This is the authors’ final peer reviewed (post print) version of the item published as:

Parry, Ken W. 2013, Addendum: social processes of transformational and charismatic leadership - progress and future research into this important challenge, in Transformational and charismatic leadership: the road ahead, Emerald group publishing, Bingley, England, pp.399-436.

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Addendum: social processes of transformational and charismatic leadership- progress and future research into this important challenge

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The aim of the original chapter was to validate the use of grounded theory research to study transformational and charismatic leadership as social processes. The chapter has achieved only some of its aims over the last decade.

GROUNDED THEORY

There has been continued and expanded use of the grounded theory method within leadership research. Grounded theory leadership research has increased threefold since 2002, by comparison with the previous ten years (Google scholar, 2012). By comparison, "leadership" research, the control group if you will, has increased only twofold over the same time-period. Thus, it appears that the use of the grounded theory method in leadership research has increased, but the increase is only slight. To be fair, most of the publications since 2002 are Ph.D. theses, while some are books, and much of the research is in healthcare and education. This means that people are researching leadership using the grounded theory method. This is good news as far as I am concerned. However, they are not yet publishing this work in refereed journals. Certainly, not much of it is in business and management publications.

I am suggesting that even though grounded theory research is labor-intensive, the publication of grounded theory research into leadership seems to be even more difficult than the research itself. Nonetheless, it is still immensely relevant to our understanding of transformational and charismatic leadership. There have been several published works since 2002. Three are by me (Kan & Pany, 2004; Kempster & Parry, 2011; Rowland & Parry, 2009). Two others are in the Journal of College Student Development (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). Xiao, Seagull, Mackenzie, and Klein (2004) have published in Cognition, Technology & Work. Lakshman (2007) has published in Leadership & Organization Development Journal. Eich (2008) has published in the Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies.

SOCIAL PROCESSES OF LEADERSHIP (SPL)

I still maintain that SPLs are the cornerstone of grounded theory and are axiomatic of the nature of leadership. SPL is partly about the personal characteristics of the "leader." It is partly about the behaviors and actions of the "leader" and partly about the cognitive and behavioral impact of
leadership upon followers. SPL is strongly cognizant of the context of leadership. Therefore, I can suggest that my work possibly has been a precursor or stimulator of the hugely popular work on authentic leadership that has emerged since 2002.

Very little research into social processes of leadership has been undertaken since 2002. Uhl-Bien (2006) has published a well-cited article on relational leadership as a social process. DeRue and Ashford (2010) examined leadership identity construction as a social process. Neither of these works has drawn specifically from the earlier grounded theory work cited above, but at least they are probing the notion of leadership as a social process. Apart from that, the only other research into SPL seems to have been Parry (2004), published in the Journal of Management & Organization, and Michael Muchiri’s Ph.D. thesis.

PROPOSED FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

I have maintained that social processes of leadership must be more heavily researched rather than the identity and behaviors of "leaders." Indeed, I suggest that we should perhaps stop researching leaders and conduct more research into leadership, as Mary Uhl-Bien and Boas Shamir have recommended. An addition to our understanding and application of the grounded theory method is that of the critical theory approach to grounded theory (Kempster & Parry, 2011). The use of critical realist-informed grounded theory will further help develop our understanding of how context and process shape the manifestation of transformational and charismatic leadership. "Critical" realism is contrasted with the "scientific" realism that hitherto has dominated most research into transformational and charismatic leadership. The opportunities that might be provided by a critical-realist-informed approach to grounded theory are twofold. First, researchers will place emphasis on the contextual understanding and explanation of the social processes of leadership, rather than on seeking "universal truths" about leadership per se through measurement. Second, researchers will assume contextual variation in leadership processes, and will seek to look across varying research outcomes for similarities and differences to build a body of knowledge on social processes of leadership. Kempster and Parry (2011) posit six more specific ways in which this critical realist notion of grounded theory might be implemented. As a further benefit, the critical-realist-informed approach to grounded theory research will be able to shed light on future authentic leadership work.

Charismatic leadership is an ideal phenomenon to research with the grounded theory method. It is well researched, yet there is still little understanding regarding the full dynamics of the charismatic social influence process. Moreover, the integration of so many aspects of the charismatic leadership phenomenon requires an integrative methodology like grounded theory. Those diverse aspects include the romance of leadership associated with charismatic leadership, leadership behaviors, follower attributions, follower self-concept, the routinization of charisma, the loss of charisma, love and charisma, emotion and charisma, ethical and unethical charismatic leadership, deviant charisma, and the sociocultural context of charisma, among others. Brad Jackson and 1 have already identified all these research needs in our book on studying leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011). It appears that no such grounded theory research into charismatic leadership has been undertaken since 2002, and hopefully this chapter addendum will be a stimulus for new research in this area. Charismatic leadership has also been researched with a mixed-method aesthetic narrative approach, which Parry and Kempster (in press) have called "aesthetic narrative positivism." This method incorporates the social processes of charismatic leadership along with the relevant cognitive processes. Although at the early stages of research, this is another direction for charismatic leadership research that could
be followed. Frequencies, distributions, and correlations are gathered for metaphors, movie genres, narratives and other social constructions of charismatic leadership.

Looking back, the original (2002) chapter in this volume has certainly achieved some of its aims, but there is still much opportunity for further progress. The social processes’ approach to studying charismatic and transformational leadership, as well as grounded theory and some of the new emerging approaches, remains relevant to advancing research in this critically important area for leadership research.

REFERENCES


