

In summary, the leadership-making process prescribes that the leader should work to develop special relationships with *all* followers; should offer each follower an opportunity for new roles, responsibilities, and challenges; should nurture high-quality exchanges with all followers; and should focus on ways to build trust and respect with all subordinates—resulting in the entire work group becoming an in-group rather than accentuating the differences between in-groups and out-groups.

### Concluding Thoughts about the LMX Model

In its earlier form (the vertical dyad linkage model), LMX was one of the simplest of the contingency models. Looking at our leader–follower–situation model, it is easy to see that LMX, even today, is largely about the process of relationship building between the leader and the follower. The situation has barely crept in, and only if we consider the desire to increase organizational effectiveness by maximizing the number of in-groups the leader might develop. From an application perspective, perhaps the biggest limitation of LMX is that it does not describe the specific behaviors that lead to high-quality relationship exchanges between the leader and the follower. Nonetheless, LMX, as opposed to some of the subsequent contingency models, continues to generate research.<sup>12,13</sup>

In fact, of all the contingency models presented here, we see more research articles related to LMX than to any of the other theories. The research addresses topics related to LMX including follower proactive personality,<sup>14</sup> the extent of the leader’s social network,<sup>15</sup> the degree to which employees identify their supervisor with the organization,<sup>16</sup> employees’ perceptions of both the procedural and distributive justice climate,<sup>17</sup> and the degree that followers perceive that the leaders treat all members fairly (not necessarily “equally”) and that the leaders represent the group’s values and norms.<sup>18</sup> On a broader level, LMX is being studied both across various countries<sup>19</sup> and with globally distributed teams.<sup>20</sup>

## The Normative Decision Model

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Obviously in some situations leaders can delegate decisions to subordinates or should ask subordinates for relevant information before making a decision. In other situations, such as emergencies or crises, leaders may need to make a decision with little, if any, input from subordinates. The level of input that subordinates have in the decision-making process varies substantially depending on the issue at hand, followers’ level of technical expertise, or the presence or absence of a crisis. Although the level of participation changes due to various leader, follower, and situational factors, Vroom and Yetton<sup>21</sup> maintained that leaders can often improve group performance by using an optimal amount of participation in the decision-making process. Thus the normative decision model is directed solely at determining how much input subordinates should have in the decision-making process. Precisely because the normative decision model is limited only to decision making and is not a grand, all-encompassing theory, it is a good model to examine next.

## Levels of Participation

Like the other theories in this chapter, the **normative decision model**<sup>22</sup> was designed to improve some aspects of leadership effectiveness. In this case, Vroom and Yetton explored how various leader, follower, and situational factors affect the degree of subordinates' participation in the decision-making process and, in turn, group performance. To determine which situational and follower factors affect the level of participation and group performance, Vroom and Yetton first investigated the decision-making processes leaders use in group settings. They discovered a continuum of decision-making processes ranging from completely autocratic (labeled "AI") to completely democratic, where all members of the group have equal participation (labeled "GII"). These processes are listed in Highlight 14.1.

## Decision Quality and Acceptance

After establishing a continuum of decision processes, Vroom and Yetton<sup>23</sup> established criteria to evaluate the adequacy of the decisions made—criteria they believed would be credible to leaders and equally applicable across the five levels of participation. Although a wide variety of criteria could be used, Vroom and Yetton

### Levels of Participation in the Normative Decision Model

#### HIGHLIGHT 14.1

##### Autocratic Processes

**AI:** The leader solves the problem or makes the decision by himself using the information available at the time.

**All:** The leader obtains any necessary information from followers, then decides on a solution to the problem herself. She may or may not tell followers the purpose of her questions or give information about the problem or decision she is working on. The input provided by them is clearly in response to her request for specific information. They do not play a role in the definition of the problem or in generating or evaluating alternative solutions.

##### Consultative Processes

**CI:** The leader shares the problem with the relevant followers individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group. Then she makes a decision. This decision may or may not reflect the followers' influence.

**CII:** The leader shares the problem with his followers in a group meeting. In this meeting, he obtains their ideas and suggestions. Then he makes the decision, which may or may not reflect the followers' influence.

##### Group Process

**GII:** The leader shares the problem with his followers as a group. Together they generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on a solution. The leader's role is much like that of a chairman, coordinating the discussion, keeping it focused on the problem, and making sure the critical issues are discussed. He can provide the group with information or ideas that he has, but he does not try to press them to adopt "his" solution. Moreover, leaders adopting this level of participation are willing to accept and implement any solution that has the support of the entire group.

**Source:** Adapted from V. H. Vroom and P. W. Yetton, *Leadership and Decision Making* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

believed decision quality and decision acceptance were the two most important criteria for judging the adequacy of a decision.

**Decision quality** means simply that if the decision has a rational or objectively determinable “better or worse” alternative, the leader should select the better alternative. Vroom and Yetton<sup>24</sup> intended quality in their model to apply when the decision could result in an objectively or measurably better outcome for the group or organization. In the for-profit sector, this criterion can be assessed in several ways, but perhaps the easiest to understand is, “Would the decision show up on the balance sheet?” In this case, a high-quality (or, conversely, low-quality) decision would have a direct and measurable impact on the organization’s bottom line. In the public sector, we might determine if there was a quality component to a decision by asking, “Will one alternative have a greater cost saving than the other?” or “Does this decision improve services to the client?” Although it may seem that leaders should always choose the alternative with the highest decision quality, this is not always the case. Often leaders have equally good (or bad) alternatives. At other times, the issue in question is trivial, rendering the quality of the decision relatively unimportant.

**Decision acceptance** implies that followers accept the decision as if it were their own and do not merely comply with the decision. Acceptance of the decision outcome by the followers may be critical, particularly if the followers will bear principal responsibility for implementing the decision. With such acceptance, there will be no need for superiors to monitor compliance, which can be a continuing and time-consuming activity (and virtually impossible in some circumstances, such as with a geographically dispersed sales staff).

As with quality, acceptance of a decision is not always critical for implementation. For example, most organizations have an accounting form that employees use to obtain reimbursement for travel expenses. Suppose a company’s chief financial officer (CFO) has decided to change the format of the form for reimbursing travel expenses and has had the new forms printed and distributed throughout the company. Further, she has sent out a notice that, effective June 1, the old forms will no longer be accepted for reimbursement—only claims made using the new forms will be processed and paid. Assuming the new form has no gross errors, problems, or omissions, our CFO really has no concern with acceptance as defined here. If people want to be reimbursed for their travel expenses, they will use the new form. This decision, in essence, implements itself.

Leaders sometimes assume, however, that they do not need to worry about acceptance because they have so much power over their followers that overt rejection of a decision is not likely to occur. A corporate CEO is not apt to see a junior accountant stand up and openly challenge the CEO’s decision to implement a new policy, even though the young accountant may not buy into the new policy at all. Because followers generally do not openly object to the decisions made by leaders with this much power, these leaders often mistakenly assume that their decisions have been accepted and will be fully implemented. This is a naive view of what really goes on in organizations. Just because the junior subordinate does not publicly voice his opposition does not mean he will rush to wholeheartedly implement the

decision. In fact, the junior accountant has a lot more time to destructively undermine the policy than the CEO does to ensure that it is being carried out to the letter.

### The Decision Tree

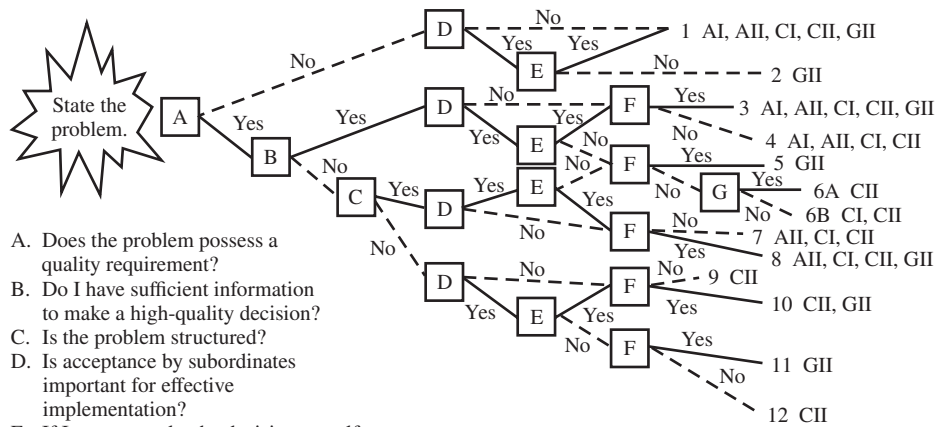
Having settled on quality and acceptance as the two principal criteria for effective decisions, Vroom and Yetton then developed a normative decision model. (A normative model is based on what ought to happen rather than describing what does happen.) They also developed a set of questions to protect quality and acceptance by eliminating decision processes that would be wrong or inappropriate. Generally, these questions concern the problem itself, the amount of pertinent information possessed by the leader and followers, and various situational factors.

To make it easier for leaders to determine how much participation subordinates should have to optimize decision quality and acceptance, Vroom and Yetton<sup>25</sup> incorporated these questions into a decision tree (see Figure 14.1). To use the decision tree, we start at the left by stating the problem and then proceed through the model from left to right. Every time a box is encountered, the question associated with that box must be answered with either a yes or a no response. Eventually all paths lead to a set of decision processes that, if used, will lead to a decision that protects both quality and acceptance.

Having reached a set of feasible alternatives that meet the desirable criteria for quality and acceptance among followers, the leader may then wish to consider

**FIGURE 14.1**

**Vroom and Yetton's Leadership Decision Tree**



- A. Does the problem possess a quality requirement?
- B. Do I have sufficient information to make a high-quality decision?
- C. Is the problem structured?
- D. Is acceptance by subordinates important for effective implementation?
- E. If I were to make the decision myself, is it reasonably certain that it would be accepted by subordinates?
- F. Do subordinates share the organizational goals to be attained in solving this problem?
- G. Is conflict among subordinates over preferred solutions likely?

**Source:** Adapted from V. H. Vroom and P. W. Yetton, *Leadership and Decision Making*. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

additional criteria. One practical consideration is the amount of time available (see Highlight 14.2). If time is critical, the leader should select the alternative in the feasible set that is farthest to the *left*, again noting that the feasible set is arranged from AI through GII. It generally takes less time to make and implement autocratic decisions than it does to make consultative or group decisions. Nevertheless, the first step is to protect quality and acceptance (by using the model). Only *after* arriving at an appropriate set of outcomes should leaders consider time in the decision-making process. This tenet is sometimes neglected in the workplace by leaders who overemphasize time as a criterion. Obviously there are some situations where time is absolutely critical, as in life-or-death emergencies. Certainly no one would have expected U.S. Airways Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger to pull out his Vroom–Yetton decision model after his Airbus A320 struck a flock of geese and he found himself plummeting toward the Hudson River in what had become a very large glider. But too often leaders ask for a decision to be made as if the situation were an emergency when, in reality, they (the leaders, not the situation) are creating the time pressure. Despite such behavior, it is difficult to imagine a leader who would knowingly prefer a fast decision that lacks both quality and acceptance among the implementers to one that is of high quality and acceptable to followers but that takes more time.

Another important consideration is follower development. Again, after quality and acceptance have been considered using the decision tree, and if the leader has determined that time is not a critical element, she may wish to follow a decision process more apt to allow followers to develop their own decision-making skills. This can be achieved by using the decision tree and then selecting the alternative

## How Much Time Do I Have?

### HIGHLIGHT 14.2

In a world of instant messages that require lightning-fast responses, Steven B. Sample, former president of the University of Southern California, touted the benefits of “artful procrastination.” In his book *The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership*, a key lesson is never make a decision today that can reasonably be put off to tomorrow:

With respect to timing, almost all great leaders have understood that making quick decisions is typically counterproductive. I’m not talking about what to have for breakfast or what tie to wear today. President Harry Truman almost personified this concept. When anyone told him they needed a decision, the first thing he would ask is “How much time do I have—a week, 10 seconds, six months?” What he understood

was that the nature of the decision that a leader makes depends to a large extent on how much time he has in which to make it. He also understood that delaying a decision as long as reasonably possible generally leads to the best decisions being made.

Other lessons from Sample include these:

- Think gray. Don’t form opinions if you don’t have to.
- Think free. Move several steps beyond traditional brainstorming.
- Listen first, talk later. And when you listen, do so artfully.
- You can’t copy your way to the top.

**Source:** S. B. Sample, *The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

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*Irrationally held truths may be more harmful than reasoned errors.*

**Thomas Huxley,**  
English biologist and  
defender of  
evolutionary science

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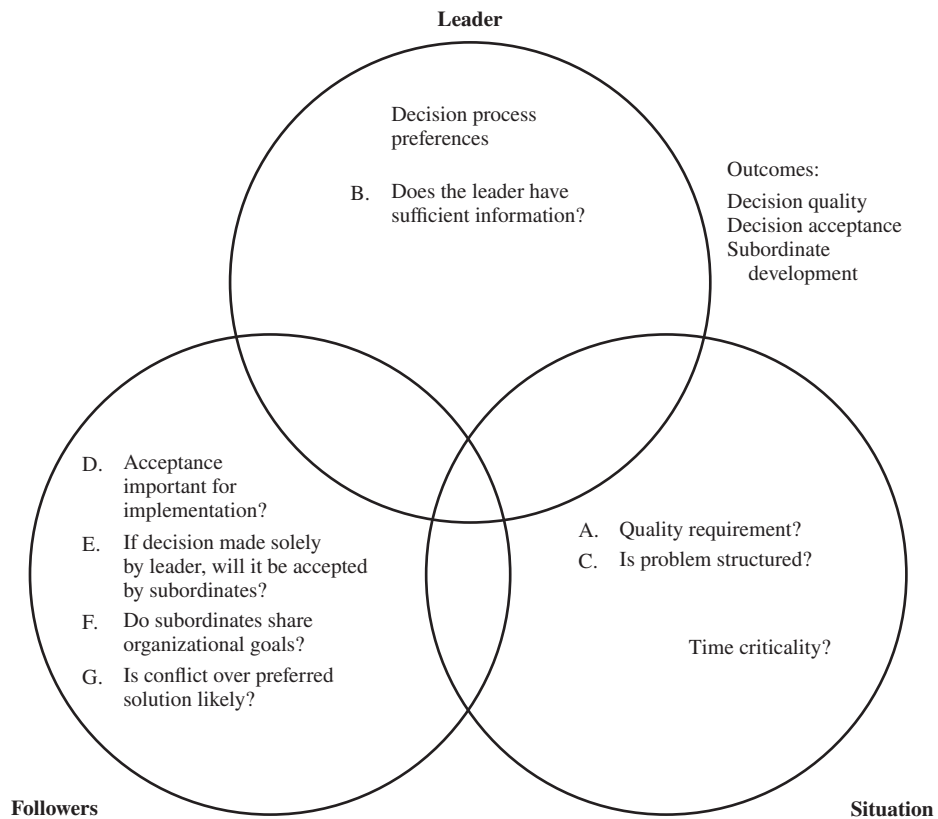
within the feasible set that is farthest to the *right*. The arrangement of processes from AI to GII provides an increasing amount of follower development by moving from autocratic to group decisions.

Finally, if neither time nor follower development is a concern and multiple options are available in the feasible set of alternatives, the leader may select a style that best meets his or her needs. This may be the process with which the leader is most comfortable (“I’m a CII kind of guy”), or it may be a process in which he or she would like to develop more skill.

### Concluding Thoughts about the Normative Decision Model

Having looked at this model in some detail, we will now look at it from the perspective of the leader-follower-situation (L-F-S) framework. To do this, we have used the different decision processes and the questions from the decision tree to illustrate different components in the L-F-S framework (see Figure 14.2). Several issues become apparent in this depiction. First, for ease of presentation we have

**FIGURE 14.2**  
Factors from the Normative Decision Model and the Interactional Framework



placed each question or factor solely within one circle or another. Nevertheless, we could argue that some of the questions could or should be placed in another part of the model. For example, the question “Do I have sufficient information to make a high-quality decision?” is placed in the leader block. It might be argued, however, that no leader could answer this question without some knowledge of the situation. Strictly speaking, therefore, perhaps this question should be placed in the intersection between the leader and the situation. Nonetheless, in keeping with our theme that leadership involves interactions among all three elements, it seems sufficient at this point to illustrate them in their simplest state.

A second issue also becomes apparent when the normative decision model is viewed through the L-F-S framework. Notice how the Vroom and Yetton<sup>26</sup> model shifts focus away from the leader toward both the situation and, to an even greater degree, the followers. There are no questions about the leader’s personality, motivations, values, or attitudes. In fact, the leader’s preference is considered only after higher-priority factors have been considered. The only underlying assumption is that the leader is interested in implementing a high-quality decision (when quality is an issue) that is acceptable to followers (when acceptance is critical to implementation). Given that assumption and a willingness to consider aspects of the situation and aspects of the followers, the leader’s behavior can be channeled into more effective decision-making processes.

A third issue is that the L-F-S framework organizes concepts in a familiar conceptual structure. This is an advantage even for a theory with as limited a focus as the normative decision model (that is, decision making); it will be even more helpful later as we consider more complex theories.

Finally, because the normative decision model is a *leadership theory* rather than Vroom and Yetton’s personal opinions, a number of empirical studies have investigated the model’s efficacy. Research conducted by Field<sup>27</sup> and Vroom and Jago<sup>28,29</sup> provided strong support for the model; these studies showed that leaders were much more likely to make effective or successful decisions when they followed its tenets than when they ignored them. Nevertheless, although leaders may be more apt to make effective decisions when using the model, there is no evidence to show that these leaders are more effective overall than leaders not using the model.<sup>30</sup> The latter findings again point out that both the leadership process and leadership effectiveness are complex phenomena; being a good decision maker is not enough to be a good leader (although it certainly helps). Other problems with the model are that it views decision making as taking place at a single point in time,<sup>31</sup> assumes that leaders are equally skilled at using all five decision procedures,<sup>32</sup> and assumes that some of the prescriptions of the model may not be the best for a given situation. For example, the normative decision model prescribes that leaders use a GII decision process if conflict may occur over a decision, but leaders may be more effective if they instead make an AI decision and avoid intragroup conflict.<sup>33</sup> Despite these problems, the normative model is one of the best supported of the five major contingency theories of leadership, and leaders would be wise to consider using the model when making decisions. Vroom has also converted the decision tree depicted in Figure 14.1 to an expert system entitled Decision Making for



Leaders that can be used interactively on laptop computers. This advance allows more input into the aspects of the decision variables by the leader.

## The Situational Leadership® Model

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It seems fairly obvious that leaders do not interact with all followers in the same manner. For example, a leader may give general guidelines or goals to her highly competent and motivated followers but spend considerable time coaching, directing, and training her unskilled and unmotivated followers. Or leaders may provide relatively little praise and assurances to followers with high self-confidence but high amounts of support to followers with low self-confidence. Although leaders often have different interactional styles when dealing with individual followers, is there an optimum way for leaders to adjust their behavior with different followers and thereby increase their likelihood of success? And if there is, what factors should the leader base his behavior on—the follower’s intelligence? Personality traits? Values? Preferences? Technical competence? A model called **Situational Leadership** offers answers to these two important leadership questions.

### Leader Behaviors

The Situational Leadership model has evolved over time. Its essential elements first appeared in 1969,<sup>34</sup> with roots in the Ohio State studies, in which the two broad categories of leader behaviors, initiating structure and consideration, were initially identified (see Chapter 7). As Situational Leadership evolved, so did the labels (but not the content) for the two leadership behavior categories. Initiating structure changed to **task behaviors**, which were defined as the extent to which a leader spells out the responsibilities of an individual or group. Task behaviors include telling people what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who is to do it. Similarly, consideration changed to **relationship behaviors**, or how much the leader engages in two-way communication. Relationship behaviors include listening, encouraging, facilitating, clarifying, explaining why a task is important, and giving support.

When the behavior of actual leaders was studied, there was little evidence to show these two categories of leader behavior were consistently related to leadership success; the relative effectiveness of these two behavior dimensions often depended on the situation. The Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership model explains why leadership effectiveness varies across these two behavior dimensions and situations. It arrays the two orthogonal dimensions as in the Ohio State studies and then divides each of them into high and low segments (see Figure 14.3). According to the model, depicting the two leadership dimensions this way is useful because certain combinations of task and relationship behaviors may be more effective in some situations than in others.

For example, in some situations high levels of task but low levels of relationship behaviors are effective; in other situations, just the opposite is true. So far, however, we have not considered the key follower or situational characteristics with which these combinations of task and relationship behaviors are most effective.

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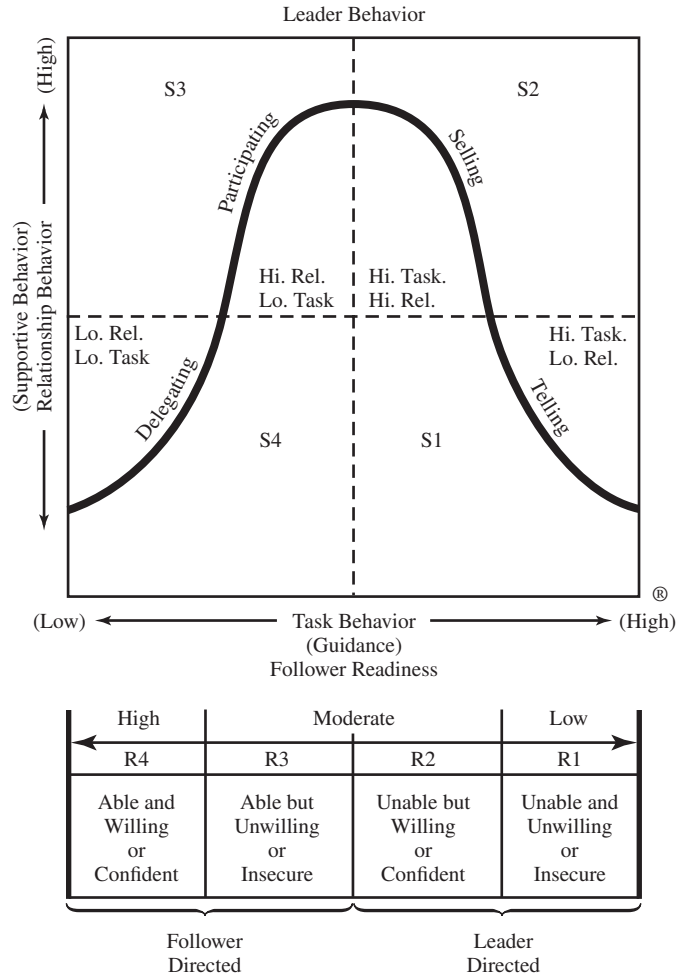
*The real world is a messy place—yet, even a messy place can (should?) be attacked systematically.*

**Alex Cornell,**  
product designer at  
Facebook

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**FIGURE 14.3**  
The Situational Leadership Model



Source: P. Hersey, K. Blanchard, and D. Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*, 7th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), p. 200.

Hersey says these four combinations of task and relationship behaviors would increase leadership effectiveness if they were made contingent on the readiness level of the individual follower to perform a given task.

**Follower Readiness**

In Situational Leadership, **follower readiness** refers to a follower’s ability and willingness to accomplish a particular task. Readiness is not an assessment of an individual’s personality, traits, values, age, and so on. It’s not a personal characteristic, but rather how ready an individual is to perform a particular task. Any given follower could be low on readiness to perform one task but high on readiness to perform a different task. An experienced emergency room physician would be high

in readiness on tasks like assessing a patient's medical status, but could be relatively low on readiness for facilitating an interdepartmental team meeting to solve an ambiguous and complex problem like developing hospital practices to encourage collaboration across departments.

### Prescriptions of the Model

Now that the key contingency factor, follower readiness, has been identified, let us move on to another aspect of the figure—combining follower readiness levels with the four combinations of leader behaviors described earlier. The horizontal bar in Figure 14.3 depicts follower readiness as increasing from right to left (not in the direction we are used to seeing). There are four segments along this continuum, ranging from R1 (the lowest) to R4 (the highest). Along this continuum, however, the assessment of follower readiness can be fairly subjective. A follower who possesses high levels of readiness would clearly fall in the R4 category, just as a follower unable and unwilling (or too insecure) to perform a task would fall in R1.

To complete the model, a curved line is added that represents the leadership behavior that will most likely be effective given a particular level of follower readiness. To apply the model, leaders should first assess the readiness level (R1–R4) of the follower relative to the task to be accomplished. Next, a vertical line should be drawn from the center of the readiness level up to the point where it intersects with the curved line in Figure 14.3. The quadrant in which this intersection occurs represents the level of task and relationship behavior that has the best chance of producing successful outcomes. For example, imagine you are a fire chief and have under your command a search-and-rescue team. One of the team members is needed to rescue a backpacker who has fallen in the mountains, and you have selected a particular follower to accomplish the task. What leadership behavior should you exhibit? If this follower has both substantial training and experience in this type of rescue, you would assess his readiness level as R4. A vertical line from R4 would intersect the curved line in the quadrant where both low task and low relationship behaviors by the leader are most apt to be successful. As the leader, you should exhibit a low level of task and relationship behaviors and delegate this task to the follower. By contrast, you may have a brand-new member of the fire department who still has to learn the ins and outs of firefighting. Because this particular follower has low task readiness (R1), the model maintains that the leader should use a high level of task and a low level of relationship behaviors when initially dealing with this follower.

Hersey suggests one further step leaders may wish to consider. The model just described helps the leader select the most appropriate behavior given the current level of follower readiness. However, there may be cases when the leader would like to see followers increase their level of readiness for particular tasks by implementing a series of **developmental interventions** to help boost follower readiness levels. The process would begin by first assessing a follower's current level of readiness and then determining the leader behavior that best suits that follower in that task. Instead of using the behavior prescribed by the model, however, the leader would select the next higher leadership behavior. Another way of thinking about

## A Developmental Intervention Using the Situational Leadership Model

### HIGHLIGHT 14.3

Dianne is a resident assistant in charge of a number of students in a university dorm. One particular sophomore, Michael, has volunteered to work on projects in the past but never seems to take the initiative to get started on his own. Michael seems to wait until Dianne gives him explicit direction, approval, and encouragement before he will get started. Michael can do a good job, but he seems to be unwilling to start without some convincing that it is all right, and unless Dianne makes explicit what steps are to be taken. Dianne has assessed Michael's readiness level as R2, but she would like to see him develop, both in task readiness and in psychological maturity. The behavior most likely to fit Michael's current readiness

level is selling, or high task, high relationship. But Dianne has decided to implement a developmental intervention to help Michael raise his readiness level. Dianne can be most helpful in this intervention by moving up one level to participating, or low task, high relationship. By reducing the amount of task instructions and direction while encouraging Michael to lay out a plan on his own and supporting his steps in the right direction, Dianne is most apt to help Michael become an R3 follower. This does not mean the work will get done most efficiently, however. As we saw in the Vroom and Yetton model earlier, if part of the leader's job is development of followers, then time may be a reasonable and necessary trade-off for short-term efficiency.

this would be for the leader to select the behavior pattern that would fit the follower if that follower were one level higher in readiness. This intervention is designed to help followers in their development, hence its name (see Highlight 14.3).

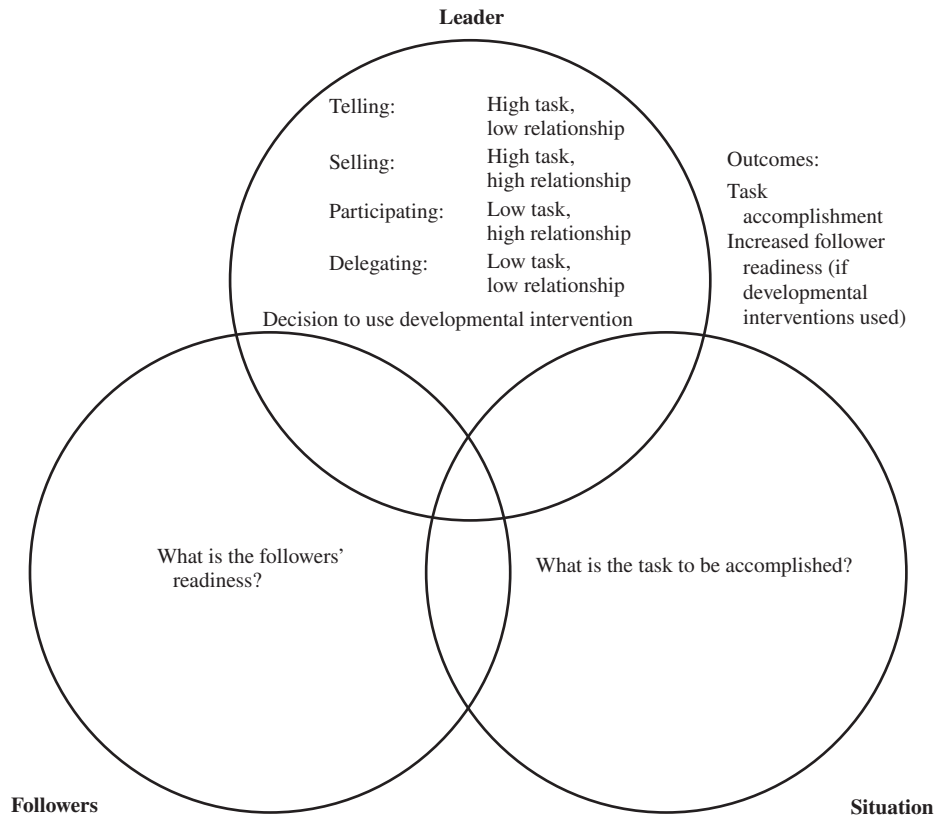
### Concluding Thoughts about the Situational Leadership Model

In Figure 14.4 we can see how the factors in Situational Leadership fit within the L-F-S framework. In comparison to the Vroom and Yetton model, there are fewer factors to consider in each of the three elements. The only situational consideration is knowledge of the task, and the only follower factor is readiness. However, the theory goes well beyond decision making, which was the sole domain of the normative decision model.

Situational Leadership is usually appealing to students and practitioners because of its common-sense approach as well as the ease of understanding it. Unfortunately there is little published research to support the predictions of Situational Leadership in the workplace.<sup>35,36</sup> A great deal of research has been done within organizations that have implemented Situational Leadership, but most of those findings are not available for public dissemination.

In 2007 Blanchard modified the Situational Leadership prescriptions to specify more clearly the four definitions of follower developmental level and their four corresponding optimal styles of leadership.<sup>37</sup> Although this revision of the model, perhaps as a result of much criticism concerning the lack of prescriptive specificity, does create a more discrete typology of follower styles, research suggests that the original model is a better predictor of subordinate performance and attitudes than the revised version.<sup>38</sup>

**FIGURE 14.4**  
**Factors from the Situational Leadership Model and the Interactional Framework**



Nevertheless, even with these shortcomings, Situational Leadership is a useful way to get leaders to think about how leadership effectiveness may depend somewhat on being flexible with different subordinates, not on acting the same way toward them all.

## The Contingency Model

Although leaders may be able to change their behaviors toward individual subordinates, leaders also have dominant behavioral tendencies. Some leaders may be generally more supportive and relationship oriented, whereas others may be more concerned with task or goal accomplishment. The contingency model<sup>39</sup> recognizes that leaders have these general behavioral tendencies and specifies situations where certain leaders (or behavioral dispositions) may be more effective than others.

Fiedler's<sup>40</sup> **contingency model** of leadership is probably the earliest and most well-known contingency theory, and is often perceived by students to be almost the

opposite of the Situational Leadership model. Compared to the contingency model, Situational Leadership emphasizes flexibility in leader behaviors, whereas the contingency model maintains that leaders are much more consistent (and consequently less flexible) in their behavior. The Situational Leadership model maintains that leaders who *correctly base their behaviors* on follower maturity will be more effective, whereas the contingency model suggests that leader effectiveness is determined primarily by *selecting the right kind of leader for a certain situation or changing the situation* to fit the particular leader's style. Another way to say this is that leadership effectiveness depends on both the leader's style and the favorableness of the leadership situation. Some leaders are better than others in some situations but less effective in other situations. To understand contingency theory, therefore, we need to look first at the critical characteristics of the leader and then at the critical aspects of the situation.

### The Least Preferred Co-worker Scale

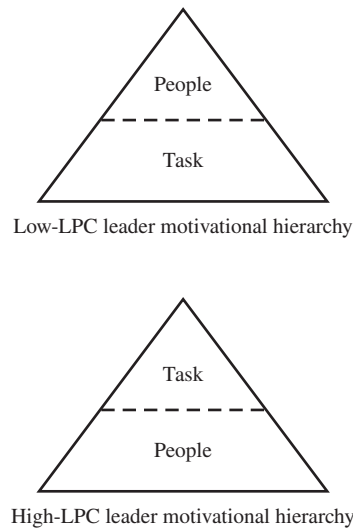
To determine a leader's general style or tendency, Fiedler developed an instrument called the **least preferred co-worker (LPC) scale**. The scale instructs a leader to think of the single individual with whom he has had the greatest difficulty working (that is, the least preferred co-worker) and then to describe that individual in terms of a series of bipolar adjectives (such as friendly-unfriendly, boring-interesting, and sincere-insincere). Those ratings are then converted into a numerical score.

In thinking about such a procedure, many people assume that the score is determined primarily by the characteristics of whatever particular individual the leader happened to identify as his least preferred co-worker. In the context of contingency theory, however, the score is thought to *represent something about the leader, not the specific individual the leader evaluated*.

The current interpretation of these scores is that they identify a leader's *motivation hierarchy*.<sup>41</sup> Based on their LPC scores, leaders are categorized into two groups: **low-LPC leaders** and **high-LPC leaders**. In terms of their motivation hierarchy, low-LPC leaders are motivated primarily by the task, which means these leaders gain satisfaction primarily from task accomplishment. Thus their dominant behavioral tendencies are similar to the initiating structure behavior described in the Ohio State research or the task behavior of Situational Leadership. However, if tasks are being accomplished in an acceptable manner, low-LPC leaders will move to their secondary level of motivation, which is forming and maintaining relationships with followers. Thus low-LPC leaders will focus on improving their relationships with followers *after* they are assured that assigned tasks are being accomplished satisfactorily. If tasks are no longer being accomplished in an acceptable manner, however, low-LPC leaders will refocus their efforts on task accomplishment and persist with these efforts until task accomplishment is back on track.

In terms of motivation hierarchy, high-LPC leaders are motivated primarily by relationships, which means these leaders are satisfied primarily by establishing and maintaining close interpersonal relationships. Thus their dominant behavioral tendencies are similar to the consideration behaviors described in the Ohio

**FIGURE 14.5**  
**Motivational**  
**Hierarchies for**  
**Low- and High-LPC**  
**Leaders**



State research on the relationship behaviors in Situational Leadership. If high-LPC leaders have established good relationships with their followers, they will move to their secondary level of motivation, which is task accomplishment. As soon as leader-follower relations are jeopardized, however, high-LPC leaders will cease working on tasks and refocus their efforts on improving relationships with followers.

You can think of the LPC scale as identifying two different sorts of leaders, with their respective motivational hierarchies depicted in Figure 14.5. Lower-level needs must be satisfied first. Low-LPC leaders will move “up” to satisfying relationship needs when they are assured the task is being accomplished satisfactorily. High-LPC leaders will move “up” to emphasizing task accomplishment when they have established good relationships with their followers.

Because all tests have some level of imprecision, Fiedler<sup>42</sup> suggested that the LPC scale cannot accurately identify the motivation hierarchy for individuals with intermediate scores. Research by Kennedy<sup>43</sup> suggested an alternative view. Kennedy has shown that individuals within the intermediate range of LPC scale scores may more easily or readily switch between being task- or relationship-oriented leaders than those individuals with more extreme scale scores. They may be equally satisfied by working on the task or establishing relationships with followers.

### Situational Favorability

The other important variable in the contingency model is **situational favorability**, which is the amount of control the leader has over the followers. Presumably the more control a leader has over followers, the more favorable the situation is, at least from the leader’s perspective. Fiedler included three sub-elements in situation favorability. These were leader-member relations, task structure, and position power.

*Leader-member relations* are the most powerful of the three subelements in determining overall situation favorability. They involve the extent to which relationships between the leader and followers are generally cooperative and friendly or antagonistic and difficult. Leaders who rate leader-member relations as high feel they have the support of their followers and can rely on their loyalty.

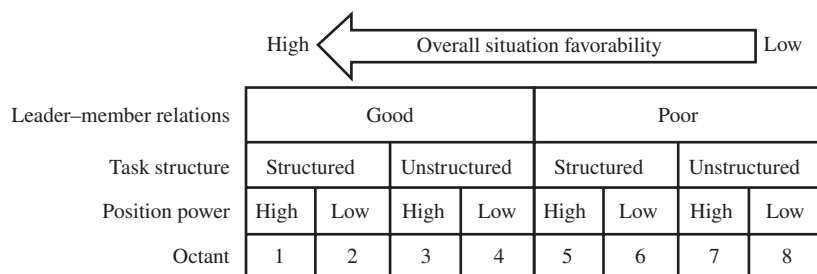
*Task structure* is second in potency in determining overall situation favorability. Here the leader objectively determines task structure by assessing whether there are detailed descriptions of work products, standard operating procedures, or objective indicators of how well the task is being accomplished. The more one can answer these questions affirmatively, the higher the structure of the task.

*Position power* is the weakest of the three elements of situational favorability. Leaders who have titles of authority or rank, the authority to administer rewards and punishments, and the legitimacy to conduct follower performance appraisals have greater position power than leaders who lack them.

The relative weights of these three components, taken together, can be used to create a continuum of situational favorability. When using the contingency model, leaders are first asked to rate items that measure the strength of leader-member relations, the degree of task structure, and their level of position power. These ratings are then weighted and combined to determine an overall level of situational favorability facing the leader.<sup>44</sup> Any particular situation's favorability can be plotted on a continuum Fiedler divided into octants representing distinctly different levels of situational favorability. The relative weighting scheme for the subelements and how they make up each of the eight octants are shown in Figure 14.6.

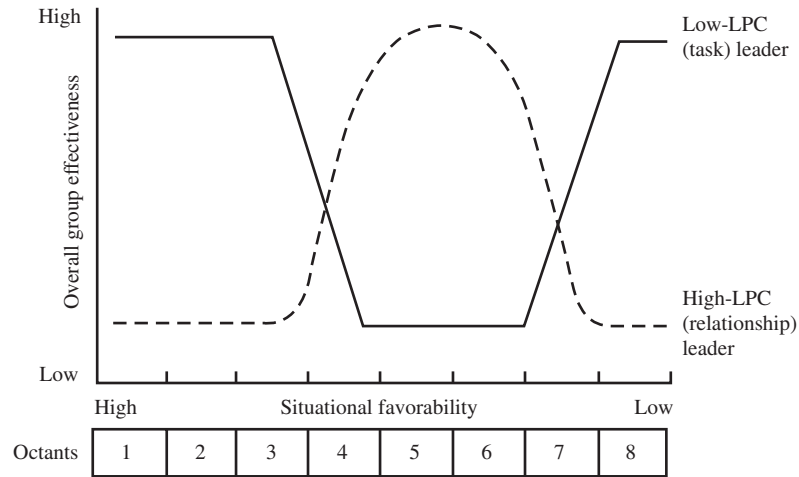
You can see that the octants of situational favorability range from 1 (highly favorable) to 8 (very unfavorable). The highest levels of situational favorability occur when leader-member relations are good, the task is structured, and position power is high. The lowest levels of situational favorability occur when there are high levels of leader-member conflict, the task is unstructured or unclear, and the leader does not have the power to reward or punish subordinates. Moreover, the relative weighting of the three subelements can easily be seen by their order of precedence in Figure 14.6, with leader-member relations appearing first, followed by task structure, and then position power. For example, because leader-member relations carry so much weight, it is impossible for leaders with good leader-member relations to have anything worse than moderate situational favorability,

**FIGURE 14.6**  
Contingency Model  
Octant Structure for  
Determining Situational  
Favorability





**FIGURE 14.7**  
**Leader Effectiveness**  
**Based on the**  
**Contingency between**  
**Leader LPC Score and**  
**Situation Favorability**



regardless of their task structure or position power. In other words, leaders with good leader-member relations will enjoy situational favorability no worse than octant 4; leaders with poor leader-member relations will face situational favorability no better than octant 5.

**Prescriptions of the Model**

Fiedler and his associates have conducted numerous studies to determine how different leaders (as described by their LPC scores) have performed in different situations (as described in terms of situational favorability). Figure 14.7 describes which type of leader (high or low LPC) Fiedler found to be most effective, given different levels of situation favorability. The solid dark line represents the relative effectiveness of a low-LPC leader, and the dashed line represents the relative effectiveness of a high-LPC leader. It is obvious from the way the two lines cross and recross that there is some interaction between the leader’s style and the overall situation favorability. If the situational favorability is moderate (octants 4, 5, 6, or 7), then those groups led by leaders concerned with establishing and maintaining relationships (high-LPC leaders) seem to do best. However, if the situation is either very unfavorable (octant 8) or highly favorable (octants 1, 2, or 3), then those groups led by the task-motivated (low-LPC) leaders seem to do best.

Fiedler suggested that leaders will try to satisfy their primary motivation when faced with unfavorable or moderately favorable situations. This means that low-LPC leaders will concentrate on the task and high-LPC leaders will concentrate on relationships when faced with these two levels of situational favorability. Nevertheless, leaders facing highly favorable situations know that their primary motivations will be satisfied and thus will move to their secondary motivational state. This means that *leaders will behave according to their secondary motivational state only when faced with highly favorable situations* (see Highlight 14.4).

## High- and Low-LPC Leaders and the Contingency Model

### HIGHLIGHT 14.4

Suppose we have two leaders, Tom Low (a low-LPC or task-motivated leader) and Brenda High (a high-LPC or relationship-motivated leader). In unfavorable situations, Tom will be motivated by his primary level and will thus exhibit task behaviors. In similar situations, Brenda will also be motivated by her primary level and as a result will exhibit relationship behaviors. Fiedler found that in unfavorable situations, task behavior will help the group to be more effective, so Tom's behavior would better match the requirements of the situation. Group effectiveness would not be aided by Brenda's relationship behavior in this situation.

In situations with moderate favorability, both Tom and Brenda are still motivated by their primary motivations, so their behaviors will remain the same. Because the situation has changed, however, group effectiveness no longer requires task behavior. Instead, the combination of situational variables leads to a condition in which a leader's

relationship behaviors will make the greatest contribution to group effectiveness. Hence, Brenda will be the most effective leader in situations of moderate favorability.

In highly favorable situations, Fiedler's explanation gets more complex. When leaders find themselves in highly favorable situations, they no longer have to be concerned about satisfying their primary motivations. In highly favorable situations, leaders switch to satisfying their secondary motivations. Because Tom's secondary motivation is to establish and maintain relationships, in highly favorable situations he will exhibit relationship behaviors. Similarly, Brenda will also be motivated by her secondary motivation, so she would manifest task behaviors in highly favorable situations. Fiedler believed that leaders who manifested relationship behaviors in highly favorable situations helped groups to be more effective. In this case, Tom is giving the group what it needs to be more effective.

Several interesting implications of Fiedler's<sup>45</sup> model are worthy of additional comment. Because leaders develop their distinctive motivation hierarchies and dominant behavior tendencies through a lifetime of experiences, Fiedler believed these hierarchies and tendencies would be difficult to change through training. Fiedler maintained it was naive to believe that sending someone to a relatively brief leadership training program could substantially alter any leader's personality or typical way of acting in leadership situations; after all, such tendencies had been developed over many years of experience. Instead of trying to change the leader, Fiedler concluded, training would be more effective if it showed leaders how to recognize and change key situational characteristics to better fit their personal motivational hierarchies and behavioral tendencies. Thus, according to Fiedler, the content of leadership training should emphasize situational engineering rather than behavioral flexibility in leaders. Relatedly, organizations could become more effective if they matched the characteristics of the leader (in this case, LPC scores) with the demands of the situation (situational favorability) than if they tried to change the leader's behavior to fit the situation. These suggestions imply that high- or low-LPC leaders in mismatched situations should either change the situation or move to jobs that better match their motivational hierarchies and behavioral patterns.

### Concluding Thoughts about the Contingency Model

Before reviewing the empirical evidence, perhaps we can attain a clearer understanding of the contingency model by examining it through the L-F-S framework. As shown in Figure 14.8, task structure is a function of the situation, and LPC scores are a function of the leader. Because position power is not a characteristic of the leader but of the situation the leader finds himself or herself in, it is included in the situational circle. Leader-member relations are a joint function of the leader and the followers; thus they belong in the overlapping intersection of the leader and follower circles.

As opposed to the dearth of evidence for Hersey and Blanchard's<sup>46,47</sup> Situational Leadership model, Fiedler and his fellow researchers have provided considerable evidence that the predictions of the model are empirically valid, particularly in laboratory settings.<sup>48-52</sup> However, a review of the studies conducted in field settings yielded only mixed support for the model.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, researchers

**FIGURE 14.8**  
Factors from Fiedler's Contingency Theory and the Interactional Framework

