



Behavioral complexity in leadership: The psychometric properties of a new instrument to measure behavioral repertoire[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Research in managerial and executive leadership recognizes the importance of behavioral complexity, particularly for addressing the competing demands and roles expected of managerial leaders. Though some empirical research on behavioral complexity exists, further progress requires a more rigorous instrument to measure behavioral repertoire. We design an elaborated, multi-dimensional instrument based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF). To examine the underlying conceptual structure and remove measurement error, we test this second-order measurement model using structural equation modeling (SEM). We also test the spatial relationship of the factors using a Bayesian circumplex model. Our data largely support the theoretical structure and stringent demands of the CVF model as applied to this instrument. Finally, we test the instrument's ability to predict managerial effectiveness and find that higher overall ability is correlated with greater overall performance. With this new instrument, we suggest the modification and addition of roles associated with the CVF model.

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The measurement of effectiveness in leadership has been a long-term interest in the organizational sciences (Yukl, 1998). Because those with responsibility at all levels of an organization may find themselves both leading bold initiatives and managing routine operations, the hybrid term “managerial leadership” captures the complementary, and even contradictory, roles that organizational actors might adopt in an effort to stimulate new efforts while also maintaining existing routines (Hunt, 2004). In such roles, they are expected to be both leaders and managers (Hunt, 2004). A recent, promising line of inquiry to better understand the success with which managerial leaders assume these roles focuses on the concept of behavioral complexity (BC) (Hooijberg & Quinn, 1992), which is an individual's capacity to exhibit a broad array of contrasting behaviors. Such behavioral diversity integrates a more comprehensive spectrum of roles associated with both management and leadership (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006). Since 1992, there has been a growing and promising stream of research on BC, but it has been hindered by underdeveloped metrics. This paper focuses on managerial leaders and the relationship of BC, specifically behavioral repertoire (BR), to leader effectiveness, and we develop an instrument with sound psychometric properties to better measure BR.

1. Behavioral complexity theory and the Competing Values Framework

Organizations are dynamic and complex settings, and leaders are required to respond to the many roles and constituencies that they encounter (Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997; Mintzberg, 1975; Tsui, 1984a,b). BC may enable a person to be effective by playing

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numerous roles representing an array of differentiated, and even competing, behavioral expectations (Hooijberg & Quinn, 1992). Within an organization, a behaviorally complex leader is someone who has the ability to “perform the multiple roles and behaviors that circumscribe the requisite variety implied by an organizational or environmental context” (Denison, Hooijberg, & Quinn, 1995, p. 526), such as stakeholders and competitive demands.

The logic underlying BC traces back to the Competing Values Framework (or CVF, Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981). The framework emerged from an empirical analysis of organizational effectiveness criteria. As seen in Table 1, the framework is defined by two dichotomous or competing values: Flexible versus Stable Structure and Internal versus External Focus. Together they are used to define four quadrants or theoretical categories. The theoretical categories of the CVF may also be described as representing a circular structure, often called a “circumplex” (Denison et al., 1995), which means that each quadrant is distinct from the others yet retains a specific spatial relationship with the quadrants sharing the same dimensions. Rational goal criteria (planning, goal setting, productivity) contrast with human resource criteria (cohesion, morale, training). Internal process criteria (information management, stability, control) contrast with open systems criteria (adaptation, growth). In recent work on the CVF, Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff, & Thakor (2006) have simplified the labels for the four quadrants so that they work across all applications of the framework from organizational levels to individual behavior levels. What was originally called the rational goal model is now called the “Compete” quadrant, internal process is “Control,” human resource is “Collaborate,” and open systems is “Create.” For the sake of simplicity and consistency, we will use these more recent labels.

The model of organizational effectiveness guides the specification of leadership roles in the CVF (Quinn, 1984). The framework suggests that the integration of competing expectations is best indicated by the performance of competing roles (see Table 1). The differentiations in the four quadrants are often assumed to be mutually exclusive theoretical categories. Such categories tend to give rise to an “either/or” perspective (Quinn, Spreitzer, & Hart, 1992) that encourages observers to overlook the inherently polar nature of organizational dynamics and contrasting leadership demands (Aram, 1976; Quinn, Kahn, & Mandl, 1994). An example is the contrast between the Compete and Collaborate quadrants. In early leadership research, Hemphill & Coons (1957) identified consideration (i.e., Collaborate) and initiation of structure (i.e., Compete) as orthogonal factors and assumed them to be uncorrelated. It took nearly two decades for researchers to note that the factors were significantly correlated across most studies, and in fact the average correlation was .45 (Schriesheim, House, & Kerr, 1976). Historically there has been a similar tendency to assume a mutually exclusive relationship between change (Create) and continuity (Control) (Fry & Srivastva, 1992). Instead, the CVF calls attention to the fact that the competing values characterizing organizations can all be critical.

BC theory has a number of advantages for understanding leadership effectiveness due to its relationship to the CVF, which captures basic and well recognized tensions in organizational theory (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981). In constructing the CVF of leadership roles, Quinn (1984) linked organizational theory and role theory. The treatment of the latter represented an integration of the literature on leadership roles (Hart & Quinn, 1993). The conceptual oppositions in the framework's quadrants represent basic theoretical distinctions and provide an adequate integration of role literature (Zaccaro, 2001). In addition to being theoretically sound, the quadrants in both the organizational framework (Kalliath, Bluedorn, & Gillespie, 1999; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991) and the individual role framework (Denison et al., 1995) have been empirically replicated. The CVF is the only framework in the role literature that is specifically defined in terms of opposing roles and asserts that effectiveness requires meeting and integrating the competing roles (Zaccaro, 2001). The approach overcomes the tendency to see leadership behaviors in an either/or fashion (Densten & Gray, 2001).

Table 1

The Competing Values Framework and a comparison of original roles to new roles (with behaviors)

		Focus dimension			
		Internal (-)		External (+)	
Structure dimension	Flexible (+)	Collaborate (Human resource model)		Create (Open systems model)	
		<i>Original</i>	<i>New</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>New</i>
		Facilitator	Facilitator	Innovator	Innovator
		Facilitates interaction	Encouraging participation	Envisions change	Initiating significant change***
		Mentor	Empathizer**	-	Visionary**
		Shows consideration	Showing concern	-	Anticipating customer needs
		-	Mentor	-	Motivator**
			Developing people***	-	Inspiring people to exceed expectations
				Broker*	-
				Acquires resources	
Stable (-)	Control (Internal process model)		Compete (Rational goal model)		
	<i>Original</i>	<i>New</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>New</i>	
	Monitor	Monitor	Producer	Producer	
	Provides information	Expecting accurate work	Initiates action	Modeling a hard work ethic***	
	Coordinator	Coordinator	Director*	-	
	Maintains structure	Controlling projects	Provides structure	-	
	-	Regulator**	-	Competitor**	
	Clarifying policies	-	Focusing on the competition		
		-	Driver**		
			Emphasizing speed		

*Old label dropped; **New label added; ***Definition modified.

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