



## GLOBE: A twenty year journey into the intriguing world of culture and leadership

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### ABSTRACT

Since its inception in the early 1990s, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project has investigated the complex relationship between societal culture and organizational behavior. The focus of this paper is on leadership, specifically what we know and have learned from the GLOBE project so far. Among other findings, we demonstrate that national culture indirectly influences leadership behaviors through the leadership expectations of societies. In other words, executives tend to lead in a manner more or less consistent with the leadership prototypes endorsed within their particular culture. In turn, leaders who behave according to expectations are most effective. We also found that some leadership behaviors are universally effective such as charismatic/value-based leadership; others are much more culturally sensitive such as participative leadership. Finally, we identified truly superior (and also truly inferior) CEOs by the degree to which their behaviors exceed (or fail to meet) their society's expectations. All in all, understanding national culture gives us a heads-up as to which kinds of leadership will likely be enacted and effective in each society. We believe that the GLOBE journey has helped us understand the complex, tricky, and fascinating relationships among societal culture, organizational behavior, and leadership processes.

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This paper is a celebration of twenty years of collaborative work conducted by more than 200 researchers and it summarizes some of the milestones uncovered during this journey. Since its inception in the early 1990s, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project progressed to be a huge research effort involving more than 200 researchers from multiple academic disciplines located across all parts of the globe. With Robert House as the principal investigator along with multiple coordinating teams, and hundreds of co-country investigators, GLOBE set out to explore the fascinating and complex effects of culture on leadership and organizational effectiveness. Over the years, the scope of the project expanded beyond leadership and organizational behavior with GLOBE researchers examining such issues as how cultural drivers influence the economic competitiveness of societies and many aspects of the human condition. Please note that the latter information can be accessed by the major GLOBE book publications (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) and numerous publications by the GLOBE

co-country investigators (CCIs). This article instead focuses on our findings related to national culture and leadership, not on national culture per se.

GLOBE continues to be a thriving project with its associated non-profit foundation (i.e., GLOBE Research and Education Foundation). While this article presents findings from the earlier phases of GLOBE (i.e., what we know), our intent is to present new and not previously published results related to leadership processes and effectiveness within various cultural contexts (i.e., what we will soon know). This latest phase of GLOBE research has its focus on executive leadership when we surveyed and interviewed more than 1000 CEOs and 5000 top management team (TMT) direct reports of these CEOs. Complete information about this latest GLOBE project will be available in our forthcoming book, "Strategic Leadership: The GLOBE study of CEO Effectiveness Across Cultures" to be published in 2012.

Lastly, we also present our ideas as to what is in the future for GLOBE (i.e., what we still need to know). For the readers not intimately familiar with GLOBE, a primer of the GLOBE project appears in Appendix. Additionally, for readers who are intimately familiar with the GLOBE project, completely new and unpublished findings are presented in the section titled "Objectives and Findings for Phase 3: CEO Leadership Behavior and Effectiveness". A summary of the three GLOBE phases is presented in Table 1.

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**Table 1**  
GLOBE phases 1, 2 and 3.

Purpose	Method	Design strategy	Major results
GLOBE phases 1 and 2			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and implement multi-phase and multi-method program to examine the relationship between national culture, leadership effectiveness and societal phenomena</li> <li>• Identify leadership attributes critical for outstanding leadership</li> <li>• Develop societal culture questionnaire</li> <li>• Develop leadership questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve a total of over 160 researchers from 62 national societies were involved in the research project</li> <li>• Conduct individual and focus group interviews with mid-level managers in domestic organizations</li> <li>• Check items for relevance and understandability</li> <li>• Survey over 17,000 managers representing 951 organizations in 62 cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ rigorous psychometric assessment procedures for scale items</li> <li>• Translate and back translate survey instruments in each country</li> <li>• Conduct pilot tests in several countries</li> <li>• Control for common source error in research design</li> <li>• Use rigorous statistical procedures to ensure scales can be aggregated and reliable</li> <li>• Assess cultures and organizations on practices (i.e., as is) and values (should be)</li> <li>• HLM used to test hypotheses (culture to leadership at organizational and societal level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation of culture and leadership scales</li> <li>• Ranking of 62 societal cultures on 9 culture dimensions</li> <li>• Grouping of 62 cultures into 10 culture clusters</li> <li>• Creation of 21 primary leadership and 6 global leadership scales</li> <li>• Determining relationships between culture dimensions and leadership dimensions</li> <li>• Determination of universally desirable and culturally specific leadership qualities (i.e., CLTs)</li> </ul>
GLOBE phase 3			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the manner in which national culture influences executive leadership processes</li> <li>• Examine the relationship between leadership expectations (CLTs) and CEO behavior</li> <li>• Examine the relationship between CEO leadership behavior and effectiveness</li> <li>• Determine which CEO leadership behaviors are most effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of more than 40 researchers in 24 countries</li> <li>• 17 of the 24 countries completed phases 1 and 2 in addition to phase 3</li> <li>• Interviews and surveys were conducted for 40 CEOs within each country</li> <li>• A total of more than 1000 CEOs and 5000 of their direct reports were respondents in the project</li> <li>• Previously defined leadership qualities from phases 1 and 2 (i.e., CLTs) were converted into behavioral leadership items and combined into scales for phase 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 6 and 9 direct reports of each CEO assessed the CEOs leadership behaviors, their personal reactions, and firm performance</li> <li>• Common method and response variance eliminated through research design</li> <li>• Internally oriented top management team (TMT) outcomes included commitment, effort, and team solidarity</li> <li>• Externally oriented firm outcomes included competitive sales performance, competitive ROI and competitive domination of the industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders tend to behave in a manner expected within their country</li> <li>• Cultural values do NOT have a direct effect on CEO behavior, rather the effect is indirect through CLTs (culturally endorsed theory – i.e., leadership expectations)</li> <li>• Both the fit of CEO behaviors (to expectations) and degree of leadership behavior predict effectiveness</li> <li>• Superior and inferior CEOs exhibit differing patterns of behavior within their country</li> </ul>

**1. Objectives and findings of GLOBE phases 1 and 2: measuring societal culture and developing a culturally endorsed theory of leadership**

In this section of the paper, we present the major findings of GLOBE research with respect to our major leadership theory which we have labeled as the culturally endorsed theory of leadership (CLT). The acronym CLT also stands for the specific leadership attributes (e.g., honesty) and their organization as part of 21 primary and 6 global leadership dimensions. For instance, charismatic visionary leadership is a *primary* dimension which is part of the *global* charismatic/value based leadership dimension. After discussing the formation of our primary and global leadership dimensions, we present evidence regarding the universality and cultural specificity of endorsed leadership processes. While some of this research has been previously published in the two major GLOBE book publications (Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004), additional findings are presented that may have escaped notice due to the more narrow focus of the research outlets. In this section, we also show how the 9 GLOBE *societal culture values* (e.g., performance orientation) are related to the leadership dimensions.

**1.1. Culturally endorsed implicit leadership – the 21 primary CLT leadership dimensions and 6 global CLT leadership dimensions**

Globe built on the foundation of *implicit leadership theory* (ILT) (Lord & Maher, 1991) to develop our *culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory* (House et al., 2004). Numerous examples demonstrate how societal and organizational culture can shape the ILT of their members (Javidan, Dorfman, Howell, & Hanges, 2010). In a country with relatively high power distance values (e.g., Russia and Iran), children typically learn that the father is the

ultimate authority in the family, and they show strong respect and deference to him. They learn that the father knows what is best and makes decisions for the good of the family. They also learn, through their interactions with their parents, that their role is to comply and follow the decisions and directives made by the father. As a result, in such cultures the collective ILT reflects elements of power and autocratic leadership. As adults, employees in organizations in such cultures are more accepting of high power distance values and autocratic leadership styles in their organizations.

The GLOBE Leader Attributes and Behavior Questionnaire became our primary leadership survey instrument included in the research for phases 1 and 2. The final version included 112 leader attribute and behavior items which included a wide variety of traits, skills, behaviors, and abilities potentially relevant to leadership emergence and effectiveness. For each item in the survey, a brief definition of the item or example clarified the construct to minimize language difficulties. Of course, elaborate translation and back translation procedures were developed to minimize language misunderstandings. (The complete procedure can be found in chapters 6–11 in House et al., 2004.) Leader attributes were rated 1 through 7 with 1 indicating “this behavior or characteristic greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader” to a high of 7 indicating “this behavior or characteristic contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader.”

After generating the 112 attributes, the next step in making sense of these disparate items was to group the items through various conceptual and statistical procedures. Statistical analyses used data from the survey of over 17,000 managers in sixty-two societies (House et al., 2004). This resulted in a formation of 21 *primary dimensions* of leadership (e.g., visionary leadership). To further understand the underlying construction of CLTs, a second-order factor analysis of these 21 dimensions produced a set of what

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