

Discovering the Meaning of Leadership: A Canadian First Nations Exploration¹

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ABSTRACT

First Nations Canadians are in a unique cultural context, with values resulting from both traditional, heritage influences and Eurocentric Canadian influences. Different patterns of endorsing heritage versus mainstream values have resulted. This research examined leadership preferences in First Nations individuals. Linking acculturation patterns to descriptors of leadership attributes that enhance or inhibit outstanding leadership, characteristics of leadership prototypes were developed for members of four acculturative strategy groups. These leadership prototypes were then compared with existing academic leadership theories.

¹ In an effort to be sensitive to the derogatory effects of colloquial language and prescribed Indigenous terminology, the following terms are used throughout this work when referring to Indigenous Canadians, without reference to their specific origins and identities: Native Canadian(s), First Nation(s), and First Peoples. Terms such as Aboriginal or Indian are only used only if they are part of a quotation or material referenced from another source or are used in legislation or policy and only in the context of discussion of that legislation or policy. Likewise, Native Canadian is used explicitly in place of Native American unless the latter term is part of a quotation from another source. Native 'Canadian' is used to clearly identify this work as set in the context of the larger Canadian society, as opposed to other parts of North America.

While the important contributions to Canadian history and present society by the nations of the Métis and Inuit peoples are not discounted, this work focuses strictly on First Nations people and their conceptions of leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The pluralistic nature of Canadian society creates an interesting dynamic in terms of leadership research. Native Canadians are in a unique situation compared to others who might be termed visible minorities in Canada. As an Indigenous minority people, their experiences with leadership are founded on strong values and traditions, but layered with history and leadership experiences based on values and expectations of the culture(s) of those who came later as colonizers. History is marred by multiple examples of European autocratic leadership that made formal attempts to exterminate First Nations peoples. When these attempts ultimately failed, religious and national leadership tried to influence the assimilation of the surviving First Nations individuals into the now dominant Canadian society. Reserve systems, Indian agents, and residential school systems sought, through leadership, to exemplify North American ideals of hierarchy, bureaucracy, meritocracy, and power.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between acculturation strategies and implicit leadership preferences. The relationship between these constructs was examined from a Native Canadian context—one not typically explored in leadership research, but a relationship that should be examined due to the unique positioning of First Nations Canadians as a subculture within a dominant Eurocentric culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically researchers have focused on the role of the leader as directing the activities of others, and have often ignored the role the followers or subordinates play in actually receiving and complying with this leadership direction (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999). Contrary to the perspective of followers as passive receivers of leadership, there is a growing body of research that views leadership through a follower-centric lens (Baker, 2007), with followers identified as active participants in the leadership process. Two areas are of particular importance to this perspective. First is an understanding of the effect of follower ideology (e.g. Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007), and the second is the idea of implicit leadership theories (e.g., Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984), which highlights the importance of realizing that followers come to leadership situations with preformed schemas of prototypical leadership examples to fit each specific context.

Followership Ideology

Meindl and his colleagues (1985) used theory and research to develop a follower-centred perspective on leadership, demonstrating that the leadership process is constructed by followers, not leaders (Meindl, 1995; Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). According to this research stream, leadership emergence and effectiveness is heavily influenced by the cognitive processes of followers, as well as the social processes between followers (Day Gronn, & Sales, 2004; Maroosis, 2008). Both personalities and values of followers impact preferences for leadership style (Thoroughgood & Sawyer, 2018). This, in conjunction with

the social dynamics of the group, sets the stage for how leaders are perceived and to some extent dictate the willingness of followers to comply with directives.

Lord (2008) also refers to leadership as a mutual influence process, whereby a leader's behaviour is reflective of both subordinate performance and the attributions the leader makes with respect to that performance. Likewise, follower performance and the ability of the leader to motivate performance is indicative of the credit given by the follower to the social power of the leader and the degree to which the leader fits the leadership schemas possessed by the follower (Lord, 2008). Followers interpret "social processes ... based on their own internal cognitive and affective schema, and followers' responses are guided by self-regulatory structures that are closely tied to their active self-identity" (Lord, 2008, p. 256). Leadership receptiveness and effectiveness is therefore determined by follower schemas.

Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007) contend that leadership is socially constructed at both the individual and the group levels. At the group level, follower perceptions are aggregated and transformed through the social processes that define the group, resulting in informal social structures that also exert influence over the leadership process (Lord, 2008). Leaders, therefore, have the ability to effect change in followers' self-regulatory structures, but at the same time are constrained by the social structures that have emerged as part of the dynamics of the followers' group (Lord, 2008; Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). The leadership relationship is based on influence whereby followers participate actively, lending their support to those leaders who reflect their mutual purposes. In this sense then "followership is not a part of leadership — leadership is a part of followership" (Adair, 2008, p. 138).

Implicit Leadership

A more recent development guided by the follower-centric approach is the conception of underlying individual level ideals regarding leadership (Lord et al., 1984). This line of research suggests that followers use implicit, preconceived notions regarding what constitutes a leader in order to determine whether or not a particular individual fits the proposed leadership role. Moreover, these preconceived ideals are used to determine whether the person will have the ability to exert influence over the follower and to what degree.

Implicit leadership theories go beyond social exchange. In other words, in order for an individual to be deemed a leader, it must be perceived, and then accepted, that the individual has the required behaviours and traits to be an effective leader within a specific context (Lord & Maher, 1991). In this manner, the process of leadership lies not solely in the social exchange of influence and coercion (as in transactional leadership; Bass, 1990; or paternalistic leadership; Aycan et al., 2000), but rather in the recognition of the "fit between an observed person's characteristics with the perceiver's implicit ideas of what 'leaders' are" (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999, p. 225).

Implicit leadership theories are categorization systems that are relied upon during information processing to encode, interpret, process, and recall specific events and behaviours, which ultimately develop into heuristics that people rely on in order to interpret new experiences (Shaw, 1990). For example, an individual who has had multiple experiences with various leaders will begin to develop schemas consistent with the positive and negative outcomes associated with those previous experiences. Faced with a similar circumstance, the individual will draw on this prototype (collection of characteristics and traits) to assess the fit between the characteristics and behaviours of an emerging leader to determine his or her potential effectiveness in this scenario (Den Hartog et al., 1999). In this regard, followers are

instrumental in the development of the leadership process, by virtue of their perceptions of what it means to be a leader (Baker, 2007; Lord et al., 1999).

Culture

Leadership preferences and prototypes are impacted by follower values, including salient cultural values (Thiagarajan & Lukas, 1971; House Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). Lord and Maher (1991) argue that culture actually plays a significant role in the formation of leadership prototypes (see also, Den Hartog et al., 1999; Kriger & Seng, 2005; and Shafer, Vierregge, & Youngsoo, 2005). Specifically, they argue that leadership perceptions can be derived from either inference or recognition. Leadership can be attributed (i.e., inferred) as a result of outcomes of a specific event or sequence of events. Alternatively, leadership can be recognized based on the perceived “fit” between a person’s personal characteristics and behaviours, and the context — leadership is perceived in accordance with implicit assumptions regarding how a leader behaves in a given situation. Attribution tendencies and implicit assumptions are derivative of cultural norms and artifacts (Den Hartog et al., 1999; Lord & Maher, 1991). As such, it is important to consider the nature of culture as it pertains to the development of leadership prototypes and the distinction between prototypes that arise in different cultural contexts. Specifically, in the context of this research, culture was examined by addressing the issue of acculturation and the plausibility that the degree of acculturation to the mainstream culture may in fact influence leadership preferences.

Acculturation

Acculturation occurs when two or more groups with different cultures come into first-hand contact with one another on a continuous basis, and where that contact results in changes or adaptations in individuals from one or more of the groups (Berry, 1997). Acculturation can be voluntary, in the sense that one group actively pursues contact with another group by freely choosing to make the move to another cultural environment; it can also be involuntary — for example, refugees, who make a move under duress to escape extreme social or political hardships that gravely affect personal safety. Alternately, acculturation can be both involuntary and imposed, as in the case of conquered nations (e.g., colonialism and Indigenous people).

In today’s multicultural society, and as a direct effect of culture as well as acculturation, many individuals are faced with interpreting social interactions through more than one cultural lens. Recent immigrants interpret situations with schemata (categorization systems shaped by values, beliefs, and attitudes) that may differ from those possessed by those who have been in a new culture for a longer period of time. These schemata are influenced by individuals’ home culture as well as by their acquired level of acculturation within the mainstream society. Similarly, it is plausible to consider that Indigenous minority groups (i.e., First Peoples) may also possess schemas that may lead to conceptualizations of social processes that differ from those found in the mainstream culture. The extent of this difference may be relative to the degree of change that has occurred as a function of their level of acculturation. According to Berry (1997), in deciding *how* to acculturate, individuals and groups have to resolve two issues: “Is it considered to be of value to maintain one’s identity and characteristics? Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with larger soci-

ety?” In the context of this research, different acculturative strategies indicate the degree to which First Nations individuals adhere to their heritage worldviews or to those of the mainstream Anglo-Canadian culture. Research suggests that First Nations individuals in Canada generally resolve these issues by conforming to one of four patterns of acculturation (Stonefish & Kwantes, 2017). The first is maintaining identification with both mainstream and heritage acculturation (“Attached”), while others maintain lower attachment to both (“Detached”). The third is to have attachment to both cultures but slightly stronger attachment to heritage (“Heritage Positive”), and the fourth is to have attachments to both but with stronger attachment to mainstream culture (“Mainstream Positive”). Drawing on existing leadership theories from academic literature, the current research examined characteristics of leadership prototypes for members of each of these groups and compared these with existing (mainstream) leadership theories and prototypes.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were recruited using the snowball technique, and the final sample comprised 73 female and 30 male adults between the ages of 22 and 70 ($M = 46.21$, $SD = 13.49$, median 47) who self-identified as Native Canadian. Participants represented 11 First Nations from across Canada. The majority of participants had lived at some point on reserve (range 0–69 years), with 75% of participants meeting the original five year residency requirement. Nearly 69% of participants had a college diploma or higher, and 81.6% were employed at the time of completing the survey. With respect to employment history, 45.6% of participants indicated that their previous employment had been predominantly on reserve.

Survey and Measures

The survey invitation received by email invited participants to complete the survey online or to request a paper-and-pencil copy be mailed to them. Fifty-eight participants completed the survey online; 37 requested and returned paper-and-pencil versions. These methods have been found to be largely congruent (De Beuckelaer & Lievens, 2009; Davidov & Depner, 2011), and statistical analysis of the data for the current research also reviewed no significant differences.

Vancouver Index of Acculturation

Acculturation was measured using the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA) (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). This measure consists of 20 items rated on a 9 point Likert-type scale, where 1 indicates *strongly disagree* and 9 indicates *strongly agree*. Items indicating attachment to heritage culture include *I often participate in my heritage cultural traditions*, while items indicating attachment to mainstream culture include *I often participate in mainstream North American cultural traditions*. Based on the pattern of attachment to the two cultures, participants were grouped into the four categories identified by Stonefish and Kwantes (2017): Detached (low on both heritage and mainstream), Attached (high on both heritage and mainstream), Mainstream Positive (higher on mainstream than heritage), and Heritage Positive (higher on heritage than mainstream).

Leadership Behaviours

Behaviours and characteristics associated with leadership were derived from the GLOBE studies (Hanges & Dickson, 2004). Participants were asked to rate seventy leadership characteristics on a Likert scale from 1–7, according to the extent to which they believed that the particular behaviour or characteristic (1) *greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader* to (7) *contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader*, with (4) indicating that the item *has no impact on whether a person is an outstanding leader*. Example items of behaviours and characteristics include: *Domineering (Inclined to dominate others)* and *Trustworthy (Deserves trust, can be believed and relied upon to keep his or her word)*.

RESULTS

Mean levels of endorsement of each of the behaviours or characteristics were calculated separately for each acculturation group. An examination of the responses for each behaviour or characteristic individually indicated that there were several significant differences in the level of endorsement for many of the items. One-way ANOVA with Scheffe post hoc analyses suggest that the Detached group in particular has a significantly different level of endorsement of a number of the leadership behaviours and characteristics when taken one at a time (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Mean Levels of Attribute Endorsement by Group

Leader Attributes	Detached	Attached	Mainstream Positive	Heritage Positive
Administratively skilled ¹	5.43	6.51	6.29	6.10
Anticipatory ¹	4.79	5.86	5.85	5.96
Arrogant ¹	2.14	1.41	1.86	1.70
Asocial ¹	2.07	1.54	1.86	1.50
Autocratic ¹	2.57	1.83	2.64	2.25
Autonomous ¹	3.86	3.61	3.43	3.10
Bossy ¹	2.79	1.83	1.93	1.85
Calm	4.64	6.24	6.07	5.65
Clear	5.43	6.46	6.64	6.50
Collaborative ¹	5.36	6.44	6.07	6.25
Compassionate	4.79	6.02	5.89	5.80
Consultative	4.93	6.15	5.96	6.00
Convincing ¹	4.29	5.20	5.36	5.45
Decisive ¹	5.07	5.63	5.50	5.55
Dependable ³	5.57	6.54	6.32	6.65
Dictatorial	2.64	1.39	1.71	1.55
Diplomatic ²	4.43	6.61	6.61	6.40
Dishonest ¹	1.71	1.22	1.36	1.20
Distant ¹	2.21	1.63	2.04	1.50

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Table 1 continued.

Leader Attributes	Detached	Attached	Mainstream Positive	Heritage Positive
Domineering ¹	2.14	1.41	1.68	1.50
Egocentric ¹	2.29	1.34	1.71	1.55
Egotistical ¹	2.21	1.51	1.50	1.55
Encouraging ²	4.79	6.54	6.43	6.65
Enthusiastic	5.00	6.37	5.93	5.90
Evasive ¹	2.86	3.73	3.86	3.60
Formal ³	4.36	5.73	5.57	5.95
Fraternal	3.57	4.02	4.30	5.07
Generous ¹	4.71	5.85	5.68	5.20
Honest ²	4.86	6.51	6.39	6.75
Improvement-oriented ¹	4.71	5.83	5.86	5.50
Independent ¹	3.79	4.05	3.64	4.45
Inspirational ²	5.07	6.63	6.43	6.40
Integrator ¹	4.21	5.54	5.54	4.80
Intellectually Stimulating ²	4.43	6.34	6.21	6.20
Intelligent ³	5.29	6.71	6.29	6.40
Intra-group Competitor ¹	2.86	2.73	3.11	2.95
Intra-group Conflict Avoider ¹	3.64	3.37	3.71	3.70
Irritable ¹	1.86	1.56	1.86	1.50
Just ²	4.36	6.39	6.07	6.40
Loner ¹	2.14	1.73	2.21	1.75
Loyal ¹	4.93	6.10	5.61	5.55
Mediator ²	4.43	6.51	5.89	6.35
Modest ³	4.29	6.10	5.36	6.35
Morale Booster ²	4.93	6.44	6.32	6.65
Motivational ²	5.07	6.54	6.39	6.35
Motive Arouser ²	4.71	6.15	6.29	6.30
Non-egalitarian ¹	2.36	1.61	1.64	1.20
Non-explicit ¹	2.43	2.59	2.79	2.20
Orderly ¹	4.93	5.41	5.54	5.55
Positive ²	4.64	6.71	6.46	5.90
Prepared	5.36	6.39	6.07	5.85
Provocateur ¹	2.71	2.32	2.71	4.00
Risk Averse ¹	2.86	3.02	3.89	3.30
Risk Taker ¹	3.43	4.32	3.46	4.10
Ruthless ¹	2.21	1.51	1.71	1.65
Secretive ¹	2.29	1.80	2.04	1.45
Self-effacing ²	3.93	5.83	5.75	5.45
Self-interested ¹	3.50	2.12	2.39	3.60
Self-sacrificial ²	4.29	5.85	5.79	5.45
Sensitive ¹	4.07	5.12	5.46	5.60
Sincere ²	4.64	6.56	6.39	6.25
Subdued ¹	2.64	3.15	2.96	3.25
Tender ¹	2.29	2.34	2.71	2.70
Trustworthy ²	4.36	6.80	6.50	6.55
Tyrannical ¹	2.29	1.41	1.64	1.45
Unique ¹	4.86	5.22	4.89	5.10
Vindictive ¹	1.93	1.46	1.50	1.20
Visionary ³	5.43	6.61	6.36	6.70
Win/Win Problem-solver ²	4.50	6.39	6.25	6.05
Worldly ²	4.29	5.71	5.86	5.65

Notes: 1. No significant differences between groups; 2. Detached group is significantly different than others; 3. No single group was statistically significantly different from all other groups.

TABLE 2
Characteristics That Enhance and Inhibit Outstanding Leadership by
Acculturation Group

Detached	Attached	Mainstream Positive	Heritage Positive
<i>Attributes Enhancing Outstanding Leadership</i>			
Dependable	Trustworthy	Clear	Honest
Administratively Skilled	Positive	Diplomatic	Visionary
Clear	Intelligent	Trustworthy	Encouraging
Visionary	Inspirational	Positive	Morale Booster
Collaborative	Diplomatic	Inspirational	Dependable
<i>Attributes Inhibiting Outstanding Leadership</i>			
Domineering	Arrogant	Tyrannical	Tyrannical
Asocial	Domineering	Non-egalitarian	Secretive
Vindictive	Dictatorial	Vindictive	Vindictive
Irritable	Egocentric	Egotistical	Non-egalitarian
Dishonest	Dishonest	Dishonest	Dishonest

When the level of endorsement of the various leadership behaviours and characteristics are rank ordered within acculturation groups, some interesting patterns emerge. Table 2 presents the top five behaviours or characteristics indicated as contributing to outstanding leadership as well as the five that are viewed as most strongly inhibiting outstanding leadership in each acculturation group.

DISCUSSION

At the specific item level, there were few items that were viewed as significantly different by members of the four acculturation groups. However, when examining the rank ordering of the items, some intriguing patterns emerged in how individuals in the four acculturation groups view the behaviours and characteristics that relate to outstanding leadership and those that most strongly inhibit outstanding leadership. With respect to endorsement of characteristics that lead to successful leadership, the Attached and Mainstream Positive groups had a great deal of similarity, in that four of the five top characteristics were shared (Trustworthy, Positive, Diplomatic, Inspirational), while the Heritage Positive and Detached groups shared two of the top five characteristics (Visionary and Dependable). The most noteworthy finding was that, regardless of acculturation strategies of the group, all groups were unanimous in identifying “Dishonest — fraudulent, insincere” as being the characteristic that most inhibits an individual from being an outstanding leader. Interestingly, this is not one of the leadership attributes that the GLOBE project reported as a characteristic universally rejected as a descriptor of an outstanding leader in their multinational research (House & Javidan, 2004). The Mainstream Positive and the Heritage Positive groups both reported “Tyrannical” and “Non-Egalitarian” as the characteristics that most strongly inhibit outstanding leadership.

Detached

The detached acculturation strategy shares similarities with marginalization (Berry, 1997). This strategy results in individuals who are, to an extent, disconnected from both the mainstream culture and their heritage culture. Stonefish and Kwantes (2017) suggest that individuals who adopt this acculturation strategy may adopt a more individualistic worldview, and focus on their own individual uniqueness rather than their group membership. Their research found that this strategy was related to placing a relatively high emphasis on the value of power — that is, control over resources and control over people. Interestingly, in this research, the group that comprised individuals who report a detached acculturative strategy was the only group to endorse “Administratively Skilled” as one of the top five leadership characteristics that lead to success. They also had the only emphasis on relationships as important to leadership, in that they endorsed “Collaborative” as a skill leading to success, and “Asocial” as a skill inhibiting leadership success. Further, “Irritable” was one of the five characteristics most strongly and negatively related to leadership success.

For those who indicated a Detached strategy of acculturation, the characteristics and behaviours most related to successful leadership were Dependable, Administrative Skill, Clear, Visionary, and Collaborative. Those that most inhibited leadership success were Dishonest, Irritable, Vindictive, Asocial, and Domineering. This pattern of leadership preferences ties in most closely with descriptions of transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is an exchange-based relationship, focusing on transactions where followers’ needs are met by the leader in accordance with their performance, or “the proper exchange of resources” (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, p. 755). Transactional leaders focus on administrative tasks, ensure that subordinates have role and task clarity, and reward efforts with pay and recognition (Bass, 1985). While many leadership types identified by theorists have characteristics in common, it was thought that behaviours that members of this group considered important to leadership were most strongly related to transactional-type leadership due to the high level of importance placed on both “dependable” and “administratively skilled” as the top two characteristics of a good leader.

Attached

Individuals who indicated that they had a high degree of attachment with both cultures comprised the “Attached” group. These individuals place a high emphasis on their ties with both their heritage culture and the mainstream Canadian culture. They tend to place little value on power, either over things or people, and have a strong endorsement of social equality with a commitment to justice and tolerance (Stonefish & Kwantes, 2017). The leadership attributes most closely related to leadership success for this group were: Trustworthy, Positive, Intelligent, Inspirational, and Diplomatic, while the attributes least related to success were Arrogant, Domineering, Dictatorial, Egocentric, and Dishonest.

This pattern of responses is very reminiscent of charismatic leadership. According to Avolio and colleagues (2009) a charismatic leader transforms the “needs, values, and aspirations of followers from individual to collective interests” (p. 286). Charismatic leaders articulate clear and appealing visions, are skilled at motivating subordinates, inspiring activity and creativity, and are trustworthy and honest. The style of leadership is positive, encouraging, and enthusiastic, characteristics which support morale boosting and being able to easily persuade people to a certain point of view. One of the key characteristics of charismatic leadership is the affective nature of the leader–follower relationship (Lang, 1991), and an emphasis on a collective identity (Yukl, 1999). Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) theorized

that situational keys to successful charismatic leadership include opportunities for connecting values to actions, when it is not clear what performance goals are, and when there are high levels of uncertainty. It may not be surprising, therefore, that this type of leader is preferred by those who are simultaneously attached to both mainstream and heritage cultures.

Mainstream Positive

While members of this group have some attachment to both mainstream and heritage cultures, the attachment to the mainstream culture is stronger. They maintain heritage values, to an extent, but are motivated to fit in with mainstream culture. While valuing power, those who opt for this acculturative strategy also value equality and justice and have lower tolerance for individual differences (Stonefish & Kwantes, 2017). The leadership attributes most strongly tied to success were almost identical to those indicated by the Attached group: Diplomatic, Trustworthy, Positive, and Inspirational. Rather than “Intelligent” however, the Mainstream Positive indicated “Clear” (easily understood) as the fifth attribute associated with outstanding leadership. With respect to the attributes deemed to most strongly inhibit outstanding leadership, there was less overlap with the Attached group — only “Dishonest” was indicated by both. The Mainstream Positive group reported Egotistical, Vindictive, Non-egalitarian, and Tyrannical as the attributes that most strongly inhibited leadership success.

This pattern of leadership characteristics is consistent with definitions of team oriented leadership; Team-oriented leadership has a core focus of organizing people toward a goal (House & Javidan, 2004). Team-oriented leadership emphasizes “effective team building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members” (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 24). This style of leadership facilitates autonomy and actively supports individual diversity in order to meet the desired goals of the group. It is not surprising to find these perceptions of leadership qualities as leading to or inhibiting success, as this perception in some way reflects Native worldviews of collectivist decision making and to some degree decentralized leadership, in that the team-oriented leader acts to facilitate group activity by removing the hierarchical structure of leadership and working on an even plane with subordinates to coordinate activity and collaborate with the team. This pattern of attribute endorsement also has echoes of Eurocentric culture, in that mainstream Canadian culture has been described as individualistic, therefore emphasizing autonomy, as well as valuing collective goals (House & Javidan, 2004).

Heritage Positive

Individuals who form this group have attachments to both mainstream and heritage cultures, but stronger ties to the heritage culture. Consistent with this, members of this group often make efforts to contribute to their heritage culture groups and to cultivate traditions (Stonefish & Kwantes, 2017). Given that there are ties to both cultures, however, it is important to note that individuals in this group, while endorsing a connection to tradition and heritage cultures, still maintain some level of connection with the more mainstream Eurocentric culture of Canada. Thus, some level of individualistic motivation may persist, even while pursuing a connection to heritage groups and traditions. Consistent with this, the attributes most strongly related to outstanding leadership endorsed by this group were Honest, Visionary, Encouraging, Morale Booster, and Dependable. The leadership attributes viewed as most inhibitive of successful leadership were Dishonest, Non-egalitarian, Vindictive, Secretive, and Tyrannical.

Not surprisingly, the pattern of attitudes endorsed by this group is suggestive of servant leadership. Servant leadership represents a style of leading that honours equality, integrity, empowerment, empathy, and humility. Individuals employing this leadership style are service motivated and endorse fairness, shared responsibility, creativity and a future orientation. They foster teamwork, collaboration, and connectedness within the group. Moreover, they forego personal gains in favour of the greater good, exhibiting characteristics of compassion and modesty (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Servant leadership traits have much in common with Native worldviews. For example, the recognition of the reciprocal nature of learning and influence results in promoting an equal distribution of power and resources and acknowledges that each member of the team makes a valid contribution to the group. This leadership style emphasizes behaving with integrity and fairness; trustworthiness and dependability are a natural result.

A servant leader will position himself or herself to benefit intrinsically from the knowledge that the follower can impart and then redistribute that knowledge for the benefit of the whole. Understanding that this relationship is reciprocal, the servant leader will motivate and inspire rather than restrict and direct so that the group may benefit beyond the sum of its parts. Moreover, servant leadership has a collective component whereby the greater good is always being served (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Equal rights and privileges for all, collaboration, intellectual stimulation, compassion, and self-sacrifice all serve to enhance the collective. When the collective goes beyond the work team, sports team, or other micro-social system, to the larger social network, heritage culture will not only be endorsed, but maintained.

Summary

Using rank-ordering of the extent to which leadership attributes foster or inhibit outstanding leadership provided a picture of what ideal leadership looks like for First Nations individuals who fit into one of four different acculturative strategy groups. The relative importance of the various leadership attributes in each group suggested similarities with extant leadership descriptions and theories. Given the small number of respondents in each group, as well as the fact that only the five most strongly endorsed attributes of outstanding leadership in conjunction with the five most strongly endorsed attributes that inhibit outstanding leadership were used to develop the descriptions, the suggestion of similarities with current leadership theories from the literature is intended only as a bridge between native views and implicit leadership theories. By linking Indigenous worldviews with leadership prototypes from the larger, global literature on leadership, it is possible to develop and test hypotheses that can lead to better understandings of opportunities and challenges for First Nations and non-Indigenous individuals interacting within the larger Eurocentric Canadian society.

Limitations

Some potential confounds in the current research include sample size, selection bias, generalizability, and measurement error. The small sample size in this research means that the findings should be interpreted with caution, as they may not generalize. Additionally, although participants voluntarily elected to participate in this study, they most likely differed in important ways from those who chose not to participate. Research can be a contentious

issue in many Native communities and for many individual First Nations members; as such, recruitment, retention, and selection bias posed challenges. Snowball sampling techniques may have compounded the selection bias concerns, inasmuch as representativeness of the sample cannot be guaranteed. However, given the uniqueness of the sample, the under-representativeness of leadership research with First Nations people, and the general skepticism of this population towards being “researched to death” (Schnarch, 2004), the sampling technique can be justified as a means to initiate research in this field using First Nations participants. Snowball sampling relies on “friends of friends” to pass the recruiting information along and move the research beyond possibly limiting constraints (for example, a university participant pool where unique populations may not constitute a large enough portion of the sample). Additionally, word of mouth has the benefit of generating positive reactions to the research and interest in the results.

Moreover, a self-report questionnaire poses its own set of potential confounds. Participants may answer each question randomly without seriously considering the meaning of the questions or the implications of his or her responses. Conversely, social desirability may lead participants to attempt to “read into” the desires of the researcher and answer questions in ways they perceive best fit the goals of the researcher or the project. This error component of the research process cannot be entirely controlled for. In this instance the personal contacts and snowball sampling technique counteracted some of this potential confound by enlisting participants who had a genuine interest in the outcome of the research.

These findings have several conceptual and practical implications. This research, like the GLOBE project, reveals leadership preference; that is, this research paints a picture of what ideal leadership looks like, and how acculturation may impact that picture. Identification of preferences does not immediately lead to answers; however, identifying leadership preferences that would increase employee retention and commitment has benefits beyond the scope of this project.

As businesses tend to become more diverse, much more emphasis has been placed on diversity management and its effects on overall organizational commitment. Diversity management in the workplace needs to be about more than simply the mix of differences within the workforce and the efforts to have that mix work together smoothly. In fact, diversity management needs to move toward a deeper understanding of what constitutes cultural uniqueness and how this differentially affects employment outcomes. For example, organizations such as Indigenous Works actively engage in organizational development programs to assist in highlighting strengths and uniqueness in order to overcome barriers to Indigenous employment at the organizational level and to establish and maintain a culture of inclusion. This research has the potential to encourage future projects aimed at exploring barriers to inclusion in other cultural contexts.

Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan (2007), in their review of research on cross-cultural organizational behaviour, draw the following conclusions (among others): future research needs to address critical questions regarding the dynamics of intercultural encounters (the “cultural interface”); and, Indigenous perspectives need to be prioritized. Consistent with this direction, this research sought to examine the cultural interface between First Nation and Anglo-Canadian cultures in terms of values and leadership style preferences. Additionally, this research gave voice to a population that will become heavily relied upon to address the skilled labour shortages as the Anglo-Canadian population continues to age and approach retirement, yet one that remains grossly under-represented in industrial/organizational literature. Gelfand et al. (2007) contend that Indigenous perspectives “contribute to the develop-

ment of more universal knowledge and more sustainable and appropriate strategies for fostering human resource development and productivity in other cultures” (p. 498).

Given the small sample size, this research represents an initial attempt at empirically documenting Native worldviews and mental pictures of leadership — thus answering Gelfand and colleagues’ call for prioritizing Indigenous perspectives. Highlighting similarities, capitalizing on strengths, and actively searching for ways to address the disconnect between what First Peoples envision in a leader and what mainstream society and organizations assume everyone desires will prove beneficial to the larger social network.

Businesses are becoming increasingly diverse, even within our own national borders. Social culture exerts significant influence over individuals, and in a multicultural society there exist multiple social cultures that influence individuals differently, depending on the context. As Canada’s Indigenous population is growing at six times the rate of the non-Indigenous population, the influence Native Canadians will have at all levels of organizations will only increase (Indigenous Works, n.d.). Developing research projects to continue this line of exploration will foster deeper understandings of what constitutes cultural differences and similarities, and how these may affect employment outcomes and organizational culture, in addition to providing the foundation for the development of leadership training and development programs to engage leaders in organizational change and follower development.

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