Chapter 3

In Search of a Star Trek Affective State

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ABSTRACT

The authors’ meta-analysis showed that leadership studies have ignored pioneering research into the heuristic tools people employ that affect decision-making and, subsequently, judgments regarding effective group performance in organizational settings. The chapter suggests a postmodern model supersed-ing the modernist perspectives whose theoretical grounding remain mired in Frederick Taylor’s (1911) scientific management theories. The authors’ meta-analysis identified salient characteristics found in the selected leadership research, allowing for a disambiguation of the transformational and charismatic leadership operational traits. The meta-analysis comprised selected research studies from 1999 to 2008, and revealed distinctive intrapersonal (5 organizational referents) and interpersonal (5 social identity/normative referents) icons that inform emergent leader and follower behaviors. The chapter proposes a postmodern evaluation matrix to reveal the structural biases and modernist conceptual ambiguities tied to the leader-worker dyadic in varying organizational contexts. The findings suggest that leadership researchers should consider complex behavioral decision-making processes that result in emergent group performances instead of focusing on a leader’s ephemeral behavioral traits. A postmodern approach also helps leadership researchers identify a group’s performance on a continuum that would demonstrate their willingness to act in a way that tests individual limits, stretches group boundaries, and exceeds company goals, what the authors term a Star Trek Affective State.

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INTRODUCTION

Common leadership symbols embodied within films, novels, architecture, and art have typified modernist leaders who displayed transactional, transformative, or charismatic behavioral traits (Taylor, 1911; Lundberg, 1988; Handy, 1991; Ackoff, 1999; Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999; Cantor, 2001; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2009). Modernist management studies have relied on these sweep-of-history-engulfing scopes, reinforcing Taylor’s (1911) classical scientific management thesis in various organizational environments (Marcuse, 1964; Baudrillard, 1994; Travica, 1999; Gherardi, 2000; Gilovich & Griffin, 2002; Sillince, 2007; Albritton & Anderson, 2008; Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Hamel, 2009). In the selected literature reviewed for the past two decades, management techniques have mirrored changes in leadership symbolism, with the most recent leadership prescriptions focused on transformational or charismatic methods that motivated subordinates to act in a way that meet organizational goals. Some recent studies exemplify changing leadership perspectives that reflected a democratic, interpersonal, and contextualized leadership line of authority. Anonson et al. (2009) states:

*Because leadership is dynamic, leaders and their traits should not be studied outside of context. Unlike traditional hierarchical models of leadership, in interprofessional leadership the platform on which member-leaders relate is horizontal, relational, and situational. Effective leadership combines both professional competency and the ability to foster team dynamics. (p. 19)*

However, a question remains as to what direction leadership and group dynamics studies inform research efforts going forward if researchers derive their findings based on ambiguous leadership concepts. It seems a reasonable concern to ask what organizations will do as Baby Boomer leaders who learned these modernist’s techniques exit the workforce, leaving a leadership culture unprepared for postmodern hiring, retention, resource-allocation, and succession-planning challenges and opportunities. Consequently, companies now and in the future require innovative management models and measurement solutions that would improve leadership understanding (Bolman & Deal, 2008) and address the multicultural contexts (Callan, 2003) that make up group interactions. This requires resolving, at the very least, the conceptual ambiguities that describe leadership traits (Nisbett, Borgida, Crandall, & Reed, 1982; Collins, 2001; Gross, 2009) and the epistemological complexities facing western moral imperatives. As we have illustrated in Figure 1, a great deal of modernists’ management ambiguity remains mired in Immanuel Kant’s reason versus nature paradigm. The Enlightenment perspective has relied on linear mental and socially evolving controls to explain civilization’s inevitable progress. Reflective of the tumultuous Ancien Régime period, modernist or Enlightenment dogmatists have worked to legitimate power relations but from these earlier archaeological mistakes, have fostered conceptual ambiguities associated with leadership behaviors.

Because of this, we believe it is mindful to discover the epistemological elements of leadership mythology. Although there are researchers who claim that modernist management and leadership studies began with Mary Parker Follett and Elton Mayo (Wren, 2005), historically, it is clear that Taylor’s (1911) *The Principles of Scientific Management*, was the first national thesis on the subject. Taylor provided a systematic, scientific, behavioral approach that heavily relies on identifying the components of management success and then teaching people who demonstrate enough ability to learn competent leadership behaviors. Interestingly, Taylor sounded chagrined in the opening pages to his book when he stated that businesses continued to seek out already well-trained competent men instead of “systemati-
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