LEADERSHIP AND POSTMODERNISM: ON VOICE AND THE QUALITATIVE METHOD

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Over the last 20 years we have seen a wealth of qualitative studies that have utilized a social constructionist framework for investigating various aspects of leadership. What have we learned and what are the challenges that lie ahead? The author touches on recent cultural studies of leadership and then outlines a particular theoretical orientation—postmodernism. He argues that postmodernism offers distinctly different ways for qualitative researchers to approach the study of leadership. In particular, the article considers the textual implications for how authors portray leadership if they subscribe to postmodern notions. The role of the narrator and the function of time in qualitative studies of leadership receive specific attention.

Over the last 20 years, studies of leadership in organizations have undergone a sea-change in how we think about, study, and define leadership. On the one hand, assumptions developed in historical studies of leadership in colleges and universities, for example, that characterized the college presidency as a role filled by heroic individuals who held specific traits (Dodds, 1962; Brown, 1969) have been rendered obsolete. On the other hand, the proposition that assumed that leadership was a fleeting concept, and it did not matter who filled a particular position such as a college presidency also has been disavowed. Cohen and March’s oft-stated comment that “the outcomes of the university do not much depend on the college president. His capabilities are limited, and his response is limited by his capabilities” (1974, p. 45) largely has been rejected (Birnbaum, 1992; Tierney, 1993). Recent researchers frequently have opted for a cultural approach to leadership studies where the investigation of leadership is largely undertaken by the use of qualitative methods (Morgan & Smircich, 1982).

Indeed, over the last 20 years we have seen a wealth of qualitative studies that have utilized a cultural framework for investigating various aspects of leadership (Calas & Smircich, 1988). What have we learned, and what are the challenges that lie ahead? This
article is divided into two parts. Part one touches on recent cultural studies of leadership. It then outlines a particular theoretical orientation—postmodernism—and discuss its broad implications for qualitative studies of leadership. Part two raises questions about the representational practices that might be developed if we accept some of the notions of postmodernism. In particular, the role of the narrator and the function of time in qualitative studies of leadership are discussed. The article concludes by offering three specific implications for the development of the text if we accept the basic ideas of postmodernism. As will be elaborated, postmodernism is discussed in large part because it is a logical next step for those of us who subscribe to cultural notions of the world. Although a great deal of work has been done about defining the parameters of the postmodern in general, we have yet to confront the implications of postmodernism for studies of leadership in particular. Accordingly, a goal of this article is to encourage those of us who do qualitative studies of leadership to think about the implications of postmodernism for our future research efforts.

**CULTURE, POSTMODERNISM, AND LEADERSHIP**

A cultural framework, first made popular in studies of businesses, has become a major conceptual lens for understanding organizations in general. By “culture” I mean those informal codes and shared assumptions of individuals who participate in an organization. An organization’s members shape and are shaped by the symbols and rituals of the institution. The overriding assumption is that every institution exists as a unique organizational culture that is open to diverse and equifinal interpretations. As Smircich and Morgan comment, “leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others” (1982, p. 258). Leadership gets defined in part by the parameters of the institution’s culture and the interaction of individuals involved in the creation of organizational reality.

Not surprisingly, most studies of leadership from this perspective have utilized a qualitative approach. The assumption of proponents of this approach is that reality is socially constructed, and thus, the organization is one such construction. Culture is the conceptual lens employed to understand what is occurring and how the organization’s participants make sense of these activities. If we are to study the interpretation of symbols, rituals, and the like, then we must come to terms with how the participants interpret different cultural phenomena in the organization. Further, the idea of culture derives from anthropology, and the basic tools of anthropologists have been qualitative techniques. Thus, for example, we have seen ethnographies of leadership (Tiemey, 1988); case studies of different aspects of leadership (Foster, 1991); intensive interviews of leaders (Bensimon, 1989) and longitudinal case studies of how leadership changes in institutions over a five-year time horizon (Birnbaum, 1992).

What loosely ties such studies together is that the researchers assume reality is socially constructed, that the participants in the organization have a role in the construction of the culture of the institution, and that the manner in which the researcher comes to understand that reality is through qualitative research. To be sure, the feminist theory of Bensimon’s work differs in outlook from Birnbaum’s cybernetic approach or Tierney’s use of critical theory, but each researcher developed interview protocols, utilized standard data collection procedures, analyzed, and then presented, the data in ways that are quite similar. It is important to note, however, that the vast majority of qualitative research on leadership has
utilized a cultural framework based in modernism. As I discuss below, by modernism, I mean the quest for scientific answers that is based in positivism. Researchers assume the world is socially constructed, but they also assume that the world can be understood by the researcher, and that generalizable truths about the nature of reality and organizational life are possible. Progress is linear and understandable. Researchers study discrete variables with the assumption that they will be able to understand the context. Data is discovered, rather than created (Tierney, 1993).

What I turn to now is a discussion of what qualitative research on leadership might look like if we were to adopt a postmodern perspective. As with others (Alvesson, 1996), I do not deny the multiple interpretations and debates about postmodernism. At the same time, I wish to offer some broad ideas about how those of us who subscribe to postmodernism might use the approach in the study of leadership in organizations.

As Alvesson and Deetz have noted, “postmodernism grew out of French structuralism by taking seriously the linguistic turn in philosophy” (1995, p. 26). Accordingly, the postmodern is a view of the world where individuals are inundated with multiple voices that create a cacophony of sound and an inability to make complete sense of reality. The discovery of ultimate Truths is abandoned as impossible and mistaken. Societies, and thus, organizations, are not ordered systems that make intuitive sense to the participants and to a researcher, but instead they are marked by differences and oppositions (Cooper, 1990).

One of postmodernism’s most eminent proponents, Jean Francois Lyotard, summarizes how he sees writers and researchers. He argues that as an author an individual is:

...in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done (1984, p. 81).

Lyotard’s comment, indeed, much of the postmodernist critique, offers both a degree of chaos and hope for researchers. If there are no rules, how are we to proceed? At times, postmodernism’s project appears mired in chaos as no one has a clear idea about how to act or make sense of the world. Nevertheless, the hope exists that we are able to create new research agendas that offer dramatically new ways of seeing, and hence acting, in the world. To delineate all of the parameters of postmodernism is more than what can be attempted here, but I offer five tenets of postmodernism that form a scaffolding for how qualitative researchers might think about, and study, leadership. These points offer a way of understanding how postmodernists view their differences with modernism.

Two caveats are appropriate. First, we ought not fool ourselves into thinking that the differences between modernism and postmodernism are so great that they share nothing in common. The usage of the word “post” is purposeful: postmodernism is an extension of modernism and, as I will discuss, shares some common ground with its theoretical predecessor. Second, because I discuss exclusively qualitative research should not imply that quantitative methods are incompatible with postmodernism, but simply that my focus here is on qualitative work. Thus, in what follows I discuss five points qualitative researchers might consider should they desire to develop studies of leadership grounded in postmodernism.
Culture and Difference

Postmodernists assume that the study of culture is a study in multiple and competing realities. Often, we have seen analyses of an organization’s culture that strive to present the culture as a coherent fabric woven throughout all layers of the institution. Where consensus is lacking the interpretation is often that the culture is weak and fragmented; conversely, cultural communities that ostensibly espouse views that everyone agrees to are viewed as strong and vibrant.

The assumption that cultures can be developed where agreement about the nature of reality exists derives from a modernist understanding of reason and the nature of truth. Reality is understandable to those involved in a setting and to the researcher. The modernist belief that reality can be reified and understood decontextualized from the culture and social practices in which it gets defined is rejected by postmodernists (Cooper & Burrell, 1988). Rather than assume that norms exist to which all of the organization’s participants must conform, postmodernists seek to question these norms and question the extent to which they are acted on and shared. As Todd Gitlin notes, “postmodernism is completely indifferent to the questions of consistency and continuity. ...It neither embraces nor criticizes, but beholds the world blankly, with a knowingness that dissolves feeling and commitment into irony” (1989, p. 52). From a postmodern perspective, then, the idea that stable cultures are passed down from generation to generation or that reality is understandable is rejected in favor of multivocality where disorganization and instability is the norm. Indeed, the idea of difference becomes a central organizing concept.

The implication for studies of leadership is that the idea of leadership becomes contested, and the assumption about what constitutes good leadership is open for interpretation and redefinition. Thus, when a researcher enters a research site his or her struggle is to search for inconsistencies and contradictions. Postmodernists eschew the search for clarity or persuasion through rational logic because absolutes no longer exist, and one assumes that multiple representations exist within one organization. The struggle becomes first how to develop those multiple interpretations, and then how to portray them.

Language and Meaning

As culture is not a text to be read monochromatically, words are assumed to have multiple meanings and interpretations. Postmodernists have emphasized the need to deconstruct images and language so that organizational norms are brought to light, and ultimately, decentered. Indeed, language becomes a key area of investigation: researchers look to multiple methods of communication and work to make sense of how meaning is conveyed. Thus, informal means of communication such as casual conversation in the mail room and formal speeches to the Faculty Senate or the Board of Directors are investigated in a number of ways: who, for example, is included in informal conversation and who is not. What does it mean that a chief executive’s most important speech is in front of senior executives where other institutional constituencies may be excluded? Formal and informal written communication, as well as historical texts such as transcripts of texts, take on increased importance because researchers need to come to terms not only with situational data, but also the larger social and historical parameters in which the organization exists.

We also recognize in postmodernism the contingency and indeterminacy of language so what one means by terms such as “leadership” varies over time. Whereas leadership in a
modernist framework assumed a stable relationship between leader--follower, leader--organization, what occurs in postmodernism is the rupture of any sense of stability about collective meanings. Of consequence, researchers find that simply describing fragmentary scenes or snapshots of leadership is unsatisfactory. Contextual understanding of the organization is essential if the postmodernist is to make sense of leadership. Thus, a historical understanding of the organization, of how leadership has been constructed, of the present social contexts in which leaders reside, and the forums used for making meaning, need to be investigated.

Individual Constraints and Possibilities

Proponents of postmodernism reject the notion that great “men” are able to force change on an organization or that some individuals are born into leadership roles. At the same time, the idea is also rejected that no action is possible whatsoever and that roles are so circumscribed that it matters little whether one individual or another inhabits a given role. The idea of “identity” is central to our understanding of postmodernism. Modernism conceived of power in individualistic terms and believed that human will was free-floating and capable of producing change. Individual identity from this angle was fixed, coherent and determined.

The postmodern French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977, 1980) argued that identities and categories such as sexuality, crime, and medicine were social inventions and embedded in societal contexts. The idea of the autonomous human being that is capable of independent human action is replaced by the portrait of an individual hemmed in by social and cultural constraints. Thus, in their rejection of standardized categories postmodernists struggle to make sense of to how great an extent individual identity and self is constrained by the mechanisms of power at work in society. As Kenneth Gergen notes, “when postmodern arguments are extended we find it possible to replace an individualistic worldview—in which individual minds are critical to human functioning—with a relational reality” (1991, p. 242). In effect, postmodernism’s aim is to de-objectify the definitions of self and identity and instead develop a new vocabulary of being.

The importance of this point for leadership studies is twofold. On the one hand, the category of “leadership” defined as a synonym for a particular individual or role will be interrogated beyond merely the taken-for-granted assumption, for example, that a college president is a leader. The role that gender plays in the manner in which leadership gets defined and enacted is the kind of central concept postmodernists would investigate. On the other hand, researchers will struggle to come to terms with the relative stability of the organization’s expectations of leaders over time. In this light, leaders are both subjects and objects of their organizational realities. The challenge for researchers is to see how a particular individual was able to create change or was unable to create change not necessarily because of a particular individualistic flaw, but rather by the constraints placed on a role within the organization.

Power and Politics

Notions of power infuse postmodern studies. All positions within an organization operate within what Foucault would call “fields of power” so that individuals or positions are not powerful or powerless; instead, the contextual situations in which we act on a daily
basis are imbued with power (Foucault, 1977, 1980). From this perspective, one can not assume, for example, that one act pertains to a "power play" and another does not. As Horkheimer has noted, "Every datum [given] depends not on nature alone but also on the power man has over it. Objects, the kind of perception, the questions asked and the meaning of the answers all bear witness to human and the degree of man's power" (1972, p. 244). Thus, understanding leadership is contingent upon understanding the role that power plays in structuring subjectivity.

Similarly, one can not point to one situation and think of it as political whereas another action is not. Political acts occur in ways in which we are accustomed--votes on particular issues and the like--but they also occur in the myriad of interactions that occur throughout an organization's daily life where some voices are heard and others are excluded. If we are to investigate relations of power and politics then, of consequence, what gets studied are those microscopic aspects of the organization that make larger acts comprehensible and possible. The assumption is that one must study the small and large acts within an organization to make sense of leadership.

Studies of leadership are studies of power. Such a comment defines a research project in a way fundamentally different than if we were to assume that we would study leadership by way of the traits of an individual, or an analysis of the discursive methods employed by a select group of leaders, or if we wished to understand the dynamics of decision-making amongst a leader and an executive team. Postmodernists begin with questions about how leadership has been defined, who gets involved, and by definition, who gets left out. How the culture of the organization operates to privilege some and silence others becomes a key organizing concept of the research project.

**Subjectivity and Objectivity**

In some respects this category seems most appropriate for researchers, but it also fits into postmodernists' belief about organizational life. Grand narratives are replaced by local narratives (Lyotard, 1984) and we discover management's false certainty in master narratives (Calas and Smircich, 1991). In effect, everyone is a "situated observer." The study of culture requires study from a number of perspectives and these perspectives do not add up to a unified summation. No one individual can play the role of key informant or interpreter of the culture because the individual works from a particular subject position that defines how he or she sees the world.

Thus, the idea of objectivity is rejected while at the same time researchers must struggle to come to terms with how they are to incorporate their own subjectivities with regard to the project under study. This kind of point has been most thoroughly discussed in feminist analyses of previous studies of leadership (Blackmore, 1989) that have used a generic idea-leadership--and exclusively studied men. From a postmodern perspective such an analysis is precisely the problem that needs to be redressed. Postmodern feminists would say that leadership is situated within patriarchal notions of what a "good" leader is that inevitably has been developed by studying men by researchers who for the most part are men. What needs to be done, then, is to broaden our research sample and to acknowledge our own subject positions as researchers and enable the reader to understand how we have dealt with our own subjectivities.
As Rosaldo has commented, "It is a mistake to urge social analysts to strive for a position of innocence designated by such adjectives as detached, neutral, or impartial" (1989, p. 69). The argument that one's work is subjective, that all individuals are situated in a particular manner and that data is "created" rather than "discovered" generates a distinctly different elaboration of research practices with regard to how one conducts research. Indeed, the five tenets of postmodernism outlined here do have significant implications for virtually every component of the research enterprise—from how we design a study, to how we enter a site, who we study and a multitude of other qualitative components. In what follows I consider one specific act in which all qualitative researchers must engage—that of the development of the text. I turn to a discussion of the textual representations used by authors in their qualitative research to describe leadership, and I then consider what practices might be called on to fall more in line with the postmodern scaffolding offered here. The guiding question for the following section, then, is: what are the implications for the manner in which we present data if we subscribe to postmodernism?

**REPRESENTATION AND AN IDEOLOGY OF DOUBT**

A discussion about how we present data has become a major issue in the social sciences during the last decade in large part because of theoretical comments by postmodernists (Calas & Smircich, 1991; Jeffcutt, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). As Alvesson and Deetz note, "Perhaps the inspiration to develop new ways of writing will turn out to be one of the most powerful and interesting contributions of postmodernism" (1995, p. 38).

James Clifford has written:

No longer a marginal dimension, writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter. The fact that it has not until recently been portrayed or seriously discussed reflects the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience. Writing reduced to method: keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, "writing up" results. (1986, p. 2).

The centrality of writing to anthropology is due in large part to the fact that most of the research is qualitative. The "crisis of representation" pertains to how we are to present our data. I discuss here two key facets of data presentation—(a) the stance of the researcher-cum-author, and (b) the temporality of the text, and then consider the implications.

**On Voice**

Most authors of qualitative studies of leadership have employed two narrative stances. One style inserts the first person narrator directly into the text: "It is early in the fall semester, and I am interviewing faculty, students and parents..." (Tierney, 1991, p. 199). In this example the author's use of the first person is a strategy designed to help move the events of the text along and to highlight that the author is involved in the construction of the text. The author is a single, stable narrator and is consistent with the action, that is, the
"I" of the text is not someone who creates the text, but rather is the data-gatherer: "I am interviewing..."

The second style is the most pervasive narrative format: "Starting with the collegial frame this president explained that good presidential leadership meant 'accomplishing commonly determined goals in such a way that all involved are satisfied with the path taken to get there'" (Bensimon, 1989, p. 114). Again, we have a stable narrative voice, but we do not hear directly from the narrator. Instead, the qualitative data has an omniscient narrator. A researcher entered a site and recorded data; the author wrote a story where he/she presented the data. Where the author fit in the story is presumably irrelevant because the intent of the text is to concentrate on the data that has been gathered.

There are, of course, other narrative strategies that researchers on leadership have employed; however, in educational journals that have published articles on leadership over the last ten years (e.g., The Review of Higher Education; The Journal of Higher Education; Teachers College Record; The Peabody Journal of Education; Harvard Educational Review; Anthropology and Education Quarterly), the two most consistent voices are those of the omniscient narrator and the first person. Given what I have discussed in the first part of this article about postmodernist assumptions I offer three comments.

First, both strategies posit the author as a researcher who unproblematically collected data and then presented it. Any discussion about the creation of the text by the author, and of consequence, the creation of the reality that was observed, is absent. The omniscient voice and the stable voice offer a portrait of a researcher whose only dilemma is to make sense of the data that was collected. A discussion of the role that the researcher played in the construction and elaboration of the data is absent. From a postmodern perspective the insertion of the author into the text would seem to warrant consideration.

Second, in an age where we have seen numerous discussions about the research method, it is curious that we primarily continue to call upon only two narrative strategies in the telling of our tales. That is, numerous ideas about data analysis, validity, generalizability and the like have been written about in the recent past so that qualitative researchers have a multitude of possible avenues to consider with regard to how they collect and analyze their data. And yet, at the same time, we have not considered how to present that data. If we studied fictional stories from 50 years ago we would find more narrative strategies than we currently call on in leadership studies. Obviously, some texts will want to continue using the two narrative voices discussed here. But is it not possible to expand the range of narrative possibilities, and to present data in dramatically different ways? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then literary criticism may be a vehicle more suited to understanding how an author develops a relationship to a text than the more standard criteria we have used to judge an article's worthiness.

On Time

Temporal Sequence: Before authors begin to write their texts they make decisions about how their story will unfold. One possibility is to tell the tale chronologically so that a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the above example we heard the author say "it is early in the fall semester," so that the reader begins the text where presumably time will continue in linear fashion. Telling a story in this manner enables an individual to read a text where action occurs in a familiar manner. The story makes sense because the
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reader captures the actions as they happen. An alternative way to present time is to
disregard it. In an article about leadership training, Kempner stated the following:

Although only a few of the administrators interviewed for this study commented directly
on the role mobility, prestige, or control played in their desire to enter administration, these
issues were very much on the mind of a number of individuals. For example, a white male
explained he wanted to be an administrator because "I could do better than my principal did
when I was teaching" (1989, p.108).

This comment suggests that the temporal sequence of the text is unimportant and
irrelevant. Presumably, the time in which the author heard the comment is unimportant
and the specific context is of little consequence. Similarly, in an article about
departmental leadership B.L. Mitchell commented, "One chairperson noted that
'previously all decisions were held up to a vote,' "and then went on to explain several
comments of other chairpersons (1987, p. 168). In an article about the goals of leaders,
Birnbaum created seven categories and offered decontextualized quotes in the following
manner: "Presidents referred to 'developing closer relations with the community' and
hoped that 'the perception of the public of us will be improved'" (1988, p. 21). This form
of comment is the temporal equivalent of the omniscient narrator. Time is neither linear
nor chronological; it is absent.

Temporal Tense: In an article about leadership and institutional stability Neumann
commented, "A college trustee's sums up the tone and meter of college life by saying that
the campus runs 'like a fine-tuned Swiss watch'" (1992, p. 425). The author has used the
present tense to tell her story. As with any authorial use of the present tense, Neumann
forces the reader to have a willing sense of disbelief: we know that the story has occurred;
the "college trustee" is not speaking as we read the text. The reader joins in the make-
believe because there is a desire to understand the purpose and goal of the text.

A more typical way to present data is to use the past tense. In Kempner's example he told
us that a "white male administrator explained," thereby informing the reader that the action
has concluded. In an article on symbolism Tiemey wrote, "One president noted 'my
philosophy of leadership is to have a team approach to managing'" (1989, p. 158). Data
collection occurred in the past and the author is relaying what took place.

Obviously, these narrative and temporal strategies are constantly mixed and matched.
An author may use an omniscient narrator to tell a chronological story in the past tense, or
alternatively, we may read a text where a first person narrator speaks about individuals
without regard to time in the present tense. However, we know from our own Western
notions of time that events and stories do not always unfold sequentially. We also know
that life's action are not always chronological, and that different people do not necessarily
experience time sequentially. As with my concern about the limited use of narrative
strategies in studies of leadership, I wonder in what ways might an author deal with time
other than the fourfold responses--chronological, not chronological, present tense, past
tense--that have been examined here? This kind of question is what needs to drive
researchers who subscribe to postmodernism.

Textual Implications

If postmodernism has created an ideology of doubt, it stands to reason that our research
endeavors also need to reflect that doubt. As previous authors have critiqued the stance a
researcher assumes with those whom he/she researched and offered alternative venues, we now need to critique narrative and temporal styles and to offer alternative modes of representation. As objectivity/subjectivity are issues of concern in the collection of data, they are also issues in the presentation of data. And as we have reinterpreted the meaning of objectivity in the collection and analysis of data, we also must reinterpret such meanings for our texts on leadership.

As Stephen Webster highlights, a postmodern effort, "cannot take itself undialectically for granted as given (as Descartes did)... [Qualitative research] must hang on in good faith to the myriad contingencies and opaque personalities of reality, and deny itself the illusion of a transparent description, a luxury reserved for less reflexive sciences" (1982, p. 111). If we accept Webster's notion, then we will see that our research efforts on leadership for the most part have operated within an "illusion of transparent description." The author presents him or her self unproblematically and presents a serial or disjunctive narrative.

In contrast, what I am suggesting is that we develop greater openness in qualitative studies of leadership. What we need, then, is to create a textual dialectic whereby we problematize "the privileged authorial perspective, monologue, assumption of descriptive adequacy, political neutrality, and other epistemological preconceptions intrinsic to the structure of ethnographic texts" (Webster, 1983, p. 195). To do so suggests that authors move away from standard representations of reality and toward experimental forms. In what follows I briefly offer three research practices that might help researchers rethink how they present data on leadership.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the ability to engage in a dialectical process with regard to the theoretical constructs of the researcher, the informant's concepts, the data itself, and the researcher's ideological suppositions. The assumption, of course, is that all research and all researchers have ideological constructs that need to be delineated. Rather than assume that data is collected and discovered as if it is preexisting, postmodern researchers of leadership seek to demonstrate how they fit within the development of the text. The challenge for the author is to develop a politics of location for him or her self with regard to the topic and one's research subjects, but to avoid the self-indulgent narcissism that leads to an over-reliance on an author's beliefs and an underreliance on the use of data. Because reflexivity is a relatively new concept in leadership studies, attempts to utilize such an approach should be seen as experiments in the development and presentation of data. The experimentation occurs by way of revealing the intertextual nature of the study with a narrative voice that is possibly unstable and a nonlinear mode of data presentation.

Questions such as the following take on importance:

- Whose questions shaped the study and how might I involve the perspective of the researched in the text, rather than merely my own?
- What narrative style might I employ that situates the researcher-author in the text in a way that enables the author's role in the creation of the text to be seen?
- What temporal strategies could be called on that reflect the nature of time given by the researched, and/or how the data was collected?
- At the conclusion of the text is the reader able to determine the multiple realities and interpretations that were at work, and if not, what needs to be done to the text?
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Textual Construction

Logically, to develop texts that utilize reflexivity and that incorporate different narrative and temporal strategies will necessitate that we look beyond the normal social science journals, for they represent in large part the status quo. Instead, rather than try to replicate the positivist aspects of the natural sciences, we might call upon literary genres as exemplars for the development of our writing schemes; such a task would force us to study a completely different array of texts for methodological guidance. The multiple forms of fiction, for example, offer insight about how we might present a narrator in ways other than those used by social scientists. Fiction also offers multiple accounts that utilize time in ways different from the schemas presented above.

To be sure, not every narrative and temporal choice will work, but it seems mistaken to ignore how authors in other fields have developed their texts as we struggle to create our own. One implication of experimentation, of course, is that some efforts will fail and others will succeed. As we explore the epistemological terrain between factual realism and fiction we will enrich our ways to explain the world we study, interpret, and create. In many respects, such an undertaking is the essence of a reflexive postmodernism. As with John Van Maanen, my aim here is to encourage researchers who do qualitative studies of leadership "to continue experimenting with and reflecting on the ways social reality is presented" (1988, p. x). At the same time, I want to stress that I am not so doctrinaire as to suggest that the strategies we have relied on up to this time need to be entirely discarded. Rather, at a minimum, I am arguing that the implications of postmodernism are that we expand our array of textual strategies.

Textual Analysis

If one accepts the goal suggested here, then the greatest challenge and logical next step is to come to terms with how one evaluates whether the text is good or bad. Because we are embarking on a new journey, I have no clear cut method for judging these texts, but two ideas offer a point of departure for further discussion. On the one hand, we might turn to literary criticism, considering recent attempts to analyze texts, and how such attempts might aid us in the analysis of our work on leadership. And on the other hand, in a postmodern world where we develop reflexive texts, it seems incumbent that we logically continue with calls for self-reflexive analysis. Accordingly, the reader does not judge the text according to standardized scientific criteria; instead, the reader judges the text in a self-referential manner where he or she might call upon the following questions in judgment:

- Are the characters believable?
- What is the quality of the narrative voice?
- Is the situation plausible?
- Does the text capture a moment or a situation or an idea?

CONCLUSION

I have argued here that postmodernism may be helpful for those who have used a cultural framework and a qualitative method in studies of leadership. Postmodernism's commitment to interpretation and a constructionist framework is in keeping with those who have studied leadership from a cultural perspective. Postmodernism, however, extends the
idea of the social construction of reality and tries to incorporate the numerous voices that exist in an institution in its analysis. Further, the role of the researcher in the creation of that reality also becomes of paramount importance.

I showed how most of our previous work has focused on particular narrative venues and I suggested that we expand our repertoire. Such an expansion may necessitate that we call upon different arenas such as the humanities for guidance about how to present data and judge the merits of the presentation. As with any experimentation, some trials will succeed and others will fail. The suggestions I am calling for also may necessitate changes in other venues. How we judge the merits of an article for a journal, for example, may need to be quite different from what we currently think of as "good research." How we teach students to conduct and to write qualitative studies may also undergo a sea-change from what we currently teach. All of these tasks take us on to uncharted waters, but they also offer rich possibilities for increased understanding of leadership in the 21st century.

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