A CROSS-CULTURAL THEORETICAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL CULTURE, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES, AND LEADERSHIP STYLES IN THE US AND FRANCE

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ABSTRACT

I offer a theoretical review of the influence of national culture on individual liberties, and subsequently leadership style in the US and in France in this discussion. National culture dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/Femininity are used to unravel how perceptions of individual liberties in the US and France influence the kind of leadership style most likely to be successful in the two countries reviewed. Implications and future research suggestions are also offered.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is said to have been extensively researched (Yukl, 2006), though this has not resulted in solving all questions regarding the process of leadership (Hamlin, 2004), its meaning (Yukl, 2006), or the way leadership is understood across cultures (Heck, 1996; Pillai, Scandura & Williams, 1999; Saros & Santora, 2001). Sometimes, leadership has been used interchangeably with management (Hamlin, 2004) further nurturing the confusion over the meaning of this concept (Dickson, Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003; Yukl, 2006). Nevertheless, leadership is one of the most influential predictor of employees' performance (Jung, Chow & Wu, 2003). Also, in attempting to define it, one recurring notion has been that of a person influencing another one (Suutari, 1996; Yukl, 2006) or a group (Jung, et al., 2003), or an individual motivating others to work towards achieving organizational goals (House, 1999, cited in Yukl, 2006, p. 3).

Similarly, the field of cross-cultural leadership has been so well researched (Boehnke, Bontis, DiStefano & DiStefano, 2002; Cassiday, 2005; Erdogan & Liden, 2006; Hamlin, 2004; Heck, 1996; Jung et al., 2003; Miroshnik, 2002; Pillai et al., 1999; Sarros & Santora, 2001; Suutari, 1996) one could describe the scope of this research explosive (Dickson, Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003). In fact, cross-cultural studies in leadership have researched such topics as the following: The consistency of leader's behavior around the world (Boehnke et al., 2002); the nature of leader's values and beliefs in international assignments, and the impact of such beliefs on leader's behavior within the scope of such assignments (Cassiday, 2005); the influence of collectivism on employees' perception of leader's fairness (Erdogan & Liden, 2006); the prevalence of universalistic versus contingent approaches of leadership across cultures (Hamlin, 2004); methodological problems in studies of leadership across cultures; the way leadership influence creativity in organizations (Jung et al., 2003); and how similar leadership behaviors are across cultures (Pillai et al., 1999; Sarros & Santora, 2001; Suutari, 1996).

PUPOSE OF THE STUDY

However well researched cross-cultural leadership has been, sparse are the studies having investigated the influence national culture exercises on individual liberties, thus influencing the style leaders may portray in one culture as opposed to in another. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of national culture in a country, the perception individuals have of their liberties, and leadership styles more likely to be exhibited in a country due to the cultural environment. The national culture dimensions in Hofstede's work (Hofstede, 2001) will serve as a backdrop to this study, and the United States will be compared to France, given that these countries stand at two opposite poles on national culture dimensions (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars, 1998). In fact, President Kennedy once observed, Americans and French at times, simply seemed to find nothing to agree on (Zeldin, 1996). A rationale for this review also proceeds from the indication there still remains a great deal to be learned on leadership and how it is observed through different countries and cultures (Heck, 1996).

VALUE OF THE STUDY

This review may be of interest to policy makers and individuals in position of leadership, in the US and France, and other countries interested in the two countries reviewed. The resulting awareness should be a mind opener for successful leaders in their attempts at influencing followers. Businesses going overseas would also benefit from this discussion. Individuals called to lead operations in such countries are well advised to show cultural intelligence (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004), in order to understand leaders' behaviors that are successful in one culture may not be successful in a different culture (Suutari, 1996). Lastly, academicians and researchers will find a fertile field of research in integrating such different concepts as those of national culture, individual liberties, and leadership.

The next point of this discussion is a brief examination of national culture dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/Feminity only (Hofstede, 2001). The third point discussed is the perceptions individuals in the US, and in France, have of their individual liberties. The fourth part will address the leadership styles one may expect to be prevalent in one culture vs. the other, and the success of influential tactics used by leaders in both cultures. The fifth point of discussion will present the implications of this review, together with the conclusion and suggestions for future research. Following is a brief exposé of Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of national culture, and their relevance to our discussion. Hofstede's (2001) work has solely been the reference considered in this review, because it (Hofstede, 2001) is mainly a validation of his previous work.

DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL CULTURE

Power Distance

This dimension expresses the level of acceptance of inequality in a society. Inequality is found in all societies, and it manifests itself at all levels: physical, social, material, political and legal. Some societies may be more accepting of inequality than others. When observing the scores obtained by the United States and France, the United States is a lower power distance (Score: 40; rank: 41) country, compared to France (score: 68; rank: 15/16; Hofstede, 2001). The quote by George Orwell (Animal Farm, 1945, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 80) suggesting though all

animals were equal, some were equal to a greater degree than were others only would make sense when reflecting on such a proposition in view of the happenings in all societies. It has been observed those with power have tended to act as if above other humans, and by inference, above laws, as seen in the attempt by President Nixon to circumvent the law in order to justify behavior that was clearly against the law (Hofstede, 2001). Contrasting the United States and France on this dimension offers interesting insights, and raises some questions. Though France is a higher power distance country (Hofstede, 2001), an 18th-century French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, making the distinction between inequality in force and intelligence, and equality by law., made the following contention: Regardless of what nature or society may have made of certain individuals, endowing them with certain characteristics or a status that may have afforded them superiority over other individuals devoid of the same privileges, all men should be considered equal by law (Hofstede, 2001; Steele, 2006). This could explain why in France, holding power may not always be equated with successful influence over the less powerful (Steele, 2006).

Uncertainty Avoidance
This dimension expresses the attitude towards anxiety over the unknown. Some societies manifest more anxiety than others in their ways of coping with uncertainties. Hofstede's (2001) work hinted that the US is a lower uncertainty avoidance society (score: 46; rank: 43) and France, a higher uncertainty avoidance country (score: 86; score: 10/15). In France, the fear of the unknown may prompt individuals to only engage in activities whose outcome is certain. Low uncertainty individuals, in contrast, tend to be less risk avoidant, innovative, and not hampered by the uncertainties waiting one engaging in novel endeavors. This dimension also highlights the contradictions in the French cultural profile, making it a challenge to understand French national culture. In countries high in uncertainty avoidance, employees are expected to obey leaders without questioning leaders' motives and decisions (Hofstede, 2001). France is different, and there are more chances in France, of an employee questioning his supervisor's decisions, and refusing to carry out a clear order (Barsoux & Lawrence, 1990, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 151) than there is of an employee exhibiting the same behavior in the United States (Crunden, 1994; Deresky, 2006). In France, an employee may decide the supervisor or leader did not have the right to make a certain request of him or her, and as a consequence, withhold compliance (Steele, 2006).

Individualism/Collectivism
This dimension translates the socialization an individual receives, either as an individual who stands on his or her own merit, a person whose well-being and happiness will result from his or her own doing, or, as an individual who primarily stands as a member of a group. The latter belongs to a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 2001). They see their livelihood as an intricate part of a group they give allegiance to, taking care of its members, and often deriving support from that same group. In a collectivistic culture, the individual yields to the group, and in individualistic cultures, the individual stands apart from the group. While the United States is the most individualistic culture in the world, France score ranked between 10 and 11, making it a country with a mildly individualistic culture. Thus, France is more collectivistic than is the United States (Hofstede, 2001). Though the United States is a society with low collectivism and one in which ties are loose among individuals, parents and children, and between co-workers, at times the United States departs from this profile, preferring group decision-making, in the name

of pragmatism (Crunden, 1994). Equally, the French though collectivistic, often manifest difficulty in respecting decisions made at a group level, preferring relationships marked by independence (Crozier, 1964, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 217).

Masculinity/Femininity
Masculinity/Femininity expresses the tendency for certain countries to pursue qualities traditionally attributed to women, and which are the pursuit of social harmony, quality of life, and nurturing of relationships. Societies putting more emphasis on the pursuit of such qualities are called feminine. In contrast, masculine societies, stress the pursuit of qualities often related to manly behavior, such as valuing work over social pursuits, and the accumulation of material wealth, over social harmony and quality of life (Hofstede, 2001). In masculine cultures, individuals define themselves on the basis of what they possess, while in feminine cultures, individuals define themselves in terms of who they believe they are, as intrinsic human beings, apart from what they possess (Hofstede, 2001).

The United States is a higher masculine (score: 62; rank: 15) society than is France (score: 43, rank: 35/36) (Hofstede, 2001). The level of economic success of France made this country the world's sixth economy, when US economy ranks first in the world (Steele, 2006). For a masculine country, being first, especially when it comes to wealth and economics, seems the natural way to pursue a course towards its early endeavor to place America as a "city upon a hill" (Crunden, 1994, p. 3), one that all would behold with eyes of admiration and would want to emulate. In contrast, it would be of no surprise, if it was that France may simply not be as interested in attaining a similar position, if it means giving up the country's love for harmony and quality of life (Steele, 2006). However, the other reason France may be trailing in its economic pursuits might also lie in the perception that individuals harbor in France, of their individual freedoms and liberties (Asselin & Mastron, 2001). The respective perceptions of these freedoms as held by Americans and French are the topic discussed next in this review.

PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES IN THE US AND FRANCE

In the United States
In order to understand the meaning of liberty and the way individuals construe their freedoms in America, one has to go back to the early settlers, puritans, who escaped the King's tyranny, by exercising their right to rebel. Once empowered in America, these puritans instituted a "authoritarian democracy" (Crunden, 1994, p. 4), whereby to rebel was not an option. Said differently, having escaped the kings' divine rights in England, they had no qualms about establishing another divine right, that of the ministers and magistrates. The word liberty came to have an interesting twist. Either an individual exercised natural liberty, or freedom, thus behaving as only an "animal or an uncivilized or a non-Christian" (p. 5) would, or, one opted for the right to obey out of one's own free will, magistrates that were chosen, in a manner becoming of individuals converted to Christianity. In effect, as puritans, Americans had the liberty to choose only that which was considered becoming, appropriate, and honest (Crunden, 1994).

In France
The history of France is different, and has been indelibly marked by the "Prise de la Bastille" [*Fall of the Bastille*] in 1789, events culminating in the demise of an old system which afforded

privileges only to the monarchy and aristocracy (Asselin & Mastron, 2001). The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen ensued, proclaiming equality for all by nature and by law (Asselin & Mastron, 2001). From then on, the government came under obligation to guarantee to all citizens equality, liberty, safety, and the right to own property. One can construe having fought for the right to be equal and free, the French inaugurated a tradition of revolutionary protest (Silver, 1980), which has caused changes to be brought about in a manner more confrontational than conciliatory. The French have often been quick to remind anyone requesting of them something that may not conform to their frame or reasoning (D'Iribarne, 1989, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 118) that no one had the right to make such a request, lest they wanted to see the French quickly exercise their right to protest (Steele, 2006; D'Iribarne, 1989, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 119). Thus, one may wonder about the leadership style to exercise in seeking compliance from a people believing in its inalienable right to only be influenced, if it deems that to be aligned to its mental programming, the latter being influenced by a culture whose apparent inconsistencies can defy any person's imagination (Asselin & Mastron, 2001).

LEADERSHIP STYLES and NATIONAL CULTURE

Motivation for Studying Cross-Cultural Leadership Styles
The study of leadership styles across culture has formerly been motivated by the search for a universal style of leadership (Dickson et al., 2003) successful in all cultures. Although some leadership competencies may present a universal flavor (Hamlin, 2004), empirical studies have yet to validate such an intuitively appealing proposition (Hamlin, 2004). Today, the growing tendency to recognizing the importance of cultural intelligence (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004) spurred a trend towards posing if one style of leadership were to be universal, it would be one with the notion of "interpersonal acumen" (Dickson et al., 2003, p. 735). The reason this is has to do with increasing awareness about the importance of emotional intelligence in cross-cultural settings (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Shipper, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003, cited in Dickson et al., 2003, p. 736; Rahim et al., 2003, cited in Dickson et al., 2003, p. 736). However, such enthusiasm is also tempered by the differences in the socialization process teaching individuals how to become useful members of society (Suutari, 1996), causing leaders to develop styles reflecting mental schemas of what works in a given society (Hofstede, 2001; Suutari, 1996). Furthermore, leaders' behaviors having proved effective in one society are not guaranteed to work in a different one (Suutari, 1996). Next, a discussion of some leadership styles will follow.

Brief Overview of Leadership Styles
A brief review of two of the most cited leadership styles will lead us to an examination of the relationship between national culture, individual liberties and leadership style in the US and France. First, I will frame the concept of leadership as presented in the literature. Leadership can be typified as a trait, a role set, an adjective, the exercise of power, or even a process (Strang, 2005). A Study (Yukl, 2006) underscored that there exist three power sources: (1) position, (2) personal, and (3) political. Styles of power have been summarized as follows (Strang, 2005; Yukl, 2006): (1) expert, (2) referent, (3) legitimate, (4) reward, (5) coercive, (6) connection, (7) information, and (8) ecological. The meanings attributed to these forms of power are well documented in the literature (Strang, 2005; Yukl, 2006) and thus will not be reiterated here.

Two of the most researched styles of leadership are the charismatic and transformational styles of leadership (Boehnke et al., 2002; Jung et al., 2003; Pillai et al., 1999; Sarros & Santora, 2001; Sosik, Avolio & Jung, 2002; Strang, 2005), and for the purpose of this review, those are the only ones that are going to be discussed.

Charismatic Style of Leadership
Although sometimes equated to the transformational style of leadership, charisma includes an element of attribution on followers' part, as they envision a leader making sacrifices and incurring personal costs while striving to fulfill the vision championed (Yukl, 2006), which sets this style apart from transformational leadership. Leaders exhibiting charisma are perceived as having an extraordinary type of influence on their followers (Sosik et al., 2002; Yukl, 2006). These leaders display self-confidence, extraversion, and dominance (Sosik et al., 2002). They use emotional appeals, rather than authority (Yukl, 2006) in eliciting compliance from followers.

Thinking about the United States and France, charisma may be more adaptable to the French culture than to the American culture and climate. As indicated earlier, the French, though a collectivistic culture, are not eager to follow authority (Crozier, 1964, cited in Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, the French tend to avoid being coerced into changing their ways, condition often required from followers being influenced by a transformational leader (Strang, 2005). In contrast, French followers can be influenced by a charismatic leader because of having the feeling they are obeying him or her freely (Sosik et al., 2002; Yukl, 2006). This would appeal to the French because they like to think they are free individuals, with the right to act in the manner pleasing them (Steele, 2006). The congruence between the vision embodied by a charismatic leader and followers' values and the concepts these followers can relate to, are indications this kind of leadership style may be successful with the French (D'Iribarne, 1989, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 119; Steele, 2006).

Transformational Style of Leadership
This style is germane to the Charismatic leadership style, although the directive approach (Jung et al., 2003) inherent to this style sets it apart from charismatic leadership. In the latter, the leader, through charisma, inspires followers who do not need to be further directed to fulfill the vision inspired by the charismatic leader. The literature (Yukl, 2006) hinted transformational leadership brought the followers to trust, admire, and be loyal as well as to show respect toward the leader, while followers were motivated to go beyond what was expected from them. In another study (Bass, 1985, cited in Yukl, 2006, p. 262), it was suggested the transformational leader changed and induced followers by instructing them on the criticality of goals to attain. Thereafter, the leader brought followers to feel impelled to forfeit their personal aspirations for the benefit of the organization or the team.

Although the transformational style of leadership has been claimed to be successfully applicable across cultures (Pillai et al., 1999), this style may be more successful in an American climate than in a French one. To clarify, the very conditions within which this type of leadership may strive do not fit a French culture environment. In his recent work, Yukl (2006) hinted contingencies under which this style of leadership was likely to spring had to do with a dynamic and unstable environment, one that was flexible and friendly to innovation. However, "friendly to innovation" is not one characteristic describing the French. This description would better

characterize Americans. To rephrase, it has been documented the French were the antithesis of change, whereas Americans were known as comfortable with this contingency (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Furthermore, the American way of analyzing situations in a pragmatic way (Crunden, 1994) seems to lead to accepting the transformational style of leadership, more than the charismatic style of leadership. Americans can be made to understand how critical it is for the organization to take steps in order to achieve organizational goals and positively impact the bottom line, even if it means inconveniencing employees, and bringing them to incur personal losses in the process. In contrast, The French may not agree to the same conditions in the name of organizational outcomes in which they may not personally believe (Barsoux & Lawrence, 1990, cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 150; Hofstede, 2001; Steele, 2006).

IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, and SUGGESTIONS for FUTURE RESEARCH

Implications
This review reiterates to policy makers the influence of national culture on the psyche of individuals. Both at the company and country levels, being able to assess the manner in which followers will react towards decisions made can facilitate the adoption of policy by individuals. In the United States, it is customary for even the most difficult measures to be followed, at organizational and country levels, because of the American pragmatic approach at analyzing situations (Crunden, 1994; Hofstede, 2001). However, the French tend to adopt a philosophical stance on issues, besides protesting nearly every decision made both at company and country levels, if they perceive the decision does not respect deep-seated beliefs in freedom and equality for all (Steele, 2006; Hofstede, 2001). My contention is being aware of these contingencies can help policy makers place themselves ahead of the curve, when it comes to devising policies.

The second implication of this review is for businesses expanding across national boundaries, whose decision-makers need to be acclimated to the way cultures respond to leadership influence. Simply positing transformational leadership is the panacea may be misleading, since it suffices to observe a country such as France to realize it may take more than a transformational leader to bring followers to accept leaders' decisions. It would be a mistake for a company operating in America and France, to apply the same leadership styles applied in the United States. This company may find out the influence the leader seeks to exert on followers is not forthcoming, when in France, if it does not find itself facing those riots the French have been famous for orchestrating as if these were springing from thin air (Steele, 2006). Acting in a culturally intelligent manner would make it possible for a company with operations in France to anticipate the reaction of followers, and act in a way that will impel them to embrace the policies adopted by the company (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).

Lastly, this review offers academicians and researchers opportunities in the field of cross-national studies of leadership styles. Hofstede (2001) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) and others in the field of cross-national studies have only began to scratch the surface of the richness that lies in the study of national culture. The reason is that culture is unseen, and remains a notion with which many have trouble relating (Hofstede, 2001). It is much easier for many to ignore the differences between cultures, because it is mind-boggling to try and understand the subtleties behind each culture. However, to posit that all cultures are similar

could be equated with contending all languages are similar, and it suffices to master one to have mastered them all. This would be a preposterous argument no one could attempt to sustain. Yet, many individuals still contend national cultures are not worth studying in their differences, claiming most other people one comes to meet, in their neighborhood or across the Atlantic are just other human beings in the planet (Hall, 1989). Obviously, individuals in our neighborhoods are similar to those we may meet across the Atlantic. However, humanity proves to come often with a twist, when, for instance, the Colombians define cunning as a virtue, while the Swiss define the same concept as characterizing a deceitful individual (Dickson et al., 2003). Whether one would like to admit it or not, humanity may simply not be the same, depending on the vantage point from which one is positioned.

Conclusion

This review has positioned itself as a theoretical analysis of leadership styles in a cross-national setting that of the United States and France. National culture dimensions have served as a backdrop to this review. At the heart of a review such as this one, lays the contention that "Influence is the essence of leadership" (Yukl, 2006, p. 145). Without influence, it is difficult to claim the existence or exercise of leadership. In the United States, leaders make decisions respected by followers ready to comply, in order to ensure organizational goals are achieved (Crunden, 1994; Hofstede, 2001). In France, decisions are made and sometimes not followed, because followers perceive these as not being of the nature to serve the interest of some (Hofstede, 2001). The French may be considered a people where the leadership concept may need to be redefined. The cultures in both countries have created conditions leading one people to express its freedoms towards what is deemed good by society, while the other has arrogated the right, or, to place it from the French perspective, has earned the right to pursue only a course that it deems aligned to the beliefs of individuals. Thus, the United States and France appear, once more, one at the opposite end of the other.

Suggestions for Future Studies

This review is theoretical and would benefit from being tested empirically, in order to validate the conclusion suggested. Also, in this review, the United States was compared to France. Many countries, such as China, India or Mexico, are conducting business with the United States. It would be interesting to study the ways national culture influences leadership styles in those countries, in order to facilitate the conduct of business between those countries and the United States.

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