

# HOW IS LEADERSHIP UNDERSTOOD IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS?

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The **Developmental Leadership Program** (DLP) is an international research collaboration supported by the Australian Government.

DLP investigates the crucial role that leaders, networks and coalitions play in achieving development outcomes.

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# PREFACE

Over the past 10 years, The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) has explored the vital role of leadership in making change happen. Our key findings are summarised in [‘Inside the Black Box of Political Will: Ten Years of findings from the Developmental Leadership Program’](#). In it, we argue leadership relies on three interconnected processes:

- First, on motivated and strategic individuals with the incentives, values, interests and opportunity to push for change.
- Second, on these motivated individuals overcoming barriers to cooperation and forming coalitions with power, legitimacy and influence.
- Third, coalitions effectively contesting the ideas underpinning the status-quo and legitimising an alternative set that can promote change.

Together, these findings form a working theory of change on developmental leadership, and a set of testable assumptions about how leaders emerge, how they work collectively to create change, and how this process can be supported.

The next phase of research will examine these assumptions. It will focus on four research questions that emerged out of the synthesis of DLP’s earlier work (see box).

As part of the process of planning the next phase, DLP has produced a series of Foundational Papers to provide a conceptual foundation and guide our empirical approach to addressing each of the questions below. DLP’s Foundational Papers aim to interrogate both the theoretical grounding and wider evidentiary basis for DLP’s assumptions about how change happens. They start from what we think we already know, but aim to challenge our thinking and ground future research in interdisciplinary theory and cutting-edge debates.

Each paper aims to situate DLP’s key findings in the wider state of knowledge on this topic, review key themes from the best existing research on our questions of interest, and suggest key theories and bodies of literature that can be harnessed to address them. Together, the papers will form an intellectual road map for our continuing work on developmental leadership, helping us to build a coherent intellectual agenda around this theme.

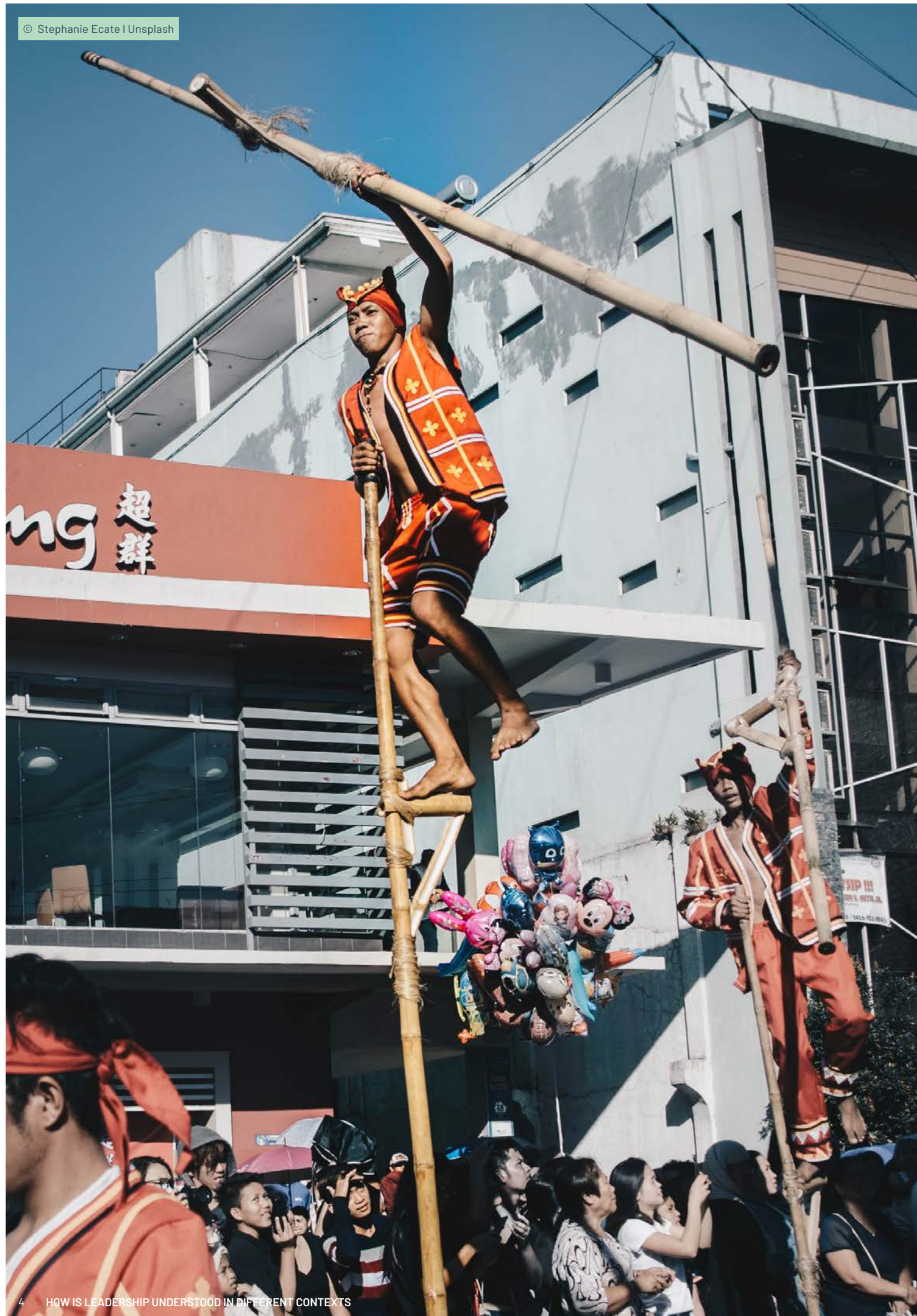
## DLP’S RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: **How is leadership understood in different contexts?**

RQ2: **Where do leaders come from?**

RQ3: **How do leaders collectively influence institutions?**

RQ4: **How can developmental leadership be supported?**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What does it mean to be a leader in different places and times? How are leaders' styles, characteristics and practices evaluated? How does history and culture affect perceptions of leadership?

For a long time, leadership studies have addressed these questions by focusing on the properties and characteristics of individual leaders, viewing leadership as a particular set of traits or behaviours. But leaders cannot pursue real change without influencing *people*, or persuading them to change their ideas or behaviours. Leadership is always, everywhere, an interaction between leaders and followers. To understand how developmental leadership works, we need to better understand one vital but often overlooked ingredient: Followers.

This paper develops a basis for thinking about how followers form perceptions of leaders, the affect this can have on leadership practices, and why this matters for development. It identifies four key areas as important influences on how followers understand leadership:

- **Dimensions of assessment:** Followers may or may not perceive the neat leadership categories researchers use to describe leaders. Instead, they are likely to 'PIIIC' their leaders, based on: 1) the *position* of a leader, which determines the source of their authority (legal-rational, traditional, charismatic); 2) their views on a particular *issue*; 3) whether they will act in their *interests*; 4) how far the leader matches the *identity* of their group; and 5) the *characteristics* they display, including how they conduct themselves.
- **Channels:** Perceptions of leaders are rarely unmediated, because media affects what information is included (or not), how information is framed, and therefore whether and how information transforms individuals' assessment of leaders.

- **Follower identity:** The assessment of leaders is also moderated by the identity of the follower, whether their gender, age and other markers. Stereotypes about gender roles and norms that vary among women and men strongly moderate leader assessments, although evidence shows that these perceptions can be shifted.
- **Cultural context:** Leadership is always situational, evaluated in a particular political setting, cultural environment and through the lens of gender power relations. Theories of leadership often don't hold across cultures, because these contextual factors look different across and within societies. Culture is not static, however – partly because leaders can work to *change* cultural norms over time.

Leadership research tends to begin with a "western" conception of leadership and then account for variations in other societies in comparison to this starting point. Future DLP research can help to break leadership studies out of this western-centric bias by adopting a culturally embedded approach to understanding leadership and viewing leadership through the lens of followers.

This research agenda could have several potential implications for aid, including how leadership development programmes can adapt to local cultures, values and ideas. At the same time, programmes may consider how to better support the cultural agility of future leaders, to enable them to bridge groups of followers.

Understanding the relationship between followers and leaders is vital for enabling leaders to solve some of the most complex, cross-cutting problems at the heart of development.



# PART ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership looks different across the world and over time. It looks and feels and works differently in different spaces and places. Different things work, different things are valued, and different things become synonymous with leadership. For example, confident, powerful women leaders in the Pacific – such as President Hilda Heine from the Marshall Islands; the Honorable Fiaame Naomi Mata’afa from Samoa; and Dame Carol Kidu from Papua New Guinea – have learned how to use their family and political networks, alongside their education, expertise and international networks, to navigate male-dominated political environments in highly politically-savvy ways (Spark et al., 2018). In Botswana, a distinctively hybrid traditional-modern form of leadership had to form and proved effective at combining the traditional institutions of chieftaincy and the Kgotla (traditional assembly place and court) with the modern institutions of parliament, parties and the judiciary. Then there is, of course, the traditional ‘big men’, such as Joe Sungi, a politician in PNG, providing developmental and charismatic leadership by using his district funds to build all-weather roads to help farmers, teachers, and nurses (Green, 2016). And there is the bureaucratic leadership provided by civil servants in places such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, which rewards and runs

off expertise within a more or less meritocratic, rational, Weberian context (Dasandi, 2014). All of this is leadership: in its own form, in a particular space and time.

These observations form the starting point for this paper: perceptions of leadership vary from context to context. Extensive research has shown convincingly that who can lead, and desirable leadership characteristics, styles and practices, look between different groups, within groups, over time, and between privately held and publicly expressed or revealed perceptions. Indeed, what leadership even *means* in any given setting, at any particular point in time, is always an empirical rather than a normative question. The term ‘leader’ is socially constructed, not pre-ordained. It develops over time through historical experience of the exercise of authority and power, shifting cultures, norms and political systems, and through particular leaders behaving in ways that shape expectations (Dickson et al, 2012). This lived experience and history, in turn, has important legacy effects on contemporary perceptions – for example, what being a ‘leader’ means in China is influenced by ancient ideas that leaders need to be highly cultured, educated and skilled (Hoppe, 2004, cited in Dickson et al, 2012).



## A FOLLOWER-CENTRED APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

For a long time, leadership studies were focused on understanding leadership either as a property of a person, or as a particular set of traits or behaviours. The 'heroic' model of leadership, which evolved out of the 'great men' theories of historical change, epitomises the former approach. The latter is exemplified in the voluminous literature, particularly in organisational management studies, concerned with typologising and testing the effectiveness of different leadership 'styles'. Both approaches can give a static, limited view that neglects important aspects of the leadership process (Aviolo, 2007). All leadership is 'a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task' (Chemers, 2002, p. 1). From this perspective, the focus on leader traits or styles underplays one vital ingredient: followers. As Vroom and Jago (2007, p. 17) put it, 'one thing that all leaders have in common is one or more followers. If no one is following, one cannot be leading.'

Followers are an underexplored variable in leadership. As Aviolo (2007, p. 26) describes it, 'most leadership research has considered the follower a passive or non-existent element when examining what constitutes leadership'. And yet, followers play an *active* role in the leadership process. Crucially for DLP, we know that leaders cannot pursue developmental change without influencing *people*, or persuading them to change their ideas or behaviours (Hudson et al, 2018). The interaction between leaders and followers could be cognitive or physical, but it is always formative; of both leader behaviour and perceptions of leaders. This observation may seem obvious, but it points to an important way of thinking about, and therefore studying, leadership. If we want a holistic view, leadership needs to be seen as a process of *interaction* between leaders' perceptions of what followers want, and follower's perceptions of leaders' legitimacy. Moreover, as the next section shows, we need to appreciate that this interaction is always a political process, because it involves choice and power.

## THE POLITICS OF FOLLOWERSHIP

In an idealised follower-leader relationship, followers would assess leaders based on perfect (unbiased, complete) information. They would be able to freely articulate their preferences, and if necessary act upon them by conferring or withdrawing their support. Leaders would then be incentivised to respond to followers' preferences as appropriate and, in turn, adapt their practices and styles accordingly. There would be alignment between people's normative evaluation of the legitimacy of leaders, and the practices that leaders adopt.

This idealised relationship rarely if ever happens in practice, because the leader-follower relationship is always mediated through politics. Citizens rarely have perfect information about the actions of their leaders as a basis for forming perceptions. Even if they do, the environment for freedom of expression varies significantly over different types of political regime, cultural repertoires and organisational spaces. The effect is that people may have more or less agency to *act* on their perceptions, or to hold leaders to account for their actions, in any given setting. Likewise, political culture, traditions and norms dictate the power of different groups of followers, and therefore the likelihood of leaders being responsive to them. For these reasons, there is rarely a perfect alignment between the perceptions and expectations of followers and the practices of leaders. If we truly want to understand *when* perceptions matter, we therefore need to understand the politics of followership.

The politics of followership depends on two crucial variables:

- i) *Whether followers can express perceptions or act upon them.*
- ii) *Whether leaders are incentivised to respond to perceptions.*

Perceptions only matter if they are acted upon – that is, if followers can express them through opinion or behaviour, and if leaders respond in thoughts and actions. But the degree to which anyone is able to form and express opinions about leaders depends on the political opportunity structure – specifically, the openness of the political regime, the scope for resource mobilisation, and the space for dissent (Kitschelt, 1986). Even within the same political environment, followers have different levels of motivation to want to influence leaders. Followers can be anything from passive bystanders, to activists and diehard supporters (Kellerman, 2007). But crucially, the leadership-follower is fundamentally a power relationship: it always, everywhere, involves some form of dominance and deference (ibid).



Power relations are reflected in, and reproduced through, this relationship. Compare the follower power of a resource-poor farmer in remote Indonesia to a wealthy, politically connected female living in Jakarta: in theory, their ability to influence a national political leader would look different based on their varying access to information, resources, networks and media, or indeed proximity to that leader.

In turn, whether or not leaders are incentivised to respond to followers' preferences is highly contingent on the political environment, which shapes the perceived power of followers. Most leaders operate within more than one constituency. According to social impact theory, the likelihood of a leader being responsive to any particular constituency depends on its strength (status, power), immediacy (closeness in space or time) and size (number of people) (Latane, 1981, cited in Oc and Bashshur, 2013). Time is another factor: groups of followers may accumulate more social influence over time if leaders build a responsive relationship with them (Oc and Bashshur, 2013). In many contexts, leaders face a choice between legitimising themselves via the majority, or through special favours to powerful interest groups, at the expense of other minority groups who cannot easily advocate for political leverage (Rothstein, 2009). From this perspective, when it comes to influencing leaders, not all followers are equal.

It is also important to point out that the leadership-follower dyad is not necessarily an elite-mass relationship. It can just as feasibly involve two or more leaders, who seek to lead one another, or may take turns in leading or following, or are following one leader but leading a separate set of followers. There are always multiple levels of chess being played and hierarchies are fluid. This needs to be taken into account when one considers leaders' or followers' interests and identity (as set out in the framework below) – does a leader's decision to extract or direct resources get shaped by a leader above him or her (acting as a follower) or by the demands of his or her followers? Identifying the dynamics and moments of leadership and followership is a necessary component of applying the framework.<sup>1</sup>

The politics of followership introduces an important caveat to any discussion of leadership perceptions: in practice, the power of perceptions to generate change is always socially and politically contingent. For these reasons, simply mapping leadership perceptions is not sufficient for understanding their formation or significance for

developmental change. What is needed is a dynamic model that captures the multiple ways in which perceptions of followers are formed and shape leader behaviours within a particular socio-political context.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership perceptions need to be viewed as the product of a political process of interaction between leaders and followers. Figure 1 sets out how we conceptualise this process, and the key factors influencing it.

A couple of key points are worth making. First, this is a conceptual cycle – a framework for analysis – it is *not* a claim that the world works in such a sequential manner. It is merely designed to help organise our thinking. Second, there is no particular start or end point along this continuous cycle. Indeed, for the process of leadership to begin it doesn't even necessarily require leaders – leaders may emerge from the coalescence of social movements, or grievances, or organisations coming together. In other words, leaders could emerge from the process of followers evaluating the context via their own identity, ideas and lived experience to identify potential leaders and bestow legitimacy and authority upon them.

The framework entails the following key steps – the numbers map onto the Figure, overleaf.

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*There is rarely a perfect alignment between the perceptions and expectations of followers and the practices of leaders. If we truly want to understand when perceptions matter, we therefore need to understand the politics of followership.*

1 It is also worth noting that the question of leader-leader interaction, competition, and cooperation is considered in DLP Foundational Paper 3 How do leaders collectively influence institutions? by Sohela Nazneen.

2

**Followers** evaluate this information based their own identity, ideas, values and lived experience.



3

**Followers** form perceptions individually, and through a wider social process of evaluation.



1

**Followers** receive direct and indirect information about leaders.



4

**Followers'** may choose to act or not to act on their perceptions, as individuals or as part of a collective.



6

**Leaders** may or may not act on the preferences or actions of followers.



5

**Leaders** interpret follower actions based on their own identity and context.



1. Followers receive direct and indirect information about leaders: Messages about the performance, output and characteristics of leaders are received through various channels – from face-to-face interaction, to televised speeches and news coverage, to social media.
2. Followers evaluate this information based their own identity, ideas, values and lived experience. These individual characteristics help explain why we see a diversity of perceptions of leadership between and within groups.
3. Followers form perceptions individually, and through a wider social process of evaluation: Leaders are assessed through prevailing ideas, norms, conventions and traditions which are collectively held and debated in the family and wider society.
4. Followers' may choose to act or not to act on their perceptions, as individuals or as part of a collective: Whether followers can act on their perceptions – and express a choice through conferring or withdrawing their support for a leader – depends on the political space for contestation.
5. Leaders interpret follower actions based on their own identity and context: A leaders' responsiveness to followers depends on their personality, age, power, the prevailing ideas and norms in their context, and how they perceive the identity and power of the (group of) followers.
6. Leaders may or may not act on the preferences or actions of followers: They may choose to alter, adapt or retrench their leadership practices. They may seek to justify their actions (or lack thereof) through public pronouncements or interactions with followers.

In this way, as the diagram shows, the formation of leadership perceptions is never passive, but actively constructed through the leader-follower relationship.

### *Leadership perceptions need to be viewed as the product of a political process of interaction between leaders and followers.*

This paper is concerned with how followers form their perceptions of leaders, and why this matters. From a follower-centric perspective, the key elements of this model, and the specific questions they raise, are:

1. **Dimensions of leadership assessment:** On what basis do people evaluate leaders?
2. **Channels of influence:** How do people get their information to form these evaluations?
3. **Follower identity:** How are individuals' evaluations of leaders affected by their social identity?
4. **Context:** How (and why) does this evaluation vary across different contexts, times and spaces?

In the following sections, we unpack these questions in turn. We begin in part 2 by synthesising the vast literature on what criteria people evaluate leaders on. In other words, the key dimensions of assessment that we understand as formative of leadership 'perceptions'. In part 3, we consider the channels through which people obtain information to assess these dimensions. We then consider how the assessment of leaders, via whatever channel, is mediated by the identity of the follower, in terms of their gender, age and other key markers. In part 5, we examine how this assessment is affected by the context in which the evaluation is made. This includes the organisational and political setting, wider cultural norms, and the particular temporal context in which perceptions are formed. From this, we distil various key principles for how DLP can approach its future research agenda, and suggest key avenues for exploration, before concluding with a summary of key findings.



## PART TWO: DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

It is almost a cliché to say that there are as many concepts, theories, frameworks, and typologies of leadership as there are researchers. The literature on what people want from leaders is vast and unwieldy. In distilling this, we identify five core dimensions that recur across the literature, and are useful to think about when considering how perceptions of leaders are formed. Importantly, these dimensions are not mutually exclusive. Followers may well judge and perceive leaders based on two or more dimensions at any one time. Likewise, the distinction between them is not always clear-cut: some dimensions can blur, or act as a proxy for one another, as we suggest below. Nevertheless, these dimensions provide a workable framework that acknowledges the complex, multi-dimensional basis on which people assess leaders.

Crucially, this framework cautions against assuming that what drives followers is ‘all about’ authority / competence / maximising returns and self-interest / identity. It may well be, in particular instances, that one dimension is demonstrably and exclusively the most important. But that is an empirical question and we caution against overlooking other dimensions a priori.

The literature suggests that followers pick – or acronymically ‘PIIIC’ – leaders based on the dimensions explored below.

- Position
- Issue
- Interests
- Identity
- Characteristics

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## POSITION

Followers may assess leaders based on the authority already bestowed upon them by virtue of a position or role they hold within society or the group. Of course, this may be a position they were born into and inherited (ascribed leadership) or obtained through their talent and ability (achieved) (Corbett, 2019). Aside from being born or made, leaders can gain positions of authority via traditional, charismatic, or rational-legal routes (Weber, 1945). Rational-legal authority is often formal, bureaucratised and follows standardised processes for selection. It confers a leader with legitimacy by virtue of being elected or some other recognised procedure – for example, a chairperson of an organisation, a president or prime minister. Traditional authority flows from historical precedent, for example traditional leaders or faith leaders – whether healers or the Pope. However it is achieved, in many social settings the position of a leader influences people's perceptions of the authority and legitimacy of that leader, sometimes independently of how they act, or how effective they are in fulfilling it.

## ISSUE

Followers may also assess leaders based on the issue, policy, initiative or platform they are backing, pushing for or standing on. Followers may share the leader's vision or objectives and therefore either literally follow and support them, or at least feel an affinity for their agenda. Developmental leaders often work towards something important and valuable – for example, creating jobs, protecting rights, inclusion, climate change, welfare, and so forth. Non-developmental leaders can also accrue followers through the same channel, for example by discriminating against sub-groups of the population or removing barriers to exploit natural resources. However, it is often the case that shared objectives are based on shared interests (as discussed immediately below). For example, President Aquino's tax reforms relied upon bringing together a reform coalition that included British American Tobacco, the San Miguel Corporation, as well as doctors and health-related organizations (Sidel, 2014). Developmental support tends to be distinguished from more narrow interests-based support by the fact that the benefits are often more diffuse (public) and / or for others' benefits.

## INTERESTS

Followers may assess leaders based on whether or not they will act in their interests. There is a large political economy literature, drawing on public choice theory, that assumes rational voters or followers and rational politicians or leaders that are incentivised to give people what they want (Keefer and Khemani, 2005). This means that followers – whether special interest groups, private sector, or citizens – will support leaders who protect their interests. This could be through the provision of private goods or benefits, or the protection of privilege along ethnic or other identity-based lines. Such logics lead to patronage or clientelism where voters exchange their votes for politicians in return for government contracts or jobs or other particularistic benefits, as described by Wood (2018) and Cox (2009) in the Solomon Islands and PNG. Cronyism in Myanmar has seen the commercial interests of the military benefit from its close links to the civilian-led administration, such as the Myanmar Economic Corporation's control of ports and telecommunications, and Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited, which controls cigarettes and petroleum imports. One problem with such arguments is that it can be difficult for followers to assess or trust their leaders' commitment to protect or further their interests. As such, followers may use leaders' identity or characteristics as shortcuts and heuristics, as described below.

## IDENTITY OF THE LEADER

A popular theory from the leadership and social psychology literature suggests that people primarily evaluate their leaders based on their identity (see Box 1). More specifically, this 'social identity theory of leadership' suggests that people look for leaders who reflect the characteristics of the group that they belong to – so called 'prototypical' leaders (Hogg et al, 2012). This could be based on the identity of the leader – their ethnicity, religion, gender – or the degree to which they promote 'a shared sense of social reality that reflects what the group believes, values, and sees as appropriate and important' (von Knippenberg, 2011, p. 1079). A prototypical leader is likely to be thought of as 'one of us' – someone who best understands and is willing to defend the interests of a group. These leaders often have a strong, built-in reservoir of trust based on their identity (Hogg et al, 2003; Reicher et al, 2018). Sometimes they can retain this trust even when they are ineffective at delivering benefits for the group – creating a so-called 'licence to fail' (Giessner et al, 2008). People may also look to such leaders to actively define their group identity. They may become identity entrepreneurs, meaning they can change the group's identity and shift norms and values without harming their legitimacy (Abrams et al, 2008).

## CHARACTERISTICS

Finally, in contrast to positional notions of authority, followers may evaluate leaders on their personal characteristics, meaning how they perform, and/or the qualities they demonstrate. We follow Aaldering & Vliegenthart (2016) in summarising the (vast) literature on leadership styles and practices into five consistently identified characteristics that leaders may or may not display.

- a. **Competence.** Leaders who know how to get things done and are effective at their job tend to be judged more positively (Green & Jennings, 2017). Such leaders display knowledge of the rules of the game, i.e. political craftsmanship. They are often seen as more experienced and possess and use strategic insight.
- b. **Strength.** Determination and aggressiveness can be prized as followers can value decisiveness, assertiveness, conviction and the ability of their leader to dominate decision-making (Lord et al., 1984). For example, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has displayed a distinctively authoritarian style of leadership with extension of martial law to Mindanao and his approach to drugs.
- c. **Integrity.** Leaders that display integrity and are considered trustworthy are highly valued in some societies. This is especially the case in contexts where frustrations around corruption are prevalent. Integrity can be displayed through their sense of duty and public commitment, putting the public interest ahead of their own, as well as being perceived as fair, honest and caring (Kinder et al., 1980).
- d. **Responsive.** Responsive leaders are those who are in touch with their followers and or the wider public and society. This may well be, but isn't necessarily, democratic. They are often seen as good listener and focussed on the growth and empowerment of followers (Greenleaf, 1977).
- e. **Charismatic.** Charismatic leaders enjoy Weber's third source of authority. They lead by inspiring others to get things done, through charm and persuasion; the connection through followers and their leader is typically an emotional one (House, 1977). Charismatic leaders often appear warm and empathetic. It is charismatic leaders that are typically associated with theories of transformational leadership, where the motivation and values of both leaders and followers are raised (Burns, 1978, Bass, 1985).

### BOX 1: WHEN IS A LEADER 'PROTOTYPICAL'?

People are naturally biased towards selecting leaders that they can identify as 'one of us'. This so-called 'prototypical' leader reflects the core identity of a group – whether based on their age, ethnicity, gender or personality – and embodies the core values and beliefs of that group. The opposite of a prototypical leader is an atypical leader: someone who doesn't fit the group stereotype.

A vast amount of empirical research has demonstrated that prototypical leaders are sometimes perceived and treated differently to non-prototypical leaders. They are likely to be more trusted, given more leeway to perform poorly in a role without losing their legitimacy, punished less for unfairness, and attributed with more charisma.

*This framework cautions against assuming that what drives followers is 'all about' authority, competence, maximising returns and self-interest, and identity. It may well be, in particular instances, that one dimension is demonstrably and exclusively the most important.*



## PART THREE: CHANNELS OF INFLUENCE

Followers receive messages about the above dimensions of leadership via various channels; from direct interaction, to televised speeches and news coverage, to social media. They interpret this both individually, and as part of a social process of evaluation that takes place within the home and wider society and networks.

Follower perceptions of leaders are rarely direct, unfiltered or disintermediated, but instead are mediated through these channels. In this section, we consider the role of media, on the basis that 'the media are the principal source for much of what citizens know about the world, and what is reported and how the information is framed has implications for both the public and policy agendas' (Habel 2012).

The traditional media has long been central to politics as the notions of it being the Fourth Estate or the Fourth Branch of Government attest (Cater, 1959). Moreover, many have noted the increased mediatisation of politics – both in terms of politicians attempting to control and get their message across through the media, but also in the sense of media acting as a or the 'spokesperson' of or for civil society and helping to hold those in power to account (Schudson, 2002).

We use the term media in the broad sense – the plural of medium, i.e. the means of communicating something. We identify 3 key media: (1) traditional print and news media, (2) social media or new media, and (3) friends and family,

and social networks. We outline how the specificities of each are important to understand how perceptions of leaders are mediated (i.e. transmitted) as well as moderated (i.e. changed) by followers' characteristics and attitudes. In other words, variation in perceptions may come from similar people assessing the same leader through different channels, or it might come from different types of people assessing the same leader through the same channels because their perceptions are moderated by their own prior beliefs.

Channels matter and the media are not neutral. The facts never speak for themselves. In addition to providing information for individuals to judge events and leaders, the type of information that is or is not conveyed, what is included or not included, whose voices or which spaces are privileged, and the way in which the information is presented, matter (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). As scholars of political communication have noted, the way in which the media choose to frame an issue or the actions of a leader changes how important or relevant the facts become (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Because individuals do not have either the time or expertise to build careful or first-hand information, they tend to 'make evaluations based on newly acquired and readily accessible information from the mass media' (Zaller, 1992). This framing or priming means that some issues are brought to followers' attention – terrorism and crime – whereas some are ignored or relegated in importance – child poverty or climate crisis – and thereby sets the standards by which leaders are judged (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

### NEWSPAPERS, TV AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

The traditional view of the press (and media in general) as the Fourth Estate comes from Thomas Carlyle (1852), who wrote 'Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.' It was the members of the press, their newspapers and their *independent* reporting that was seen as crucial in the functioning of democracy. They show that the local media is critical in promoting political accountability and exposing corrupt leaders and promoting good ones. For example, Ferraz and Finan (2008) show that the release of information about corrupt practices disseminated through media outlets in Brazil 'had a significant impact on

incumbents' electoral performance, and that these effects were more pronounced in municipalities where local radio was present to divulge the information'.

This – neutral reporting of information thereby acting as an independent watchdog for the public and holding those in power to account – should be the primary role of the media. However, ever since Cater (1959), observers have noted the potential for and reality of the corruption of the media as it acted as a political actor in and for itself (Page, 1996) or if it was controlled by those in the legislative or executive branches of government.

Authoritarian contexts have been traditionally associated with state monopolies over newspapers and broadcast media, such as radio and TV, along with curtailed press freedoms and the ability of journalists to report (Faringer, 1991). Earlier observers perceived that civil society activism, donor led reform, alongside private investment, was leading to a loosening of such de jure and de facto government power over the media (Bourgault, 1995). However, more recent trends point to a closing of civil society and media space. UNESCO's 2017/2018 World Trends report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development documents how there has been an increased capture of media by government and corporate interests; increased criticism of media and human rights groups by leaders in power; and an increase in government instigated internet shutdowns from 18 in 2015 to 56 in 2017.

How do citizens perceive the credibility of the media? Because of the historical association of state-owned media with authoritarian regimes, the public presses' reliance on tax revenues, and the fact that most fact-checking and investigative journalism comes from the private sector, the assumption is that private media tend to play a stronger watchdog role on leaders – corruption, theft and electoral fraud, and that private media will be more trusted than public media (Tettey, 2002). But others have argued that private media are less well resourced, less professionally trained, and that profit-driven news organizations are less likely to offer substantive reporting (Hamilton 2004). Moehler and Singh (2011) find that countries in Africa with lower press freedom or higher levels of corruption tended to have a greater preference for private over public media. And individuals who are more politically sophisticated and place a higher value on democracy are more likely to trust private media as opposed to public media.

How does media consumption relate to civic and political activism? Citizens that were exposed to political radio shows during an election campaign in Ghana, displayed greater political engagement (Moehler and Conroy-Krutz, 2016). However, if the content of the program was antagonistic to individuals' prior political beliefs, they were less likely to participate.

Political actors *strategically* use media to change perceptions. This is because to become legitimate, leaders have to convince followers of the normative 'justifiability' (Beetham, 1991) of their actions or behaviours. They often have resources at their disposal to do this – whether it's rhetorical platform in (sometimes control over) the media, the capacity to convene participatory processes, or to form patronage relationships. In public speeches, a leader's legitimacy may depend on how well they can cultivate what Steffek (2003, p. 251) terms the art of 'explaining and defending'. For these reasons, public discourse is, as Gupta (1995, p. 376) tells us, 'a key arena through which the state, citizens, and other organizations and aggregations come to be imagined' and where 'representations of the state are constituted, contested, and transformed in public culture'. In Indonesia, for example, Philip Kitley (2000) documents how television was fundamental to the country's national culture project, promoting a sense of national unity and identity, from the establishment of its public broadcasting service in 1962. Kitley details how, for example, the popular children's series *Si Unyil* depicted the model Indonesian (adult) subjects, parodying regional accents, 'to build and strengthen audience acceptance of the national language and the "national subject."' (Kitley, 2000: 15).

Recent research analysing the political speeches of world leaders identifies several linguistic strategies for legitimization. These include (1) emotions: for example, representing a threat from the 'other' to elicit fear; (2) a hypothetical future: for example, telling a consequential story of worst case scenario if action is not taken to address a threat; (3) rationality, for example, political actors may seek to demonstrate that they have weighed up various options before coming to a decision; (4) voices of expertise; by using expert authorisation for their actions; and (5) altruism, by presenting themselves as servants of the people (Reyes, 2011). Of course, the choice and utility of linguistic strategies is context specific; this particular study was largely undertaken on US leaders after 9/11. Nevertheless, language and discourse are forms of soft power that are used by political actors to persuade and influence (would-be) followers of their right to rule. While the power of words may vary according to the situation, they are a key link between leaders and followers.







## SOCIAL MEDIA

The early view of social media was that it was a radical democratising force – a “liberation technology” no less (Diamond 2010). This is because the access to the channels of the traditional media was low and social media radically widened access. Contrary to the top-down, elite-mass structure of traditional media, social media empowered civil society. This Panglossian view has given way to a more nuanced and critical view of social media.

First, there is a recognition of how easily and effectively leaders can use social media to monitor and control citizens as opposed to the other way around and to foment hate (Morozov 2012). For example, in Myanmar, following the successful reform of the telecoms sector (see Dasandi and Hudson, 2017) Facebook came to dominate the market with over 20 million users. In 2017, it became clear that Facebook was used by Buddhist extremists to incite hatred and violence against the Rohingya minority. Such examples go to show how fake news can be used to weaponize misinformation (Ireton and Posetti, 2018). Fake news isn't new. Over two thousand years ago, Octavian ‘hacked’ the republican system by portraying Mark Antony in slogans on coins as ‘a degenerate Roman ... striving to subvert the liberties of the Roman people to subjugate Italy and the west under the rule of an oriental queen’ (Kaminska, 2017). Yet, while fake news is an old story, it is also an amplified one, ‘fuelled by new technology’. Digitally fuelled information, spreading through networks – personal and social media – with limited quality control, the possibility to edit and misrepresent, the ability to go viral, and ability to maintain anonymity threatens trust in public institutions and leaders as well as the media. It becomes difficult for citizens to discern what is true and what is false.

Second, counter to the notion of the media as a rational public space of independent and impartial information and debate, social media has shown how algorithms that predict what content users like, based on previous likes, serves to filter out information that is counter to their world view, creating highly personalised news feeds. This is itself reinforced by the tendency of individuals to inhabit online communities of similar individuals.

Such homogenisation of views and information has been termed a filter bubble or echochamber. Social media echo chambers have been shown to ‘trigger collective framing of narratives that are often biased toward self-confirmation’ (Del Vicario et al 2016). For example, the 2014 Ebola outbreak led to many conspiracy theories circulating in echochambers, including that it was the result of U.S. bioterrorism experiments, a population control plot, or President Obama wanting America to become more African (Millman 2014). In December 2018, Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari had to deny a theory, widely aired on social media as well as political opponents, that he had been replaced by a lookalike from Sudan called Jubril (The Guardian, 2018). In the 2017 elections in Kenya leading up to the re-election of President Uhuru Kenyatta, fake polls with CNN and BBC logos on them circulated Facebook and WhatsApp. The homogenisation of information has also increased polarisation, hyper-partisanship, and the breakdown of political contestation and the lifeblood of civil society. As opposed to a global village, the structure of online communities increasingly resembles a cyberbalkanization (Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson 2005).

But even with cyberbalkanisation, political mobilisation is still possible and holding leaders to account can still be done through digital technologies that goes beyond mere ‘clicktivism’ (Bond et al. 2012). For example, in Fiji, digital technologies have fostered a virtual community of accountability and transparency for activists (Brimacombe et al 2018). Social media platforms enabled activists to cultivate networks of solidarity and support that translated into ‘offline’ networks and organisations. Take Back the Streets, for example, created a Facebook group to enable women to document instances of harassment. The subsequent debate and data generated by the activists fed into the Land Transport Authority (LTA) as part of consultations to amend the LTA Code of Conduct and the Land Transport Act.

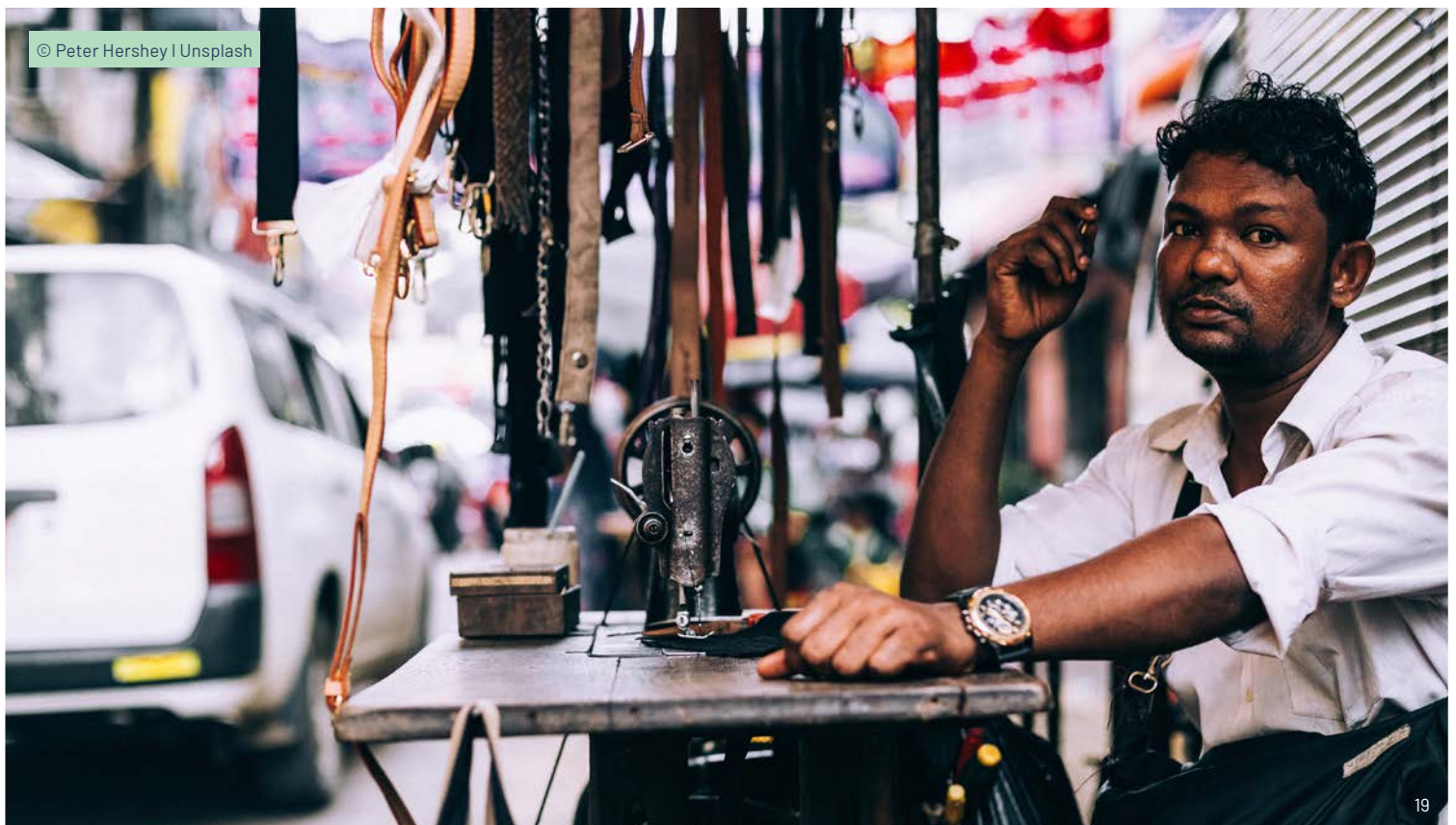
## ENDORSER: TRUSTED INDIVIDUALS, FRIENDS, FAMILY, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND WORD OF MOUTH

The final aspect of media – which is equally applicable to traditional broadcast media and social media, but is often most powerful in people's face to face social networks of trusted family and friends – is the endorsement effect of a trusted other. Support for leaders can be undercut or boosted by the negative or positive assessment of friends, family, or respected others since: "foremost among agencies of socialization into politics is the family" (Hyman, 1959:51).

The effects of endorsement and socialisation can be more vertical or more horizontal. More vertical influences tend to rely on authority and hierarchy and be more institutionalised, so for example school, religion, and family. Traditional chiefs are able to endorse presidential candidates, as villagers will tend to vote along the lines of their chief (Baldwin, 2015). For example, in Zambia, 25 traditional leaders expressed support for the incumbent president, Edgar Lungu, in advance of the presidential election in 2016 (*The Economist*, 2016). And within families, it is well established that parental political views and voting tends to follow that of the parents as children are socialised into a political culture and habit (Jennings, et al 2009).

More horizontal effects tend to be through peer influences. The mechanism here is that a shared group-identity offers solace, and the desire for individuals to 'fit in' can mean that shared-views are established (Walker et al, 2000). There is evidence that individuals tend to follow their peer group's political preferences, voting for the same leaders (Kenny 1994; Beck 2002). Work in social psychology and political communication has shown that individuals are only persuaded to consider and act on new information when the provider is perceived to be knowledgeable and trustworthy (Fiske & Dupree, 2014). So, the endorser effect can be critical for how leaders are perceived.

What the rising importance of social media and the continuing importance of personal endorsements through social networks underline is the importance of how followers' perceptions of leaders are expressed and serve to challenge or reproduce perceptions of leaders. This is an important avenue for future research. There are a number of examples in this paper – from the digital activists in Fiji to the risk of backlash effects (see Box 4) – that reinforce this point that perceptions of leaders is not merely something that citizens or followers interpret or consume but that they are also active producers and translators of these perceptions. Followers have agency in this process and can accept or reject and transform a leader's image.



## PART FOUR: FOLLOWER IDENTITY

**F**ollowers' perceptions of leaders are filtered through their own identity, ideas, values and lived experience. These individual characteristics help explain why we see a diversity of perceptions across society *between* and *within* groups. Follower identity matters for developmental leadership because, as discussed in part I, the identity of followers, or groups of followers, can affect how leaders perceive their power and influence, and therefore how likely they are to respond to their preferences. In practice, different groups may form different views of leaders through a history of exclusion or neglect by leaders. In this way, the identity of followers is key to the follower-leader relationship. In turn, the identity, lived experience, life history and values influence individuals' assessment of leadership. Below, we consider the impact of social identity, gender and age, on the formation of individual and group perceptions of leaders.

### IDENTITY

As noted earlier, people evaluate leaders on the basis of their 'fit' with the identity of the group they most closely associate with. In all societies, 'groups evaluate and define who we are, and influence what we think, feel, and do, and how others perceive and treat us' (Hogg et al, 2012). Empirical research has convincingly showed that prototypicality affects people's preferences for leaders, and their perceptions of a leader's legitimacy to act (Hogg & Knippenberg, 2003; Reicher et al, 2018). Perhaps most significantly, leaders are also more likely to be perceived as 'effective' when they are considered prototypical (Hohman, Hogg, & Bligh, 2010).

However, new research has also shed light on how the degree of preference for prototypical leaders varies within groups, according to different identity markers. Group members who most strongly identify with a group are more likely to favour prototypical leaders than those who don't, for example (Hogg, 2001). People's preference for a prototypical leader may also change over time, depending on whether people feel their group identity is under threat, or uncertain (Rast et al, 2012). Results from a recent DLP survey in Indonesia support the theory that non-prototypical leaders tend to have to perform well to gain trust, whereas prototypical leaders typically have a "license to fail" (Giessner et al, 2008). However, they also highlight that preferences for different 'prototypes' varies across key identity markers (see box 2).

### GENDER

Systematic analysis and meta-analyses have shown that differences between men and women – in terms of social or personality variables, including leadership, cognitive abilities, verbal and nonverbal communication, psychological wellbeing, and moral reasoning – are not significant (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974; Hyde, 2005). The mean differences among men and women are bigger than the difference between men and women (Kimmel, 2007). Contrary to binary thinking, the 'law of the excluded middle' highlights that most men and women fall in the middle of all distributions of whatever is being measured and are actually more similar to one another (Tavris, 1993).

With respect to leadership styles, meta-analysis of the existing literature confirms that men and women are not that different, and that when scholars have looked at transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership, there are more similarities than differences between women and men leaders (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Despite this, and despite the increasing similarity in terms of the education opportunities and experiences of women, perceptions and stereotypes of gender-based differences continue to prevail.

But, as Kimmel (2016) has argued, virtually every society differentiates people on the basis of gender, and almost all societies are based on male dominance. Men get more and their roles and tasks are valued more. 'The adoption of masculinity and femininity implies the adoption of "political" ideas that what women do is not as culturally important as what men do' (Kimmel 2007: 3). Kimmel calls this differential socialisation, or the process of being taught to be different: 'Gender difference is the product of gender inequality, and not the other way around' (Kimmel 2016: 4). The real task of social science is not to explain gender differences, but why gender difference is so important to individuals and society. From this perspective, a gendered understanding of *perceptions* of leadership is central.

Gender stereotypes, and gender norms, affect how people perceive and evaluate leaders. A series of studies has examined what qualities or stereotypes people associate with men and women and leadership. When citizens are asked to list the qualities they associate with men and a list the qualities they associate with leaders, the two lists are often very similar. The results of these studies



suggest that a set of stereotypically masculine qualities heavily overlap with a set of idealised leadership qualities (Fullager et al. 2003). Psychology researchers draw on 'role incongruity theory' to understand how these prescriptive stereotypes that people assign to men and women mean that people are more likely to feel as though 'men's' qualities are more congruent with leadership roles than women – explaining the stereotypical perception that men are 'naturally endowed' with leadership qualities. As box 2 shows, DLP Indonesia research findings show perceptions of women as leaders differ between men and women, who prioritise different evaluative criteria.

## AGE

Another key dimension of followers' identity that influences their perceptions of leaders is age. This is borne out in the evidence that voting patterns are often split across generations. For example, recent analysis shows that across Africa, political participation is lower among the bulging population of young people, with potentially worrying implications for the future of democracy on the continent (Resnick & Casale, 2014). Two explanations are put forward for the low participation of young people compared to older generations. First, younger generations are generally less politically active (in community or voluntary organisations), and have less access to political knowledge or discuss politics. Second, many young people are dissuaded from voting if they believed elections are unlikely to remove leaders that held the office for many years, which is of course a recurring pattern across many authoritarian systems on the continent (Resnick & Casale, 2014).

Different generations can have different perceptions of leaders or political parties because their perceptions are formed through particular historical experience, which add meaning to certain leadership values, or styles. In Africa, older generations are often attached to a particular political party or leader associated with the end of colonialism, because they lived through that experience, recall the significance of liberation struggle, and have a certain sentimental attachment and loyalty to people or parties associated with that formative era. However, these same attachments do not transmit across generations with different lived experiences (Resnick & Casale, 2014). In this way, the criteria against which people evaluate leaders depends on an individual's life history, which introduces another key dimension of variation both between and across societies.

## BOX 2: THE EFFECTS OF FOLLOWER IDENTITY ON ASSESSMENTS OF PROTOTYPICAL LEADERS

Recent DLP research in Indonesia tested the social identity theory of leadership based on an experimental survey of 2003 respondents across five provinces.

Respondents were asked to construct two different leader profiles – who they would personally like to see in power, and who they believe would most represent the wider interests of the group. Based on social identity theory, we identified 7 key characteristics for respondents to select from: gender, age, faith, ethnicity, leadership style, religiosity, and attitude towards existing traditions.

The survey highlighted some key differences in how men and women perceive prototypical leaders. Women (22%) were more likely to choose a female leader than male respondents (7%). Women (48%) were more likely to choose a 47-year old than men (41%), whereas men (15%) were more than twice as likely to choose a 27-year old leader than female respondents were (6%). Men were more likely to choose a leader with the same ethnicity as them (63%) than women (55%).

To test the difference a prototypical leader makes on people's perceptions, respondents were randomly assigned to two groups. The first group were shown a leader profile that matched their prototypical leader – i.e. the kind of leader they had identified as most likely to represent the wider interests of the group that they identify with. The second group were shown a randomly created leader profile that was non-prototypical. Both groups received a manifesto statement from either their prototypical leader or a non-prototypical leader. Groups assigned their 'prototypical leader' reported they could be more trusted (36% more), considered more capable or effective (33% more), and felt more likely to protect the interests of the group (38% more). Here, there were no significant differences between men and women.

Source: Hudson et al, 2019

## PART FIVE: LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS IN CONTEXT

How leadership is interpreted in different contexts, and the expectations this generates among followers, can have dramatic effects on what leaders actually do – for example, whether they are inclusive or exclusive, focus on broad-based social concerns or delivering individual rewards, and the degree to which they perceive their identity versus their effectiveness as sufficient to justify their (continued) power.

Culture shapes how leaders behave because leaders intuitively know what local values and norms dictate in terms of appropriate behaviour. Culture also provides a lens through which people evaluate leaders, because people's traditions, values, and norms form a cognitive filter through which they assess whether a leader is appropriate or worthy of their support. In this way, leadership is always 'situational', meaning the power and authority that leaders can exercise depends on the particular context in which they operate and crucially, how they adapt to it (see Box 3 on power). Take for example a local chief operating at community level. Culture, history

and tradition dictate what people expect from this leader. The chief may gain legitimacy by adopting a traditional community protection role and leadership style that closely follows expected social norms. But the same leader may be called to engage in national councils that address wider development concerns outside of their village. Here, the institutional norms and power structures may require them to operate in different ways to gain legitimacy and authority, and their effectiveness may be judged by different criteria based on that context.

Of course, 'context' is a broad term. Aviolo (2007) usefully breaks this down further, to the 'proximate' and 'distal' contexts in which leaders and followers interact. The proximate context refers to the organisational setting, organisational culture, and the sector in which leaders are operating. The wider 'distal' context, encompasses the broader societal culture, norms and values and the nature of the political system. Below, we consider the influence of culture on leadership perceptions at both the proximate and distal levels. Specifically, we focus on the influence of

### BOX 3: POWER

Power takes several forms, most systematically developed by feminist scholars and those working on questions of empowerment (Rowlands, 1997; Allen, 1998). People can accumulate the '*power to*' achieve their aims and goals, whether through formal decision-making, capacity or reputation-building. '*Power over*' is the stereotypical controlling power, whereby one person is able to set or constrain the choices of others. It can manifest as domination, subordination, manipulation, repression, and produce compliance or resistance. '*Power with*' is a collective form of power, and a key aspect of how coalitions work to achieve a shared goal. Finally, '*power within*' comes from people's intrinsic motivation and sense of agency.

Drawing on Luke's 'Three faces of power' (Lukes, 1974) a widely-used way of breaking down how power operates is to think of it as 'visible', 'invisible', and 'hidden' (Dahl, 1957; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 2005; Gaventa, 1980; 2006). The best example of this is the Power Cube (Gaventa, 2006). 'Visible' power is the open 'face' of power. It reveals itself as powerful individuals who get to decide at key decision-making points. But power isn't just about decision-making. It is also about determining what comes onto the agenda in the first place. Powerful actors can control this agenda by deciding what is legitimately up for discussion. In practice, this 'hidden' power may take the form of lobbying, or private deals. Finally, 'invisible' power is the power to persuade and sometimes manipulate what people think, how they can act, and what they believe to be in their interests. Power like this can influence people without them even realising it. For example, it can determine who really has authority to speak in public meetings, and whether both men and women can have a voice (Koester, 2015).

cultural norms, gendered power relations, and the sectoral context in which leaders operate, as influencing how leaders are perceived, and may behave. We also consider how perceptions of leadership vary over time, as these contextual factors change.

## CULTURAL NORMS AND VALUES

At the global level, research identifies sweeping differences between how “western” and “eastern” cultures perceive leadership. For example, Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck (2014) studied perceptions of ‘ethical’ leadership in the public and private sectors, using a small sample (n = 36) of interviews from a selection of countries in the global west and east. In the east, ethical leadership was associated with modesty and openness to ideas, service to people, and detachment from material gain. In the west, it was more likely to mean good performance management, including clear objectives and monitoring. Crucially, the researchers found as many commonalities as differences in how ethical leadership was understood, with universal values that included honesty and fairness. While research that generalises cultural patterns should be treated with caution for obvious reasons, it nevertheless shows that people evaluate leaders based on values and ideas that are sometimes, though not always, particular to that context. Imprinting a “Western” or “Pacific” conception of leadership may be misleading. And yet, thinking about what culture, history and norms are influencing how a person in a village is evaluating their local leader, or how a person in a capitol city is evaluating that same local leader, is essential for understanding why leaders gain or lose followers.

Leadership has to be conceptualised from a cultural perspective, because cultural values have direct effects on expectations of leader behaviour. In Tonga, for example, the concept of Faka’apa’apa – loosely translated as “respect” – represents a kind of a social contract whereby people demonstrate mutual respect, consideration and dignity of one another through their behaviour, clothing and speech, in order to build crucial social capital and relationships (Johansson Fua, 2007). Faka’apa’apa values the collective good over the individual good, and equity over equality. In turn, this way of life permeates conceptualisations of leadership. As Johansson Fua (2007 pp. 679-680) describes: ‘leaders within a Tongan context are guided by the key principle of Va’ – which is Faka’apa’apa. As leader, Faka’apa’apa as respect is given only after the staff have recognised key principles of feveitokai’aki (sharing, generosity),

fe’ofa’aki (love, compassion), fetokoni’aki (helpfulness) and loto fakato’ kilalo (humility) that are appropriately demonstrated by the leader through their relationships’. In this sense, she argues, leadership in Tonga is always a process of building and negotiating relationships, through the demonstration of leader compassion and humility, and the most important quality of a leader in this context is their ability to display and reflect these core values.

Cultural norms and values also affect *preferences* for leadership styles; that is, how leaders operate and the kinds of values they practice (Hanges et al, 2016). Global surveys have gone so far as trying to classify distinct leadership ‘cultures’ across countries. The largest example of this approach – the Global Leadership and Organisational Behavioural Effectiveness (GLOBE) study – involved a major survey of 17,000 managers across 65 countries. Building on and consolidating the work of Hofstede (1980) and others, GLOBE distilled a set of cultural factors and socio-political conditions that seem to play an important role in how leadership is understood, perceived and operates across different contexts (see Table 1). The research identified clear links between perceptions of desirable leader “attributes” – in other words, idealised leader prototypes – and national culture (Dorfman et al, 2012). Strikingly, national culture was a more important determinant of preferred leadership styles than organisational culture. Overall, there were wide variations across cultural “clusters” on the degree to which leaders were expected to be status conscious, bureaucratic, autonomous, face-saving, humane and internally competitive. But the effect of culture is more complex than diversifying the menu of desirable leadership qualities: It can also change the meaning and interpretation of them. What ‘integrity’ means, for example, has been shown to vary across cultures. For example, research has found that while some Anglo cultures (US and Ireland) understand integrity as leaders demonstrating consistency between their espoused values and behaviour, some Asian cultures (China, Hong Kong) understand integrity in terms of how leader’s *treat* other, and whether they do so fairly (Martin et al., 2013).



**TABLE 1: CULTURAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP**

CONDITION	DESCRIPTION	TYPES OF EFFECTS
<b>In-group collectivism</b>	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action	Leaders encourage (should encourage) group loyalty even if individual goals suffer
<b>Power distance</b>	The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally	Followers are (should be) expected to obey their leaders without question
<b>Uncertainty avoidance</b>	The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events	Most people lead (should lead) highly structured lives with few unexpected events
<b>Gender egalitarianism</b>	The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality	Boys are encouraged (should be encouraged) more than girls to attain a higher education (scored inversely)
<b>Assertiveness</b>	The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in their relationships with others	People are (should be) generally dominant in their relationships with each other
<b>Future orientation</b>	The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future	More people live (should live) for the present rather than for the future (scored inversely)
<b>Humane orientation</b>	The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring and kind to others	People are generally (should be generally) very tolerant of mistakes
<b>Institutional collectivism</b>	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action	Leaders encourage (should encourage) group loyalty even if individual goals suffer
<b>Performance orientation</b>	The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence	Students are encouraged (should be encouraged) to strive for continuously improved performance

Source: Dorfman et al, 2012

The *meaning* of different leadership styles may be dependent on the values held within a particular society. For example, Joseph (2015) puts forward a 'values-based' approach to transformational leadership in the South Pacific. He argues that across the region, traditional models of leadership – from the chieftaincy, to hereditary leadership – are prevalent and often 'localised' to a specific region, reflecting and reinforcing fragmented, often tribalised systems of governance. Using Hofstede's (2013) model, he characterises the region as high power distance, high masculinity, and high collectivism, whereby individual needs are subsumed to collective interests. In this context, and from a normative standpoint, he argues that an idealised, indigenous version of transformational leadership needs a clear moral foundation, is mission-driven, development oriented (to empower indigenous leaders), and builds on a strong understanding of stakeholder values.

But what aspects of culture matter for how leaders are perceived? Culture is, after all, a broad term that incorporates a range of shared beliefs, identities and values transmitted through shared experiences (Dickson et al., 2012). Drilling down further into the GLOBE data, clear patterns emerge between the way societies are organised, and the values they hold, and ideas about how leaders should act. For example, societies with strong social hierarchies between people in positions of power (parents, leaders, teachers) and their subordinates may be described as having high 'power distance values'. In these societies, people tend to expect leaders to behave in rule-oriented ways, be secretive and cognizant of their status (Dorfman et al, 2012; Javidan, 2010 ). Bureaucratic leadership (defined as risk-averse, rule conformity) styles were also preferred in societies with strong 'uncertainty avoidance' (preserving the status quo and favouring stability over change). Autonomous leadership (defined by a tendency to work alone, independently) styles were disliked in cultures that value collective goods. In these cultural contexts, people particularly valued 'self-sacrificial' leadership styles, where leaders are willing to sacrifice their interests for the common good. Internally competitive leadership (defined by assertiveness, a tendency to be prescriptive, and a reluctance to share information) was disliked in societies with low 'power distance values', and crucially, where gender egalitarianism is valued. Out of these findings, the researchers developed a "culturally endorsed theory of leadership (CLT)". This essentially argues that leaders tend to perform to cultural expectations (prototypes) and that when they do, they become more effective.

Large-scale surveys have also sought to identify certain leadership attributes that are *universally* desirable. In the GLOBE study, for example, the most highly rated universal criterion was integrity (trustworthy, just and honest). Likewise, "irritable", "ruthless" or "malevolent" were found to be universally undesirable. But these studies are conducted in specific sectors (marketing, business) and from an organisational management perspective. While such exercises in meta-level categorisation provide strong evidence that leadership is culturally contingent, they provide a static, partial picture. Cultural 'bracketing' is highly contested and problematic if certain cultures are omitted, or shoehorned to fit into imperfect categories that do not capture nuance. For example, much of the literature assumes culture homogeneity at the country-level, neglecting the important role of within-country differences (Tung, 2008). Also, snapshots neglect how leaders can work to *change* culture over time, or indeed what happens when leaders do not conform to the expected cultural prototype. Finally, much of this research is still built on a western conception of leadership, and sets up and tests dichotomies between these and "eastern" perspectives. Theories of leadership, however, often don't hold across cultures. For example, 'transformational' leadership – associated with an inspirational, visionary style – isn't culturally acceptable in a Japanese setting (Takahashi et al, 2012).

Some research directly challenges the primacy given to cultural differences in global leadership surveys. Based on interviews with healthcare leaders and their constituents in Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines, Posner (2013) argues that how leaders behave trumps both their identity and their culture in determining their effectiveness. Specifically, although there were cultural differences in how leaders behaved, they were consistently considered more effective when they used five 'exemplary' leadership practices: model, inspire, challenge, enable, encourage. From this, he deduces that these leadership practices (as opposed to any particular leadership values or principles) are universally rewarded across cultures. Interestingly, they also found that leadership training did not increase the frequency with which leaders used these practices.







Thinking about developmental change then, the idea that a leader's effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes at least partly stems from their capacity to align with societal cultural ("cultural endorsement") presents something of a quandary. From this perspective, the effects of leadership may be more or less developmental, depending on whether the prevailing culture is developmental, or at least creates a permissive environment for change. In effect, if leadership is culturally contingent, then its impact on what some might consider to be developmental "goods" (equity, inclusion) are also culturally mediated. The cultural endorsement-effectiveness circle has no inherent normative bias towards good outcomes. Indeed, the circle might reinforce cultural values that are precisely working against them. From a developmental perspective then, the cultural endorsement-effectiveness circle can be virtuous or vicious.

## GENDERED POWER RELATIONS

One of the clearest illustrations of the effects of cultural norms and power relations on perceptions of leadership comes from the literature on gender and leadership. Research has started to coalesce around specific cultural norms that seem to play a key role in determining women's participation in political leadership around the world. In their study of the relationship between institutional development and women's political leadership, Bullough et al. (2012) identified three aspects of culture that negatively affect women's leadership: i) *weak performance orientation*, whereby gender identity is valued over performance, merit or individual accomplishments; ii) *high power distance*, characterised by poor upward mobility and communication between different levels of a social hierarchy, and iii) *in-group collectivism*, meaning collective goals are valued over individual goals. On this latter point, the researchers found that in societies with high in-group collectivism, family expectations and responsibilities were a more significant source of cultural pressure on women than any wider social norms.

A cultural perspective is vital for understanding some of the potential barriers to women taking up leadership roles. For example, interviews with female academics across a number of Asian countries<sup>1</sup> suggest the culture of leadership in higher education makes taking up a leadership position undesirable. In these contexts, the idea of women leading men, and therefore transgressing patriarchal boundaries, would be perceived as disrupting

the 'symbolic order', such that 'leadership was frequently perceived and experienced by women in terms of navigating a range of ugly feelings and toxicities that depleted aspirations, well-being and opportunities' (Morley & Crossouard, 2016, p. 801). Though there were different explanations for women's underrepresentation in leadership in HE across these settings, it was commonly found that gender inequality intersected with wider social class, caste, religion, ethnic and linguistic inequalities to reproduce women's underrepresentation. Norms about women's role in the family, combined with organisational cultures, and gender-based violence on campuses, reinforced a self-perception among women as second-class citizens unworthy of leading. Patriarchy reinforced a dominant culture of masculinity and aggressive assertiveness which many women found unpalatable. Many women reported that advancements in their career attract ugly feelings of envy from male colleagues. Gender-based violence on campuses made women reluctant to draw attention to themselves through selection committees (Morley & Crossouard, 2016). This study illustrates a wider dynamic: socio-cultural practices permeate and intersect with organisational culture, with the effect of keeping women in their prescribed social roles.

Typologies of leadership are not gender neutral; they fail to account for the role of gender stereotypes in creating different expectations in how men and women leaders behave in different social settings (Chin, 2011). As wider research has shown, organisational cultures often mirror social construction of gender norms – particularly when we think of personality traits that people expect from leaders, which can often be gendered (ibid). Others have argued that women adopt particular leadership styles, tending towards more democratic, collaborative styles that draw on friendship. This is supported through DLP research PNG and Malaysia that showed how important the role of trust and pre-existing friendship networks were in the effectiveness of coalitions (Spark and Lee, 2018). However, we should exercise caution in adopting an essentialist position that assumes gender is the single and most important dimension of leadership evaluations (as was also discussed in Section 2).

Although gender norms clearly shape perceptions of women as leaders, some research stresses that these effects are not homogenous. As Zetlin (2014) argues in reference to research on women's participation in parliaments in the Pacific, the literature often portrays leadership in this region as a hyper-masculine contest

1 Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka

between 'big men' and chiefs. Yet, the prevalence of patriarchal culture differs across this region, and its effects on perceptions of women's cultural acceptability as leaders is by no means homogenous. Some parts of the region, for example, Solomon Islands and Bougainville, are predominantly matrilineal. In Bougainville, women's role in bringing about a peaceful end to the civil war in 1992 boosted their influence at the national level, with the first reserved seats for women in the region. This latter point reiterates that structural crisis can precipitate changing roles for women, sometimes with the effect of enabling them to have greater representation in leadership. Moreover, traditional understandings of women's power often co-exist alongside with more contemporary beliefs, sometimes in different leadership spaces. Zetlin (2014) contrasts women's deferential engagement with traditional women title bearers in Palau with new their active engagement in emerging women's empowerment organisations. This illustrates that there is never one 'culture' within or between societies, because culture is mediated by space. As Zetlin (2014) argues, rather than blame culture, understanding the effects of culture requires an understanding of cultural hybridity – that is, how traditional beliefs sit alongside more contemporary beliefs, in different spaces. Moreover, it is time to ask how cultural beliefs can also strengthen women's leadership. The wider point is that a specific 'culture' cannot be holistically transposed to whole areas or regions, or indeed to a particular point in time (Zetlin, 2014).

*People's traditions, values, and norms form a cognitive filter through which they assess whether a leader is appropriate or worthy of their support. In this way, leadership is always 'situational', meaning the power and authority that leaders can exercise depends on the particular context in which they operate and crucially, how they adapt to it.*

## VARIATION OVER TIME: CONTINUITY, CHANGE, STABILITY, CRISIS

Cultural expectations of leaders are not fixed because culture is not fixed. They change over time through shifting demographics, critical junctures, and changing norms. In the South Pacific, leadership capacities and styles have been shaped over time through economic, political and historical experiences at the national level. Most South Pacific Islands have undergone significant political transformation, from colonialism, to independence movements, to now self-governance, nation-building and reform (Joseph, 2015). Leadership has faced challenges in resolving internal power struggles, from political coups in Fiji, to conflict and instability in the Solomon Islands. It has also had to address complex issues of resource scarcity, largely from extractive industries that have mined, depleted and devastated natural resources including forests (Fiji) and phosphate (Nauru) (Joseph, 2015).

The kind of leadership people want in times of crisis may be different from what they want at times of relative stability. Weber (1942) argued that charismatic leadership was more likely to emerge in times of crisis, for example. Charismatic leaders can be popular at times of war, but quickly become unpopular in peacetime. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill is a stark example. Churchill's single-mindedness and dogmatic determination may have been as an asset during wartime, earning him the label of war hero, but this could not carry him to victory in the 1945 post-war election. By this time, the war-weary electorate was looking for a statesman more than a warlord, and issues of social progress, housing, and justice had overtaken the concern with ending the war.

If leadership is an interactive process of building relationships between leaders and followers, then there is always a temporal dimension to leadership. Social identity is built over time through an interactive process whereby leaders have to connect their self-identity to the group identity. Identity is not fixed. Rather "one of the core elements of leadership lies in actively defining the identity, one's self and one's actions so as to produce a fit between them" (Reicher et al., 2018: 130). In this way, leaders are *identity entrepreneurs*, and as such, have to *reflect* on the identity of the group, *represent* it through their narratives, and finally, *realise* their goals (the so-called 3R's) (Reicher et al., 2018). One of the key claims from the social identity theory of leadership is that people identify more closely with a prototypical leader in a context where they feel their own identity is under threat. Similarly, they may

identify more strongly with their national identity when they perceive it to be threatened. Leaders can, in turn, capitalise on and reinforce this sense of ‘uncertainty’ among followers, to cultivate the sense of attachment to an identity and in turn, their appeal (Hohman et al, 2010).

Cultures can also evolve over time in response to regional dynamics, generational shifts, or trigger events that can either suppress or ignite certain values (Tung, 2008). Gender norms can change over time through deliberate action to increase women’s representation, for example. Historical legacies, stereotypes, cultural and social norms that imply women are inferior or do not have the qualities to lead, means that formal representation is often insufficient, i.e. the opportunity or legal right to participate in politics or lead does not result in substantial numbers of women in formal positions of power or leadership (Phillips 1995). In response, overcoming a history of exclusion and ideological barriers facing marginalised groups has often involved active efforts to shift these norms, through reserved seats and affirmative action. But what does this do to followers’ perceptions of leaders? Does it make them more acceptable as attitudes shift and stereotypes are overturned? Or does it lead to a backlash, as citizens resent the imposition of choices on them? (See Box 4 on backlash effects).

Some evidence suggests that changes in women’s political representation can, over time, improve perceptions of women as leaders. Beaman et al (2009) examine whether affirmative action via quotas changes women’s electoral prospects and voter perceptions of female leaders. They use random variation in mandated exposure to women leaders across village councils in West Bengal, India. The data show that an increase in female leadership improves the electoral prospects for future women candidates, with the share of female leaders going from 11% in councils where the position had never been reserved to 18.5% in councils that had. Moreover, they find that exposure to a female leader changed male villagers’ perceptions of female leaders. Men living in villages without a reserved female leader position judged male leaders more effective, but the evaluation gap disappears in reserved villages. This was explained through changes in perceptions of gender role stereotypes, where exposure to women leaders made male villagers more likely to associate women with leadership activities as opposed to domestic activities.

## BOX 4: BACKLASH

Challenging gender – or other norms – is critical to changing them. Yet there is also a dilemma in seeking to disconfirm stereotypes: it can produce a hostile and negative reaction in the form of backlash effects (Rudman and Phelan, 2008). Challenging gender norms can be from the individuals themselves – for example, women presenting themselves as powerful, authoritative, and competitive in a context that these characteristics are seen as transgressive – or from those advocating on their behalf – for example, through affirmative action programs to challenge the consequences of negative stereotypes. But, if strongly held gender (or other) norms are perceived to be violated, then the repercussions can be a negative backlash. For example, Andrea Cornwall (2017: 11) writes: ‘Women’s empowerment has been noted in some settings to be met with a male backlash that typically manifests in increased levels of domestic violence as men seek to restrict women’s mobility and react to their resentment of women’s exercise of new-found economic agency and voice.’

The psychological literature has documented the mechanics of such backlash or backfire effects, showing that because humans are goal-oriented they tend to evaluate new information through pre-existing biases and reinforce pre-existing views (Kunda 1990; Taber and Lodge 2006; Nyhan and Reifler, 2010). Moreover, if individuals are exposed to counter-attitudinal evidence or arguments, this can trigger a psychological process that can actually reinforce pre-existing opinions and beliefs – hence the phenomenon of ‘backlash’. For example Nyhan and Reifler (2010) use an experimental to randomly provide individuals with a story about President Bush claiming that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Another group were shown a story about the Duelfer Report, which documents the lack of Iraqi WMD stockpiles – i.e. seeks to correct misperceptions about WMD. The results show that for liberals the correction worked and reduced their misperceptions, but for conservative individuals being told that there were no weapons of mass destruction actually made more likely to believe that there were.



## VARIATION OVER FUNCTION: SECTORAL

Context is also local, particular to a sector, or organisation. What is expected from managers of organisations may, of course, not be what is expected from political leaders. A leader is always a leader of a specific constituency of followers, whether church-goers, voters, part members, village elders, etc. and this context – not just cultural, but also sectoral – matters. Indeed, it may be the case that business leaders from Fiji, Indonesia, and Australia have more in common with each other in terms of motivations, values and leadership style, than they do other types of leaders in their own cultural contexts. Research examining what is meant by ethical leadership across different sectors concluded that in the public sector it was more often associated with kindness and compassion than in private companies (Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck, 2014). In contrast, in the private sector, there was a more legally-based, compliance-oriented understanding of ethical leadership.

Leadership, of course, happens at multiple levels: from the informal household, kin, or local level, to the formal, national level. It is crucial to ask what leaders themselves perceive as the most effective level at which to operate, and not to assume a desire for national-level influence among leaders. Too much focus on formal political leadership can overlook the value of local, traditional leadership. For example, Pacific Island women<sup>2</sup> are using their indigenous knowledge to actively work ‘behind the scenes’ for climate change adaptation by taking up traditional leadership roles (McLeod et al, 2018). While these women perceive themselves to be influential in these roles, some believe that the premium placed on women’s participation in formal political settings (e.g. Congress), and the associated participation quotas put in place to achieve this, undervalues their influence at the local level. As one woman from Yap put it, ‘we don’t have to get into high positions to have the public hear our voice, but it’s us being in action that really counts’ (McLeod et al, 2018, p. 181). This case serves as caution against a western conception of leadership as formal, political, and visible.

Of course, the values and norms of the wider political system filter through to the sectoral level. Leadership in the Philippines is nurtured within, and has to adapt to, a particular form of oligarchic democracy. Close-knit, elite leadership at the national level, combined with clan-based patronage politics at the local level, reinforce inequalities and social cleavages along religious, linguistic and ethnic lines. In this situation, effective leadership is enabled by ‘bridging’ capital that enables leaders to crossover between sectors (Schweisfurth et al, 2018). Leaders of reform movements drew on networks across centres of activity and power, and moved between them in their lifecourse, to skilfully accumulate the legitimacy and power to act as leaders.

2 Marshall Islands, Palau, Yap, Kosrae, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Papua New Guinea

## PART SIX: FUTURE RESEARCH

Taken together, this paper's findings on how perceptions and meanings of leadership are formed, and how they differ across cultures and contexts, suggest a number of **key principles** that could usefully be integrated into DLP's research, across all of its key questions.

### UNDERSTANDING HOW CONTEXT SHAPES LEADER BEHAVIOUR AND FOLLOWER PERCEPTIONS

Leadership research needs to give a 'situational' account of leadership that examines how perceptions are formed, and the impression they make on leaders, both in the proximate context (organisational setting, sector) and wider distal context (political environment, cultural norms, gendered power relations). For example, examining how change happens at the collective level means exploring both the nature of the organisations involved in a coalition, and the extent to which this represents one or multiple organisational cultures. And yet, coalitions always operate in a wider political setting, where navigating between local and national arenas of power may be shaped by different norms and values. This raises two important questions for how leadership operates and is perceived: one, how leaders navigate between their proximate and distal contexts and the possibly competing social norms that preside in each, and two, when (under what circumstances) one trumps the other in terms of shaping (expectations of) behaviour.

### A CULTURALLY EMBEDDED APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

Leadership research tends to oscillate between the very broad, and the very specific, with little in-between. It tends to begin with a "western" conception of leadership and then account for variations in other societies in comparison to this starting point. We agree with Trimble and Chin (2019) that leadership research needs to break out of this western-centric bias. Leadership research is prolific, and yet it 'draw(s) on narrow, cultural-specific knowledge and practices that simply are not relevant for a diverse and global population, nor applicable in varying contexts and changing social environments. By failing to explore the deep core of culturally unique leadership styles among non-white populations, researchers too often have overlooked leadership styles that have endured for centuries through sheer effectiveness in leading and governing their people' (Trimble & Chin, 2019, p. 2). Culturally embedded leadership theory assumes a common 'culture', at least at the national level. Social identity theory assumes a common 'identity'. DLP can help to break down these meta-level categories, and provide a culturally specific account of leadership that extends dominant western models, and explores how culture and complex social problems intertwine to generate diverse leadership styles in the Asia-Pacific region. The implication being that supporting leaders and leadership needs more bespoke and local support, training, skills, and characteristics, and to rely less (but not necessarily not at all) on external trainers or workshops or relying on universal or generic training. Local actors should be supported to develop their own training materials and processes – which incorporate and adapt international materials – rather than be trained in a context-less leadership theory and practice.

## VIEWING LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF FOLLOWERS

Leaders are nothing without followers. Understanding how and why leaders operate implies a need to also understand the values, interests and needs of followers within that setting. This also means understanding the constituencies that leaders are seeking to appeal to, and the different, competing expectations placed on them by diverse sets of followers.

They also raise a number of **specific research avenues** that can be explored through tailored research on this theme.

## WHAT DIMENSIONS OF ASSESSMENT MATTER MOST FOR LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS ACROSS TIME AND SPACE?

Leadership research provides a menu of factors that influence follower perceptions. But when do these factors matter, and why? As the above discussion shows, there is great diversity of perspectives within and between groups. There is no model or formula that could ever predict how all the different leadership factors – from the identity of followers, to the cultural context, to gender power relations – map onto leadership perceptions. When, for example, does identity trump performance in the assessment of leader's worthiness of being followed? In practice, this means exploring leadership through situated accounts, rather than searching for universal formula. It may also mean searching for outliers to what are perceived as universal truths, and which test dominant, western-centric, gender-neutral theories. We know, for example, that identity shapes leader behaviour, and there are clear effects of prototypicality on how leaders are evaluated and perceived. But what are the outlier cases in this generalised model? When and where do leaders gain legitimacy if they are not prototypical? What demographic, social, cultural factors influence the strength of the prototypicality effect? Practically, this matters because it is the leadership of change or the reform processes is unacceptably different (atypical leadership). It could torpedo the process itself as people reject the leader and what they stand for. And yet, blindly accepting that leadership needs to be prototypical – no matter how progressive an individual might be in thought and deed – means reproducing hegemonic identities and roles. So, there is a danger in going for atypical leaders, but also prototypical leaders. Understanding when leaders are 'acceptably different' requires breaking down the dimensions of identity (some may be more or less contentious, e.g. gender might not matter, but ethnicity does, or vice versa) (Corbett, 2015).

## HOW DO LEADERS ACTIVELY CULTIVATE PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR LEGITIMACY?

While the outcomes of leadership are well studied, the active process whereby leaders cultivate their identity, and persuade followers of their legitimacy, is much less well examined. This is a crucial missing link in understanding developmental leadership, because leaders can only lead change effectively if they are perceived to be legitimate. Given that developmental change often requires shifting norms and ideas at the societal level (Hudson et al, 2018), DLP Research can more closely examine how leaders use narrative, framing and discourse to actively change perceptions and persuade people of their legitimacy and authority. At the societal level, leaders have to ensure their messages fit with local cultures, and sometimes deploy multiple framings to ensure this. In practice, this means observing two sides of legitimacy; the legitimacy claims that leaders make on the one hand, and how they are received and evaluated on the other (Zaum, 2013). Others looking at these questions have used discourse, media analysis and historical texts as data points (Hurrelmann et al, 2009; Hurrelmann et al, 2007; Schmidt, 2013; Steffek, 2003). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) also offers a way to decode relationships between power, language and gender (Reyes, 2011).

## HOW DO LEADERS EFFECTIVELY NAVIGATE BETWEEN DIFFERENT CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS?

A key avenue for DLP's future exploration of leadership is to produce a more fine-grained analysis that examines what happens when leaders have to lead where there is no common culture, or across multiple groups with different identity characteristics. This, to us, seems key to solving complex problems that are at the heart of development. At the collective level, leaders need to bridge cultures to build coalitions. As research on developmental leadership in the Philippines has shown, potential cultural barriers to collective action can be ameliorated by 'bridging' capital, meaning leaders build on common experiences – in this case, higher education – to build trust and influence across cultures, organisations and sectors (Schweisfurth et al., 2018). Likewise, if social identity is important, then, as others have argued (Reicher et al., 2018), leadership involves a process of social identity management. That is, it involves *cultivating* a shared identity, narrating a shared reality, and in that process, influencing the meaning of the group, what they value, and how they should act (ibid). As Reicher et al (2018, p. 130) describe it: 'Indeed one could argue that the key aspect of leadership and politics more generally is to create co-acting constituencies who see





themselves as part of the same social category'. But what do leaders need to cultivate this shared identity? Aside from looking and acting like a 'typical' member of the group, that is? One of the key implications of the importance of identity for how people value and evaluate leaders is that for leaders to be legitimate when pushing for change across groups with divergent identities, they may have to cultivate a common identity while ensuring that no individual group feels their particular identity is under threat of assimilation (Hohman et al., 2010). In terms of operational implications this often means identifying leaders that are 'culturally agile', that is to say that they display and ability to work with people outside of their natural constituency – i.e. the ability to work with elites (if non-elite) or with other ethnic communities. This means the ability to speak and act in ways that are deemed acceptable to others; the ability to navigate different interests in a non-judgmental way; the ability to empathise and see the world from other people's perspective. If there is a ceiling or floor to whom leaders or a leadership group can work with then the enterprise is likely doomed to failure as a sufficiently inclusive process of contestation is unlikely to evolve, undermining the sustainability of the process (Hudson et al., 2018). One obvious mitigation strategy is to build sufficiently diverse coalitions to speak to all constituencies.

Through exploring the above avenues of research and applying the core principles, DLP research may provide

insights into key *questions for policy and practice*.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE VALUE IN LEADERS ACROSS DIFFERENT SETTINGS?

Understanding is the basis of action. Knowledge about what is valued in different cultural contexts is important. At a basic level, leaders who want to be effective need to know what is acceptable leadership practice in one context, and unacceptable in another, and the consequences to them if they do not live up to expectations of behaviour. From a business perspective, organisations use this information to train individuals who have to work across cultures to perform their roles effectively (Dickson et al., 2012). But how does this translate into the potential for developmental leadership at the individual, collective and societal level? For example, how does learning about cultural prototypes help us to understand when leaders are more legitimate, supported, and followed? And crucially, how can development agencies seeking to support developmental leadership use these findings? Operationally, this underlines the need to do a fulsome political analysis that incorporates attitudes, beliefs, ideas, perceptions or legitimacy as well as identity (Hudson et al., 2016). It also underlines the need to do an ethical or normative analysis to make a decision on whether the risks or benefits of going with the grain or seeking to challenge the grain outweigh one another (Dasandi and Erez, 2015).

## HOW CAN LEADERSHIP TRAINING BE TAILORED TO SPECIFIC CULTURAL CONTEXTS?

One area for consideration that logically stems from a culturally-embedded approach is how leadership development programmes can take account of local cultures, values and ideas. Indeed, if they don't do this, they are likely to be less than effective (Darby, 2015). A study that examined the relevance and transferability of an indigenous Australian community development leadership training programme to Papua New Guinea (PNG) public health leaders provides some interesting insights (McCalman, Tsey, Kitau, & McGinty, 2012). The programme aimed to develop the value-based "soft capacities" of postgraduate public health students through a short course on "Family Wellbeing" that emphasised two key areas for activity and assignment: empowerment and change. Researchers observed students' responses to this programme, assessed student evaluations and interviewed managers involved in delivery. They found that more than half of respondents had "taken ownership" of the programme, in the sense that it had touched their lives personally, they were actively seeking to meet family and community needs, and beginning process of change in their villages ("starting a big fire with a spark"). The research concluded that the program transferred successfully because it aligned with traditional leadership values, which in PNG include respect for self, honesty, inclusion, freedom and compassion (McCalman et al., 2012). At the heart of this is the question of whether there are universally accepted values, and desired leadership behaviours, or whether everything is culturally contingent. A key question for supporting leadership development may be how to navigate between cultural determinism and acquiescence to culture as a 'problem' on the one hand, and appreciating that there are also universally rewarded skills and attributes that can transcend (and sometimes shift) cultures on the other.

## HOW CAN WE BUILD CULTURAL AGILITY AMONG FUTURE LEADERS?

A key concern is to understand the influence of culture on leader behaviour without falling into the trap of cultural determinism. Some forms of leadership development programmes – for example, scholarship awards – necessarily involve immersing future leaders into an alternative culture, and educating, socialising them within that culture. An interesting question, therefore, is how these leaders then adapt on returning to their host culture, how far this new identity affects their potential

for cultural endorsement within it, or what kind of cultural agility they need to build it if necessary for their future effectiveness. In practice, this might involve exploring the cultural agility of leaders – that is, how leaders develop the skills, understanding and sensitivity to lead diverse sets of followers with diverging cultural values (we might call this 'cultural competence'). In any social setting, whether church leadership, NGO leadership, or political leadership, leaders often have to cater to several constituencies. Leading collective change is likely to be an exercise in cultural agility. Solving complex problems that cut across sectors often involves building common ground between groups with multiple competing values and interests (Hudson et al, 2018). In collectives with multiple stakeholders spanning government, business or different groups within civil society, there is unlikely to be a homogenous 'culture' or set of expectations for who should lead, or how leaders should behave. Leaders in these situations may well have to perform chameleon-like shifts in order to balance competing interests, manage communications effectively, and ameliorate the potential for conflict (Hanges et al, 2016). While there are no universal criteria for effective cross-cultural leadership, emerging research has begun to show that leaders may be more culturally agile when they possess certain characteristics, including being non-judgemental, tolerant of diversity, and emotionally intelligent. Overall, mediating between cultural sensitivities and strategic realities may require an ability to 'switch' mindsets: from the local, to the national, to the global (Hanges et al, 2016). A key question for policy and practice, is how to develop this cultural agility where necessary to pursue developmental change.

# CONCLUSIONS

**W**e have argued that leadership is an interaction between leaders and followers. Followers are an underexplored variable in leadership, but they are also an active ingredient. As Aviolo (2007, p. 26) describes it, 'most leadership research has considered the follower a passive or non-existent element when examining what constitutes leadership'. We started from actually existing perceptions of leaders and leadership and asked why and how they matter, to develop an evidence-based framework for understanding how perceptions of leaders vary across space and time, and between people and groups in society.

In Foundational Paper 2 Corbett shows why we need a choice-based, leader-centred approach to understand where leaders come from and their motivations. In this paper, we propose a complementary follower-centric approach to understand how people perceive and evaluate leaders. This matters because leaders need followers and leadership is shaped by their perceptions.

In this paper we have set out the parameters of a future research agenda into the relationship between followers' perceptions and leadership, and why this matters to leadership for development. From a follower-centric perspective, the key elements of this model are:

1. **Dimensions of leadership assessment:** On what basis do people evaluate leaders?
2. **Channels of influence:** How do they get their information to form these evaluations?
3. **Follower identity:** How is their evaluation affected by their social identity?
4. **Context:** How (and why) does this evaluation vary across different contexts, times and spaces?

Followers may or may not perceive the neat leadership categories that researchers use to describe leaders, nor may they be particularly salient or important to them when assessing a particular leader. Drawing on the literature across political science, psychology, business studies, and organisational sociology, we offer a five dimensions of assessment approach. These dimensions represent how followers 'PIIC' their leaders: 1) the *position* of a leader, which determines the source of their authority (legal-rational, traditional, charismatic); 2) their views on a particular *issue*; 3) whether they will act in their *interests*; 4) how far the leader

matches the identity of their group; and 5) the *characteristics* they display, including how they conduct themselves.

We then set out the main channels through which people obtain information to assess these dimensions. Perceptions of leaders are rarely unmediated, because media affects matter what information is included (or not), how information is framed, and therefore whether and how information transforms individuals' assessment of leaders. We argue that any consideration of leader perceptions needs to incorporate an analysis of the media effects of dominant communication channels.

Third, we argued that the assessment of leaders, via whatever channel, is moderated by the identity of the follower, in terms of their gender, age and other key identity markers. Empirical research has convincingly demonstrated that identity affects people's preferences for leaders, and their perceptions of a leader's legitimacy to act (Hogg & Knippenberg, 2003; Reicher et al., 2018). Moreover, stereotypes about gender roles and norms that vary among women and men strongly moderate leader assessments, although evidence shows that these perceptions can be shifted. Similarly, age and other identity markers impact on individuals' preferences for leadership.

Finally, we examined how leader assessments are affected by the context in which the evaluation is made. This includes the organisational and political setting, wider cultural norms, gender power relations, and the particular temporal context in which perceptions are formed. We showed that theories of leadership often don't hold across cultures, because these contextual factors affect how people define leadership, and what they want from leaders. At the same time, we argued against universal cultural 'bracketing' on the basis that it often assumes homogeneity at the country-level, and neglects within-country or local cultural variations. Moreover, culture is not static, partly because leaders can work to *change* cultural norms over time.

Taken together, the findings align with DLP's earlier research and other Foundational Papers which argue that leadership is a relational, political process. Perceptions of leaders are created through the interaction of leader's perceptions of followers' expectations, how they model their behaviour accordingly, and how followers interpret and evaluate that in a particular cultural and social setting. Perceptions are actively formed, and re-formed, through this process. Power and authority are also actively co-constituted through it.



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