



Leader Effectiveness and Culture: The GLOBE Study

In a Nutshell

GLOBE was initiated to investigate one fundamental question: How is culture related to societal, organizational, and leader effectiveness?

- The research project measured culture in different segments (country, industry, and organization) exploring both current practices and values. Its results are based on data from about 17,300 middle managers from 951 organizations in the food processing, financial services, and telecommunications services industries in 58 countries.
- GLOBE also measured culturally different ideas of the characteristics of outstanding leaders, thereby providing the largest information base for cross-cultural leadership ever.
- Its results are used to compare cultures in terms of their values and practices, and in terms of the leadership style, that are endorsed in different cultures.
- GLOBE findings offer a range of practical advice for cross-cultural business and leadership, e.g. GLOBE found that some aspects of leadership are culturally dependent, while charismatic and team-oriented leadership are universally desirable styles.

Background

The "Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness" (GLOBE) Research Program was conceived in 1991 by Robert J. House (1932-2011) of the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania. In 2004, its first comprehensive volume on *"Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies"*¹ was published.

A second major volume, *"Culture and Leadership across the World: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies"* became available in early 2007. It complements the findings from the first volume with in-country leadership literature analyses, interview data, focus group discussions, and formal analyses of printed media to provide in-depth descriptions of leadership theory and leader behavior in those 25 cultures.

This summary contains:

- GLOBE's finding about dimensions of cultural values and how cultures are similar or dissimilar from each other in terms of their values
- GLOBE's findings of how people's ideas of good leadership vary across cultures
- Country scores on GLOBE's six leadership styles GLOBE

¹ GLOBE speaks of societies rather than countries, as their data showed that some countries are fractioned into rather different cultural groups. In Canada and Switzerland, GLOBE distinguishes between French- and English-, or French- and German-speakers, respectively; in South Africa, it differentiates White and Black culture, and in Germany, it differentiates West and East Germany (formerly known as GDR.)

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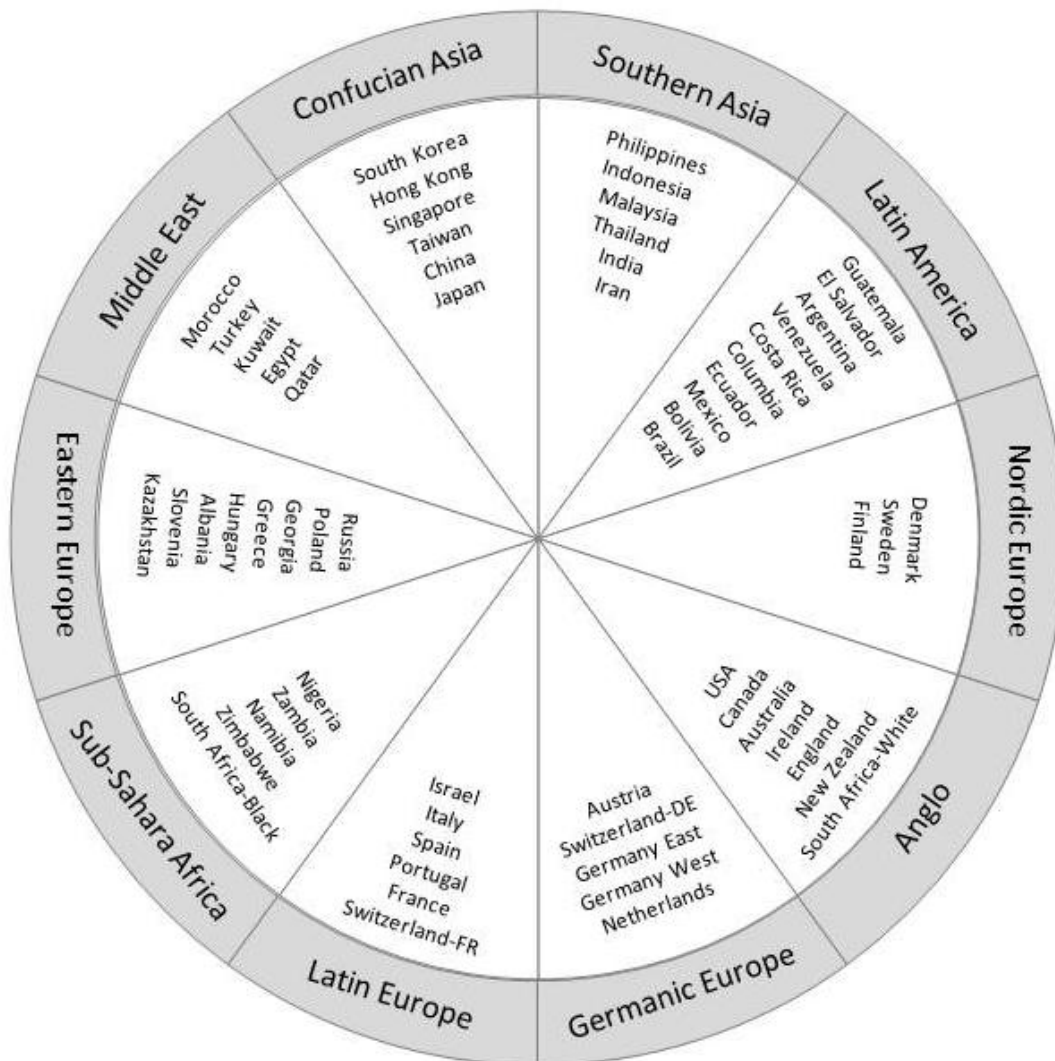
Cultural Dimensions and Culture Clusters

GLOBE's first major achievement is a comprehensive description of how cultures are different or similar from one another. GLOBE established nine cultural dimensions that make it possible to capture the similarities and/or differences in norms, values, beliefs—and practices—among societies. They build on findings by Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), Smith (1995), Inglehart (1997), and others. They are:

Power Distance	The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally
Uncertainty Avoidance	The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.
Humane Orientation	The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others.
Collectivism I (Institutional)	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.
Collectivism II (In-Group)	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.
Assertiveness	The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others.
Gender Egalitarianism	The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality.
Future Orientation	The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future.
Performance Orientation	The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

This allowed GLOBE (see Figure 1) to place 60 of the 62 societies into culture clusters, similar to those by other previous studies (Ronen and Shenkar, 1985; Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz 1999). Cultural *similarity* is greatest among societies that constitute a cluster; cultural *difference* increases the farther clusters are apart. For example, the Nordic cluster is most dissimilar from the Eastern European cluster.

Culture Clusters in the GLOBE Study



Adapted from House et al (2004).

Cultural Ideas of Outstanding Leaders

GLOBE's other major finding is how different cultures conceptualize outstanding leaders. GLOBE is based on the premise that leader effectiveness is contextual, that is, it is embedded in the societal and organizational norms, values, and beliefs of the people being led. In other words, for a leader to be effective, the time-tested adage applies: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

Leadership Categorization Theory (Lord & Maher, 1991) states that everyone has an implicit idea of what leaders look, act, and behave like. These ideas are rooted in people's early experiences with leaders and are shaped by one's culture and upbringing. They then become expectations

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about what good leadership is, and these expectations serve as a personal benchmark for people to determine if a leader is effective, good, and worth following – or not. GLOBE was the first study to investigate the contents of people’s expectations of leaders on such a broad scale, and also link them with cultural values and practices.

GLOBE examined 112 leader characteristics, such as; modest, decisive, autonomous and trustworthy, based on the following definition of leadership:-an outstanding leader is a person in an organization or industry who is "*exceptionally skilled at motivating, influencing, or enabling you, others, or groups to contribute to the success of the organization or task.*" The first round of analysis generated 21 leadership scales, which in turn folded into six superordinate leader styles. Based on a 7-point scale and the "world mean" of each scale (i.e., the average of 61 country means), the 21 leadership scales ranked from the "most *universally* desirable" to "the least *universally* desirable" as follows:

Integrity (6.07)	Humane (4.78)
Inspirational (6.07)	Status conscious (4.34)
Visionary (6.02)	Conflict inducer (3.97)
Performance-oriented (6.02)	Procedural (3.87)
Team-integrator (5.88)	Autonomous (3.85)
Decisive (5.80)	Face saver (2.92)
Administratively competent (5.76)	Non-participative (2.66)
Diplomatic (5.49)	Autocratic (2.65)
Collaborative team orientation (5.46)	Self-centered (2.17)
Self-sacrificial (5.0)	Malevolent (1.80).
Modesty (4.98)	

These 21 leadership scales were statistically and conceptually reduced to six styles. The first two styles, charismatic/value based and team-oriented style, were seen as contributing to outstanding leadership in all cultures. However, for the other four styles, cultural variation was larger: In some cultures, they were seen as good and effective styles, while some other cultures saw them as hindering, for outstanding leadership. Below, the six styles are listed in the order of least cultural variation to most cultural variation. We also indicate the range of ratings each style received in the different countries.

1. The charismatic/value based style (4.5 – 6.5) stresses high standards, decisiveness, and innovation; seeks to inspire people around a vision; creates a passion among them to perform; and does so by firmly holding on to core values. This includes the facets of visionary, inspirational, self-sacrificial, integrity, decisive, and performance-oriented.
2. The team-oriented style (4.7 – 6.2) instills pride, loyalty, and collaboration among organizational members; and highly values team cohesiveness and a common purpose or goals. This style includes the facets of collaborative team orientation, team integrator, diplomatic, (reverse scored) malevolent, and administratively competent.
3. The participative style (4.5 – 6.1) encourages input from others in decision-making and implementation; and emphasizes delegation and equality. This style includes the facets of (reverse scored) autocratic and (reverse scored) non-participative.

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4. The *humane style* (3.8 – 5.6) stresses compassion and generosity; and it is patient, supportive, and concerned with the well-being of others. This style includes the facets of modesty and humane-oriented.
5. The *self-protective* (2.5 – 4.6) style emphasizes procedural, status-conscious, and 'face-saving' behaviors; and focuses on the safety and security of the individual and the group. This style includes the facets of self-centered, status-conscious, conflict inducer, face saver, and procedural.
6. The *autonomous style* (2.3 – 4.7) includes only one facet concerned with autonomy. It is characterized by an independent, individualistic, and self-centric approach to leadership.

Table 1 below gives scores for the six leader styles. Note that scores between 1 and 3.5 indicate that a style is seen as inhibiting outstanding leadership, while scores from 4.5 to 7 indicate that a style is seen as contributing to outstanding leadership. Scores between 3.5 and 4.5 indicate that a style doesn't much matter for outstanding leadership.

Country	Charismatic	Team-Oriented	Self-Protective	Participative	Humane-Oriented	Autonomous
Albania	5.70	5.87	4.55	4.51	5.15	3.81
Argentina	5.98	5.99	3.46	5.89	4.70	4.55
Australia	6.09	5.81	3.05	5.71	5.09	3.95
Austria	6.03	5.74	3.07	6.00	4.93	4.47
Bolivia	6.01	6.10	3.83	5.30	4.56	3.92
Brazil	6.01	6.17	3.50	6.06	4.84	2.27
Canada (English-speaking)	6.16	5.84	2.96	6.09	5.20	3.65
China	5.57	5.57	3.80	5.05	5.18	4.07
Colombia	6.04	6.07	3.37	5.51	5.05	3.34
Costa Rica	5.95	5.81	3.55	5.54	4.99	3.46
Denmark	6.01	5.70	2.82	5.80	4.23	3.79
Ecuador	6.46	6.21	3.63	5.51	5.13	3.53
Egypt	5.57	5.55	4.21	4.69	5.14	4.49
El Salvador	6.08	5.95	3.44	5.40	4.69	3.47
England	6.01	5.71	3.04	5.57	4.90	3.92
Finland	5.94	5.86	2.55	5.91	4.30	4.08
Georgia	5.65	5.86	3.90	4.89	5.61	4.57
Germany (West)	5.84	5.49	2.97	5.88	4.44	4.30

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Country	Charismatic	Team-Oriented	Self-Protective	Participative	Humane-Oriented	Autonomous
Germany (East)	5.87	5.51	3.33	5.70	4.60	4.35
Greece	6.02	6.12	3.49	5.81	5.16	3.98
Guatemala	6.00	5.94	3.77	5.45	5.00	3.38
Hong Kong	5.67	5.58	3.68	4.87	4.89	4.38
Hungary	5.91	5.91	3.24	5.23	4.73	3.23
India	5.85	5.72	3.78	4.99	5.26	3.85
Indonesia	6.15	5.92	4.13	4.61	5.43	4.19
Ireland	6.08	5.82	3.01	5.64	5.06	3.95
Israel	6.23	5.91	3.64	4.96	4.68	4.26
Italy	5.99	5.87	3.26	5.47	4.37	3.62
Japan	5.49	5.56	3.61	5.08	4.68	3.67
Kazakhstan	5.54	5.73	3.36	5.10	4.26	4.58
Kuwait	5.90	5.90	4.02	5.03	5.21	3.39
Malaysia	5.89	5.80	3.50	5.12	5.24	4.03
Mexico	5.66	5.75	3.86	4.64	4.71	3.86
Morocco	4.81	5.15	3.26	5.32	4.10	3.34
Namibia	5.99	5.81	3.36	5.48	5.10	3.77
Netherlands	5.98	5.75	2.87	5.75	4.81	3.53
New Zealand	5.87	5.44	3.19	5.50	4.78	3.77
Nigeria	5.77	5.65	3.90	5.19	5.48	3.62
Philippines	6.33	6.06	3.33	5.40	5.53	3.75
Poland	5.67	5.98	3.53	5.05	4.56	4.34
Portugal	5.75	5.92	3.11	5.48	4.62	3.19
Qatar	4.51	4.75	3.92	4.76	4.66	3.38
Russia	5.66	5.63	3.69	4.67	4.08	4.63
Singapore	5.95	5.77	3.32	5.30	5.24	3.87
Slovenia	5.69	5.91	3.61	5.42	4.44	4.28
South Africa (Black sample)	5.16	5.23	3.63	5.05	4.79	3.94
South Africa (White sample)	5.99	5.80	3.20	5.62	5.33	3.74
South Korea	5.53	5.53	3.68	4.93	4.87	4.21

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Country	Charismatic	Team-Oriented	Self-Protective	Participative	Humane-Oriented	Autonomous
Spain	5.90	5.93	3.39	5.11	4.66	3.54
Sweden	5.84	5.75	2.82	5.54	4.73	3.97
Switzerland (German)	5.93	5.61	2.93	5.94	4.76	4.13
Taiwan	5.58	5.69	4.28	4.73	5.35	4.01
Thailand	5.78	5.76	3.91	5.30	5.09	4.28
Turkey	5.96	6.01	3.58	5.09	4.90	3.83
USA	6.12	5.80	3.16	5.93	5.21	3.75
Venezuela	5.72	5.62	3.82	4.89	4.85	3.39
Zambia	5.92	5.86	3.67	5.29	5.26	3.43
Zimbabwe	6.11	5.97	3.21	5.58	5.18	3.37

Unfortunately, data for the Czech Republic, France, Iran, and Switzerland (French) were not available for compiling this table.

Source: Adapted from Den Hartog et al., 1999

The differences in cultural acceptance of the different leader styles also manifest in concrete behaviors. A more detailed analysis identified that leader characteristics such as ambitious, enthusiastic, formal, logical, or risk taker are valued very differently around the world. For example, on GLOBE's 7-point scale to measure a society's view of these leader traits, the culture means for "risk taker" range from 2 to 6. This is in line with the extent to which countries tolerate uncertainty, as measured by GLOBE's uncertainty avoidance dimension, as described above, and it shows how cultural values and people's ideas of good leadership are one integrated system. On the other hand, there are also some leader characteristics that are universally endorsed across all the societies in the GLOBE study: People want their leaders to be trustworthy, just, honest, decisive, and so forth. However, how these traits are expressed and enacted may still be noticeably different from society to society. For example, for a leader to be described as decisive in the U.S., he or she is expected to make quick and approximate decisions. In contrast, in France or Germany, being decisive tends to mean a more deliberate and precise approach to decision-making. The same caution applies to the universally undesirable leader traits.

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GLOBE's Significance

Harry Triandis, a key thought leader in cross-cultural research, calls the GLOBE research "the Manhattan Project of the study of the relationship of culture to conceptions of leadership" (2004). There are a number of reasons for this assessment.

GLOBE is the most comprehensive study to date that *empirically* researched the relationship between culture and leader behavior in so many societies, with so many different quantitative and qualitative measures and methods, and in so many different organizations. It did so by engaging more than 170 collaborators from around the world who brought to the project an in-depth understanding of their own culture and its notion and practice of leadership.

Perhaps most importantly, and in the words of its principal investigator, Robert J. House, "[M]y final conclusion is that we are in a position to make a major contribution to the organizational behavior and leadership literature. To date more than 90% of the organizational behavior literature reflects U.S.-based research and theory. Hopefully GLOBE will be able to liberate organizational behavior from the U.S. hegemony" (2004).

~ Michael H. Hoppe & Regina Eckert

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