

## BOOK REVIEW

# CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP, ACROSS THE WORLD: THE GLOBE BOOK OF IN-DEPTH STUDIES OF 25 SOCIETIES.

By J. S. CHHOKAR, F. C. BRODBECK, & R. J. HOUSE.  
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**Reviewed by Erich Baumgartner**

In 1980, Geert Hofstede, in an article challenging the assumption that American management theories apply in cross-cultural settings, noted that the “first U.S. book about the cultural relativity of U.S. management theories is still to be written.” His landmark study on cultural differences in management practices (G. H. Hofstede, 1980) had just been published. But most American managers and leaders continued to proceed on the parochial assumption that the wisdom of American management literature represented the one best approach that could be offered to leaders worldwide. Over the years this notion has been thoroughly challenged by cross-cultural researchers. The work of Hofstede led to further investigations of cultural management practices and values. What many of these studies had in common was the notion that there were culture dimensions that could be compared from culture to culture (Adler, 2002; Lewis, 1996; Schwartz, 1999; Trompenaars, 1998). The most ambitious of all cross-cultural leadership studies, however, is the so-called GLOBE study, a collaborative research endeavor that according to the Hong Kong scholar Kwok Leung may very well “go down in the history of management research as a hallmark for diversity, inclusiveness, richness, and multilateralism” (xvi). *Culture and Leadership, Across the World* is the second volume of the GLOBE

(Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) research project. This volume presents the results of GLOBE's Phase 3, which consisted of an in-depth description of culture and leadership in 25 of the 62 countries studied by the GLOBE project. The results of Phase 1 (the development and validation of the research methods) and Phase 2 (the description of culture and leadership factors in 62 countries) were reported in the 818-page book *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations* (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), which was reviewed by Thom Wolf in the first issue of this journal (2006).

The present volume contains 28 chapters, written by 57 authors, in 1162 (xxxi) pages, including 61 pages of index. The first two chapters are introductory, followed by 25 country chapters, and a concluding chapter integrating the rich findings of the volumes that readers will find particularly enlightening. In chapter 1, which serves as a general introduction to the GLOBE project, its purpose, structure, history, and methodology, the authors defend the need of a country-specific (emic) approach to leadership and culture and define the main constructs of culture, organizational practices, and leadership.

The GLOBE project approaches culture in terms of nine quantitative dimensions: (1) Assertiveness, (2) Future Orientation, (3) Gender Egalitarianism, (4) Humane Orientation, (5) Institutional Collectivism, (6) In-Group Collectivism, (7) Performance Orientation, (8) Power Distance, and (9) Uncertainty Avoidance. One contribution of the GLOBE project has been to measure culture variables not only on the practice and manifestation ("as is") level, but also on the level of values, beliefs, and implicit theories ("should be," cf. McClelland, 1985). Furthermore, GLOBE distinguishes two units of analysis: organizations and societies. The operational definition of leadership in the GLOBE study is "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. 6). Thus GLOBE focuses on organizational leadership, not leadership in general.

In chapter 2 the authors first discuss the methodology of the GLOBE project as a whole, and then describe the specific methodology of the country chapters integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as focus groups, ethnographic interviews, media analysis, as well as unobtrusive measures and participant observation data from the country co-investigators (CCIs). As a result the country chapters not

only contain information that allowed the researchers to compare and rank the countries on the culture dimension level, but also develop rich country-specific (emic) descriptions of how leadership typically manifests itself in a country. These in-depth leadership portraits make this book an enormously useful volume for leaders of international organizations or multicultural institutions because they give insights not found at the level of the country general (etic) leadership dimensions.

The 25 country chapters are arranged in 10 clusters of countries based on unique patterns of societal and organizational characteristics. They are listed in Table 1. Each chapter follows a common format, moving from general facts about the country (demographics, economy, government, etc.) to a brief historical sketch and finally a more extensive picture of any cultural features that allows the readers to catch a glimpse of the unique character of leadership in this context. Thus we learn (not surprisingly) that Switzerland employs about twice as many people in the banking sector as Italy, France, and Great Britain, and that it derives about half of its foreign trade from the banks. Some readers may find it interesting to analyze the placement of certain “boundary-spanning” countries which seem to defy easy classification. The Netherlands, for instance, are found in the Germanic section even though it shares certain characteristics also with the Nordic and Anglo clusters. If you look for Turkey, go to the Middle East cluster, while Israel is found in the Latin European cluster.

Each chapter then reports the results of the nine GLOBE culture dimensions, providing many examples helpful for a better understanding of the scores, such as for instance the representation of women in organizations and society. One example of a culture dimension reported is Future Orientation. What I found remarkable was that Switzerland ranked second in the “As Is” score for this dimension with a Mean score of 4.73, which is remarkably close to its “Should Be” value of 4.79, a score that makes its comparative rank drop to 59 out of 61. Evidently there are many countries aspiring to be forward-looking in their leadership practices, but Switzerland actually seems to achieve it. The authors note that religious roots, particularly the Calvinist influence in part of the population, which gets translated into a strong work ethic, and the legendary Swiss thriftiness may be one explanation for this near convergence of Swiss aspirations and reality in Future Orientation.

Is it really possible to describe what can be considered manifesta-

Table 1: *GLOBE Society/Culture Clusters*

ANGLO (6 OF 7)	LATIN EUROPE (3 OF 6)	NORDIC EUROPE (2 OF 3)	GERMANIC EUROPE (3 OF 5)
AUSTRALIA ENGLAND IRELAND NEW ZEALAND SOUTH AFRICA (WHITE SAMPLE) UNITED STATES	FRANCE PORTUGAL SPAIN	FINLAND SWEDEN	AUSTRIA GERMANY (FORMER EAST) NETHERLANDS SWITZERLAND
EASTERN EUROPE (2 OF 8)	LATIN AMERICA (3 OF 10)	SUB-SAHARA AFRICA (0 OF 5)	MIDDLE EAST (1 OF 5)
GREECE RUSSIA	ARGENTINA COLOMBIA MEXICO		TURKEY
SOUTHERN ASIA (1 OF 6)	CONFUCIAN ASIA (3 OF 6)		
INDIA	CHINA HONG KONG SINGAPORE		

tions of a typical Indian manager “(a) common to the entire country without exception and (b) unique to the country insofar as these are not found in other societies” (p. 991)? The authors are cautious in their optimism that this can be done in useful ways. Thus I found it refreshing to discover a certain tentativeness with which authors approached their task of describing culture-specific factors. Yet their familiarity with the culture seemed to allow them to highlight aspects that can help cross-cultural managers and researchers approach each country with greater depth. Thus, each chapter is a goldmine of interesting details about how leaders approach their task, some of them pointing to the need for understanding specific worldview issues and possibly careful preparation for cross-cultural projects. One worldview issue that shows up in several countries is the prevalence of spirit and luck factors. In the chapter on India, you will notice the authors’ stress on the role of astrology in determining appropriate dates and times to undertake some important activities. Most Western leaders shaped by hundreds of years of Enlightenment worldview and secularized Christian notions will find themselves rather uncomfortable in such settings.

Another aspect I found rather fascinating is the fact that some of the Nordic countries and Switzerland are rather suspicious of the very notion of leadership.

This discussion of the culture variables is usually followed by a description of the implicit leadership model present in the country among middle managers by listing the scores on 21 leadership variables that can be grouped into 6 (second-order) leadership dimensions: (1) Autonomous, (2) Charismatic, (3) Humane, (4) Participative, (5) Self-protective, and (6) Team oriented leadership. While the listed scores allow for a certain comparison with other countries, it is the additional information derived from multiple qualitative sources that allow a rich tapestry of cultural threads to emerge. Often chapters also include biographical highlights of examples of leaders considered especially significant by a country (e.g. Gandhi in India), and appendices with supporting material.

The authors seem to have had quite a bit of freedom to construct their chapters. This freedom seems to be responsible for the variability in the usual chapter length of 30-45 pages (Singapore, 22 pages; USA, 70 pages) and a certain inconsistency in the way some statistical scores are reported that occasionally makes comparison between countries unnecessarily awkward. While striking this critical note, I also found a few figures whose format had gone astray (e.g.: Figure 1.1 repeated much cleaner in Figure 2.1, and Figure 1.2). Table 1.2, which reports the GLOBE Society/Culture Clusters, indicates the countries with chapters in this volume with a star but fails to mark Greece, Russia, India and Switzerland, which are actually represented in the book. This is correct, however, in Table 28.1. Appendix A3 is titled wrongly as Power Distance while the chart is In-Group Collectivism. Some of the country markers in Appendix B charts in my book were unfortunately illegible. Given the sheer massiveness and the complexity of the volume, these are minor problems. I suspect that these problems have been corrected by now in later printings.

A more serious question is raised by the way the 25 countries were selected based on those authors accepting the invitation to participate in Phase 3 rather than on an attempt to represent the different regions of the world more inclusively. This pragmatic approach to research reporting has led to the exclusion of Black Africa (South Africa is based on a white sample and included in the Anglo cluster), the Arab World

(Turkey is the only Middle-East cluster representative) and the underrepresentation of Southern Asia (1 out of 6), Latin America (3 out of 10), and Eastern Europe (2 out of 8), and the overrepresentation of Anglo and other European countries (15 of 21). May I suggest that the richness of this volume is a strong argument for the need of a further volume reporting the remaining 37 countries?

The last chapter of the book is a brilliant tour de force that attempts a synthesis of the results of Phases 2 and 3. This chapter is full of insights for students of cross-cultural leadership. Particularly interesting is the discussion on cluster-typical and boundary-spanning societies and different “species” of leadership. Some societies, like Argentina or Colombia, exhibit characteristics that are quite representative of their clusters. Others like the Netherlands are related to several clusters: located in the Germanic cluster, its societal characteristics overlap with the Nordic cluster (in Power Distance, In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, and Gender Egalitarianism) and some with the Anglo cluster (in Uncertainty Avoidance). Boundary-spanning societies may facilitate access to cultural information and skills for organizations wishing to expand into other culture clusters.

One contribution of the GLOBE study is the ability to distinguish subtle differences in culture or leadership dimensions that are often not noticeable by quantitative studies alone. While countries may show similar numbers in a leadership dimension, these differences detected by qualitative data are so real that the authors even speak of different “species” of leadership. For instance, Humane Oriented leadership can mean (a) “a set of values and behaviors that espouse equanimity, egalitarianism, and not flaunting one’s own status as a leader” (in several Anglo-cluster countries); (b) “friendly, open and generous interpersonal conduct” which in times of crisis is expected to be “direct and clear” (in New Zealand), “compassionate” (in the USA) or “aggressive” (in Australia); (c) “a Confucian principle of moderation and maintaining harmonious social relationships” (in China); or (d) “a traditional principle of humanity reposing faith and confidence in followers, giving them freedom, and taking personal care of their well-being” (in India) (pp. 1043-44). These are just a few examples to show the rich insights that the GLOBE study has produced and may be waiting to share with the world of leadership.

What does this volume do for leaders of international Christian

organizations? For one thing, it helps Christian leaders understand that there are infinite variations of leadership that have arisen out of the complex interplay of history, religion, politics, and economics. Since this volume arose out of research in business organizations, the authors deal with worldview and religion issues only in a marginal way. Yet, it is precisely in this volume that includes qualitative research methods that these issues surface most clearly. It is curious that despite centuries of working in cultures around the globe, no Christian organization or denomination has ever attempted a similar research study, even though some Christian organizations or denominations with global presence could make an important contribution to the further unpacking of the many issues and questions yet left untouched by the GLOBE research study. For instance, in my international work with Christian organizations, I note that the local culture often influences the way leadership is practiced in a given country. American churches priding themselves in following Biblical models are often headed by a “president” and run by “committees” following parliamentary-like procedures.

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