Chapter 3

Leadership Behaviors

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand why so many different behavior categories have been proposed.
- Understand what research methods have been used to study leadership behavior.
- Understand how leader behavior can be described with either broad or specific categories.
- Understand why task and relations behaviors are important for leadership effectiveness.
- Understand why change-oriented behaviors are important for effective leadership.
- Understand how specific types of task and relations behavior can be used effectively.

The preceding chapter reviewed descriptive research that was designed to identify typical activity patterns of managers, and the current chapter will review research on the types of leadership behavior most likely to influence subordinate satisfaction and performance. The chapter begins by describing different approaches used for classifying leadership behaviors that are relevant for effective leadership. Next is a description of several broad behavior categories that have influenced much of the research over the past half century. Methods for studying the effects of leader behavior are described next, and the results found in research on task-oriented and *relations-oriented behavior* are reviewed and evaluated. The final part of the chapter describes some specific types of task and relations behaviors that are important for effective leadership. The *change-oriented behaviors* are explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

Ways for Describing Leadership Behavior

A major problem in research on the content of leadership behavior has been the identification of behavior categories that are relevant and meaningful for all leaders. In the research on managerial activities in Chapter 2, each study produced a somewhat different set of behavior categories,

making it difficult to compare and integrate the results across studies. A similar condition exists for the behavior research described in this chapter. As a consequence, the past half century of research has produced a bewildering variety of behavior concepts pertaining to managers and leaders (see Bass, 1990; Fleishman et al., 1991). Sometimes different terms are used to refer to the same type of behavior. At other times, the same term is defined differently by various theorists. What is treated as a general behavior category by one theorist is viewed as two or three distinct categories by another theorist. What is a key concept in one taxonomy is absent from another. With so many divergent taxonomies, it is difficult to translate from one set of behaviors to another.

There are several reasons why taxonomies developed to describe leadership behavior are so diverse (Fleishman et al., 1991; Yukl, 1989). Behavior categories are abstractions rather than tangible attributes of the real world. The categories are derived from observed behavior in order to organize perceptions of the world and make them meaningful, but they do not exist in any objective sense. No absolute set of "correct" behavior categories can be established. Thus, taxonomies that differ in purpose can be expected to have somewhat different constructs. For example, taxonomies designed to facilitate research and theory on managerial effectiveness differ from taxonomies designed to describe observations of managerial activities, or taxonomies designed to catalog position responsibilities of managers and administrators.

Another source of diversity among taxonomies, even for those with the same purpose, is the possibility that behavior constructs can be formulated at different levels of abstraction or generality. Some taxonomies contain a small number of broadly defined behavior categories, whereas other taxonomies contain a larger number of narrowly focused behavior categories. For example, *task-oriented behavior* is a broad meta-category, clarifying work roles is a midrange category, and setting clear performance goals is a specific, narrow category. They are all abstract behavior categories, but goal setting is a part of *clarifying*, which is a part of task behavior (see Table 3-1). In the same way, relations-oriented behavior is a broad meta-category, *developing* is a midrange relations behavior, and providing career advice is a very specific type of developing. The optimal level of abstraction for the behavior categories in a taxonomy depends upon the purpose of the taxonomy. For research on effective leadership, the broad *meta-categories* are less useful than more specific behavior categories.

A third source of diversity among behavior taxonomies is the method used to develop them. Some taxonomies are developed by examining the pattern of covariance among behavior items on a behavior description questionnaire describing actual managers (factor

TABLE 3-1 Examples of Behaviors at Different Levels of Abstraction

Broad, Abstract Categories	**Task-oriented Behavior**	
Middle-range Categories	Clarifying	Monitoring
Specific Categories	Assigning work	Observing how the work is done
	Setting task goals	Reading weekly sales reports
	Explaining policies	Holding progress review meetings
Observed Incident	The manager set a goal to increase sales by 10%	The manager checked the new display to see if it was done right

analysis method); some taxonomies are developed by having judges group behavior examples according to perceived similarity in content or purpose (judgmental classification); and some taxonomies are developed by deduction from theory (theoretical-deductive approach). Each method has its own associated biases, and the use of different methods results in somewhat different taxonomies, even when the purpose is the same. When a combination of methods has been used, one method is usually more important than others for selecting the behavior categories.

When different taxonomies are compared, it is obvious that there are substantial differences in the number of behaviors, the range of behaviors, and the level of abstraction of the behavior concepts. Some taxonomies have only a few broad categories, some have many specific behaviors, and some have a few broad categories with specific component behaviors. Some taxonomies are intended to cover the full range of leader behaviors, whereas others only include the behaviors identified in a leadership theory (e.g., theories of charismatic or *transformational leadership*).

Major Types of Leadership Behavior

Most theories and research on effective leadership behavior involve one or two broadly defined behaviors (sometimes called *meta-categories*). This section of the chapter briefly describes several meta-categories that are relevant for effective leadership, and they are explained in more detail later in this chapter and other chapters.

Task and Relations Behaviors

Much of the early theory and research on effective leadership behavior was strongly influenced by work at Ohio State University during the 1950s. The initial task of the researchers was to identify categories of relevant leadership behavior and develop questionnaires to measure how often a leader used these behaviors. A preliminary questionnaire was used by samples of military and civilian personnel to describe the behavior of their supervisors (Fleishman, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Hemphill & Coons, 1957). Analysis of the questionnaire responses indicated that subordinates perceived their supervisor's behavior primarily in terms of two broadly defined meta-categories.

One set of behaviors involves concern for relationships and was labeled *consideration*. This behavior category included doing personal favors for subordinates, finding time to listen to a subordinate with a problem, backing up or defending a subordinate, consulting with subordinates on important matters, being willing to accept suggestions from subordinates, and treating a subordinate as an equal.

The other set of behaviors was involved concern for task objectives and was labeled *initiating structure*. This behavior category included assigning tasks to subordinates, maintaining definite standards of performance, asking subordinates to follow standard procedures, emphasizing the importance of meeting deadlines, criticizing poor work, and coordinating the activities of different subordinates.

Other researchers also developed questionnaires with scales for task and relations behaviors, although the labels and component behaviors varied somewhat from version to version (see Table 3-2). It was widely accepted that leaders must use some task and relations behaviors to be effective, and these two meta-categories influenced most of the early leadership theories.

TABLE 3-2 Similar Behavior Constructs in Early Leadership Research

Task-oriented	Relations-oriented	Source
Initiating Structure	Consideration	Fleishman (1953); Halpin & Winer (1957)
Instrumental Leadership	Supportive Leadership	House (1971)
Goal Emphasis; Work Facilitation	Supportive Leadership; Interaction Facilitation	Bowers & Seashore (1966); Taylor & Bowers (1972)
Performance Behavior	Maintenance Behavior	Misumi & Peterson (1985)

Change-oriented Behavior

The early leadership theory and research paid little attention to behaviors directly concerned with encouraging and facilitating change. In the 1980s, some change-oriented behaviors were included in theories of charismatic and transformational leadership (see Chapter 12), but leading change was still not explicitly recognized as a separate dimension or meta-category. Evidence for the construct validity of change-oriented meta-category was later found by researchers in Sweden and the United States (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991; Yukl, 1997, 1999a; Yukl, Gordon, & Taber, 2002).

Verification that change-oriented behavior is a distinct and meaningful meta-category extended the earlier research and provided important insights about effective leadership. Each of the three meta-categories has a different primary purpose, and they are all relevant for effective leadership. Task-oriented behavior is primarily concerned with accomplishing the task in an efficient and reliable way. Relations-oriented behavior is primarily concerned with increasing mutual trust, cooperation, job satisfaction, and identification with the team or organization. Change-oriented behavior is primarily concerned with understanding the environment, finding innovative ways to adapt to it, and implementing major changes in strategies, products, or processes. Examples of each type of behavior are shown in Table 3-3.

Some specific types of leader behavior in a meta-category affect only one objective, but other types of behavior affect more than one objective. For example, when a leader consults with team members about the action plan for a project, the result may be more commitment to the project (human relations), better use of available personnel and resources (task efficiency), and discovery of more innovative ways to satisfy the client (adaptation). When a leader provides coaching for an employee, the result may be improved productivity (task efficiency), an increase in employee skills relevant for career advancement (human relations), and better implementation of an innovative new program (adaptive change).

Participative Leadership

Another behavior category identified in the early leadership research is *participative leadership*, which is also called *empowering leadership* and *democratic leadership*. It involves a leader's use of decision procedures that allow other people such as subordinates to have some influence over decisions that will affect them (Coch & French, 1948; Heller & Yukl, 1969; Likert, 1961, 1967; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The use of empowering decision procedures reflects a strong concern for relations objectives such as subordinate commitment and development, but it can also

TABLE 3-3 Examples of Task, Relations, and Change-oriented Behaviors

Task-oriented Behaviors

- Organize work activities to improve efficiency.
- Plan short-term operations.
- Assign work to groups or individuals.
- Clarify what results are expected for a task.
- Explain priorities for different task objectives.
- Set specific goals and standards for task performance.
- Explain rules, policies, and standard operating procedures.
- Direct and coordinate work activities.
- Monitor operations and performance.
- Resolve immediate problems that would disrupt the work.

Relations-oriented Behaviors

- Provide support and encouragement to someone with a difficult task.
- Express confidence that a person or group can perform a difficult task.
- Socialize with people to build relationships.
- Recognize contributions and accomplishments.
- Provide coaching and mentoring when appropriate.
- Consult with people on decisions affecting them.
- Empower people to determine the best way to do a task.
- Keep people informed about actions affecting them.
- Help resolve conflicts in a constructive way.
- Use symbols, ceremonies, rituals, and stories to build team identity.
- Encourage mutual trust and cooperation among members of the work unit.
- Recruit competent new members for the team or organization.

Change-oriented Behaviors

- Monitor the external environment to detect threats and opportunities.
- Interpret events to explain the need for change.
- Study competitors and outsiders to get ideas for improvements.
- Envision exciting new possibilities for the organization.
- Encourage people to view problems or opportunities in a different way.
- Develop innovative new strategies linked to core competencies.
- Encourage and facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship in the organization.
- Encourage and facilitate collective learning in the team or organization.
- Experiment with new approaches for achieving objectives.
- Make symbolic changes that are consistent with a new vision or strategy.
- Encourage and facilitate efforts to implement major change.
- Announce and celebrate progress in implementing change.

involve a concern for task objectives such as decision quality. The content of leader decisions may involve task objectives (plan work procedures), relations objectives (determine how to improve employee benefits), change objectives (identify innovative new initiatives), or some combination of the three types of objectives. Participative leadership is discussed in Chapter 5. Participative decision procedures such as consultation or a joint decision can be used with peers and outsiders (e.g., suppliers, clients) as well as with subordinates.

Transformational Leadership

Another behavior meta-category that was identified in the 1980s is usually called *transformational leadership* (Bass, 1985), but other terms for it include *visionary leadership* and *inspirational leadership*. The component behaviors vary for different theories and measures of transformational leadership, but they usually include a few relations-oriented behaviors such as supporting and developing, a few change-oriented behaviors such as articulating an appealing vision and encouraging innovative thinking, and a few behaviors that are difficult to classify into a single meta-category (e.g., leading by example, talking about personal values, making self-sacrifices for the team or organization). Some of the same behaviors are also described in theories of *charismatic leadership*. Theories and research involving transformational and charismatic leadership are described in Chapter 12.

External Leadership Behaviors

Theories and research on dyadic leadership seldom include boundary-spanning behaviors, in part because information about a leader's behavior is typically obtained only by surveying subordinates who have little opportunity to observe how their leader interacts with people outside the work unit or organization. However, just as the research on managerial work (in Chapter 2) identified important boundary-spanning roles and activities, the research on leadership of groups and organizations has identified relevant boundary-spanning behaviors (see also Chapters 10 and 11). Three distinct and broadly defined categories of external behavior are *networking*, environmental scanning, and representing (Luthans & Lockwood, 1984; Stogdill, Goode, & Day, 1962; Yukl et al., 2002; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1982; Yukl, Wall, & Lepsinger, 1990).

Networking involves building and maintaining favorable relationships with peers, superiors, and outsiders who can provide desired information, resources, and political support. The behavior category includes attending professional conferences and ceremonies, joining social networks, socializing informally, doing favors, and using impression management tactics such as ingratiation (see Chapter 8).

Environmental scanning (also called *external monitoring*) includes collecting information about relevant events and changes in the external environment, identifying threats and opportunities for the leader's group or organization, and identifying best practices that can be imitated or adapted (see Chapters 4 and 11). The scanning may be carried out by using a leader's network of contacts, by studying relevant publications and industry reports, by conducting market research, and by studying the decisions and actions of competitors and opponents.

Representing includes lobbying for resources and assistance from superiors, promoting and defending the reputation of the leader's group or organization, negotiating agreements with peers and outsiders such as clients and suppliers, and using political tactics to influence decisions made by superiors or governmental agencies. The proactive influence tactics described in Chapter 8 are commonly used for lobbying and negotiating.

Methods for Studying the Effects of Leader Behavior

Several types of research methods have been used to study the effects of leader behavior. By far, the most common method is the use of survey research with behavior description questionnaires filled out by subordinates. Each subordinate indicates how often the leader has been using the behaviors, and then the behavior scales are correlated with measures of criterion variables such as subordinate satisfaction, turnover, task commitment, and performance.

Another type of study uses descriptions of leader behavior obtained from observation, diaries, *critical incidents*, or interviews with leaders and subordinates. The behavior descriptions are coded into categories and related to measures of leader effectiveness. Case studies and biographies of famous leaders can also be content analyzed to identify behaviors used by effective (or ineffective) leaders.

A small number of studies have involved an experiment in which leader behavior is manipulated by the researchers to determine how it affects the attitudes or performance of subordinates. Some laboratory experiments used student groups with leaders who were instructed to use a designated pattern of behavior. Other lab experiments asked people to read scenarios or view a video with leaders who use different patterns of behavior, then indicate how they would likely respond to each type of leader. A few field experiments involved leaders in actual organizations who were trained to use particular types of behavior.

Each type of method has advantages and limitations, and the most appropriate method depends in part on the research question. The use of multiple methods is highly recommended to minimize the limitations of a single method. Unfortunately, multimethod studies are very rare. It is more common for researchers to select a method that is familiar, well accepted, and easy to use rather than determining the most appropriate method for their research question.

Example of a Critical Incident Study

Yukl and Van Fleet (1982) conducted a study using critical incidents and survey questionnaires for different samples of military leaders. In critical incidents describing Air Force officers in the Korean War, the task-oriented behaviors found most often in effective incidents included clarifying roles and objectives, planning operations, emphasizing performance, and solving immediate problems. The relations-oriented and transformational behaviors found most often in effective incidents included coaching and developing, inspiring confidence and optimism, and leading by example. The results from the incidents were compared to survey results for a sample of platoon leaders in a simulated combat field exercise conducted at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. After the combat exercise, subordinates used a questionnaire to describe their platoon leader's behavior, and squad performance was evaluated by independent judges. The specific leader behaviors that correlated significantly with performance were the same ones found to be important in the earlier analysis of critical incidents.

Example of Diary Incident Study

An example of research based on analysis of incident diaries is provided by Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, and Kramer (2004). Leader behavior in 26 project teams was described in diary incidents recorded by members for several weeks. Researchers coded the leader behaviors into specific categories of behavior identified in previous research. The analysis of results showed that effective leaders used more relations-oriented behaviors such as providing psychological support, consulting with team members, and providing recognition, but they also used more task behaviors such as clarifying roles and objectives, monitoring progress, and dealing with work-related problems. How and when a behavior was used were as important as what type of behavior was used. The effects of negative behavior (inappropriate or inept actions or failure to take appropriate action when it was needed) were usually stronger than the effects of positive behavior. Ineffective behaviors sometimes initiated a negative spiral of actions and reactions between the leader and subordinates with unfavorable consequences for the project team.

Examples of Field Experiments

Field experiments are difficult to conduct in real organizations, and only a small number of them have been used to investigate the effects of leadership behavior. Hand and Slocum (1972) trained managers in a steel plant to use more consideration behavior, and 18 months after the training was completed, these managers were rated more effective than managers in the control group (Hand & Slocum, 1972). The results for managers trained to use more task-oriented behavior were inconclusive.

In another field experiment, Wexley and Nemeroff (1975) found that training hospital supervisors to use more consideration behavior resulted in higher subordinate satisfaction and attendance measured two months after the training. Latham and Saari (1979) found that training first-line production supervisors to use more relationship-oriented behaviors (e.g., active listening, use of praise) resulted in higher performance ratings for these supervisors one year after training. Porras and Anderson (1981) found that human relations training designed to increase the use of some relationship-oriented behaviors (e.g., active listening, praise, consultation) resulted in a significant 17 percent increase in worker productivity six months after training was completed. Finally, in a study of production supervisors in a furniture factory, productivity improved (six months to two years after training) in three of the four departments in which supervisors were trained to use more praise with subordinates (Wikoff, Anderson, & Crowell, 1983).

In summary, the experiments in field settings found that relations-oriented behavior usually resulted in higher subordinate satisfaction and productivity. Task-oriented leadership was seldom manipulated in the leadership experiments, but some field experiments on goal setting (a specific type of task-oriented behavior) found that setting clear, specific, and challenging performance goals for subordinates improved their performance (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Interpreting Causality in Leader Behavior Research

Unless leader behavior is manipulated in an experimental study, it is very difficult to determine causality. For other research methods such as survey studies, there is more than one plausible interpretation of causality. When a positive correlation is found, the researchers usually assume the leader's behavior influenced the criterion variable (see Figure 3-1A). For example, a significant correlation between consideration and subordinate performance is usually interpreted as showing that considerate leaders cause subordinates to be more motivated and productive. However, it is also possible that causality is in the opposite direction, and leader behavior is influenced by the criterion variable (see Figure 3-1B). For example, leaders are more supportive to subordinates with high performance than to subordinates with low performance. Several experiments conducted in a laboratory setting with university students demonstrated that causality can operate in both directions (Day, 1971; Day & Hamblin, 1964; Farris & Lim, 1969; Herold, 1977; Lowin & Craig, 1968; Misumi & Shirakashi, 1966; Sims & Manz, 1984).

Another possibility is that both leader behavior and the criterion variable are affected in the same way by a third variable (see Figure 3-1C). In many studies, the measures of leader behavior and the criterion variable are obtained from the same respondents. The correlation will be inflated if both measures are biased in the same way. For example, well-liked leaders are rated high on both consideration and effectiveness by subordinates, whereas disliked leaders are rated low on both variables. This type of bias is unlikely when the criterion variable is measured independently of leader behavior, but rater attribution biases can still occur (see Figure 3-1D). For example, raters who know the leader's group has high performance may assume that the leader uses relevant behaviors more than is really true (see Chapter 9).

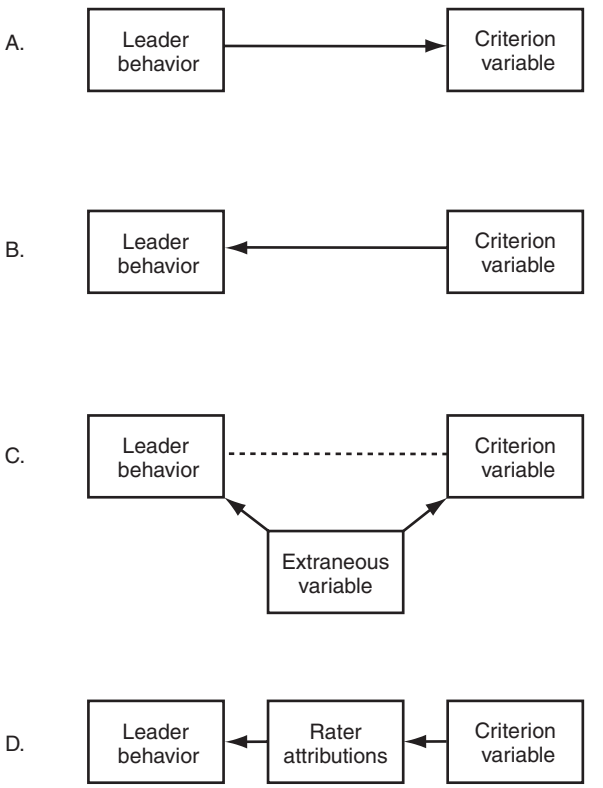

Figure 3-1 Possible Causes of a Correlation Between Leader Behavior and Criterion

Effects of Task and Relations Behaviors

In the early days of research on effects of leadership behavior, hundreds of studies were conducted to determine the influence of task-oriented and relations-oriented behavior on indicators of leadership effectiveness such as subordinate satisfaction, subordinate performance, and ratings of leader effectiveness by superiors. Scholars have used meta-analyses to examine the overall results (e.g., Fisher & Edwards, 1988; Judge, Piccolo, & Illies, 2004). However, the results are difficult to interpret when several different behavior measures, types of criteria, and research methods are included in the same analysis. Findings in the behavior research are described separately for survey studies and other types of research.

General Findings

The only consistent finding in the survey research was a positive relationship between consideration and subordinate satisfaction. Subordinates are usually more satisfied with a leader who is considerate, although the relationship was weaker when the measures of behavior and satisfaction were not from the same source. Task-oriented behavior was not consistently related to subordinate satisfaction. In some studies, subordinates were more satisfied with a structuring leader, but other studies found the opposite relationship or no significant relationship.

This pattern of results suggests the possibility of a curvilinear relationship such that satisfaction is highest for a leader who uses a moderate amount of task-oriented behavior.

In the survey studies, measures of leadership effectiveness had a weak positive correlation with task-oriented behavior and relations-oriented behavior, but once again the results were not consistent across studies. The weakest results were found in studies with an independent, objective measure of effectiveness such as group performance.

The results from experiments and studies with critical incidents, diaries, and interviews are more consistent, and they generally support the proposition that effective leaders guide and facilitate the work to accomplish task objectives, while at the same time maintaining cooperative relationships and teamwork. It is likely that all leaders need to use some task-oriented and relations-oriented behaviors.

Evaluation of the Behavior Research

Much of the behavior research suffers from the tendency to look for simple answers to complex questions, and it is not surprising that meta-analyses of survey studies find only weak positive relationships between effective leadership and meta-categories such as task and relations behavior. Behavior taxonomies are descriptive aids that can help us to analyze complex events and understand them better. Broadly-defined categories can be useful for comparing results from different studies, but there has been too much reliance on them in the formulation of theory and design of research. In most survey studies, the researchers failed to consider whether some specific component behaviors are more relevant than others for the leadership situation, or how the relevance of a specific behavior varies across different situations.

In a theory called the *managerial grid*, Blake and Mouton (1964, 1982) proposed that effective managers have a high concern for people and a high concern for production. These concerns are defined as values rather than as behaviors. A high concern for both people, and production (the "*high-high leader*") does not imply that the leader must use all forms of task and relations behavior. As shown in Chapter 2, managers are overloaded with demands and must ration their time. Thus, effective managers will only use specific behaviors that are relevant for their situation. Aspects of the situation that determine which task-oriented and relations-oriented behaviors are most relevant include the type of team or organization, the nature of the task, and characteristics of subordinates (e.g., experience, motives, gender and cultural diversity, trust and loyalty, identification with the team).

Most of the behavior studies have other limitations that make the results difficult to interpret. Few studies checked for the possibility of a nonlinear relationship between behavior and the performance criterion (such as when a moderate amount of the behavior is optimal). For example, some *monitoring* is usually beneficial, but an excessive amount can reduce subordinate satisfaction. Few studies checked for interactions among behaviors with interrelated effects. To understand why a leader is effective requires examination of how the behaviors interact in a mutually consistent way. For example, monitoring operations is useful for discovering problems, but unless something is done to solve the problems, monitoring will not contribute to leader effectiveness. Thus, when necessary, effective leaders will use other behaviors (e.g., problem solving, coaching) in combination with monitoring.

The descriptive studies of managerial work and research using case studies and biographies suggest that complementary behaviors are woven together into a complex tapestry such that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Kaplan, 1988). A leader's skill in selecting and enacting appropriate behaviors is related to the success of the outcome, and unless a behavior is used in