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LEADERSHIP IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:
MĀORI AND PĀKEHĀ PERCEPTIONS OF OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management at Massey University,
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Dale Marie Pfeifer
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ABSTRACT

Exploring the leadership of New Zealand’s diverse cultural groups is of great importance in providing effective leadership. New Zealand’s population is diverse and rapidly changing (Statistics New Zealand, 2004b), resulting in leader-follower relationships increasingly being enacted in the cross-cultural context. As research suggests, cultural variations of leadership exist (Brodbeck et al., 2000; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), and inappropriate leadership could stifle the leadership process (Lord & Maher, 1993), it may be especially important to recognise cultural difference in leadership.

Well-respected leadership theorists suggest that leadership behaviour is both culturally similar and different (Brodbeck et al., 2000; House et al., 2004), with distinct prototypes of leadership existing in each culture. Followers will only be influenced by leaders’ behaviour which they recognise from that prototype (Lord & Maher, 1993). To be effective, leaders’ behaviour must match followers’ culturally contingent leadership expectation (Popper & Druyan, 2001). New Zealand research supports this theory, confirming the existence of culturally unique leadership behaviour domestically (Ah Chong & Thomas, 1997; Love, 1991a). If the leadership expectations of New Zealand’s diverse cultural groups are not recognised, the result will be ineffective leadership for significant groups.

This study investigates perceptions of outstanding Māori and Pākehā leaders by culturally similar followers. In doing so, it examines the unique Māori and Pākehā leadership prototypes, exploring their similarities and differences. In addition, it considers ways in which this course of research could impact on effective leadership in New Zealand.

A multi-method approach was taken by this study in exploring perceived Māori and Pākehā leadership. The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior
Effectiveness) survey was employed as this study’s quantitative component. The GLOBE is currently cross-cultural leadership’s fore-running research programme, investigating culture’s impact on leadership processes in 62 cultures, with the aim of developing a truly cross-cultural leadership theory. Close iwi consultation with Te Atiawa and Māori academics was employed as this study’s qualitative component.

This study’s findings suggest similarities and differences in how Māori and Pākehā followers perceived the outstanding leadership behaviour of culturally similar leaders. Broadly, they suggest that outstanding Māori leaders were perceived as exhibiting a greater degree of humane-orientated and self-protective behaviour. In some instances, outstanding Māori leaders were also perceived as exhibiting a greater degree of charismatic/value-based and team-orientated behaviour, although in some cases this was perceived as similar for outstanding Māori and Pākehā leaders. Participative and autonomous leadership behaviour was perceived as making a similar contribution to outstanding Māori and Pākehā leadership.

This study’s findings support previous research which suggests culturally unique leadership prototypes. It offers insight into Māori leadership (as perceived by Māori followers) and provides a rough sketch-map of homogeneous and heterogeneous aspects of Māori and Pākehā leaders’ perceived behaviour.
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