Introduction to the GLOBE Research Project on Leadership Worldwide

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GLOBE is the acronym for "Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness," the name of a cross-cultural research effort that exceeds all others (including Geert Hofstede's landmark 1980 study) in scope, depth, duration, and sophistication. The first book-length report of the GLOBE Research Program was recently published by Sage, and it is this book that GROVEWELL is overviewing here. It is Robert J. House et al., *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, Sage Publications, 2004.

The GLOBE Project's Definition of Leadership

The GLOBE researchers studied leadership worldwide; they defined leadership as

> "...the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members" [p. 15].

Introductory Overview of the GLOBE Research Effort

Conceived in 1991 by Robert J. House of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and led by Professor House, the GLOBE Project directly involved 170 "country co-investigators" based in 62 of the world's cultures as well as a 14-member group of coordinators and research associates. This international team collected data from 17,300 middle managers in 951 organizations (for details about the research sample, see Note 1). They used qualitative methods to assist their development of quantitative instruments. In order to accurately and sensitively record the nuances of local meanings, all instruments were developed in consultation with members of each target culture, and instrument translation was done with enormous care. Specific attention also was paid to the effect of "response bias" on data-gathering and -analysis (Note 2). Relevant previous literature was exhaustively reviewed and, as appropriate, applied (making the book being overviewed here a veritable bibiographic goldmine). Ultimately, 27 research hypotheses were tested.

GLOBE is a research project of at least three phases. The first two are dealt with in the recently published book. Phase 1 involved the development of research instruments. Phase 2 assessed nine fundamental attributes, or cultural dimensions, of both societal and organizational cultures, and explored how these impact leadership in 62 societal cultures. Phase 3, currently underway, is primarily studying the effectiveness of specific leader behaviors (including that of CEOs) on subordinates' attitudes and performance.

GLOBE's 62 Societal Cultures and 10 Societal Clusters

The 62 "societal cultures" assessed by GLOBE range from Albania to Zimbabwe. They comprise all the business-oriented societies you might hope to find with the exceptions of Norway and Saudi Arabia, plus several you might not expect such as El Salvador, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Namibia, Qatar, Slovenia, and Zambia.

These societal cultures are not referred to as "nations" because the researchers were admirably thinking as social anthropologists instead of political scientists. Among the 62 are included "Canada (English-speaking)," "Germany (Former East)," "Germany (Former West)," "South Africa (Black sample)," "South Africa (White sample)," and finally both "Switzerland (French-speaking)" and "Switzerland" [said on p. 725 to be German-speaking].

To aid in the interpretation of findings, the researchers grouped the 62 societies into 10 "societal clusters" or simply "clusters." The clustering decisions were finalized before the research findings were collected, not as a result of the findings. One of the more interesting chapters in the book (Chapter 10) concerns the reasons why each societal culture was included in this or that cluster. The ten societal clusters, and the number of societies within each cluster, are as follows. (Note 3)

The Ten "Societal Clusters" and Number of Societies in Each

Anglo - 7	Latin Europe - 6
Nordic Europe - 3	Germanic Europe - 5
Eastern Europe - 8	Latin America - 10
Sub-Saharan Africa - 5	Middle East - 5
Southern Asia - 6	Confucian Asia - 6

There are almost no surprises in terms of which societies appear within each cluster. I say "almost" because there is one: Israel is in the "Latin Europe" cluster. About this decision, the authors explain that, long ago, some Jews in Southern Europe converted to Catholicism due to religious persecution while others migrated to Eastern Europe. Members of the latter group were largely responsible for founding Israel, and they "retained their social and business ties with the Latin European region" [p. 184].

GLOBE's Standards for Measurement: Nine "Cultural Dimensions"

The first major question addressed by the GLOBE researchers was which measurement standards to use so that they could be precise about the similarities and differences among various societal and organizational cultures. After a thoroughgoing literature review as well as two pilot studies, the team identified nine "cultural dimensions" that would serve as their units of measurement, or (in research language) "independent variables."

Cultural dimensions have been an often-used tool of intercultural researchers for decades; readers familiar with them will find among the GLOBE nine some that are well-known and some that have been carefully redefined or even newly developed. Each of these nine units of measurement receives a great deal of attention in the book, and are discussed at length in my third interpretative article). Here I will list them by name only:

The Nine Units of Measurement or "Cultural Dimensions"

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

For readers who are not familiar with cultural dimensions, I will explain that each of these is conceptualized and depicted as a *continuum* between two extreme poles. For example, people in a society or an organization might be extremely non-assertive, extremely assertive, or anywhere in between. As visually portrayed in my third article, the GLOBE researchers used a 7-step rating scale. Continuing with assertiveness as our example, "1" is *greatly non-assertive*, "4" is *neither non-assertive nor assertive*, and "7" is *greatly assertive*. If you are new to cultural dimensions, it is essential that you avoid thinking of them, implicitly or explicitly, as dichotomies.

Another fact about GLOBE's nine cultural dimensions is that each one was conceptualized in two ways: *practices* or "as is," and *values* or "should be." Continuing with the example above, people in a society or an organization could rate themselves in actual practice as "6" or somewhat assertive, but simultaneously could rate themselves as valuing, or preferring, a state of affairs that is "3" or slightly non-assertive. Some of GLOBE's most fascinating findings come to light because the team consistently sought to compare respondents' *values* with their *practices*.

To summarize, within each of the nine cultural dimensions, the GLOBE researchers probed respondents about both *practices* and *values*, and did so within both the larger *society* and the specific *organization*:

Investigated for each of the nine cultural dimensions:	Wider Society	Organization
PRACTICES (as is)	✓	✓
VALUES (should be)	✓	✓

A Major Research Question about Leadership

One of the most important questions addressed by the GLOBE research team concerned the extent to which the practices and values associated with leadership are universal (i.e., are similar worldwide), and the extent to which they are specific to just a few societies. To probe this issue, the team began with a large number of possible leader "attributes." As a result of their findings from the 17,300 respondents worldwide regarding all these attributes, the team was able to identify 21 "primary leadership dimensions" or "first order factors" that in all societal cultures are viewed as, to some extent, contributing to a leader's effectiveness or lack of effectiveness. The 21 primary leadership dimensions are:

The Primary Leadership Dimensions (also called First Order Factors)

Administratively Competent	Decisive	Non-participative
Autocratic	Diplomatic	Performance oriented
Autonomous	Face saver	Procedural
Charismatic / Visionary	Humane orientation	Self-centered
Charismatic / Inspirational	Integrity	Status consciousness
Charismatic / Self-sacrificial	Malevolent	Team collaborative
Conflict inducer	Modesty	Team integrator

Each of the 21 primary leadership dimensions comprises two to four of the original "attributes." For example, the first of the 21, Administratively Competent, comprises four attributes: orderly, administratively skilled, organized, and good administrator. The last of the 21, Team Integrator, likewise comprises four attributes: communicative, team builder, informed, and integrator. The full list of 21 dimesions, each with its set of attributes, is found in the book in Table 8.4 [p. 131].

Returning for a moment to the level of the numerous component "attributes," three major research questions were these (the wording below is mine):

1. Are one or more attributes universally viewed as *contributing to* outstanding leadership? If "yes," they are termed "universal positive leader attributes."

2. Are one or more attributes universally viewed as *inhibiting* outstanding leadership? If "yes," these are termed "universal negative leader attributes."

(For information about the meaning above of "universal," consult the final section of this article, "A Word About GLOBE's Research Design.")

3. Are one or more attributes culturally specific, viewed as contributing to outstanding leadership in some societies and as inhibiting outstanding leadership in other societies? If "yes," these are termed "culturally contingent leadership attributes."

If you would like a foretaste of GLOBE's findings, you should know that there are attributes in all three lists, and that the longest list is the culturally contingent one.

GLOBE's Six "Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory Dimensions"

A principal outcome of this huge research effort was the development of six universally shared conceptions of leadership, known most often as "culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions," also known as "global leadership dimensions" and by several other names (Note 4).

It is of critical importance to keep in mind that these six are *dimensions*, or continua, and as such are *not* statements of what is outstanding leadership. Rather, *they are about the ways in which people worldwide distinguish between leaders who are effective and ineffective*.

These six culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions are a direct outgrowth of the research within all 62 societal cultures. The six are described using the 21 "primary leadership dimensions" or "first order factors" from the table above. The six are listed below [based on Table 21.1, p. 676]:

(Table appears on following page)

The Six Global Leadership Dimensions ** means "reverse scored"

Charismatic/Value-Based	Team Oriented	Self-Protective
» Charismatic/Visionary	» Team collaborative	» Self-centered
» Charismatic/Inspirational	» Team integrative	» Status conscious
» Charismatic/Self-sacrificing	» Diplomatic	» Conflict inducer
» Integrity	» Malevolent **	» Face saver
» Decisive	» Admin. competent	» Procedural
» Performance oriented		
Participative	**Humane Oriented**	**Autonomous**
» Autocratic **	» Modesty	» Autonomous
» Non-participative **	» Humane oriented	

Much of the analysis in the book is focused on explaining how the nine cultural dimensions (e.g., "performance orientation," "assertiveness," and seven others) as *independent* variables relate to the six culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions (e.g., "charismatic / value-based," "team-oriented," and four others) as *dependent* variables across the 10 societal clusters. Constantly referenced in all analyses are the findings at the *societal* and *organizational* levels, and the findings in terms of *practices* (as-is) and *values* (should-be).

A Few Words about GLOBE's Research Design

The book includes extended, highly technical discussions of the project's research design and statistical analyses; in fact, the 140-page Part III is entitled "Research Methodology." Although I have a basic understanding of statistics and research procedures and have personally been involved with rigorously designed research, I am not qualified to pass judgment on the excellence of these admittedly critical features of the GLOBE Project. However, I would like to note two matters that may be of interest to the general reader.

CLIMATIC DETERMINISM: As mentioned above under the heading "GLOBE's 62 Societal Cultures and 10 Societal Clusters," the book includes a compelling chapter (Chapter 10, within Part III) on the clustering of the 62 societies. What I did not mention previously is that this chapter also includes an extended consideration of the extent to which *physical climate* can be a basis for the clustering of societies. As the co-authors point out, many scholars have argued that climate influences culture, a recent example being Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997). If climate does determine culture to a significant extent, then GLOBE's research team clearly

wanted climate to be a factor that they properly took into account. With respect to climate, the authors' conclusions are these: It is true that "…extremity of thermoclimate (temperature) has a particularly important influence on the societal behaviors" [p. 211]. However, "On the whole, the societies [in the GLOBE sample] showed a capacity to develop practices and values that eschew climatic determinism" [p. 215].

THE MEANING OF "UNIVERSAL": As noted above under the heading "A Major Research Question about Leadership," the research team was determined to explore whether there are cultural universals with respect to leadership. I was impressed by the very stringent requirements the team imposed upon itself in order to say that a leadership attribute is "universal" or "universally endorsed" as positive or negative [pages 677-8]:

Universal Positive: To be "universally endorsed" as *contributing to* effective leadership, an attribute had to meet both of two criteria: (a) 95% of the societal averages had to exceed a mean of 5 on a 1-to-7 scale (on which 7 is high), _and_ (b) the worldwide grand mean score for that attribute (considering all 62 cultures together) had to exceed 6 on a 1-to-7 scale.

Universal Negative: To be "universally endorsed" as *an impediment to* effective leadership, an attribute had to meet similar criteria: (a) 95% of the societal averages had to be less than a mean of 3 on a 1-to-7 scale, _and_ (b) the worldwide grand mean score for that attribute (considering all 62 cultures together) had to be less than 3 on a 1-to-7 scale.

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NOTE 1: About the research sample, the GLOBE team reports that "…sampling strategy required that data from each society met the following criteria: (a) respondents had to be middle managers, (b) multiple respondents had to be obtained from organizations, (c) two or more organizations had to be obtained from two of three types of industries (financial, food processing, and telecommunication), and (d) at least two industries had to be obtained for each society. Half of the respondents from a given organization completed one version of the GLOBE culture and leadership questionnaire. The other half completed a second version of the [same] questionnaire. By administering these questionnaires to separate samples of middle managers from the same organization or society, we minimized or even eliminated common source response bias....

"A total of 17,370 middle managers from 951 organizations in three industries completed the culture and leadership questionnaires in both Phases 1 and 2 of GLOBE. Specifically, 1,943 respondents participated in the Phase 1 pilot studies and 15,427 respondents participated in Phase 2. The number of respondents by country ranged from 27 to 1,790 with an average per country of 251 respondents.

"Approximately 74.8% of our respondents were men." [Note: This percentage is approximate due to cultural sensitivities in the collection of demographic information.] "Respondents had an average full-time work experience of 19.2 years, of which an average of 10.5 years were spent as managers. They had worked for their current organizations an average of 12.2 years.

"Phase 2 data were obtained from middle managers employed in 951 separate organizations. *Only corporations headquartered in the host cultures were included in our sample. Therefore, we deliberately excluded from our sample foreign multinational corporations.* Multinational corporations were excluded because their members would be from multiple cultures and their responses would not be indicative of [their] societal culture..." [p. 96, italics added].

NOTE 2: Response bias occurs when a group of respondents tends to use a generally positive, or generally negative, response set; or when group members tend to use only end-points (e.g., 1, 2, 6, 7) or only mid-points (e.g., 3, 4, 5) of a scale. Existing research has shown that there are societal-wide tendencies in individuals' responses to scaled questionnaire items. The research team "went to extraordinary lengths" to avoid, detect, and statistically correct for, response bias [pp. 680-1].

NOTE 3: The GLOBE research report usually refers to 62 societies. There are only 61 societies in this table, which is based on the book's Table 10.1 [p. 191]. The reason appears to be that the Czech Republic has been excluded from some measures due to "pervasive response bias" (see page 27, Note 1, in the book).

Also worth noting is that, in the book being overviewed here, there is little information about specific societal cultures. In a forthcoming book, leadership profiles from some 25 societal cultures will be presented and discussed. In Robert J. House's book, this forthcoming book is said to be "Jagdeep S. Chokkar et al., *Cultures of the World: A GLOBE Anthology*, Sage Publications, in press." However, my call to Sage Publications in September 2007 reveals that Sage has no record of this book.

NOTE 4: The various names applied to these six key dimensions are...
- » "culturally endorsed implicit theories of leadership"
- » "culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions"
- » "global leadership dimensions" and "global leader behaviors"
- » "second order factors"
- » "CLTs," an acronym for **C**ultural **L**eadership **T**heory [dimension**s**]

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