Leadership Preferences of Indian and Non-Indian Athletes

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The effect of ethnic difference on the preferences of Indian and non-Indian athletes for leadership behaviour was assessed using the Leadership Scale for Sport. Non-Indian athletes were found to express greater preferences for democratic, autocratic, and social support behaviour than Indian athletes. The results suggest that though Indian athletes participate in "nontraditional" sports, their professed preferences for leadership behaviour are distinct. Recommendations are provided for the development of future Indian and non-Indian leaders in sport.

Introduction

Leadership in sport has received an increasing amount of attention in the 1980s. Research in the area of preferred leadership behaviour has focused on a number of variables including sex, age, task variability, and task dependence. The conclusion drawn is that the successful leader is one who is adaptable (Chelladurai, 1980; Chelladurai & Carron, 1983). Such leaders are able to modify their behaviour based upon the various internal and external forces that confront the leaders and their group members (House, 1971; Osborn & Hunt, 1967). More recently, culture—as a variable—has also been shown to play a role in leadership preference in sports (Terry, 1984; Malloy, 1986; Chelladurai, Malloy, Imamura, & Yamaguchi, 1987). Of the research conducted involving culture, comparisons have been made between Canada and the United Kingdom and Japan in terms of preferences for leadership-coaching behaviour. While these studies provide some initial groundwork for further research, it would seem appropriate to explore the variations in cultural preferences domestically.

For this study a sample of male and female Canadian Plains Indian and non-Indian athletes from the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and ranging in age from 14 to 50 years, were asked to complete an instrument that assessed their preferences in leadership styles in sport. The purpose of the study was to determine the affect that culture has upon the leadership preferences of Indian and non-Indian athletes as expressed in the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

A Context for Cultural Conflict

Indian nations, while each having unique cultural characteristics, are relatively homogeneous in terms of shared values and beliefs as they relate to the land and the cosmology surrounding it. This has meant that there is a common basis derived from the relationship to land for many of the Indian cosmologies

concerning relationships between people. There is some concern that Indian culture is in danger of losing its identity, and of being overwhelmed by the domination of European Canadian culture in areas such as educational policies, social programs, the media, sport and recreation opportunities, and so forth.

In particular the educational system in Canada has been damaging to Indian cultural heritage. For example, the Canadian federal government's educational orientation has been one of integrating Indians into the mainstream of "Canadian" life, rather than providing opportunities for the maintenance of Indian heritage within a modern framework (Cardinal, 1968).

As a result, in many schools Indian students have been unilaterally exposed to the western culture's world view at the expense of their own heritage. There is further concern because that not only the content of the educational system is non-Indian but also most of the leaders, that is, the teachers, are non-Indian. In Saskatchewan, 3.7% of teachers are of Indian ancestry, yet 15% of the province's student population is of Indian ancestry (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 1988). While it is part of the provincial government's mandate to increase the percentage of Indian educators, the fact remains that the vast majority of Indian children are being educated and coached by non-Indian teachers, using non-Indian content with regard to curriculum and sport activities. This situation creates difficulties in terms of cultural development. It has the potential to create misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Allison (1982) described a similar state of affairs with regard to Navajo students: "[they] attend a school whose implicit and explicit structure, function, and content reflect the ideology and/or valued characteristics (e.g., individualism, competitiveness, high achievement orientation) of Anglo mainstream society" (p. 24).

One way of improving this situation in the field of sport is to increase the number of Indian teachers and coaches; another is to increase the cultural awareness of those non-Indian teachers/coaches who are assuming leadership roles in organizations that have Indian students and/or athletes as participants. This second objective is perhaps the essential contribution that the non-Indian community can make. As Cardinal (1968) said,

if white society will accept a role that permits Indians to determine their own solution for the future, if whites will work among themselves to broaden their knowledge of the non-Indian society, such interested white people can and will play a crucial role in assuming racial stability in Canada. (p. 95)

One area of cultural difference seems to be that relationships between the individual and the group are conceived of differently. Indian people see consensus as the way to make decisions in a group. This is based on premises of respect for all life, including the respect for the individualism of each person, but incorporating a requirement for all in a group to agree on a course of action. The nature of community is thus somewhat different. Little Bear, Boldt, and Long (1984) attempt to capture this when they say "the non-Western character of traditional Indian thought ... is a concept of community, expressed in tribalism, which distinguishes traditional native Indian thought from Western liberalism with its emphasis upon individualism (p. 3).

This sense of community is further enhanced by the Indian concept of government. Indian governmental systems function in accordance with traditional Indian principles and customs based upon the rights of the group rather than the individual in a system of consensual decision making (Lyons, 1984). In such a system the decisions are agreed upon and accepted by the group as a whole. The democratic system, on the other hand, has at least two opposing factions, a majority (or plurality) and the minority. As Lyons expresses this, "it is important to have a decision-making process whereby you avoid disagreements, and the process Indians advocate is consensus. Consensus involves long discussions and, if agreement cannot be reached, the issue must be set aside until agreement is possible" (p. 5).

Indian Leadership
Within such a consensual system of government the traditional concept of the leader differs considerably from the Western perspective (Porter, 1984). A traditional leader's role within the community has been to coordinate group economic activities, to attempt to settle disputes among members, and to facilitate harmonious relationships amongst the people. A chief's role is not traditionally an authoritarian one—leaders are "facilitators" (Driver, 1961). Porter (1984) described the role of Mohawk chief thus: "According to ... (Mohawk) constitution, we have a chief. But the chief is not like the chief executive or commander-in-chief, as non-Indians seem to think of a chief. He does not have power or high status like a king or dictator. This is not the way it is with our leaders" (p. 16).

And in the Apache system, "tribal decisions are made by consensus; each speaks until no one has more to say. The circle pattern is egalitarian as is the society. No one is the obvious leader" (Farrer, 1977, p. 89). Such a system of consensual decision making and facilitative leadership is the "ideal" style for the Indian people (Porter, 1984).

Indians and "Non-Indian" Sport
This concept of leadership may have something to do with the leadership and team associations of Indian people involved in sport.

Research in the area of athletic competition in some of the Indian Nations of the Southern United States (i.e., the Ute, Navajo, and Mescalero Apache nations) has revealed fundamental differences in perception between Indian and non-Indian competitors (Tindall, 1973; Allison, 1981; Farrer, 1977). Allison (1982) discusses the extent to which Navajo youth are socialized into Navajo culture via family, peers, and the community, yet are exposed to non-Indian culture, including sport, in the educational system. The Navajo youth participate in Anglo forms of play but bring with them the orientations of their own heritage. Allison (1982) states that "The student athlete represents extensions of Navajo culture" (p. 26). She further describes how the non-Indian and Navajo cultures differ in terms of rules, competition, and recognition. The Navajo athletes tend not to value structured play to the same extent as the non-Indian athletes. For Navajo, competition is characterized more by the concept of free

play than by sport, that is, organized "proper" competition. The rational/pragmatic orientation of the non-Indian culture may be a basis for its focus upon rules and regulations and achievement. As well, while the non-Indian athlete focuses upon external sources of competition—the opponent—the Navajo tends to be more concerned with implicit standards of achievement: "The Navajo athlete competes more with himself than against an opponent; physical aggressiveness is not part of their game, yet they play hard within the game itself" (Allison, 1982, p. 29).

Harmony with nature in general as a fundamental premise of Indian culture would support the practice of self development rather than overcoming or beating a fellow human. Finally, Allison (1982) discusses the degree to which athletes seek recognition for their performances. The Navajo tend to avoid acting superior in association with athletic achievement as it implies a notion of superiority which is inimical to a communal and consensual culture, that is, it is "stepping outside the circle." The opposite holds true for the individualistic success-oriented non-Indian culture.

A review of research that deals with cultural difference in approach to sport suggests that Indian athletes approach "non-Indian" forms of play and sport from an Indian perspective, and do not necessarily assume the values of the dominant culture in terms of their behaviour in the sport context (Allison, 1979). While the focus of much of the research has been upon the orientation of the athlete, little has been carried out that deals with coaching behaviour and Indian athletics. If the athlete brings to the playing field cultural orientations in terms of competition, rules, and recognition, will such perspectives also be apparent in preference for coaching/leadership behaviour? Has the influence of the dominant "western" culture eliminated fundamental differences in leadership preference?

Methods

Subjects. The subjects of this study were 48 Indian athletes (males=24, females=24) and 38 non-Indian athletes (males=16, females=22) participating in a competitive intermediate level of volleyball. The mean age for the Indian sample was 22 years and the mean age for the non-Indian sample was 24.2 years. The Indian athletes were members of teams participating in the North American Indian Volleyball Championships held at the University of Regina, Canada, in March of 1989. Players were coached by Indian coaches or player/coaches. The non-Indian athletes were members of teams participating in the Saskatchewan Provincial "B" Championships also held at the University of Regina in April, 1989.

Measures. The Leadership Scale for Sport, or LSS (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Chelladurai & Carron, 1981) is a 40-item questionnaire that attempts to assess five dimensions of leader behaviour: training and instruction (10 items), democratic behaviour (9 items), autocratic behaviour (5 items), social support (11items), and positive feedback (5 items). Each item is preceded by the phrase, "I prefer my coach to..." (e.g., *"specify in detail what is expected of each athlete"*).

Table 1. *Dimensions of Leader Behaviour in Sports.*

Training and Instruction	Behaviour of the coach aimed at improving the performance of athletes by emphasizing and facilitating hard and strenouous training; by instructing them in the skills, techniques and tactics of the sport; by clarifying the relationship among the members, and by structuring and coordinating the activities of the members
Democratic Behaviour	Behaviour of the coach which allows greater participation by the athletes in decisions pertaining to group goals, pratice methods, and game tactics and strategies
Autocratic Behaviour	Behaviour of the coach which involves independence in decision making and which stresses personal authority
Social Support	Behaviour of the coach characterized by a concern for individual athletes, for their welfare, for positive group atmosphere, and for warm interpersonal relations with members
Positive Feedback	Behaviour of the coach which includes providing reinforcement for an athlete by recognizing and rewarding good performance

(From Chelladurai [1980]. Used with permission.)

The subjects are asked to respond on a five-point Likert scale (always; often [about 75% of the time]; occasionally [about 50% of the time]; seldom [about 25% of the time]; never). A description of these dimensions of leader behaviour is found in Table 1.

The psychometric properties of the LSS include a Chronback's alpha range of .45 to .93, indicating internal consistency and a test-retest reliability range of .71 to .82 (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

Procedures. The data were collected by the researcher, who was on site during the tournaments, using a questionnaire distributed to and completed by the athletes between matches.

Results

Analysis. The statistical procedure consisted of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) followed by a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). The MANOVA was carried out with a single independent variable, heritage, with two levels, Indian and non-Indian. The dependent variables consisted of the summated scales of the five dimensions of leadership behaviour identified through the LSS. The MANOVA was followed by a univariate ANOVA analysiswith the dependent factors being the five dimensions of leadership behaviour. A post hoc Scheffe analysis was carried out for significant univariate *F* findings to control for Type I errors.The descriptive statistics for both Indian and non-Indian athletes are found in Table 2. Significant ANOVA values are discussed below.

Group Differences.—The MANOVA demonstrated that there were significant differences between the Indian and non-Indian groups in terms of heritage

Table 2. *Athlete Assessment of Desirable Leader Behaviour (Scale 1-5)*

Leader Behaviour		Indian (n=48)	Non-Indian (n=38)
Training and Instruction	Mean	1.76	1.92
	SD	(.52)	(.45)
Democractic Behaviour	Mean	2.30	2.69
	SD	(.66)	(.54)
Autocratic Behaviour	Mean	3.12	3.70
	SD	(.85)	(.55)
Social Support	Mean	2.66	3.06
	SD	(.74)	(.67)
Positive Feedback	Mean	1.78	1.75
	SD	(.68)	(.56)

Table 3. *Univariate Analysis of Leader Behaviour Dimensions*

Leader Behaviour	Hypothesis MS	Error MS	F
Training & Instruction	.56	.24	2.33
Democratic Behaviour	3.25	.37	8.78*
Autocratic Behaviour	5.85	.53	11.04*
Social Support	3.34	.51	6.55*
Positive Feedback	.02	.40	.04

df=2,84　*p<.01

regarding their preference for the five dimensions of leadership behaviour (multivariate F (5, 420)=6.32, p.<01). The results of the univariate analysis of variance are found in Table 3.

There were sub-group differences in three of the five dimensions. Non-Indian athletes preferred a greater degree of democratic behaviour (M=2.69) than the Indian athletes (M=2.30). Non-Indian athletes were also found to prefer a greater degree of autocratic behaviour (M=3.70) than the Indian athletes (M=3.18). Non-Indian athletes demonstrated a greater preference for social support behaviour (M=3.06) than their Indian counterparts (M=2.66). There were no significant differences between the two groups on the dimensions of training and instruction and positive feedback.

Discussion

There are differences between Indians and non-Indians in leadership preferences on the axes of democratic and autocratic leadership styles, with Indian athletes

appearing to not to value either style in as great a measure as non-Indian athletes. One reason for the difference could be that Indian athletes tend to prefer consensual decision-making, as would be predicted by some of the discussion about Indian leadership in the literature. The instrument, however, does not assess preferences for leadership in a consensus-oriented group, and it is conceivable that Indian athletes would exhibit the same difference (i.e., lower preference) for such a consensus-style leadership. The consensual decision making process depends upon unanimous agreement before a decision is passed, resulting in group cohesion and harmony (Wynn & Guditus, 1984).

The lower value placed by Indian athletes on democratic-style leadership may have something to do with the requirements of democratic style: individuals rally around a point of view and there is usually a specific time and place for group decision-making. If what Cardinal (1968, p. 75) says about Indian people's watching, observing, and learning before committing themselves is appropriate, it could be that Indian athletes would rather wait and observe until they feel they can make apprpropriate input. The Indian preference for less autocratic behaviour on the part of the coach seems to be consistent with the "traditional" Indian orientation toward the consensual-decision making style. While athletes may not wish to publicly speak their mind, they may resent an authoritarian style of coaching as it may be perceived as contrary to the maintenance of group harmony.

In terms of the social support dimension, the results are curious. Based upon other studies of sport and "traditional" orientations, one would expect that leaders who demonstrate concern for athletes' welfare and who attempt to develop warm personal relationships within the group would be highly valued by Indian athletes. The results of this portion of the study would therefore seem to be inconsistent with the traditional values predicted by Allison (1981). However, because the Indian communities tend to be culturally homogeneous, the degree to which individuals receive social support from significant others, that is, immediate and extended family, and friends in the community, may be a factor in the reduced need of such behaviour from their coach. In non-Indian communities there may be fewer opportunities for individuals to receive social support from so many quarters, and therefore the leader/coach plays a more significant role for non-Indian athletes in providing such support.

Insofar as this research documents a difference between the groups, the results lend support to the work of Allison (1979), who suggested that the concepts of assimilation and acculturation of non-mainstream ethnic groups is overly simplistic. The theory postulates that an assessment of the degree to which an ethnic group has been assimilated or acculturated can be based upon the extent that the ethnic group has adopted the dominant culture's forms of play and games. The Indian athletes in this study, though participating in a "non-Indian" game, that is, volleyball, demonstrated a significant difference from their non-Indian counterparts.

As Eidheim (1970) suggests, ethnic groups are capable of adapting their behaviour to the context of their environment while maintaining their own value system. In this case, Indians may participate in non-Indian games, yet maintain

their traditional value orientation toward leadership and other variables without modifying the rules of participation. In effect, they make the activity "Indian."

This research is exploratory in terms of preferences of Indian athletes for leader behaviour. More research is necessary if we wish to understand differences between Indian and non-Indians perspectives on sport.

One implication of the research is that the appropriateness of using standardized measurement tools in cross-cultural research is questionable. In-depth qualitative methods of field research may be of significant use in order to contextualize survey and questionnaire research in this area.

It is timely research. Population trends indicate that the Indian community will continue to grow dramatically. Another motivation to do this kind of research is the age of the population—over 50% of the Saskatchewan Indian population, for example, is younger than 20 years of age. It is important that there be technically competent Indian sports leaders and coaches of this very large sector of the population. In situations where Indian leaders and coaches are not available, non-Indian leaders/coaches who are, as well, technically competent and who appreciate and are sensitive to and accepting of Indian values as they may be evidenced in athletics and sport.

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