

**A Review of the Managerial Grid Model of Leadership  
and its Role as a Model of  
Leadership Culture**

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# A Review of the Managerial Grid Model of Leadership and its Role as a Model of Leadership Culture

Rost (1991) scathingly describes the leadership literature of the last 60 years as "confusing, discrepant, disorganised, and unintegrated" and leadership studies as not worthy of the name "academic discipline" (p. 91). The view that the leadership literature is lacking in theoretical integration or definitional consensus is not new and has been expressed by a number of leading researchers in the field (Bennis 1959; Stogdill 1974; Burns 1978; Bryman 1986). This is despite a staggering volume of literature on the subject. As an indication, Bass (1981) collected and analysed some 4,725 studies of leadership in the second edition of his handbook on leadership. By the third edition of the handbook, the list of studies had grown to nearly 8,000 and filled 189 pages of references (Bass 1990).

Rost (1991) suggests that one of the reasons for a lack of any meaningful convergence in the literature is that leadership thinking, since about 1930, has been trapped in an *industrial paradigm*. The fundamental premises of this paradigm are that leadership is the same as good management and that leaders do the leading while followers do the following. The conclusion from this thinking is that leadership is largely about the characteristics of an effective leader. Leaders tend to be the focus in most theories, and researchers have tended to ignore alternative theories that did not see leadership as leaders or managers doing leadership.

Burns (1978) called attention to this problem and the need for a new theory focusing on leadership as a process. The notion of transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1981, 1990) and Rost's (1991) post-industrial leadership paradigm broke further ground in moving away from the leader-follower, subject-object thinking about leadership and pointed towards a more dynamic, process-oriented leadership paradigm. Ironically, important unrecognised steps towards such a paradigm may have been taken as early as 1964, with the introduction of the Managerial Grid model of leadership.

## The Managerial Grid: A Model of Leadership Style

"Grid" was originally developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton between 1958 and 1960 and first published in 1964 (Blake and Mouton 1964). The model was particularly influenced by Fleishman's work on *initiating structure* and *consideration* (Blake, Mouton and Bidwell 1969; Blake and Mouton 1982b).

Fleishman posited that there were two underlying dimensions of leadership behaviour which were called "consideration" and "initiating structure" (Fleishman 1957a, 1957b; Fleishman and Peters 1962).

Consideration referred to behaviour reflecting respect for subordinates' ideas and consideration of their feelings. Initiating structure referred to the extent to which a leader structured and defined his or her role

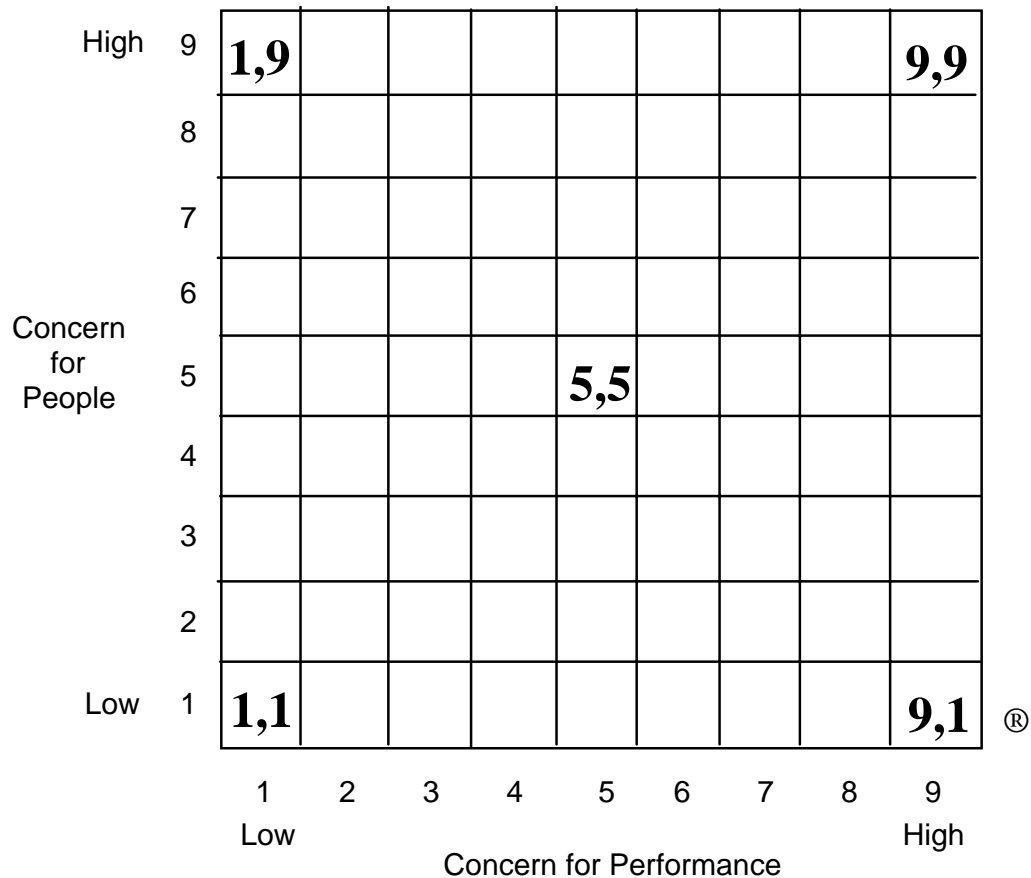
and those of subordinates in order to achieve formal organisational goals. It was argued that high consideration was associated with high subordinate satisfaction, while high initiating structure was associated with high effectiveness but also high grievance levels and absenteeism. Further, it was claimed that when leaders rated high on both dimensions, high effectiveness and high satisfaction would occur without the grievance and absenteeism. Fleishman and Simmons (1970), in a representative quote, concluded "that the leadership pattern which combines high consideration and structure is likely to optimize a number of effectiveness criteria for a variety of supervisory jobs" (p. 171). This was subsequently referred to as the "high-high" leader paradigm and was the subject of research and the target for criticism during the 1970s (Larson , Hunt and Osborn 1976; Nystrom 1978).

The Fleishman model and the Grid model were often treated as identical or at least variants of the same basic model. Bryman (1986) noted that the strong resemblance between the Grid model and the Fleishman model has led many writers to hold the implicit view that the former arose from the latter (Bryman 1986, p. 77). In some writings, the two models were used apparently interchangeably (Larson, Hunt and Osborn 1976; Nystrom 1978) and the Grid model became inadvertently embroiled and entangled in the "high-high" debate. This was despite attempts by Blake and Mouton to differentiate their model conspicuously from Fleishman's. They believed that the conceptual nature of the two Fleishman dimensions, made it likely that a high-high style would reduce down to a narrow paternalistic leadership style, rather than one which added the two dimensions in a synergistic way. Blake and Mouton concluded that using attitudinal dimensions, rather behavioural ones as in the Fleishman model, overcame this problem (Blake and Mouton 1982b; Blake 1992).

Blake and Mouton's attitudinal dimensions were dubbed "Concern for Production", reflecting an underlying attitude toward achieving results, and "Concern for People", referring to the thoughtfulness for others applied when leadership is exercised. According to Blake and Mouton, these two dimensions, as defined, would yield a high-high leadership style that was a synergistic integration of high levels on both dimensions (Blake and Mouton 1982b).

The Grid model predicts specific core leadership approaches or styles when leaders operated with various combinations (integrations) of the two attitudinal dimensions. Blake and Mouton plot five core leadership approaches on their two dimensional grid as shown in Figure 1. These are represented by a numerical shorthand, based on their Grid co-ordinates. The 9,9 model is seen by Blake and Mouton as the ideal leadership style and is espoused by them as the "one best way" of leadership.

**Figure 1. The Managerial Grid**



Adapted from *Gridworks* by Robert R. Blake, Jane S. Mouton and Walter Barclay, Scientific Methods Inc. 1993.

The five Grid styles were viewed by Blake and Mouton as representing five discernible and prevalent orientations in individual leadership behaviour. Although the axes are attitudinal, the combinations of these attitudes result in leadership styles that are defined in behavioural terms. Thus, an individual disposed towards a 9,1 style would be expected to behave in a manner consistent with the high task/low people attitude and consistent with the 9,1 style of behaviour prescribed by the model.

Blake and Mouton (1981b) provide a questionnaire designed to assess individual style (p. 2-3). The questionnaire taps into six dimensions labelled "Decisions", "Convictions", "Conflict", "Temper", "Humor" and "Effort". Using these dimensions, overall descriptions of the attitudes and behaviour characterising each style, are also provided (p. 1-2):

9,9: "I place high value on sound, creative decisions that result in understanding and agreement. I listen for and seek out ideas, opinions and attitudes different from my own. I have strong convictions but respond to sounder ideas than my own by changing my mind. When conflict arises, I try to identify reasons for it and seek to resolve underlying causes. When aroused, I contain myself even though my impatience is visible. My humour fits the situation and gives perspective; I retain a sense of humour even under pressure. I exert vigorous effort and others join in."

9,1: "I expect decisions I make to be treated as final. I stand up for my ideas, opinions, and attitudes, even though it sometimes results in stepping on toes. When conflict arises, I try to cut it off or win my position. When things are not going right, I defend, resist and come back with counter-arguments. My humor is hard-hitting. I drive others and myself."

1,9: "I support decisions which promote good relations. I embrace opinions, attitudes and ideas of others rather than push my own. I avoid generating conflict; but, when it does appear, I try to soothe feelings to keep people together. Because of the disapproval tensions can produce, I react in a warm and friendly way. My humor shifts attention away from the serious side. I prefer to support others rather than initiate action."

5,5: "I search for workable, even though not perfect, decisions. When others hold ideas, opinions, or attitudes different from my own, I try to meet them halfway. When conflict arises, I try to find fair solutions that accommodate others. Under tension, I feel unsure and anxious about how to meet others' expectations. My humor sells me or my position. I seek to maintain a steady pace."

1,1: "I accept the decisions of others with indifference. I avoid taking sides by not revealing opinions, attitudes, and ideas. When conflict arises, I try to remain neutral. By remaining uninvolved I rarely get stirred up. My humor is seen as rather pointless. I put out enough effort to get by."

Bass (1990) offers the following shorthand descriptions for each of the five styles:

9,9: Integrator of task accomplishment and trust and commitment from followers

9,1: Tough-minded no-nonsense production-prodder

5,5: Compromiser

1,9: Country Club Leader

1,1: Laissez faire, abdicator of responsibility

**Descriptive labels for each of the styles generally used by Blake and Mouton are:**

**9,9: Team Management or Teamwork**

**9,1: Authority-Compliance or Authority-Obedience**

**5,5: Middle-of-the-Road Management or Organization Man Management**

**1,9: Country Club Management**

**1,1: Impoverished Management**

Blake and Mouton also differentiate between dominant and backup styles, where the dominant style is the one normally and most typically adopted by the individual and the backup is one adopted in stressful circumstances, when the stakes are low, or under other circumstances (Blake and Mouton 1981b; Blake and McCaense 1991).

Although the five Grid styles represent classifications of individual behavioural dispositions, according to Blake and Mouton, it is important to note that the axes do not themselves represent behavioural dimensions. Rather than reflecting behaviour as in the Fleishman model, the Blake and Mouton axes purport to reflect the "character of thinking and feeling applied behaviorally to achieving any intended purpose" (Blake and Mouton 1982b, p. 278). They view the two dimensions as interdependent. This interdependence and the interactive nature of the dimensions to create specific approaches to leadership is signified by a comma (,) rather than a plus sign (+) to distinguish their relationship from that of the Fleishman dimensions. They pose the analogy with chemistry, where two elements could be combined or simply mixed while retaining their original character (+) versus a reaction between the two elements creating a new compound with a character different to either of the original components (Blake and Mouton 1982b). The Fleishman model is viewed by Blake and Mouton as a mixture or simple addition of two behavioural dimensions, while the Grid model is seen as a compound or integration of two attitudinal dimensions resulting in a distinct behavioural disposition.

The Grid leadership style model was formally expanded recently to include two other approaches called "9+9 Paternalism" (designated "9+9" to indicate its additive rather than integrative nature) and "Opportunism", a model which can incorporate several Grid approaches opportunistically (Blake and McCaense 1991). The addition of these leadership styles to the model may well have reflected a perceived prevalence of such behavioural dispositions and represented an attempt to stretch the model to embrace these two styles. However, rather than strengthen the model by broadening its scope, it may well undermine the conceptual foundations which were so strongly espoused by Blake and Mouton. For example, the addition of the 9+9 model represents the acknowledgement of an additive, Fleishman-like approach rather than the distinctive, integrative approach which was seen by Blake and Mouton to be essential to their model. Neither Paternalism nor Opportunism is predicted within the integrative, two-dimensional model, as originally conceptualised, and their addition potentially serves to question the model's internal validity.

Blake and McCaense (1991) also add a third, motivational, dimension to the model. This provides additional insights into the nature of each Grid style but does not fundamentally change the two-dimensional model or add to its utility as a classification schema for leadership style.

As observed by Rost (1991), developing two-dimensional diagrams of leadership style seems to have been a major ritual in leadership studies, helping to "further the myth that progress is being made in leadership

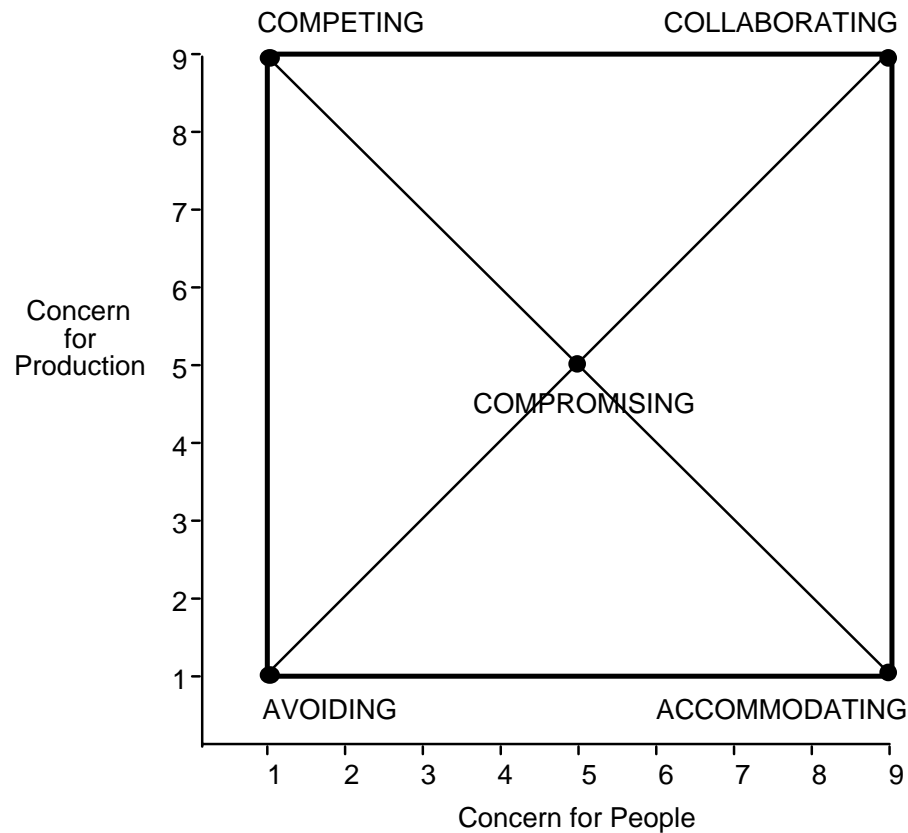
research" (p. 33). At first glance, and despite the important (+) versus (,) distinction of the five leadership approaches predicted, the Grid model has the look and feel of a number of these two-dimensional models. It seems to offer a simplistic 2x2 framework for classification of leadership style. It could be argued that, given the "chemistry" between the two dimensions, there is an added richness to the model, and perhaps a two-dimensional model does not adequately capture all the factors at play. This may be so, but it does not alter the apparent primary purpose of the model which, like many other 2x2 leadership models, is to characterise leadership styles. This is clear in the writings of Blake and Mouton, where there is reference to individual "Grid style" and instruments are offered for measuring individual leadership style according to the 2x2 Grid model (Blake and Mouton 1981b).

Therefore, there is little doubt that, akin to other 2x2 leadership models, the Grid model is one which proffers a window on individual leadership style in line with what Rost (1991) refers to as an "industrial paradigm" of leadership. The Grid model predicts that, the five core leadership styles proposed, do exist as discernible and relatively stable classes of leadership behaviour. Theoretically, one could test the internal validity of the model by assessing the extent to which the five styles are discrete, prevalent and stable among practising managers, at least as dominant leadership styles. Similarly, the external validity of the model could be explored by measuring the prevalence of each of the styles among managers (as dominant or backup style or both) and relating the existence or prevalence of each to relevant positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and performance.

As a model of leadership style, Grid has several distinguishing characteristics. The basic five styles with dominant and backup variants, and the integrative nature of the dimensions have already been noted. The other important feature, which it shares with the Fleishman model, is its espousal of a "one best way" of leadership. This normative feature differentiates it from the later contingency models which, although again generally based on 2x2 models, offer no ideal approach. Instead, they assert that the most effective leadership approach depends on situational factors. According to Blake and Mouton (1982b), the contingency theories and Grid represent fundamentally opposite conceptions in leadership theory. This may account for the heated debate between Blake and Mouton and Hersey and Blanchard, the proponents of one popular contingency theory, Situational Leadership Theory (see, for example, Blake and Mouton 1981a, 1981c, 1982a, 1982b and Hersey and Blanchard 1969, 1982a, 1982b).

Recently, Grid has resurfaced in the research literature as a important model of conflict resolution style. Van de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) refer to Grid's "striking comeback as a leading thesis in the literature on conflict management" (p. 199). When applied as a conflict resolution model, the Grid model is reinterpreted as shown in Figure 2, with the five core leadership styles replaced by five specific conflict resolution strategies.

**Figure 2. Grid as a Model of Conflict Management**



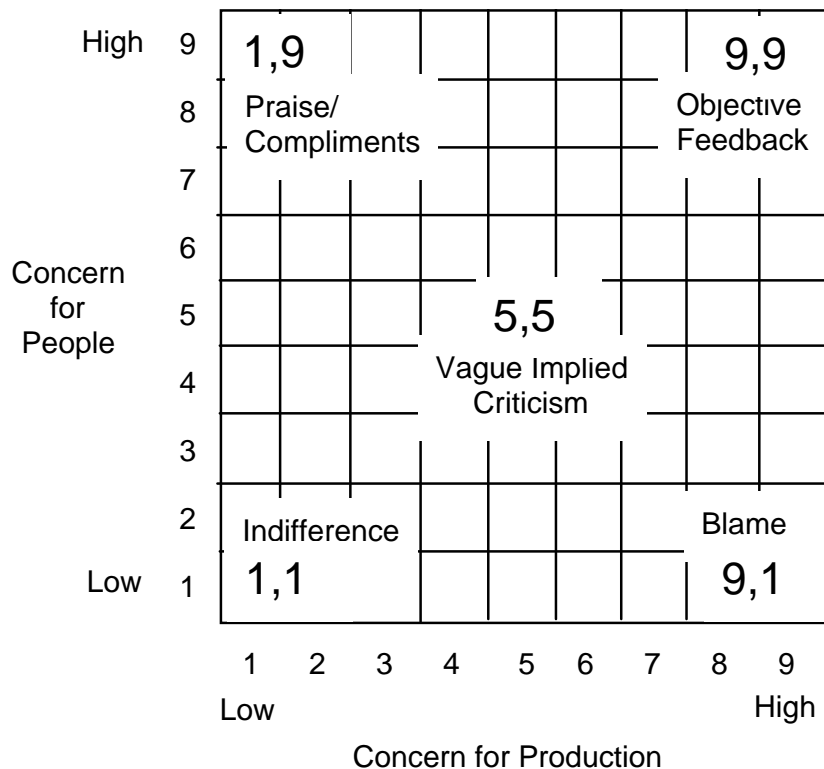
Van de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) remind us that in the Grid model the axes are conceptualised as interval rather than ordinal scales and that the individual styles represent specific points rather than areas on the grid. This allows the styles to be pinpointed geometrically, and has allowed Van de Vliert and Kabanoff to test the internal validity of the model, by reproducing the locations of the five styles using intercorrelations as surrogates of distance. Their analysis yielded geometric locations of the styles which were reasonably consistent with the original 2x2 model.

There is little doubt that conflict resolution style is one important facet of leadership style and that conflict resolution style may be one useful way to characterise and discriminate the five Grid leadership styles. Indeed, it could be argued that conflict resolution style is close to the essence of Grid. In Grid training seminars, for example, the issues of conflict and conflict resolution are strongly emphasised, and individuals are trained in conflict resolving strategies. However, conflict resolution method or style is one factor only and not the entirety of Grid leadership style. Other characterisation dimensions are also implied or stated in the literature and practice of Grid. Based on the dimensions used in Blake and Mouton's leadership style questionnaire (Blake and Mouton 1981b, p1-2), one could develop a Grid based on



decision-making style, convictions, temper, sense of humour and level of effort. Blake and McCaense (1991) state that the dimensions of leadership are conflict solving, initiative, inquiry, advocacy, decision making and critique and offer a questionnaire designed to measure individual style against each of these dimensions (p. 18-22). Other possible dimensions inferred from the Grid literature and practice include communication style, objective-setting style and co-ordination style. As with conflict resolution style, critique style is regarded as particularly important (Blake and McCaense 1991) and the five core Grid styles have been explicitly distilled into a critique grid as shown in Figure 3. Communication style has also been used to profile leaders according to the Grid model (Jensen 1993). We are therefore saying that the Grid leadership style model can potentially be decomposed into a number of facets, and conflict resolving style is only one of these.

**Figure 3. The Critique Grid**



Source: The Employee Participation Grid Seminar, Learning Administrator's Guide, published by Scientific Methods Inc. Austin TX (1990).

Whether viewed as a comprehensive model of leadership style or as a more restricted model of conflict resolution or critique style, the approaches so far described all treat the Grid model as essentially a taxonomic tool for leadership style. Despite a number of distinguishing characteristics, it remains a relatively simplistic 2x2 leadership style model. However, the Grid model has a much richer life than simply

as a window on individual leadership style. This becomes apparent when one understands the application of Grid in practice.

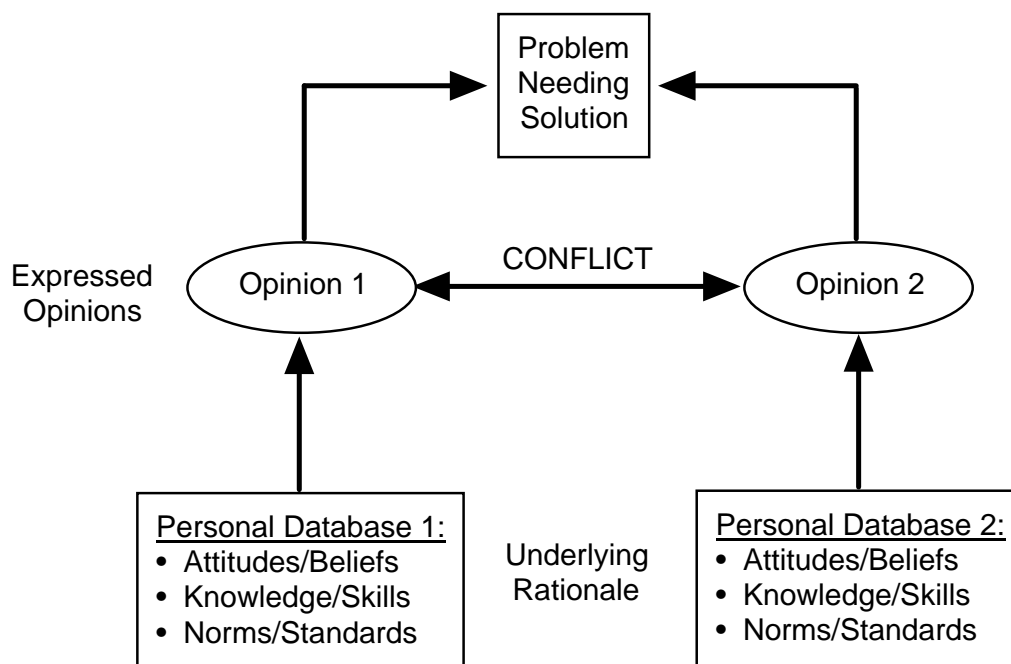
## **Grid as an OD Process**

Although regarded in the academic literature primarily as a model of leadership style, Grid has found widespread practical application as a model of organisation development (OD) in many organisations and in many countries (Guyot 1978; Kur 1981; Blake and Mouton 1985; Iles and Johnston 1989; Lester 1991; Blake 1992). Grid OD is the term applied to the process by which Grid is introduced into and applied in organisations. Blake and McCaule (1991) explicitly differentiate Grid's role as a framework for leadership style from its manifestation as an OD process. They outline the six phase programme of Grid OD, commencing with the Grid training seminar (Phase 1). The other five phases are dubbed "Team Building", "Interface Development", "Designing an Ideal Strategic Organization Model", "Implementing Development" and "Consolidation". They describe the overall process as a "model for bringing real change to bear on organizations through a fully integrated approach" (p. 359).

Beer and Kleisath (1971) note that one of the important differences with Grid OD, compared with other leadership approaches, is the fact that it was an outgrowth of T group or sensitivity training. They note though that, unlike sensitivity training, Grid OD provides a well-defined cognitive framework for thinking about leadership, and the Grid training experiences are completely structured. However, Grid OD's parentage in sensitivity training is very much evident in the nature and style of the training process employed. A typical Phase 1 Grid training programme runs for five days. During this period, participants are subjected to an intensive programme of lectures and team assignments. Initially, the assignments focus on pre-seminar reading material about the Grid leadership style model. This is usually one of the editions of the Managerial Grid book by Blake and Mouton (see, for example, Blake and Mouton 1964, 1981b) or the more recent text by Blake and McCaule (1991). The pre-reading is itself challenging, involving thirty to forty hours of study. Upon arrival at the training venue, participants are assigned to a specific team of five or six people, the composition of which is designed to provide a cross-section of skills and knowledge. Apart from one inter-team exercise, they remain in the same team throughout the five days of training.

Initial exercises involve questionnaires pertaining to the pre-seminar reading material. The questionnaires are designed to be ambiguous and contentious in order to foster conflict and allow participants to practice conflict resolving skills. Conflict in the Grid OD context refers to any situation where differing views exist and need to be resolved. The Grid OD conception of conflict is depicted in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Conflict as the Fuel for Grid OD**

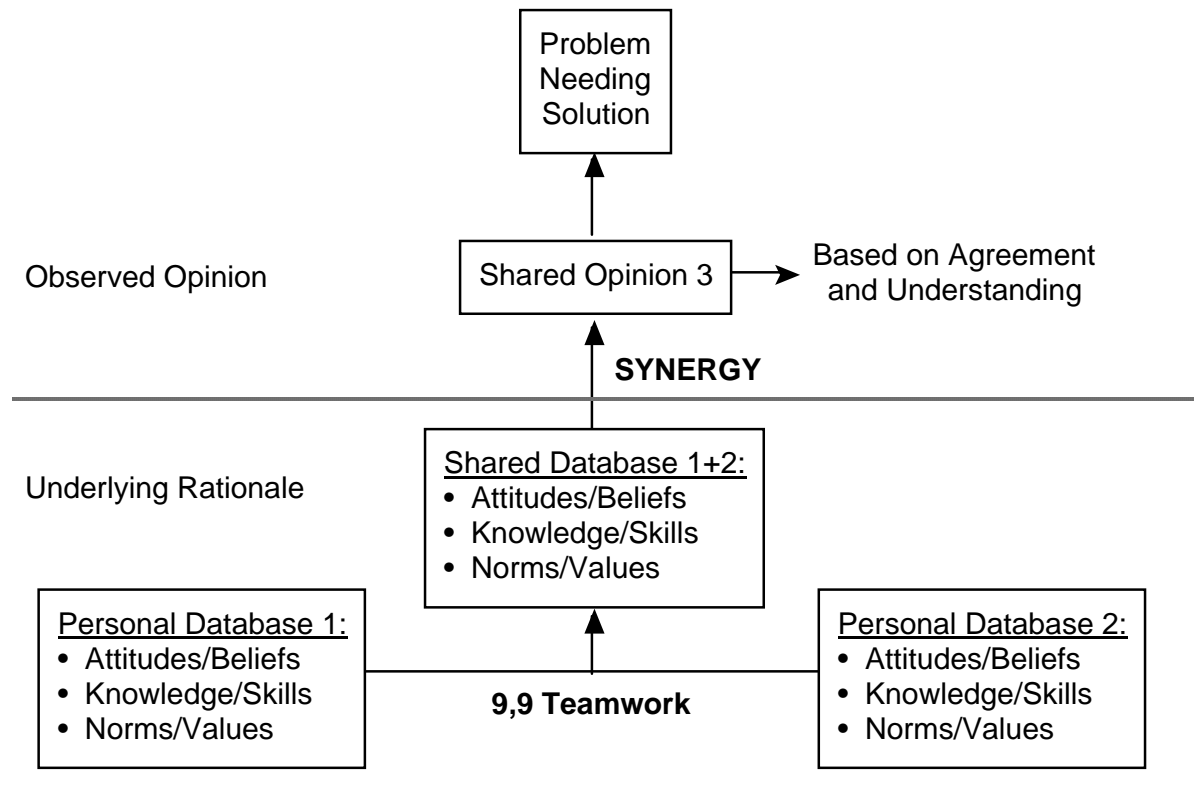


Conflict is the fuel of Grid training. The objective is to encourage participants to confront the underlying issues behind conflicts rather than focusing solely on advocated opinions. Team members are encouraged to share and combine their databases to arrive at a consensus team opinion derived from a broader base of information than that held by any individual team member. Theoretically, this should lead to a higher quality opinion than that held independently by any individual in the team. This, in Grid parlance, is referred to as synergy and is depicted in Figure 5.

The process by which synergy occurs is referred to by Blake and Mouton (1981b) as "9,9 Teamwork". The espoused skills, required for the 9,9 Teamwork process, include:

- Active listening (listening to understand)
- Open mindedness
- Clarifying behaviour or inquiry (clarifying others' views and probing into underlying rationale)
- Candid critique (non-judgmental feedback, unencumbered by status or social reticence)
- Focusing on facts, rather than opinions
- Confronting the underlying causes (attitudes, beliefs, values, knowledge differences) of conflict

**Figure 5. Grid as a Conflict Resolving Process**



To foster confrontation of conflicts, the time allowed for each assignment is restricted. This creates a degree of pressure and helps to dissolve peoples' normal reticence to dealing with conflict. Team members experience both effective and ineffective conflict resolution in the various workshops. The members of the teams are brought closer together by this process, which is both stressful and strongly goal oriented. Hopefully, considerable trust develops, and this allows individuals to practice the advocated 9,9 Teamwork skills. This occurs in an environment where team members are, at times, close to emotional and intellectual exhaustion, increasing the susceptibility of participants to internalisation of the 9,9 Teamwork skills and values. According to Beer and Kleisath (1971), the "anxiety and the possibility of psychological damage to individuals are minimized by a high degree of structure which forces participants to deal with surface behavior only" (p. 336). In addition, the team compositions are organised to ensure that people who normally work together are not in the same team. This not only potentially makes people more open and candid but helps prevent people taking any emotional baggage back into the workplace (Blake and Mourn 1979).

Grid OD training could well be described as a process of conditioned learning. The apparent cognitive learning goals, such as getting the answers right in the questionnaires and other assignments, are not the real agenda of the process. The real agenda has to do with the behavioural and attitudinal changes which are instilled in participants as a result of the process.

Beer and Kleisath (1971) refer to this intensive training programme as "a procedure designed to change the many organizational forces which influence individual behavior" (p. 336). In a presentation of the results of their study of the implementation of a Grid training programme ("laboratory") in an organisation, they conclude:

*Why did the laboratory work? I think the answer lies in the cognitive framework provided to participants and in the dynamic and involving qualities of a structured laboratory...One could almost see the values of individuals change as the week progressed. In our opinion, any laboratory which provides a catchy and easily understood cognitive framework and a format that involves individuals would be successful. Grid merely saves someone the considerable work of designing a laboratory with these general qualities. It is these qualities of Grid rather than its specific characteristics which make it a powerful tool for changing behavior. (p. 346)*

It is evident that the 2x2 leadership style model is largely secondary to the process. Beer and Kleisath conclude that the two-dimensional grid is purely a cognitive framework and platform, used as a backdrop for a more behaviour-based training of individuals in the 9,9 leadership style and gaining their commitment to the 9,9 Teamwork model. The Grid OD training process uses the two-dimensional model essentially only as a framework for helping trainees contrast leadership practices, understand those practices that are productive and develop a commitment to the 9,9 leadership style at an individual level and the 9,9 Teamwork process at a team level. Against this backdrop, the primary agenda and emphasis of Grid OD is behavioural and attitudinal rather than cognitive. It focuses on learning and reinforcing those teamwork skills, habits, beliefs and values that are consistent with a 9,9 style and process. In other words, Grid OD is not about applying the 2x2 leadership style model *per se* but about effectively installing a 9,9 Teamwork model in an organisation. The 2x2 Grid style model is not central to the process. During the training process, participants are not trained in any other leadership approach from the Grid, apart from 9,9. Participants simply apply their cognitive understanding of the other approaches to help them identify and contrast non-9,9 practices so that these non-9,9 practices can be eradicated. More importantly, in terms of the process, the cognitive material becomes the basis for the conflict which is the fuel of Grid training. It is less important that participants understand the five Grid styles than that they experience and become committed to 9,9 Teamwork as a process.

As another indicator of the secondary importance of the 2x2 model *per se*, at no stage, are participants explicitly classified in terms of Grid style. Moreover, the whole issue of style becomes secondary; participants learn from the training experience that styles of individual behaviour can vary within, as well as

between, individuals. In contrast, 9,9 Teamwork transcends individual style differences, operating at an inter-person, process level, rather than an individual, behaviour level. 9,9 Teamwork potentially acts to harness team productivity, regardless of the individual style dispositions. This dynamic, inter-person focus for behaviour provides participants with what appears to be a cognitively sound and situationally stable approach to teamwork that transcends the complexities and idiosyncrasies of understanding cause and effect at the individual level.

## **The Nature of 9,9 Teamwork**

Grid OD is a process designed to install a 9,9 Teamwork leadership model in a team or organisation. 9,9 Teamwork is a model of team interaction demanding certain individual skills and supported by a shared set of attitudes, values and beliefs.

The 9,9 skills, which Grid OD endeavours to develop, have already been identified. In addition, the attitudes, values and beliefs it attempts to engender are:

- Leadership as the responsibility of all team members and not simply the formal leader
- Consensus-based decisions as the ideal decision process outcomes
- Diversity of views/ideas as an asset and not as something to be avoided
- Creativity and experimentation
- Trust as an essential ingredient to teamwork
- Synergy - the team together can outperform any one individual
- Feedback as a vital ingredient to individual and team performance
- Participation of team members in decision-making based on their ability to contribute to the quality of a decision or their stake in the outcome of the decision
- Excellence as the only acceptable standard

A 9,9 Teamwork approach involves leadership, not as something exclusively vested in the formal leader of a team but as a broader team responsibility. In the 9,9 Teamwork view of leadership, if a decision is forced through without appropriate consensus (a 9,1 approach) or if a poor decision is made because the underlying issues are not adequately confronted in order to avoid upsetting morale (a 1,9 approach), then the entire team is considered responsible for the dysfunctional leadership. In either case, the dysfunctional leadership could have been avoided by other team members behaving in a 9,9 Teamwork fashion, for example, by the use of critique and clarifying behaviour. In a team which espouses 9,9 values and seeks to operate in a 9,9 Teamwork fashion, all team members are considered responsible for leadership in the sense that everyone is responsible for ensuring that interactions in the team occur in a 9,9 fashion.

Apart from this notion of dispersed, teamwide responsibility for leadership, another feature of 9,9 Teamwork is that it involves dimensions other than those at the level of overt behaviour. It is also explicitly grounded in a set of values and beliefs, the guiding principles for behaviour in an environment where the 9,9 Teamwork process is operating.

Finally, 9,9 Teamwork, as an outcome of Grid OD, refers to the nature of the interactions between team members and is differentiated from individual leadership style. Individual style, especially of the formal team leader, could certainly have a significant effect on the nature of the interactions in a team, but it is conceptualised by us as a separate variable from the nature of these interactions. 9,9 Teamwork can be thought of as operating at the inter-individual level of process, rather than the intra-individual level of disposition or style.

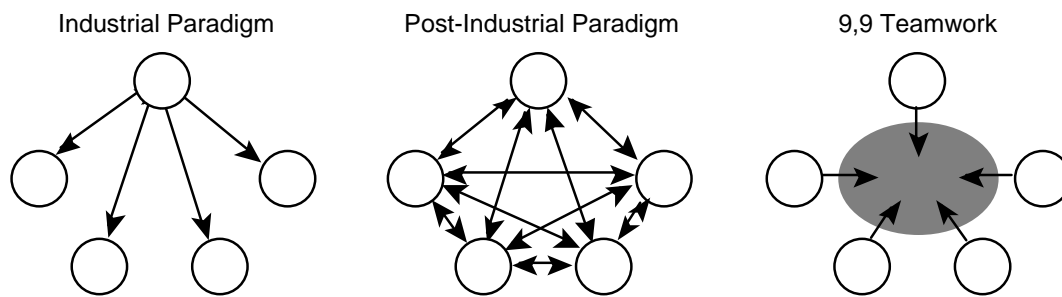
Grid, as an OD process, implies that the 9,9 leadership style, at the individual level, translates, at the team level, into a 9,9 Teamwork process or mode of team interaction. This view of 9,9 Teamwork, implies a model of leadership wherein, leadership conceived, not only as an individual orientation, but as a team-level process. The process is characterised by the nature of communication, conflict resolving and other processes which ultimately occur in the team and not by the orientation of individuals. A disembodied notion of leadership is implied, where individuals influence the process but the process is something that happens between them, rather than by or within them.

Such a conception of leadership is not entirely novel and various definitions, alluding to or explicitly incorporating a team-level (rather than one-on-one) process conception, or specifying dynamic relationship aspects, or attempting to view leadership as something not exclusively vested in one person, have punctuated the literature over the years (Bogardus 1934; Cartwright and Zander 1953; Jacobs 1970; Hollander 1978; Kracke 1978; Foster 1989; Rost 1991). For example, Foster (1989) states that leadership "does not reside in an individual, but in the relationship between individuals.." (p. 46), while Rost (1991) elaborates a post-industrial leadership paradigm, incorporating a leadership concept where the persuasion process is multidirectional and not exclusively vested in the formal leader.

The 9,9 Teamwork conceptualisation of leadership is depicted in Figure 6, and is contrasted with a simple representation of classical leadership thinking (the industrial paradigm) and Rost's proposed "post-industrial paradigm". The arrows indicate the direction of persuasive communication or advocacy. In the 9,9 Teamwork model, persuasion is conceived to occur as a result of the pooling of data within the team, rather than advocacy directed at others.

## Figure 6. Leadership Paradigms

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With its team level process orientation and its explicit anchoring in attitudes, values and beliefs, the leadership concept implied by Blake and Mouton's 9,9 Teamwork model does not sit squarely or comfortably in the mainstream leadership literature and theory. One needs to invoke another theoretical framework for its effective analysis. This framework is the theory of organisation culture.

### Grid as a Model of Leadership Culture

Organisation culture has been a hot topic in recent management literature. Since Pettigrew (1979) first introduced the concept of organisational culture to the literature, an extensive body of research literature has grown. According to Clement (1994), the research has focused both on the nature of culture and on developing instruments to measure it (see, for example, Wilkins and Dyer 1988; O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell 1991; Sheridan 1992; Hatch 1993). The most widely accepted definition of organisation culture is that of Schein (1985). According to the Schein model, culture exists simultaneously on three levels: basic assumptions, values and artifacts. Basic assumptions are at the deepest and most intractable level of culture and represent taken-for-granted beliefs about reality and human nature. Values are social principles, philosophies, goals and standards considered to have intrinsic worth and relate to beliefs about what ought to occur in the organisation. Artifacts are the visible, tangible and audible results of activity which are grounded in values and assumptions.

Considerable research has dealt with measuring culture at the value level (O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell 1991; Sheridan 1992; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders 1990). Some research has specifically related the fit between the individual and the organisational value systems to outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, performance and longevity (O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell 1991). However, the usefulness of identifying value profiles for organisations in terms of their ability to differentiate observed behaviour and important affective or performance outcomes in organisations has been questioned



(Sheridan 1992). Hatch (1993) advocates a more dynamic, process-oriented approach to culture, than Schein's model. Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) conclude that successful OD change efforts should focus on the work itself rather than some abstraction such as "culture".

Some research has invoked leadership practices as an important facet or determinant of culture. Ichikawa (1993) refers to leadership as a form of culture, although the cultural context is more societal than organisational. Freeman and Boeker (1984) state that the forms of authority used within organisations and the interactions between individuals and the organisation represent an important facet of culture. Brown (1992) argues that effective leadership depends on a sensitivity to organisation culture. In the context of OD interventions directed at changing culture, Clement (1994) argues that leadership practices are probably the most critical element in OD efforts directed at cultural change. For the purposes of OD intervention at least, it appears that the focus of cultural analysis needs to be on the behavioural level and, moreover, on the dynamic interactions between people in organisations. Schein (1985) goes further and asserts that the process of leadership and the process of building culture are inseparable and that culture is an outcome of leadership. Schein (1985) also distinguishes between individual leader style and the "cultural style" which prevails at group level.

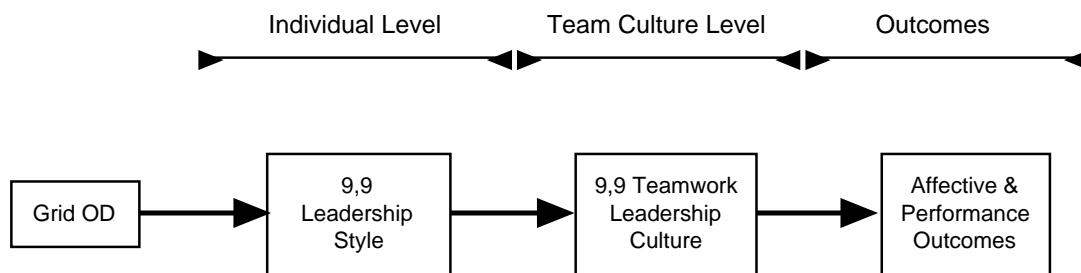
This all suggests a need for a theory which bridges the fields of leadership and organisation culture. It is proposed here that when leadership is viewed in terms of process, rather than individual disposition or behaviour, a leadership conception is produced which has dimensions so similar to current definitions of organisation culture that the ideas of "leadership" and "culture" merge. The concept of *Leadership Culture* is proposed here. Leadership culture is conceptualised as one important manifestation and facet of organisation culture, which deals with the dynamics of interactions between individuals and the attitudes, values and beliefs held by team members. It is proposed that, conceptualising leadership as a form of culture, might provide a concrete and useful theoretical framework for thinking about leadership, heretofore obscured by non-dynamic, dispositional models of leadership.

Leadership cultures *per se* have not been studied. References to "leadership culture" are superficial only (see, for example, Rindler 1992, Staub 1993) and lacking in any substantive conceptual foundation.

It is proposed that, with its explicit orientation to dynamic interactions between individuals at team level and its anchoring in values and beliefs, Blake and Mouton's 9,9 Teamwork model can provide a useful model of leadership culture. When discussing 9,9 Teamwork, we cannot satisfactorily describe it as a leadership style. It represents an approach to interacting that pervades the inter-person space and taps into a variety of processes, values and beliefs. It seems to make sense to talk about a 9,9 Teamwork "culture" in a team or organisation.

Blake and Mouton (1981b) refer to Grid OD as means of changing organisation culture. It is proposed that Grid OD does indeed change organisation culture by modifying one facet of culture: leadership culture. Grid OD endeavours to change leadership culture in a team by moving individuals towards a leadership style consistent with the 9,9 style and away from alternative styles predicted by the Grid model. This is attempted through a programme aimed at changing attitudes, values and beliefs and instilling 9,9 skills in team members. The more often, individual team members behave in a way consistent with the 9,9 leadership style model, the greater the prevalence of 9,9 Teamwork processes at the culture level. Theoretically, this should lead to positive changes in affective and performance outcomes for the organisation. These relationships are depicted in Figure 7.

**Figure 7 Grid OD as a Model of Cultural Change**



In such a model, the prevalence or simply the presence or absence of 9,9 Teamwork processes in a team could be assessed and related to relevant variables such as team performance, job satisfaction and commitment. However, the opportunity exists to develop a more comprehensive leadership culture model derived from the Grid leadership style model. Although Grid OD is designed specifically to focus on delivering a 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture to an organisation, why should we not assume that the other four Grid styles can also be faithfully translated from individual leadership styles into leadership culture variants? If this were the case, we could equally talk about the presence or absence of a 9,1 leadership culture or a 1,9 leadership culture.

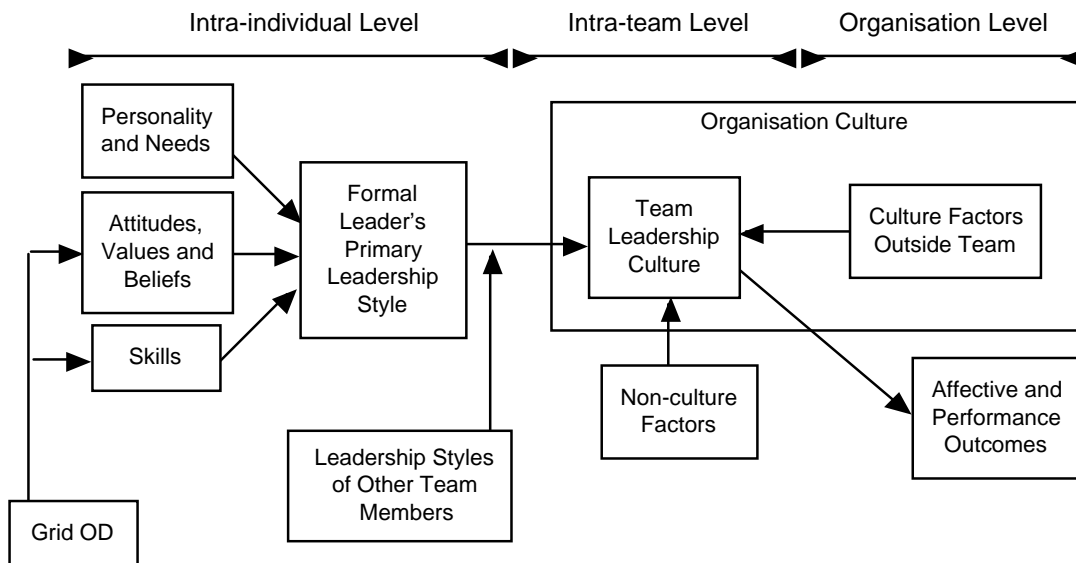
Thus the Grid model potentially provides us with a comprehensive framework for classifying different leadership cultures based on the nature of the interactions between people rather than individual leadership style. That is, features such as the nature of communications, critique, conflict resolution and other dimensions of interaction in the team, could be used to characterise and classify leadership cultures into one of the five variants of culture predicted by the Grid model.

Accordingly, five basic leadership cultures are proposed, mirroring the Grid leadership style model. These are referred to here as "9,9 Teamwork", "9,1 Authority", "1,9 Country Club", "5,5 Middle-of-the-Road" and "1,1 Impoverishment". In the leadership culture model proposed, these five cultures represent descriptions

of dynamic interactions at the team level rather than individual behavioural dispositions. It should be noted that these leadership cultures, although not identified as cultures or explicitly differentiated from individual style, are inferred from the writings of Blake and Mouton. In some instances, they refer not to 9,9 leadership style but to *9,9 Team Management* and provide a process-level rather than disposition-level definition, such as "Work accomplishment is from committed people; interdependence through a common stake in organization purpose leads to relationships of trust and respect" (Blake and Mouton 1981b, p. 11). Similar, culture-oriented descriptions are provided for the other four positions on the Grid. Blake and McCanse (1991) refer to "team culture" (p. 306) when identifying the team environment in which 9,9 Teamwork processes operate. In fact, during Grid seminars, participants are provided with a 60-item questionnaire designed to measure "organisation climate" in terms of the Grid model. The items in the questionnaire provide descriptions of teamwork processes consistent with each of the Grid styles.

The concept of leadership culture is intuitively seductive but a more concrete definition is required. Before providing this, it is useful to elaborate an overall model which conceptually relates constructs such as Grid OD, Grid leadership style, Grid leadership culture and organisational outcomes. A comprehensive conceptual model of leadership culture and its relationships with these other constructs is outlined in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Comprehensive Leadership Culture Model**



The model identifies relevant variables operating at three levels: individual, team and the broader organisation outside the team. The model depicts leadership culture as a subset or facet of overall

organisational culture and posits that team level leadership culture has a significant influence on affective and performance outcomes for an organisation. Individual leadership style is seen as an intervening variable between Grid OD and leadership culture. Leadership style, at the individual level, is viewed as being directly affected by variables which include innate factors (such as personality and needs), modifiable attitudinal factors (attitudes, values and beliefs), and training and learned skills (particularly communication and problem solving skills). Kabanoff (1987) reported on the relationship between innate factors such as Machiavellianism, locus of control, and expressed needs for control and inclusion, and Grid leadership styles. However, these innate variables are unlikely to be affected by Grid OD. It is posited that Grid OD primarily influences attitudes, values and beliefs, and skills and thereby influences individual leadership style (behavioural dispositions). The 2x2 Grid model of leadership style may give us a cross-sectional snapshot of individual style or conflict resolving dispositions, but it is proposed here that it is the process of Grid OD that can influence these through influencing attitudes, values and beliefs, and learned skills.

The model presents individual leadership style, and specifically the formal leader's dominant (as distinct from backup) style, as one significant variable directly influencing leadership culture in a team. However, it is proposed that the leadership styles of all team members come into play in determining the nature of interactions (leadership culture) in the team. Like the team leader, the leadership styles of all team members are also posited to be affected by Grid OD through modification of attitudinal and skill variables, although these relationships have been omitted from the model for simplicity. The other team members' styles are seen as moderating the relationship between the formal leader's dominant style and team leadership culture. For example, a formal leader or manager disposed to a dominant 1,9 leadership style will not necessarily cause a 1,9 leadership culture to predominate in the team. What prevails will partly depend on the disposition of the other team members and their willingness to allow the communication, critique and conflict resolution processes offered by such a style to predominate and determine overall communication, critique and conflict resolution process in the team. Similarly, one could envisage a situation where a 9,1 or other culture prevails despite the primary orientation of the formal leader, due to stronger influences from other team members. It should be noted that the nature of the 9,9 leadership style and the 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture is such that individual team members will have a significant influence on team leadership culture. In other words, we might hypothesise that the influence of other team members in determining overall leadership culture will be greater when a 9,9 leadership culture is prevalent.

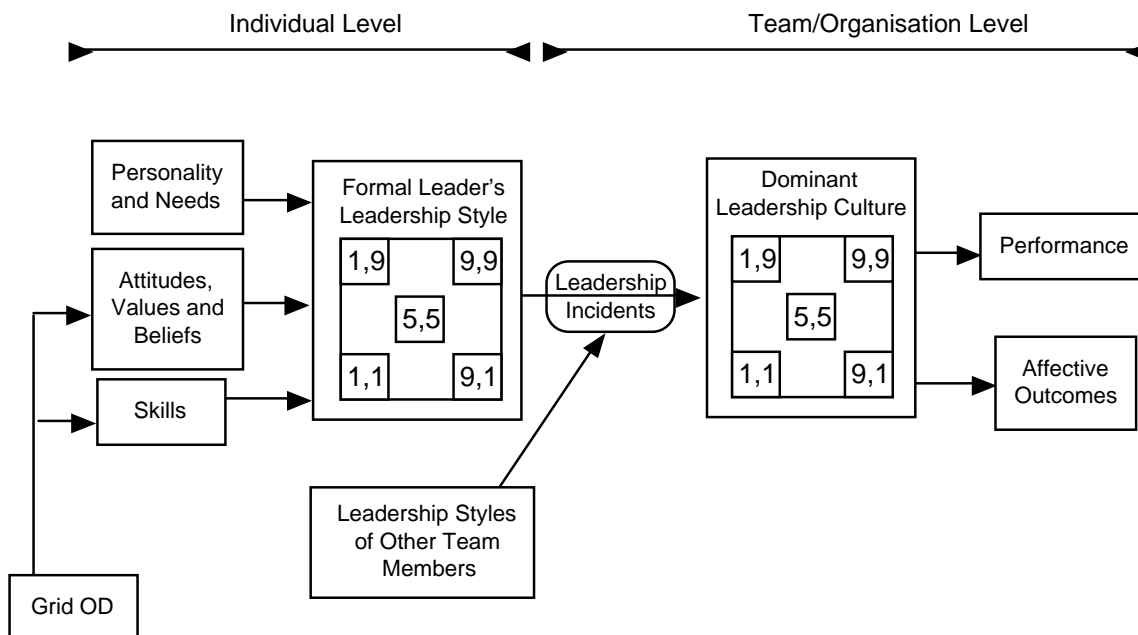
The other point to note is that according to the Grid leadership style model, styles are not static. For example, even if the formal leader has a dominant 9,1 style, he or she may be acting in their backup style from time to time and this will also influence the ultimate leadership culture in the team. The same could be proposed in relation to the styles of all team members.

Other cultural factors in the organisation and non-cultural factors in the organisation or the team are also included as probable influencers of team leadership culture. For example, if the formal leader is the head of a department within a larger organisation, what about the influence of broader organisation policies, his or her boss's leadership style and horizontal influences from peers in other departments? All of these might directly or indirectly affect team leadership culture or play a role in moderating the effect of the formal leader's style on team leadership culture.

The definition of leadership style inferred by the Grid model is relatively clear: an individual disposition to adopt certain strategies (e.g., communication, critique and conflict resolving) when interacting with team members. In defining leadership culture, one needs to integrate the construct conceptually with this definition of leadership style inferred by the Grid model. One also needs to take into account the process-orientation and inter-individual locus for the construct. To bridge these needs, the concept of "leadership incidents" is proposed. A leadership incident is deemed to occur whenever a team member engages in an interaction with other team members which influences the direction or nature of team activity. The concept of leadership incidents allows a characterisation of the interactions between individual leadership styles and a definition of overall team leadership culture. The nature and, therefore the characterisation, of a leadership incident will depend partly on the outcome of the interaction between individual leadership styles. In the model, it may also be influenced by other factors outside this intra-team level of interactions and process. This conception of leadership incidents precludes team activity that does not involve interaction between individual team members. It might be argued that a directive from the boss (a 9,1 communication strategy) does not represent an interaction and therefore that 9,1 strategies are precluded from such a definition. However, despite the fact that the communication is one-sided, the process of team members accepting the directive does represent an interaction. In a similar way, it could be demonstrated that all relevant 1,1, 1,9, 5,5, 9,1 and 9,9 processes, as defined or inferred by the model, are catered for in the concept of leadership incidents.

Such incidents could be classified in terms of the communication, critique or conflict resolving process adopted. Based on the nature of the interaction process adopted, the individual interactions (incidents) could be characterised as incidents consistent with one of the five Grid leadership culture options. Theoretically, by classifying every incident in a team, over time, into one of the five leadership culture types, we could identify the dominant leadership culture in the team. A conceptual model, which excludes some of the less critical concepts from the comprehensive model in Figure 8 and incorporates the notion of leadership incidents and this conception of leadership culture, is shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Simplified Leadership Culture Model**



Further, it may be possible, and arguably more sound, to develop a profile of the overall leadership culture operating in the team as a composite of the five cultural variants. For example, one could envisage, over a given period, a team leadership culture that operates, say, 50% of the time in a 9,9 mode, 20% 9,1, 20% 1,9, 10% 5,5 and rarely or never in a 1,1 way. Leadership culture would then be conceptualised as an overall composite of five types of interactions. The foregoing suggests that the five components of the overall composite must add to 100% i.e. every leadership incident can be classified exclusively as only one of the five cultural variants. This is not necessarily the case and not deemed to be pivotal to an initial test of the validity of model. In the ideal situation, where the characterisation criteria are well validated, orthogonal dimensions of leadership culture, and the interaction options offered by each dimension are mutually exclusive and cover all interaction possibilities, then the cultural profile could legitimately be expected to add to 100%. For example, imagine that leadership culture could be represented by a single latent dimension such as conflict resolution process. Then, if the five types of interactions available to describe leadership incidents were mutually exclusive and covered all possible conflict resolving interactions, the 100% assumption and criterion could be applied. In this study, this assumption has been relaxed. This issue is discussed further under Analytical Procedure.

## Tests of the Grid Model

Despite the richness of the Grid model when viewed as a model of leadership culture and the widespread application of Grid OD over the years, it has not been extensively or rigorously tested (Filley, House and Kerr 1976; Guyot 1978; Blake 1994). According to Filley, House and Kerr (1976) the few rigorous studies have generated mixed or contradictory conclusions. Despite this indictment, it is worthwhile to review the research which has been conducted, at least to assess the extent to which explicit or implicit propositions and research hypotheses touch upon the relationships proposed by the model in Figure 9.

Most of the significant tests have focused longitudinally on Grid OD as a process, while one study (Bernadin and Alvares 1976) is cross-sectional in design. None have been supported by a theory that explicitly conceptualises Grid as a model of leadership culture although a number include variables which appear to represent elements or surrogates of leadership culture as conceptualised in the present study. A summary of the longitudinal and cross-sectional studies from the literature, using the model in Figure 9 as a framework, is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Major Studies of Grid**

Study	Type	Individual Level	Team (Culture) Level	Outcomes
Blake and Mouton (1964)	Longitudinal		Boss's work effort Problem liveliness Decision quality Profit consciousness Win-win conflict solving Intra-group and inter-group relations	Productivity Cost savings Profitability
Beer and Kleisath (1971)	Longitudinal	Leader behaviour	Integration Peer supportiveness Group norms Communication Inter-group relations	Productivity Satisfaction Commitment
Hart (1974)	Longitudinal		Work "culture" Attitudes	Performance
Bernadin and Alvares (1976)	Cross-sectional	SAMS <sup>1</sup> Conflict resolving method Leader effectiveness		
Keller (1978)	Longitudinal	Leadership style	Organisational climate Power relationships	Satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> Self Assessment of Managerial Style questionnaire.

Blake, Mouton, Barnes and Greiner (1964) first described the application of Grid OD in a manufacturing plant of 4,000 employees during 1963. This was a longitudinal study over 12 months, but without a control group. In total, 800 employees were exposed to the six phase Grid OD programme, and according to the authors, the results were impressive. At the individual level, they reported major shifts in dominant values, attitudes and behavior patterns. At what could probably be considered the team culture level, they noted improved union, community and parent company relationships and an improvement in team level

performance surrogates including items such as boss's work effort, problem liveliness in group discussions, quality of decisions made and profit consciousness. However, the assessments were made after the study and compared with respondents' retrospective perceptions of the same items prior to the study. An unweighted average of the team level items indicated a 23.2% increase in these perceived group performance measures. Using the same design, 49%, 55% and 61% of managers reported improvements in boss-subordinate, intragroup and intergroup relations, respectively; similarly, 40% of managers reported an integrative approach (win-win) to problem-solving compared with only 14% five years earlier (again assessed retrospectively). In terms of concrete outcomes, they claimed considerable cost savings and profit increases and a substantial increase in employee productivity.

The study could readily be criticised on a number of grounds although any critique needs to be tempered by the understanding that the published results were the outcome of a *post hoc* review of the Grid OD project in the manufacturing plant rather than intended as a rigorous scientific analysis (Blake 1995). Blum and Naylor (1968) point out that the changes reported could have been attributed to a changeover to automation, changes in market conditions or other factors. Hart (1974) notes that, of the 160% increase in profits reported, management attributed nearly 70% to new equipment, major staff reductions and changes in non-labour costs. The lack of a control group, the after-only measuring of key variables, the lack of adequate construct definition and the apparent absence of any reliability or validity assessments of the instruments all weaken the study's conclusions. Despite this, it did offer some measure of at least qualitative support for the Grid OD model.

Beer and Kleisath (1971) measured a range of team level variables along with satisfaction, commitment and productivity in an organisation both before and one year after an introductory one-week (Phase 1) Grid OD programme. They reported significant improvements in satisfaction and commitment, although changes in productivity were difficult to identify. The team level variables were described as "team process dimensions" and included integration, peer supportiveness of achievement, peer supportiveness of affiliation and group pressure for conformity. Some of these may be surrogates of leadership culture as defined in the model, while others may represent individual value level measures. Their group relations and communications scales were probably more indicative of team level leadership culture. Overall, changes in all but two dimensions were in the expected direction. However, once again there was no control group, and there were a number of confounding environmental influences over the period of study.

Hart (1974) reported on another study of Grid OD in an organisation, involving 1,400 managers in Phase 1 Grid OD and 408 personnel in Phase 2 over a period of eight years. Hart endeavoured to overcome the lack of a control group in previous studies by including a sample of employees who had not been exposed to the Grid OD. Questionnaires were completed by 185 employees, including 57 from the control group. Variables included a 10-item questionnaire measuring work culture and attitudes and a 14-item measure of performance outcomes. Hart found significant differences between those work units exposed to extensive



(Phase 2) Grid training and the control group, in favour of the Grid group. Few significant differences were found between those units exposed to only introductory level Grid training (Phase 1) and the control group. However, the study design was effectively cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. The responses from all employees surveyed were at a specific point in time, and like the Blake, Mouton, Barnes and Greiner (1964) study, the performance measures were compared with respondents' retrospective assessments of performance 12 months earlier. Once again, a number of criticisms could be levelled at the study's experimental design, overall research methodology and construct validity.

Keller (1978) conducted a longitudinal assessment of the impact of Grid OD training among 131 employees in an oil refinery and chemical plant. Study design included a pre-test and 14 months post-test measure of variables including leadership style, organisational climate, power relationships and job satisfaction. The post-test results indicated a reduction in satisfaction and reduction in the organisation climate variable of warmth and trust. These results were compared with the results from a control group of 29 employees not subjected to Grid OD and found not to be significantly different. In this study, Grid OD seemed to have no significant effect on what appeared to be relevant variables at the individual level (leadership style), team level (organisation climate) and outcome level (satisfaction). However, the sample was small and the study could be criticised on other grounds.

Bernardin and Alvares (1976) were highly critical of the previous longitudinal attempts to test the Grid model and adopted a cross-sectional approach. They conducted what they described as a "rare empirical test" of the model. However, their test was focused on individual level variables and did not address the broader cause-effect relationships suggested by the models in Figures 8 or 9. They sought to predict leadership effectiveness (based on subordinate or peer ratings) and conflict resolution style (confrontation, compromise or forcing) based on classifications of individuals as intrinsically Task (9,1), Middle (5,5) or Team (9,9) oriented in their leadership style. No significant relationships were found. They found that individual Grid leadership style, as measured, was not a significant predictor of conflict resolution method, i.e., in effect a 9,9 individual leadership style was not significantly associated with a 9,9 individual conflict resolution style. Further, 9,9 leadership style was not associated with significantly higher leader effectiveness scores than the other two classifications.

Once again though, this study is plagued by theoretical, methodological and construct validity and reliability problems. There is no indication of any reliability or construct validity assessment for the measure of individual leadership style. The approach adopted to refining the conflict resolution scale (4 items) was problematical. There was no attempt to assess the reliability or validity of the leadership effectiveness scale used (5 items) which, at face value, seems to be a questionable measure of effectiveness (including items such as "He does and says the right things at the right time"). Further, using individual dispositions (leadership style and conflict resolution style) as both independent and dependent variables ignores the important team level, process and cultural nature of 9,9 Teamwork. Finally, important organisational

outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and trust were not included as dependent variables. In their critique of this study, Blake and Mouton (1976) note other weaknesses including that the self assessments of leadership style which were used are unreliable. In summary, Bernardin and Alvares's scathing conclusions about the Grid model are not supported by their methodology or findings.

In endeavouring to test the model presented in Figure 9, one is compelled to ask: What testable propositions are stated or implied by the model? One set of propositions might relate to the influence of Grid OD on attitudes, values and beliefs, and learned skills and, in turn, the influence of such changes on individual style dispositions. Another test could relate to the relative influence of the formal leader's leadership style versus that of subordinates in determining overall leadership culture in the team. Another study might focus on the existence of the five core leadership cultures as proposed. The prevalence of each leadership culture could be measured and conclusions drawn about their relevance in practice. Bypassing the intervening variables, one could also investigate Grid OD's effectiveness as a methodology for instilling the 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture in an organisation. Finally, we could investigate the impact of the 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture on relevant organisational outcomes.

It is proposed that initial research focus on the last question - the impact of the 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture on organisational outcomes - as the critical first step in a rigorous test of the Grid leadership culture model. If the 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture is not associated with positive outcomes in the organisation, then there is little point investigating the effectiveness of Grid OD in installing this culture in organisations. Further, to substantiate the claim that 9,9 Teamwork represents the "one best way" of leadership culture, the 9,9 Teamwork leadership culture would need to be a superior predictor of positive outcomes to the alternative leadership cultures offered by the model.

## **Conclusions**

By interpreting leadership as a form of culture, a new conception of leadership emerges: Leadership as the management of influence processes. The Managerial Grid model offers a model of leadership which is consistent with this new conception. In an era of "cross-functional teams", "learning organisations" and "continuous quality improvement" where the emphasis is squarely on the dynamic interactions within teams, Grid as a model of leadership culture, deserves to be seriously reappraised by leadership researchers and practitioners. As an initial step in the re-appraisal of Grid, it is proposed that research focus on measuring and differentiating the five basic Grid leadership cultures and then establishing whether the Teamwork (9,9) leadership culture represents the "one best way".

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