

# A Cross-Cultural Examination of the Endorsement of Ethical Leadership

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**ABSTRACT.** The western-based leadership and ethics literatures were reviewed to identify the key characteristics that conceptually define what it means to be an ethical leader. Data from the Global Leadership and Organiza-

tional Effectiveness (GLOBE) project were then used to analyze the degree to which four aspects of ethical leadership – *Character/Integrity, Altruism, Collective Motivation, and Encouragement* – were endorsed as important for effective leadership across cultures. First, using multi-group confirmatory factor analyses measurement equivalence of the ethical leadership scales was found, which provides indication that the four dimensions have similar meaning across cultures. Then, using analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests each of the four dimensions were found to be universally endorsed as important for effective leadership. However, cultures also varied significantly in the degree of endorsement for each dimension. In the increasingly global business environment, these findings have implications for organizations implementing ethics programs across cultures and preparing leaders for expatriate assignments.

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“The essence of a republic is a virtuous citizenry who demands virtuous leaders” John Adams, 1776.

Rapid technological advances, coupled with changes in the social and political landscape in the latter part of the 20th century have helped give rise to a truly global economy. Businesses face international competition for customers and resources, and co-workers, leaders, and subordinates may likely be located anywhere around the world. In addition, the growth in the number of multinational corporations and joint ventures over the past two decades has been tremendous. For example, data suggest that only 47 of the world's 100 largest economies are nation states, the remaining 53 are multinational corporations (Melloan, 2004). As a result, more and more leaders are assuming expatriate roles and

interacting regularly with colleagues from a culture different than their own. For leaders to be successful, it has become imperative for them to be aware of the cultural differences that influence business practices (Miroshnik, 2002). In particular, managers need to understand the differences and similarities in the expectations of leaders across cultures. Organizational researchers have responded to this need, and empirical research examining cross-cultural leadership is on the rise (see Dickson et al., 2003; House et al., 1997). However, the cross-cultural leadership research and leadership research in general, has typically not addressed the topic of ethical leadership. In recent years, the ethical lapses of leaders in everywhere from business to government to church organizations have made headlines around the world, thrusting ethical leadership to the forefront of the public's attention.

While production and profitability goals are often viewed as a leader's primary objectives, there is a long held view that leaders also have responsibility for ensuring standards of moral and ethical conduct (Barnard, 1938; Cullen et al., 1989; Mautz and Sharaf, 1961). Moreover, the responsibility of leaders to provide ethical or moral leadership has been discussed for centuries (see Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). The increasingly multinational nature of business creates a need for research aimed at understanding global business ethics (Carroll, 2004), and this is particularly true regarding ethical leadership. This paper presents a first attempt at examining the importance attached to leading ethically from a cross-cultural perspective. First, the western-based ethical philosophy and leadership literatures are reviewed to identify the core attributes and behaviors that have been put forth as characterizing ethical leadership. A western-based perspective is employed for two reasons. First, it provides a conceptual frame-of-reference and starting point for determining the core factors associated with leading in an ethical manner. Using this perspective also addresses a second, more practical, business need. In response to the myriad ethical scandals that occurred in western-based businesses (particularly in the United States), corporations have begun implementing ethics and integrity programs to prevent these types of events from occurring in the future. Many of the larger organizations will have to address issues of leading ethically across cultures, and by taking this

perspective we aim to provide useful information for managers as well as developers of training content.

## Ethical leadership across cultures

### *What is ethical leadership?*

Fundamentally, ethical leadership involves leading in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of others (Ciulla, 2004). As leaders are by nature in a position of social power, ethical leadership focuses on how leaders use their social power in the decisions they make, actions they engage in, and ways they influence others (Gini, 1997). To date, we are aware of only two studies that have empirically examined ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2003). To supplement their perspectives, we conducted a comprehensive review of the literature, and identified six key attributes that appear to characterize ethical leadership, including *character and integrity, ethical awareness, community/people-orientation, motivating, encouraging and empowering, and managing ethical accountability*. These attributes are discussed in greater depth below.

### *Character and integrity*

Character refers to "the pattern of intentions, inclinations, and virtues" that provide the ethical or moral foundation for behavior (Petrick and Quinn, 1997, p. 51). Bass (1956) suggested that leaders' character becomes apparent in acts of humility, loyalty, virtue, generosity, and forgiveness. Further, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) went on to contend that character demands a "commitment to virtue in all circumstances" (p. 196). Integrity is a fundamental component of character (Fluker, 2002; Petrick and Quinn, 1997), and entails the ability to both determine, as well as engage in morally correct behavior regardless of external pressures (Emler and Cook, 2001). Moreover, integrity is often considered to be an important aspect of leadership in general (e.g., Bass, 1990; Bennis, 1989; Locke et al., 1999; Posner and Schmidt, 1984). Demonstrating integrity is important for engendering a sense of leader trustworthiness (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002), which Bass and Avolio (1993) contend is critical for followers to accept a leader's visions and Brown et al. (2005) suggest is a direct component of leading ethically.

Leader character and integrity provide a foundation of personal characteristics that guide a leader's beliefs, decisions, and actions.

#### *Ethical awareness*

Ethical awareness "is the capacity to perceive and be sensitive to relevant moral issues that deserve consideration in making choices that will have a significant impact on others" (Petrick and Quinn, 1997, p. 89). Further, ethical awareness applies to both the consequences of actions or decisions, as well as the processes used to achieve them. According to Treviño et al. (2003) leaders demonstrate ethical awareness by having a concern for (a) the collective good of the group, (b) the impact of both means and ends, (c) the long-term and not just the short-term, and (d) the perspectives and interests of multiple stakeholders. Moreover, many of the questions on the Brown et al. (2005) Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) focus on a leader's demonstration of ethical awareness in the ways they model and promote ethically appropriate conduct.

#### *Community/people-orientation*

Ethical leaders have a focus on "serving the greater good" (Treviño et al., 2003, p. 19), which results in being people-oriented, aware of how their actions impact others, and using their social power to serve the collective interests of the group over self-serving interests (Fluker, 2002; Gini, 1998; Kanungo and Mendonca, 1996). Moreover, as the notion of ethics is primarily concerned with "the common good" (Potts, 2002, p. 44), civility, which involves integrating the rights and needs of others, (Gini, 1998) as well as considering how one's actions impact others (Bowie, 1991), is particularly important for ethical leadership. Altruism appears to be important to developing a community/people-orientation, and Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) even contend that altruism provides the ethical foundation of leadership. Altruism, which involves engaging in behaviors intended to help others without expecting any external rewards (Macaulay and Berkowitz, 1970) or regard for one's personal welfare (Krebs, 1982), is also an important characteristic of ethical leadership.

#### *Motivating*

Ethical leaders motivate followers to put the interests of the group ahead of their own (Bass and Steidlmeier,

1999; Gini, 1997; Kanungo and Mendonca, 1996). Ethical leadership involves an intellectual and emotional commitment between leaders and followers (Zaleznik, 1990) that makes both parties "reciprocally co-responsible in the pursuit of a common enterprise" (Gini, 1997, p. 326). This is conceptually similar to the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1993), which involves inspiring followers to work toward the leader's vision for the group and to be committed to the group. Brown et al. (2005) even contended that ethical leadership "falls within the nexus of inspiring, stimulating, and visionary leader behaviors that make up transformational and charismatic leadership" (p. 117). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) went on to suggest that authentic transformational leaders are ethical in their influence tactics when they increase followers' awareness of ethical behavior, instill confidence in their subordinates, and "move followers to go beyond their self-interests for the good of their group, organization, or society" (Bass, 1998, p. 171).

#### *Encouraging and empowering*

Ethical leaders are encouraging and empowering so that followers gain a sense of personal competence that allows them to be self-sufficient (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Gini, 1997). Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) suggested that leaders with altruistic motives have a sense of identification with and respect for their followers. As a result, leaders use empowerment strategies that build followers' self-confidence and self-efficacy. These actions parallel the idealized influence and individualized consideration facets of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1993). Idealized influence involves motivating followers to question past assumptions and to think independently and creatively, while individualized consideration involves treating followers equitably and fairly. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) also added that ethical empowerment strategies are important antecedents of followers' perceptions that the leader's intentions are in the best interest of the group.

#### *Managing ethical accountability*

In their study of executive ethical leadership, Treviño et al. (2003) found that ethical leadership entails a transactional component that involves setting

standards and expectations of ethical conduct for followers. Their findings suggest that ethical leaders establish standards of ethical conduct and hold their subordinates accountable using the rewards and punishment systems that are available.

Together, these aspects of ethical leadership align closely with several major ethical theories, including virtue ethics, Kantian deontological ethics, and utilitarianism. Virtue ethics focuses on the intrinsic characteristics of an individual as contained in that person's character or virtues held (Lefkowitz, 2003). The underlying assumption is that a person's character predisposes a person to do right things and to act ethically (Petrick and Quinn, 1997). Virtue ethics is embodied in the ethical leadership dimension of character and integrity. In a similar vein, Kantian deontological ethics also focus on the intrinsic nature of a person or an action. Kant contended that the good of an action should be judged by the nature of that act or the intention of the person committing the act, independent of its consequences (Lefkowitz, 2003). Thus, personal motivations and intentions are of critical importance to determining if an action is good regardless of the consequences (Pincoffs, 1985; Slote, 1992). A particularly relevant aspect of Kant's writing for ethical leadership research is his contention that the one absolute and unconditional good is respecting the value of human beings, and that a moral or good act is one that is motivated by intentions or a sense of duty to uphold the value of humanity (Lefkowitz, 2003). Moreover, Lefkowitz (2003) noted that Kant's perspective on humanity is one of the most important moral guidelines ever put forward as it asserted that all human beings have "absolute worth in and of themselves and thus should be treated with dignity and respect" (p. 48). Deontology is clearly apparent in Ciulla's (2004) perspective on ethical leadership. While deontology is embodied in the entire notion of ethical leadership, it is perhaps most clearly evident in the character and integrity, ethical awareness, and community/people-orientation aspects of ethical leadership, as they involve respecting and promoting the respect of others. Third, utilitarianism is a type of teleological ethical theory that contends an action is good if it produces that greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people (Bentham, 1789/1948). By and large, leaders are expected to

produce results. As such, utilitarianism needs to be considered in defining ethical leadership. Utilitarianism is evident in the notion of using one's social power to benefit the greater good, and in the community/people-orientation, motivational, and encouraging/empowering aspects of ethical leadership.

Additionally, it is important to point out that the perspective on ethical leadership summarized above differs somewhat from Brown et al.'s (2005) perspective. They present a social learning view of ethical leadership, where they contend that ethical leadership involves role modeling and promoting normatively ethically appropriate conduct, and is demonstrated via a leader's actions, decisions, and communications. In contrast, the perspective presented in this paper focuses on leader cognitions and actions, and suggests that ethical leadership is demonstrated via multiple levels of psychological processes. At the core of ethical leadership exists a cognitive component consisting of leaders' values and knowledge (integrity, ethical awareness, and community/people-orientations) which then influence the way leaders behave and use their social power (motivating, encouraging, and empowering followers and holding people accountable). By focusing broadly on the psychological processes (cognitions and behaviors) involved with ethical leadership, we provide an alternative perspective to Brown et al.'s model. We do not intend to criticize their work, but rather to provide an alternative, theoretically grounded perspective that focuses on both leader cognition and behavior. We applaud Brown et al. for their ground-breaking work in this area. Our intention is to build on their efforts and further contribute to the understanding of ethical leadership in organizations.

In their study of executive ethical leadership, Treviño et al. (2003) noted that there is likely to be considerable variation in the importance people attach to ethical leadership, and research is needed that examines whether people view ethical leadership as important for effective leadership. Societal culture provides people with a powerful set of cues as to the behaviors that are encouraged or discouraged by that society, and provide a powerful set of contextual forces that affect the types of leadership that people come to view as effective in a setting (Lord et al., 2001).

*Cross-cultural leadership studies*

The practices, norms, and values that become commonly shared by members of a society provide a frame of reference for making social comparisons (Heine et al., 2002), as well as judgments about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of behavior. Hofstede's (1980) work was instrumental in identifying the implications of culture differences for organizational behavior. One area addressed by recent research has examined culture as it relates to the types of leadership practiced within a society (see Dickson et al., 2003; House and Javidan, 2004). For example, Offermann and Hellmann (1997) found that managers from countries with low power distance values tended to be more communicative and perceived as more approachable than managers from higher power distance countries. Societal culture has also been found to be related to variation in the expectations that people have about leaders (e.g., Den Hartog et al., 1999; Dorfman and House, 2004; Gerstner and Day, 1994; House and Javidan, 2004). These expectations are critical to the leadership process as they influence the types of people who are accepted as leaders, the amount of discretion and authority that leaders are able to exercise, follower loyalty, and the type of leadership provided by leaders (Lord and Maher, 1991; Lord et al., 2001). Researchers have found that societal culture is associated with differences in personal values and sensitivities to ethical issues (Jackson, 2001). Business practices that are commonly accepted in one country may conflict with a code of ethics or standard practices in another country creating ethical dilemmas for managers trying to conduct business across cultures (Carroll, 2004; Donaldson and Dunfee, 1999). As such, the cross-cultural research suggests that there is likely to be variation across cultures regarding whether the various aspects of ethical leadership are viewed as contributing to or impeding effective leadership. As expectations for both leadership and ethics may vary across cultures, research is needed that examines cross-cultural variation in the importance attached to various aspects of ethical leadership.

Vandenberg and Lance (2000), among others, have contended that researchers need to establish measurement equivalence in their questionnaires prior to making comparisons across groups, particularly when conducting cross-cultural research. Differences in

ratings or in relationships between predictor and outcome variables may be the result of true differences across cultures (Myers and Tan, 2002) or to the non-equivalence in measures (Mullen, 1995). For researchers to draw meaningful comparisons across cultures, they need to first demonstrate the measurement equivalence of questionnaires (Vandenberg and Lance, 2000). When measurement equivalence is demonstrated, researchers can assume that variables of interest have similar meaning and are thus comparable across cultures (Drasgow and Kanfer, 1985; Karahanna et al., 2002), which then enhances the interpretability of results (van de Vijver and Leung, 1997).

This paper examines the endorsement of components of ethical leadership across cultures. First, a measure of ethical leadership is designed and the measurement equivalence of this scale is examined across 31 different societies. Then, variation in the endorsement of components of ethical leadership is examined across clusters of societies with similar cultures.

**Method***Participants*

Data from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) Research Program (House et al., 1999; House and Javidan, 2004), a study of leadership and culture across 62 different societies, are used for this study. In short, GLOBE's team of approximately 180 social scientists from around the world collected data from approximately 17,000 middle managers from 931 organizations in 62 different societies and three different industries (financial services, food services, and telecommunications) during the mid 1990s. As part of GLOBE's data collection efforts, all participants completed questionnaires designed to measure perceptions of leaders. Next, approximately one-half of the participants from each organization completed scales designed to assess organizational culture (Form A) while the other half completed scales designed to examine societal culture (Form B). Forms A and B were distributed randomly to participants within organizations. In the present study, data regarding the endorsement of ethical leadership are obtained from both Form A and Form B respondents.

Measures

*Dimensions of ethical leadership*

GLOBE’s leadership scales were developed to assess 21 dimensions of leadership. The scales were composed of 100 attributes or behavioral descriptors (e.g., autocratic; benevolent; nurturing; visionary). Participants were asked to rate each descriptor on a 7-point response scale ranging from 1-*This behavior or characteristic greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader* to 7-*This behavior or characteristic contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader*. Because the GLOBE project did not originally develop scales to measure ethical leadership, we derived a measure using the attribute and behavioral descriptor items. First, we asked six graduate students enrolled in an Industrial/Organizational Psychology program who had completed a Doctoral seminar on leadership to perform a q-sort exercise. In this exercise, they were presented a written summary of ethical leadership and asked to identify which of GLOBE’s 100 items were reflective of ethical leadership. A total of 23 items were identified by at least four of the six raters as being reflective of ethical leadership. These items were then standardized within countries according to procedures recommended by Dickson et al. (2000). As different societal cultures provide different frames of reference for making social comparisons (Heine et al., 2002), this procedure helped to minimize reference group effects.

Next, an exploratory factor analysis across all countries was conducted using these standardized items and a four-factor solution including 15 of the 23 items was retained. A confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted using structural equation modeling procedures in Mplus (2.01). The fit of a model in which each item was set to load only on its respective factor was tested. Results suggested that the model fit the data well (CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05), providing evidence to support the four-factor solution. The four factors that emerged aligned closely with the key components of ethical leadership identified in the literature. The first factor was labeled Character/Integrity (four items;  $\alpha = 0.74$ ), and closely aligned with the character and integrity aspect of ethical leadership. The second factor was labeled Altruism (four items,  $\alpha = 0.66$ ), and aligned closely with the notions of altruism and civility embodied in the community/people-orientation

aspects. We labeled the next factor Collective Motivation (five items,  $\alpha = 0.76$ ), and it aligned clearly with the motivating aspects of ethical leadership. The final factor that emerged was labeled Encouragement (two items,  $\alpha = 0.73$ ). This factor also aligned with the encouraging/empowering aspects of ethical leadership discussed earlier. Table I compares the dimensions of ethical leadership addressed by this measure to the conceptual dimensions of ethical leadership identified through the review of the literature.

In summary, a comprehensive review of the literature was performed to identify the core

TABLE I  
Comparison of the dimensions of ethical leadership addressed by the ethical leadership measure to the conceptual dimensions identified in the literature

Conceptual dimensions of ethical leadership	Scale dimensions of ethical leadership
Character and Integrity	<i>Character/Integrity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Sincere</li> <li>• Just</li> <li>• Honest</li> </ul>
Community/ People-Oriented	<i>Altruism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generous</li> <li>• Fraternal</li> <li>• Compassionate</li> <li>• Modest</li> </ul> <i>Collective Motivation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicative</li> <li>• Confidence Building</li> <li>• Group Orientation</li> <li>• Motive Arouser</li> <li>• Team Building</li> </ul>
Motivating Encouraging and Empowering	<i>Collective Motivation</i> <i>Encouragement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging</li> <li>• Morale Booster</li> </ul>
Ethical Awareness Managing Ethical Accountability	Not addressed  Not addressed

Note: The Scale Dimensions of Ethical Leadership column identifies the individual items (leader attributes) that compose that dimension.

components of ethical leadership from a conceptual perspective. Items from GLOBE's leadership scales that were consistent with conceptual components of ethical leadership were identified by Industrial and Organizational Psychology graduate students. These items were then subject to an exploratory factor analysis which produced a solution with four factors that aligned closely with the conceptually defined components of ethical leadership, and the factor structure was then confirmed using confirmatory factor analyses. Unfortunately, the GLOBE attributes and behaviors did not match up with the ethical awareness or accountability components. As such these components of ethical leadership were not addressed in the current study. While ethical awareness and managing standards of ethical conduct are obviously important components of ethical leadership, our measure addressed both leader cognition (Character/Integrity and Altruism) and behavior (Collective Motivation and Empowerment) all of which have been identified as important aspects of ethical leadership. As such, we suggest that while our measure was not able to capture the full breadth of the six components comprising the ethical leadership construct, it provides a useful starting point for examining beliefs about ethical leadership across cultures.

#### *Societal culture clusters*

While every society has its own unique culture, there are societies with similar cultures (Dickson and Den Hartog, 2005). Ronen and Shenkar (1985) were among the first researchers to create culture clusters by grouping together countries that have similar work-related values and attitudes. Building on their work, GLOBE created a set of culture clusters by combining societies that have similar cultural values and practices (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). First, GLOBE project researchers assessed cultural values and practices of societies along nine dimensions, including *Assertiveness*, *Future Orientation*, *Gender Egalitarianism*, *Human Orientation*, *In-Group Collectivism*, *Institutional Collectivism*, *Performance Orientation*, *Power Distance*, and *Uncertainty Avoidance*. Then they conducted a cluster analysis of the cultural values and practices of the 62 societies, and identified 10 culture clusters listed in Table II. Societies that were grouped into a cluster are similar to each other along multiple cultural dimensions. Additionally, in

TABLE II  
Societies included in this study grouped by Culture Cluster Membership

Culture Cluster	Society	N
Anglo	Australia <sup>a</sup>	344
	Canada <sup>a</sup>	257
	England <sup>a</sup>	168
	Ireland <sup>a</sup>	156
	New Zealand	184
	United States <sup>a</sup>	399
	White South Africa <sup>a</sup>	180
Confucian Asian	China <sup>a</sup>	160
	Hong Kong	171
	Japan	195
	Singapore	218
	South Korea <sup>a</sup>	233
	Taiwan <sup>a</sup>	236
	Eastern European	Albania
Georgia		258
Greece <sup>a</sup>		234
Hungary <sup>a</sup>		183
Kazakhstan		121
Poland		278
Russian		301
Germanic European	Slovenia <sup>a</sup>	254
	Austria	169
	Germany (Former East)	44
	Germany (Former GDR) <sup>a</sup>	413
	Netherlands <sup>a</sup>	287
	Switzerland <sup>a</sup>	321
Latin American	Argentina <sup>a</sup>	153
	Bolivia	102
	Brazil <sup>a</sup>	263
	Columbia <sup>a</sup>	289
	Costa Rica	115
	Ecuador	49
	El Salvador	26
	Guatemala	112
	Mexico <sup>a</sup>	308
	Venezuela <sup>a</sup>	142
Latin European	France	182
	Israel <sup>a</sup>	543
	Italy <sup>a</sup>	266
	Portugal	79
	Spain	360
Middle Eastern	Egypt <sup>a</sup>	201
	Kuwait	50
	Morocco	105
	Qatar	147
	Turkey <sup>a</sup>	289

TABLE II  
(Continued)

Culture Cluster	Society	N
Nordic European	Denmark	324
	Finland <sup>a</sup>	430
	Sweden	895
Southeast Asian	India <sup>a</sup>	228
	Indonesia <sup>a</sup>	336
	Malaysia	121
	Philippines <sup>a</sup>	285
Sub-Saharan Africa	Thailand <sup>a</sup>	444
	Black South Africa <sup>a</sup>	241
	Nambia	32
	Nigeria	415
	Zambia	76
	Zimbabwe	45

<sup>a</sup>Indicates that society was also included in the multi-group confirmatory factor analyses.

many instances the societies within a cluster share a common language, are located in geographic close proximity, and/or have a similar physical climate. It is important to note that while commonalities exist among societies within a cluster, differences exist as well. Ignoring these differences fails to address the intricacies of day-to-day life within a society. However, the use of culture clusters provides a parsimonious approach for examining differences in beliefs about leadership by grouping together those societies that have a number of commonalities.

## Results

First, we conducted a series of multi-group confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using M-plus (2.01) to test whether there was equivalence in the factor structure of the ethical leadership measure across societies. Multi-group CFA uses latent variable structural equation modeling procedures to determine whether the factor loadings of each item on its latent construct (i.e., dimension of ethical leadership) are equivalent across multiple groups (i.e., societies). The measurement equivalence analyses were conducted on a sub-sample of 7715 participants from 31 different societies. In determining appropriate sample sizes for structural equation modeling analyses, Bentler and Chou (1987) suggest that researchers

include a minimum of five cases per estimated parameter. As the ethical leadership questionnaire contained 15 items, a minimum of 75 respondents ensures a minimum of five cases per factor loading within each society. As such, only societies with a minimum of 75 respondents providing complete data were included. For the present study, the factor loadings for each item were constrained to be identical across societies, a model was estimated, and fit indices were examined to determine if the estimated model fit the sample data. A comparative fit index (CFI) greater than or equal to 0.90 and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of less than 0.10 were criteria used to determine model fit.

Regarding Character/Integrity, results provided some indication of model fit as an acceptable CFI of 0.91 was obtained, however the RMSEA value was much higher than desired (RMSEA = 0.13). These results provide conflicting evidence of model fit, and suggest that the model provides only a modest fit of the data. For the Altruism dimension, a more clear indication of overall model fit was found (CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.08). Finally, since the Encouragement dimension contained only two items, the equivalence of both the Collective Motivation and Encouragement dimensions were examined in one CFA analysis. Results again provided evidence of overall model fit (CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.09). Model fit indices are summarized in Table III. Overall, the results of the measurement equivalence analyses provide some evidence, though modest in nature, that the dimensions of ethical leadership are defined by the same items across societies, and thus demonstrate measurement equivalence. We then used these scales to examine variation in the endorsement of ethical leadership dimensions across societal cultures using GLOBE's culture cluster groupings.

As noted previously, GLOBE culture clusters are groupings of those societies that have similar cultural values and practices along multiple dimensions of culture. A series of four one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine if there were differences across the culture clusters. All participants from the GLOBE project that responded to questions used for the ethical leadership scales ( $N=13,537$ ) were used in these analyses. Individual responses were aggregated to the country level and



TABLE III  
Confirmatory factor analyses examining factor loading equivalence across countries

Dimension	$\chi^2$	df	<i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA
Integrity	7639.42	186	<0.001	0.91	0.13
Altruism	5261.51	186	<0.001	0.96	0.08
Collective Motivation and Encouragement	17400.32	651	<0.001	0.93	0.09

CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

the ANOVAs were conducted on a sample of 59 different societies (leadership scales were not completed by participants from three societies).

Results indicated that the endorsement of each dimension of ethical leadership differed significantly across the culture clusters: Character/Integrity

TABLE IV  
Ranking of societal culture clusters based on endorsement of each dimension of ethical leadership

Band	Character/Integrity	Altruism	Collective Motivation	Encouragement
Higher	Nordic European (6.40)	Southeast Asian (5.16)	Anglo (6.32)	
<i>M</i> Range	6.40	5.16	6.25–6.32	
Middle	Germanic European (6.31)	Sub-Saharan (4.96)	Germanic European (6.12)	Nordic European (6.43)
	Latin American (6.26)	Confucian Asian (4.93)	Sub-Saharan (6.12)	Anglo (6.39)
	Anglo (6.22)	Latin American (4.87)	Latin European (6.09)	Latin American (6.19)
	Southeast Asian (6.19)	Middle Eastern (4.76)	Southeast Asian (6.06)	Germanic European (6.18)
	Sub-Saharan (6.01)	Anglo (4.70)	Eastern European (5.86)	Sub-Saharan (6.17)
	Latin European (6.00)	Eastern European (4.53)	Confucian Asian (5.78)	Southeast Asian (6.15)
	Eastern European (5.89)	Germanic European (4.37)		Confucian Asian (6.04)
	Confucian Asian (5.82)			Eastern European (6.03)
<i>M</i> Range	5.82–6.31	4.37–4.96	5.78–6.12	Latin European (6.01) 6.01–6.43
Lower	Middle Eastern (5.65)	Latin European (4.29)	Middle Eastern (5.53)	Middle Eastern (5.57)
<i>M</i> Range	5.65	Nordic European (4.23) 4.23–4.29	5.53	5.57

*N* = 59 (Anglo *n* = 7; Confucian Asian *n* = 6; Eastern European *n* = 8; Germanic European *n* = 5; Latin American *n* = 10; Latin European *n* = 5; Middle Eastern *n* = 5; Nordic European *n* = 3; Sub-Saharan African *n* = 5; Southeast Asian *n* = 5.).

( $F_{(9,49)} = 2.457, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.311$ ); Altruism ( $F_{(9,49)} = 3.230, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.372$ ); Collective Motivation ( $F_{(9,49)} = 3.773, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.409$ ); and Encouragement ( $F_{(9,49)} = 2.403, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.306$ ). The magnitude of the differences was also estimated using the Eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) effect size statistic, which represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variables (i.e., ethical leadership dimension) explained by categorization in one of the culture clusters. The effect size estimates indicated that societal culture clusters had a substantial influence on the endorsement of ethical leadership scores. For example, approximately 37% of the differences in scores across societies regarding the endorsement of Altruism as important for effective leadership were attributable to the culture cluster that a particular society was categorized in.

Further examination of the results reveals an interesting finding. While statistically and practically significant differences existed between culture clusters, the cluster-level mean endorsement was above the scale midpoint (4.0) for all dimensions, and above 5.0 for all dimensions except Altruism. This finding suggests that there is universal endorsement for the importance of the components of ethical leadership; however, societies differ in the degree of endorsement.

We then conducted a series of post hoc analyses using the Student–Newman–Keuls procedure to identify where differences between clusters existed. Table IV summarizes the results of this analysis. Within each ethical leadership dimension, societal clusters are ranked from high to low according to the cluster-level average. Based on the Student–Newman–Keuls results, clusters were then grouped into *Higher*, *Middle*, or *Lower* bands. Within each band, the clusters do not differ significantly from each other.

Regarding the Character/Integrity dimension, the mean endorsement varied from 5.65 for societies included in the Middle Eastern cluster to 6.40 for societies included in the Nordic European cluster. While the high mean scores indicate that Character/Integrity is universally viewed as facilitating a person being an effective leader, societies in the Nordic European cluster endorsed Character/Integrity to a significantly greater degree than societies in the Middle Eastern cluster. Regarding the Altruism dimension, the mean endorsement ranged from 4.23 in Nordic European societies and 4.29 in Latin

European societies to 5.16 in Southeast Asian societies. While cluster-level means universally drifted toward positive endorsement of Altruism, results also indicated that Southeast Asian societies endorsed Altruism as important for effective leadership to a significantly greater degree than either Nordic or Latin European societies. Scores for the Collective Motivation dimension ranged from 5.53 for societies in the Middle Eastern cluster to 6.32 in Anglo societies. Again, while Collective Motivation was universally viewed as facilitating effective leadership, Anglo, Latin American, and Nordic European societies endorsed this aspect of ethical leadership to a significantly greater degree than societies in the Middle Eastern cluster. Finally, the mean scores for Encouragement ranged from 5.57 for Middle Eastern societies to 6.43 in Nordic European societies. Middle Eastern societies tended to endorse Encouragement to a lesser degree than societies comprising the remaining ten culture clusters.

## Discussion

In general, the findings from this study indicate that Character/Integrity, Altruism, Collective Motivation, and Encouragement – four components that characterize ethical leadership in western societies – are universally supported, and viewed as behaviors and characteristics that contribute to a person being an effective leader across cultures. At the same time, however, cultures also differed in the degree of endorsement for each dimension. This suggests that the dimensions of ethical leadership included in this study represent a *variform universal*, which exists when a principle is viewed similarly around the world, however cultural subtleties lead to differences in the enactment of that principle across cultures (Hanges et al., 2000). We now further discuss the specific findings, along with the practical and theoretical implications of this work.

For the Character/Integrity dimension, the highest level of endorsement was found among Nordic European societies. Interestingly, two of the societies in this cluster, Sweden and Finland, have continuously been ranked among the countries with the lowest levels of corruption throughout society as indicated by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) (Transparency

International, 2001). These findings appear to suggest that integrity is highly valued among Nordic societies, and one that is particularly important for leaders. Character/Integrity was endorsed to a lesser extent among Middle Eastern societies. A possible explanation for this finding is the importance of saving face in Middle Eastern societies. To gain the respect of peers and subordinates, as well as to maintain one's own self respect, it is particularly important for leaders to maintain their image or status (Dickson and Den Hartog, 2005). While Character/Integrity was viewed as important, perhaps they take on different meaning and have a different emphasis due to the importance of saving face in these societies.

Within the Altruism dimension, Southeast Asian societies demonstrated the greatest level of endorsement of leader Altruism. There is a strong sense of in-group pride and loyalty coupled with a humane orientation engrained in the culture of societies in the Southeast Asian culture cluster (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). Perhaps these aspects of culture translate into expectations that effective leaders are generous and fraternal toward their subordinates. Altruism was endorsed to a lesser degree among Latin European and Nordic European societies. Humane oriented cultural practices have been found to be less common among Latin European societies, while in-group pride and loyalty practices have been found to be less common among Nordic European societies (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). Perhaps these cultural characteristics translate into Altruism being viewed as less critical for leaders to be effective.

Latin American and Anglo societies tended to endorse collective motivation to a greater extent than other societies. Collective Motivation embodies aspects of communication, team building, and motive arousing in followers. Both Latin American and Anglo societies tend to be generally accepting of expressive communication and open displays of emotion (Dickson and Den Hartog, 2005). Anglo societies in particular tend to view visionary communication by leaders positively and have expectations for communication and participation in decision making (Dickson et al., 2003). As such, it stands to reason that these societies would have a high level of endorsement of Collective Motivation. In contrast, Confucian Asian societies tended to endorse collective motivation to a lesser degree. In

these cultures, people tend to prefer leaders that communicate their vision in a non-aggressive manner (Fu and Yukl, 2000), and thus they are less likely to view arousing followers' motives or building confidence as important leader attributes.

Nordic European societies were also among the strongest endorsers of Collective Motivation, along with Encouragement. Cultural practices in Nordic European societies tend to emphasize a lower level of power distance and a greater emphasis on collective distribution of rewards (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). Perhaps this translates into a desire for leaders who are encouraging, expressive, and foster an environment of teamwork.

In contrast, Middle Eastern societies tended to endorse Collective Motivation and Encouragement to a lesser extent than other societies. A closer look at cultural beliefs and leadership practices among these societies may provide some insights into these findings. First, beliefs about what constitutes an effective leader may differ. For example, Power Distance is a highly valued aspect of culture in Middle Eastern societies (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). As a result, people are accepting of centralized decision making, more willing to accept direction from leaders, and less likely to question the actions of their leaders (see Dickson et al., 2003). Additionally, protecting one's reputation and saving face are extremely important among Middle Eastern societies. When a leader's reputation is tarnished, their ability to be viewed as an effective leader by both colleagues and subordinates is severely hindered, which in turn will likely lead to further challenges for the individual. Moreover, Middle Eastern societies are built on social networks of interconnected relationships (Hutchings and Weir, 2004). Secondly, the attributes and behaviors that are characteristic of ethical leaders according to Middle Eastern norms and expectations may differ from other countries. Islamic religious values are deeply rooted aspects of everyday life throughout Middle Eastern societies (Hutchings and Weir, 2004), and ethical leadership likely takes on additional components that address upholding Islamic values when conducting business. The dimensions of ethical leadership examined in this study would not have captured those components. As a result, ethical leadership in Middle Eastern societies likely involves not only components of Integrity, Altruism, Collective Motivation,

and Encouragement (because they were all endorsed as contributing to effective leadership), but also more specialized components that involve modeling and respecting Islamic values and building relationships across organizational boundaries.

#### *Implications and limitations*

In examining the implications of this study, several points need to be addressed. First, as noted previously, our conceptualization of ethical leadership in this study is drawn primarily from a western view of business ethics and ethical theories. The implications of these findings are thus most applicable to organizations based in western societies engaging in business outside of their home culture cluster. However, the finding of measurement equivalence suggests that our measure of ethical leadership has some utility for examining ethical leadership across cultures. Further, as each of these dimensions aligned with the theoretical conceptualization of ethical leadership discussed earlier and were universally endorsed as contributing to a person being an effective leader, we suggest that they provide a useful starting point for understanding the core components of ethical leadership that are similar across cultures.

While cultural values of a society impact what people view as right and wrong (Beauchamp and Bowie, 2001), managers are increasingly likely to encounter situations where the norms of their home country conflict with the norms of the country he or she is doing business in. In fact Carroll (2004) noted “the primary venue for ethical debates in the future will more and more be the world stage” (p. 114). Accordingly, Donaldson and Dunfee (1994, 1999) contend that establishing codes of ethical conduct that are consistent with hypernorms of ethical behavior may help to reduce ethical uncertainty in international business environments. Hypernorms refer to fundamental principles of human existence that are universally endorsed, such as providing physical security for workers or deception being viewed as wrongful (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994). Given the variform universal endorsement of the four ethical leadership dimensions found in this study, perhaps these dimensions reflect a hypernorm of leading that may help to provide guidance to organizations faced with the challenge of establishing and maintaining standards of ethical conduct across cultures.

A second point that needs to be addressed involves the culture clusters. Even though societies within a cluster have similar cultures and endorse similar forms of leadership there are differences in values and norms between societies. In addition, considerable variability also exists within a society in terms of the things people pay attention to and emphasize. The findings from this study provide indication of how people within a culture cluster, on average, view certain aspects of ethical leadership as of more or less importance for effective leadership.

While these leadership attributes are universally endorsed there was also considerable variation across societies. This variation provides important information to organizations developing compliance programs, integrity programs, or codes of ethics on an international basis, by identifying areas where organizations may either have an easier time implementing programs or where they may meet greater resistance. For example, organizations are likely to encounter less conflict regarding ethical norms within a cluster than between clusters. Developing implementation strategies that take into account variation in the degree of endorsement of ethical leadership may help to ensure a smoother transition process, and also to gain quicker and greater acceptance of these initiatives. Finally, understanding differences across societies can be useful in the design of codes of ethics that are sensitive to norms of various countries, yet do not violate hypernorms of ethical conduct.

There are several limiting factors to this research. First, again this study is largely based on a western view of ethics. As such, characteristics that may be considered essential for ethical leadership outside of western society are not addressed in this study. For example, Islamic values are deeply rooted in the cultural values of societies in the Middle Eastern culture just as Confucian values are pervasive throughout societies in the Confucian Asian cluster. The conceptual model of components of ethical leadership presented in this paper does not capture ethical values that are unique to those societies. Future research is needed that identifies both differences and similarities in the core attributes and behaviors that characterize ethical leadership across cultures.

Secondly, this study was conducted using an archival dataset that was not originally designed to

address ethical leadership. However, this study is based on a powerful dataset that allowed us to examine beliefs about some of the important aspects of ethical leadership across 59 different societies. In addition, our measure did not capture the full conceptual space of the ethical leadership construct. Future research is needed that examines the endorsement of all of the components of ethical leadership, including ethical awareness and managing ethical accountability.

In conclusion, each of the ethical leadership dimensions addressed in this paper focuses on leading in a positive or people-focused manner. When combined, these dimensions reflect leading in a manner that is respectful of the rights and dignity of others – that is, ethical leadership. Traditionally, leadership researchers have focused on studying the complexities of the leadership process with an ultimate aim at understanding how leaders influence performance. Ethical leadership stands alongside and complements the performance focus of these theories by outlining ways that leaders can lead ethically and ensure the ethics of business practices in their organizations. This is not to say that ethical leadership is not important for effectiveness or performance. In fact, we speculate that ethical leadership will likely have a strong relationship with unit performance, perhaps by having an additive or interactive effect with more performance-focused aspects of leadership such as leader-member exchange. Moreover, given the financial devastation that resulted from the demise of corporations such as Enron and WorldCom that occurred largely from the failure of their leaders to act ethically, the importance of ethical leadership for firm performance cannot be ignored. At the very least, increased focus on ethical leadership should help organizations avoid these economic pitfalls that have affected not only members of individual organizations, but also the communities which these organizations serve. Indeed, the prosperity of a society is intricately linked to the ethics of those who lead, and the citizens who endorse, and indeed demand, virtue in their leaders.

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