Article

/CCM International Journal of Cross Cultural Management

International Journal of
Cross Cultural Management
2015, Vol. 15(3) 329–345

DOI: 10.1177/1470595815606740
ccm.sagepub.com
SAGE

Destructive leader behavior: A comparison of Australian, American, and Iranian leaders using the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire

James Benjamin Shaw and Anthony Erickson
Bond University, Australia

Farzaneh Nasirzadeh
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Abstract
This article provides insights into the important but relatively unexamined issue of destructive leadership in a non-Western country. Although tentative, the article also provides some guidance for expatriate managers in adapting their own behavior to avoid being categorized as "destructive" by non-Western subordinates. In the following pages, we report the findings of a study of destructive leader behaviors among convenience samples of Australian, American, and Iranian leaders. No differences were found between Australian and American leaders in regard to the nature and frequency of destructive behaviors. As a result, the Australian and American data were combined and compared to a sample of Iranian leaders. Destructive leader behavior was measured using the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire developed by Shaw et al. (2011). Although relatively small in magnitude, results consistently indicated that the worst, middle, and best leaders differed significantly from one another in both samples in terms of the level of destructive leader behavior exhibited. In general, the pattern was similar for both the Australian–American and Iranian samples, although small, consistent differences were observed across the two samples.

Keywords
Comparative leadership study, cross-cultural leadership, destructive leadership, leadership, toxic leadership

Corresponding author:
James Benjamin Shaw, Faculty of Business, Bond University, University Drive, Robina, Queensland 4229, Australia.
Email: bshaw@bond.edu.au

There has been an increased interest in the "darker" side of leadership. Several studies have examined such topics as bullying (Ferris et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2007), toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2006), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), narcissistic leadership (Paunonen et al., 2006), and destructive leadership (Einarsen et al., 2007; Erickson et al., 2007; Kellerman, 2004; Van de Vliert and Einarsen, 2008). This research deals with what is known as "destructive" leadership, which Einarsen et al. (2007: 208) define as "The systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates." Einarsen et al. (2007) proposed a model for destructive leadership with two dimensions of leadership behavior: (1) behavior oriented toward subordinates and (2) behavior oriented toward the organization. The two continua lead to four types of leadership. *Tyrannical leadership* undermines the motivation, well-being, or job satisfaction of subordinates without necessarily being destructive to organizational goals. *Derailed leadership* displays both anti-subordinate and anti-organizational behaviors. *Supportive–loyal leadership* shows consideration for the welfare of subordinates while violating the legitimate organizational interests. Finally, *constructive leadership* involves behavior that is constructive to both subordinates and the organization.

Erickson et al. (2007) examined the type of behaviors in which destructive leaders are perceived to engage. They used qualitative responses from 240 respondents to identify personal characteristics and behaviors associated with the perception by subordinates of their superiors as destructive leaders. These behavioral examples were classified into 11 major categories, for example, autocratic behavior, poor communication, poor ethics/integrity, and inconsistent/erratic behavior. Shaw et al. (2011) utilized these earlier results along with information from other research on the dark side of leadership to develop a questionnaire to identify behavioral and personality-based dimensions of destructive leadership. Seven hundred and seven respondents (mainly from the United States and Australia) responded to a Web-based beta version of the 127-item Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ). Factor analysis of the questionnaire items identified 22 categories of destructive leadership behavior (e.g. acting in a brutal and bullying manner, lying and other unethical behavior, micromanaging and overcontrolling, and inability to develop and motivate subordinates).

The current study builds on the work of Shaw et al. (2011) using the DLQ to explore the differences in destructive leadership between Western and non-Western leaders. Few studies to date have examined whether there are cross-cultural differences in the prevalence of destructive leadership behaviors. Most cross-cultural leadership research has focused on the nature of effective leader behaviors across cultures. Dastmalchian et al. (2001) noted that the majority of this literature is based on research from industrialized, mostly Western countries and that our understanding of cross-cultural differences in leadership behavior remains somewhat limited. Such criticism is even more justified with respect to our understanding of destructive leadership.

Dickson et al. (2003) assert that since 1996 there has been an "explosion" of cross-cultural research on leadership due partially to the fact that much leadership theory has a distinctly American bias. There is also a desire to establish the extent to which leadership behaviors are universal or culturally contingent. For example, Dickson et al.'s (2003) review examined the extent to which variations in Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions resulted in culturally contingent forms of leadership.

Perhaps the most extensive study of culture and leadership to date is the GLOBE Research Project (House et al., 2004). Results from the GLOBE study provided support for the existence of factors that were universally considered to facilitate effective leadership, for example, being

trustworthy, just, and honest (integrity); having foresight and planning ahead (charismatic-visionary); or being positive, dynamic, and encouraging and building confidence (charismatic-inspirational). GLOBE results also identified factors that were universally considered to be an impediment to effective leadership, for example, being a loner, antisocial, noncooperative, irritable, non-explicit, egocentric, ruthless, or dictatorial. Furthermore, the GLOBE study supported the existence of culturally contingent leadership attributes, identifying leader behaviors that in some cultures were considered to enhance effective leadership but in other cultures were considered to be an impediment to effective leadership.

While there is increasing interest in the nature and prevalence of destructive leadership, there remains a paucity of research that examines such leadership in countries other than the West. This study seeks to address this deficit by examining the nature of destructive leadership in a culture that is different from Western cultures and comparing it to the destructive leadership evidenced in a sample of Western managers.

Iran was chosen as a comparison sample, quite frankly, because of a serendipitous relationship that developed between the first two authors and the third author of this article. The third author is an Iranian academic who became interested in the DLQ (Shaw et al., 2011). The DLQ was translated into Farsi, and the third author conducted a research study using the translated DLQ in her home country. We were then able to combine her Iranian data with the Australian and US data that had been collected in an earlier study. Although the Iranian sample was in no way a "matched" sample to the Australian-American sample, we felt that it was still useful for an initial exploration of destructive leadership perception in Western and non-Western contexts. The availability of data from Iran was particularly useful because (a) relatively limited leadership research has been conducted in this country to date and (b) Iran represents a country with a very different cultural background than those countries that have been the typical sites of research on destructive leadership.

Some research does provide support for differences in leadership between Iran and Western countries. Hofstede (1980) collected data from IBM employees in 40 countries, including Iran. Hofstede found that Iran was characterized by medium levels of power distance and individualism and was relatively high in terms of masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Dastmalchian et al. (2001) examined the attributes of effective leadership found among Iranian managers. Factor analysis of their 166-item questionnaire yielded 7 scales: supportive and dictatorial (these two resemble the GLOBE factors of charismatic and narcissistic leadership), planner (the future orientation of the leader's behavior), familial (willingness to put family first), humble (attaching low attention to one's own importance), faithful (believing in and acting according to the standards of religious doctrine), and receptive (anticipatory, benevolent, and amicable).

A somewhat different approach was taken by Van de Vliert and Einarsen (2008) who, using GLOBE data, examined the extent to which collective wealth and harshness of climate affect societal views of constructive versus destructive leadership. They found the contrast to be smaller in harsh and poor environments, moderate in temperate climate, regardless of the level of collective wealth, and much greater in environments considered harsh but possessing a relatively high level of collective wealth. Their results showed only a moderate contrast in Iran between constructive/destructive leadership.

Large studies such as Hofstede (1980) and GLOBE (2004) have provided evidence for leadership factors that are culturally contingent. Others such as Dastmalchian have identified cultural differences that *do* seem to map well on to the differences as to how Iranian leaders actually behave. So our current study follows in the footsteps of a fairly established literature regarding the impact of

culture on leadership behavior and perceptions. Given the relative dearth of research on the effect of culture on destructive leadership, it makes sense for us to begin our examination where other studies have also focused. While Van de Vliert and Einarsen (2008) argue that a "climactic" explanation of leadership is a more distal explanation of leadership behaviors and perceptions, the manager on the ground must deal with the manifestation of behaviors and perceptions and the apparent differences between countries and cultures. Much in the same manner that a medical professional must deal with the cancer rather than the cause. For these reasons, we believe that examining the differences in leadership perceptions between Iranian and Australian/American respondents from a cultural point of view makes sense.

While previous research has identified some of the values and effective leadership behaviors of Iranian managers, no work has specifically examined the nature and prevalence of destructive leadership behavior of Iranian leaders. Our study represents an exploration of the differences in destructive leadership between a sample of Iranian managers and a sample of American/Australian managers. This article compares and contrasts the destructive leadership behaviors of the two samples. The following section of this article covers the research questions and methodology of the study.

Hypothesis and research questions

Since relatively little research has been conducted that would allow us to make specific hypotheses about differences in destructive leader behaviors among Australian, American, and Iranian leaders, this study has, instead, posed three interesting research questions that we hope to answer.

Research Question 1: Overall, is there a significant difference in the perceived level of destructive leader behavior among Australian, American, and Iranian leaders?
Research Question 2: If there are significant differences in the perceived level of destructive leader behavior, what specific destructive leader behaviors are most prevalent in each of our samples?
Research Question 3: Are both western and non-western leaders who engage in significant destructive behaviors likely to be perceived negatively by their subordinates?

In our study, we investigated whether there are significant differences among Australian, American, and Iranian leaders in the nature of destructive behaviors that most affect the perception that subordinates have of their leaders. For example, an inability by a leader to effectively deal with new technology and change may significantly affect the perception of Australian and American subordinates in terms of whether they view their leader as a good/effective or bad/ineffective leader. On the other hand, dealing with new technology may not have much influence on Iranian subordinates when judging their leader as good/effective or bad/ineffective. In the case of Australian and American leaders, in organizations where high levels of technology typically exist, the lack of ability to use such technology may be viewed negatively. On the other hand, in developing countries such as Iran, where levels of technology in many organizations may not be as high, or if high, may be viewed as very "new" in nature, the inability of leaders to master such technology may be viewed less negatively. In addition, as indicated by the work of Dastmalchian et al. (2001), most of the characteristics of effective Iranian leaders seem more "interpersonal" rather than "technological" in nature.

Method

The data for this study came from two sources. Data for Australian and American respondents represented a convenience sample and were collected by the first and second authors using a Web-based survey. Data for Iranian respondents were collected by the third author using a paper and pencil version of the DLQ survey.

"Ausmerican" sample methods

The method for collecting data on both Australian and American (United States) leaders was identical. Furthermore, later analyses indicated that there were no significant differences between the Australian and American leaders in terms of the frequency and nature of destructive leader behaviors. As a result, the Australian and American data were combined into an Ausmerican sample, and all discussion in the remainder of this article refers to this combined sample.

A Web-based survey was used to collect data on Australian and American leaders. Several means were used to elicit responses to the survey. Announcements were made on several international professional list server Web sites (e.g. Emonet, HRNet, etc.) and to destructive leadership-related Web sites (e.g. Badbossology.com). Invitations to participate were sent to local community newsletters and to the alumni newsletter of our university. A "snowball sampling" was used where staff and students at our university were asked to encourage colleagues, family, and friends to participate, and these individuals were, in turn, asked to make the presence of the survey known to their contacts. Press releases about the study were sent to major news organizations. Announcements on local radio stations were made, and one of the authors was interviewed by some radio stations in the United States. Reuters News agency picked up the story from an earlier study (Erickson et al., 2007), and it appeared in over 600 Web sites and newspapers around the world. We had made contact with a number of human resource (HR) managers, HR consultants, and others interested in the topic and many of them agreed to spread the word of our study to their colleagues and clients.

Full details of the method used can be found in Shaw et al. (2011). While there are a number of limitations associated with Web-based convenience sampling, using this approach allowed us to obtain a fairly large sample ($N = 417$) of Australian and American leaders and their subordinates (see Shaw et al., 2011, for further information on this issue).

Data collection from Iranian respondents

For the Iranian sample, questionnaires that had been translated and retranslated from English to Farsi were distributed in paper form in the three cities of Tehran, Mashhad, and Neyshabour. The completed questionnaires were then collected by the third author and her colleagues. Some of the questionnaires received were only partially completed, and these incomplete questionnaires were excluded from subsequent analyses.

In Tehran, the questionnaires were distributed among 190 console advisers, tax experts, and other similar individuals within the Organization of Tax Administration, which is one of the largest organizations in Iran. Of the surveys distributed, 150 were returned with 121 of those fully completed and included in the study. For the Neyshabour sample, the questionnaires were distributed among 140 accounting and management postgraduate students with 42 returned and 30 of those fully complete. For the Mashhad sample, 210 questionnaires were distributed to individuals in the Central Administration Office, the School of Economy and Business, and the Faculty of Banking Science at Ferdowsi University. In all Mashhad locations, 330 questionnaires were distributed with 149 of them fully complete and included in our analyses. Thus, of the 660 questionnaires

distributed, 300 were fully completed, returned, and used in subsequent analyses in this study. This represents a response rate of 45.5 percent, which for a completely voluntary study, involving a very lengthy questionnaire, is exceptionally good. It may have been that many of the questionnaires that were only partially completed may have been the result of a fatigue factor for some of the respondents. Having started the survey, they simply did not have the motivation to complete all items. Regardless of this, the overall response rate was deemed very satisfactory by the authors.

As noted earlier, we were unable to "match" respondents across our Iranian, Australian, and American samples. While this means that interpretation of our results becomes more problematic, given the paucity of research on destructive leadership, particularly in non-Western samples, we felt that there was still significant value in examining differences among our Western and non-Western respondents.

The DLQ

The DLQ elicits responses to 127 items using a rating scale with six responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A response of "don't know" is also provided. Four of the 127 items ask respondents to indicate an overall judgment of their current supervisor (e.g. *My boss is a terrible boss to work for; Of all the bosses I have known, my boss is one of the very best* {reverse scored}; *Of all the bosses I have known, I would prefer to work for my boss more than any of the others* {reverse scored}; *and My boss is not a very good boss*). In terms of the current study, these 4 items were formed into an Overall Good–Bad scale measuring the overall respondent perception of their leader as being a good/effective or bad/ineffective leader. Nineteen of the 127 items relate to broad personal characteristics of the leader (e.g. *my boss is compulsive; my boss is arrogant; my boss is self-centered; or my boss is lazy*). One hundred and four items of the DLQ focus on specific behaviors in which a leader might engage (e.g. *my leader often makes knee jerk reactions to problems or* and *my leader often takes credit for the work that others have done*).

When necessary, responses to some items are reverse scored so that a *high* rating indicates a *high level of destructive leader* behavior or a high level of a destructive personal characteristic. On one additional item, for example, Worst-Best-Boss, respondents rate their overall perception of their current supervisor by indicating a number from 1 to 100, where 1 = *the absolute WORST leader you could possibly imagine working for* and 100 = *the absolute BEST leader you could possibly imagine working for*. The remaining items on the DLQ ask respondents to provide demographic information about their current supervisor and themselves (age, gender, nationality, and education level) using a "type in the box" response format.

Destructive leader behavior scales

The construction of the DLQ is fully described in Shaw et al. (2011). A critical issue to understand concerning the nature of scores derived from the DLQ is that for *all* of the scales used in the current study, the items comprising the scale scores are *residual scores*, that is, scores on the items with overall affect toward the leader partialled out. As described in Shaw et al. (2011), factor analyses conducted using raw item scores had yielded a single factor that included all items. Shaw et al. (2011) felt that much of the variance accounted for by this single factor was due to the general affect toward the leader. They felt that this overall affective response was hiding the nature of the underlying behaviors committed by the leader to warrant such affect. As a result (and as described extensively in the 2011 article), in the current study, a score comprising 4 items that measured the overall affect was regressed on each item of the DLQ, with the residual scores resulting from this process then becoming the basis for all analyses in our study. While this approach has some

Table 1. Scales of the DLQ used in the study.

Scales
B1: Making Decisions Based on Inadequate Information
B2: Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner
B3: Lying and Other Unethical Behavior
B4: Micromanaging and Overcontrolling
B5: Not Making Expectations Clear to Subordinates
B6: Ineffectual Negotiation and Persuasion
B7: Inability to Deal with New Technology and Other Changes
B8: Inability to Deal with Interpersonal Conflict or Similar Situations
B9: Lack of Credibility within the Organization
B10: Playing Favourites and Other Divisive Behavior
B12: Ineffective Coordination and Management of Issues
B13: Not Seeking Information from Others
B14: Acting in an Insular Manner Relative to Other Groups in the Organization
B16: Not Having the Skills to Match the Job
B17: Inability to Prioritise and Delegate
B18: Exhibiting Inconsistent, Erratic Behavior
B19: Unwillingness to Change Mind and Listen to Others
B20: Inability to Understand and Act On a Long Term View
B21: Inability to Develop and Motivate Subordinates
B22: Inability to Make Clear Appropriate Decisions
P1: An Inconsiderate Tyrant
P2: Lazy and Incompetent
P3: Overly Emotional with Negative Psychological Characteristics
P4: Careless When Dealing with People in Various Situations

Note. Scale numbers correspond to the original destructive leader scales derived in Shaw et al. (2011). "B" indicates scales derived from behavioral items, while "P" scales were derived from personal characteristics items. ***Bold italics font*** indicates unacceptably low coefficient αs, and these scales were not used in analyses in the current study. Both scales P1 and P2 were dropped from final analyses as well.

limitations, we believe that the benefits of the approach outweigh the disadvantages. We will discuss this issue further later in the article.

Using these residual item scores, factor analyses were done separately for the 19 personal characteristics items and the 104 behavioral items. Four factors were extracted from the 19 personal characteristics items, while 22 factors were extracted from the 104 behavioral items. However, factors 11 and 15 contained only a single item and were dropped from further analyses. Based on the method of deriving DLQ factors described in Shaw et al.'s (2011) scale, scores of 0.0 represent the *average* rating on a particular scale, not a 0 level of the presence of a particular characteristic of behavior. Also, the original numbering of the factors from Shaw et al.'s (2011) study are maintained in this current article (i.e. there are no factors labeled 11 or 15). A list of the destructive leader factors measured in this study is presented in Table 1.

Sample

The total sample for this study was 717, with ratings obtained on 296 Australian, 121 American, and 300 Iranian leaders. Thus, the Ausmerican sample had a sample size of 417. There were some

missing data in the sample with scale scores computable for between 406 and 415 Ausmericans and for between 296 and 300 Iranians. The average respondent in the Ausmerican sample was 44.9 years old (standard deviation (*SD*) = 11.1), with a range of 18–76 years, and for the Iranian sample was 32.7 years old (*SD* = 6.8), with a range of 18–57 years. The average age of the current Ausmerican leaders being rated was 49.7 (*SD* = 7.3) with a range of 25–70 years and in the Iranian sample average age was 44.9 (*SD* = 8.5) with a range of 24–65 years. While the majority of the Ausmerican leaders described were male (61.4 percent), the majority of respondents to the survey were female (63.5 percent). For the Iranian sample, 83.3 percent of the leaders were male with the remaining being either female (7.3 percent) or unspecified (9.4 percent)

Respondents in our samples were highly educated, with 79.2 percent of the Ausmerican sample respondents and 78.7 percent of the Iranian sample respondents having university bachelors, masters, or doctoral degrees. Ausmerican sample respondents' professional work experience averaged 21.4 years (*SD* = 10.9) and ranged from 1 to 47 years. Iranian sample respondents' professional work experience averaged 9.4 years (*SD* = 6.5) and ranged from less than 1 year to 28 years. While we cannot claim that either the Ausmerican or Iranian samples are representative of any particular population, the current leaders rated by respondents represented a wide variety of fairly senior positions. Of these leaders (Ausmerican/Iranian), 64.5 percent/80.1 percent were in positions with titles comparable to those of CEO/Managing Director, Vice President (title not used in Iran), Minister's Assistant (for Iran data only), Director, Executive Officer, Senior Partner, General Manager, Functional Manager, Unit Manager, Department Manager, Policy Advisor, or Senior Consultant. Academic managers such as President, Vice Chancellor, Dean, or Department Head represented 14.4 percent/10.6 percent of the current leaders. Lower level managers such as supervisors or team leaders comprised only 8.6 percent/8.5 percent of the current leader sample, with the remaining leaders representing a range of generally mid-level managerial positions. In both samples, respondents who were the immediate subordinate of these leaders had a wide variety of position titles.

Analyses and results

Due to the large number of items on the DLQ (127 items) and the sample size of our Iranian leaders (*n* = 300), this yielded a variable to *N* ratio of 1 to 2.36, which is considerably lower than what would be considered acceptable to conduct a factor analysis on the items. Thus, we were unable to conduct *meaningful* factor analyses to examine the factor structure of the DLQ within our Iranian sample. From a purely exploratory perspective, however, we did "run the numbers" just to see what results we got from a factor analysis of the Iranian data. As expected, the factor structure was relatively ill-defined. Despite this lack of clarity in the structure, the factors that did emerge from this speculative analysis were intuitively not that dissimilar from the factor analyses described in Shaw et al. (2011). However, we must repeat here that we could not *realistically* examine whether the factor structure of the DLQ items among Iranian respondents was comparable to those in the original Shaw et al. (2011) study.

We did, however, examine the internal consistency reliability of the scale items separately for the Ausmerican and Iranian samples. Six of the 20 behavioral scales showed unacceptably low coefficient αs (<0.60) in either the Ausmerican or Iranian samples and were excluded from any further analyses. Two of the four personal characteristics scales also showed unacceptably low coefficient αs. As a result, we decided to exclude any of the personal characteristics scales from further analyses and instead concentrated on the behavioral aspects of destructive leaders in our two samples. Thus,

all scales used in the current study, for both the Ausmerican and Iranian samples, have internal consistency reliabilities of at least 0.60.

Descriptive statistics and scale intercorrelations

Means and SDs were calculated for each of the behavioral scales of the DLQ for both the Ausmerican and Iranian respondents. To examine the influence of specific destructive leader behaviors on the leader perception of Ausmerican and Iranian respondents, the leaders rated in each of the samples were classified as a good, middle, or bad leader. This classification was made using an Overall Good–Bad scale described earlier in this article that comprised 4 items (coefficient $\alpha = 0.94$) on which respondents indicated their overall perception of their leader. Cut points were determined that, across the entire combined sample, divided leaders into the worst 1/3 of leaders on the Overall Good–Bad scale (average score higher than 4.0), the middle 1/3 of leaders (average score between 2.1 and 4.0), and the best 1/3 of leaders as measured by the scale (average score equal to or less than 2.0). Remember that a high score on the Overall Good–Bad scale indicates that the respondent views the leader as a bad leader. This allowed us to investigate the differential effect that specific destructive leader behaviors had on the perception of Iranian and Ausmerican respondents. In addition, intercorrelations among the scale scores were calculated separately for the Ausmerican and Iranian samples with the average scale intercorrelation for Iranians being 0.50, while for Ausmericans it was 0.37.

Analyses directly related to the research questions

The first research question asked in this study was whether or not Ausmerican and Iranian leaders were perceived as having significantly different levels of destructive leader behaviors, while the second question focused on the exact nature of the destructive leader behaviors exhibited by the different nationalities. The third question focused on the relative importance of specific destructive behaviors for Ausmerican and Iranian respondents in determining their perception of leaders as good/bad or effective/ineffective.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted using nationality (Ausmerican vs. Iranian), the trichotomized overall perception of their leader (worst vs. middle vs. best leaders as identified by the Overall Good–Bad scale), and the interaction between these two main effect variables as the independent variables in the analysis. The set of dependent variables was comprised of scores for each leader on 15 behavioral scales of the DLQ. The overall multivariate tests of significance indicated significant multivariate main effects for both nationality and overall perception as well as a significant effect for the interaction term. All four multivariate statistics (Pillai's trace, Wilks' lambda, Hotelling's trace, and Roy's largest root) computed using the SPSS general linear model multivariate analysis procedure were significant at $p < 0.005$. Descriptive data relevant to the MANOVA analyses reported below are presented in Table 2. Remember that the information here represents *residual scores* with an overall mean of 0.0. High positive scores indicate a higher than average level of destructive behavior. Note that data in Table 2 indicate that the variance within each of the national groups is quite similar for most variables.

Research Questions 1 and 2. Although there were significant interaction effects, the nature of these interactions were such that an interpretation of the individual main effects was possible. In terms of Research Question 1, the MANOVA significant main effect for nationality clearly indicated that there *are* national differences between Ausmerican sample respondents and their Iranian colleagues in terms of the perceived prevalence of destructive leader behaviors. In terms of Research

Table 2. Behavior scale scores for Ausmericans and Iranians across three types of leaders.

		Ausmericans			Iranians			Total sample		
Behavioral scale	Type of leader	Mean	*SD*	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*N*
B1: Making Decisions Based on Inadequate Information	Worst 1/3	0.13	0.77	148	0.02	0.73	51	0.10	0.76	199
	Middle 1/3	0.08	0.65	132	0.03	0.66	108	0.06	0.65	240
	Best 1/3	−0.26	0.36	123	−0.08	0.71	127	−0.17	0.57	250
	Total all leaders	0.00	0.65	403	−0.02	0.70	286	−0.01	0.67	689
B2: Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	Worst 1/3	*0.07*	0.73	148	*0.57*	0.72	51	0.20	0.76	199
	Middle 1/3	*−0.04*	0.66	132	*0.15*	0.66	108	0.04	0.67	240
	Best 1/3	*−0.23*	0.48	123	*−0.06*	0.63	127	−0.14	0.57	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.06***	0.65	403	***0.13***	0.69	286	0.02	0.68	689
B3: Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	Worst 1/3	*0.04*	0.80	148	*0.68*	0.74	51	0.20	0.83	199
	Middle 1/3	*−0.07*	0.66	132	*0.16*	0.70	108	0.03	0.69	240
	Best 1/3	*−0.25*	0.36	123	*−0.05*	0.61	127	−0.15	0.51	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.09***	0.66	403	***0.16***	0.72	286	0.02	0.69	689
B4: Micromanaging and Overcontrolling	Worst 1/3	*0.05*	0.66	148	*0.43*	0.65	51	0.15	0.68	199
	Middle 1/3	*0.04*	0.70	132	*0.21*	0.53	108	0.12	0.63	240
	Best 1/3	*−0.37*	0.47	123	*0.09*	0.58	127	−0.14	0.57	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.08***	0.65	403	***0.20***	0.58	286	0.03	0.64	689
B6: Ineffectual Negotiation and Persuasion	Worst 1/3	0.15	0.83	148	0.36	0.81	51	0.20	0.83	199
	Middle 1/3	0.04	0.62	132	0.08	0.73	108	0.06	0.67	240
	Best 1/3	−0.21	0.43	123	−0.18	0.67	127	−0.20	0.56	250
	Total all leaders	0.00	0.67	403	0.02	0.75	286	0.01	0.70	689
B7: Inability to Deal with New Technology and Other Changes	Worst 1/3	*−0.07*	1.01	148	*0.51*	0.94	51	0.08	1.02	199
	Middle 1/3	*0.02*	0.76	132	*0.21*	0.82	108	0.11	0.80	240
	Best 1/3	*−0.19*	0.54	123	*−0.18*	0.73	127	−0.18	0.64	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.08***	0.81	403	***0.09***	0.85	286	−0.01	0.83	689
B8: Inability to Deal with Interpersonal Conflict or Similar Situations	Worst 1/3	*0.29*	0.63	148	*0.14*	0.86	51	0.25	0.69	199
	Middle 1/3	*0.22*	0.69	132	*−0.12*	0.70	108	0.07	0.71	240
	Best 1/3	*−0.27*	0.50	123	*−0.31*	0.64	127	−0.29	0.58	250
	Total all leaders	***0.10***	0.66	403	***−0.16***	0.72	286	−0.01	0.70	689
B9: Lack of Credibility within the Organization	Worst 1/3	*0.07*	0.87	148	*0.57*	1.01	51	0.20	0.93	199
	Middle 1/3	*0.02*	0.75	132	*0.00*	0.89	108	0.01	0.82	240
	Best 1/3	*−0.20*	0.43	123	*−0.20*	0.73	127	−0.20	0.60	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.03***	0.73	403	***0.01***	0.89	286	−0.01	0.80	689
B12: Ineffective Coordination and Management of Issues	Worst 1/3	0.16	0.74	148	0.22	0.91	51	0.18	0.78	199
	Middle 1/3	0.13	0.63	132	0.01	0.73	108	0.07	0.68	240
	Best 1/3	−0.16	0.49	123	−0.26	0.64	127	−0.21	0.57	250
	Total all leaders	0.05	0.65	403	−0.08	0.75	286	0.00	0.70	689

Table 2. (continued)

		Ausmericans			Iranians			Total sample		
Behavioral scale	Type of leader	Mean	*SD*	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*N*
B16: Not Having the Skills to Match the Job	Worst 1/3	0.04	0.85	148	0.45	1.04	51	0.14	0.92	199
	Middle 1/3	0.01	0.58	132	0.14	0.83	108	0.07	0.70	240
	Best 1/3	−0.30	0.42	123	−0.07	0.89	127	−0.18	0.71	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.07***	0.67	403	***0.10***	0.91	286	0.00	0.78	689
B17: Inability to Prioritise and Delegate	Worst 1/3	0.01	0.80	148	0.46	0.71	51	0.13	0.80	199
	Middle 1/3	0.03	0.60	132	0.17	0.73	108	0.09	0.66	240
	Best 1/3	−0.27	0.47	123	−0.13	0.73	127	−0.20	0.61	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.07***	0.66	403	***0.09***	0.75	286	0.00	0.70	689
B18: Exhibiting Inconsistent, Erratic Behavior	Worst 1/3	0.01	0.83	148	0.38	0.79	51	0.10	0.83	199
	Middle 1/3	0.05	0.66	132	0.25	0.77	108	0.14	0.72	240
	Best 1/3	−0.29	0.52	123	−0.09	0.74	127	−0.19	0.65	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.07***	0.70	403	***0.12***	0.78	286	0.01	0.74	689
B19: Unwillingness to Change Mind and Listen to Others	Worst 1/3	0.21	0.70	148	0.28	0.78	51	0.23	0.72	199
	Middle 1/3	0.23	0.73	132	−0.05	0.90	108	0.11	0.82	240
	Best 1/3	−0.26	0.51	123	−0.32	0.81	127	−0.29	0.68	250
	Total all leaders	0.08	0.69	403	−0.11	0.87	286	0.00	0.77	689
B20: Inability to Understand and Act On a Long Term View	Worst 1/3	−0.05	0.84	148	0.37	0.70	51	0.06	0.82	199
	Middle 1/3	0.03	0.62	132	0.23	0.55	108	0.12	0.60	240
	Best 1/3	−0.30	0.34	123	−0.03	0.64	127	−0.16	0.53	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.10***	0.66	403	***0.14***	0.64	286	0.00	0.66	689
B21: Inability to Develop and Motivate Subordinates	Worst 1/3	0.07	0.73	148	0.35	0.70	51	0.14	0.73	199
	Middle 1/3	0.16	0.60	132	0.18	0.69	108	0.17	0.64	240
	Best 1/3	−0.33	0.46	123	−0.24	0.75	127	−0.28	0.62	250
	Total all leaders	***−0.02***	0.65	403	***0.02***	0.75	286	0.00	0.69	689

Question 2, the difference between Iranian and Ausmerican leaders was relatively consistent across most of the destructive behavior scales. On 10 of the 15 destructive leader behavior scales (behavior scales 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 21; see "Total all leaders" row in ***bold italics*** in Table 2), leaders rated by respondents in the Iranian sample showed higher levels of destructive behavior than leaders in the Ausmerican sample. Only for behavior scale 8 (Inability to Deal with Interpersonal Conflict or Similar Situations; see Total all leaders row in ***bold italics*** in Table 2) did the Iranian leaders show a lower level of this behavior than their Ausmerican counterparts. For four of the destructive behavior scales (behavior scales 1, 6, 12, and 19), there were no differences between the scores of Ausmerican and Iranian leaders.

Research Question 3. From the MANOVA results, the significant Nationality × Overall Leader Perception interaction effect relates directly to Research Question 3. Post hoc analyses of this

interaction indicated that a significant interaction effect occurred for only 6 of the 15 destructive behavior scales (scales 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9; see Worst, Middle, Best rows in *italics* in Table 2).

For the scales measuring Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner and Lying and Other Unethical Behavior, the pattern for both Ausmerican and Iranian managers is generally the same. That is, the worst leaders show the highest levels of these behaviors with the level dropping consistently as you move from worst to middle to best leaders. For the Iranian sample, however, the decrease in these behaviors between the worst and middle leader groups is much more dramatic than for the Ausmerican leaders. For the scale measuring Micromanaging and Overcontrolling, the pattern again shows a general decrease in this behavior for both Ausmericans and Iranians. However, in the Ausmerican sample, the worst and middle leaders show essentially the same level of this behavior, but the best leaders show a very dramatic decrease in micromanaging and overcontrolling. In the case of Iranian leaders, the pattern of reduction in this destructive behavior is fairly gradual and linear in nature.

The situation for the scale measuring the leader's Inability to Deal with New Technology and Other Changes is quite different. For Iranian leaders, this destructive behavior decreases dramatically and in a clear linear direction as one moves from worst to middle to best leaders. For the worst leaders, there is quite a high level of this behavior as well. For the Ausmerican leaders, there is a relatively low level of the behavior across all leader groups, and it is the "middle leaders" who show the highest level of the behavior.

In the case of the scale measuring Inability to Deal with Interpersonal Conflict or Similar Situations, this is the only scale on which the Ausmerican leaders score higher than their Iranian counterparts at all three leader levels. For both Iranian and Ausmerican leaders, however, the presence of this behavior is relatively low. The worst leaders show the highest level of this behavior, but the worst Iranian and Ausmerican leaders show only slightly higher than average levels of this behavior. For "middle" Iranian leaders, the tendency to engage in this behavior is well below the combined sample average, while Ausmericans in this group show a slightly higher than average level of this behavior.

Finally, for the scale measuring behaviors that indicate a Lack of Credibility within the Organization, for both Iranian and Ausmerican leaders, the tendency to engage in this set of behaviors decreases linearly as one goes from worst to middle to best leader groups. Middle and best leaders in the Ausmerican and Iranian samples are essentially identical in their level of this behavior. In contrast, even the worst Ausmerican leaders have only an average amount of this behavior relative to the combined sample, while the worst Iranian leaders show a relatively high level of the behaviors represented in the scale.

Discussion

This study examined whether there were significant differences in the perceived level of destructive leader behavior between Ausmerican and Iranian samples and what specific destructive behaviors were most prevalent. Finally, we examined whether specific types of destructive behaviors differentially affected the perception that subordinates had of their leaders.

The results indicate that destructive leader behaviors common in our Ausmerican sample were also viewed as negative components of leader behavior by Iranian managers. All of the behavioral scales of the DLQ were found to be significantly higher in Iranian "bad" leaders compared to Iranian middle and/or good leaders. This makes sense, given that the DLQ's destructive behavior scales are similar to factors identified in the GLOBE studies as being universally perceived as impeding leader effectiveness. Thus, our results support the earlier GLOBE results.

While the two samples were characterized by the similarity above, they differed in a variety of ways. First, there was the difference in the size of scale intercorrelations in the two samples (average scale intercorrelation = 0.50 for Iranians and 0.37 for Ausmericans). This may indicate that Iranians view bad leadership as a more "holistic" construct than their Ausmerican counterparts. It may also be that Ausmerican leaders have been exposed to a wider range of leadership literature and training and thus have a more complex and differentiated cognitive map of destructive leadership. This is an interesting issue that relates to earlier research on implicit theories of leadership (e.g. House et al., 1999, 2002). Unfortunately, we did not have a sufficiently large sample of Iranian leaders to conduct a full factor analysis of DLQ items that could have perhaps provided a greater understanding of this issue.

A second point of contrast between the two samples was found in differing levels on specific destructive behavior scales. For 10 of the 15 behavior scales (scales 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 21), leaders in the Iranian sample showed higher levels of destructive behavior than leaders in the Ausmerican sample. For one behavior scale (8: Inability to Deal with Interpersonal Conflict or Similar Situations), the Iranian leaders had a lower level of this behavior than Ausmericans. For four of the behavior scales (scales 1, 6, 12, and 19), there were no differences between the two samples. It is perhaps not surprising that on so many of the DLQ scales, the Iranian sample evidenced higher levels than their Western counterparts. While some of the differences were relatively small, though statistically significant, the pattern of differences was very consistent between the Ausmerican and Iranian samples.

The Ausmerican sample is likely to have benefited from decades of Western leadership research, leadership development, and training programs and has been regularly exposed to stereotypical examples and role models of what is considered "appropriate" or "effective" leadership. Such exposure would mean that Western managers/leaders and their subordinates would be well aware of the required behaviors for success and, hence, more likely to model these positive leader behaviors. Alternatively, the Iranian sample is perhaps more likely to have had significantly less management (i.e. leadership) education. Given the history of the country and the existence of a high power distance between managers and staff, there has likely been exposure to a more authoritative style of leadership. The differing levels of destructive leader behavior on specific scales provide support for the notion that there are differences in the perceived level of destructive leader behavior among Australian/American and Iranian leaders. It also provides an indication of the specific nature of the destructive leader behaviors most prevalent in each of our samples.

In answer to our third research question, we found a significant Nationality × Overall Leader Perception interaction for 6 of the 15 destructive behavior scales (scales 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9). The nature of these interactions has been detailed in the analysis section of this article. Collectively, these interactions suggest that there are substantial differences between Ausmerican and Iranian samples in the destructive behaviors that affect the perception that subordinates have of their leaders. However, when we examine the nature of these interactions, their significance seems somewhat muted in nature. For our Ausmerican sample, the amount of *Micromanaging and Overcontrolling* engaged in by leaders seemed to more dramatically affect respondents' overall perception of their leaders than this type of destructive behavior did in the Iranian sample. However, the opposite was true for the scale Inability to Deal with New Technology and Other Changes. This type of destructive behavior was not highly prevalent in the Ausmerican sample, but did relate quite dramatically to Iranian subordinates' overall perception of their leaders. Leaders represented in the Ausmerican sample may well have been regularly trained in new technology and change management, while Iranian managers may have received less training in this area. Thus, Iranian leaders

who showed increased ability in this type of behavior could likely have a more significant impact on the positive perceptions their subordinates have of them. All other significant interactions seemed to reflect rather modest differences between the two samples, though those modest differences do exist.

Overall, it would seem from our results that the similarities between Iranian destructive leaders and Ausmerican destructive leaders are perhaps greater than the differences. This may provide some sense of comfort or affinity for those Ausmericans who deal with Iranian organizations and nationals. It may also provide a sense of confidence in Western leadership practises and education in terms of preparing managers for international posts. Our research is perhaps evidence of the simple fact that "bad leaders are bad leaders in most places."

However, despite the similarities, our research also provides evidence of differences between Iranians and Ausmericans in terms of prevalence and perception of destructive leadership behaviors. The Iranian sample showed a consistently and modestly higher level of destructive behavior on two-thirds of the destructive behavior scales. Such differences may provide a guide for managers working with subordinates in countries such as Iran. Iranian leaders were rated worse on behaviors such as bullying, lack of ethics, micromanaging, technological incompetence, lacking skills, erratic behavior, having only a short-term view, lack of motivational skills, and inability to delegate. By understanding the nature of common destructive leader behaviors found in local managers, an expatriate manager may enhance his or her ability to influence and lead local subordinates by providing a "contrast effect" between their own behavior and that of local managers. Being perceived as a good leader (as opposed to a destructive leader) can have many positive aspects. For example, Shaw (1990) noted that individuals perceived as good leaders have increased social power and influence over subordinates. Relative to leaders perceived as destructive, good leaders are more likely to receive credit for positive group outcomes and thus gain status within the group. From an organizational perspective, destructive leadership may lower productivity and financial performance (Field, 2003; Keelan, 2000). Thus, for expatriate managers working in locations such as Iran, not being *perceived* as a destructive leader and *not exhibiting the behaviors* associated with destructive leaders can both lead to positive outcomes.

Limitations of the study

The results of our study seem to provide answers to our three research questions with our analyses finding differences in our two samples in the perceived level of destructive leader behavior, along with the specific destructive behaviors that are most prevalent in each sample. Our study also identified differences between our two samples in the types of destructive behaviors that most affect the overall perception that subordinates have of their leaders. These results have practical implications, as discussed above, for expatriate managers working in locations such as Iran. However, like most studies, there are several limitations to our methodology and these are detailed below.

In our Ausmerican sample, respondents who were able to complete our survey required some minimum level of computer expertise and familiarity with the Internet. This was not the case for our Iranian sample in that they completed a paper and pencil form of the DLQ. We have no real way of determining whether the "computer-savvy" respondents in our Ausmerican sample were different in some unknown way from our Iranian respondents.

In our two samples, there was a greater proportion of both respondents and leaders from academic and financial institutions than would be expected in the general population. In addition, respondents in both samples were highly educated, with 79.2 percent of the Ausmerican sample

respondents and 78.7 percent of the Iranian sample respondents having university bachelors, masters, or doctoral degrees, respectively. Thus, any conclusions about how subordinates perceive their leaders in regard to destructive leader behavior are derived from a very highly educated and professional cadre of employees.

There were also some other demographic differences between the respondents in the two samples. The average respondent in the Ausmerican sample was 44.9-years old but only 32.7-years old in our Iranian sample. The average age of the current Ausmerican leaders being rated was 49.7 years and that of the Iranian sample was 44.9 years. While 61.4 percent of the Ausmerican leaders were male, 83.3 percent of the Iranian leaders were male. Ausmerican sample respondents' professional work experience averaged 21.4 years, but it was only 9.4 years in Iranian respondents. This difference in work experience lends some credence to our notion that the Ausmerican leaders likely had greater exposure to management/leadership training than their younger and less experienced Iranian counterparts. Thus, in addition to national cultural differences, it is very likely that these demographic differences may partly explain some of the variations between the samples in terms of destructive leader behavior.

A second potential bias in our sample could have been that respondents who were willing to complete the entire survey may have been those particularly affected by the behavior of destructive leaders. While this could occur, respondents in our sample rated leaders who ranged from exceptionally good to extremely destructive. In fact, the median of all respondent ratings on the Overall Good–Destructive Leader scale was 3.0 of 6.0. Given the data above, we believe that while some bias might exist within our sample, it is not sufficient to invalidate our conclusions.

A third potential limitation of the current study is the use of residual scores as the basis for our principal component analysis procedures. The removal of the "overall liking/disliking" of their leader from the respondents' ratings may remove a potentially important variable. However, as noted previously in Shaw et al. (2011), the nature of the factors identified using this approach "makes sense" and is consistent in nature with previous research on the characteristics of destructive leaders. In addition, inter-item correlations among the residual score-based factors show evidence of both convergent and discriminant validity among the various factors. However, the stronger intercorrelation among scales for the Iranian sample could suggest that our Iranian respondents have a more holistic view of destructive leadership than the Ausmerican sample. If this were the case, then the potential biasing effects for the use of the residual scores might be more significant. There is certainly a need to validate the factor structure—using either residual or raw item scores—on a larger Iranian sample.

Finally, while our study found significant and persistent patterns of similarities and differences between the two samples, the size of the effects is quite small in many cases. On this basis, our results should be viewed conservatively and implications for practice considered suggestive rather than conclusive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has examined the nature of destructive leadership in both Western and non-Western countries. Given the importance of this topic and the relative paucity of such research to date, the study provides some insight into the comparative differences between destructive leadership in these countries. Our research provides evidence of both similarities and differences between Iran and our Ausmerican sample. From a practical perspective, our findings suggest that expatriate managers operating in non-Western locations should, first and foremost, avoid engaging

in behaviors that would be viewed as destructive in their own countries. This may well allow them time to learn more about the nuances of effective leader behavior in the foreign context and thus enhance their chances of leadership success.

However, the modest effect sizes found in our study require that any implications for practice be viewed as tentative. We suggest that our study should provide the impetus for more sophisticated research seeking to replicate the results using a common data collection method and matched samples. The DLQ provides a productive approach to investigate cross-cultural differences in destructive leader behavior. However, the utility of the DLQ could be greatly enhanced by larger scale studies in a variety of national/cultural settings.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

Dastmalchian A, Javidan M, and Alam K (2001) Effective leadership and culture in Iran: an empirical study. *Applied Psychology: An International Journal* 50(4): 532–58.

Dickson MW, Den Hartog DN, and Mitchelson J (2003) Research on leadership in a cross-cultural context: making progress, and raising new questions. *The Leadership Quarterly* 14: 729–68.

Einarsen S, Aasland MS,, and Skogstad A (2007) Destructive leadership behavior: a definition and conceptual model. *Leadership Quarterly* 18(3): 207–16.

Erickson A, Shaw J, and Agabe Z (2007) An empirical investigation of the antecedents, behaviors, and outcomes of bad leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies* 1(3): 26–43.

Ferris G, Zinko R, Brouer R, et al. (2007) Strategic bullying as a supplementary, balanced perspective on destructive leadership. *Leadership Quarterly* 18(3): 195–206.

Field T (2003) Workplace bullying. *British Medical Journal* 326: 776–77.

Harvey M, Treadway D, and Heames J (2007) The occurrence of bullying in global organizations: a model and issues associated with social/emotional contagion. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 37(11): 2576–99.

Hofstede G (1980) *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values*. Beverly Hill: Sage.

House RJ, Hanges PJ, Javidan M, et al. (2002) Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: an introduction to project globe. *Journal of World Business* 37: 3–10.

House RJ, Hanges PJ, Javidan M, et al. (2004) *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The Globe Study of 62 Societies*. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

House RJ, Hanges PJ, Ruiz-Quintanilla SA, et al. (1999) Culture specific and cross-culturally generalizable implicit leadership theories: are attributes of charismatic/transformational leadership universally endorsed? *The Leadership Quarterly* 10(2): 219–56.

Keelan E (2000) Bully for you. *Accountancy* 125(1281): 56.

Kellerman B (2004) *Destructive Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.

Lipman-Blumen J (2006) *The Allure of Toxic Leadership: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – and How We Can Survive Them*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Paunonen SV, LÎnnqvist JE, Verkasalo M, et al. (2006) Narcissism and emergent leadership in military cadets. *Leadership Quarterly* 17(5): 475–86.

Shaw JB (1990) A cognitive categorization model for the study of intercultural management. *Academy of Management Review* 15(4): 626–45.

Shaw JB, Erickson A, and Harvey M (2011) A method for measuring destructive leadership and identifying types of destructive leaders in organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly* 22: 575–90.

Tepper BJ (2000) Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal* 43(2): 178–90.

Van de Vliert E and Einarsen S (2008) Cultural construals of destructive versus constructive leadership in major world niches. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* 8(3): 275–95.