



Managerial Leadership and Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines managerial leadership and its cultural and historical foundations in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The analysis is based on existing literature, a qualitative analysis of African media reports, and quantitative results from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project. The five SSA countries studied were Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa (black sample). Results yielded several common themes that characterize SSA leadership patterns across the region. In particular, a common cultural characteristic, *ubuntu*, was reflected in high levels of group solidarity, paternalistic leadership, and Humane Oriented leadership. Although the negative legacy of colonial dominance has contributed to a culture of corruption, poverty, tribalism and violence, charismatic leaders frequently invoke indigenous cultural values and means to overcome these problems. Implications for further development of global leadership theories are discussed.

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1. Managerial Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa

As noted by South African management scholar Mangaliso (2001, p. 23), “much of management theory is based on the writings of 20th century Western scholars whose disciplinary orientations were heavily grounded in economics and classical sociology. Their writings depict people as being individualistic, utility maximizing, and transaction-oriented.” Theories of management based on these assumptions frequently lead to mechanistic portrayals of human behavior that largely ignore cultural or regional differences. In point of fact, people are not just economic beings; they are also social and communal beings, and are often influenced more by emotions than presumed logic. Moreover, the relative balance of such factors in determining managerial and employee behavior can vary, often substantially, across cultures. As Mangaliso concludes, “by acknowledging this, global management discourse can evolve more holistic and inclusive theories” of management practices and leader behavior (p. 23).

In this spirit, this paper examines patterns of managerial leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Data from the Global

Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project are integrated with an analysis of historical and media reports to produce a picture of culture and leadership patterns in five representative SSA countries: Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa (black sample). Many cultural and historical similarities exist among the region's countries that allow us to treat them as a single entity. In particular, these societies share a common historical experience that includes early hunter-gatherer groups, ethnic and tribal loyalties, colonial dominance and exploitation of rich natural resources, subsequent independence, and efforts at responsible self-governance. There are differences among these countries that also will be explored. Diverse languages, religions, races and governments add to the complexity of this region. These help explain its uneven societal development and some of the difficulties facing SSA leaders. These similarities and contrasts present a complex system of problems that are explored in this paper.

2. Historical and cultural evolution

Africa is the second-largest continent with a total area of over 11 million square miles and 53 countries. A significant part of Sub-Saharan Africa is inhabited by a collection of related ethnic groups known as *Bantu*. The Bantu and other early hunter-gather societies appear to have lived first in small nomadic kinship groups that tended to be cooperative and relatively egalitarian. As time passed, the Bantu settled into hierarchically organized communities presided over by kings and stratified by age, gender and wealth

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signified by ownership of livestock. In these communities, traditional leadership was based on ascribed power passed on through patrilineal inheritance. Age was explicitly associated with seniority and accumulated wisdom. The leader was more of a mediator of disputes than a director of behavior, promoting consensus and adhering to a servant-leader model.

Coexistence among some ethnic groups in SSA was disrupted by commercial slave trade from the 18th century. In 1884, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck invited European countries, the United States and the Ottoman Empire to a conference in Berlin with the objective of sharing the African territory. This is what was later referred to as the “scramble for Africa”. Bismarck’s move had far-reaching and often unintended sociopolitical consequences that are still being felt. The demarcation of Africa ignored existing ethnic and historical boundaries and local sociopolitical dynamics.

Colonial governments established a variety of governance structures. The preferred mode of domination by the British colonial administrators was a policy of divide-and-rule, executed by adapting existing ethnic administration to enforce order and collect taxes. The most fundamental western influence in the colonization process was western education and customs. This pattern of conquest has been variously referred to as the three Cs: Christianity, Commerce and Civilization (Nkomazana, 1998). Immediately after colonization, resistance started to emerge in local communities. Emerging African leaders began organizing themselves into political unions and opposed discriminatory practices such as confinement to reservations, head taxes and inability to own property. Traditional chiefs, having been absorbed in colonial administrations, were often used to suppress political dissent among their subjects. The creation of African countries that split traditional ethnic geographic boundaries, colonial policies of “divide and rule,” and the use of tribal chiefs as surrogate colonial rulers helped to establish ethnic rivalries that have become a common part of politics in post-colonial Africa.

The first wave of post-colonial African leaders came to power due to their elite education, accidents of birth, social status, and association with trade unions. These leaders often shared similar personal characteristics of soaring rhetorical skills and personal charisma.⁴ However, none seemed prepared with the necessary leadership skills to deal with post-independence challenges. Leaders often retained power through a balance between acts of benevolence to supportive ethnic groups and brutal dictatorship against the opposition. Today, regional cultures share historically common characteristics. For instance, there is a common aspiration to seek harmony between human beings and the supernatural or other inanimate objects. Most groups in SSA are still patrilineal and patrimonial. There are strong power-distance relationships based on ascribed status, gender and age. Hofstede (2001) suggests that two dimensions of culture are particularly important: importance of religion and traditional wisdom. The first dimension supports the relevance of one’s relationship with a higher power. The second dimension emphasizes the importance of being hospitable, discussing decisions rather than imposing them on others, and that wisdom comes from experience and time, not education. These two cultural dimensions clarify the critical role of *traditionalism* in many aspects of life in SSA.

3. Research literature on leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa

Studies on management and leadership practices in Sub-Saharan Africa are sparse compared to almost any other region of

the world (Steers, Sanchez-Runde & Nardon, 2010). Moreover, most studies have emphasized western theories and commentaries on political leadership, pre- and post-colonial leadership dynamics, or current leaders. These studies have not reflected indigenous dimensions and contexts that are critically important to African leadership (Blunt & Jones, 1997). Some SSA cultural dimensions are likely to contradict western managerial practices. These include: a deep respect for the elderly presumably due to oral traditions where age and wisdom are closely related, relationships between different age groups are markedly gerontocratic and generally paternalistic (Linguist & Adolph, 1996). The extended family serves as the building block for any organization and tolerance and forgiveness indicates the importance of interpersonal relations over individual achievements. Further, in African organizations, the importance of clan or ethnic interests over individual needs are manifested in different ways. African leaders feel duty-bound to satisfy social and even economic needs of their relatives (Dia, 1994). The distribution of scarce resources to clan and ethnic affiliates are natural responsibilities of leadership (Blunt & Jones, 1997). With this paternalistic orientation, leaders bestow favors and expect and receive obeisance or deference. This phenomenon offers a unique perspective on in-group collectivism and reflects a response to collective need rather than individual performance.

Attempts have been made to identify core values of African leaders. Mbigi (2002) identifies five core values: respect for the dignity of others, group solidarity, teamwork, service to others, and the spirit of harmony and interdependence (i.e., ‘each one of us needs all of us’). The last dimension has been labeled the spirit of *ubuntu* (Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi, 1997). *Ubuntu* is the basic philosophy that governs existence and social relations. It reflects “a family atmosphere... philosophical affinity and kinship among and between indigenous people of Africa” (Karsten & Illa, 2004). While some views of collectivism are associated with ‘here and now’ relationships, *ubuntu* is anchored in history and includes present and future obligations to the social entity. A contrasting view of decision-making is provided by Kiggundu (1989), describing African decision-making in the context of the high power distance relationship between management and ordinary workers. Respect for hierarchy is seen as unconditional obedience to instructions and directives. This is comparable to the autocratic leadership style displayed by many African political leaders and some managers that have been described by other scholars.

In summary, findings from the leadership literature are generally consistent with the description of the region’s cultural evolution presented earlier. The importance of age and lineage resulting in the presumption of accumulated wisdom affect the selection and acceptance of leaders. Responsibilities of leaders to their extended families, tribes or ethnic groups supersede performance based reward systems and promote nepotism and paternalism. Consultative consensus oriented decision procedures are used among peers, but hierarchical authority appears to be dominant in reaching final decisions. Leaders are expected to be considerate, forgiving and supportive of followers’ welfare and development and to maintain good relationships (*ubuntu*), although in-group expectations likely impinge on these relationships. These tentative conclusions will now be compared with a media analysis and results from the GLOBE research project.

4. Media analysis of leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa

To provide a qualitative assessment of leadership and culture in the region, a media analysis was conducted. Approximately 25,000 words from popular news and media publications in all the SSA countries were scanned for content reflecting societal culture and leadership themes over a period of two weeks. A detailed methodology and results of the media analysis is provided in

⁴ Virtually all SSA founding presidents shared similar characteristics of strong rhetorical skills and charisma. These leaders include Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Sam Nujoma (Namibia) and Nelson Mandela (the first black president of South Africa). These skills are still highly valued for any type of leadership position in this cluster.

Appendix A. Findings from the media analysis consistently demonstrated five themes of corruption, poverty, tribalism, violence and a desire for change and economic development that provide a socio-economic context and explanation for some leadership orientations. The publications associated the themes with leaders' actions and often interpreted them as a surrogate measure of leader effectiveness.

4.1. Corruption

Corruption permeates many aspects of socioeconomic life in SSA. It is a way of doing business, sealing deals, securing contracts, facilitating and obtaining what is wanted. Perennial corruption over the decades has led to a negative perception of many leaders in both organizational and political positions. Getz and Volkema (2001) found that power distance and uncertainty avoidance were positively related to corruption. SSA countries are generally high in power distance and in-group collectivism. It may be that when strong in-group collectivism exists and a society is high in power distance, abuse of power becomes commonplace and expands beyond cultural expectations. Top civil servants and private sector executives seem to put family and personal interests first, ethnic interests second and corporate interests third. Africans clearly pay the price of corrupt practices among their leaders.

4.2. Poverty

There is endemic poverty in many parts of SSA. Other than Namibia and South Africa, the rest of the SSA has a GDP per capita of less than five hundred U.S. dollars. Poverty is partly aggravated by corruption that has caused extreme situations of income inequality. Poverty permeates most facets of society. Even those perceived to be wealthy have to deal with fragile and inconsistent property rights, lack of access to basic amenities and insecurity. Effects of poverty extend beyond people's social and economic lives and affect their perception of effective leadership. The poor tend to associate leadership positions with wealth, with some expectations of receiving handouts and other forms of expropriated resources. This places undue pressure on aspiring leaders to seek wealth by all means possible, not only as an end in itself but also as a vehicle for acquiring leadership positions.

4.3. Tribalism

For historical and sociological reasons, a culture of tribalism is embedded in the social fabric and plays a significant role in the way people think, socialize and accept their leaders. Many SSA countries are resigned to the notion of maintaining a balance of power among tribal groups when allocating resources. This includes leadership positions rather than attempting to minimize the effects of tribalism. In social and organizational environments, leaders emerge and get accepted in part due to their ethnic origins. Tribalism provides a toxic organizational framework for nepotism, intolerance and occasional acts of violence.

4.4. Violence

Corruption, poverty and tribalism all converge into a perfect storm of violence. Many countries in the region have experienced postcolonial violence of one form or another. Some scholars have traced the culture of violence to various historical events (Allen, 1999). The violent historical legacy regarding property rights, slavery, partitioning of Africa and the commons has frequently arisen during the course of the region's history. The culture of violence is fueled by a desire of some individuals to retain political power and a willingness to defend that power at all costs,

displacement of moderate leaders through ethnic extremism, and orchestrated conflicts towards vulnerable civilians and ethnic groups.

4.5. Change and economic development

There is a clear desire for leaders to be action oriented and decisive in implementing programs for change and economic development. Leaders are favored when their rhetoric and actions are seen as pro-change. This leadership orientation is seen as a way out of the perfect storm of corruption, poverty, tribalism and violence.

5. GLOBE methodology and dimensions of societal culture

GLOBE quantitative measures of cultural dimensions were obtained in each of the five countries in the SSA cluster. A total of 818 managers from 263 organizations in the five countries completed the GLOBE survey instruments on societal culture, organizational culture, and culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories (ILTs). The ILTs refer to an aggregate compilation of the people's image of what makes an outstanding leader in their country. The nine GLOBE dimensions of societal culture are based on earlier cross-cultural research by Hofstede (1980), Hofstede and Bond (1988), Triandis (1995), and McClelland (1961) and are shown in Table 1.

We used a stratified sampling strategy in which four different strata (i.e., individuals, organizations, industries, and societies) were included. In particular, the 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 (labeled version Alpha). The other half completed a second version of the GLOBE culture and leadership questionnaire (labeled version Beta). By administering these questionnaires to separate samples of middle managers from the same organization, we minimized or even eliminated common source variance. Finally, only corporations headquartered in the host cultures were included in our sample. Therefore, we deliberately excluded from our sample foreign multinational corporations.

Two types of measures were used to assess each cultural dimension. The institutional *cultural practices* in a country were measured by "as is" questions, indicating the respondents' perception of the current practice of a cultural dimension in their society. *Aspired values* on each cultural dimension in the society were measured by "should be" questions, indicating respondents desired levels for that culture dimension. Culturally endorsed leadership items were developed to assess the degree to which different leader characteristics and behaviors facilitate or inhibit "outstanding leadership" in the respondents' country. Seven-point Likert scales were used throughout the GLOBE research. The development and validation of GLOBE scales used to gather this survey data are described in House et al. (1999).

The overall mean scores for "as is" (Practices) and "should be" (Values) on each cultural dimension for all GLOBE countries are shown in Table 1. The practices and values scores for the SSA cluster are also reported in Table 1 as well as the differences between the two scores (values minus practices). The differences indicate how respondents believe their culture should change regarding these dimensions. The groups A through C in Table 1 indicate the relative score (rank) for the SSA cluster on each culture

Table 1

Means for GLOBE societal cultural dimensions.

	“As is” culture dimensions			“Should be” cultural dimensions			Difference (“Should be” vs. “As is”)
	Mean for SSA	Mean across all countries	Group	Mean for SSA	Mean across all countries	Group	
<i>Performance orientation</i> : the degree to which a society encourages high standards of performance and rewards innovation and improvement	4.13	4.1	B	6.05	5.94	B	1.92
<i>Assertiveness</i> : the degree to which individuals are assertive, tough, dominant and aggressive in social relationships	4.24	4.15	A	3.99	3.83	B	−0.25
<i>Future orientation</i> : the extent to which members of a society or an organization believe that their actions will influence their own future	3.92	3.84	B	5.87	5.4	B	1.95
<i>Humane orientation</i> : the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, kind and caring to others	4.42	4.08	B	5.58	5.42	B	1.16
<i>Institutional collectivism</i> : the extent to which a society's organizational and institutional norms and practices encourage and reward collective action and collective distribution of resources	4.28	4.27	B	4.66	4.73	B	0.38
<i>In-group collectivism</i> : the degree to which individual express pride, loyalty or cohesiveness in their organizations and families	5.31	5.13	B	5.63	5.66	B	0.32
<i>Gender egalitarianism</i> : the degree to which the collective minimizes gender inequality	3.29	3.37	B	4.3	4.51	B	1.01
<i>Power distance</i> : the extent to which a society accepts and endorses authority, power differences and status privileges	5.25	5.17	A	2.86	2.75	C	−2.39
<i>Uncertainty avoidance</i> : the extent to which a society, organization or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events	4.27	4.16	B	4.99	4.62	B	0.72

dimension in comparison to all GLOBE countries. These groups were formed based on the mean score on each cultural dimension and the standard error of estimate for the overall data set to calculate “bands” of countries with similar scores. There are statistically significant differences between groups but not within groups. “A” groups had the highest ranking, “B” groups the next highest, and “C” groups had the lowest ranking for SSA in comparison to other GLOBE countries. There was one SSA country (South Africa) that scored below the “C” group on a single “as is” culture dimension (Power Distance). This was an outlier in comparison to the rest of the SSA countries.

Compared to other GLOBE countries, SSA is especially high in Assertiveness (in the A group) and Power Distance (four of the five sampled countries were in the A group). Since the GLOBE measure of Assertiveness includes aggressive behavior, Assertiveness and Power Distance may feed the violence, tribalism and corruption found in several SSA countries. However, it should be noted that many violent situations in SSA are usually instigated by a few elements in the community. Most SSA respondents indicated they believed there should be less Power Distance and slightly less Assertiveness in their culture. Although the GLOBE measures of In-group Collectivism showed SSA in the B group (moderate), the historical and media analyses and the high level of SSA's score on this dimension indicated In-group Collectivism is high. In-group Collectivism produced the highest overall cultural practice score for all the GLOBE cultural dimensions in SSA.

Humane Orientation was also in the B group (moderate). Respondents indicated there should be much more Humane Orientation in leadership in their culture, which is consistent with traditional cultural expectations in SSA. There was a very large variance in Humane Orientation across the five SSA countries,

indicating that traditional leadership patterns are changing more slowly in some areas. Uncertainty Avoidance was moderate (B group). Respondents indicated there should be more Uncertainty Avoidance, probably reflecting their desire for protection from the corruption in governmental institutions and violence occurring in parts of SSA. Other GLOBE measures were all moderate (B group), although SSA respondents clearly want more Performance Orientation and Future Orientation. There was some evidence that they wanted a little more Gender Egalitarianism and Institutional Collectivism, but tradition and experience with corrupt government institutions apparently made respondents wary of these cultural trends.

6. Culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories

Implicit leadership theory (ILT) posits that people develop sets of beliefs about the behaviors and characteristics of leaders versus non-leaders as well as effective versus ineffective leaders (House, Wright, & Aditya, 1997). These implicit theories are represented by prototypes that contain specific configurations that characterize the most common features of a certain type of leader (Phillips & Lord, 1981). ILTs and associated leadership prototypes may be salient for particular positions, contexts, or individuals (Yukl, 2006). Because leadership prototypes influence the extent to which an individual accepts and responds to others as leaders (Lord & Maher, 1991), these prototypes are also thought to influence the selection and appraisal of leaders.

The dataset generated by the GLOBE project was used to explore differing perceptions of outstanding leadership. Respondents identified behaviors and characteristics of outstanding leaders in 62 countries. Leadership attributes were statistically grouped into

Table 2

Leadership dimension means for the SSA countries in this study.

Dimension	Means						
	SSA cluster scores	BAND for cluster	Nigeria	Namibia	Zambia	Zimbabwe	SA-black
Charismatic/value based	5.79	M	5.79	5.99	5.92	6.11	5.16
Team oriented	5.70	M	5.65	5.81	5.86	5.97	5.23
Participative	5.31	M	5.18	5.48	5.29	5.57	5.04
Humane oriented	5.16	H	5.49	5.10	5.27	5.18	4.79
Autonomous	3.63	L	3.62	3.77	3.43	3.37	3.94
Self-protective	3.55	M	3.89	3.36	3.66	3.20	3.62

21 first-order factors and then consolidated into six second-order factors collectively referred to as culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories (CLTs). The global dimensions of CLTs are Charismatic/Value-Based leadership, Team Oriented leadership, Participative leadership, Humane Oriented leadership, Autonomous leadership, and Self-protective leadership (Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck, 2004). Results for SSA GLOBE leadership dimensions are shown in Table 2.

6.1. Charismatic/Value-Based leadership

Charismatic/Value-Based leadership is a broadly defined leadership dimension that reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate, and to expect high performance outcomes from others based on firmly held core values. The GLOBE Charismatic/Value-Based leadership dimension includes six leadership sub-dimensions: visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, integrity, decisive, and performance oriented. Like most GLOBE countries, SSA countries strongly endorsed this leadership dimension as contributing to outstanding leadership. The mean score for SSA is 5.79. This falls within the middle of three groups when all GLOBE societal clusters were ranked on this dimension. Zimbabwe and Namibia viewed Charismatic/Value-Based leadership as especially important for outstanding leadership. Traditional ascent to leadership in SSA countries was based on ascribed status. In modern SSA societal and organizational institutions, charismatic/value-based attributes are increasingly offering a path to leadership roles. Modern African leaders often exhibit characteristics of Charismatic/Value-Based leadership especially through the art and skill of oratory.

6.2. Team Oriented leadership

Team Oriented leadership is a leadership dimension that emphasizes effective team building and implementation of a common purpose or goal among team members. This leadership dimension was also strongly endorsed in SSA countries and includes five leadership sub-dimensions: collaborative team orientation, team integrator, diplomatic, malevolent (reversed scored), and administratively competent. The score for SSA in this category was 5.70 that is also in the middle group of all societal clusters on this dimension. Zimbabwe and Zambia viewed Team Oriented Leadership as especially important for outstanding leadership. This dimension reflects traditional elements of tribal leadership described earlier. There is evidence of the effectiveness of team leadership among corporate and societal leaders across the region.

6.3. Participative leadership

Participative leadership reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions. The GLOBE Participative leadership dimension includes two leadership sub-dimensions: participative and autocratic (reverse scored). SSA has a score of 5.31 that is well within the middle group of GLOBE

culture cluster scores on this dimension. No SSA country was especially high on this dimension. Some early leaders used the mystique of symbols, heritage and even animals to create an aura of power and distance (e.g., Haile Selassie of Ethiopia used lions to symbolize imperial power). The high Power Distance scores in most SSA countries have likely limited the use of Participative leadership in SSA history. The fact that this leadership pattern is viewed as contributing to outstanding leadership in SSA supports societal members' desire for less Power Distance (described earlier) and recognition that African institutions and organizations require widespread input to solve the problems they face.

6.4. Humane Oriented leadership

Humane Oriented leadership reflects supportive and considerate leader behaviors but also includes compassion and generosity. The GLOBE Humane Oriented leadership dimension includes two leadership sub-dimensions: modesty and humane oriented behavior. The score for SSA in this category is 5.16 that is in the highest group of GLOBE culture cluster scores on this dimension. Nigeria and Zambia rated Humane Oriented leadership as particularly important for outstanding leadership. Humane Orientation clearly plays a significant role in outstanding leadership behavior in SSA countries, especially in light of the poverty, corruption and violence that is prevalent in these countries. Humane orientation permeates the core of societal and organizational life in SSA. There are distinct similarities between humane orientation and *ubuntu* – humaneness. The late president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, based a significant part of his leadership philosophy on *ujamaa* (i.e., familyhood), a paternalistic ideology that perceived the society as an extension of the basic family and the leader's role in caring for his family.

6.5. Autonomous leadership

Autonomous leadership is a newly defined leadership dimension that has not previously appeared in the literature. This dimension refers to independent and individualistic leadership. The GLOBE Autonomous leadership dimension includes a single sub-dimension labeled autonomous. The score for SSA is 3.63 that is in the lowest group of GLOBE culture cluster scores. Since the SSA score is below 4.0 on Autonomous leadership, this means it is viewed as inhibiting outstanding leadership. In fact, every country in this cluster rated this dimension below 4.0.

6.6. Self-protective leadership

Self-protective leadership is a newly defined leadership dimension (emerging from a non-western perspective) that focuses on ensuring the safety and security of the leader. It may involve a certain level of status consciousness, self-centeredness and involving the group in internally competitive actions to help the leader prosper. The GLOBE Self-protective leadership dimension includes five leadership sub-dimensions: self-centered, status

conscious, conflict inducer, face saving, and procedural. The SSA score is 3.55 that is in the middle group of country cluster scores. All SSA countries rated this dimension as inhibiting outstanding leadership as did all GLOBE countries. Africans today clearly reject the vision of organizational leaders as acting alone and protecting their turf, which characterized many African national leaders in the post colonial period. However, these leader characteristics can still be seen in some African countries that struggle for equity and fairness in resource distribution. In the recent past, there has been a wave of rejection for heavy-handed self-protective behavior of leaders such as Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

In summary, like most GLOBE countries, Charismatic/Value-Based and Team Oriented leadership are most highly supported by SSA respondents as characteristics of outstanding leadership. Participation and Humane leadership are also endorsed. Autonomous and Self-protective leadership are viewed as inhibiting outstanding leadership in SSA countries. Yet, the media analysis and review of the historical development of SSA countries provides unique ways in which these leadership qualities are enacted. The following section provides an integrative perspective of leadership within this cultural milieu.

7. Managerial relevance

In this section, we synthesize the GLOBE data with our other sources into six major cultural themes and their implications for practicing leaders. The first theme, a spirit of *ubuntu*, recognizes the importance of human interdependence and striving for harmony in all social relations. *Ubuntu*, prominent throughout history in SSA, is based on respect for the dignity of people, reciprocity in social relations, and a desire for tolerance and forgiveness. This is consistent with the Humane Orientated leadership dimension from the GLOBE project. Recall that SSA countries scored in the top group on this aspect of leadership compared to other GLOBE country clusters. This leadership dimension represents attributes such as generosity, compassion, modesty and patience, as well as considerate and supportive behaviors. SSA GLOBE respondents identified this leadership style as one characteristic of outstanding leadership. Interestingly, the Humane Oriented leadership style is not as important or valued in other cultures. We see this leader characteristic as being a critical distinction for this region of the world.

A *religious and spiritual* orientation toward life is a second theme that has been characteristic of SSA countries throughout history. This reflects belief in a higher power as well as a connection and need for harmony with physical objects, persons, and the supernatural. Although none of the GLOBE cultural dimensions addressed this theme, it seems consistent with GLOBE's *Charismatic/Value-Based leadership* style that includes visionary, inspirational, self-sacrificial behaviors by leaders with a high degree of integrity. It may also reflect the Servant Leader Model which describes leaders who are highly ethical, supportive and dedicated to serving followers and other constituents.

The third theme, *In-group solidarity*, is also a traditional value in SSA cultures that reflects loyalty to one's family, clan or tribe as well as teamwork and service to one's in-group. This factor is addressed by GLOBE's cultural dimension of In-group Collectivism measuring pride, loyalty and cohesion of respondents to their families and organizations. Although SSA respondents were moderate on this cultural dimension in comparison to other GLOBE countries, other sources and the level of the SSA score on this dimension indicated it is an important characteristic of SSA culture. Leadership styles that are *Team Oriented* and *Humane* reflect this cultural dimension, and GLOBE respondents indicated both of these leadership attributes characterize outstanding

leaders in SSA countries. Servant leaders also seem consistent with this cultural dimension.

The fourth theme reflects traditional African societies that have been heavily *patriarchal* and *patrimonial* with little role for women in tribal governance. Leadership positions were based on ascribed status and respect was given to individuals who were male and/or advanced in age. These long held cultural traditions are reflected in the low overall score on Gender Egalitarianism for the SSA cluster, although there was much variance across SSA countries in Gender Egalitarianism. SSA respondents indicated the need for more Gender Egalitarianism in the future, reflecting the desire for less male dominance in their societies. Respondents clearly desired less power distance in their societies in the future, but there was little indication that Assertiveness would decline in the near future. These traditional cultural characteristics imply a *paternalistic leadership* style that is highly directive with followers, providing for their needs as viewed by the leader and giving them little responsibility. With this style, power is concentrated in the leader and can often lead to abuse as is seen in the corruption and violence that characterizes some African administrators.

Colonialism by European powers, the fifth theme, was a dominant force in SSA until the late part of the twentieth century. Colonial dominance broke down many of the cultural mechanisms that had evolved to allow *ubuntu* to exist among different tribal groups. Colonial powers ignored traditional tribal boundaries and sent Christian missionaries to convert the native people from their age-old religious beliefs. European dominance accentuated *assertive and power distance* cultural tendencies. These tendencies apparently still persist as shown by the GLOBE scores. GLOBE respondents also expressed only a slight preference for Institutional Collectivism, probably due to the exploitation and corruption that has characterized many institutions in SSA. These colonial dynamics implied leadership styles that were Self-protective and Autonomous to allow individuals to protect themselves while exploiting SSA resources and people. GLOBE respondents apparently recognize these styles as remnants of past colonial administrations and reject them as characteristics of outstanding leadership.

A culture of *corruption, poverty, tribalism and violence* (a sixth theme) persists in many SSA countries. This culture includes a negative view of organizational and political leaders as well as low personal aspirations and feelings of helplessness resulting in a tolerance of corruption, nepotism and occasional acts of violence. These factors contribute to the emergence of the 'African strong man' who imposes his will on populations, enriches himself and his in-group at the people's expense, and uses any means possible to retain his power. This leadership style is further encouraged by the high Power Distance and Assertiveness of SSA societies. The prototypical African strong man is clearly an important factor contributing to the continuing social problems in SSA today.

8. Leadership today and in the future

A unique feature of SSA countries is the dual nature of the socio-economic environment characterized by sharp social and economic differences between a small clique of the managerial cadre that forms the middle class and the majority of the population that is to be found in slums and rural areas. The less educated and less affluent majority continue to depend on subsistence activities for economic survival and have different perceptions of effective leadership that are rooted in idiosyncratic and traditional values and beliefs.

GLOBE cultural dimensions offer a perspective on traditional cultural customs and values among different SSA communities. Male dominance, polygamy, patrimony and patrilineage signify the lack of gender egalitarianism. The result is that gender-specific

roles and occupations are still prevalent. Such roles are a constant reminder of unequal access to possibilities between genders. Evidently, African organizations are missing out on a lot of managerial competence by enforcing gender-specific roles. A paternalistic nature of relationships is evident in all the five GLOBE countries. Men serve as heads of their families and are responsible for their safety and economic needs. Power distance relationships can be identified in age-based status and gerontocracy. Respect and wisdom are “earned credits” that members accumulate as they grow older. One of the enduring legacies of colonial influence is the emergence of a self-protective stratum of petty bourgeoisie. Power distance is also expressed in ascribed pathways to leadership in political and some public institutions. In-group collectivism is demonstrated through a deep sense of family beyond the traditional nucleus family and aspirations towards consensus-building to resolve conflicts.

Prior to European influence, there was a higher premium for social wealth to be realized in terms of social benefits to the whole collective. An implicit philosophy of “being your brother’s keeper” resonated with most communities. Such humane-orientation is expected and appropriate for many leaders. However, one unintended consequence may be to minimize individual motivation to pursue entrepreneurial dreams. Considerable emphasis is placed on a leader’s ability to honor his or her obligations to ethnic affiliates, without denying others to an extent that causes open conflict (Nzelibe, 1986). In the last two decades, trends toward democratization and commercialization have de-emphasized the notion of social wealth among leaders in SSA societies.

As the African strong man loses power, commercialization will hopefully provide more equitable benefits for Africans. This is apparently recognized by GLOBE respondents who pointed to the need for much more Performance Orientation, Future Orientation, and is shown in the media analysis which indicated a desire for leaders to initiate more change and economic development. A social oriented Charismatic/Value-Based leadership style is consistent with this new situation and this leadership style received the highest rating as a characteristic of outstanding leadership by SSA GLOBE respondents.

Several recent African leaders have demonstrated a leadership style that encompasses important cultural elements while addressing key societal issues. At the societal level, leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Laymah Gbowee have championed major social movements with strong moral arguments that encompass a vision and mission for a better African society for all people. Their actions clearly reflect a total commitment to their ethical mission with risk taking and self sacrifices that have attracted attention as home-grown leadership models for the rest of the SSA. They demonstrated the African cultural value of *ubuntu* through respect and inclusion of all stakeholders in negotiations and decision-making. They represented their constituencies and strongly supported their “fellow travelers” as they all took risks and sacrificed to achieve their shared mission. This dedicated, inspirational and disarming leadership style can be characterized as charismatic/value based with a strong emphasis on boundary spanning, ethical behavior and indigenous cultural values. Much of this style was universally endorsed in the GLOBE study of business organizations and appears to be effective in African societies as they strive to overcome the pains of colonial dominance, racism and ethnic violence with accompanying poverty and corruption.

Appendix A. Media analysis methodology

The following methodology was used to perform the media analysis:

1. The following media publications from SSA countries were analyzed for leadership themes. Nigeria – The Guardian, Financial times; Zambia – The Post, Times of Zambia; Namibia – The Namibian, The Namibia Economist; South Africa – Sowetan, Businessday; Zimbabwe – Daily News, Sunday Mail. From each country, a daily newspaper and a weekly financial/economics publication were chosen. The criterion for selection was circulation. In addition to these publications, news content from British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC Africa) was analyzed during the same period. BBC was selected on account of having extensive commentary on all the five countries.
2. The first week of September 2008 and the last week of October 2008 were chosen for analysis.
3. All articles related or referring to leadership appearing in the chosen publications during the days of analysis were selected. The main objective was to identify verbs and adjectives describing leaders, their actions, readers’ perceptions of those leaders, or issues that concerned leaders.
4. Relevant words and text segments were assigned theme specific codes that had not been predetermined and subsequently q-sorted by one researcher. A similar process was repeated for the second period of analysis.
5. Codings were double checked by a second researcher who had not been involved in the initial process.
6. The data elicited from the media analysis focused mainly on leadership issues that were of great concern for leaders and had implications on their leadership.

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