

Title: Towards a Grammar of Leadership

* _ _ *

Author: Daniel H. Clark

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Robert Millward

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Wenfan Yan

Dr. George Bieger

Contemporary (empirical) leadership study (CLS) is beset with the inability to define its object efficiently. Consequently, CLS has generated hundreds of so-called leadership “definitions” with no end in sight, leaving the field in disarray. This situation of definitional indefiniteness is due to a lack of a fundamental (philosophical, non-empirical) theory of leadership that articulates a universal leadership reality that grounds and provides referential stability for empirical study. This essay is an attempt to provide this fundamental theory, viz., the Grammar of Leadership.

Essentially, the Grammar is a philosophical hypothesis about what is the ontological “depth” that underlies all the variety of phenomenal “surfaces” of leadership. This hypothesis represents a way to delimit the proper domain of the scientific-empirical study of leadership, to “qualify” socialities for that domain so that scientific-empirical study can proceed confidently and efficiently with the effort to define leadership. It is precisely due to the lack of this philosophical foundation that CLS is in chaotic disarray.

The exposition of the Grammar proceeds first by a discussion of the formal “syntactical” elements that obtain in any instance of leadership. Then there is a “semantic” application of this syntax to analyze actual situations in an attempt to show the explanatory power of the theory. Results of the analysis include disqualification of one situation from the domain of leadership study but the inclusion of the other. These results are characterized as the “disciplining” of the concept of leadership that remedies the definitional indefiniteness of CLS and thereby gives it a proper theoretical basis as a project of scientific-empirical research.