Your next activity helps you explore this important point and emphasises the need to see leadership qualities or traits in a situational context. We examine this approach next.

You will see that Activity 5 confirms what we said earlier about how we 'rightly associate leadership with personal qualities' but that it also implies that, generally speaking, leadership success or failure cannot be predicted on the basis of personal leadership qualities alone and without considering the situation. Andrew Rivers, though manager of his staff, was not their leader.

Q **ACTIVITY 5: QUESTION**

Consider, either individually or in groups, the appropriateness of Andrew Rivers' personal leadership qualities to his earlier career role.

1. What qualities or traits do you feel Andrew brought to his army role?
2. How you think these matched the military situation?

A **ACTIVITY 5: ANSWER**

Obviously we do not have full information about Andrew and we must make assumptions based upon what we do know:

1. He may well have brought with him into the army a certain upbringing and education. Andrew may also have had the 'right' appearance as well as, perhaps, self-assurance, a cool head, a drive for achievement, aggressiveness and initiative. He commanded his men and he may also have had a certain aloofness which suited. You may have seen him slightly differently and used different words to describe his traits.

2. We know that he had had operational duties, at least, in Northern Ireland and it is likely that a cool head, self-assurance, aggressiveness and initiative would have been appropriate. Presumably Andrew also spoke and looked the part, and in the 'caste-system' of the army, inter-personal skills with fellow officers and a certain aloofness with other ranks may have fitted the situation.

≫ 2.3 Situation-Contingent Personality Traits Approach

This approach assumes that different situations require different sets of traits. It seeks then to find those personality traits that will improve leader effectiveness in specific situations rather than pursuing the somewhat fruitless search for traits that will improve effectiveness across a diversity of situations.

Fiedler (1967) has done extensive research in this area. He assumes that all leaders have fairly stable traits and that these lead them to having their own characteristic styles of leadership. Their style is seen to be rooted in their personality.

To establish what he sees as their key traits, Fiedler gets leaders to rate their 'least preferred co-worker' *(LPC)* on a scale. He asks leaders to choose that individual with whom task accomplishment has proved the most difficult in their experience and then measures the degree to which leaders are still able to favourably perceive that person. The resultant *LPC* score indicates the presence of one of two leadership styles in the leader:

- If the score is relatively high, then the leader is **relationship-orientated,** and has described their least preferred co-worker in both positive and negative terms. This style of leader, because of his or her personality traits, sees work in terms of people as well as task performance, so that even with someone with whom task accomplishment has proved the most difficult in all of their experience, they are still able to say positive things about them.

- If the score is low, then the leader is **task-orientated,** and has described their least preferred co-worker purely in negative terms. This style of leader, because of his or her personality traits, sees work paramountly in terms of task performance, and since they are describing someone with whom task accomplishment has proved the most difficult in all of their experience, they are unable to say positive things about them.

Since this approach seeks to match the leader style with the situation, and the leader style, stemming from the leader's traits, has been established, Fiedler next isolates three aspects of the situation which he sees as determining its favourability and so affecting the leader's influence. These three are, in descending order of importance:

- **Leader-member relations** – this is the group's willingness to accept the guidance of the leader and the degree to which that leader is trusted and liked.

- **Task-structure** – this is the degree to which the task can be carried out by standard procedures.

- **Position power of leader** – this is the power of the leader deriving from their position in the organisation. For example, how much influence the leader has over rewards or punishment.

≫ 2.4 Situations and Leadership Styles

Now let us look at what Fiedler's theory of leadership has to say about situations and appropriate leadership styles. When reading these propositions however, remember that while he built his influential theory from data collected over the previous 10 years, subsequent research by, for example, Peters et al (1985) and Bryman et al (1987) has only given it partial support. As Arnold et al (1991) observed: 'Laboratory-based studies have produced results more consistent with the theory than field studies.'

1. Where the situation is deemed good, that is, the leader-member relations are fine, the task is structured and the leader's position power is strong, then it is desirable to have a **task-orientated leader** since it is not worth spending time on interpersonal relations. It is best that the leader just forges ahead with the task.

2. Where the situation is deemed bad, that is, the leader-member relations are poor, the task is unstructured and the leader's position is weak, then again it is desirable to have a **task-orientated leader** since things are so difficult anyway it just is not worth spending any time on interpersonal relationships. Again, it is best that the leader just forges ahead with the task.

3. Where the situation falls between these two extremes then keeping the group members happy becomes much more important. A **relationship-orientated leader** is needed to hold the members together so that the task can be tackled.

Fiedler in fact constructed eight combinations of group-task situations through which to relate leadership style (Table 1).

| | Situation highly favourable | | | | | | | Situation Highly unfavourable |
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Leader-member relations	Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Task structure	Structured	Structured	Unstructured	Unstructured	Structured	Structured	Unstructured	Unstructured
Leader position power	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Desirable leader LPC score	Low	Low	Low	High	High	High	High	Low

Table 1: Fiedler's theory of leadership
Source: Arnold et al 1991

Q ACTIVITY 6: QUESTION

Identify by number which situations, according to Fiedler, relate to each of the three propositions, 1, 2, or 3 which we have just described.

A ACTIVITY 6: ANSWER

1. In terms of this proposition, it is likely that you will have identified situation I.

2. In terms of this proposition, it is likely that you will have identified situation VIII.

3. In this case, you may well have identified situations IV or V which are moderately favourable with mixed variables. Leaders in such situations with interpersonal relationship orientations, that is high *LPC* scores, are likely to be more effective.

Q ACTIVITY 7: QUESTION

Think of any problems with the Fiedler model. Discuss your ideas in a group, if possible.

A **ACTIVITY 7: ANSWER**

This is a difficult question, but you may, for example, have argued that:

- It appears to imply that leaders who are task-orientated are not concerned with group member relations.

- It is unreasonable to view leader-member relations as just a part of the situation. These two parties may change their relations over time.

This is not to say that the basic approach of the theory is not valid. Analyse the situation, specify the traits and orientation that a leader in that situation must have and then place an appropriate leader in charge.

To help your understanding of the situation-contingent traits approach it would be useful for you to apply it to the recreation centre situation. It is very likely that individually, or in your group discussions, you will have already decided that Andrew's traits and orientation, while seemingly highly appropriate in the army were much less so in the recreation centre. The implication of this is that different situations do appear to require different sets of traits and different orientations.

Q **ACTIVITY 8: QUESTION**

Look back over the Andrew Rivers scenario in Review Activity 1 and then answer the following questions. You can answer questions 4 and 5 in a group, if possible.

1. Did it appear that Andrew had fairly stable traits and that these led to his own characteristic style of leadership? Explain your answer.

2. Is it reasonable to assume that Andrew's style was rooted in his personality? Explain your answer.

3. If Andrew had rated his LPC do you think it likely that he would have had a low score and hence have been revealed to be a task-orientated leader? Explain your answer.

4. Analyse the situation in the recreation centre in terms of Fiedler's three main variables. Name each variable prior to analysing it.

5. Remembering the three conclusions Fiedler reached about leader-orientation and situation contingency, discuss Andrew's suitability for the recreation centre manager post.

1. Yes, Andrew did appear to have fairly stable traits which led him to have a characteristic style of leadership. There was no attempt to modify his approach in this radically different context despite, for example, initial friendly overtures from his deputy. It would be useful to point out here that there is an approach to leadership which, while accepting that leaders are likely to have *preferred* styles or sets of behaviours, holds that they can be trained to change them to meet situation requirements. Hersey and Blanchard (1982), for example, developed a situational leadership theory which falls into this situation-contingent *behaviours* approach. They derived four leadership styles – **telling, selling, participating** and **delegating** – from the two behavioural categories of leader behaviour identified in the classic Ohio State University Studies which are now commonly referred to as task-oriented behaviours and people-oriented behaviours (Stogdill & Coons, 1957). According to Hersey and Blanchard's theory, and using scales which they developed, the level of maturity of followers can be established and then the leader can match this level with an appropriate style. Their theory points up the fact that there are situational factors which Fiedler did not consider.

2. Yes, it would seem reasonable to assume that Andrew's style was rooted in his personality. Again, his approach was totally unwavering and he was 'noticeably surprised' when confronted by the county recreation manager. We could argue, of course, that his personality had been formed by eighteen years in the army. You may have made this point earlier. Obviously this is something that we have no information about but even if it was so formed, it is now his personality.

3. From what we know of Andrew, it seems very likely that he would have scored low on the *LPC* scales. He would clearly appear to be a task-orientated leader in his approach to his team, the work and to his own manager. For example, Andrew cancelled the welcoming party arranged by his deputy saying that he 'did not think it a good idea' and when asked direct, work-related questions his answers were 'always brief and sometimes hostile'. Andrew also expressed shock at the informality of his staff's attitude to work. Then, when his manager raised the issue of his team's discontent with the way he made all of the decisions, his response was that it was he who was paid to make them. Andrew added that their morale would improve when they got used to the professional standards that he insisted on.

4. **Leader-member relations:** Andrew is disliked, to say the least and his team is not willing to follow his guidance.

   Task structure: From what is known from the case study, the task is likely to be quite clearly defined and standard procedures will be in evidence. The task is structured.