

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Project

The Wharton Business School of the University of Pennsylvania was home to the **GLOBE** Research Project, which investigated business leadership worldwide. This project comprised 170 researchers in 62 societies who worked more than 11 years. The research team's stated objective was...

To determine the extent to which the practices and values of business leadership are universal (i.e., are similar globally), and the extent to which they are specific to just a few societies.

The team attained this objective. GLOBE's findings present to us all a breakthrough in our ability to think about business leadership in a way that is accurate, action-oriented, and *genuinely global*.

Any organization that devotes resources to developing global leaders now has within its grasp the data and the guideposts to accomplish this critical goal. It is now possible *with unprecedented confidence* to assess, develop, and measure top leadership talent in a way that captures the full meaning of "global."

The first report from the GLOBE team is an 818-page book published by Sage (R.J. House et al., 2004). At Grovewell.com are three articles (total 8,500 words) providing those responsible for leadership development with an overview and interpretation of the findings reported in that book.

The first question addressed by the team was which measurement standards ("independent variables") to use to be precise about the similarities and differences among various societal and organizational cultures. Their efforts yielded nine "cultural dimensions" that serve as their standard of measurement.

Performance Orientation	Uncertainty Avoidance	Humane Orientation
Institutional Collectivism	In-Group Collectivism	Assertiveness
Gender Egalitarianism	Future Orientation	Power Distance

The ultimate question addressed by the team concerned the extent to which the values and practices associated with leadership are either universal (worldwide) or specific to just a few societies. In the process of finding answers, the team explored many leadership "attributes," human qualities that have a positive or negative impact on effective business leadership. The team discovered the following:

UNIVERSAL POSITIVES: 22 attributes were universally regarded as *contributing positively* to outstanding business leadership, including "trustworthy," "motive arouser," and "excellence oriented."

UNIVERSAL NEGATIVES: 8 attributes were universally regarded as *inhibiting* (i.e., contributing negatively to) outstanding business leadership, including "irritable" and "dictatorial."

CULTURALLY CONTINGENT: Most revealing is the fact that 35 attributes were viewed in some societies as *contributing to* good leadership, and in other societies as *inhibiting* good leadership. This list includes surprises such as "cunning," "evasive," "class conscious" – and even "sensitive"!

A key finding of the research was a set of “culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions.” These dimensions (continua) are the summary indicators of the characteristics, skills, and abilities perceived around the world as *contributing to*, or as *inhibiting*, outstanding business leadership:

Charismatic / Value-Based	Team Oriented	Self-Protective
Participative	Humane Oriented	Autonomous

In one of their most significant statements about global business leadership, the GLOBE team wrote:

When individuals think about effective leader behaviors, they are more influenced by the value they place on the desired future than their perception of current realities. Our results, therefore, suggest that *leaders are seen as the society’s instruments for change. They are seen as the embodiment of the ideal state of affairs* [R.J. House et al., 2004, pp. 275-6, italics added].

Specific Findings re “Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory Dimensions” (CLTs)

The “culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions,” or CLTs, are the key findings of the GLOBE project. They are similar to what laypersons refer to as “leadership styles.” They identify the abilities, characteristics, and skills perceived around the world as *contributing to*, or as *inhibiting*, leadership effectiveness.

CHARISMATIC / VALUE-BASED: This CLT captures a leader’s ability to inspire, to motivate, and to expect high performance outcomes on the basis of his/her firmly held core values. Statistically this CLT was associated with “self-sacrifice,” “integrity,” “decisive,” and “performance oriented.” (Charisma means to inspire devotion to group goals via a leader's aura, dynamism, and persuasiveness.)

One of GLOBE’s most significant findings was that *all cultures* saw this dimension as very substantially contributing to outstanding leadership. Anglo cultures most strongly associated it with outstanding leadership. Middle Eastern cultures least associated it with outstanding leadership – yet their mean was well above the mid-point.

TEAM ORIENTED: This CLT emerged in second place in capturing what many business people worldwide commonly associate with outstanding leadership. It is described as emphasizing effective team-building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members.

Again, *all cultures* saw “team orientation” as contributing substantially to outstanding leadership. Latin American cultures most positively associated it with outstanding leadership. Middle Eastern cultures least associated it with outstanding leadership, but their mean was above the mid-point.

PARTICIPATIVE: This CLT reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions. Statistically it was *the opposite* of “autocratic” and “non-participative.”

Germanic Europe most positively associated “participative” with outstanding leadership. The least positive association was found in the Middle East, where its association was modestly above the mid-point.

It is significant that the United States was the only society in which “participative” had a positive influence on employee performance.

HUMANE ORIENTED: This CLT reflects supportive and considerate leadership, but also includes compassion and generosity. Statistically it was positively associated “modesty.”

Around the world, this CLT was viewed as *only moderately* contributing to outstanding leadership. Southern Asia gave it the highest of the moderate scores; Nordic Europe gave it a score just at the mid-point.

SELF-PROTECTIVE: This CLT, newly revealed by the GLOBE research, is difficult to define. The researchers write: “From a Western perspective, this dimension focuses on ensuring the safety and security of the individual or group.” It also can reflect “being status- and class-conscious, evasive, ritualistic, procedural, normative, secretive, indirect, self-centered, and asocial.” Statistically, this CLT was associated with “self-centered,” “status conscious,” “conflict-inducer,” “face-saver,” and “procedural.”

Around the world, this CLT was viewed as not contributing to outstanding leadership. The highest score, by South Asian cultures, was just below the mid-point; Nordic Europe associated it with lack of leadership.

AUTONOMOUS: Also a new leadership dimension that’s difficult to understand, this CLT is discussed by the researchers thus: “It refers to independent and individualistic leadership.”

Worldwide, this CLT was viewed as not contributing to outstanding leadership. Eastern Europe ranked it highest, barely above the mid-point. Latin America ranked it lowest, not far below the mid-point.

Click here <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/strategic-leadership-across-cultures/book235707> to be taken to the publisher’s page describing the full 818-page GLOBE research report.

– Cornelius Grove, Ed.D., managing partner