and Situational Leadership

The findings from the studies you've already considered led to **contingency theory**. According to contingency theory, what works for a leader in one situation may not work in another. This theory attempts to explain why a leader who is very successful in one situation may fail when transplanted to another or when the situation changes.

While researchers have proposed several contingency theories, one of the most famous was developed originally by P. Hersey and K. H. Blanchard. In 1982 these researchers developed what they termed **situational leadership** theory. Like Blake and Mouton's leadership grid, situational leadership uses "styles" of leadership that align with the *task-versus-people* orientation. But this leadership theory holds that a leader's most appropriate action or behavior depends on the situation and on the followers.

According to Hersey and Blanchard, the motivation and the abilities of your Soldiers will affect your decisions in a given situation. They group leaders into four styles of leadership: delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing.

Their theory assumes that each of these leadership styles can be effective—depending on the development level of the individual or people you are leading. In this theory, then, how you lead isn't a question merely of you and your skills and abilities—it also depends heavily on your Soldiers' abilities and attitudes.

Good leaders, Hersey and Blanchard say, must adapt their leadership styles to the "maturity" and willingness of their subordinates. This creates a new level of complexity for leaders: How thoroughly you consider the willingness, motivation, and abilities of your followers can decide how successfully you will lead. In this and similar theories, the leader isn't everything: You must include the followers in the equation.

contingency theory

a theory that holds that there is no one best way to lead—what works in one situation may not work in another

situational leadership

a leadership model that holds there is no one best way to influence and lead people—the leadership style depends upon the readiness level of the follower or the group the leader is influencing

The Army Leadership Requirements Model

Army Field Manual 1, one of the Army's two capstone manuals, states that the Army exists to serve the American people, protect enduring national interests, and fulfill the nation's military responsibilities. To accomplish this requires values-based leadership, impeccable character, and professional competence. Figure 2.3 shows the Army Leadership Requirements Model from FM 6-22. It provides a common basis for thinking and learning about leadership and associated doctrine. All of the model's components are interrelated.

> Just as the diamond requires three properties for its formation—carbon, heat, and pressure—successful leaders require the interaction of three properties—character, knowledge, and application. Like carbon to the diamond, character is the basic quality of the leader. . . . But as carbon alone does not create a diamond, neither can character alone create a leader. The diamond needs heat. Man needs knowledge, study and preparation. . . . The third property, pressure—acting in conjunction with carbon and heat—forms the diamond. Similarly, one's character attended by knowledge, blooms through application to produce a leader.
>
> GEN Edward C. Mayer
> Chief of Staff of the Army (1979–1983)

LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS MODEL

Attributes

What an Army Leader Is:

A Leader of Character
- *Army Values*
- *Empathy*
- *Warrior Ethos*

A Leader With Presence
- *Military bearing*
- *Physically fit*
- *Composed, confident*
- *Resilient*

A Leader With Intellectual Capacity
- *Mental agility*
- *Sound judgment*
- *Innovation*
- *Interpersonal tact*
- *Domain knowledge*

Core Leader Competencies

What an Army Leader Does:

Leads
- *Leads others*
- *Extends influence beyond the chain of command*
- *Leads by example*
- *Communicates*

Develops
- *Creates a positive environment*
- *Prepares self*
- *Develops others*
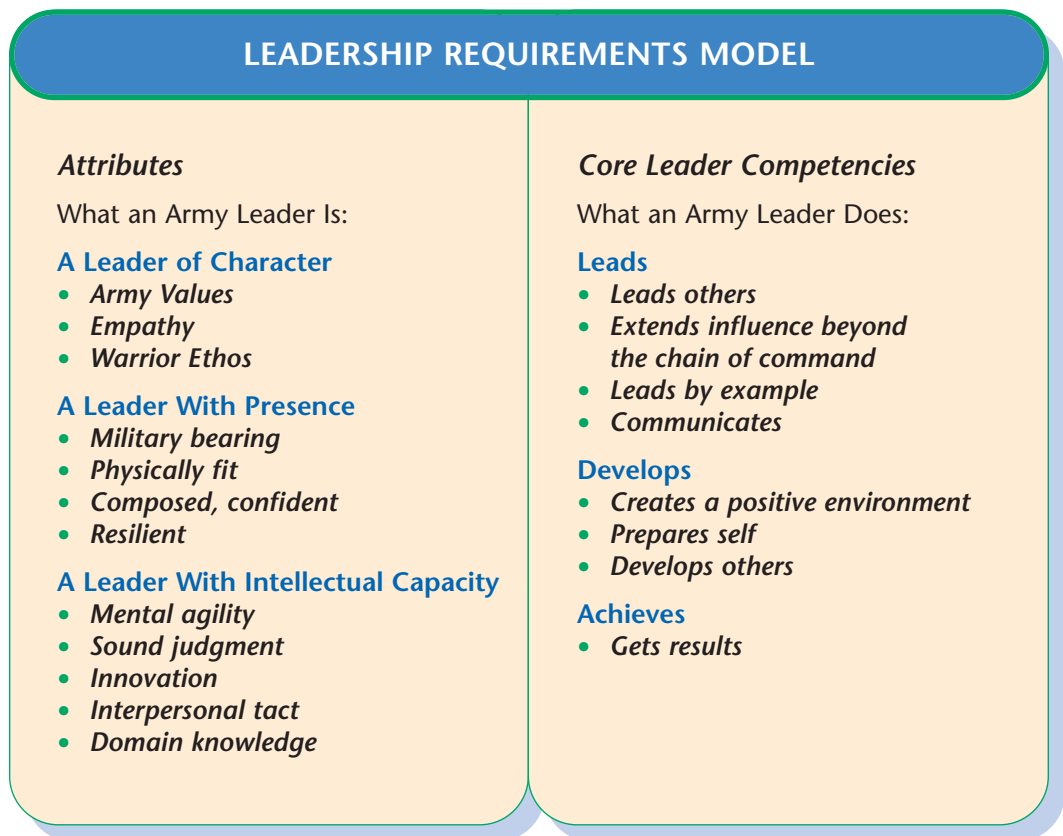
Achieves
- *Gets results*

Figure 2.3 The Army Leadership Requirements Model

The model's basic components center on what a leader is and what a leader does. The leader's character, presence, and intellect enable him or her to master the core leader competencies through dedicated lifelong learning. The balanced application of the critical leadership requirements empowers the Army leader to build high-performing and cohesive organizations that can effectively project and support landpower. It also creates positive organizational climates—allowing for individual and team learning—and empathy for all team members, Soldiers, civilians, and their families.

Three major factors determine your character as a leader: values, empathy, and the Warrior Ethos. Some characteristics are present at the beginning of your career, while others develop over time through additional education, training, and experience.

Your physical presence as a leader determines how others perceive you. The factors of physical presence are military bearing, physical fitness, confidence, and resilience. Your intellectual capacity helps you come up with solutions and gain the knowledge to do your job. Your conceptual abilities apply agility, judgment, innovation, interpersonal tact, and domain knowledge. Domain knowledge includes tactical and technical knowledge, as well as cultural and geopolitical awareness.

The Army recognizes that you will face many different and difficult leadership challenges in both combat and noncombat situations. Adapting your leadership styles to the particular Soldiers you lead and the unique situations you face will be critical to your effectiveness as a small-unit leader. You *will* face a wide variety of situations; many will be new to you. You must be able to apply your values and technical skills to successfully steer your way through them in ways that bring credit to you, to your unit, and to the Army.

Critical Thinking

How does studying a number of leadership theories help you better understand the Army Leadership Requirements Model?

CONCLUSION

There's no one fixed view of what makes for a successful leader. As you've seen in Yukl's model and other leadership theories, researchers have learned a great deal about leadership. Some common factors stand out: the approach (task versus people) you select; your followers' ability, maturity, and willingness; the situational requirements; and your own skills, abilities, and values. Still, no one has discovered a secret formula for creating great leaders.

To be an effective Army leader, you will need to work hard at all aspects of leadership—not just one. You should commit to modeling high values, building trust, focusing on results, and motivating and influencing others as you learn and grow as an Army officer. Your ultimate mission is to transform your Soldiers and help them adapt to an ever-changing world. The security of the United States depends on your success.

Key Words

trait
behavioral theory
transformational leadership
transactional leadership
contingency theory
situational leadership

Learning Assessment

1. Review the main leadership theories discussed in this section. What do they have in common?
2. Discuss the Army Leadership Requirements Model and how it relates to the various leadership theories you've studied.

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