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CONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH EXPERIENCING GENERATIONAL POVERTY:

An Exploratory Case Study in Muñoz, Dominican Republic

Abstract

This exploratory case study adds to the growing literature on leaders and leadership development in communities experiencing poverty in the global south. It explores how leadership is conceptualized among community-identified leaders in Muñoz, Dominican Republic. Drawn from semistructured interviews, the eight participant narratives provide insight into potential approaches for developing local leadership capacity that may help combat generational poverty. The recommendations from this study highlight the need to support the development of human capital using an anticolonial framework. The recommendations are especially relevant for leadership groups preparing to work or currently working in the nonprofit sector. By knowing how to better support the development of localized leadership within communities of poverty, external nonprofit agencies—particularly those from the global north—can better support communities and mitigate the risk of perpetuating colonial dynamics and power structures.

Key words: community leadership, generational poverty, leadership development, human capital

Introduction

Poverty can be defined in many ways depending on context, access to resources, and opportunities—to name a few. Although poverty is generally understood as lacking basic necessities such as food and shelter, the World Bank has expanded its definition to capture more holistic and multidimensional aspects, such as feelings of powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom, high levels of economic and social vulnerability, feelings of fear, restricted rights and freedoms, and limited access to many supports (World Bank, 2001). Living in poverty is difficult, but permanently transitioning out of poverty can be even more challenging; as a result, permanently eradicating poverty is a complex and tenuous goal. According to the World Bank—which sets the international poverty line and is currently considered one of the main sources for global information on worldwide poverty—declared the current goal to eliminate poverty by 2030 will unlikely be met: "Extreme poverty will likely continue going down significantly but will not drop to zero by 2030" (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2018, n.p.).

There are many global nonprofit organizations involved in worldwide poverty elimination: Hasanagic (n.d.) identified 25 established global organizations dedicated to fighting poverty. These organizations offer many opportunities for education and leadership development—for example, Oxfam International (2021), established in 1995, works in 90 countries

with 3,624 partnership organizations. Even though there is an abundance of support, literature, and research on poverty that broadens the ways we help, define, understand, and measure poverty (e.g., multiple studies and reports from the United Nations and the World Bank), it can be difficult to comprehend the confluence of factors that make reducing and ultimately eliminating global poverty so challenging. Although data and research can help those working in the nonprofit community-based sector understand these challenges, set priorities, share knowledge of what works, provide leadership, and measure progress (World Bank, 2020), they do not automatically translate into solutions. One deeply rooted question that underpins efforts to eliminate poverty is why there are such discrepancies between effort and improved outcomes.

A response to this question, as argued by Brown, Ravallion, and van de Walle (2019), is that more reliable poverty estimates will facilitate better understandings of the characteristics of poverty and its intergenerational transmission, and consequently will inform more effective interventions appropriate for different types of individuals and contexts. With deeper understandings, approaches to reducing poverty can be specifically targeted to develop training and programs. As the World Bank (2020) declared: "There is no silver bullet to ending poverty, and strategies to reach the least well-off must be tailored to each country's context, taking into account the latest data and analysis and the needs of the people" (para. 1). However, the World Bank does suggest that approaches to ending poverty should aim to invest in building the human capital of people, especially those living in poverty and who have restricted access to capital. These considerations inspired me to conduct an exploratory case study to better understand the contextual nature of these approaches to ending poverty as well as the importance of focusing on building human capital in these endeavours.

More specifically, the case study detailed in this article was situated in a specific community in the Dominican Republic. Muñoz is a larger community that has been experiencing generational poverty: Many families have lived in poverty for at least two generations. Over the past 8 years, I have been involved with this specific community. I have witnessed many nonprofit groups/organizations (e.g., NGOs, missionaries, humanitarian organizations, etc.) extend *help* (i.e., provide services, leadership, support, and opportunities) in an effort to break the cycle of generational poverty within this community. Like many humanitarian efforts to provide large- or small-scale poverty reduction strategies (PRD), the results have been limited. As suggested by the World bank (2020), a focus on building human capital means focusing on the people of the community—not only on external resources—to develop leadership qualities among people who can lead their communities and reduce and/or eliminate dependencies on external help. My purpose in conducting this study was to consider an effective starting place for building this human capital. I did so by focusing on community-identified leaders to develop local capacity in the approaches and strategies for breaking generational poverty—*with* the community rather than *for* the community. This approached is widely known as *community leadership*. Therefore, I aimed my research questions toward my objective of learning how leaders and leadership were considered and enacted among community members in the Muñoz Batey.

Leaders and Leadership. Is it possible to formulate global definitions of leaders and leadership without defaulting to Western-centric generalizations? Some scholars (e.g., Gaetane & Sider, 2014) have suggested that one of the main challenges of using Western conceptions of leadership in non-Western communities is that scholars and external helpers often simply replicate policy and practice from the "developed" world. Terminologically, delineating *leaders* and *leadership* represents a common debate: Despite the abundance of literature, "Leadership has presented a major challenge to practitioners and researchers interested in understanding the nature of leadership. It is a highly valued phenomenon

that is very complex" (Northouse, 2016, p. 16). Or, as Stogdill (1974) simply wrote, "There are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it" (p. 259). However, I argue there are certain tenets and characteristics that can be used as a universal baseline. As Northouse (2016) succinctly wrote:

The people who engage in leadership will be called *leaders,* and those toward whom leadership is directed will be called *followers.* Both leaders and followers are involved together in the leadership process. Leaders need followers, and followers need leaders. Although leaders and followers are closely linked, it is the leader who often initiates the relationship, creates the communication linkages, and carries the burden for maintaining the relationship. (p. 7)

The simplicity of Northouse's definition allows a great degree of conceptual flexibility. In using this definition as a baseline in my exploration of community leadership, I was able to approach my participants and their narrative data with—my own positionality and biases notwithstanding—a high level of open-mindedness.

Community Leaders and Leadership. Community development is one of the most productive ways to improve the lives and livelihoods of individuals within a community (Syme & Ritterman, 2009). Kirk and Shutte's (2004) intensive research on community leaders found that they can be effective in supporting and enabling community development. Consequently, focusing specifically on leaders and leadership in any effort to support change is critical because, regardless of the context, leaders play a pivotal role in change and improvement and are necessary for building community members' social capital (Marzano et al., 2005). As such, building leadership capacity within communities is integral to any efforts to combat generational poverty; however, community-based leadership is distinctive. Many educational philosophers, such as Paulo Freire (1972), and veteran researchers such as Joe Kincheloe (2000) and Peter McLearn (2000)—argued that education (e.g., building human capital and community development), teaching, and decolonization efforts must involve marginalized populations in the building processes. These researchers posited that emancipatory leadership from within is the only viable and sustainable solution for a community to change its path. Influenced by these arguments and the uniqueness of the history and context of the community, I conducted this exploratory study as a first step to understand how leaders and leadership are conceptualized in the community of Muñoz.

A major challenge in supporting leadership capacity-building in non-Western communities is avoiding the tendency to merely replicate policies and practices from Western countries (e.g., see Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). Heifetz (1994, 2011), a long-standing advocate for *adaptive* and *informal leadership,* contended that building capacity to mobilize people living in struggling communities to tackle tough problems requires different approaches than those described in many Western conceptualizations of leadership and leadership development. He argued that doing so requires a unique and alternative leadership approach that is evidence-based and can confront complex, situational, and contextualized problems that do not have easy solutions. The findings on these types of solutions is scant—if not nonexistent—in most of the current or comparative literature on leadership. Supporting the development of localized leadership requires a better understanding of how leaders and leadership are conceptualized among community members. Gorringe (2011) suggested that more must be known from the perspective of local leaders, who can tell their stories about leading their community. Pigg (1999) contended that theoretically based models specifically intended for community leadership remain notably absent; this absence is both noteworthy and troubling. In this article, I report on a collection of narratives from identified leaders in a mostly Dominican-Haitian community in Muñoz.

Working from an Anticolonial Discursive Framework. To approach community-based

research as an identified outsider (especially one socialized to privilege Western ideology) requires *an anticolonial framework* (ACF). Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) suggested that to develop and use an ACF, a researcher must have a keen sense of the colonization process and colonizing tendencies which allows a false status to the colonial subject through the authority of Western canons and at the same time devalues local knowledges. An ACF helps frame and revive the revolutionary aspects of Indigenous knowledges by validating the forms of knowledge and lived experiences of individuals and collectives; it also enables a researcher to identify the saliency of colonialism and colonization and how these two forces still impact marginalized communities—for example, in the reproduction of imposing relations, economic poverty and so forth. (p. 229)

As university-based researchers and nonprofit organizations, we need to be aware of the historical and institutional structures and contexts that uphold Western ideologies as superior, especially when working in non-Western contexts and communities. Otherwise, the data and analyses are likely to perpetuate the colonial understandings that are (unsuccessfully) being deconstructed. As such, Western researchers and/or nonprofit agents who are researching and working among non-Western and/or marginalized communities need to clearly understand and transparently state their positionality. This includes an understanding of how your experiences shape your biases.

Researcher Positionality

Understanding how a study may be impacted by the characteristics and experiences of the researcher is of paramount importance for any qualitative research study (Berger, 2015), especially when a researcher works with a marginalized group or community of which they are not a part. It would be irresponsible of me to write an article and make claims based on the data without revealing my positionality and past experiences with both the participants and the community under study. As Dei and Asgharzadeh (2011) have warned, if the researcher does not have a heightened and critical sense of self-awareness about their ideologies and positionality, the research is likely to produce yet another comparison to Western ideologies. In other words, it can become a product of an oppressor with good intentions. I offer my positionality as a way of letting readers know how I have framed the findings and interpretations of the participant perspectives.

I am a White woman with many privileges. I grew up and was educated in the Western hemisphere. My involvement with the case study community of Muñoz began 8 years ago. I started volunteering at one of the nonprofit schools that served only Haitian children who, because of their citizenship status, were ineligible to attend the government school. My intentions were of a service nature and included the objective of improving the quality of the teachers and their teaching and helping with the school's operational practices (e.g., putting student recordkeeping in place, scheduling, etc.). In the last 4 years, I increased my time and visits in the community, which allowed me to stay for longer periods (6–8 weeks) and more frequently each year. I subsequently expanded my volunteer services to the local government schools. In this role, I support teachers, students, parents, and surrounding community members by aiding in their education process. Over the last 8 years, I have become well-known in the community for my work with the school and my expressed desire to help the community through my education efforts. I have built many strong relationships and have gained the trust and respect of the community members in Muñoz. One of my goals in starting this research was to explicitly explore the needs of the community as a way to guide the extension of my services to the community.

Over the last 8 years, I have been continuously transforming my thinking, beliefs, and values through my daily experiences and critical self-examination. It is a dynamic process in which I am always in a

constant status of disequilibrium: uncomfortable with my thoughts, actions, and judgments. As a researcher, I cannot solely rely on my observations to form conclusions. I must constantly ask questions and seek multiple perspectives to better understand how to interpret and think about certain aspects of the community. I must also critically reflect on the lens I am using to create meaning out of my observations; in my case, this is a Western, privileged lens. In my view, deep, critical reflection as a researcher cannot happen during short-term visits—to believe otherwise is a grave mistake that can perpetuate colonial dynamics. Critical self-awareness and reflection and a constant sense of discomfort are mandatory for any researcher or service agent working in marginalized communities. As well, you must be able to clearly identify your social capital and use it appropriately. My intention is to avoid being another service agent in the community that comes and goes, or tries to impose Western methods on its residents, including leadership methods. However, as Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) contended, no one is completely liberated from the sociopolitical contexts that produce oppression and researchers need to be wary of the arrogance involved in emancipating *other* individuals and groups from features of oppression by examining and exposing the forces that undermine their abilities to make crucial decisions in life. As researchers, we must always strive to work within anticolonial frameworks (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001).

Background

This case study involves a group of Dominican-Haitians living in the Dominican Republic (DR). Although covering the historical background of Haitian people living in the DR is not within the scope of this paper, it is necessary to provide some contextual and historical details. The first major influx of Haitians came to the DR in 1950 when the Haitian and Dominican governments struck an agreement about immigrant workers to help harvest the sugar cane fields. These Haitian families lived in small areas near the sugarcane fields, which became known as *the Batey*, or *Bateyes*. Heavy Haitian migration to the DR continued until at least the mid-1990s, when there was a crisis in the international sugar market and Haitian labour was no longer needed in such demand (Castel, 2017). This complicated past has created controversy over the idea of Haitian birthright citizenship in the DR—as Hannah Arendt aptly phrased it, the right to have rights (2001).

As of today, the Dominican government is still trying to figure out how to deal with the Haitians living in the country and the continued migration of Haitians to the DR. The most recent one was a *regularization plan* to help legalize any foreigner in the country seeking legal citizenship. According to de Castro, the DR's ambassador to the United States, the plan is to positively improve the process of undocumented people (i.e., those without legal immigration status). The regularization plan provides a temporary status that leads to the acquisition of a permanent residency, a temporary residency, or a nonresident visa, in accordance with each individual's condition. However, there is another group of Haitians who are considered *stateless* (Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute Fact-Finding Project, 2014); that is, they do not have nationality in the DR or in Haiti and this stateless status denies them many opportunities, such as continued access to education and health care, legal employment, the right to vote and to have a bank account, and to the government regularization plan because they do not have birth certificates from any country. These are the people who live in constant fear of deportation. As well, stateless Haitians who have children in the DR cannot register the births of their children, which continues the cycle of statelessness.

Overall, most Haitian occupancy in the DR could be considered a precarious existence with many limitations that affect their lived experiences and socioemotional well-being. However, in the Batey you will see strong evidence of Haitian culture: their culinary styles, their music, and their leisure activities. Beyond the visible aspects of culture, there are also their ways of thinking and being, how they

parent and raise their children, and their reactions to their community and others living in the community. Overall, the social, cultural, and political existence of the Haitian people living in the DR could be considered a long historical battle for a recognized existence.

Methodology

This research is an exploratory, qualitative case study on how a specific community perceived leaders and leadership. Prior to conducting this research, I received ethical approval from my academic institution. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a *case* as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context," which is, "in effect, your unit of analysis" (p. 25). Therefore, I specifically chose to conduct a case study because I wanted to focus on a single entity (i.e., the community and its people) and to caution against generalizing or transferring the findings to other similar communities. I also view this choice as consistent with my anticolonial framework. The case study was exploratory in nature to serve as a pilot for a larger study to follow (Crossman, 2020), based on the participants' recommendations for building leader and leadership capacity in the community. As Yin (2018) suggested, choosing a case study method:

depends in large part on your research question(s). The more that your questions seek to *explain* some contemporary circumstance (e.g., "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works), the more that case study research will be relevant. Case studies also are relevant the more that your questions require an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon. (p. 4)

These tenets align with my intentions in conducting this research study: to explore, understand, and add to the growing body of knowledge about a "social phenomenon"—explore community leadership in an area of poverty in a non-Western context as a means to better support leadership capacity.

The Case. The boundaries of this case involve a community (Muñoz) located 5 kilometers outside of one of the main cities, Puerto Plata, in the DR. The population of Muñoz is approximately 2,500 people with a combination of Dominicans, Haitian-Dominicans, and stateless Haitians. Most consider the community of Muñoz to be a *campo*, which means a rural area outside of the city. The community is like many other rural communities with a variety of basic services (e.g., minimarkets, a motor repair shop, small restaurants, an artesian market, craft shops, a few tourist excursion collection stations), a public school, and a few churches. It is also host to a variety of manufacturing companies (e.g., concrete, wooden furniture, granite). The largest structure is the government school with approximately 400 students from kindergarten to high school. There are other smaller church-run or nonprofit schools in the area with 25 to 70 students; these schools are common throughout the DR. Overall, Muñoz is considered one of the bigger, more developed campo areas in terms of population and services/manufacturing available. What makes this community unique is its large Haitian population, which is comprised of naturalized citizens, immigrants, and stateless persons.

This case study specifically involves the Haitian-Dominicans and stateless Haitians living in the three Bateyes of Muñoz. The Bateyes—another name for *ghetto*—have been traditionally populated with both documented and undocumented Haitians. These Bateyes have been a part of Muñoz for many years. Although there is no official statistical collection of demographics, according to a number of locals, there are approximately 500 Haitian residents (out of the total population of 2,500) living in Muñoz: some with Dominican citizenship, some Haitian citizens, some noncitizen immigrants with no legal status, and others from mixed Dominican/Haitian parents with citizenship. It is difficult to determine an exact number of Haitians living in the area because it is a very transient community. As legal or controversial issues arise, many Haitians flee and return to Haiti. Of the Haitians living in the area, most live in the Batey.

Their houses have one room with poor structures, no toilets, and no running water. Others who live in better housing are also not economically stable and struggle to have a stable food supply. To provide a snapshot of the Batey in numbers, a small-scale informal research study was conducted by a group of visiting graduate students working with a nonprofit organization in 2016. Table 1 provides the statistics based on responses from 169 households:

Table 1

2016 Muñoz Batey Household Statistics

The average weekly income is $1,730 Dominican Pesos (approximately $41.21 USD). This equals a monthly income of approximately $164 USD
There are 566 residents living in a 7,750 square meters area (a football field is 5,351 square meters).
19 years is the average amount of time that people have lived in Muñoz.
57% drink tap water, which in the Dominican Republic is considered unsafe for drinking.
27% bathe in borrowed or river water.
78% lack sanitation in their homes.
79% cook on charcoal stoves.
87% do not have showers in their homes.
15 of the 169 homes are made of wood.
31 of the 169 are without beds. The inhabitants use makeshift sleeping tools such as sun loungers or sleep on the floor.

Participants. I selected study participants using purposeful sampling. I chose a well-known community member who identifies as a Haitian-Dominican and has lived in the community for over 30 years. I asked him to recommend people in the Muñoz Batey community whom *he* thought were leaders and demonstrated aspects of leadership. I purposely did not provide him with any criteria so that he would select participants based solely on his perspective. Based on his recommendation (or purposeful sampling), I verbally contacted these seven prospective participants (including this well-known community member) and all eight agreed to participate in the study. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 50 years old. There were four men and four women. I have used pseudonyms to ensure the participants remain anonymous.

Data Collection. I collected data using semi-structured interviews. These interviews included questions in six main categories: (a) participants' personal background, (b) how they see themselves as leaders in the community, (c) their thoughts about leadership, (d) how they engage in leadership in their communities, (e) their opinion on what is needed to help their community members break cycles of poverty, and (f) any additional comments or ideas. All interviews were conducted using a translator.

Participants were given the option to speak in either Spanish or Creole—whichever language they most preferred. The interviews were audio recorded and then translated and transcribed into English for analysis.

Data Analysis*.* I analyzed the data collected in this case study using *thematic analysis*: a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning from qualitative data (Kumar, 2014). I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reading and re-reading. Then, I assigned codes as a deductive orientation—coding and theme development directed by existing concepts or ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2013)—that identified important features of the data relevant to answering my research question. Next, I searched for patterns in these codes across the data by creating a pattern map, and then reviewed these and named them as *themes*. The final step was to organize my themes and present as them findings; however, prior to this I included two external readers—both educational researchers with knowledge of similar research and who had also previously been to the community area—because I was concerned my prolonged involvement with the community may have led to biased analysis. As well, doing so increased the trustworthiness of the themes by having multiple readers identify similar themes. Therefore, my two external readers conducted their own examinations. Each reader identified common themes in the data, and I subsequently overlapped our three interpretations to find the most common themes. I discuss these themes in the next section.

Findings

It is important to state that the eight participants (i.e., identified Batey community leaders) in this study are not meant to be representative of the experiences of all community members. However, the data can contribute to broader understandings of a plausible direction for building local leader and leadership capacity. Throughout the interviews, the participants described their thoughts on leaders and leadership, considered whether they are or are not a leader, and explained why or why not. Within these conversations, they identified the most pressing community challenges and provided suggestions for developing leaders and leadership capacity in their community. Three interrelated themes emerged that underpinned their thoughts: (a) leaders need titles, (b) leaders are helpers, and (c) without a title, one has no authority to lead others.

Leaders Need Titles. Yukl (2013) provided a definition of leadership that is generally privileged in Western thought: "Leadership is an assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization" (p. 2). The identified community leaders in this study more or less did not see themselves as leaders based on this definition. They defined a leader as one who specifically holds a title or position. For this reason, the participants explained that they do not have any role or position in the community that entitles them to consider themselves a leader *per se*. Louise, a 54-year-old street salesperson, expressed her thoughts by saying, "Am I a leader? Well, I can easily get the attention of people. I am known. So, I think that I can see myself as a leader but I don't play any role in the community." The two school leaders did consider themselves as leaders in the school but not so much in the community. As Nick, a 20-year-old teacher, explained, "Since I've been working [at the school], I've started to see myself as a leader." He further explained that he sees himself more as a role model for others than a leader. Samantha—also a teacher, 26 years old—similarly saw herself as a role model for the students. She also stated, however, "Honestly, I don't really see myself as a leader in the community, because I don't get involved the way that I am supposed to." Overall, in the absence of a title, the participants did not feel they have any authority to act as a leader in the community. These participants'

statements are consistent with those commonly noted in the community leadership literature, in that no formal authority is associated with positional power (O'Brien & Hassinger, 1992; Pigg, 1999).

Leader as Helper. When participants were asked specifically why they thought others considered them to be leaders, they surmised that this was because they helped others—not because they had a delineated *role*. Rather, the participants made frequent reference to their position in the community as being a *helper*. This connection between *helping* and leadership came up repeatedly, and confirmed Sullivan's (2007) assertion that community leadership is different from more traditional understandings—namely, "'leaders' asking, persuading and influencing followers" (p. 142). These participants saw themselves as people that simply help people when needed. As Pierre, a 40-year-old pottery shop owner, said:

I am well-known in my community because of my free services, my favors. So, everyone knows me. They somehow see me as a leader in my community because they can't say I am a bad example and my behaviour lets others trust me and be respectful toward me.

In terms of a solution, all participants indicated that having a community leadership group could potentially be a way to help their community become a better, more stable place; they reasoned that this was because others might listen more to a group rather than an individual *imposing* to become their self-acclaimed leader. For example, five out of the eight participants made comments about forming a leadership group, hosting group meetings, having discussions, and making plans for the community. For example, Pierre stated specifically:

It would be a great idea to develop a leadership group in our community. Gather some people and talk about leadership, learn them, and find a way to get out some of our problems together by sharing our viewpoints. I think it would be good to set an appointment with the community to talk with people, convince them of the importance of leadership, and make their minds to develop leadership around us. Even if it would be 10% who would get convinced, but it would be a great step.

Philly, a 53-year-old charcoal seller, added, "I guess if we need to have more leaders and leadership capacity in this community, the thing to do is set up a meeting." Nick suggested, "If we really want to develop leadership in the community, we should go to their houses, convene them like three days a week, train them, and educate them about being a leader."

Even though the participants did not necessarily see themselves as *official* leaders with specific titles or an elected position, throughout their interviews they clearly expressed one of the central characteristics named in much of the scholarly literature on leadership: vision. They expressed visions of improvement, identified challenges, posed possible solutions for their community, and had creative ideas about how leadership could be enacted. Not seeing themselves as leaders because they have no role or title is a critical place to begin for building leadership capacity, and also points to the impact and legacy of colonial thinking in that they delegitimized themselves as leaders and felt that authority was expressly connected to official titles.

Conflict Between Leaders and Leadership. Although the participants did not see themselves as leaders because they did not have a title, they did express how they enacted leadership in their communities, their concerns about their community, and their visions of how it could become a better place. Even though they did not see themselves as leaders without a title, they felt others saw them as leaders due to their actions, such as giving someone a meal when they did not have one, providing transportation to the hospital when the person had no money to pay a taxi service, and giving advice if someone asked. Specifically, it was not necessarily what they do for others, but that people view them as someone who has the ability (and, possibly, the authority) to provide help and make decisions.

As well, participants easily identified their own leadership *traits* and offered solutions. For example, Nick suggested that a leader was someone "who can make the minds of [educate] young women living in the community about the problems of early pregnancy, pregnancy without preparation, and provide them with contraceptive pills, condoms, planning methods, and sexual education." He also added that educational opportunities for young people could be increased by creating a subsidy for university or college education. Danny, the 40-year-old taxi driver, on the other hand, focused on the challenge of stepping into a leader role with his current work schedule but also offered his vision for his community. He explained, "I am motivated to be a leader but I don't have time. I couldn't really get involved but I think I can be a leader. My motivation to be a leader is to develop the Batey, to clean it up, and learn people how to maintain the area, to make plans and economy to get a breakthrough."

Although these participants had vision and insight into their community's problems, they did not necessarily act on them. Their belief that leaders must have a title could limit them from enacting leadership in their communities, and feeling as though they could be seen as an authoritative figure to whom others should listen. According to Louise,

Having reunions with people living in the community wouldn't bring much to the table because they aren't willing to change. They don't listen to those who feel more concerned and trying to improve even some small situation. For example, when I said to my neighbour not to put garbage in the street. He replied that I am not in my country and I have no right to tell him what to do or not to do.

Her perspective was reflected in other participants' statements. Samantha commented, "There's no physical obstacle for kids in the community to succeed, the only gate is their mind. And I add that the parents are also obstacles." Both of these participants identified local mindsets as a barrier to positive change. Pierre described what he perceived as the lack of leadership when a disaster impacted the community:

I don't think that we are going to change because we aren't unified enough—no solidarity. Even if someone would take some good decisions for us, they won't listen to him. They won't get part of any common work. Each person minds their own business. For example, we had a fire in the community. Many houses were burnt but nobody said nothing. We don't have any leader who said what we are going to do. No one took charge of this disaster and we keep living this way. Each time disaster happens, there is no one to take the lead and find a way to help mentally or financially. It is disappointing.

Lusane, a 32-year-old street vendor, also explained that the community needs people to help others see the importance of change and to teach them how to do things differently to help themselves and the community.

For these participants, being a leader and enacting leadership is not only about what is done: It is also about changing mindsets, taking care of their fellow community members, and instilling a motivation for change. Although they viewed the lack of a leader or leadership presence as a problem, these identified leaders were not willing or did not feel confident enough to be the person who enacts leadership in their community.

Limitations. In addition to the limitations described earlier around positionality and privilege, this study included a small sample size. As well, my sampling strategy was limited to a singular perception of leader and leadership because I only used one participant to purposefully identify and select participants. Therefore, only his perception of leaders and leadership was used, which likely affected and limited the participants identified and data collected. A final limitation could be some nuances in meaning lost in the process of translating the interview data to English.

Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section reveal a few different facets of thinking about leaders and leadership in the community of Muñoz. First is the overarching sense that a person must be seen as someone of authority to have status and the right to lead others; this line of thinking could potentially be informed by internalized colonialism within the context of both the history and contemporary reality of Haitian-Dominicans living as *outsiders* in the DR. All participants clearly stated their reluctance to take on a leader title or any leadership role for fear of being ostracized or drawing attention to themselves in the community where they live and would like to continue living harmoniously. It appears that drawing attention to oneself by speaking out or demonstrating a sense of empowerment is not how one survives in this community. Based on these beliefs, the situation that presents itself is twofold: their conceptualizations of leaders and leadership result in no leader and as such there is no leadership to guide or help the community. This presents a conundrum because it is evident that these identified leaders are visionaries (and effective ones at that) with ideas for improving their community. In some situations, however, they demonstrated leadership but felt limited in their ability to enact more elaborate ideas because they do not feel entitled—either confident or willing or, literally, with a title—to try and implement them in their community. This conundrum is connected to the importance of building human capital: Human capital can help build confidence and inspire leadership, which can potentially support these leaders to enact their visions for their community. It also suggests that their visionary leadership can function as a way forward.

Included in their vision for building leadership capacity, all participants suggested a community group approach would be the best. Schein (2004) described this idea as *community leadership*: the objective of leadership by working together with community members to be coleaders. However, the narrative data indicate building leadership capacity will also need to involve supporting and developing confidence, empowering individuals to find their voices and decolonize their ways of thinking, and to lead others toward the same. Building capacity for leadership is indeed about building skills and knowledge for change, but resistance will be a natural by-product of any change process (Fullan, 2015). Therefore, they will need to find solutions that support anticolonial cultural transformation while respecting cultural values and norms. Consequently, as the participants suggested, the possibility of a nonauthorized or nonpositioned person (Haitian or otherwise) enacting leadership, such as encouraging others to tidy the community, is suppressed and thus affects the opportunities for leaders to develop in their community in more influential and positive ways.

As Pierre suggested, the lack of a leadership presence means that there is no one to guide or direct them; the cultural expectation is to only provide help to others when asked. However, the participants' vision may provide the way forward: They consistently referenced the idea of a community leadership group or a team approach—more or less strength in numbers to overcome the one-person authority figure. This idea in itself can be seen as a decolonial effort: In this community, building leadership capacity may not reflect Western or colonial ideas about leadership being located within a single person with authority, power, and privilege, but rather involve decolonizing and distributing leadership.

Recommendations

In this section, I present some recommendations based on the research-based evidence from this study and for achieving the purpose of this research:

to explore how to build leaders and leadership capacity in areas of poverty. My hope is that service workers or nonprofit organizations working within communities living in poverty in non-Western contexts will benefit from these recommendations. As I mentioned earlier, this exploratory case study is by no means intended to be representative of a whole, but rather an opportunity to infuse local narratives and conceptions of community leadership into discussions around combatting poverty.

Community Leadership Approach. The participants clearly expressed that a group approach would be beneficial for building leadership capacity in Muñoz. Community leadership can make people feel like they belong to a group and consequently that they are able to make a difference within that group (Eversole, 2012; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Onyx & Leonard, 2011). This is not to say that this approach will be simple, but, based on the narrative data, a community approach to leadership could be more suitable and sustainable—based on the social, cultural, and political background of this community—and achieve community buy-in. Community leadership is different from more traditional notions of leadership that involve a leader asking, persuading, and influencing followers (Sullivan, 2007). Scholars have studied community leadership in the disciplines of education and health (Bukoski et al., 2015; Riley, 2012; Trapence et al., 2012) and the underlying take-away is that leadership should not be seen solely as a position of authority but as an "emergent, interactive dynamic" (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, p. 299). Community leadership is less hierarchical (Onyx & Leonard, 2011) and based on volunteer action (Zanbar & Itzhaky, 2013); it involves the creation of social capital (Riley, 2012) and the group acts as a symbol for change (Sullivan, 2007), with community leaders being informal and nonelected (Bénit-Gbaffou & Katsaura, 2014).

Long-Term Commitment. As evidence in the findings, the process of building leadership capacity in an area of poverty is not a quick or easy task. It will involve developing leaders who first feel empowered to lead others and then have courage to help others in the community feel the same way. Changing perspectives takes time, especially in precarious living environments like Muñoz. Therefore, building human capital and leadership capacity is a long-term effort, which likely explains why short-term interventions from external organizations have resulted in minimal change to generational poverty. In this particular area (and possibly other similar contexts), this lack of change is compounded by the historical and contemporary influences of colonialism and the geopolitical lived reality of Haitians living in the DR in the 20th and 21st centuries. Any organizations—or even individuals—thinking of inserting themselves into communities experiencing generational poverty is not only a delicate and nuanced endeavor, but also one that requires long-term commitment. Therefore, if my intention is to support the development of leadership capacity in Muñoz, then I must be prepared to make a long-term commitment. My hope is that others are also prepared to do the same.

Recommendations for External Organizations and Individuals. As an extension to the findings in this research, I offer the following recommendations based on my experiences as potential implications for external *helpers* (i.e., service agents, researchers, teachers, trainers, nonprofit organization volunteers) who interact with populations experiencing poverty can be made. It goes without saying that much of the external *helpers* working with communities that experience poverty will continue to come from outsiders with privilege. For those who will either be leading, teaching, or training others to work with communities of poverty, I suggest you incorporate the following critical points within the lessons: (a) get to know the community and its historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts; (b) have a deep understanding of your own positionality; and (c) have a clear understanding of what you will be leaving

behind for the community. These three critical recommendations align with previous works (e.g., Freire 1970, 2005; Pearson, 2000; Smith, 2012) on anticolonial frameworks and decolonizing methods.

Know Your Context. Prior to inserting oneself into a community experiencing poverty, a researcher, service worker, or organization must have a keen sense of not only the various contexts of the community, but also how these contexts influence community members' thoughts and actions. In a place like Muñoz that has a colonial history, it is also necessary to understand and work within an anticolonial framework and do decolonizing work within yourself and your own mind. Otherwise, perceptions, analysis, recommendations, and further *helping* actions risk perpetuating colonial perspectives and attitudes, such as paternalism. Also, any efforts from external helpers/researchers who do not deeply and critically interrogate their own good intentions will diminish any sustainable efforts.

Understand Your Positionality. A critical understanding of one's positionality is a must. Helping build local leadership capacity requires actively understanding and rejecting the idea of the White savior/servant (Pearson, 2000), as even externals with good intentions who have unexamined ideologies may cause more damage than good (Spivak, 2010). For example, external agents who have not done their own internal work might assume that a solution for developing leadership characteristics among these participants would be to focus on accumulating power and followers. A direct transfer of Western leadership concepts does not take into account how the social and cultural ideologies of a leadership approach could be incompatible with a community. These leaders have vision: They do not need an outsider to tell them what is needed for their community to improve and potentially combat generational poverty. What the research implies is that they need to increase their human capital with support, guidance, and mentoring to know how to develop leadership skills to empower themselves and others in their community.

Determine Your Legacy. A final and most important point is thinking about the legacy that you are leaving behind. International service agents and volunteers who provide financial or human services to communities experiencing poverty must consider the following question: Are you consciously or unconsciously perpetuating colonial power structures? Good intentions alone are not enough: deeper reflection on the impact of your good intentions in these communities is required. Pearson (2000) has written about four different lenses through which outsiders have offered help to marginalized people; specifically, in his writing about Aboriginal peoples in Australia, he described *help* as a destructive savior model:

These people feel sorry for the plight of Aboriginal people, they are sympathetic and supportive. They oppose racism but are often blind to its subtler manifestations. They wish well for Aboriginal people, are committed and often work hard. They sacrifice much for the betterment of Aboriginal people. The problem is that their concept of themselves as saviors of Aboriginal people is destructive. (Pearson 2000, p. 50)

In her research, Spivak captured this point as well: "The real question is not the people who are trying to do really nasty things, but the people who are trying to do decent things out of an unexamined ideology. Ideology is larger than personal good will" (Daza &Tuck, 2014, p. 338).

Conclusions

In this exploratory case study, I have presented narrative data about how leaders and leadership are understood by identified community leaders in Muñoz, DR. The intention of this research was to infuse potent considerations into efforts targeted at combatting generational poverty and promoting sustainable change. Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans

are generally strong-willed, resilient people who have survived despite facing many challenges. Included in these challenges are generational poverty and the legacy and continuing impact of colonialism. Any researchers or nonprofit groups (e.g., service workers, volunteers, or organizations) will need to have a deep understanding of these challenges, as well as the local sociocultural and geopolitical contexts. According to the narrative data, building capacity for community leadership and cultivating the vision that already exists within the community is the most likely way forward—a process that will involve building the human capital of the whole community, and will not occur quickly or be served by short-term engagement.

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