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SUPERORDINATE ROLE FLEXIBILITY AS A FUNCTION OF ROLE PREFERENCE--ETC(U)
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SUPERORDINATE ROLE FLEXIBILITY AS A FUNCTION OF ROLE
PREFERENCE, PRESSURE, AND PERCEPTION OF SUBORDINATES

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By

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~~and~~
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ABSTRACT

The investigators studied the relationship between the superordinate's contingent role behaviors measured by the Superior-Subordinate Evaluation Test (SSET; Marstellar, 1972) and role pressures and role preferences measured by the Response to Power Measure, Supervise Ability Scale, and Responsibility Index (RPM, SAS, RI; Sweney, 1970, 1971). A sample of forty-eight pairs of superordinates and subordinates were selected from missile operations crews. Since each superordinate responded to each of three subordinates on the SSET, it was possible to relate not only his contingent role responses but also to operationally define his flexibility in terms of his range of scores on each of the three superordinate roles being measured.

The findings indicated that they responded with counteractive role patterns rather than the long term adaptive roles found in earlier studies. They claimed to use authoritarian roles with rebels, permissive roles with ingratators, and equalitarian roles with critics. Long term data indicates the opposite behavior to exist.

Flexibility seemed to be more closely related to the superordinate's own roles than those of subordinates. Permissives were least flexible and equalitarians the most. A questioning attitude on the part of subordinates increased flexibility while subordinate yes-saying reduced it.

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SUPERORDINATE ROLE FLEXIBILITY AS A FUNCTION OF ROLE PREFERENCE,
PRESSURE, AND PERC. TION OF SUBORDINATES*

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Since the Lewin, Lippett, and White (1939) classical research, studies of leadership have largely assumed that subordinates are interchangeable. Exceptions can be found in the work of Zaleznik (1965) and Mechanic (1964) each of whom identified crude subordinate styles. Neither, however, established a framework which could explain interactions between superordinates and subordinates as interlocking parts of a dynamic system.

To develop a systems approach to question of the results of leadership styles or roles, Sweney (1970, 1971) presented a heuristic model for explaining predictions concerning their interactions with each other in the same person or between persons.

Recent literature has suggested that role flexibility is a valuable characteristic in a leader. Fiedler (1962) presents a contingency theory which suggests that when conditions are either very

* Research reported here was sponsored by the Life Sciences Division of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research under Contract #2001.

good or very bad, close supervision is better, but when conditions are moderate equalitarian-participative styles are effective. Hill (1972) suggests that the style in the minds of the subordinate was a function of the general task dimension. The research and development organizations demanding a greater flexibility or style than the accounting organization.

These past studies have not studied the question of flexibility as a function of needs resulting from the role played by subordinates. This research report is directed toward this issue.

Methods

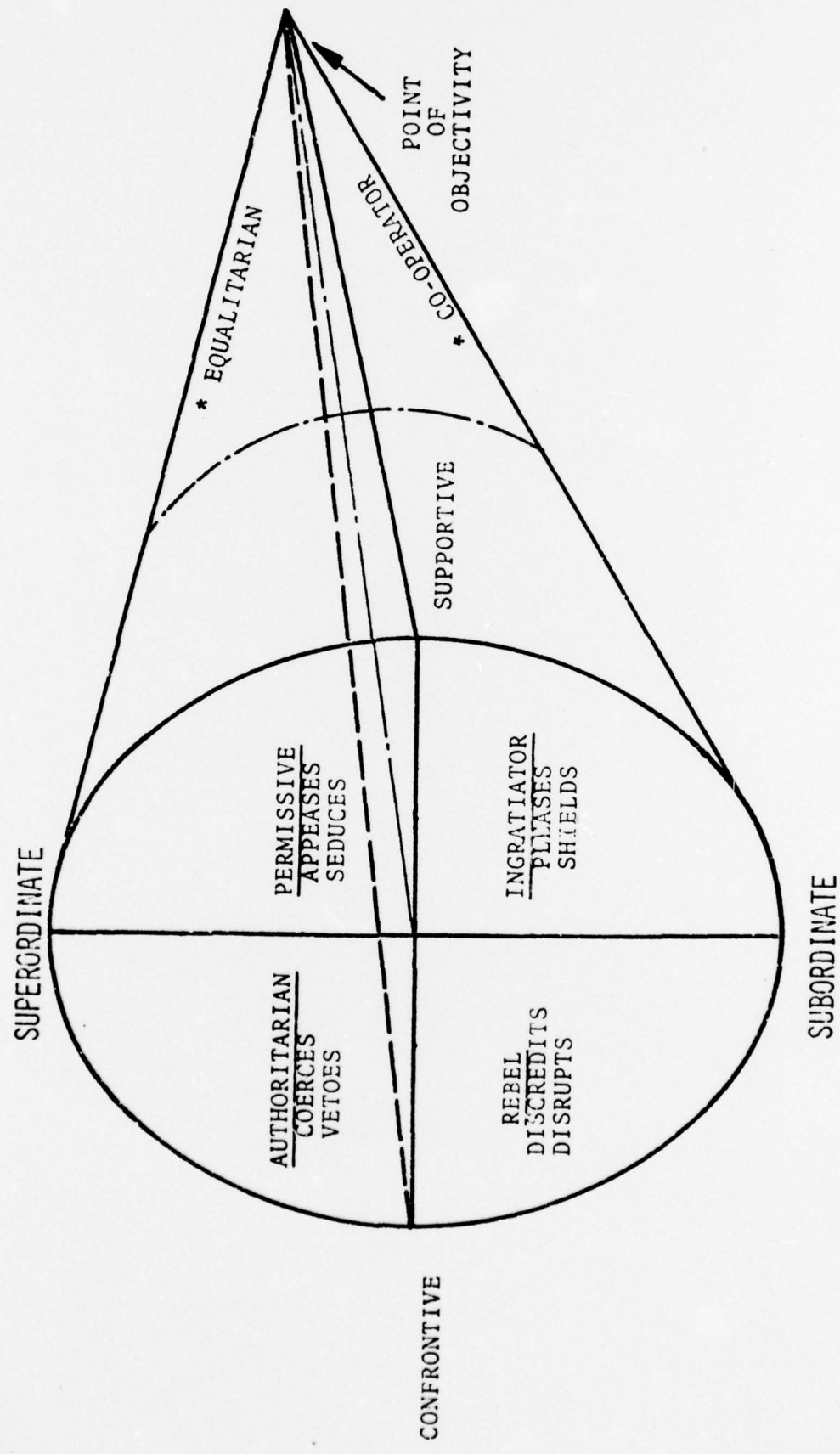
A number of organizational role instruments were administered to a sample of crew chiefs and crew members of an Air Force Missile Wing. The results were analyzed to determine if role flexibility and contingent role behavior on the part of the crew commander could be identified with the subordinate roles displayed by each of the three crew members.

Instruments:

The instruments used in this study were generated to measure various facets of the Response to Power Model. Role preference for each of the six roles was measured by the Response to Power Measure (RPM) which is composed of 96 subtle opinionnaire items with three responses each. Cattell, Radcliffe, And Sweney (1963) found this particular format to measure the Alpha component of motivation and to be related primarily to hedonistic pleasure rather than to any real action potential.

RESPONSE TO POWER MODEL

SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE



* COMMUNICATES / ASSESSES

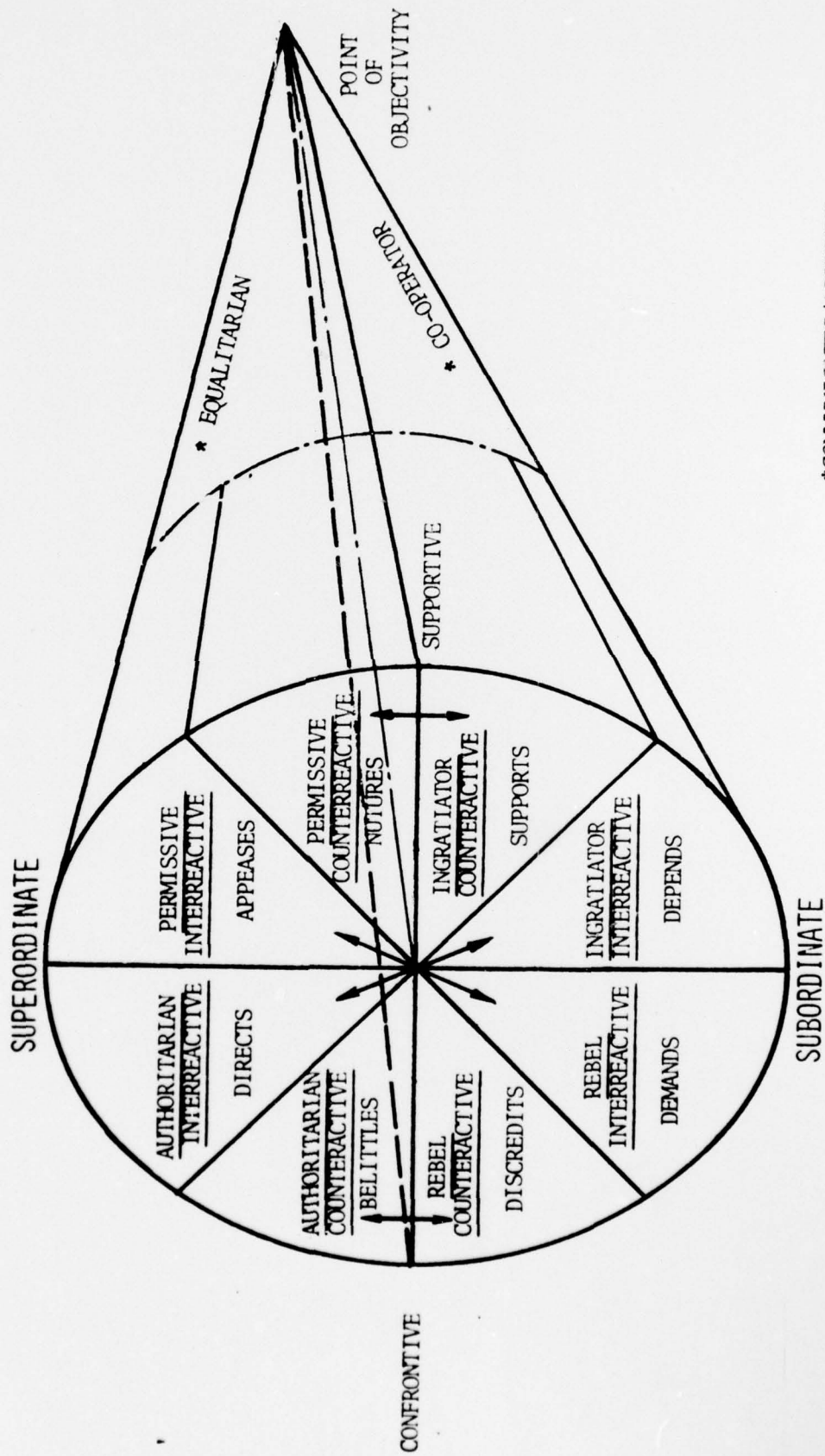
Role Pressure was measured by two separate instruments; the SuperviseAbility Scale (SAS) for the three superordinate roles and Responsibility Index (RI) for the three subordinate roles. These instruments present situations for which the solutions given should be ranked for appropriateness. The format and the instructions increase the likelihood of socially desirable responses. For this reason, the scores obtained from these tests are assumed to be measuring social desirability pressure to play certain roles.

Role Perceptions of the six roles are measured by two ratings scales. The Supervisor's Role Rating (SRR) results in scores indicating the degree to which the subordinates perceive their bosses to play authoritarian, equalitarian, and permissive roles. The Subordinate Behavior Rating (SBR) provides scores indicating the degree to which the superordinate perceives his subordinates to be playing critic, rebel, or ingratiation roles.

The role flexibility on the part of the crew commander was measured by Superior Subordinate Evaluation Test (Marsteller and Sweney, 1972), an instrument similar to the SuperviseAbility Scale (SAS) but the responses were to be made applicable to particular subordinates, the most competent one, the least competent one, and (in this case) the remaining one.

Each time the superordinate takes the test, his responses reflect the degree to which he utilizes each of the three superordinate roles in dealing with that particular subordinate. In this way, it is possible to relate the kind of role he plays to subordinate behavior but it is also possible to assess the amount of flexibility or variability of roles he applies to the various subordinates.

ROLE REACTION MODEL



*COMMUNICATES/ASSESSES

Subjects:

The subjects consists of the two operations squadrons of the 381st Missile Wing. Seventy-two crews were measured of which sixty-nine had sufficiently complete scores to be used in the analysis. Each crew consists of a crew commander who is usually a captain, a deputy crew commander, usually a First Lieutenant, and two enlisted men whose duties are of a technical or procedural nature.

These crews operate as a unit over a year or more of their duty. They serve twenty-four hour duty shifts in the missile command module, and hence develop an intense relationship with each other. These subjects were selected because they offered the greatest likelihood of shaping each other's behaviors, their superordinate-subordinate role relationships. They are also appropriate for this study because the crew commander had a limited number of individuals, three to one, to whom he could respond in his particular management style.

Analysis:

When the data were gathered it was analyzed using Pearson-Product-Moment correlations to establish linear relationships between the variables measured to avoid error rate questions concerning serendipitous findings. A number of hypotheses were generated concerning the expected outcomes.

The analysis proposed for these results would direct themselves toward the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The equalitarian (as measured by other instruments) would tend to employ greater variability in his dealing with his subordinates and would hence have a higher average deviation of the superordinate roles which he employs.
- Hypothesis 2: The individual having greater equality between his management roles as measured by other instruments would also tend to utilize greater flexibility in his dealings with his subordinates as measured by an average deviation of each of the roles on the SSET.
- Hypothesis 3: Because his utilization of management roles is contingent on the subordinate role of the subordinate. Significant correlations will be found between his self evaluation behavior and the subordinate's behavior as measured by other tests.
- a. authoritarianism on the SSET will positively correlate with rebel behavior as measured in the subordinate.
 - b. authoritarianism behavior will also correlate with ingratiating behavior as displayed by the subordinate.
 - c. permissive behavior will positively correlate with ingratiating behavior as displayed by the subordinate as measured by the subordinate.
 - d. permissive behavior will positively correlate with rebellious behavior as displayed by the subordinate.
 - e. equalitarian behavior will be less clearly defined but will positively correlate with the critic role in the subordinate.
- Hypothesis 4: The role employed by the superordinate will more positively be correlated to the superordinate's perception of that superordinate as measured by the SRR than it will be to the superordinate's predominant management style.
- a. authoritarianism measured on the SSET will correlate positively with the authoritarianism perceived by the subordinate on the SRR.
 - b. permissive on the SSET will correlate positively with permissive as perceived by the subordinate on the SRR.
 - c. equalitarianism on the SSET will correlate positively with equalitarianism as perceived by the subordinate on the SRR.

Hypothesis 5: The selective perception of effectiveness will be positively related to consonance in superior-subordinate roles.

- a. an authoritarian will tend to perceive ingratiators as their most valuable subordinate.
- b. an equalitarian will tend to perceive critics as their most valuable subordinate.
- c. a permissive will perceive rebels as their most valuable subordinate.

RESULTS

The correlations obtained from the interactions among the variables were organized to display the results of flexibility and contingent role behaviors on the part of the crew commander and as obtained by the superordinate-subordinate evaluation test. Flexibility was defined as the range of variability in the application of each of the three roles to the subordinate involved. The utilization of a particular superordinate role was measured directly from the SSET.

The results can be categorized as reflective superordinate perceptions and the demands or re-enforcement provided by the subordinate themselves. In some cases it was also found that the superordinate's own subordinate role affected the choice of contingent behavior.

TABLE 1 : CORRELATIONS OF CONTINGENT SUPERORDINATE ROLES
ON THE SSET WITH OTHER SUPERORDINATE ROLE

OTHER SUPERORDINATE	ROLES OF COMMANDER	BEHAVIOR		
		N - 48		
		Contingent role of Commander		
		Authori.	Equali.	Permissive
Authoritarian Pressure	(SAS)	+ 29	- 48**	- 01
Authoritarian Preference	(RPM)	+ 10	+ 18	- 27*
Authoritarian Perception	(SRR)	- 25	+ 24	+ 15
(perceived by subordinate)				
Equalitarian Pressure	(SAS)	- 50**	+ 68**	- 12
Equalitarian Preference	(RPM)	+ 31	- 73**	+ 17
Equalitarian Perception	(SRR)	- 11	+ 06	+ 10
(perceived by subordinate)				
Permissive Pressure	(SAS)	+ 17	- 12	- 14
Permissive Preference	(RPM)	- 45**	+ 22	+ 42**
Permissive Perception	(SRR)	+ 38**	- 30*	- 27*
(perceived by subordinates)				
Questioning	(RPM)	- 34*	+ 05	+ 42**
True Saying	(RPM)	- 12	+ 38**	- 14

* > 05 level of significance

** > 01 level of significance

Table 1 indicates the contingent roles played by the crew commanders conform very closely to the superordinate role pressures measured by SAS for authoritarians and equalitarian roles, but to role preference for the permissive role. These results suggest that social desirability is one of the primary guides of the selection of proper contingent equalitarian or authoritarian roles. Permissiveness is selected on a basis of preference and justified by the contingency conditions. The response styles of the crew commanders on the RPM were also significantly related. The indecisive questions tended to select permissive and not authoritarian contingent roles. The "yes sayers" selected authoritarian contingent roles. The reversal of signs for equalitarian pressure and preference is highly significant and suggest complex dynamics.

TABLE 2: CORRELATIONS OF CONTINGENT SUPERORDINATE ROLES ON
THE SSET WITH THE SUBORDINATE ORIENTATIONS.

N = 48

SUBORDINATE ORIENTATION OF COMMANDERS		Contingent Roles of Commanders		
		AUTHORI.	EQUALI.	PERMISSIVE
Critic Pressure	(RI)	+ 12	- 16	- 04
Critic Preference	(RPM)	- 25	+ 05	+ 29*
Critic Reflexive	(SRR)	- 28 *	+ 24	+ 17
Rebel Pressure	(RI)	- 03	- 02	+ 06
Rebel Preference	(RPM)	- 36*	+ 42*	+ 15
Rebel Reflexive	(SRR)	- 20	+ 03	+ 25
Ingratiator Pressure	(RI)	- 04	+ 13	- 05
Ingratiator Preference	(RPM)	- 10	- 03	+ 15
Ingratiator Reflexive	(SRR)	04	- 22	+ 13

* > 05 level of significance

Table 2 indicates that contingent role behaviors are only moderately related to the commander's own subordinate style. If he plays the critic role, he tends to find more demands for permissive or equalitarian behavior under contingency conditions. If he is a rebel, he also tends to reject authoritarians and select equalitarian roles under the social desirability pressures placed upon him by the contingency problems presented.

The subordinate's implications, of his perceptions of his own superordinates, indicates consistency with past results with the authoritarian, equalitarian, and permissive perceptions of reflective measures of rebel, critic, and ingratiating subordinate roles.

TABLE : CORRELATIONS OF CONTINGENT SUPERORDINATE ROLES ON THE
SSET WITH ROLES OF SUBORDINATES

N = 48

SUBORDINATE ROLES OF	CREW MEMBERS	Contingent Roles of Commander		
		AUTHORI.	EQUALI.	PERMISSIVE
Critic Pressure	(RI)	- 01	- 03	+ 05
Critic Preference	(RPM)	- 04	- 10	+ 13
Critic Perception (by commander)	(SRR)	- 26	+ 32*	+ 10
Rebel Pressure	(RI)	+ 07	- 08	- 03
Rebel Preference	(RPM)	+ 30*	- 19	- 26*
Rebel Perception (by commander)	(SRR)	+ 35*	+ 17	- 60**
Ingratiator Pressure	(RI)	- 08	+ 11	+ 01
Ingratiator Preference	(RPM)	- 15	+ 11	+ 11
Ingratiator Perception (by commander)	(SRR)	- 21	- 35*	+ 55**
Questioning	(RPM)	- 04	- 04	+ 09
True Saying	(RPM)	+ 20	- 01	- 27*

* > 05 level of significance **> 01 level of significance

Table addresses the crucial question of whether contingent superordinate role selection is systematically related to measures of subordinate roles exhibited by the particular crew members about whom the crew commander is asked to respond. The results indicate that the contingent role behaviors are chosen in such a way to counteract the subordinate roles of the crew members. The relationship is primarily to the commander's perception of the subordinate rather than the other self measures.

In this way, the rebels are treated with authoritarianism, ingratiation with permissiveness, and critics with equalitarianism. Other studies have indicated that in the long run accommodative or adjustive roles are taken. Thus, they become permissive with rebels, and authoritarian with ingratiators.

TABLE : CORRELATIONS OF FLEXIBILITY DEFINED BY THE RANGE OF
SUPERORDINATE ROLE REACTIONS (SSET) AND SUPERORDINATE
ROLES ON OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF THE CREW COMMANDERS

N =

		Flexibility = Range		
Superordinate Roles	Crew Commanders	Authori.	Equali.	Permissive
Authoritarian Pressure	(SAS)	+ 12	+ 29*	+ 05
Authoritarian Preference	(RPM)	- 04	- 09	00
Authoritarian Perception	(SRR)	+ 07	+ 24	- 04
Authoritarian Reaction	(SSET)	+ 12	- 22	+ 08
Authoritarian Reflexive	(SRR)	+ 27*	+ 24	+ 23
(perceiving superordinate as permissive)				
Equalitarian Pressure	(SAS)	- 01	- 01	+ 12
Equalitarian Preference	(RPM)	- 12	+ 02	- 17
Equalitarian Perception	(SRR)	+ 05	- 35**	+ 03
Equalitarian Reaction	(SSET)	+ 19	+ 22	+ 08
Equalitarian Reflexive	(SRR)	+ 29*	- 06	+ 31*
(perceiving superordinate as equalitarian)				
Permissive Pressure	(SAS)	- 15	- 37**	+ 07
Permissive Preference	(RPM)	- 40**	- 30*	- 44**
Permissive Perception	(SRR)	- 02	+ 16	+ 01
Permissive Reaction	(SSET)	00	+ 12	- 17
Permissive Reflexive	(SRR)	- 45**	- 16	- 44**
(perceiving superordinate as authoritarian)				

Questioning
True

* > 05 level of significance ** > 01 level of significance

The flexibility in the contingent use of various superordinate roles was found to be highly related to the superordinate roles as measured on other instruments. The commander, perceived to be authoritarian by his subordinates and who responded to role pressure, tended

to use more variability in applying the equalitarian role to manipulate his subordinates. The permissive is characterized by his notable willingness to show flexibility with any role. His claim to treating people equally is related to the lack of decisiveness found in this study, and the low people perception accuracy and in ability to discriminate found in other studies. The commanders perceived as equalitarian by subordinates used average flexibility in the use of authoritarian and permissive roles, but not using equalitarianism as a means of manipulating subordinates.

Table 5: CORRELATIONS OF FLEXIBILITY DEFINED BY THE RANGE OF SUPERORDINATE REACTIONS ON SSET WITH SUBORDINATE ROLES OF THE CREW COMMANDERS

N = 48		Flexibility = Range		
ROLE OF SUBORDINATE	CREW COMMANDERS	Authori.	Equali.	Permissive
Critic Pressure	(RI)	- 06	- 36**	+ 10
Critic Preference	(RPM)	- 23	+ 02	- 36**
Rebel Pressure	(RI)	+ 06	+ 15	- 03
Rebel Preference	(RPM)	- 16	- 16	- 18
Ingratiator Pressure	(RI)	- 03	+ 06	- 02
Ingratiator Preference	(RPM)	- 35*	- 11	- 38**
* > .05 level of significance		** > .01 level of significance		

The flexibility which the commanders used in his contingent changes of roles seemed to be only moderately related to his own self measures of subordinate roles. The reflexive measures of subordinate roles obtained from his perception of his own superior, however, were found to be more related.

The lack of flexibility on the part of the supervisor preferring the permissive role could be attributed to the same dynamics which Fiedler has found in his manager with a high Assumed Similarity between Opposites.

TABLE : CORRELATIONS OF FLEXIBILITY DEFINED BY THE RANGE OF SUPERORDINATE REACTIONS ON THE SSET WITH THE SUBORDINATE ROLES OF CREW MEMBERS

N = 48

Roles of Subordinates	Crew Members	Flexibility = Range		
		Authori.	Equali.	Permi.
Critic Pressure	(RI)	+ 11	- 04	+ 13
Critic Preference	(RPM)	+ 01	- 22	+ 07
Critic Perception	(SBR)	+ 08	- 20	+ 11
Rebel Pressure	(RI)	- 07	+ 15	- 09
Rebel Preference	(RPM)	- 01	+ 07	+ 06
Rebel Perception	(SBR)	- 28*	- 14	- 09
Ingratiator Pressure	(RI)	+ 01	- 18	+ 01
Ingratiator Preference	(RPM)	- 05	- 31*	+ 03
Ingratiator Perception	(SBR)	+ 24	+ 25	+ 03
Questioning	(RPM)	+ 26	- 10	+ 37**
True Saying	(RPM)	- 27*	- 03	- 28*

* > .05 level of significance

**> .01 level of significance

Table 6 shows the relation of subordinate role behaviors of the crew members with the flexibility role in behavior utilized by the crew commanders, respectively. Styles on the RPM showed the highest relationship with the superordinate having the most questioning subordinate utilized the most flexibility in the application of permissive and authoritarian behavior. The superordinate having the yes-saying subordinate felt the least need of flexibility of behavior. The actual relationship

with roles shows a distinct patterning but reached a less significant level. The flexibility in the use of authoritarianism and equalitarianisms was related to perception of superiors as ingratiators, negative correlations for these same areas were found with the subordinate own stated preference for ingratiating behavior. Low flexibility of authoritarian behavior was utilized when the subordinates were perceived to be predominantly rebellious. When this finding is related to the contingent behavior it becomes clear that as a group becomes rebellious, the superordinate perceives that he should exercise more and more authoritarianism with less and less flexibility. The low correlations in the critic area suggests that the moderating influence of this group of subordinates have upon the crew commanders needs to manipulate.

DISCUSSION

The hypotheses generated were fulfilled in the general pattern but many of the correlations were insignificant due to the limited size of the sample. The highest correlations were found between the superordinate role pressure and the superordinate contingent behavior. The tendency, however, for the signs to be reversed on the superordinate preference measures indicated a very significant departure from the expectations. These reversals are repeated on a less dramatic level in the flexibility area and emphasizes the likelihood that the instrument measuring flexibility was highly conditioned by social desirability response style. Another unexpected finding was the strong predictive

value obtained from the response styles on the RPM and from understanding flexibility and contingent superordinate role behavior.

The superordinate's own subordinate role strongly affected his contingent use of superordinate roles. Surprisingly under these circumstances, the rebel claims he would use equalitarian and permissive roles and not authoritarian ones. The critic would tend to follow a similar pattern and the ingratiator is indeterminant.

The reaction of the superordinate to the subordinate is primarily a counteractive one and thus the critic is met with equalitarian behavior, the rebel is met with authoritarian behavior, and the ingratiator is treated permissively. The lack of agreement of these claimed roles and the long term interactions found between superordinate-subordinate roles suggest that the claimed behavior is probably highly contaminated with social desirability. It does appear, however, that yes saying on the part of the subordinate is responded to with authoritarian behavior, whereas no saying is responded to by permissive behavior. This contradiction of response styles and roles suggest some productive areas of research.

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