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Fostering Peace and Leadership: A Project for the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit

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FOSTERING PEACE AND LEADERSHIP: A PROJECT FOR THE BLACK MAMBA
ANTI-POACHING UNIT

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts
with Honors College Graduate at
Western Kentucky University

By

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May 2018

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Tomo A. Brown

May 2018

I dedicate this thesis to my fiancée, who impressed a will to thrive and to love upon my
heart.

I also dedicate this work to my parents and siblings, all of which wanted the best for me
and to whom I can happily express that I've discovered this ideal.

Lastly, I dedicate this piece to any individual who underestimates her or his potential as a
person – comparable to perceptions I held of myself in the past.

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The human I give my deepest gratitude to is the love of my life, Sarah Blead. Sarah, your ardent brightness and warmth outshine the radiance of the sun, reaching and inspiring all people in a manner that transcends human limitations. Your presence is a gift

to every soul you cross paths with in this beautiful world – including me, whom you have chosen as the person to endlessly experience your presence and astounding love.

I owe every momentous achievement and joy of my life to God, who has strengthened and guided my heart toward a life of happiness, passion, and hope; I thank Him for this wondrous life that I do not deserve.

Abstract

The Black Mambas are members of a majority-female anti-poaching unit in South Africa that preserves wildlife in the world's most targeted site for rhinoceros poaching. Despite the Black Mambas' successes, the organization's director has expressed concerns of a potential leadership issue in the unit, for which he seeks to identify the source and resolve accordingly. To assist in realizing these efforts, the researchers of this project traveled to South Africa and conducted work analysis interviews with 18 of the 34 members of the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data on participants' perceptions of cultural and organizational leadership. A comparison used to identify general themes and commonalities in participants' responses revealed that the Black Mambas are remarkably confident individuals, which opposed initial suspicions based on literature reviews of race and gender. Findings that were consistent with past research on South African leadership primarily pertained to qualities of an effective leader, such as the demonstration of proper communication – prompting ideas for methods to improve the unit's leadership practices. Other potential approaches include the implementation of more opportunities to be promoted and incentives. Limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Psychology, Organization, Leadership, Culture, Africa

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Presentations

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Introduction

Located in South Africa, the Kruger National Park has become the most targeted site for commercial rhinoceros poaching in the world (Lunstrum, 2014), leading researchers to identify this grave phenomenon as a crisis and an international drama (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016; Humphreys & Smith, 2014). In awareness of this intolerable activity, South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs addressed the situation as a National Priority Crime and affirmed an ongoing implementation of efforts to prevent further poaching of rhinos (Republic of South Africa, 2017). Of the numerous approaches undertaken to combat this predicament – ranging from the translocation of rhinos to the utilization of militaristic strategies (Lunstrum, 2014) – one of the most successful initiatives has proven itself to be a modest group of unarmed, young Black South African women (Frank, 2015; Goyanes, 2017). The Black Mambas are members of an anti-poaching unit that is primarily comprised of young females from local communities (Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit, 2018; Transfrontier Africa, 2018). With a mere 34 personnel, the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) serves to protect the Balule Nature Reserve and the Greater Kruger National Park from the illegal hunting of wildlife – particularly rhinos. The unit accomplishes its aim through perimeter patrols of the fence line on foot and by car and educating school children in local communities on the value of wildlife conservation. Only in operation since 2013, the Black Mamba APU was recognized by the United Nations Environmental Program in 2015 for its

commendable achievement of reducing local rhino poaching by more than 75 percent and presented the Champions of the Earth award: the highest environmental honor of the United Nations.

In spite of the Black Mambas' significant successes as an organization and a proponent in the fight against poaching, Craig Spencer, the founder and managing director of the unit, has expressed concern toward what he has perceived to be a leadership issue within the unit. Spencer has detailed a supposed disconnect in unit members' interpretations and demonstrations of leader-like conduct, as well as a mid-level leadership problem in which some Black Mambas appear reluctant to actively progress in identifiable leadership positions above their fellow members. This is a reasonable apprehension from Spencer, considering the critical role of proper leadership practices in the continued successes of any given organization (Bryman, 2013; Yukl, 2013). Research has demonstrated that attitudes regarding appropriate exhibitions of leadership within organizational contexts can remarkably differ across cultures (House, Hanges, Jayidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Thus, constituent cultural factors must be accounted for in suspecting a leadership problem and developing a resolution. The following sections will define the terms 'leadership' and 'culture,' as well as contribute brief discussions involving the two constructs. These sections will also outline cross-cultural leadership with respect to South Africa and describe the current state of the nation's stance on leadership.

Leadership

Leadership is identified as a universally recognized concept, with no society having been discovered where leadership is completely absent (Bass, 1997). This reality

does not, however, affirm any form of a unanimously agreed-upon definition of leadership across divergent social contexts (Silva, 2016). In fact, a wide array of literature reviews have demonstrated the degree to which the term ‘leadership’ has been uniquely defined (Ali, 2012; Elkins & Keller, 2003; Rosch & Kusel, 2010). Stogdill, recognized for authoring the *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research*, once made the assertion that there are nearly as many unique yet accepted definitions of leadership as there have been people who have made attempts to define the construct (1974). In awareness of Stogdill’s statement, Silva (2016) conducted a literature review on leadership to produce a contemporary definition to integrate themes from prior, highly-regarded interpretations of the concept. The resultant product of Silva’s research is: “Leadership is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals” (p. 3). This definition will be used for the purpose of establishing an operational definition for the term ‘leadership’ throughout this paper.

Accounts involving the practice of leadership date back to the beginning of civilization (Stone & Patterson, 2005), but efforts to shape consistency to categorize leadership in the modern world have only surfaced in more recent decades (Willis, 2008). A specific effort that has proved beneficial in identifying demonstrations of leadership is the forming of leadership styles. Within the context of research, these styles are ordinarily divided into three overarching dimensions: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership pertains to a practice between leaders and followers in which encouragement and empathy are mutually provided to one another, in the pursuit of a shared vision. Transactional

leadership involves a relationship between leaders and followers that does not exceed the exchange of valued items or benefits. Laissez-faire leadership offers followers a notable extent of autonomy as a result of leaders' limited involvement, and this form of leadership is often perceived as an avoidant or negligent manner of leading (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Each of these three dimensions of leadership is inclusive of further specified styles that account for distinct approaches to each and allow for greater categorization (Khan, Nawaz, & Khan, 2016; Puranik, 2017; Schimmoeller, 2010). Though the leadership styles that could be considered effective might seem apparent to readers of this text, research has evidenced that different perspectives toward what is deemed to be effective leadership exist in different cultural contexts (Yukl, 2012) – which prompts an interesting dynamic in a modern-day world that stresses the need for global, culturally-intelligent leaders (Thorn, 2012). Bennis and Nanus (1997) stated that leadership represents the most studied construct in the social sciences yet remains the least understood, and given the multidimensional nature of the construct, this sentiment would appear to stand true.

Culture

Culture is another concept that many have made attempts to unanimously define (Bond et al., 2004). More than 60 years from the time of publication, Kroeber and Kluckhohn's *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* continues to be regarded as the most substantial endeavor to compile and compare different definitions of culture (Axelrod, 1997; Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsley, 2006; Cohen, 2009). The two anthropologists (1952) utilized 164 juxtaposed interpretations to develop a comprehensive description of culture. However, as a result of competing definitions,

social scientists still fail to agree upon the descriptive nature of the word (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Despite this assertion, the definition proposed by Hofstede resonates favorably in the study of culture, presumably as a result of his pioneering research on cross-cultural groups and dynamics that established his credibility amongst professionals and researchers (Boonghee, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011; Nielson & Gannon, 2006; Triandis, 2004). Hofstede (1980) explains culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p. 21). Similar to the utilization of Silva’s definition of leadership (2016), this suggested meaning for culture by Hofstede will be used to operationally define the term throughout this writing. Though noticeably dated compared to the description selected to identify leadership, Hofstede’s interpretation of culture continues to be operationalized in a multitude of current publications (Schein, 2010; Triandis, 2018; Yukl, 2013); whereas, a consistently-utilized definition remains absent in the study of leadership.

While Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s (1952) definition of culture is not as frequently cited as Hofstede’s (1980), the anthropologists’ explanation of the term specifies explicit components that are believed to constitute culture, including patterns of behavior, traditional ideas, and attached values. These ideologies from Kroeber and Kluckhohn have emerged in various sources across the social sciences (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Ericksen, 2002; Morgan, 2006), which presented reason to their inclusion in this discussion of culture. These constituents that differ across cultures and, thus, represent individualities generally serve as the basis for cross-cultural study, in that cross-cultural research is a method of comparative research that seeks to indicate variances from culture to culture (Ilesanmi, 2009). Although searching for contrasting attributes

appears to be the tendency for cultural analyses, it is imperative that commonalities are investigated alongside variances – a practice that has been referred to as the identification of emics, qualities that are exclusive to a specific culture, and etics, qualities that are relevant to all cultures (Graen, Hui, Wakabayashi, & Wang, 1997). Aware of this necessity in cross-cultural research, Hofstede (2010) developed the widely-recognized Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory: a framework for evaluating cultures on predetermined, universal dimensions to monitor for both similarities and differences in juxtaposed cultural contexts. The original four dimensions are power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance demonstrates the degree to which members of a culture accept and expect an inequality in the distribution of power. Individualism-collectivism gives focus to the extent to which the people within a society associate themselves with others and are affiliated with in-groups. Masculinity-femininity involves a spectrum that measures a culture’s inclination to value achievements, titles, and material rewards or to value cooperativeness, care, and quality of life. Uncertainty avoidance is acknowledged as the amount that the people of a society customarily tolerate ambiguity.

Descriptions of Hofstede’s (2010) cultural dimensions were necessary in this discussion, for these dimensions – along with the newer additions of long- and short-term orientations and indulgence versus self-restraint – have been frequently referenced in cultural research publications, including the GLOBE study (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). The study of cross-cultural leadership is not limited to the GLOBE study, as this area of research has captured the interests of many in this vastly diverse world.

Cross-Cultural Leadership: South Africa

It was once stated that leadership is interwoven in a historical-contextual superstructure (Hunt, 2004), which impacts conceptions of leadership and, therefore, how the construct is both defined and researched. Such variances in perceptions of leadership typically reside across cultures because of culturally-based contingencies toward ideas of effective leadership (Dickson, Castaño, Magomaeva, & den Hartog, 2012). This has inspired an “explosion in the amount of research on leadership in a cross-cultural context” (Dickson, den Hartog, & Mitchelson, 2003, p. 729), that has sustained and seemingly intensified over the last decade and a half. Within this sector of research, the country of South Africa has received a significant amount of attention (Muchiri, 2011) – a reality that can be attributed to the dynamic transformation of the nation’s mentality toward leadership (Booyesen & van Wyk, 2008). This transformation is a direct result of South Africa’s transition into a post-apartheid era as of 1994, which has prompted subsequent researchers to dub the country the ‘new South Africa’ (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; van der Vilet, 2004). In contrast to the age of government-decreed segregation, the new South Africa was believed to be capable of realizing any feat, even emerging as a prominent global leader and an instigator of an African revolution (Alden & Schoeman, 2013; Vale & Maseko, 2002). Nevertheless, the nation continues to encounter complications with enacting demonstrations of idealized, impartial leadership. Former animosities and prejudices have left behind long-lasting impressions on the country’s general culture (Booyesen & van Wyk, 2008), as they were long considered to be exemplifications of effective leadership in a patriarchal, White-supremacist South Africa.

In continuation of the GLOBE study, Booysen and van Wyk (2008) measured the earlier-mentioned Hofstede's cultural dimensions (power distance, masculinity-femininity, etc.) in relation to the society of South Africa, and the researchers found that South African society persists in exhibiting a propensity for a male orientation, rather than an inclination toward gender equality. Interestingly, Booysen and van Wyk uncovered that present-day South Africans are to some extent aware of the advisable principle of supporting and appreciating female roles in leadership-style positions, yet an enduring discrepancy between the ratio of female to male leaders presides over the society, largely in favor of the males. This societal orientation has pressured South African women in male-dominated organizations to adopt restrictive strategies such as internalizing opinions and refraining from proactivity, in an effort to cope with challenges and injustices that arise from the unfavorable social parameters against the assumption of leadership roles by women (Martin & Barnard, 2013). As a result of the nation's predisposition to regard White South Africans as superior, these disparities are regrettably all the more pronounced for Black South African women (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Johnson & Thomas, 2012; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). A more concentrated study by Booysen and van Wyk surveyed a balanced sample of White and Black male and female managers in South Africa, to measure for racial and gender differences in eight of the nine GLOBE cultural dimensions. These dimensions are closely related to those posed by Hofstede, and the researchers found significant ideological differences between the distinct populations in the sample for all dimensions except power distance. The qualitative data from the study suggest noteworthy findings involving Black South Africans and female South Africans. Namely, comments such as

“Blacks do not want female managers” (p. 467) demonstrate a supposedly discernible gender differentiation for Black South Africans, while quotes like “Blacks emphasize the team above the individual” and “Blacks are communal, democratic, and inclusive” (p. 468) imply an inclination for collectivism by the Black population. This information is valuable and readily available for South Africans to employ equitable leadership amid diversity, yet earlier-cited research reveals the continuance of racial and gender-related discrepancies.

The country’s society at large appears to be knowledgeable about the potential for ideological improvements following the extinction of apartheid, which could ultimately facilitate a form of leadership that is considered effective across a multitude of modern-day cultural contexts (Alden & Schoeman, 2013; Booysen & van Wyk, 2008; Vale & Maseko, 2002). However, the new South Africa is neglecting the importance of actualizing continued efforts toward eradicating discriminatory preconceptions, which are believed to be debilitating the country’s potential as a global leader. Although apartheid arguably represented the most troublesome period in the nation’s history, Chopra et al. (2009) affirm that “...years after liberation from apartheid, South Africans are facing new challenges for which the highest caliber of leadership, vision, and commitment is needed” (p. 1023). As a successful organization that counters South Africa’s social inequalities, the Black Mamba APU unquestionably carries the capacity to illustrate the ideals for leadership, vision, and commitment alluded to by Chopra et al. (2009) that the nation needs in this revolutionary day and age. The purpose of this project is to acquire insights from members of the Black Mamba APU involving culture and leadership perspectives, in an effort to mitigate the disconnect in members’ interpretations and demonstrations of

organizational leadership as observed by Director Craig Spencer. This valuable information will allow for three distinct outcomes:

- 1.) A solution for the current mid-level leadership issue within the Black Mamba APU.
- 2.) The furtherance of organizational successes for the majority-female, Black South African unit in a country working to overcome discrimination.
- 3.) The future development of an organizational system for propagating similar anti-poaching units throughout Africa.

Method

Participants

The participants of this project were 18 of the 34 members of the Black Mamba APU. The anti-poaching unit is divided into four pickets, and of the 18 participants, four participants were from Olifants West, four were from Jejane, five were from Grietjie, and five were from Maseke. Aside from administrative positions, the Black Mambas have two ranks: ranger or sergeant; eight of the participants were rangers and the remaining 10 were sergeants. All of the participants were Black South African females, ranging between 19 and 29 years of age. All of the participants had completed high school (up to 12th grade) in their respective communities in the local area, and some participants reported to be mothers, wives, and sisters.

Materials

We developed an original list of 17 questions (see Appendix A), with both open- and closed-ended questions (all closed-ended questions were followed with a request for the participant to elaborate on her response). This list was modified according to the following conditions and circumstances: questions were sometimes skipped or reworded in specific instances that involved the manner in which a participant responded; if the participant held the position of a sergeant, two additional questions (see Appendix B) were asked. Due to time constraints, a revised version of the list (see Appendix C) was used for the four non-sergeant members of the Maseke group. This list consisted of nine questions from the original list and four new items for a total of 13 questions. Two follow-up, focus-group-style sessions were conducted with the sergeants of the Black Mamba APU, in which a brief list of five questions (see Appendix D) was used.

Smartphones were used to record audio for dialogues shared with participants, and the content from the audio recordings was transcribed for analysis by two researchers in the weeks following data collection.

Procedure

I traveled to South Africa in March of 2018 with another researcher – a graduate student from Western Kentucky University – to meet members of the Black Mamba APU and spent a total of 12 days in the country. We conducted a number of work analysis interviews, which have been defined as meetings with two or more individuals that are intended for the exchange of information regarding a job (van de Voort & Whelan, 2012). Fifteen work analysis interviews were conducted over the course of three workdays with members of the Black Mamba APU. Ten of these were administered with one interviewer and one interviewee, three were administered with two interviewers and one interviewee, and two were administered as focus-group sessions with one interviewer and four or five interviewees. These interviews were conducted in two distinct rounds, which will be referred to as Round One and Round Two. Round One was comprised of all of the interviews, except the focus-group sessions, for a total of 13 interviews. Of the 13 participants in Round One, eight were rangers and five were sergeants, and three of these participants were interviewed by two interviewers. Nine participants in Round One were interviewed using the original list of 17 questions, with the two additional questions for sergeants added in the five instances that sergeants were interviewed. The four participants from the Maseke picket in Round One were interviewed using the revised list of 13 questions. Round Two consisted of the two focus groups, which were conducted as follow-up interviews with all of the sergeants of the unit. Thus, any sergeant who also

participated in an initial interview was interviewed twice, while some sergeants were only interviewed for the focus groups. Across all of the interviews, 10 sergeants were interviewed, with five being interviewed twice. The respondents of the focus groups were interviewed using the list of five questions intended for the follow-up interviews. These interviews were held during varied times of day (typically late morning and early afternoon) in various locations throughout the Balule Nature Reserve, including the Black Mambas' living quarters, the unit's operations office, and outside in the bush. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in English. Each interview began with an explanation of the project's purpose by the interviewer (myself and/or the other researcher), a request for permission to digitally record the audio from the interview, and a collection of basic information from the interviewee, such as her name, age, job position, and number of years spent with the Black Mamba APU. The length of time for the interviews ranged from six minutes to an hour, while the interviewer(s) audibly recorded the dialogue. The recordings were transcribed on later dates, and transcriptions were coded to account for the confidentiality of participants.

Results

The qualitative data acquired from the 15 interviews that constituted this project are presented based on three interrelated areas of discussion: women as leaders, qualities of leaders, and organizational leadership.

Women as Leaders

In the original list of 17 interview questions, nine questions were directly related to women as leaders in the community. The revised list of 13 questions consisted of six of these items. While information on women of the community and their undertakings of leadership roles was obtained intermittently throughout each interview, a few questions in particular granted the most insight on the matter.

Specifically, participants' responses to the question, "Are men better at being leaders than women?" offered perspective on cultural views involving the efficacy of women as leaders. Of the 12 interviewees that gave responses that were recorded for this question, seven interviewees contested that women are better leaders than men and provided supporting statements:

"But a woman will understand what I am feeling, and, and put herself on my shoes and feel the same way as me" (Mamba D).

"...us as a woman, you know how to hold a secret – we know how to do our job properly" (Mamba E).

"...because women are more careful and women are secretive than men" (Mamba B).

"[The organization] decided to employ all women because women have a good heart" (Mamba H).

Four respondents expressed that the efficacy of men and women as leaders is equal:

“I say it’s 50/50...because women can do what men thinks women cannot do” (Mamba A).

“No, we’re all equal. But what I can say is that sometimes women are stronger than men, sometimes men are stronger than women. It depends on how strong are we as people” (Mamba I).

“No, we can all be leaders – not only men...women can do men’s job” (Mamba J).

Only one of these 12 respondents stated that men are better leaders than women:

“Yes...because women they treat womans, they do not treat well. Men, the men they treat women well” (Mamba L).

The same 12 Black Mambas were asked if women in their respective communities outside of work ever fulfill roles as leaders or are considered by others to be leaders.

While a number of the responses were somewhat vague, answers from at least three of the interviewees were apparent in communicating their doubtfulness toward the presence of women-leaders in the community:

“Umm, not, not always” (Mamba E).

“Not really, because they are still believing that men, they are the head of the family, they take responsibility of each and everything” (Mamba A).

“Some of them, but they’re mostly men” (Mamba C).

Of the interviewees that responded more positively to the question, some spoke of women within family-settings as leaders:

“I can give an example with my mother” (Mamba D).

“Yeah...like in the family, where there’s no men” (Mamba J).

Others were more inclined to view women of their communities as leaders in society and job-settings:

“...some of the [women] in our community, they are chief. They select them as a chief to rule our community, because they trust women”

(Mamba G).

“Uh, like community leaders; like, uh, that are working for the government” (Mamba B).

“Teacher – she’s a teacher” (Mamba K).

“...the principal is a woman” (Mamba F).

Immediately following this question, the Black Mambas were asked about whether there are ever groups of women in these communities that meet on a regular basis. All 12 of the participants responded positively, offering a variety of accounts concerning women in groups: seven of the 12 spoke of groups of women who exercise together, with five mentioning ladies soccer; four respondents noted community involvement, such as partnering with orphanages and performing community projects; three indicated church groups. Other responses pertained to more general gatherings of women, including those that congregate to talk about family and those that accompany one another on trips out into town.

The next question for the interviewees was, “Who are the leaders of these groups?” With mentions made of women who work alongside the chief and women who lead church-goers, the responses to this question from each of the Black Mambas alluded to women whom they did not mention when the researchers inquired, “Are women ever

leaders in your community?” A participant who relayed that women are “Not really” (Mamba A) leaders in the community responded to the current question about leaders of groups of women by stating:

“...[they] have the writer, the chairperson, and something like that. So, those are the leaders – all of them” (Mamba A).

Qualities of Leaders

The original list of questions contained six items that were intended to investigate participants’ perceptions toward leadership qualities. The revised list of 13 questions included three of these items, and one of the two sergeant-exclusive questions also gave focus to leadership qualities. Of these concentrated questions, the following proved to be the most beneficial in developing an understanding for the way in which the same 12 Black Mambas idealized a leader’s character. The interviewees were requested to identify the differences between a good leader and a bad leader, and their responses shared several commonalities: to begin with ideas of a good leader, the characteristic of being able to properly communicate was cited by five separate respondents; the quality of respect toward followers was noted by four respondents; a hardworking-nature was described by three respondents; sharing a vision was voiced by two respondents; the ability to lead by example was listed by two respondents; and being secretive was mentioned by two respondents. The following trends were observed for ideas of a bad leader: the inability to effectively communicate was acknowledged by four respondents; the act of making excuses and shying away from challenges was expressed by four respondents; a lack of respect was detailed by three respondents; and being selfish was stated by two respondents.

Moreover, the eight participants that were asked the original list of questions were requested to answer, “How should leaders act toward their followers?” Many of the interviewees gave responses that were similar to the earlier inquiry regarding the differences between a good leader and a bad leader. Five interviewees addressed respect, four addressed proper communication, and three addressed leading by example:

“...a leader should be, umm, a respectful, a respectful person to their, to their followers” (Mamba D).

“A leader is a, is, is a person who’s going to, to listen to the followers” (Mamba D).

“...to show my leadership by example” (Mamba D).

“...they must lead by example” (Mamba G).

“...always shouting at them even when it is not needed” (Mamba B).

“...it’s all about respect and if you’re a good listener then that should be fine” (Mamba A).

“...do not shout on them or disrespect them” (Mamba F).

“...they have to respect and...are friendly people” (Mamba H).

“They have to teach us the good things and they lead by example” (Mamba H).

Another finding from this item involved some respondents suggesting the need for a balance in contrasting character-qualities:

“I cannot say that you must be a soft person...but you must be middle...Like, not be aggressive” (Mamba B).

“Some are too respectful, and others are too disrespectful. Some are ignorant and some are stubborn. So, you have to be strong and willing to help and willing to see the change” (Mamba C).

As an additional measure for leadership-quality perceptions, the five interviewees that held positions as sergeants were asked, “How would you explain your leadership style?” Their responses are as follows:

“Umm, uh, I can say I’m, I’m a person who is patient with things, and I’m a person who, who wants to get more ideas from my, from my, my followers. And I also want them to, to listen to my ideas. I’m a person who is, I’m a little bit short tempered... I don’t control anybody, and I don’t want to control anybody... if I’ve done something wrong, I’m going to apologize” (Mamba D).

“I’m a hard worker, and then I’m always telling people that, ‘If you wanted to do something, you have to focus and then just tell us, so that I can do, do it’” (Mamba E).

“So, I don’t think that you can be a leader without knowing people that you are leading, and you cannot be a leader without knowing where you are going – where you are heading” (Mamba B).

“Oh, I’m nice. I like people to understand what I am saying, and I love to do what I want them to; I want to teach them what I know. Like, I want to, if I want you to do this, and I will do it with you so that you can understand me more than telling you” (Mamba A).

“So, I’m a strict lady coming to work – I don’t compromise...Secondly, is I’m a very caring person on the other side. I’m very understanding...I have to treat everyone equally with respect and dignity. Love them all – treat them the same, just like my own siblings” (Mamba C).

Organizational Leadership

The revised list of 13 questions included two items that were designated to examine ideas of organizational leadership: “Is it better for groups to have leaders, or should everyone be on the same level,” and “If there was a new system of leadership for the unit, what changes should there be?” These items were also included in the list of five questions for the two focus-group-style interview sessions with the sergeants of the Black Mamba APU, and these questions were asked to a total of 13 participants – nine sergeants and four non-sergeants; the number of recorded responses is less than 13, as the focus-group interviews did not require all of the participants to openly respond, so long as they agreed with another participant’s response.

For the question, “Is it better for groups to have leaders, or should everyone be on the same level,” all six interviewees that gave recorded responses expressed the need for leaders in groups, with three interviewees vocalizing concerns for a lack of guidance in the absence of a leader and two mentioning the difficulties that would arise in the process of suggesting ideas:

“Yes, yes, I think it, it should be that way, because of management... If we were all equal, it wouldn’t be easy for, it wouldn’t be easy for me to tell you something and you do it” (Mamba K).

“You must have sergeant, supervisor...because when we do, they do not have sergeants, everyone they will do something that they want to do”

(Mamba L).

“Yeah...So, when we all equal, everyone will say that, ‘This and that,’ so there would be no understanding there. So, there should be a leader”

(Mamba J).

“...it’s better if don’t be equal, ‘cause if we, if you have things to suggest, it’s better if you go to the certain people...to suggest things, so then they can take that information to the other level. So, it’s good if we have levels – not do the same thing” (Mamba O).

“It’s better to have the leaders, because you can’t control, we can’t be all the leaders. We need one person to suggest something, so the rest will follow the sergeants and take it, and the one leader will choose who’s the best that she’s been suggesting and take it” (Mamba M).

“One leader” (Mamba N).

When asked about potential changes that could be integrated into a new system of leadership, two of the five respondents shared that they did not have any ideas or did not think any changes were necessary. Of the remaining three, one interviewee alluded to an adjustment in the authority that a sergeant can abuse:

“Yes, for the sergeants, because when we tell them that, ‘We must to do this,’ they say ‘I, me, I can’t do this’” (Mamba L).

The remaining two respondents to this question communicated changes that would allow for continued progression and growth in the job:

“There [would] be more opportunities for [us] or maybe more positions...And it was going to give challenge to those Mambas...The company that is on the same level doesn't improve” (Mamba D).

“So, if there is other positions...then you know that, ‘Maybe at least I can earn more than what I’ve earned the past two years’” (Mamba O).

The final set of results derive from responses to a question asked at the end of the original and revised lists of questions, with 17 items and 13 items respectively: “If you could make any changes in the organization, what would they be?” Of the 12 Black Mambas whose responses were recorded, only one spoke of the improvement of organizational structure. All of the other answers to this question are categorized as follows: four respondents explicitly voiced their wishes to carry firearms; three respondents shared their desires for a higher salary; three respondents relayed the advantage of having a greater number of patrol vehicles; two respondents expressed ideals of having more days off; two respondents communicated their wants for the hire of additional Black Mambas; and two respondents mentioned the benefit of having further opportunities, such as receiving schooling and fulfilling roles similar to the responsibilities of administrative personnel.

Discussion

The primary purpose for this research project was to garner information via first-hand accounts from members of the Black Mamba APU, with the intention of using this information to help resolve perceived concerns with the unit members' meanings and manifestations of leadership. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with more than half of the Black Mamba APU's members, and the specific concentrations of the questions were community women as leaders, qualities of a leader, and organizational leadership. As this project can be classified as an exploratory study, there were no exact hypotheses. However, the findings of this study were expected to correspond with the assertions of previous, related literature.

Implications: Women as Leaders

Despite previously-cited research that discussed the way in which South African women cope with the reality of the society's inclination to regard men as leaders (Booyesen & van Wyk, 2008; Martin & Barnard, 2013), a majority of the interviewed Black Mambas openly expressed that women are better leaders than men. This manner of response was unexpected considering comments recorded in the GLOBE studies that indicated a disfavor for female managers by Black South Africans, the evident bias for men as leaders in the poaching crisis (Büscher, 2016a), and that both interviewers were males. Perhaps this is representative of a positive result of the many reforms implemented by the South African government to promote gender equality between men and women (Dworkin, 2012). The aforementioned results pertaining to women as leaders demonstrated that – while a number of interviewees were initially apprehensive or doubtful toward the presence of women leaders in their communities – all of the

respondents interestingly described women who are leaders in community groups for a later question that they neglected to mention when asked, “Are women ever leaders in your community?” This may reveal a potential preconception that South African women hold regarding the roles and expectations of leaders, as suggested by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009). Another item of discussion that was emphasized in the literature review was the matter of racial prejudice against Black South Africans, with researchers directly applying this concern to the realm of wildlife conservation in South Africa where White South Africans dominate the practice and are perceived as being the most passionate about it (Büsher, 2016b; Butler & Richardson, 2015). Surprisingly, not a single interviewee made any mentions of race, and several of the Black South African females overtly expressed a passion and pride for their work.

Implications: Qualities of Leaders

The analysis of notions involving leadership qualities was also a central focus for this research project, and the literature on Booysen and van Wyk’s (2008) GLOBE study that investigated the preferred style of leadership for effective South African leaders was used as a means of comparison. Booysen and van Wyk’s study, comprising 450 Master’s students and managers in South Africa, uncovered a preference for the transformational leadership style – identified earlier in this piece (Bass 1985; Burns, 1978) – which supports the findings from this research project; namely, the qualities of properly communicating, respectful behavior, holding a vision, and leading by example align with the attributes of transformational leadership. Booysen and van Wyk also note that exceptional leaders in South Africa are considered to exhibit a balance in contrasting qualities, such as being strong and forthright while being egalitarian and participative –

similar to responses recorded from a few of the Black Mambas. The researchers stressed that communication is “of paramount importance” (p. 453) in the multicultural and multilingual workforce of South Africa, which would explain why the quality of proper communication was the most prevalent response from interviewees. Specific responses pertaining to respectfulness, friendliness, and selflessness correspond with findings by Booysen and van Wyk that promote communal and democratic practices by Black South Africans. This correspondence is significant in terms of transformational leadership, because actualizing this form of leadership is a collective effort that should serve in the best interest of all who are involved. Although the answers from the Black Mambas about expected qualities of a leader were generally consistent with the transformational style, certain commentaries from some of the participants appeared to imply an extrinsic motivation that fails to be satisfied by a lack of tangible rewards, such as earning pay raises or vacation days – which would suggest a slight favorability for the application of a transactional leadership style within the organization.

Implications: Organizational Leadership

The final focus of this project was the exploration of perceptions toward organizational leadership. It would appear that the Black Mambas agree with the need for leadership positions in organizational contexts as identified by various researchers (Bryman, 2013; House et al., 2004; Yukl, 2013), based on feedback of the interviewees who responded to the question, “Is it better for groups to have leaders, or should everyone be on the same level?” Not only did the respondents concur with this belief, but a few of them also communicated the perceived benefit of incorporating additional leadership positions, in support of a more pronounced system of hierarchal leadership.

This was an unforeseen finding, given Director Craig Spencer's concern for the Black Mambas' will to pursue positions of leadership. Although, there is a chance that the Black Mambas' wishes for more leadership positions are resultant of their desire to have more opportunities for pay raises.

Implications: Application of Findings

In regards to using these data to address the leadership issue observed by Spencer, several conclusions can be inferred. First, it would seem that race and gender do not inhibit the Black Mambas' positive views toward women in leadership, which suggests that Spencer should not be concerned about apprehensions of women as leaders from the unit members. However, one consideration involving race and gender would be Spencer's identity as a White South African male. It is possible that the Black Mambas feel confident in their abilities to act as leaders, but they may lack the confidence to openly demonstrate this will to their superior, who is opposite from them in both race and gender. A solution to this potential problem may lie in the second speculation: an adjusted approach to leadership. Considering the extent to which communication was emphasized by the Black Mambas, improving communication between Spencer and the unit members could prove to be valuable. Also, the integration of a rewards system that offers more pay raises or more days off – mirroring the practices of transactional leadership – may be beneficial, to encourage the Black Mambas to publically exhibit unrecognized ambitions of becoming leaders. As the unit members appear to share a vision for wildlife conservation and aptly apply the transformational leadership style, employing a method from the transactional style of leadership may serve to motivate prospective leaders. Lastly, the implementation of greater opportunities for leadership

positions – in both quantity and seniority – as cited by a few interviewees may inspire the Black Mambas to actively progress as leaders within the organization.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations with the current project. Both of the researchers were men, whereas all of the interviewees were women. Although more than half of the Black Mambas were interviewed, a greater sample size would have allowed for more data. While a nearly-equal sample of participants was interviewed from each of the four sectors of the Black Mamba APU, the participants from the Maseke group were interviewed using a revised list of questions, due to time constraints and the need for data on different items. Follow-up interviews were initially planned for each of the participants, but as a result of time constraints, follow-up interviews were instead conducted only with sergeants in two focus-group-style sessions. Some of the interviews were conducted indoors or in the shade, while others were conducted outside in direct sunlight, which might have influenced the duration of the interviews and the amount of information collected. Over the course of the few days that interviews were conducted, some of the Black Mambas from the Grietjie group had the misfortune of encountering a lion while on foot patrol, which may have influenced responses from any participants who were affected. Lastly, the audio recording for one of the interviews was lost due to a technical error, which prevented the ability to transcribe the interview's dialogue and, thus, the utilization of its data.

Future Research

While it would be ideal for the current research to be sufficient in resolving the unit's leadership predicament, any future research conducted on the Black Mamba APU

should assume the form of a longitudinal study. This methodology would allow for the assessment of long-term effects of initiatives that are implemented to improve the already-successful organization. Longitudinal studies would also be integral for the future development of a system to replicate anti-poaching units similar to the Black Mamba APU throughout Africa – once a suitable solution for the current leadership issue can be administered and accounted for in future units.

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Appendix A

Original List of Questions

Black Mamba Interview Questions

1. What made you want to be a Black Mamba?
2. What is the best part of your job?
3. Are men better at being leaders than women? Why or why not?
4. Can women be leaders?
5. If so, what would they need to do to be good leaders?
6. Are women ever leaders in your community? If so, can you give examples?
7. Do you have groups of women in your community who meet regularly? If so, can you give examples?
8. Who are the leaders of these groups?
9. How do they become leaders?
10. What is the difference between good leaders and bad leaders in these groups?
11. How are things decided in these groups?
12. Is there anyone in the unit that you see as a leader? If so, why do you see this person as a leader?
13. How should leaders act toward their followers (i.e. the people they lead)?
14. What skills do you think someone would need to lead and train new Black Mambas?
15. Do you think you could (or would you want to) lead and train a new group of Black Mambas? Why or why not?
16. What makes the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit so successful?

17. If you could make any changes in the organization, what would they be?

Appendix B

Additional Questions for Sergeants

Black Mamba Interview Questions (Sergeants)

18. How would you explain your leadership style?
19. Has anything about this job made you a better leader? Why or why not?

Appendix C

Revised List of Questions

Black Mamba Interview Questions (Revised)

1. What made you want to be a Black Mamba?
2. Are men better at being leaders than women? Why or why not?
3. Are women ever leaders where you are from? If so, can you give examples?
4. Do you have groups of women in your community who meet regularly? If so, can you give examples?
5. Who are the leaders of these groups?
6. How do they become leaders?
7. What is the difference between good leaders and bad leaders in these groups?
8. What skills do you think someone would need to lead and train new Black Mambas?
9. Do you think you could (or would you want to) lead and train a new group of Black Mambas? Why or why not?
10. Is it better for groups to have leaders, or should everyone be on the same level? Why?
11. Do you all have a system for leadership in the unit? If so, can you explain it?
12. If there was a new system of leadership for the unit, what changes should there be?
13. If you could make any changes in the organization, what would they be?

Appendix D

Questions for Follow-Up Sessions

Black Mamba Interview Questions (Follow-Up Sessions)

1. What would you say to somebody who wanted to be a Black Mamba?
2. Do you think anyone could be a Black Mamba or only certain types of people?
3. Is it better for groups to have leaders, or should everyone be on the same level?
Why?
4. Do you all have a system for leadership in the unit? If so, can you explain it?
5. If there was a new system of leadership for the unit, what changes should there be?