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How Does a Responsible Leader Win in a Competitive World?

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Abstract

Competitiveness demonstrates a firm's effectiveness in achieving an advantage over others. A leader's competitiveness can facilitate higher profits and growth. It can also lead to unethical and irresponsible corporate dealings. This paper suggests competitiveness can be responsible.

Responsible Leadership defines two main responsible leaders (RL), integrative and instrumental. Integrators are linked to social responsibility and multiple stakeholders, while Instrumentalists are associated with competitive advantage and shareholders. Missing from extant research frameworks is how the two RLs experience competitiveness.

We examined the lived experience of a group of Top 100 Leaders in Canada, finding that both RLs practiced responsible competitiveness. A more nuanced group, they shared characteristics and personal values that seemed to curb the overreach or hyper-competitiveness associated with irresponsibility.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); Competition; Competitiveness; Responsible leadership; Responsible competitiveness; Hyper-competitiveness*

Introduction

Business is an increasingly powerful influence in society. Indeed, many businesses generate revenues that exceed the GDPs of some European countries (Belinchón & Moynihan, 2018). As a result, corporate activities can generate either significant prosperity for stakeholders through responsible actions or considerable

hardship due to irresponsible actions (Kang et al., 2016; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016). Companies determine how they will behave within the context of a highly competitive marketplace.

Competition impacts many business decisions, making it an essential driver of management and strategy in organizations (Sales et al., 2018). In the marketplace, competition drives economic outcomes and is essential for the economy to function well (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016).

Competitiveness demonstrates the capacity of a country, region, or firm to compete (Bogoyavlenskaya and Kliueva, 2013). It is also a leadership trait that is coveted by the business world (Bloodgood & Turnley, 2012; Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2008; Houston et al., 2015a).

When a company can outperform its competitors through the creation and maintenance of some strategy or product, we say they have a competitive advantage (CA) (Kong & Prior, 2007; Porter, 2006; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016). Companies search for competitive advantage in markets by differentiating themselves from competitors.

One way to do this is to engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Empirical studies have demonstrated and supported the link for a positive connection between CSR and competitiveness (Hafenbrädl & Waeger, 2016; Loikkanen & Hyytinen, 2011; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016). CSR has been introduced into large companies in impressive numbers, but its impact has been greatly overestimated (Devinney et al., 2013; Ghobadian et al., 2015; Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), 2015). Ideally, more commitment to CSR would yield a world of responsible competitiveness (Boulouta & Pitelis, 2014; Zadek, 2006). However, quite the reverse has occurred (Devinney et al., 2013; Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), 2015; Zona et al., 2013).

Globally, we continue to see increased examples of corporate misbehavior (Fleming et al., 2013; Riera & Iborra, 2017; Schneider, 2014) even among companies that have touted their CSR credentials. Recent examples include British Petroleum's insensitivity to social impacts during the company's Gulf of Mexico oil spill (Lange & Washburn, 2012; Sherwell & Lawler, 2015); Volkswagen's falsified emissions scandal (Abatecola & Cristofaro, 2019); Boeing's inadequately tested 737 MAX software (Tabuchi & Gelles, 2019); and Facebook's collusion with Cambridge Analytica to use private data for political gain (Blow, 2019; Wong, 2019).

It is important to distinguish between the company and its leadership. Competitive leaders are sought out and well compensated for their ability to generate high profits (Mudrack et al., 2012). When undertaken properly, competitiveness can render a company financially successful and a leading force in key economic measures (Mudrack et al., 2012; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016; Zadek, 2006). However, hyper-competitiveness is often associated with questionable ethics, to the point that such behavior can become normalized under pressure to achieve what may be unrealistic objectives (Balch & Armstrong, 2010). This form of competitiveness has been linked to the corruption and scandals dogging the corporate world in recent decades (Zona et al., 2013).

Researchers have examined the antecedents of corporate scandals (Zona et al., 2013), the role of the senior leader in driving the company's corporate strategy (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), and the personal values and traits that are known to influence the behaviors and decisions of leaders (Brandt, 2016; Lichtenstein et al., 2017). The field of responsible leadership (RLship) has emerged as a way for scholars and practitioners to explore the characteristics and motivations of corporate leaders and understand the dynamics of responsible and irresponsible behavior (Abatecola & Cristofaro, 2019; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018; Pless et al., 2012;). The literature describes two primary types of RLs: Integrative and Instrumental. The integrative leader is aligned with the broad perspectives of responsibility, while the instrumental leader reflects a narrow responsibility (Waldman et al., 2020). Variations of the two types exist within a framework of RL orientations or mindsets developed by Pless et al. (2012). This paper will provide further descriptions of these two types of.

Missing from the research to date is an examination of the competitive nature of these responsible leaders (MacNeil & Matear, 2020; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016). After all, Adam Smith saw competition as a desire within all of us (Gonin, 2015; Rasmussen, 2006; Wells & Graafland, 2012). Responsible leaders should be no different. However, where competitiveness does appear in the literature, the assumption of competition is aligned with the narrow shareholder or instrumental perspective (Freeman, 2002; Freeman et al., 2010). This gap in the literature became the subject of our research. The purpose of this paper was to develop a deeper conceptualization of the characteristics and dimensions of RLs by exploring the competitiveness within the individual leader. We did this through a rich qualitative account of the lived experience of 10 senior leaders, five Integrators and five Instrumentalists.

The study showed that not only did both groups partake in various degrees of competitiveness, but, also, they shared some of the same characteristics: moral motivation, an empowering leadership style, and broadened and more collaborative stakeholder relations. We found a nuanced group of leaders who were effectively competing in the marketplace while making ethical decisions, a combination that some would consider appropriate for strong leadership (Lestrange & Tolstikov-Mast, 2013; Schwab & Larkin, 2016; Waldman et al., 2020).

The Literature: Responsible Leadership, CSR, and Competitiveness

Responsibility is a relative term that is defined and perceived according to one's viewpoint (Maak & Pless, 2006; Voegtlin, 2016; Waldman et al., 2020). Even when we restrict the word to the business context, there are widely opposing views (Frangieh & Yaacoub, 2017; Kempster & Carroll, 2016; Siegel, 2014). For example, business leaders can be considered responsible by complying with relevant laws and regulations and maximizing profit for shareholders (Devinney et al., 2013; Siegel, 2014; Smith & Rönnegard, 2016). This narrow form of responsibility is connected to Friedman's (1970) shareholder theory whereby leaders and managers are primarily responsible to their owners/shareholders, leaving the social outcomes to others (Husted & Salazar, 2006; Pless et al., 2012). The opposing viewpoint reflects a broader form of responsibility to all organizational stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010; Pless et al., 2012; Voegtlin, 2016). While both forms of responsibility are reflected in the corporate world today, the majority of leaders, particularly in the western world, employ the narrow approach to responsibility, even when a firm proclaims allegiance to social responsibility (Maak et al., 2016; Pless et al., 2012; Waldman et al., 2020).

Responsibility and Responsible Leadership

Responsible leadership has emerged primarily as a response to unethical leadership (Frangieh & Yaacoub, 2017; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018; Voegtlin et al., 2019). It is grounded in stakeholder theory and promotes social responsibility as both a means and a desirable outcome (Antunes & Franco, 2016; Blakeley, 2016; Maak & Pless, 2011). It differs from other leadership theories in that there is a clear focus on individual and shared responsibility (Blakeley, 2016; Pless & Maak, 2011; Pless et al., 2012).

There is no agreement on a single definition for RLship. Various scholars do agree that there are different ways to understand an RL, that there are two general types, and that stakeholder relations figure prominently (Maak et al., 2016; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018; Voegtlin, 2016; Waldman et al., 2020). We apply the definition of leading experts who define RLship as a social–relational and ethical phenomenon that involves a broad-based, stakeholder approach to responsibility (Haberthür, 2018; Maak & Pless, 2006).

Pless et al. (2012) developed a framework for RLs that describes various mindsets that may exist within the integrative and instrumental categories. This paper used these mindset characterizations to identify integrative and instrumental leaders in the research sample. As well, the paper will further define these leadership mindsets in future sections.

CSR and Competitive Advantage

CSR is the outcome when business goes beyond its fiduciary duties and engages multiple stakeholders in decisions and actions (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Carroll, 2015; Dahlsrud, 2008). The drive to include CSR within the strategies of organizations around the world is mainly based on the argument that business has an obligation to multiple stakeholders, not only to its shareholders (Carroll, 2015; Freeman et al., 2011; Maak et al., 2016). For some, CSR is perceived as an antidote to the negative effects of corporate malfeasance (Ghobadian et al., 2015; Williams, 2014). Other researchers have suggested that CSR is a genuine CA, obtained by strategically employing responsible activities to enhance profit and performance; the social benefits, in this view, are a mere by-product (Boulouta & Pitelis, 2014; Calabrese et al., 2013; Cullens & Waters, 2013).

CSR is linked to RL (Esper & Boies, 2013; Pless et al., 2012; Voegtlin et al., 2019). While the CSR literature has been slow to focus on individual leaders, it is clear that they can use the power of their positions to drive the social responsibility of their firms (MacNeil & Matear, 2020; Pless et al., 2012; Tideman et al., 2013). Esper and Boies (2013) proposed that RLship is a critical link between CSR policies and firm outcomes, with the RL transmitting CSR policies and strategies throughout the organization. Voegtlin et al. (2012) emphasized the role of RLs in working with stakeholders to achieve a consensus on organizational strategies. Pless and Maak (2011) drew parallels with the RL who achieves effective CSR strategies and sustainable stakeholder relations. More recently, scholars have turned their focus to RLship and how a leader's mindset—the characteristics and motivations that inform decisions and actions—affects business strategy (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Miska et al., 2014; Pless et al., 2012).

Researchers have established a positive link between CSR and financial performance, although somewhat tenuously (Beurden & Gossling, 2008; Peloza & Papania, 2009; Perrini et al., 2011). Related researchers suggested that CSR positively impacts organizational competitiveness by reducing costs, creating new value, enhancing employee engagement and recruitment, building better stakeholder relationships, and enhancing corporate reputation (Boulouta & Pitelis, 2014; McWilliams et al., 2006; Porter & Kramer 2006). The relevant research defines CA as the strategic employment of CSR within organizations to enhance profit and performance (Siudek et al., 2014).

Competition and Competitiveness

There are multiple theories that define and explain competition (Jambor et al., 2016; Quairel-Lanoizele, 2011). Stated simply, competition is the conflict that arises when there is a collective demand for scarce resources (Sales et al., 2018, p. 108).

Market competition drives economic outcomes and is essential for a capitalist economy to function well (Christ et al., 2017; Frynas & Yamahaki, 2015; Wang et al., 2016). Traditional economic approaches describe competition as a mechanism that has a positive impact on the community by ensuring the efficient management of resources and stimulating innovation (Jambor & Babu, 2018; McAfee & McMillan, 1996). While this definition has endured, it describes the outcome of competition, not the action of competing (Quairel-Lanoizele, 2011).

Competitiveness, as distinguished from competition, addresses the activity involved (Quairel-Lanoizele, 2011). Like competition, it has no one generally accepted definition; nonetheless, competitiveness plays a central role in society and an even more important one in business (Horney, 1937; Kohn, 1992; Mudrack et al., 2012). At the societal level, the most widely accepted definition is that of the World Economic Forum, "the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of an economy, which in turn sets the level of prosperity that the economy can achieve" (2017, p. 114).

At the individual level, competitive personalities can be determining factors in the overall competitiveness of nations as well as their firms (Bogoyavlenskaya & Kliueva, 2013; Ryckman et al., 1997; ten Brinke et al., 2015). It is the individual's competitive personality, known as trait competitiveness, which is central to this paper.

Individual Trait Competitiveness

The extent to which an individual competes in any given situation is referred to as trait competitiveness (Fletchev & Nusbaum, 2008; Hibbard & Buhrmester, 2010; Judge et al., 2009). Personality traits are typically defined as descriptions of people in terms of relatively stable patterns of behavior, thoughts, and emotions (McCrae & Costa, 2003). They differ from values in that personal values (e.g., achievement, security) are generally described as broad-based, relatively stable life goals that guide one's perceptions, judgments, and behavior (Parks-Leduc et al., 2015; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). The competitiveness personality trait explains how an individual is inclined to behave in various contexts (Mudrack et al., 2012).

Scholars have examined trait competitiveness using different theoretical frameworks. There are degrees of competitiveness, from hyper-competitiveness to healthier forms of competitiveness (Helmreich & Spence, 1978; Horney, 1937; Mudrack et al., 2012). Competitiveness can also determine ethical or unethical behavior (Balch & Armstrong, 2010; Mudrack et al., 2012; Zino et al., 2013). For example, hyper-competitiveness has been linked to unethical corporate activity (Artikel-Sidebar, 2018; Houston et al., 2015; Swab & Johnson, 2019).

Leaders and Competitiveness

Competitive leaders are highly sought after, and competitiveness is both encouraged and rewarded in business environments (Mudrack et al., 2012). Senior leaders, especially CEOs of large organizations, often contend with fierce global competition (Chin et al., 2013; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016; Szczepańska-Woszczyna et al., 2015). Boards and corporate recruiters respond to these competitive forces by selecting for competitiveness as an individual leadership trait.

An individual who is competitive will not necessarily make unethical decisions, however. Indeed, competition may have received an unfair assessment because of the increased number of corporate scandals (Cote, 2018; Ghobadian et al., 2015; Junaid, 2013). While a competitive leader's irresponsible behavior can lead to negative social and environmental impacts, there is a more complex interplay of the individual's personal traits, moral values, and contextual factors (Cote, 2018; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016; Zona et al., 2013). For example, the competitive leader who is morally grounded is capable of shaping the contextual environment in a more positive and balanced manner, ensuring a business strategy that supports the health of the organization and relevant stakeholders (Waldman & Siegel, 2008; Waldman et al., 2020; Winter, 1991).

In this context, competitiveness and responsibility are not mutually exclusive, but inter-related (MacNeil & Matear, 2020). An individual with a strong responsibility disposition can control their behavior through internal mechanisms such as moral and legal standards, concern for others, and a sense of obligation and self-judgment (Winter, 1991). A responsible individual who feels an inner obligation to do the right thing will respond differently to intense competition than one who is motivated solely by financial gain. For example, the CEO of Maple Leaf Foods, a corporation based in Canada, has put forth an aggressive plan to reduce the company's environmental footprint by 50 percent by 2025, choosing environmental stability over larger profits (Castaldo, 2019; Thompson, 2019). Responsibility is thus based largely on a moral standard geared toward the concerns of others, an obligation to act on that standard, and a commitment to be accountable for the consequences of one's actions (Waldman & Siegel, 2008; Winter, 1991).

Theoretical Framework

This paper describes a multi-theoretical approach that facilitated a more comprehensive review to determine the organizational and individual complexities of contemporary business environments. Based on a review of the literature, the paper integrated several paradigm lenses, which included stakeholder theory, the emerging RLship paradigm, and competition theory.

Stakeholder theory delineated the factors in the macro environment—the organization and management's capacity to address multiple and competing stakeholder interests (Kemper & Martin, 2010). Responsible leadership was used to address the micro-level factors represented by the individual leaders and their behaviors and motivations (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Pless et al., 2012; Stahl & Sully de Luque, 2014). The final lens was classic competition theory which defined the processes involved in the management of finite resources and the strategic decision-making that leaders performed to remain effective in their roles (Deutsch, 1949; McAfee & McMillan, 1996; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016).

Research Methodology and Design

The paper used a qualitative research methodology and a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of senior leaders from multiple sectors in Canada. A further aim was to explore how competitiveness was experienced by these leaders, how they made sense of competition as it related to social responsibility and engagement, and to describe similarities or differences among the leaders and across groups. The approach is phenomenological in that it involves a detailed exploration of the participant's world, which is concerned with each individual's personal perception or account rather than the production of objective statements of competitiveness. The paper applied Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the participants' lived experience with a phenomenon that is not detailed in the RLship or social responsibility literatures, leader competitiveness, which was identified by MacNeil and Matear (2020) and Quairel-Lanoizele (2016) as a topic requiring research.

Research Methods

The paper draws on the experiences of senior leaders who represented organizations that were deemed top employers in an annual national competition. As top employers, they had created a working environment that was exceptional for employees and a culture of social responsibility and stakeholder/employee engagement. The latter two criteria are central to determining an RL and provided a direct link to the RL framework developed by Pless et al. (2012). The RL framework is further described later in this section.

Research question and objectives

The research question was, how do different RLs experience competitiveness? IPA is about exploration and not hypothesis testing, but we found it necessary to organize the study around some key intentions to ensure the research question was addressed. To this end, our goals were to: (a) identify each participant's RL mindset based on descriptive characteristics within the literature; (b) identify and explore the key themes that emerged through the review and interpretation process; and (c) uncover and understand the meanings leaders attached to competitiveness so that patterns could be identified across groups.

Population. The population was the index of Top 100 Employers in Canada, which included private and non-profit leaders. A senior leader was defined as a CEO or a member of the senior leadership team reporting to the CEO, for example a vice president (VP).

Organizations with more than 500 employees with national or international scope and a publicly espoused CSR strategy were considered due to the level of influence these companies and leaders have over

stakeholders (Devinney et al., 2013; Scherer et al., 2013). Once the additional criteria were applied to the original primary population, the eligible number of participants was reduced to 59.

Sampling and Sample Size. The paper employed a purposive sampling method to determine the sample size. Purposive sampling is considered appropriate for studies that require a conscious selection of a small number of data sources that meet specific criteria (Groenewald, 2006; Ogiri Itotenaan et al., 2014). Small sample sizes are quite workable for IPA as long as there is adequate detail and depth to develop the themes since the objective is to reach data saturation with the information on the subject, not to maximize numbers (Bowen, 2008; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Smith et al., 2008). The primary researcher identified the CEO for each organization through the company's website and contacted the firms via email first and then telephone. We secured interviews with 10 Top 100 employers after numerous contacts and much persistence with those who showed an interest. To accommodate the busy schedules of these executives, we extended the interview period to five months—March to July. The participants represented three sectors: five from the private sector, three from the public sector, and two from the not-for-profit (NFP) sector. Appendix A provides a brief overview of the 10 leaders in the sample.

We established saturation by reviewing each transcript, line by line, and identifying emerging themes. By the 10th interview we were seeing ample repetition and redundancy and little novel information pertaining to the research question. This process was performed by the primary researcher and peer reviewed by the secondary researchers, who concurred that saturation through thematic analysis was evident.

Interviews and questions. The primary researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, which provided the participants with the flexibility to elaborate on their responses. The questions were open-ended to enable the interviewer to delve deeply into the components under study, leading ultimately to more informed responses. To avoid bias, the lead investigator submitted the queries and prompts for peer review to ensure they were not leading questions.

None of the primary questions was focused on competition and competitiveness, but the concepts were included as descriptors and prompts throughout the interview. This was done by design because our original focus was on the more general characteristics and motivations of senior leaders. As the interviews unfolded, we noted the prominence of competition and competitiveness, and this prompted a separate analysis. A list of questions and prompts is included in Appendix B.

The leaders opted for telephone interviews. This method proved to be satisfactory with participants who provided detailed responses. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The average interview time was 45 minutes and all transcripts were member checked for accuracy. We supplemented the transcripts with secondary data in the form of company documents retrieved from each firm's website (e.g., strategies and plans, news releases, and reports) and information voluntarily provided by individual leaders after the interview (e.g., news releases, program descriptions) which is aligned with approaches advocated by Harper and Cole (2012), Rowley (2012), and Stake (1995).

Analysis framework. We applied IPA to explore in detail how participants were making sense of competition and how they expressed competitiveness as senior leaders. The paper adopted the guidelines presented by Smith (2011) and Smith and Osborne (2003) for the process. The aim was to study each individual, then establish patterns of similarities and differences within and between groups.

We relied on the self-awareness and ability of participants to describe their experience as senior leaders. Experts recommend employing epoche or bracketing to improve the credibility of the analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2013; Terrell & Rosenbusch, 2013). The primary researcher deliberately put aside preconceived beliefs or biases throughout the interpretation process and the co-researchers performed a final process check.

Identification of RL mindsets. We used the conceptual framework developed by Pless et al. (2012, p. 58) to identify the RL mindsets of each leader and then to uncover the meanings each individual ascribed to competitiveness. Table 1 depicts the framework.

The process consisted of matching the framework characteristics to the respective narrative of each RL. This was an iterative process, first connecting the information from the transcripts to the RL characteristics and then consulting the themes as they developed to test our mindset choices. Each mindset was peer reviewed by the two co-authors to ensure consensus in the final set of RL orientations.

Applying IPA meant that the focus was on the type of reference selected for the relevant characteristic, as opposed to counting the number of words and/or expressions in the transcript that matched the RL characteristic (Cope, 2010; Hemingway & Starkey, 2018). Deciding that a participating leader demonstrated an integrative or instrumental characteristic was a function of the intensity of a statement, how powerful a point was made in terms of its emotional element, and how meaningful it was to the leader and to the interpretation—points recommended by Smith and Osborne (2007). For example, we considered a leader as demonstrating morality if they spoke about their values and made positive statements regarding values, especially if they informed the leader's decision-making.

Identifying the final common themes. We conducted a thematic analysis in stages, one transcript at a time. First, each transcript was reviewed multiple times to identify the emerging themes. A sample of the emerging themes from one of the first transcripts is included as Table 2. One can see from the example that the themes alternated between an RL mindset that was integrative (e.g., strong moral values and a personal commitment to social responsibility) and instrumental (e.g., concerns around global competitiveness and Return on Investment). Further into the transcript the themes suggest that the leader is balancing personal values and principles with the profit-seeking industry to which they are committed. In subsequent transcripts, some themes are repeated, and others emerge, indicating how leaders were both similar and different.

Table 1: *RL Characteristics*

	Categories	Traditional Economist	Opportunity Seeker	Integrator	Idealist
Leadership Characteristics	Core Purpose	Create immediate/short-term economic value for shareholders	Create long-term economic value for shareholders & create value for other stakeholders if beneficial for shareholders	Create long-term value for a range of stakeholders in business and society	Create long-term social value for targeted stakeholders in need or society as a whole
	Motivation	Save costs and maximize profits; manage risks; obey the law	Competitive advantage; personal and firm reputation or PR	Shared moral values and principles	Psychological fulfillment
	Cognition	Strongly rational and analytic	Largely rational and analytic	Integration of rationality and emotions/affect	Strongly emotional
	Leadership Style	Rule-based, autocratic, management by exception	Transactional	Transformational, empowering	Servant
Stakeholder Relations	Relationship Focus	Focus on shareholders; engagement of a few key stakeholders if economically advisable (to avoid risks)	Focus on stakeholders who can be used to realize opportunities and ultimately satisfy shareholders; limited commitment to stakeholder other than shareholders	Focus on all stakeholders perceived to be legitimate	Focus on selected stakeholders (e.g., those in need) or society as a whole
	Relationship approach	Instrumental. distance kept from stakeholders, other than shareholders or owners	Instrumental. relations with stakeholders as a means to serving shareholders or owners	Balanced approach based on morals and principles, collaboration with all stakeholders	Service oriented approach to targeted stakeholders
Strategic Emphasis	Performance focus	Narrow Economic performance. Creating value for shareholders. Strict adherence to cost-benefit analysis.	Broad Primarily economic value creation for shareholders; value creation for other stakeholders if strategically beneficial; some use of cost-benefit analysis	Broad Focus on value creation for targeted stakeholder or society; no use of cost-benefit analysis	Narrow Focus on value creation for targeted stakeholders or society; no use of cost-benefit analyses

Note. Used with permission and adapted from "Different Approaches Toward Doing the Right Thing: Mapping the Responsibility Orientations of Leaders," by N. M. Pless, T. Maak, & D. A. Waldman, *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 26, p. 58, 2012. © 2012 by the Academy of Management.

Table 2: *A Sampling of Unclustered Emerging Themes—VP, Air Transportation*

Emerging Themes & Notes	Illustrative Text
Employee Engagement (EE)–Meaning seems personal and perhaps more integrative than instrumental.	**I: Your understanding of engagement?** Engaged employees understand and buy into the company's mission and objectives and wish to work cooperatively with management to achieve those objectives. There has to be something in it for the employee to be engaged, however.
Personal values and engagement: VP describes engagement personally, based on values. Different approach—integrative? EE-ROI: instrumental; financial outcomes of engagement; CA essential; displays Return on Investment (ROI) strategy (instrumental). Limits to EE: Input to decisions and strategies but control is ultimately with manager. EE as response to labor crisis; lessons learned from unengaged employees—instrumental again. Greater returns; measurable results. Both instrumental and integrative forms of leadership seem to be operating.	**I: How important is it to you?** Employees need to be valued, respected…. People deserve respect. You owe them transparent communication, conversations, frank discussions when things are not going well, and you need to recognize when they do good work, and you need to reward them for that. You need to be fair. **I: What is achieved, if anything?** I think [engagement] is mandatory. It's very good for the company. It's needed because employees who only pay lip service to something that they don't believe in or agree with are not doing the best job they could. We would not expect full agreement on every issue, rule, or policy change, but certainly maximum engagement is our goal. The face of the company has changed a great deal. The company went through some very difficult times in the early 2000s…. We have overcome most of the challenges. There has been very tangible, real progress. A number of programs were put in place… recognition, training, diversity and other programs.
Is this more than a financial commitment? External stakeholders have a purpose for the company, e.g., reputation management; national values on show so must live up to expectations. Would the company be as careful if no one were watching?	**I: What, if anything, does external SE achieve?** (Company) [T]hey stop being opponents and it makes a world of difference. All that takes is time and energy and they know their views are being heard and respected, and once they understand, it's a huge difference…. Once you spend time with them, you literally give them the time of day, it makes a big difference. You are working collaboratively, and it changes everything.

Emerging Themes & Notes	Illustrative Text
Personal commitment to social responsibility—the foundation. Working with staff and creating a culture of responsibility.	**I: Why is social responsibility/sustainability important to you/the company?** We have a foundation, that I chair, and the employees who workfor the foundation work with me. We work with a great number of charitable organizations and groups that work for the health and wellbeing of children. I am personally involved with that foundation and it provides a lot of rewards on a personal level. We do what we are able.
Again, her approach (i.e., caring, respect) is more integrative; expected outcome is instrumental. *Seems to work*.	
CA: Company and CSR/Sustainability required to maintain CA in highly competitive global marketplace.	**I: Why is social responsibility/sustainability important to the company?** I don't think you can be a successful company today... and ignore your responsibility towards sustainability.... There is a lot of competition now, but we were there before everyone else.
Instrumental approach to CSR/Sustainability. Sustainability/CSR linked to competitiveness. More instrumental emphasis here.	**I: How effective are your Sustainability/CSR strategies?** The environment is obviously very important and in [the XYZ industry] environmental protection, as in reduction of carbon emissions, correlates directly with fuel efficiency, which correlates directly with the bottom line. So, the stars all align for the company to do all that it possibly can do to reduce carbon emissions, as an example. For us, the biggest mover of this is new airplanes.... you get a 30% efficiency for a new airplane.
Leaders' role in EE—personally involved; demonstrates best practices in engagement.	**I: What does EE look like in your company?** We initiated a different way of communicating with our employees, which included YouTube discussions with [the President] and myself, town halls, and a lot of written communications.
Integrative meanings—communication.	
Leadership—more empowering style. More integrative characteristics—respect for employees, caring leadership, encourages input to decisions.	**I: Are values important to you?** My personal value is that we don't issue any communications that are misleading let alone untrue.... It shouldn't be misleading or trying to position or spin something in a manner that is going to mislead people into thinking something that's not going to come about. You should be honest in your communications. It's very important.
Moral personal values: respect, honesty, humility—very important to her.	

The remaining transcripts were analyzed, and emerging themes were extracted, resulting in a long list that had to be clustered and finessed to make way for the final analysis. That final analysis—identifying the common themes—had to address both individual nuance and collective experience (Smith & Osborne, 2007). A theme was judged as recurrent if it occurred in at least half the transcripts and only those themes have been presented. A succinct list of common themes was assembled along with the prevalence of each theme (Table 5). Illustrative extracts from the participants have been embedded within an analytic narrative, which offers interpretation based on theory and practical experience.

Findings

We identified five instrumental and five integrative leaders. We selected the terms Instrumentalist and Integrator to describe the groups since these are the two most prominent RL types in the current business environment (Waldman et al., 2020). Not surprisingly, the Instrumentalists came from the private sector while the Integrators were based in the public and NFP sectors. The even split between the two groups was unplanned. Most interesting about the participants were their similarities: they all shared one or more key characteristics of both mindsets.

Responsible Leader Mindset No. 1: The Instrumentalist

The private sector Instrumentalists experienced competitiveness at more intense levels than their public and NFP sector counterparts. While this finding was in keeping with the research in this area, these leaders also showed some marked differences (Darling & Cunningham, 2016; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016; Szczepańska-Woszczyna et al., 2015). Instrumentalists were aligned with the instrumental mindset in their primary accountability to shareholders and a pursuit of profit and CA, but they also shared Integrator traits.

There were three leadership characteristics that Instrumentalists shared with the Integrators: (a) motivation—a reliance on personal values and principles, not simply the bottom lines of their respective organizations, (b) leadership style—most of the Instrumentalists showed a more empowering leadership style rather than one that was transactional or autocratic, and (c) most were committed to and personally involved with stakeholder engagement, particularly employee engagement. Table 3 identifies the shared integrative characteristics as divergence from the RL framework. Illustrative quotes provide evidence of divergence from and alignment with the instrumental leader described in the literature.

Table 3: *Instrumental RLs and Divergent (Integrator) Characteristics*

Leader Characteristic	RL	Divergent Comment	Maintains Alignment with Instrumentalist
Leader Motivation— Competitive advantage, firm reputation	**Tran-1**	**Divergence: Moral motivation (personal values)** We can't do it on our own. We work very actively with [international associations] and… [industry] committees…. We share the goals of where we want to be on carbon emissions… I chair a foundation…. I am personally, involved in with that foundation and it provides a lot of rewards on a personal level…We don't look at putting our energies where we will get the greatest visibility. We look at putting our energies and resources where they will make the most difference…. Once you spend time with [external stakeholders], you literally give them the time of day, it makes a big difference. You are working collaboratively, and it changes everything.	
	Forestry	**Divergence:** We operate in many small, sometimes remote locations, and we are committed to be a responsible, caring leader in supporting our 8,000 employees, their families, and their communities…. This company started 61 years ago with very simple values. The key for us is making sure our people in leadership roles have those values…. We need to do [competition] in a humble way… because I respect our competition and I like our competitors.	
	PS-1	**Divergence:** You can't just talk about [CSR] and hope…. Ideally you make [social responsibility] part of the culture of the organization.	
	PS-2	**Divergence:** It tends to start with doing the right thing…. We should, as an organization and individual leaders, be demonstrating social responsibility and building environments… that promote sustainability, strength, and vibrancy.	
	Tran-2	**Divergence:** We don't do any green washing…[W]e have a very serious environmental agenda…. [W]e owe our employees respect…. Teamwork and integrity is what we believe in. If I didn't believe in this, I wouldn't be doing it. I'm so proud of what we do…. Sometimes we lose business because our competitors are hungrier than we are or because they behave in a way that we're not going to match.	
Leader Style— Transactional	**Tran-1**	**Divergence: leadership style is empowering, transformative** Once you've risen in an organization and you are making very important decisions over other people's lives, it affects the way you treat other people that you work with or that may report to you…. I think this company has the right values…Our employees are starting to trust us, but we are still very much under probation…. It makes us work harder…. We buy equipment for the pediatric hospital…. We look at what is really needed… and the special projects are	

Leader Characteristic	RL	Divergent Comment	Maintains Alignment with Instrumentalist
		what our employees want. We think that is real social responsibility.	
	Forestry	**Divergence:** It's the most important thing to me that when I retire, every employee feels more important than they do today…Number one, it's [employee engagement] the most important thing I do. Number two, it's what I enjoy the most… I think there's a downside to [celebrating leaders] in that people's egos get really big and they go from being great team players and leaders to letting it get into their heads and I frankly don't want that to happen to me.	
	PS-1	**Divergence:** When I work with people, if their values are in the right place, I can work with almost any kind of style or behavioral issue…We want to make sure we're incenting the right type of behavior that naturally lends itself to these kinds of natural CSR, not so it has to be mandated.	
	PS-2	**Divergence:** On a personal basis, I think doing the right thing and suspending personal interest is key…You can ask any question, but there's only one of three answers: I will give you the answer; I don't know, but I'll try to find out; and I know but can't tell you. They deserve as my teams, colleagues, peers, whatever, to know.	
	Tran-2	**Aligned with Instrumentalist—Leadership is transactional.**	**Aligned with Instrumentalist:** We have a session in Florida, and we treat [employees] royally. This is quite costly, and I always hope that it's money well spent because, in the end, it's a bet. Engaging employees is a bet.
Stakeholder Relations Focus is broad, Approach is collaborative	Tran-1	**Divergence:** commitment to stakeholders; listening to their perspectives. You owe [employees] transparent communication, conversations, frank discussions when things are not going well, and you need to recognize when they do good work and reward them for that. You need to be fair. You need to listen to stakeholders…. It's really important to do that because you don't always have the best perspective and you can't work in isolation…We listen to [employees'] feedback. They are involved. We recognize that if something is not working for them, it's not going to work for the company either…. When they understand what the issue is and how you can work together to make things better, it's huge.	
	Forestry	**Aligned with Instrumentalist—Leader's approach is not collaborative; not directly involved.**	**Aligned with Instrumentalist:** We do [SE]…. It's not something I like to do. [It's] a necessary thing to
	PS-1	**Divergence:** Broad, inclusive relationships.	

Leader Characteristic	RL	Divergent Comment	Maintains Alignment with Instrumentalist
		When our clients ask us to do something that's not in our capability, we need to tell them so and recommend someone else. It may be a bad decision in the short-term, but it will be the absolutely right, long-term decision.	do.
		It's about continuing to show up… offering help and advice and engaging with them whether there's a paid engagement or not.	
		It's about including other people's opinions and drawing on the spirit of partnership.	
	PS-2	**Divergence: Leader's relationships are broad, inclusive**. We… engaged many of our staff to establish how they want to work…. This space was basically designed with a significant amount of influence by them…. I don't believe I have all the answers… I have many people around me I can rely on for input. Getting different people's thoughts and ideas on the table is one way of getting much better diversity in our leadership ranks and is really critical. It is a strategic imperative.	
	Tran-2	**Aligned with Instrumentalist—Stakeholder Relations consist primarily of shareholders; other stakeholders consulted to minimize risk.**	**Aligned with Instrumentalist:** Our engagement with external stakeholders is first and foremost coined in terms of advocacy…. We have to re-educate all the time.

Note. The following applies to Tables 3 and 4: All instrumental and integrative characteristics used with permission and adapted from "Different Approaches Toward Doing the Right Thing: Mapping the Responsibility Orientations of Leaders," by N. M. Pless, T. Maak, & D. A. Waldman, *Academy of Management Perspectives, 26*, p. 58. © 2012 by the Academy of Management.

Responsible Leader Mindset No. 2: The Integrator

The five integrative leaders diverged from the Integrator mindset in that they were also motivated to compete and gain a CA. While they did not appear to experience competitiveness to the same degree as their instrumental colleagues, they were clearly applying SE and EE and, to a lesser extent, CSR to reap benefits related to better performance, improved recruitment and retention strategies, and to maintain intellectual capital.

Table 4 provides illustrative quotes from each leader that demonstrate how the leaders diverge from the integrative mindset by being both morally and competitively motivated. The remaining characteristics are aligned with the Integrator mindset.

Competitiveness: Integrative and Instrumental Experience

The research question explored how some RLs—from various sectors and with different mindsets—experienced competitiveness. We focused on CSR and engagement in the selection of study participants as these areas are central to defining the responsible leader. The two strategic areas also served to substantiate our claims of competitiveness.

CA is germane to the mindset of an instrumental leader and this is the experience of the instrumental RLs in our study. Instrumental competitiveness was demonstrated by language that referred to winning, beating the competition, and getting the biggest bang for their efforts. Verbatim accounts of such language are included in Table 3.

Integrators and Competitiveness

All integrators in our study practiced competitiveness in strategies to enhance performance and to protect and promote intellectual capital, showing some similarity with research done in the non-profit sector (Allameh, 2018; Kong & Prior, 2008). CA was evidenced when Integrators described the results achieved by implementing CSR and EE. See Table 4 for evidential quotes.

We found supporting evidence for the notion that competition is experienced by all leaders, not just instrumental ones, and those who practice CSR and engagement strategies are no exception (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011; Quairel-Lanoizelee, 2016). Here we see that these strategies can be a winning combination for employees, external stakeholders, and the society/environment at large. The following quotes demonstrate the Integrators' experience with competitiveness and their expectations for a CA from EE and CSR. See Table 4 for further examples regarding how these leaders diverged from the RL framework.

"Candidates today…specifically go looking for employers who have high engagement and who have a commitment to CSR" (BD-1).

"Turnover goes down, so your retention levels go up, and being able to attract quality talent improves over time" (BD-2).

"Today you have to make sure you really understand the needs of the individual and the community.… If you do this you will enhance client satisfaction, do well with stakeholders, and enhance trust" (Coop-2).

Table 4: *Integrator RLs and One Divergent (Instrumental) Characteristic, Competitiveness*

Leader Characteristic	RL	Divergent Comment
Leader Motivation—Shared moral values and principles	HS	**Divergence: Leader is also motivated to compete for resources and reduce costs.** In the face of increasing demands, we have to find ways that produce the most effective services possible at the most reasonable costs. One of the ways you do that is by making sure there's no waste in the system.... One of the advantages we have is that we tend to attract people who are attracted to health care because the work involves helping others.... We haven't always leveraged that depth to the degree we could.
	BD-1	**Divergence: Leader expects CA from CSR & EE.** [Engagement] brings a lot to the organization. It brings a lot to our image as a good employer.... Candidates today... specifically go looking for employers who have high engagement and who have a commitment to corporate social responsibility.... At job fairs on campuses, about a third of would-be employees or potential recruits said they were there because of the B-Corp certification.... In lots of sectors a great challenge is attracting customers to you... [Engagement] has given us the pulse of the organization.... If you have latitude and... the ability to design things, you can use that pulse like a good barometer and guide to effect change.
	BD-2	**Divergence: Competitiveness—CSR & EE used to attract talent & effect organizational change**. Candidates today are extremely sophisticated, and they are making the purchase. You can be selling something good, but they don't have to buy it because they've got many other options of employers to consider... We can see this very strong correlation between engagement, high client satisfaction, and results/organizational success... Turnover goes down, so your retention levels go up, and being able to attract quality talent improves over time.... That's why the investment of time and effort that senior leaders need to take with engagement can be so powerful.
	Coop-1	**Divergence**: Competitiveness/CA–CSR & EE to enhance performance, attract & retain talent. Engagement is vital to the success of a business, but I don't look at engagement as making people happy; happiness is found through being engaged in their work...We always have to be realistic and pragmatic about what the organization is. We are a retailer and want to retain good people.
	Coop-2	**Divergence: Competitiveness/CA; EE used to attract & retain best staff, enhance performance.** Today you have to make sure you really understand the needs of the individual and the community.... If you do this you will enhance client satisfaction, do well with stakeholders, and enhance trust.

Shared RL Mindsets—Pairing Instrumental and Integrative Characteristics

The Integrators reflected the moral motivation that is characteristic of this mindset, yet shared some of the competitive drive of the instrumental group. A similar shared experience occurred with the Instrumentalists. Their instrumental behavior was paired with several of the Integrator's characteristics: moral motivation, an empowering leadership style, and a more enhanced approach to stakeholder relations.

Moral motivation was observed as they described the importance of personal values, referring to values like respect, responsibility, integrity, humility, safety, inclusiveness/diversity, fairness, and caring. How they dealt with employees and, to some extent, external stakeholders and competitors, indicated a more transformative/empowered leadership style (Muller & Krishnan, 2011). Finally, for several Instrumentalists, their focus and approach to stakeholders, in general, was more like that of an Integrator, working directly with a wide variety of stakeholders and using different, more tailored approaches.

Instrumentalists and personal values.

The following direct quotes provide evidence of how personal values entered each instrumental leader's narrative. The VP of air transportation demonstrated moral values and principles like responsibility, humility, respect, and caring for others when she spoke about her engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

"You need to listen to stakeholders. It's really important to do that because you don't always have the best perspective and you can't work in isolation" (Tran-1).

"I believe everyone is worthy of personal respect and that you should treat employees with respect."

"Once you've risen in an organization and you are making very important decisions over other people's lives, if you try to put yourself in their place... it affects the way you treat other people you work with or that may report to you."

Forestry is a highly competitive industry that must overcome a variety of social, environmental, and economic challenges (Natural Resources Canada, 2020). This CEO respected his competitors and directed his employees to compete respectfully, "we need to do [competition] in a humble way... because I respect our competition and I like our competitors" (Forestry). This suggests that any tendency for problematic hyper-competitive behavior would likely be tempered by the values of the CEO, the company, and the individual employees.

The two senior partners in a global professional services firm represented national and international interests and worked in two different parts of the country. Their personal and organizational values were reflected in the following quotes.

"It tends to start with doing the right thing.... We should, as an organization and individual leaders, be demonstrating social responsibility and building environments... that promote sustainability, strength, and vibrancy" (PS-1).

"We're engaging in the pursuit of excellent service delivery that's tied to quality, integrity, ethics, and collaboration" (PS-2).

The VP of rail transportation had been with the company for many years and had recently worked through a downsizing period. At the time of the interview, he was adjusting to a new company president who brought a focus on engagement and social responsibility to the firm, "engagement is something that we have not always done as well as I think we should have, but that was a reflection of the priorities of the time" (Tran-2).

Organizational values were implied when he described his commitment to the company and the new safety program, "we're investing a lot in what we call safety culture…. [I]t's not enough to have the plant and investment; it's not enough to have detection equipment."

This was a very competitive company, but leadership was not prepared to win at all costs, "sometimes we lose business because our competitors are hungrier than we are or because they behave in a way that we're not going to match." His personal values were articulated when he referred to how he felt about his work, "pride in the company and pride in what we do. Teamwork and integrity is what we believe in. If I didn't believe in this, I wouldn' be doing it. I'm so proud of what we do."

Instrumentalists and empowerment
Most (4/5) of the instrumental leaders practiced a more empowering (transformational) form of leadership rather than a transactional one.

Transactional versus more empowering leaders. These two leadership styles differ in how leaders express their style and the impact typically felt by followers. A transactional leader uses objectives to get work done, exchanging monetary rewards and incentives and promotions for performance. It is a mutual exchange between the leader and the follower (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011). Transformational leaders look for motives and higher needs in followers, engaging them in a way that helps them achieve their potential (Burns, 1978). These leaders empower followers and seek to raise their awareness and increase morale (Muller & Krishnan, 2011).

The integrative leaders, and 4/5 of the instrumental leaders in the sample, demonstrated transformational or empowering characteristics. Evidence of empowering integrative leaders is provided in Table 4. Here we highlight the instrumental RLs who diverged from the RL framework by reflecting a more empowering leadership style. The following quotes provide evidence of our claim. For more examples see Table 3.

The air transportation VP reflected a transformational form of leadership when she described the foundation and how employees were involved, "we have a foundation that I chair and the employees… work with me…. We look at what is really needed…. And the special projects are what our employees want. We think that is real social responsibility."

The forestry CEO showed that he had inspired trust and working together for a common goal, "there's a high degree of trust in this organization…. Our job is to ensure that continues to get better as the company becomes bigger because if you have 8,000 people all pulling in the same direction, it's pretty powerful." His commitment to employees seemed genuine, "number one, [engagement] is the most important thing I do. Number two, it's what I enjoy the most."

The first senior partner in the professional services area demonstrated his respect for the employees when he spoke of a new building that was designed with the employees' input: "[W]e engaged many of our staff to establish how they want to work…. This space was basically designed with a significant amount of influence by them." The second senior partner in professional services was equally respectful of employees when he described the development and implementation of an improved performance management system for employees, "we're rolling out globally a [new] performance management approach. We call it RPM, reinventing performance management…. We're… reinventing… the whole approach…. Making [employees] part of decisions makes them more engaged. They have buy-in early on."

When they described their understanding of leadership it sounded empowering, not transactional, "we take leadership development and make it about three big stages: leading self first, others second, and the business third. We had typically invested in almost the complete reverse situation" (PS-1). "We want to make sure we're incenting the right type of behavior that naturally lends itself to… natural CSR, not one that has to be mandated" (PS-2).

On the other hand, the VP of rail transportation demonstrated a transactional leadership style typical of the Instrumentalist. We saw him as transactional because he led by objectives and managed for results, "we're going to be meeting our senior managers and their employees in the mechanical repair shops and talking about the business [plan].... We try to make it relevant so that people understand" (Tran-2). He seemed to be following the lead of his president but was not necessarily functioning from an internal moral imperative when he explained the CSR/sustainability strategy, "it's because of [the president], and I support him in that. We believe we need sustainable transportation and we'll do our share to make that happen."

When he described an awards ceremony to celebrate employees, his commitment to the process was eclipsed by the need for results:

> This is quite costly, and I always hope that it's money well spent because, in the end, it's a bet. Engaging employees is a bet. You're hoping that by showing respect, giving recognition, showing appreciation, and sharing some of the issues and challenges that the company faces will enable people to feel they understand what the company is about and the role they play. But it's a bet.

Instrumentalists and Enhanced Stakeholder Relations

All leaders spoke highly of the importance of EE in their organizations. Most were committed to and directly involved in EE in their respective organizations. The majority of Instrumentalists spoke of work being done with multiple, diverse groups of external stakeholders; however, it was employee engagement to which they were the most deeply committed. Personal values likely informed these strategies, yet the promise of CA (i.e., higher performance and profit, reputation management, better recruitment, and talent management) came through most clearly as the ultimate outcomes for the instrumental group. Following are quotes from the instrumental leaders to demonstrate their more enhanced focus on external stakeholder relations.

The VP of air transportation described the broad focus of the company's stakeholder engagement, "we... have suppliers and partners who are stakeholders, but I think the customers, the communities we serve, the shareholders, and the government would be the major stakeholders. Engagement is different for each stakeholder." She also described an approach that was more collaborative, "it makes a huge difference when you get [stakeholders] on board. When they understand what the issue is and how you can work together to make things better, it's huge."

The senior partners at the global professional services company were directly involved in developing and promoting strategies for better EE programs, "when I launched our revitalized leadership development program... it was intended to start to change how we really think about leadership, with the result of getting to better engagement on all fronts" (PS-1). "We're rolling out globally a performance management approach.... We're trying to get away from the periodic assessment feedback cycles" (PS-2).

They had a broad list of external stakeholders and they worked directly with many, "[Our clients] are a primary stakeholder group. Academic organizations are very important to us.... regulators.... influencers... the people who have a significant voice in our external environment" (PS-1). [T]here are some significant programs that we... engage with the community.... [M]y honest impression is that [when I reflect on] any... programs I've been involved with over the years, I often think I might be learning more, [and] gaining more than what I've given" (PS-2).

The forestry CEO and the VP of rail transportation did not demonstrate an integrative approach to external stakeholder relations. The forestry leader stated the importance of external stakeholder relations, "we've worked hard on external communications, and we've worked hard on external stakeholder engagement. That's a necessary thing to do, and in the long run, it's the right thing for us." However, he did not seem to share this characteristic with the Integrators because he was not as involved in SE as he was in EE, "well, we do it. It's

not something I like to do. It's something that is necessary to do, and we need to do it well…. I hired someone to do government relations for us." The VP of rail transportation, like the CEO of Forestry, was less keen to deal with the external stakeholders. He tended to see the external process as advocacy, not engagement: "Our engagement with external stakeholders is first and foremost coined in terms of advocacy…. We have to re-educate all the time."

Table 5: *Final List of Common Themes and Sub-themes*

Common Themes	All Leaders Thematic Prevalence	Instrumental Thematic Prevalence	Integrator Thematic Prevalence
1. Broad-based Competitiveness			
• Various degrees of competitiveness & CA	10/10		
• Various tools (including CSR, EE, SE) & processes	10/10		
2. Shared RL Mindsets			
• One or more characteristics shared with opposing mindset	10/10		
3. Shared RL Characteristics			
• **Integrative** mindset & some degree of competitiveness			5/5
• **Instrumental** mindset & one or more Integrative characteristics		5/5	
• **Moral motivation**			
▪ Outlook is rooted in moral values & principles		5/5	
• **Empowering/Transformational Leadership**			
▪ Higher performance through engagement that influences, motivates, inspires, & stimulates employees, stakeholders[1]		4/5	
• **Stakeholder Relations**			
▪ Focus on all legitimate stakeholders		3/5	
▪ More balanced approach to SE/EE based on morals & principles, more collaboration		3/5	

[1] Brown and Moshavi, 2005; Mulla and Krishnan, 2011

Discussion

The analysis led to several noteworthy findings. There were two areas in which the RLs were different from the current standard in the literature for integrative and instrumental mindsets: (a) Integrators who represented the public and NFP sectors demonstrated competitiveness and appeared to pursue a CA in key management strategies; and (b) Instrumentalists who were private sector representatives displayed moral

values and other integrative characteristics that seemed to positively influence their competitiveness behavior. Figure 1 shows how the literature standard and our findings compare.

The research indicates all leaders encounter competition; however, the Integrator, as described in the current RL literature, is not associated with competitiveness (Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless et al., 2012). Here we have examples of senior leaders who actively pursued the CA inherent in CSR and engagement strategies. The Integrators clearly articulated their personal commitment to social responsibility and engagement yet were actively monitoring and measuring the organizational benefits such as improved reputation, increased customer satisfaction, and enhanced levels of recruitment and retention. A clear focus on the returns suggested some instrumentalism even though they maintained what was primarily an integrative mindset.

While aggressive forms of competitiveness can encourage leaders to act irresponsibly, competitiveness can be responsible if the individual leader is guided by a higher ethical standard (Javidan et al., 2016; Lestrange & Tolstikov-Mast, 2013; Mudrack et al., 2012). Even with the intense levels of competition typical of the private sector, the Instrumentalists in this study appeared to keep their competitiveness in check. We attributed this to the characteristics they shared with the Integrators, particularly a moral motivation.

We understood the Instrumentalists as being both financially and morally motivated and capable of finding a balance between the two. Their morality was expressed by the personal values they espoused and the type of leadership and stakeholder relations they practiced. Personal values are motivational sources of human behavior that underpin the actions of individuals and groups (Brandt, 2016; Lichtenstein & Aitken, 2015; Waldman et al., 2006). The significance of ethical and moral values and their potential role in curbing more extreme forms of competitiveness and combating corruption has been noted by various researchers (Darling & Cunningham, 2016, Lestrange & Tolstikov-Mast, 2013; Ryckman et al., 1997).

Personal values figured prominently with the leaders in this study. Both groups described similar values: respect, integrity, humility, trustworthiness, empathy, authenticity, diversity, and caring. These values are very similar to those noted by Ryckman (1997) as being associated with a competitive leader whose activities do not culminate in irresponsibility and corruption.

Figure 1: *Nuanced RLs—Ethical and Effective Leaders*

| Characteristic | The Literature | | The Study | |
	Integrative RL	Instrumental RL	Nuanced Integrative RL	Nuanced Instrumental RL
Leader's Motivation	Moral foundation—personal values & principles	Economic performance, profit maximizing, CA	Moral values *and* CA, organizational performance	Moral values *and* economic performance, profit maximizing, CA
Study Findings	Ethical Leadership	Effective Leadership	**Both leaders demonstrate ethical *and* effective Leadership**	

Research Contributions and Limitations

Our findings support scholarly work that endorses an integrative–instrumental leader who is both effective and ethical (Waldman & Siegel, 2008; Waldman et al., 2020). They add nuance to the developing

understanding of RLs, providing insight into how they can balance competitiveness with responsibility. The information may be useful to academics and practitioners who seek to add to the approaches and tools organizations use to select leaders and develop leadership competencies.

The personal lived experiences of senior leaders and competitiveness may add nuance to the developing framework of responsible leaders. Hyper-competitiveness has caused scandals and long-term damage in organizations, which reduces shareholder wealth in the long term (Chin et al., 2013; Maciariello, 2010; Omar et al., 2017). We suggest that competitiveness is an area rich for further research and monitoring. There may be value in developing leadership values, assessment scales, and improving measures to assess leadership performance in this area.

We also recognize the limitations of the research. Phenomenological research focuses on meanings and experience, not measurements or explanations (Moustakas, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2017). As a qualitative study, our findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. What we have provided is a more fine-grained description of RLs who function effectively and ethically in various corporate environments.

The context of the corporate environments within which the 10 cases occur may have contributed to the nuanced mindsets of the RLs in this study. All the leaders in the sample represented a Top 100 employer in Canada in 2016 and were hailed as having provided exceptional workplaces for employees (Jermyn, 2014). Such environments may attract and/or cultivate leaders who have a more integrative sensibility, highlighting relationship building and human well-being (Augusto & Mário, 2016). In a different corporate environment, an instrumental-type RL may not espouse the values witnessed in this study.

Conclusion

This study explored how the two main types of RL, the Integrative and the Instrumental, experienced competitiveness. These leaders demonstrated a more nuanced version of the two mindsets, however. First, we saw that all the RLs experienced competition and sought a CA as part of their CSR and engagement strategies. Second, both groups possessed moral value systems. The presence of moral values within both mindsets was especially meaningful for the instrumental leaders' experience with competition. Their competitiveness was more intense yet appeared to be guided by personal values that favored responsible behavior over irresponsible actions.

Hyper-competitiveness, with its tendency for questionable ethics, has led to countless corporate scandals and even criminal behavior. On the other hand, values-based leaders are more inclined to practice responsible competitiveness, counter corruption, and develop a culture that is positive and responsible. Further, a leader with integrity garners trust from stakeholders and builds sustainable relationships, while a lack of integrity destroys people.

Scholars and thought leaders have called for more effective global leadership. The question is whether we believe our corporate leaders should be as skilled at ethical choices as they are at finances and strategy. The leaders in this study seemed to perform both effectively and ethically because they incorporated relevant characteristics from each RL orientation, combining integrative morality and strategy-based instrumentalism to perform successfully in their organizations.

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Appendix A

Table A-1: *About the Leaders in the Canadian Sample*

Leader Position	Leader Characteristics
VP, Air Transportation	She has been with the company for more than 20 years and has been through dramatic changes and challenges, including strikes and significant losses.
VP, Rail Transportation	An economist who has been with the company for more than 25 years and has served in multiple senior positions.
CEO, Forestry	He has been with the company for a large part of his career, earlier as a CA and more recently as the CEO.
Senior Partner, Professional Services-1	A senior partner with a multinational company who worked both internationally and locally with the company.
Senior Partner, Professional Services-2	A senior partner with a multinational company. He has worked in various capacities with the firm.
VP, Health Services	Vice President within health services and gas served in the public service for more than 20 years.
VP, HR, Business Development	Vice President of Human Resources for a business development organisation. She has worked across the world in predominantly private sector companies.
Senior Director, Business Development	Senior Director of CSR for a business development organisation.
CEO, Coop, Recreational retail	CEO of a national cooperative specialising in recreation and sports.
VP, Coop, Financial Services	Vice President of Sustainability and Ethics. She has been with the coop for most of her career.

Table A-2: *Canadian Leader Sample by Sector*

Sector	Private (Pri)	Public (Pub)	Not-for-profit (NFP)
	Transport-Air (Tran-1)	Health Services (HS)	Retail Coop (Coop-1)
	Transport-Rail (Tran-2)	Bus-Dev-CSR (BD-1)	Fin Services Coop (Coop-2)
	Forestry (Forestry)	Bus-Dev-HR (BD-2)	
	Professional Services-1 (PS-1)		
	Professional Services-2 (PS-2)		

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Stakeholder Engagement—perceptions, experience

1. Engagement is taken seriously by (your organisation) based on the success you have had with the Top 100 Employer listing:

• What is your understanding of engagement? [Definition/meaning of engagement, experience]

• How important is engagement to you as a senior leader?

2. Employee engagement (EE) can be challenging, especially with a large company.

• How does (your organisation) engage employees? [Types of activities, policies, other experience]

• How involved are they in decisions? [Types of input, other experience]

• What, if anything, does EE achieve for the company? [performance, competitiveness, hiring, retaining, etc.]

3. External stakeholders come in many forms and with diverse needs. How do you decide who your key stakeholders are?

• What does external stakeholder engagement (SE) look like at (your organisation)? [Examples-committees, collaborations]

• How involved are stakeholders in the decisions of the organisation?

• What, if anything, does external SE achieve for the organisation? [Benefits-legitimacy, trust, competitiveness, etc.]

Social Responsibility/Sustainability—perceptions, experience

4. (Your organisation) contributes to the community (i.e., social responsibility) and produces regular sustainability reports. Why is social responsibility/sustainability important to (you)? To (your organisation)? [Benefits/costs, personal commitment, competitive advantage, increased profits, reputation, etc.]

• How effective are your strategies? [Examples should indicate effectiveness – performance, profits, culture, etc.]

• How involved are stakeholders in these strategies? [community input, committees, collaborations]

• What suggestions would you have for other business leaders who want to improve engagement and CSR/Sustainability strategies in their organisations? [leadership, policies, practices, etc.]

Trust—Perceptions, Experience

5. Levels of public trust in business, government, and other institutions have been low for a number of years. How important is trust to (you)? To (your organisation)? [meaning of trust; examples of trust; experiences with loss of trust]

• How important is trust to (you)? To (your organisation)? [meaning of trust; examples of trust; experiences with loss of trust]

• Do you have any suggestions for others who want to increase trust in their organisations?

Values—individual, organisational; role, impact

6.   Senior leaders make the decisions that drive organisational processes and strategies. We know that personal values affect behaviour, but there is little information about the influence of personal values on leaders' decisions.

•   How do you think personal values enter into your decisions? [examples, experiences, expectations, stories]

•   What values would you say are important for leaders to be successful in today's global marketplace?