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Leadership, War & Hollywood

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What makes a leader so effective? Does it depend on how successful they are? How influential they are? Or is it both? A leader's main focus is to complete the task at hand while guiding their followers to the end. This is all dependent on the leader's behavior. According to Peter G. Northouse's novel, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, "The behavioral approach focuses on what leaders do and how they act."<sup>1</sup> This helps determine how effective a leader is at influencing others if their efforts to accomplish a goal. Northouse breaks down leadership based on this approach by saying, "Leadership is composed of two different kinds of behaviors: task behaviors and leadership behaviors. Task behaviors facilitate goal accomplishment: They help group members to achieve their objectives. Relationship behaviors help followers feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation they find themselves in."<sup>2</sup> This is saying that task behavior has a leader focuses on completing the goal/objective first while the group members help. On the other hand, relationship behavior is when a leader focuses on the group members first and how they can be helped in accomplishing a goal. A great example of the behavioral approach is the military. In the military, leadership and discipline is everything. The lives of many men depend on the behavior approach of their leaders. To further examine this approach I researched two World War II generals, General Patton, and General Bradley. Both men were similar and different in many ways. They were similar for both were great strategists and influential leaders. They were different for Patton was influential due to fear while Bradley

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<sup>1</sup> Northouse, Peter Guy. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

was influential due to respect. However, the major difference between them was that Patton was a task behavioral leader while Bradley was relationship behavioral-based. Thus, making me want to emulate Patton for he was more successful.

In the movie, Patton, General Patton and General Bradley are given command of the third army and are expected to take Nazi-occupied territory. Patton shows he is a good strategist when he comes up with the plan to take Sicily from the Germans. Although he does this against the advice of others and without British help, which he was supposed to wait for, Patton successfully takes the island. Likewise, Bradley shows his strategic mindset when he devises a plan to break through German lines and liberate France. This plan turns out successful and France becomes free from German authority after four long years. Both Patton and Bradley's ability to plan and execute was the reason why they worked so well together. Furthermore, the men were similar for both were very influential leaders. Patton expected every man to wear their uniform properly, shoes to be shined, beds to be made, and his orders to be followed. He was very strict when it came to order and discipline. Therefore, getting his influence from fear. Patton himself says, "I only hope to God they never lose their fear of me."<sup>3</sup> This shows that Patton likes his influence to be based on fear for he thinks it is most effective. When it came to Bradley, he was less strict than Patton, but he was well respected amongst the men for he showed interest and cared for their well being. This made men want to follow Bradley for they knew he would consider their best interest. In a biography article about Bradley, it says, "Known by his troops in World War II as "The Soldier's General" because of his care of and compassion for those soldiers under his command."<sup>4</sup> This explains why soldiers loved Bradley so much and respected him more than Patton. Their difference in influence also played a role in which type of behavioral leader they were.

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<sup>3</sup> *Patton*. 20th Century Fox, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Patterson, Michael Robert. Omar Nelson Bradley, General of the Army. Accessed September 20, 2019.

Patton was a task behavioral leader for the mission was more important while Bradley was a relationship behavioral leader who thought about his men first. Patton was a fast-paced leader for he wanted to carry out his missions as quickly as possible. He believed he could fight his way through almost anything. Completing the mission was the most important thing to him for he believed soldiers were just collateral damage. We see this in the movie when Bradley wants to wait a day before taking territory in Sicily and Patton makes the army go earlier. Patton wants to get there before the British so he can have the glory. This shows how task-oriented Patton was for he could have waited for the British to help him, but instead, he wanted to complete the task with his army only and as soon as the men landed. Another part of the film that showed Patton exemplifying task behavior was when he looks at the casualty report for the Sicily mission. When Bradley asks him about it Patton says he has seen it and then acts as if it is nothing important. This tells us that Patton doesn't really care about the men he lost because the mission was complete and that's what's important. He focuses on "facilitating goal accomplishment" proving to us that he is task behavioral. Unlike Patton, Bradley was relationship behavioral leader for he cared for the men, maybe a little too much. We see this when Patton orders the army to go on the Sicily mission early and Bradley disagrees with this. Patton is worried about completing the mission while Bradley worries about the casualties that may occur. He tells Patton that he needs to think about the everyday soldier who faces death every time Patton makes a decision. Bradley cares so much for these men that he goes as far as to say, "If anything happens to those men, I'd like to be there with them."<sup>5</sup> This shows that Bradley is a relationship based leader for he would risk his life to lead his men. This makes Bradley seem as if he cares for his men a little too much for he is a general and the fact that he would risk his life in a mission seems foolish. This request my Bradley proves his commitment to his men and

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<sup>5</sup> *Patton*.

his relationship behavior. This is why I would rather emulate Patton and why he was more successful.

When it comes to war hard decisions have to be made for the greater good. I believe Patton had a better ability to make those decisions than Bradley. Patton's goal was to end the war which ultimately made him more successful. He tried to accomplish this goal as quickly as possible for the longer a war is the more damage done and lives lost. Unlike Patton, I believe Bradley's goal was to keep alive as many men alive as possible and get them home. This was Bradley's weakness when it came to being a military leader. The only weakness Patton showed was his inability to keep his mouth shut. I would rather be a leader who can put emotions aside and focus on the mission rather than be a leader who constantly worries about a few casualties. Also, Patton was more successful than Bradley because he moved at a faster pace. Bradley liked to carefully plan and take his time when fighting the Germans while Patton used his strength and smarts to punch through them. Patton did not wait between countries like others, he keep moving on to the next. That is why I would rather emulate Patton and why he was more successful than Bradley.

General Patton and General Bradley are two of America's greatest and most influential military leaders. They both have similarities and differences that made them so historical. Patton showed strength in being goal-oriented while Bradley showed power in being considerate of the common soldier. They showed success through two different behavioral approaches and are reasons why the Germans were defeated. Based on the film and research I believe both were great leaders with Patton having the edge. Through these men, I have learned what makes a leader effective.