

# Bricolas

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WHITE PAPER · BRICOLAS

# 3D



# Management<sup>TM</sup>

*A Modal Approach to Managing and Leading*

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MAY 2026

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## ABOUT THIS PAPER

You're holding a theoretical-framework contribution. Not a journal article, not a marketing whitepaper, not a workshop handout. It's a model of management built out of clinical and consulting practice and tested against the management and leadership literature – broadly, not exhaustively. The question driving it: *what should I be doing more of, less of, differently, and is there a frame that helps me sort that?*

Three kinds of readers in mind. Consultants, coaches, and OD practitioners who might use this in their work. Buyers of leadership development who need the strategic frame. And the interested manager or peer who wants to think harder without slogging through dissertations.

A note on the literature. The leadership field is genuinely vast, and every reader will meet bodies of work they haven't seen. So will I. I cite scholars whose names I learned during this project alongside scholars I've worked with for years. Including, in places, my own dissertation work – flagged where it lands, never relied on as the foundation.

What this paper does NOT claim: empirical validation, factor structure, exhaustive coverage. I argue for the model. I name where it strains. I tell you what I'd want to know more about. And I close with what to do about it – concretely, not in the abstract.

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## HOW TO READ THIS

If you read one page: the executive summary (next page). It carries the framework's claim and the implications.

If you want the framework: §2. The architecture diagram (Figure 2.1) and the mode cards (Figure 2.2) carry it.

If you want what to do: §6. Three concrete moves – replace one-off workshops with learning journeys; coach the team; make what gets noticed measurable.

If you want the credibility infrastructure: Methodology and About-the-author at the back. Methodology details the eight-iteration scoping review and cross-validation pass; §4 engages critical perspectives the framework strains under.

# Executive summary

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Managers often arrive at a point where one mode of management is crowding out another. The work calls for a shift their existing frame doesn't help them make. 3D Management offers a way to see, name, and carry the shift – and points past individual training to the collective conditions that make it possible.

## ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

The 3D Management framework was built out of clinical and consulting practice with mid-to-senior managers. It was tested against the management and leadership literature through a structured cross-validation pipeline (337-construct catalog, 18 behavioral and 14 functional clusters, eight stable clusters retained). Methodology details, sources, and limitations live in the back matter.

*The problem.*~ Managers I work with often arrive at a point where they realize what got them here won't get them there. The way they go about their work has to change. They name it in different words: be more strategic, build stronger relationships, get time back to think. The structural problem underneath is the same. One mode of management is crowding out another.

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*What got them here won't get them there. One mode of management is crowding out another.*

*The frame.*~ This paper builds a frame that helps them sort it. Three modes sit at the core: doing the work, directing others' work, developing people. Two postures (Versatility, Steward) shape how managers carry the modes. System pulls condition what's possible from outside. A fourth dimension names where leadership lives, not as a role but as a process that emerges when modes get carried, postures get held, and others around the work engage their parts. Leadership outcomes don't come from individual manager training. They come from collective capacity, built deliberately.

3D Management makes a categorical separation that recurs across management literature but has rarely been articulated cleanly: managing is a role with three modes; leading is a process that produces collective outcomes. The two are integrated in practice but distinct in kind. Most leadership frameworks fuse them, collapsing what a manager does with what leadership produces. 3D treats leadership as a fourth dimension that emerges from how modes get engaged, not from any single role enacting it.

Three modes form the core. Do is engaging directly with task. Direct is conducting and guiding the work, one person's or a team's collective effort. Develop is engaging with the people doing the work. Each mode operates at task, person, team, or system altitude. The altitude variable runs through the modes rather than sitting alongside them. Two cross-cutting postures shape how managers carry the modes: Versatility (the capacity to shift modes based on what the work and people need) and Steward (the orientation toward work larger than the immediate transaction). System pulls condition every mode-engagement from the system around the work, with mechanisms across group-dynamic, structural-contextual, and discovered-kinship clusters. The fourth dimension carries leadership-process content the literature has produced under several names; *direction, alignment, and commitment* is the cleanest articulation.

This is a theoretical contribution, not an empirical study. The framework hasn't been operationalized as instruments testing differential predictions; that's a different methodology and a different paper. What it does: name where the modes live in the architecture, what holds them in balance, what the system pulls against, and where leadership-process intersects management-action. The paper engages critical perspectives (managerialism critique, identity-regulation scholarship, cross-cultural traditions as both kin and challenger) and names where the framework strains under those readings.

*The implication.*~ The framework's implications point past individual manager training. Mode engagement is conditioned by group dynamics, structural position, cultural ground, identity context, and the safety climate the team operates within. Build manager capacity in isolation from those conditions and the workshop fails predictably. Managers leave with new vocabulary and slip back into the modes they came in with; the conditions around the work haven't changed. The closing section names three concrete moves: replacing one-off workshops with learning journeys, coaching the team rather than just the manager, and making what gets noticed measurable as a developmental instrument.

# Introduction

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## *What should I be doing more of, less of, differently?*

Most managers I work with inevitably get to a point where they begin to explore what they should be doing more of, less of, differently. They usually start with a surface goal: be more strategic, build stronger relationships, get more time back. What surfaces in coaching is one mode crowding out another. They over-direct because their team isn't working the way they want. They default to doing it themselves because giving feedback feels harder. They try to coach through situations that need a direction call. The pattern under the surface goal is over- or under-doing one mode in a way that affects the others.

The frameworks they've inherited rarely answer this cleanly, and I think the reason is structural. Most leadership frameworks fuse what a manager does in their role with what leadership produces as a process. 3D Management treats them as integrated but layered.

The framework has three management modes: Do, Direct, Develop. Each is a stance toward getting things done, coordinating work, or forward development of others. Action verbs cross-cut all three. Visioning, articulating, listening, caring, and (paradigmatically) delegating are activities that look the same on the surface but engage different modes depending on the stance underneath. Delegation in Direct is task assignment. Delegation in Develop is co-design: working with the person on what they take on and

how, where the assignment itself is the developmental scaffold.

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*Modes are stances, not activities.* Most managers default to one. Engaging across all three – deliberately, situationally, in shifting combinations – is the work.

Leadership is a different category: not a stance, but a social process. It happens between people, in conditions that allow it. The framework treats leadership as a fourth dimension that emerges from how modes get engaged, not as something a single role enacts.

3D takes the manager as its starting point: one camera placement, not a universal claim. The framework was built from Western sources and pays attention to what's happening beneath the surface of organizational work. Section 5 names what stays out of frame; Section 4 engages where the framework strains under cross-cultural readings.

The framework's implications are collective. 3D doesn't end with a manager who needs more training. It ends with teams (and the systems around them) that can hold the conditions where modes get engaged, leadership emerges, and the work gets done. Knowledge of the framework is a start; what it actually calls for is collective work.

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# The Framework

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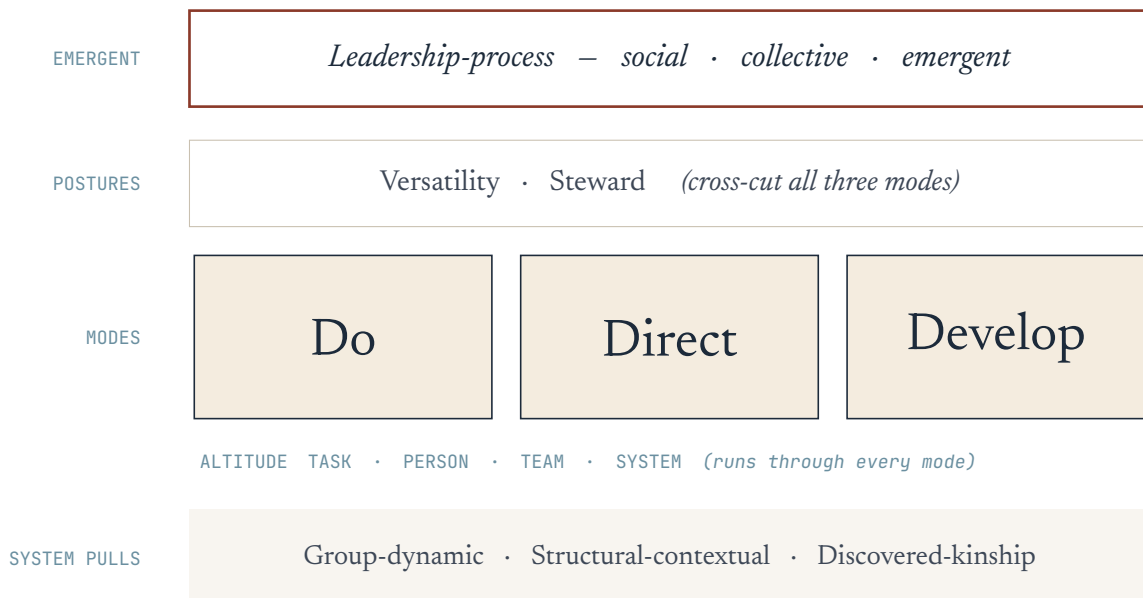
*Three modes at the center, conditioned by what surrounds them.*

3D Management has three modes at its core, conditioned by four other elements: an altitude variable running through them, two cross-cutting postures, system pulls operating from outside, and a fourth dimension where leadership emerges as a process. The full architecture is shown in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1

*The 3D Management architecture.*

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*The modes sit at the center; postures cross-cut them; system pulls operate from outside; the fourth dimension is what emerges when each layer is engaged.*

FIGURE 2.2

*Three modes, three stances.*

## Do

*Engaging directly with the task – analysis, writing, building, deciding, executing.*

WHAT GETS MADE?

## Direct

*Conducting and guiding the work – setting direction, naming priorities, calling decisions, making sure the work coheres.*

HOW DOES THE WORK COHERE?

## Develop

*Engaging with the people doing the work, oriented forward – coaching, mentoring, sponsoring, building capability.*

WHO IS GROWING HERE?

*A manager engages all three in shifting combinations. Engagement is rarely clean – modes bleed into one another, named so the manager can notice which stance they're in and whether it fits.*

The three modes are stances, not activities or competencies; they are orientations toward distinct objects of attention.

A note about action verbs. Visioning, articulating, listening, casting vision, caring, challenging, holding space, advocating: these are actions a manager takes, not modes they're in. The same action shows up across modes. Visioning happens in Direct (casting the team's direction) and in Develop (helping an individual see a future for themselves). Caring happens in Develop (attending to a person's growth) and in Direct (protecting the team's working conditions). Feedback happens in Direct (telling someone whether their work meets the bar) and in De-

velop (surfacing what to grow from here). Modes describe the stance; verbs describe the moves the stance makes.

## Altitude

Each mode operates at four levels of altitude: task, person, team, and system. The same mode looks different at each.

Direct at task altitude is calling how a specific piece of work should be done. Direct at team altitude is setting the team's overall direction. Direct at system altitude is shaping the organization itself: the structures, policies, and conditions the team works inside.

Altitude does two things. It captures that managers don't operate at one level; a frontline manager moves between task and team altitude over a single day. And it places system-level work inside the modes: setting an organization's structure isn't a different mode, it's Direct (or Do, or Develop) at system altitude.

The categorical claim 3D operates on (three modes

plus a leadership dimension) appears across multiple established management frameworks. The crosswalk is not claiming exact equivalence across traditions. It shows convergence: different literatures repeatedly distinguish task contribution, work-direction, and people-development. 3D names the recurring pattern (Figure 2.3).

FIGURE 2.3

*3D as crosswalk – where the field's vocabulary maps onto the modes.*

FRAMEWORK	DO	DIRECT	DEVELOP
Quinn CVF <sup>1</sup>	Producer (rational goal)	Director, Coordinator (rational goal + internal process)	Mentor, Facilitator (human relations)
Mintzberg roles <sup>2</sup>	Decisional (operational, disturbance handler)	Decisional (resource allocator, negotiator)	Interpersonal (leader, liaison)
Watkins transitions <sup>3</sup>	Quick wins, technical learning	Strategy + role definition	Coalition, team building
CCL PMCL <sup>4</sup>	Personal effectiveness	Operational, business acumen	Building relationships, developing others
Charan-Drotter-Noel <sup>5</sup>	Self-management of own work	Manager of others, function	Manager of managers
Bass MLQ <sup>6</sup>	Transactional contingent reward	Transactional active mgmt; transformational direction	Transformational individualized consideration
Yukl taxonomy <sup>7</sup>	Task-oriented (clarifying, monitoring)	Task + change-oriented (envisioning, encouraging innovation)	Relations-oriented (supporting, developing)

*Across major management and leadership traditions, vocabulary repeatedly sorts into task contribution, work-direction, and people-development. 3D gives the pattern a simpler grammar.*

The point is structural recognition, not perfect translation. 3D gives the recurring pattern a simpler managerial grammar: three stances toward distinct objects, plus one dimension for leadership-process.

MODE 01 · DO

# Do

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## WHAT GETS MADE?

Do is engaging directly with the task: analysis, writing, building, deciding, executing the work the manager owns at the individual-contributor level. The literature on Do is empirically robust but theoretically thin. Diary studies confirm the pattern decade after decade: managers spend substantial time on task-level activity, fragmented across the day, interleaved with everything else.<sup>2</sup> What the stance is, the studies establish. What the literature undersupplies is a positive theory of Do as something the manager engages on purpose.

What gets theorized instead is the friction. *The Leadership Pipeline*<sup>5</sup> treats Do as a phase to graduate from; staying in Do reads as failure to transition. 3D rejects the staging architecture. What shifts as a leader matures isn't that they stop Doing – it's what the Doing is. Building work plans, deep thinking, drafting strategy: these are Do at higher altitude, not graduations from it. Do is a stance one engages deliberately, in shifting combination with Direct and Develop. It is not a developmental rung to leave behind.

Do bleeds into Direct when the manager who's nominally handed off the work continues to call specific moves on it: drop that bullet, restructure the third paragraph, use this framing in the deck. The directing is task-level; the manager is staying inside Do through the directing. Do bleeds into Develop when the manager, asked to coach, demonstrates reflexively: running the difficult conversation themselves, drafting the strategy memo while the new manager watches, pulling the meeting back on track without naming what they did. The intent is developmental; the move is Do.

None of these moves are inherently loaded; that's the categorization point. Do is necessary work; some-

times demonstrating is the right move. The framework makes the move legible so the leader can notice which mode they're in and whether it fits.

Over-Do shows up in patterns the literature names well: the founder still in the codebase, the senior leader who keeps writing the strategy doc themselves.<sup>8</sup> The literature reads it as personal-deficit. 3D reframes it as a stance held against the wrong conditions: under-resourced teams that genuinely need the leader's hands, founder-mode legacy that hasn't unwound, performance cultures that reward visible output over enabled output. Under-Do is the inverse: the leader who's been senior long enough to lose the craft, can no longer credibly judge the team's work product, can't pinch-hit when the team is stuck. Both shapes are conditioned by the system pulls Section 3 develops.

Do is a stance, not a fixed activity. What specific work fills the time (drafting, deciding, demonstrating, visioning, articulating) depends on altitude, on what the moment calls for, on what the system around the work permits. The question isn't whether to engage Do. It's how to engage it deliberately, in shifting combination with Direct and Develop.

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*What shifts as a leader matures isn't that they stop Doing – it's what the Doing is.*

MODE 02 · DIRECT

## Direct

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HOW DOES THE WORK COHERE?

Direct is conducting and guiding the work, one person's or a team's collective effort. The stance covers setting course, naming priorities, allocating resources, calling decisions when the group (or person) needs them, evaluating whether work meets the bar, and making sure the work coheres. Direct's literature is the most discretely-categorized of the three modes. Where Do has diary studies and Develop has three relational shapes, Direct has style families that each name a particular way of directing.

The stance is rooted in decades of research naming distinct styles of directing: transformational and transactional<sup>6</sup>, charismatic,<sup>9</sup> servant and stewardship-oriented.<sup>10</sup> Each carries its own theoretical commitments and empirical base. The transformational/transactional pair has been refined and critiqued extensively; meta-analytic work has shown substantial overlap between the named styles, evidence consistent with 3D's reframe of them as variations of one stance. What's useful about the style traditions, beyond the categorization, is the trade-offs they surface: aspirational engagement against transactional clarity, rapid mobilization against dependency risk, team empowerment against decisive direction. The styles aren't just labels for kinds of leader; they're maps of the trade-offs directing has to manage.

3D's contribution is the stance underneath. The literature treats transformational, charismatic, and servant leaders as different kinds of leaders. 3D categorizes these styles within one stance: conducting and guiding work that one person or a team is doing; calling the move. Style is what fills that stance.

Direct bleeds into Do when the leader, calling the work's direction, ends up shipping the work them-

selves because the team can't get there in time. Direct bleeds into Develop when feedback meant to evaluate work-against-bar softens into developmental encouragement, and the call about whether the work met the bar never quite lands. Style emphasis produces tendencies. A leader leaning on charismatic leadership might bleed towards Do (voice and presence crowd out the team's contribution); a leader leaning on servant style might bleed towards Develop (empowerment substitutes for direction). The forward-oriented care is real; the directing didn't happen.

Over-Direct comes in two shapes. Command-shape Direct collapses team agency: the leader calls every move; the team executes; nobody contributes to direction-setting. Performative direction-setting makes the visible moves (vision speeches, all-hands, strategy memos) without the underlying stance-engagement. The form of Direct happens; the work the team needed from Direct doesn't. Under-Direct is the vacuum at the top: calls that need to be called don't get called; the team waits, improvises, loses coherence. Both shapes track the system pulls Section 3 develops.

Direct is a stance, not a leadership style. Style is what fills the stance: different ways of engaging, calibrated to what the work and moment need. The question isn't which style to adopt. It's how to engage Direct deliberately, in shifting combination with Do and Develop.

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*Direct is a stance, not a leadership style. Style is what fills the stance.*

MODE 03 · DEVELOP

# Develop

WHO IS GROWING HERE?

Develop is engaging with the people doing the work, oriented forward: building capability the manager believes will matter to the person before it matters to the immediate output. The literature on Develop has

the inverse profile of Do's: theoretically rich and empirically thick, with three relational shapes the literature has worked hard to distinguish: coaching, mentoring, sponsoring.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

What 3D adds is the stance underneath. The stance is shared: forward-oriented engagement with the person, in service of who they're becoming rather than who they currently are in the role. 3D categorizes the three as variations of a single stance: three distinct activities guided under one mode (Figure 2.4).

FIGURE 2.4

*Three activities, one stance.*

	COACHING	MENTORING	SPONSORING
Stance	Peer-evocative	Wisdom-bearing	Advocate-with-power
Time horizon	Situational	Long arc	Targeted advancement
Primary question	<i>What's the next forward move for you?</i>	<i>What's worked for me?</i>	<i>Which rooms aren't they in yet?</i>
Empirical base	ICF competencies; coaching outcome studies	Kram's longitudinal mentoring work	Sponsorship outcome research (Hewlett, Ibarra)
Bleed risk	Demonstration trap (→ Do)	Evaluation drift (→ Direct)	Over-coach the protégé; over-direct role

*Three relational structures, one stance: forward-oriented engagement with the person.*

Modes bleed for Develop too, in shapes that depend on which relational activity is in play. The Develop-into-Do bleed is the demonstration trap: the manager who meant to grow the person but did the work instead, most common in coaching, where the temptation to demonstrate sits closest to the surface. Develop bleeds into Direct when developmental feedback turns evaluative, when the question shifts from “what’s the next forward move for you?” to “did this work meet the bar?” Most common in mentoring, where the mentor’s experience pulls to-

ward judgment rather than exploration. Sponsoring’s bleed shape is its own: advocacy can shade into coaching the protégé directly (Develop-on-Develop) or into directing what role they take next (Develop-into-Direct). The relational structure (advocate-with-power rather than confidant-with-wisdom) makes both easy to slip into.

None of these bleeds are inherently failures; the framework names the move so the leader can see which stance they’re in.

Over-Develop is the coach-instead-of-call shape: a manager so attentive to people’s growth that throughput suffers; the team needs a call and gets a question. Under-Develop is transactional-only: the manager who never invests in anyone’s forward arc, treating the people doing the work as inputs. Talent walks. The team doesn’t grow, and the manager hasn’t noticed because the immediate output is fine.

Develop is a stance, not a scheduled activity in a named relationship. Coaching programs, mentor relationships, sponsorship arrangements make it visible. But the stance can carry into hallway conversations, into how a manager listens during a status update. The question isn’t whether to schedule the conversations. It’s how to engage Develop as a stance the manager carries, in shifting combination with Do and Direct.

WHEN THIS FRAMEWORK HELPS

*Six patterns the framework names directly – recognize the manager, recognize the mode.*

	WHEN OVERDONE	WHEN UNDERDONE
Do	The founder still in the codebase. The senior leader who keeps writing the strategy doc themselves.	The leader senior long enough to lose the craft, no longer credibly judging the team’s work or pinch-hitting when the team is stuck.
Direct	The boss who calls every move; nobody contributes to direction-setting. Or the visible moves – vision speeches, strategy memos – without the underlying stance.	The calls that need to be called don’t get called. The team waits, improvises, loses coherence.
Develop	The team that needs a call and gets a question. Throughput suffers because the manager is too attentive to growth.	The manager who never invests in anyone’s forward arc, treating people as inputs. Talent walks; the team doesn’t grow.

# Cross-cutting Work

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*The postures, conditions, and emergent layer that hold the modes in place.*

A senior manager whose team has just doubled is stuck. The moves that worked at eight don't fit at sixteen, but the manager keeps reaching for them anyway, because they're the moves that worked. Versatility is the capacity to notice that and shift: to choose Do or Direct or Develop based on what the work and the people in front of you actually need, not on what feels most familiar.

The literature names angles: paying close attention to each person on the team,<sup>11</sup> catching what's happening in real time as the work happens,<sup>14</sup> the safety to try something new.<sup>15</sup> Each is real. Each leaves a question open: what is the reading calibrated to?

The older name for what's underneath is practical wisdom: Aristotle's *phronesis*.<sup>14</sup> It's the capacity to know what this moment calls for, built up over time by getting things wrong and adjusting. Part of that capacity is measurable: the habits of attention practitioners use in groups (to authority, to bodies, to what the group is for, to what's happening inside the practitioner) form distinct empirically validated dimensions of group-dynamics awareness.<sup>16</sup> Versatility isn't infinite plasticity. It's practical wisdom applied to the question of mode, developed through practice, not granted.

The ideal of the endlessly flexible worker is also a feature of how late capitalism organizes work.<sup>17</sup> Mo-

bility and constant adaptability become the marks of legitimate work; the demand for endless adaptation gets internalized as self-imposed pressure. The framework holds Versatility as a posture worth developing while granting that the conditions a manager develops it inside shape what it ends up serving. Some of what reads as "lacks Versatility" is the worker refusing a system that has stopped earning the flex.

A manager can be fluent in all three modes and still wield them in service of their own visibility: Develop calibrated to who's worth investing in for the manager's network, Direct calibrated to who looks good when the work goes well. Nothing in 3D as stated so far rules this out. Steward is the constraint that does. The reason for being versatile sits in two places at once: partly in what helps the manager work the way they want, partly in what makes sense for the team and the larger work. Steward holds those two registers in balance, not by privileging the second over the first, but by ruling out the case where the first comes at the second's cost. A structural constraint, not a moral demand for selflessness.

Stewardship research splits two ways: as a structural claim (under trust and shared identity, managers act as stewards of the work)<sup>18</sup> and as a personal stance (taking responsibility for the work even when you

can't fully control it).<sup>18</sup> The wider cluster of related styles (ethical, servant, authentic, spiritual) overlaps enough that treating them as distinct doesn't hold up.<sup>19</sup> 3D treats them as one posture cutting across all three modes.

Versatility and Steward are postures, not personality

traits. Versatility tells you whether the manager can shift; Steward names what the shifts are oriented toward. Without Steward, Versatility becomes mode-flex for short-term self-advantage. Without Versatility, Steward stays stuck in one mode. The framework asks for both, in balance, against the system pulls below.

FIGURE 3.1

### *Two postures, paired.*

*Versatility and Steward cross-cut all three modes. The framework asks for both, held in balance.*

## Versatility

*The capacity to notice and shift – choosing Do, Direct, or Develop based on what the work and people need, not on what feels familiar.*

CAN THE MANAGER SHIFT?

## Steward

*Holds two registers in balance – what helps the manager work the way they want, and what makes sense for the team and the larger work.*

ORIENTED TOWARD WHAT?

## The Fourth Dimension: Leadership as Process

What leadership is (what counts as it, what produces it, who can do it) has been the field's most-contested question for decades. Trait, behavioral, contingency, transformational, charismatic, servant, authentic, distributed, complexity-based, critical: each captured something the others missed; none settled the construct.<sup>7</sup>

3D doesn't try to settle that debate. It's a positioning move: the manager engages modes; leadership emerges from how those modes get carried, how others around the work engage, and what conditions allow. Inside the framework, leadership is *not posi-*

*tional*. It happens between people: in how a manager carries the modes alongside others who carry their own work; in the conditions under which the work gets shaped.<sup>20, 21</sup>

Several framings engage leadership-process from different angles. The 2008 reframe in *The Leadership Quarterly* shifted attention from any one person to what the group produces together: direction, alignment, commitment.<sup>21</sup> The Tavistock tradition names what's happening underneath: roles get pulled into shape by the groups they sit in; basic-assumption dynamics surface when uncertainty rises.<sup>22</sup> The same tradition supplies an analytical lens for working with these dynamics: four elements – boundary, authority, role, task – through which

group-level dynamics get named and held.<sup>22</sup> Influence beyond formal authority (managing up, peer-network advocacy, informal commitment-building) sits in leadership-process, not management. Change-leadership is the same kind of move when the system itself is in transition. Each captures something; none alone defines leadership. 3D borrows where it borrows and stays out of the territory each tradition develops in depth.

Leadership-process emerges from the intersection: a manager engaging modes and holding postures at varying altitudes; others around the work engaging their parts; the system allowing it. None of these alone produces leadership. The intersection does. Leadership isn't the manager's personal output. It's what the whole apparatus produces when each piece gets carried well enough, often enough, in the condi-

tions that make it possible.

The implications follow. Leadership-process doesn't get produced by sending one manager to a workshop. It emerges when conditions allow it, which means individual development AND attention to the team and system around the work. Section 6 develops what collective capability looks like in practice.

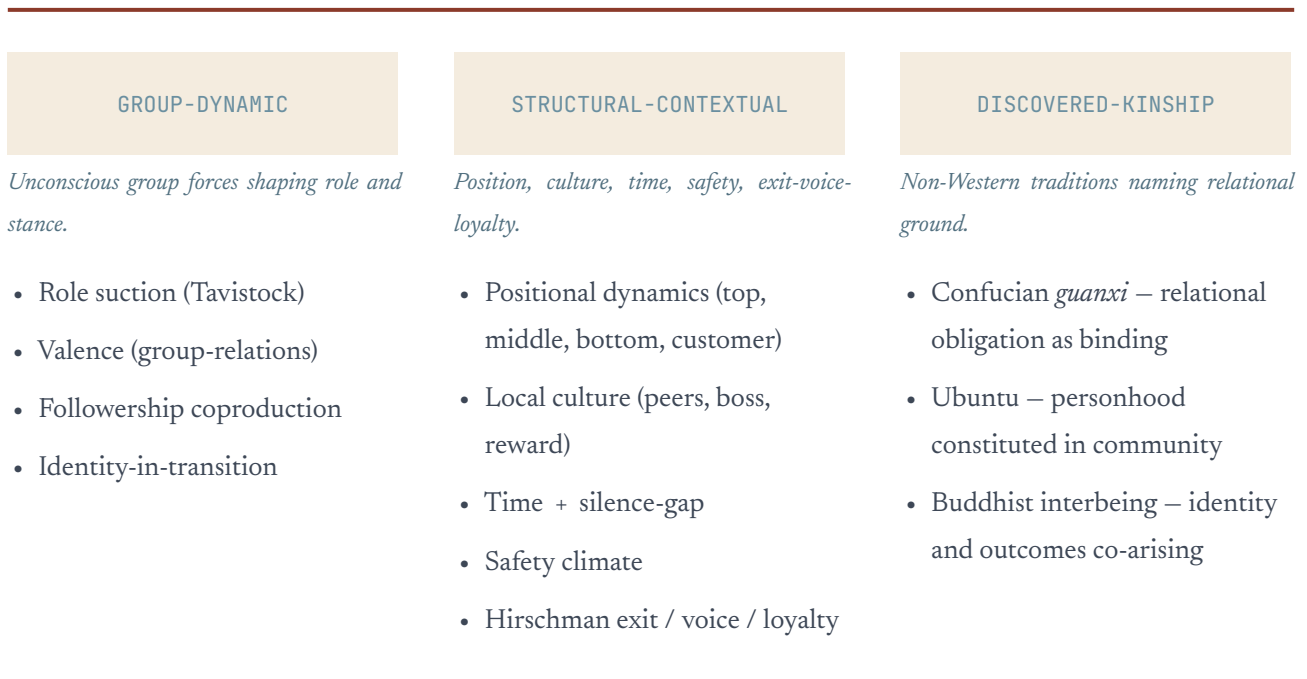
### System pulls

Modes engage inside conditions. The system (group dynamics, structural position, cultural norms, time, identity in transition) pulls on which mode the manager engages and how. The construct synthesizes mechanisms across multiple traditions; the closest cognate is the Tavistock notion of role suction.<sup>22</sup> Figure 3.2 inventories the mechanisms by cluster.

FIGURE 3.2

### *System pulls – three clusters of conditions that shape mode-engagement.*

*The conditions around the work pull mode-engagement in particular directions, regardless of the manager's intent.*



Group-dynamic pulls. Roles get pulled into shape by the unconscious dynamics of the groups they're in. What looks like a manager's choice is often a role the group is recruiting them into, around anxiety the group is carrying.<sup>22</sup> Followers shape leader behavior; implicit theories and coproduction orientations exert measurable pull from the led to the leading.<sup>23</sup> Identity-in-transition pulls toward modes that maintain who the manager currently is: the engineer-promoted-to-manager pulls toward Do because Doing is where identity rests.<sup>24</sup>

Structural and contextual pulls. Position pulls regardless of who fills it: senior leadership toward isolation, middle to translate up and down, frontline toward defensive cohesion.<sup>25</sup> Local culture pulls toward whatever the team and organization model and reward. Time and expectation pull through the silence gap: a coaching question where the team expected a directive; the silence pulls the manager back unless

they can hold it. Safety climate sets a related condition: whether the team can absorb a mode-shift without rupture.<sup>15</sup> Hirschman's loyalty names the pull toward not-disrupting.<sup>26</sup>

Discovered-kinship pulls. Several traditions theorize relationality as the starting point: Confucian *guanxi*, Ubuntu, Buddhist interbeing.<sup>27</sup> Each starts where 3D's system-pulls construct arrives: the manager's actions are never separable from the relational web they sit in. Section 4 engages these traditions further.

System pulls explains why managers default to moves that don't fit the work. The conditions are pulling against the deliberate engagement the framework calls for. Working with system pulls means working with the conditions, not just the manager's stance, and that's why the framework's implications point past individual training to collective capability.

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# Landscape and Critical Perspectives

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*3D's lineage, its critical interlocutors, and where the framework strains.*

The categorical separation 3D operates on (three management modes plus a leadership dimension) appears across multiple sources: Quinn's Competing Values Framework,<sup>1</sup> Mintzberg's managerial-work taxonomies,<sup>2</sup> Watkins's transition framings,<sup>3</sup> CCL's PMCL.<sup>4</sup> 3D enters the same territory and adds what the curricular forms don't carry: altitude, the cross-cutting postures, system pulls, and a leadership-process treatment.

The framework's deepest lineage is *psychodynamic-informed-developmental*: taking seriously unconscious group/role dynamics, anxiety as a real feature of work-life, practitioner-as-instrument. Tavistock,<sup>22</sup> Heifetz's adaptive tradition,<sup>28</sup> identity-workspace research,<sup>24</sup> and Kets de Vries's clinical approach<sup>29</sup> anchor the family; modes, postures, and altitude draw from neighboring management traditions, while system-pulls and the collective-capability call are the psychodynamic-developmental core.

I ran a separate validation pass: same literature, different method. A cross-validation pipeline distilled eighteen bodies of work into clusters without seeing

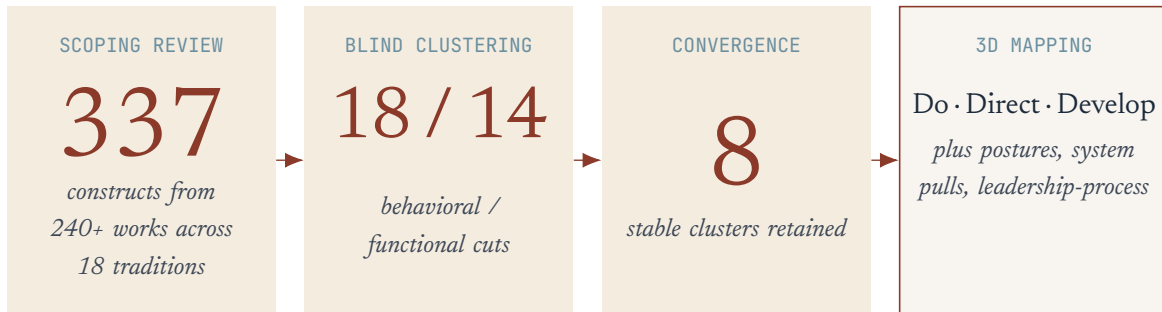
3D's structure, then compared the clusters to 3D's categories. The clusters mapped onto Do, Direct, Develop, the postures, system pulls, and the leadership-process layer without forcing (Figure 4.1). The categorical move 3D makes isn't idiosyncratic; it's recognizable in the structure of the literature when distilled blind. What's contested isn't whether the categories are recognizable; it's what the framework does with them.

The cross-cultural traditions 3D engages (Confucian *guanxi*, Ubuntu, Buddhist interbeing, Indigenous, Daoist *wu wei*) are theoretical conversation partners, not data points to validate.<sup>27, 30, 31, 32</sup> Each is kin to system pulls and challenges 3D's manager-as-locus stance: role *is* personhood in Confucian thought; Ubuntu refuses the autonomous self; Buddhist *right livelihood* presses 3D's productivist horizon; Indigenous traditions resist Western managerial epistemology categorically.

The framework refuses GLOBE-style comparativism that scores non-Western contexts against Western yardsticks.<sup>33</sup>

FIGURE 4.1

*Two independent clustering strategies converged on the same eight stable clusters – mapping cleanly onto 3D’s categories.*



*Convergence between behavioral (18) and functional (14) cuts produced 8 stable clusters. The cross-cutting layer (postures, system pulls, leadership-process) dispersed across clusters rather than forming separate ones – consistent with the claim that these elements cross-cut rather than constitute distinct modes. Methodology details in the back matter.*

Two critical perspectives reach into 3D’s core. The Boltanski-Chiapello / Han critique<sup>17</sup> bites Versatility: the endlessly flexible worker is a feature of how capitalism organizes work. Steward in service of work larger than transaction, and phronesis as situated wisdom rather than continuous availability, are partial answers; neither dissolves the critique. The identity-workspace critique<sup>24,34</sup> presses an adjacent point: any developmental container forms a particular subject. The subject 3D forms is versatile, reflexive, system-aware, stewardship-oriented. The response is structural: own the constructive claim explicitly. Silent absorption is the failure mode.

What gets stuck out of frame is asymmetric. The same Direct performance produces different consequences across identity.<sup>35,36,37</sup> Develop’s relational work codes differently depending on who the manager is. Versatility reads as range for some, untrustworthiness for others.<sup>36</sup> System pulls themselves

land asymmetrically. The lineage has been silent on this; Fotaki, Driver, and Petriglieri’s stranger-leaders work presses the point.<sup>38,39,40</sup> 3D inherits the silence, and won’t, by itself, tell you whether pulls land differently across identities the field’s default doesn’t mark.

*Versatility cannot be taught without naming the asymmetric cost of its performance.*

The honest position: 3D’s pedagogy is not naive about psychic cost but is naive about social cost. Steward cannot be taught without naming the conditions under which the framework asks managers to carry. The asymmetry account belongs in facilitator-prep work that accompanies the framework, and as design constraint on every deployment.

# Limitations

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*Where the framework's camera doesn't reach – and what to do with that.*

The framework places its camera at the manager: what 3D sees from there is what the manager can do, see, hold, and carry. Other vantage points are real and complementary: the group at the center (Tavistock),<sup>22</sup> the follower at the center (followership theory).<sup>23</sup> Each is its own coherent place to point the camera, with its own literature. 3D doesn't replace any of them; the framework treats followership as a pull-mechanism inside system pulls rather than as its own vantage point.

The framework's account of healthy mode-engagement assumes conditions that hold the work: basic safety, a manager with authority latitude, a system that doesn't actively suppress or weaponize the modes. Those conditions aren't always present. In organizations where leadership has become coercive, where psychological safety has collapsed, the framework still applies, but the pulls distort. Do becomes defensive (protecting the manager from blame rather than holding craft alive); Direct becomes fear-based (calling moves the manager doesn't believe in); Develop gets suppressed (because it would surface what the system can't tolerate seeing).<sup>41</sup> The leadership dimension either doesn't emerge at all or emerges as

compliance.

When organizations go bad, people respond in roughly three ways: exit, voice, loyalty.<sup>26</sup> All three become live choices for the manager, but they manifest *through* the modes rather than as alternatives to them. The framework operates as diagnostic where prescription gets harder. Naming what the modes look like under distortion is itself a form of clarity.

3D is a theoretical contribution, not an empirically tested model with measurable predictions. The cross-validation pass showed conceptual coherence (the categorical structure 3D operates on maps onto clusters that surface when the literature is distilled blind), not validation of what the framework predicts. Operationalization as instruments testing differential claims (for example, whether teams led by managers leaning Develop produce better outcomes than teams led by managers leaning Direct under specified conditions) is a different methodology and a different paper. The empirical work that would test 3D's predictive claims is a research agenda the framework opens, not one this paper closes.

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# Where We Go: Collective Implications

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*From individual training to collective capability. Three concrete moves.*

*“The workshop ended.”*

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*“The work did not.”*

A team finishes a two-day 3D Management workshop. The managers leave with new vocabulary: Do, Direct, Develop, Versatility, Steward, system pulls. They know what they were over-doing and what they were under-doing. They have plans. Three months later, most of them have settled back into the modes they came in with. Not because they forgot the framework. Because the team’s reward structure still measures throughput, not capability-building. Because the boss still calls more meetings than the work needs, and the calendar still fragments thinking time into pieces too small to hold any of the modes well.

Knowing the modes is not the work. A manager engaging modes deliberately is necessary. It’s not sufficient. The conditions the team holds together (shared language, real authority, time that allows mode-engagement, reward structures that recognize

the work the modes do) are what makes deliberate mode-engagement possible past the workshop’s last day.

What could have changed the outcome for that team? Not more individual coaching; they got that. Not more workshop content; they got that too. The work that would have made the difference is structural: shared vocabulary so noticing is collective; psychological safety and real authority so mode-shifting holds under pressure; an audit of what the reward structure, the boss, and the calendar actually reinforce. Without those conditions, the framework can name something accurately and still not be allowed to take hold.

Three concrete moves, all consistent with the framework’s collective-implications claim:

# 1 Replace one-off workshops with learning journeys.

*The mode-shifting capacity 3D names doesn't get built in two days.*

A two-day workshop can teach the modes' vocabulary. It can't build the practice of engaging modes deliberately under the conditions a real team and a real system produce. Mode-shifting is practical wisdom of choosing the right mode – developed through practice, refined by misreading and adjusting. Learning journeys span the team's actual work, weaving training into a longer arc of engagement.

*The workshop is the wrong unit of intervention. The arc is.*

# 2 Coach the team, not just the manager.

*The shared vocabulary and shared noticing 3D asks for can't be installed through one-on-one work.*

Individual coaching can help a manager see their default modes, catch their pulls, and engage Versatility more deliberately. It can't make the team co-readers of the work – and without that, the manager carries the framework alone. Team coaching builds vocabulary together, so noticing becomes collective. The team learns to hold the conditions for mode-shifting under pressure, rather than sliding into default patterns when stakes rise.

*Individual coaching builds a manager. Team coaching builds the conditions a manager needs to operate in.*

# 3 Make what gets noticed measurable.

*The reading capacity at the heart of Versatility has been operationalized empirically.*

Versatility depends on what the manager notices – who holds authority, what bodies signal, what the group is for, what's happening for the manager inside. These habits of attention have been measured. The Group Dynamics Awareness Questionnaire measures group-dynamics awareness across four dimensions of attention; used developmentally, the instrument gives managers and teams a way to map their own habits and identify where they default.<sup>16</sup>

*What gets named gets noticed. What gets measured gets developed.*

The framework can show you where leadership-process emerges. It can't summon it. What this section names is the shape of the work that produces it: work that runs over months rather than days, that engages the team rather than the manager alone, and that uses real diagnostic instruments rather than re-

lying on intuition. The work itself is yours.

# Methodology

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*How the framework was built: scoping review, blind clustering, convergence.*

The framework was developed through an iterative scoping review of management and leadership scholarship spanning roughly a century, from the foundational management writings of the 1910s and 1920s through contemporary organizational research. Over 240 distinct works were engaged across 18 traditions over 8 iterations, generating a 337-construct catalog. Saturation served as the criterion: iteration continued until additional items surfaced refinement of existing categories rather than new ones. The catalog spans foundational management, group-relations and Tavistock scholarship, leadership-style traditions (transformational, transactional, charismatic, servant, stewardship, authentic), developmental and identity-workspace work, critical management studies, and cross-cultural traditions including Confucian, Ubuntu, Buddhist, and Indigenous sources.

A separate inductive cross-validation pass tested the framework against the catalog using two independent clustering strategies that did not have access to 3D's structure. A behavioral cut produced 18 clusters; a functional cut produced 14. Their convergence yielded 8 stable clusters: the categorical structure the literature surfaces when allowed to organize itself. Capability-building and operational structuring corresponded cleanly to Develop and Direct. The cross-cutting layer (postures, system pulls, leadership-as-process) did not surface as separate stable clusters; its content dispersed across multiple clus-

ters, consistent with the claim that these elements cross-cut rather than constitute separate modes.

The work used Claude (Anthropic) as a writing and analytic partner under Anthropic's *AI Fluency Framework* (Dakan, Feller, & Anthropic, 2025): the 4D model of Delegation, Description, Discernment, and Diligence.<sup>42</sup> Bricolas adopts and recognizes this framework as the operating standard for AI-assisted scholarly work. In practice for this brief: framework architecture, honest-finding determinations, and the categorical moves stayed with author Delegation; structured prompts carried literature synthesis and citation verification (Description); blind-clustering passes, executed by separate model instances structurally blocked from accessing the framework's categories, plus per-citation claim-fit checks served as Discernment; bibliographic verification and the final author review functioned as Diligence. AI assistance executed substantial portions of synthesis and verification work; author judgment carried framework decisions and the publication call.

The framework is a theoretical contribution, not an empirical study. The cross-validation corroborates conceptual coherence, not predictive accuracy. Empirical operationalization (instruments testing differential predictions) is a research agenda the framework opens, not one this paper closes.

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# About the author

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## PRACTICE

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John Weng, PhD is the founder and principal of Bricolas, a leadership development practice in San Diego, California focused on executive coaching, team development, and supervision for senior leaders, partners, and founders. He also serves as a leadership coach and consultant at the University of Cambridge Judge Business School, supporting participants of the General Management Programme and the Advanced Leadership Programme.

## SCHOLARSHIP

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Dissertation: *Development of the Group Dynamics Awareness Questionnaire (GDAQ): A Mixed Methods Study* – developing and testing an instrument for measuring habits of attention practitioners use when reading groups. Published work appears in *New Directions for Student Leadership* and the *Journal of Leadership Education*, with empirical and theoretical contributions on case-in-point pedagogy, intentional emergence in leadership development, and learner-centered design. Recent work appears in the Emerald edited volume *Moving the Needle* (2025).

## CREDENTIALS

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PhD in Leadership Studies, University of San Diego (2024). Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and ICF Advanced Certificate in Team Coaching (ACTC) through the International Coaching Federation. Post-graduate Certificate of Advanced Study in Coaching Supervision. The practice draws on group-relations methodology, adaptive-leadership tradition, developmental scholarship, and coaching-supervision practice.

## CONTACT

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# Bricolas

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*Bricolas is composed practice – moves drawn from a wide repertoire of frameworks, designed for this team, this leader, this room as it actually is.*

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CITE AS

Weng, J. (2026). *3D Management™: A Modal Approach to Managing and Leading*. Bricolas. v1.0 · May 2026.

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