

# CONTEMPORARY SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP RESEARCH: SOME RECENT EMPIRICAL STUDIES

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## ABSTRACT

Recent studies of businesspeople in Sub-Saharan Africa by the Global Leadership & Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness project and the Preferred Leadership Across Cultures project are reviewed, consolidated, and discussed. The results indicate that evidence of a pan-Sub-Saharan African convergence of managerial leadership practices and preferences around the ubuntu movement is not evident. The movement may be an inspirational goal promulgated by elites to encourage a more humane, community-oriented set of values for Sub-Saharan Africans. Results also indicate the managerial leadership behaviour preferences of Black and White South Africans is very similar, with evidence of general acceptance of what are termed “Western” attitudes toward business leadership.

**Keywords:** Managerial Leadership, Sub-Saharan Africa, Review

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## INTRODUCTION

Two approaches to understanding the development of managerial leadership philosophy in Africa today are,

- “The west has won”, nothing can beat democracy and capitalism; we're still at the end of history. --Francis Fukuyama
- *Ubuntu* will prevail in Sub-Saharan African ideology, focusing on people's allegiances and relationships with one another.

Beginning with the Leadership and Management Studies in Sub-Sahara Africa 2006 Conference, 25-28 June 2006, in Stone Town, Zanzibar, I have been following the extensive debate going on as to the “proper” direction of management and leadership, as well as management and leadership education development in Africa, ranging from “return to traditional”, adopt “Western” (North American, European) models, or develop a hybrid of the two (the latter is my predicted direction, and it probably cannot be prevented). Anecdotal discussions at the conferences indicate that going to tribal or village elders for decision-making is waning, and is increasingly rejected by younger generations. At the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology in 2006, in a presentation and discussion by Monique Wach, of Inetop - National Institute for the Study of Work and Career Counselling in France, she noted that compared to students in Burkina Faso, French students indicated

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stronger preference for “tradition” in values than did the students in Burkina Faso, with obvious implications for the future if this attitude holds.

Kirk and Bolden (2006) note that in recent years there has been a call for an “African renaissance”, whereby Africans are urged ‘to be true to themselves’ (Louw 2002:14), to liberate themselves from colonial and post-colonial thinking and to re-engage with African values (Koka 1997; Mbigi 2000; Mulemfo 2000; Teffo 1997). This call emphasizes the importance of education and of the development of indigenous knowledge...”

### **Scope, Boundary and Objectives**

In the leadership literature relating to Sub-Saharan Africa we see increasing calls for leadership studies, and leadership that are distinctively African and that are suited to now. Some propose that leadership can be a catalyst for social change and transformation, but only where it is deeply rooted in African concepts of identity and community, e.g., Mbigi & Maree (1995) and Prinsloo (2000). This call is to develop a body of indigenous knowledge about African leadership, a body of knowledge that can become the basis for the development of a new generation of leaders whose purpose is to transform Africa not into something different from its heritage but building upon heritage. That is, from an Africa perceived as in some way deficient to one which celebrates the characteristics of Africa. Ntibagirirwa (2003) states a need to understand and to address the difficulties of identity faced by African societies that stem from the fact that Africans have shifted away from their own value system and the moral values that go with it, to other value systems underpinned by other metaphysical foundations. Kirk & Bolden (2006) feel these aspirations raise some challenging questions for researchers:

- Firstly, “the continuing ontological question of defining *leadership*, especially in Africa”; my response is that at the current state of theoretical development of leader and leadership studies, the only useful definitions are operational definitions.
- Secondly, “from an epistemological perspective, if we have not been successful in defining *leadership*, how can we measure it?” My response is that we can only measure operational definitions.
- And thirdly, “is the notion of ‘African leadership’ useful or meaningful? Given the vastness of the continent, with its diverse cultures and histories, is the term ‘African leadership’ actually likely to hide more than it reveals?” My position is that there is no “African leadership” paradigm.

In this paper I will review consolidate, and discuss three studies carried out and reported in Littrell, Wu & Nkomo (2009) and Wanasika, Howell, Littrell & Dorfman (2011), in which I had some involvement.

### **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL EVOLUTION IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA**

A significant part of Sub-Saharan Africa is inhabited by a collection of related ethnic groups known as *Bantu*. The Bantu originated from the equatorial rainforest and migrated to different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, absorbing other communities and also becoming assimilated as they migrated. Bantu and Bantu-heritage cultures are widespread in the countries in this study.

In Zambia, for example, 10,000 years ago Bantu-speaking people set up cattle-based economic communities; these eventually were presided over by chiefs and stratified by age, gender, and wealth signified by ownership of livestock. Traditional leadership in most kingdoms and chiefdoms was based on ascribed power passed on through patrilineal inheritance. Values, customs, beliefs and rights were developed and codified through oral traditions. On the other hand, traditional rulers had to constantly seek the council of elders before resolving weighty or ambiguous matters that had no precedent. To a large extent, leadership was based on consensus among a select group of elders with regard to interpretation of oral traditions and customs. Men achieved leadership status as they advanced in age within the community. Age was explicitly associated with seniority and accumulated wisdom. However, failure to adhere to common values and norms often led one to be ostracized. (Littrell & Gregory 2008). These situations and traditions were heavily influenced and leadership practices changed by European colonisation.

### **Colonial Heritage**

European colonization followed a consistent pattern globally and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Early explorers had as one purpose spreading Christianity, with traditional African kings who had considerable (but not total) influence over their subjects, serving as important targets for conversion. The next step was to extract local raw materials, send them home for value added manufacturing, and export manufactured product and create demand in the Sub-Saharan Africa markets. The process of conversion to Christianity was facilitated by gifts, favourable trade arrangements, and other commercial activities. This was followed by gradual enculturation to the home culture of the colonisers, and by gradual conversion of the population to Christianity, establishment of missionary schools to teach the local community to read and write, and to educate a local cadre of administrators to facilitate the aims of the colonisers. Enculturation of the indigenous population with the colonisers' culture was an important objective.

Sub-Saharan Africa pre-colonial business cultures were based upon barter exchange, communal ownership of property, little consideration of personal wealth, reciprocal trust, and a concern for honour and face saving and face giving. After colonization, European administrators introduced money, individual tax structures, and paid labour for work in plantations, mines and other extraction industries.

By the mid 1950s it was evident that colonial rule, especially for the British, was not sustainable in Africa. African political parties were sufficiently powerful and organized to take their case to British parliamentarians. Due to the cold war, Marxist-leaning groups in Africa were able to obtain ideological and material support from the Eastern bloc. In some colonies, home-based resistance took the form of economic sabotage through demonstrations and strikes at the workplace. The argument that Africans were not ready for self-governance was weakened by the significant number of western-educated and high-status African elites. By the mid 1960s most Sub-Saharan Africa countries had been granted independence with indigenous Africans taking over leadership positions.

The first wave of African presidents inherited nascent countries that had been arbitrarily created without due consideration to local politics and ethnic groups. Many came to power on account of their elite education, rhetorical skills, and charisma. However, none seemed to have the necessary leadership characteristics to deal with post-independence challenges of

galvanizing the people around a common cause, writing a realistic constitution (most constitutions were cut-and-paste jobs of western constitutions), developing new governance structures and managing large projects such as mass education and health services. Leaders who survived retained power through a balance between acts of benevolence to supportive ethnic groups and brutal dictatorship against the opposition. They personalised the office by appointing family and cronies to senior positions while plundering the public exchequer and stashing funds in private bank accounts abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Leadership performance of many of the first generation of Sub-Saharan African leaders is a well-documented disaster. Immediately after independence, Nigeria was plunged into a prolonged ethnic civil war. *Coups d'état* became a widespread phenomenon. Many African governments changed their constitution to outlaw opposition parties and remove term limits. Consequently, some of the leaders such as Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Bongo in Gabon have been in power since independence.<sup>2</sup>

Following collapse of the Soviet Union, local mass action and pressure from financial donors and Africans in Diaspora led to a wave of multi-party democracy endeavours in the early 1990s. Many of the old guard stepped down or lost leadership positions during multi-party elections. A new breed of populist politicians seemed to have taken over the national leadership of many Sub-Saharan Africa countries. However, early evaluation of the effectiveness of current leadership suggests a case of old wine in new bottles.

It is difficult to distinguish a single, overarching African culture today. Nigeria alone has more than 300 ethnic groups, and the spread of Christianity, Islam, and urbanization during the past century have created further differentiations. However, African cultures share certain common characteristics. In addition to imported religions, many Sub-Saharan communities believed in the power of inanimate objects, and spirits, as well as a heavenly higher power.

Most groups were patrilineal and patrimonial. Men had more rights to inheritance and were allowed to be polygamous under most traditional customs. However, this is now infrequent in cosmopolitan areas due to adoption of some western values, opposition stemming from Christianity, and economic pressures. Although vows of marriage were traditionally made between husband and wife, they were often considered as contractual ties that bind the relationship between both families. Men were also expected to put food on the table and protect the family from external harm. In addition to existing power-distance relations based on ascribed status, there was a gender- and age-defined power-distance. The high-context nature of relationships was manifested in deep-rooted traditions, value of honour, trust and unconditional generosity towards other kinsmen. Acts of transgression against established norms and traditions had long term consequences that extend to future generations of the transgressor.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Mobutu Seseseko in Zaire had accumulated a personal fortune of \$10 billion when he died, while the entire country's foreign debt was \$7 billion (Ayithey, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Mugabe was President of Zimbabwe from the time it attained independence in 1980 until recently, while Omar Bongo has been President of Gabon since 1967. Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia was re-elected five times before being bundled out in 1991. In Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta was President from 1964 to 1979 when he died in office. Mobutu Seseseko, ruled Congo from 1965-1997 before being deposed in a military coup.

## **Effects of Colonial Culture**

Bierschenk (2003) and Geschiere (1993) reviewed French and British rule in colonial Africa. Typical of their conclusions, Geschiere, in a study of colonial Cameroon, indicate a continuous tug-of-war between the imposition of the management practices of the colonial powers and the ethnic practices, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of the local peoples. A not unexpected result of this tug-of-war development of a hybrid culture accommodating sufficiently, the needs of the members of the leadership and management cadre and the local peoples. This situation was discussed by Graen & Hui (1996), Heimer & Vince (1998) and Littrell (2003). In a case study of multi-ethnic work teams Heimer & Vince (1998) found that at the initial stages of their formation, the teams tend to move in one of two directions; towards the creation of a “safe hybrid cultural sub-group for highly heterogeneous teams. Sustainable learning and change within international teams, is created out of a further stage of development, the “challenging hybrid culture”, capitalizing upon the multicultural synergies. Depending upon the initiative and competence of the leader and manager players in hybrid colonial-leader-local-leader interactions, we saw hybrid cultures of various characteristics emerging. The lasting effect of these hybrid cultures is, of course, a function of the time in power of the colonial government, the kinds of programs and interactions between the colonial and local leaders, and the “strength” of a local culture in maintaining itself.

## **MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA**

Ugwuegbu (2001:65) states, “Problems of leadership in African organizations are responsible for the underdevelopment of organizations in many African countries.” He also states that many of the problems are due to the heritage of colonial governments and the fragmented ethnic and religious societies in Africa, see pp. 68-69. Chisholm (2001), in a qualitative analysis of interviews with managers in education in South Africa found that leadership competence was associated with “masculinity, rationality and whiteness” (p. 387), and a further comment, “white, male, middle-class, and heterosexual” (p. 389).

## **Specific Characteristics of Management Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Remnants of traditional cultural customs and values amongst different communities offer a glimpse of some GLOBE (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta, 2004 Chhokar, Brodeck and House 2007) cultural dimensions. Male dominance, polygamy, patrimony, and patrilineage signify that gender treatment is not egalitarian. Gender-specific roles and occupations can still be found in contemporary environments. Such roles are a constant reminder of unequal access to business possibilities between genders. A paternalistic nature of relationships is evident in the four countries. Men serve as heads of their families and are responsible for safety and economic needs. Power distance relationships can be identified in age-based status and gerontocracy. Within specific age-sets, members consider each other as equals. However, respect and wisdom are earned as men grow older. One of the enduring legacies of colonial influence is the continued emergence of a self-protective stratum of petty bourgeoisie among the educated and ruling class. Power distance is also expressed in ascribed pathways to leadership of political, and occasionally, 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 accumulation of property was perceived negatively. Utility for wealth was realized

in terms of social benefits to the whole collective, while an implicit philosophy of “being your brother’s keeper” resonated with most communities. Such humane-orientation seems to have survived conflicting external influences, but its unintended consequence may be a decrease in individual motivation to pursue entrepreneurial dreams. This would have consequences on a national scale.

I hypothesise that the data analyses from the sample will demonstrate male role dominance, paternalism, large status differences, self-protection, in-group collectivism, consensus-building, and a “being your brother’s keeper” type of humane-orientation.

Another dimension of the sub-Saharan context is the relationship with the supernatural. Dia (1994) posits that African economic psychology is characterized by powerful connections between objects, humans and the supernatural. The depth and scope of this relationship varies from one ethnic entity to another. However, there is a common aspiration to seek harmony between human beings and the supernatural, sometimes in the form of inanimate objects.

In the past twenty years, a small number of conceptual leadership models of the region have been developed. Beugré & Offodille (2001) contend that culture has played a critical role in the way western managerial theories and practices have been transplanted to African contexts. They maintain that managerial leadership in Africa should be evaluated within the context of indigenous cultural features. Kirk & Bolden (2006) note the tendency among leadership writers to play down the importance of indigenous knowledge, values and behaviours. They often assume a linear progression from the *developing* to the *developed* and/or the *traditional* to the *modern*. They further hypothesize that, “such an approach to leadership and management theory, however, is not only pejorative (classifying non-western approaches as “under-developed”) but also obstructive to the emergence of more constructive theory, practice and policy”. A similar conclusion is drawn by Jackson (2004) from a study of 15 sub-Saharan countries.

Beugré & Offodile (2001) highlight some of the cultural dimensions likely to contradict western managerial practices. There is deep respect for the elderly, presumably due to oral traditions where age and wisdom are inextricably intertwined. Age groups can be egalitarian but relationships between different age groups are markedly gerontocratic and, in most cases, paternalistic (Linguist, Adolph and Blunt 1996). The extended family serves as the building block for any organization, similar to other in-group collectivist cultures such as Mexico (Howell, DelaCerde, Martinez, Prieto, Bautista, Ortiz, Dorfman and Mendez 2007). Linguist, Adolph and Blunt (1996) offer a portrait of an effective manager in Africa as one who is perceived to consult subordinates, treat them considerately, promote their self-development, support and provide them with clear direction. These attributes have strong parallels with traditional modes of managerial leadership in certain cultures. Similarly, Blunt & Jones (1997) support the essence of a paternal and supportive managerial style, tolerance and forgiveness, and the importance of interpersonal relations over individual achievements in African organizations. Jackson (2004) concludes that African managers engender humanistic management practices and are highly skilled in managing cultural diversity and multiple stakeholders.

Kiggundu (1988) has conceptualized decision-making in the context of the management-worker relationship. A high power distance relationship is signified by status differences between management and ordinary workers. Often workers have to render unconditional obedience to instructions and directives. This is comparable to the autocratic leadership style

displayed by African managers that has been described by other scholars (Blunt & Jones 1997; Jones, Blunt & Sharma 1995). Kiggundu (1988) concludes that managerial leadership in Africa is authoritarian, focused in one or a few individuals, and highly political. He notes that this approach is not conducive to management development through entrepreneurship, creativity, and opportunity.

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The importance of clan or ethnic interests over individual needs is manifested in various ways. African managers are duty-bound to satisfy social and even economic needs of their relatives (Takyi-Asiedu 1993; Dia 1994). The distribution of scarce resources to clan and ethnic affiliates are natural responsibilities of leadership (Blunt & Jones 1997). This phenomenon offers a unique perspective on in-group collectivism and reflects a response to collective need rather than performance. Such characteristics are potentially in conflict with western values of individualism and merit-based systems. However, they are consistent with values of in-group collectivism demonstrated in some cultures in the Far East and Latin America. Decisions among peers in African organizations among peers are made through long discussions and negotiations and often concluded through consensus. The next higher authority is often given “wobble room” regarding decisions as professional courtesy and as a manifestation of embedded power distance relationship.

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African societies seem to have a great capacity also for tolerance and forgiveness, which can explain the attempts at reconciliation with former oppressors by African leaders like Jomo Kenyatta, Robert Mugabe and Nelson Mandela? Many observers have wondered at this capacity to forgive and forget. This image of the benign acceptance of past wrongs is epitomized by Nelson Mandela who, after three decades of imprisonment comes out, becomes an architect of black/white reconciliation, goes to beg white terrorists who are prepared to fast until death, "Please, please, don't kill yourselves. Please eat." This man who had just lost twenty-seven of the best years of his life goes to beg white terrorists not to fast until death. Where else but in Africa will you find this sort of thing? (Mazrui 1994:134). This behaviour is an indication of the pan-Sub-Saharan African existence of the Rwandan *gacaca* model of reconciliation discussed further below.

## UBUNTU - OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Attempts have been made to identify pan-African core values of 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 (each one of us needs all of us). The last dimension has been variously evaluated as the spirit of *ubuntu* (Mbigi 1997; Kirk & Bolden, 2006; Karsten & Illa, 2005). Ubuntu, a concept frequently employed in reference to leadership in all of Africa is in fact specific to South Africa; it is proposed as the basic philosophy that governs existence and social relations, “a family atmosphere, philosophical affinity and kinship among and between indigenous people of Africa” (Karsten & Illa 2004). While Collectivism is often associated with ‘here and now’ relationships, ubuntu is anchored in history and present and future obligations to the social entity. There seems to be a parallel between the concept of ubuntu and the GLOBE projects In-Group Collectivism that is worthy of further investigation.

Ubuntu is a word from the Southern African Nguni language family (Ndebele, Swati/Swazi, Xhosa and Zulu; in Kiswahili it is *utu*.) At the highest level of analysis, humanity, feeling of fellowship, kindness. In a review of many works that have dealt with the concept of ubuntu and similar African thoughts on communalism Bangura (2005) concludes that ubuntu serves as a spiritual foundation of Sub-Saharan African societies. It is a unifying worldview encapsulated in the maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*: “a person is a person through other persons”, an individual is defined by his or her relationships with others. This traditional African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. The idea of ubuntu envisages individuals and community as a relational entity, each giving value, purpose and identity to the other.

References, for example Bangura (2005), are made to the South African concept of *ubuntu* by researchers and writers in other Sub-Saharan countries (also see Bangura, 2008b), and they note that it is known by different names in non-Bantu cultures. I have so far been unsuccessful in finding literature that enables a list of the other labels. Bangura (2008a) describes a practice that seems peripherally related, the Rwandan *gacaca* (pronounced “gachacha”) model of reconciliation. Gacaca is a traditional African village system that works on the principle of reconciling the parties when a wrong is done, deciding an appropriate punishment that always includes some kind of restitution, and restoring social harmony rather than penalizing the guilty party (imprisonment was not considered, and there were no prisons until the arrival of the Belgian colonisers in Rwanda).

Kirk & Bolden (2006) ask whether Africans see ubuntu as something more than a romanticised notion that puts a communal gloss on unequal relations between people, masking real power differences and resource inequalities. And even if the ontology of ubuntu can be established as a distinctive social value; can it truly be seen as a feature of social life across the continent? Kirk & Bolden say “yes”, but my studies results indicate that this question is not definitively “yes”.

Ntibagirirwa (2003) urges Africa to return to what he calls “the African value system”, which is grounded in the Bantu notion of existence as persons in community, or ubuntu. He concedes that while this value system has been generalised to all Sub-Saharan Africa (a view he holds) others, he says, may see this as being limited to the Bantu people who are mostly found in Africa south of the Equator. Ntibagirirwa believes it is the notion of ubuntu that holds the paradox of individual and community in dynamic and inter-dependent tension,



proposing the idea of abrogating the twin dangers of the subjugation of the individual to the collective (experienced in oppressive Communism), and the detached super-ordinacy of the individual (a competitive individualism antithetical to collectives in society).

These ideas lead us to expect co-existence of the traditional cultural value dimensions of Individualism and Collectivism (House et al., 2004; Hofstede 2001) in the same societal culture, perhaps measurable by the GLOBE dimensions of “In-Group” and “Societal” Collectivism. However, Wanasika, Howell, Littrell and Dorfman (2011) find that In-Group/Family Collectivism is generally valued highly for all Black samples, and research by Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) indicates that the Xhosa of South Africa are significantly more individualistic than the Zulu, Tsonga, and South Sotho ethnic groups, and that English-speaking South Africans are significantly more individualistic than Afrikaans-speaking. Sub-Saharan Africans are less individualistic, more communal, than cultures identified as Western. The results of Thomas & Bendixen (2000) indicate extremely low Hofstede Individualism means for *all* sub-cultures in South Africa. See Table 1.

**TABLE 1: Results from Thomas and Bendixen (2000) for Hofstede’s Five Dimensions in South Africa from Ethnic Samples**

South African Samples, Raw Scores	Uncert. Avoidance	Power Dist.	Individualism	Masc.	Long-Term Orient.
ZA White-English	142	30.7	5.4	87.8	33.3
ZA White-Afrikaans	144	46.3	5.6	77.3	40.1
ZA Coloured	50	36.9	-5.4	83.5	30.4
ZA Black-Zulu	60	58.7	-1.6	82.8	26.5
ZA Black-Xhosa	72	76.4	-1.6	78.2	18.1
ZA Black-Sotho	78	47.2	-4.5	79.4	52.2
ZA Asian	40	66.6	-1.0	71.3	24.5

### **Empirical Cultural Values Evidence of the Practice of Ubuntu Amongst Managerial Leaders Seems to Be Missing**

In analyses of the cultural value dimensions of managers, House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004) from the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project identify nine cultural dimensions and six second-order leadership dimensions. The nine cultural dimensions are:

1. Performance Orientation.
2. Assertiveness.
3. Future Orientation.
4. Humane Orientation.
5. Institutional Collectivism.
6. In-Group Collectivism.
7. Gender Egalitarianism.
8. Power Distance.
9. Uncertainty Avoidance

The GLOBE project collected samples from middle managers in Sub-Saharan countries Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa Blacks, South Africa Whites, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The results can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2: GLOBE Project Cultural Dimensions Scores for Sub-Saharan Africa Samples

<b>As Is</b>	Perform Orient	Future Orient	Assert	<b>Family Coll</b>	Societal Col	Gender Egal	<b>Humane Orient</b>	Pow Dist	Uncert Avoid
Namibia	3.5	3.3	3.8	<b>4.0</b>	4.0	3.7	<b>3.8</b>	5.3	4.1
Nigeria	3.9	4.1	4.8	<b>5.6</b>	4.1	3.0	<b>4.1</b>	5.8	4.3
<b>ZA-B</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.6</b>
ZA-W	4.1	4.1	4.5	<b>4.4</b>	4.5	3.3	<b>3.5</b>	5.1	4.1
Zambia	4.2	3.6	4.1	<b>5.8</b>	4.6	2.9	<b>5.2</b>	5.3	4.1
Zimbabwe	4.2	3.8	4.1	<b>5.6</b>	4.1	3.0	<b>4.5</b>	5.7	4.2
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<i>StdDev</i>	0.4	0.5	0.4	<b>0.7</b>	0.4	0.4	<b>0.5</b>	0.4	0.6
<b>Should Be</b>	<i>Perform Orient</i>	<i>Future Orient</i>	<i>Assert</i>	<b><i>Family Coll</i></b>	<i>Societal Coll</i>	<i>Gender Egal</i>	<b><i>Humane Orient</i></b>	<i>Pow Dist</i>	<i>Uncert Avoid</i>
Namibia	6.5	6.3	3.8	<b>6.1</b>	4.3	4.2	<b>5.5</b>	2.6	5.2
Nigeria	6.3	6.0	3.2	<b>5.5</b>	5.0	4.2	<b>6.1</b>	2.7	5.6
<b>ZA-B</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.9</b>
ZA-W	6.1	5.6	3.7	<b>5.8</b>	4.4	4.5	<b>5.5</b>	2.7	4.7
Zambia	6.2	5.9	4.4	<b>4.7</b>	5.8	4.3	<b>5.5</b>	2.4	4.7
Zimbabwe	6.5	6.1	4.6	<b>5.9</b>	4.9	4.5	<b>5.2</b>	2.7	4.7
<b>Mean</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<i>StdDev</i>	0.3	0.4	0.6	<b>0.4</b>	0.5	0.5	<b>0.3</b>	0.4	0.6

The development of the idea of ubuntu is driven by South African Blacks. As for “walking the walk” of ubuntu, inspecting the information from the GLOBE project in Table 2 we see that the “as is” scores for South African Blacks are at the mean In Family Collectivism, equal with South African Whites in Societal Collectivism (2<sup>nd</sup> to Zimbabwe), high in Humane Orientation, and lowest in Power Distance. In the Thomas and Bendixen results in Table 1 we see that the Black samples are higher in Power Distance and higher in Collectivism than the White and “Asian” (Indian heritage) samples; ubuntu does not specifically address Power Distance; high Power Distance is generally associated with a parental leadership style. The “as is” aspects of cultural values do not appear to be antithetical to the idea of ubuntu.

For GLOBE “should be” cultural value dimensions South African Blacks are 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest in Family Collectivism, highest in Societal Collectivism, equal lowest with Zimbabwe in Humane Orientation and highest in Power Distance. These “should be” values can be construed to be antithetical to ubuntu. These differences in “as is” and “should be” dimension means could be interpreted to indicate that South African Black managerial leaders see idealistic “should be” principles of ubuntu as detrimental to achieving business goals and objectives. Obviously the GLOBE results are not definitive.

### Ubuntu and Managerial Leader Values Amongst Black South Africans

The six GLOBE leadership dimensions with contributing first-order dimensions are listed in Tables 3 and 4, and Chart 1. The scores in Table 3 for the Sub-Saharan Africa samples indicate that South African Blacks means are highest on leadership dimensions *antithetical* to ubuntu, Autonomous and Self-Protective, and lowest on dimensions that are reputedly related to ubuntu, Charismatic/Value-Based, Team Oriented, Participative, and Humane Oriented, indicating that actual preference for followers for business leaders to exhibit ubuntu traits is low.

**Table 3: GLOBE Project Leadership Dimensions Scores for Sub-Saharan Africa Samples**

Country Sample	Charismatic/Value-Based	Team Oriented	Participative	Humane Oriented	Autonomous	Self-Protective
South Africa White	5.99	5.80	5.62	5.33	3.74	3.19
Zambia	5.92	5.86	5.29	5.27	3.43	3.66
Zimbabwe	6.11	5.97	5.57	5.18	3.37	3.2
<b>South Africa Black</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>5.23</b>	<b>5.04</b>	<b>4.79</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>3.62</b>
Nigeria	5.76	5.65	5.18	5.49	3.62	3.89
Namibia	5.99	5.81	5.48	5.1	3.77	3.36
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa SD</i>	<i>0.31</i>	<i>0.24</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>0.22</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa Mean</i>	<i>5.03</i>	<i>5.72</i>	<i>5.36</i>	<i>5.19</i>	<i>3.65</i>	<i>3.49</i>
<i>Skewness</i>	<i>-1.38</i>	<i>-1.21</i>	<i>-0.23</i>	<i>-0.60</i>	<i>-0.05</i>	<i>0.21</i>
<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>0.44</i>	<i>0.19</i>	<i>-1.43</i>	<i>-0.42</i>	<i>-1.28</i>	<i>-1.38</i>

**Table 4: GLOBE Project Leadership Dimensions**

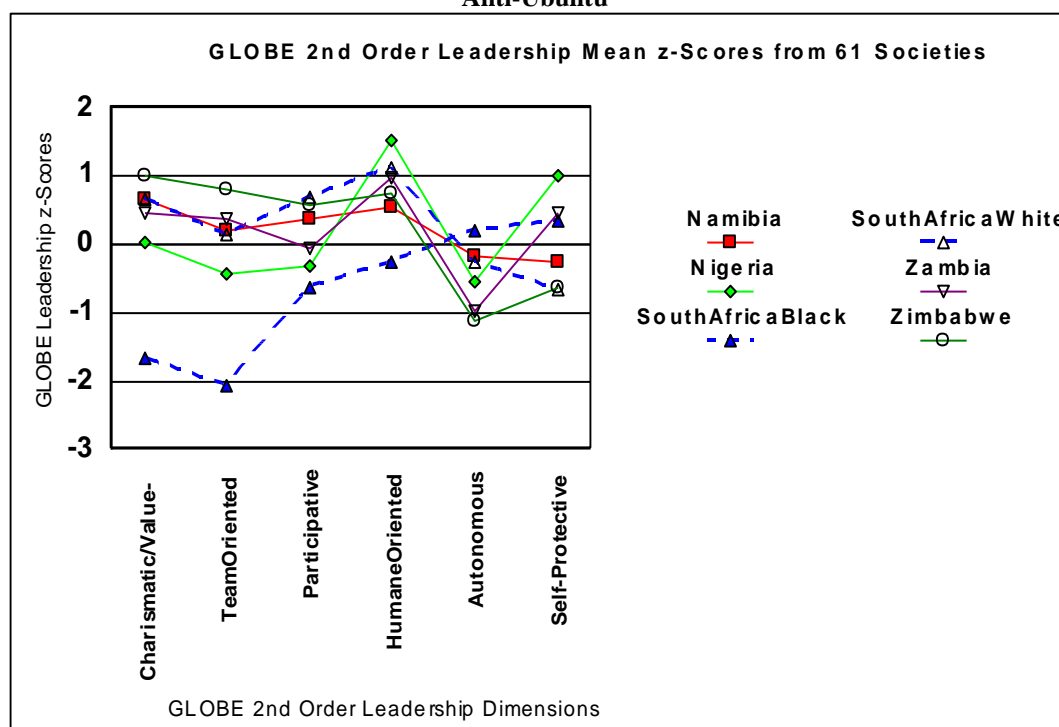
<p><b>Charismatic/Value-Based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charismatic/Visionary</li> <li>• Charismatic/Inspirational</li> <li>• Charismatic/Self-sacrificing</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Decisive</li> <li>• Performance oriented</li> </ul>	<p><b>Team Oriented</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team collaborative</li> <li>• Team integrative</li> <li>• Diplomatic</li> <li>• Malevolent **</li> <li>• Admin. competent</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-Protective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-centred</li> <li>• Status conscious</li> <li>• Conflict inducer</li> <li>• Face saver</li> <li>• Procedural</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autocratic **</li> <li>• Non-participative **</li> </ul>	<p><b>Humane Oriented</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modesty</li> <li>• Humane oriented</li> </ul>	<p><b>Autonomous</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous</li> </ul>

\*\* Means - reverse scored

In Figure 1 we see depicted the findings that the South African Black sample have the lowest value in Team Oriented, Participative, Humane Oriented, and the highest in Autonomous leadership, traits antithetical to the practice of ubuntu.

Assuming the GLOBE and the Thomas and Bendixen projects were well-managed and collected data that accurately represent the values and behaviour of Black managerial leaders in South Africa, practice on the ground is typical of a high Collectivism, high Power Distance developing society, but questionable as to leading according to the principles of ubuntu. Espousing and promotion of ubuntu could possibly be seen as a political correctness campaign by idealistic government leaders, religious leaders, and academia; we intend this comment as neither praise nor condemnation, merely speculation based upon the data. Ubuntu in Africa may not extend beyond one's tribe, as can be seen in Bangura's (2008a) discussion of recent societal events in Uganda (Bangura 2008a) and in Kössler's (2007) analysis of the tribal conflicts in the Kenya elections.

Figure 1: GLOBE 2<sup>nd</sup> Order Dimension Means Chart from z-Scores Based Upon Sixty-One Samples: Anti-Ubuntu



Given the myriad descriptions of Sub-Saharan Africa leader behaviour, we need a method of operationalising leader behaviour dimensions and measuring them. I discuss this method now.

## THEORY AND OPERATIONALISATION OF EXPLICIT LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

The Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire XII is employed to operationalise explicit leader behaviours. Its development began after World War II, in the USA. There was a period of almost thirty years during which leaders were studied either by observing their behaviour in laboratory settings or by asking individuals in field settings to describe the behaviour of individuals in positions of authority, and relating these descriptions to various criteria of leader effectiveness. Three influential groups of investigators pursued the quest for explanations of leader effectiveness in this manner. These were Robert Bales and his associates at Harvard (Bales 1954), members of the Ohio State Leadership Center (Stogdill & Coons 1957), and members of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (Kahn & Katz 1953; Likert 1961; Mann 1965).

Research conducted within this paradigm became known as the behavioural school of leadership. One of the major empirical contributions from the behavioural school was the identification of two broad classes of leader behaviours – **task-oriented** and **person-oriented** behaviours – that were identified by repeated factor analyses conducted by the Ohio State group, interviews by the Michigan group, and observation of emergent leaders in laboratories by the Harvard group. It should be noted that the Harvard group also identified a third dimension, **individual prominence**, which was somehow ignored in subsequent leadership literature. This dimension may have been neglected because of the social-liberal disapproval

of individual prominence seeking found in some universities at the time. A second major contribution of the behavioural paradigm was a more refined and detailed specification of task- and person-oriented behaviours.

### Assumptions and Limitations of the Leader Behaviour Paradigm

The initial guiding assumption of the behavioural paradigm was that there are some universally effective leader behaviours, and these could be discovered by either observing leaders in action, usually in a laboratory setting, or by asking subordinates about the behaviour of their immediate superiors. Little thought was given to the specific role demands of leaders, the context in which they functioned, or differences in dispositions of leaders or followers. Failure to consider these factors was subsequently thought to be the reason for the researchers' inability to identify leader behaviours that had universal or near universal effectiveness.

Stogdill (1974:128-141) discussed the Ohio State Leadership Studies from 1945 through 1970, where factor analytic studies produced two factors identified as *Consideration* and *Initiation of Structure in Interaction*. Stogdill (1959, 1963, 1974:142-155) noted that it was not reasonable to believe that the two factors of *Initiating Structure* and *Consideration* were sufficient to account for all the observable variance in leader behaviour relating to group achievement and the variety of social roles. Stogdill's theory suggested the following patterns in Table 5 of behaviour are involved in leadership, though not equally important in all situations (the order of the list and the numerals of the factors have no relevance).

**Table 5: LBDQXII Leader Behaviour Dimension Descriptions**

Factor 1: Representation measures to what degree the manager speaks as the representative of the group.
Factor 2: Demand Reconciliation reflects how well the manager reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system.
Factor 3: Tolerance of Uncertainty depicts to what extent the manager is able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or getting upset.
Factor 4: Persuasiveness measures to what extent the manager uses oral persuasion and argument effectively.
Factor 5: Initiation of Structure measures to what degree the manager clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected.
Factor 6: Tolerance of Freedom reflects to what extent the manager allows followers scope for initiative, decision and action.
Factor 7: Role Assumption measures to what degree the manager exercises actively the leadership role rather than surrendering leadership to others.
Factor 8: Consideration depicts to what extent the manager regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers.
Factor 9: Production Emphasis measures to what degree the manager applies pressure for productive output.
Factor 10: Predictive Accuracy measures to what extent the manager exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcomes accurately.
Factor 11: Integration reflects to what degree the manager maintains a closely-knit organisation; resolves inter-member conflicts.
Factor 12: Superior Orientation measures to what extent the manager maintains cordial relations with superiors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status.

### Review of the Literature Relating to the LBDQ XII

Judge, Piccolo and Ilies (2004) attempted to identify all possible studies of the relationships between *Consideration*, *Initiating Structure*, and relevant organizational criteria. The studies

remaining after triage reported a total of 593 correlations computed from 457 independent samples. The meta-analysis found that *Consideration* and *Initiating Structure* have significant main effects in assessing the criteria of leadership consisting of

- Follower satisfaction (satisfaction with leader, satisfaction with job)
- Leader performance or effectiveness (leader job performance, group/organization performance, leader effectiveness).

The instrument used in the leadership studies did moderate the validity of both *Consideration* and *Initiating Structure*. Although Schriesheim and Kerr (1974) favoured the LBDQXII, and Fleishman (1995) preferred the LOQ or SBDQ, the original LBDQ and the LBDQXII have the highest validities averaged across *Consideration* and *Structure*. Overall, the pattern of correlations is more consistent than has been depicted in previous reviews (e.g., Yukl 1998). In general, *Consideration* exhibited stronger relationships with the criteria than did *Initiating Structure*. This was especially true with respect to follower satisfaction (follower job satisfaction, follower satisfaction with the leader). *Initiating Structure* did have slightly stronger relations with group–organization performance. LBDQXII dimension scores were predictive of leader effectiveness.

### **Cross-Cultural Research with the LBDQ XII**

The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) XII has been used in several countries to study leadership behaviour. Littrell (2002b) compared the results of several studies employing the LBDQ XII; results of various studies can be seen in Littrell (2002a, 2002b), Littrell (2003), Schneider & Littrell (2003), Littrell & Valentin (2005) and Littrell & Nkomo (2005).

The results were obtained using a Likert-style scale with "1" indicating that the ideal leader should never exhibit the behaviour, and A "5" indicating the leader should always exhibit the behaviour with the anchor points are Always=5, Often=4, Occasionally=3, Seldom=2, Never=1. Initial cross-cultural use by Black and Porter (1991) and Selmer (1997) reported acceptable reliability and validity in cross-cultural use. "Cross-cultural" reliability and validity are difficult to define, as the instrument must measure both similarities and differences across cultures that are inherently different, each consisting of individuals that differ one from the other within the culture.

### **THEORETICAL MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

I was unable to locate any study specifically reporting Hofstede's value dimension scores for Ghana, Zambia or Kenya. Those published at Geert-Hofstede.com by ITIM.COM do not include unique country scores. Two scores for African regions are included, east and west Africa, and a single set of scores for South Africa, not considering ethnicity. The *Geert-Hofstede.com* (not actually written by Hofstede, but compiled by ITIM.com) analysis for East Africa includes the countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia. East Africa usually includes the countries of Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Zambia is usually included in the South Africa region. However, Smith, Peterson and Schwartz (2002) in a 47-nation study of the relationship amongst cultural values, sources of guidance in behaviour, and their relevance to managerial

behaviour found the responses of managers in Kenya and Tanzania to be similar to one another, but those of Uganda to be quite different from those two (Zambia is not included). Hierarchical cluster analysis of the scores in Smith et al. do indicate that Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya cluster together in a unique cluster. Past research and the literature review leads to the following summary of characteristics:

- Group over Individual
- Relationship over Task
- Complex Power Relationships
- My Group over Other Groups
- Consensus Decision-Making in Peer Groups
- Humane Orientation
- Paternalistic

Littrell, Wu and Nkomo (2009) carried out studies of preferred leader behaviour of business people in the Republic of South Africa, Zambia, Kenya and Ghana. The resulting dimension means are depicted in Figure 2 and Table 6. Littrell, Wu and Nkomo (2009) found salient dimensions derived from the literature review from which conclusions can be supported from their data:

- **Low preferences for Tolerance of Freedom and Tolerance of Uncertainty support high Collectivism:** Self-interest is superseded by in-group interests. Ethnicity provides guidance for behaviour and values. Organizations in In-Group Collectivist cultures function as extended families. They are likely to take responsibility for their members in all domains of life and, in return, to expect members to identify with and work dutifully toward shared goals. Influenced by the surrounding national culture, these organizations are likely to rely on past protocol, preserve the status quo and be relatively slow and reluctant to change.
- **High Preferences for Group Integration and Initiation of Structure and low preferences for Tolerance of Freedom and Tolerance of Uncertainty support the preference that good managerial leaders are people-oriented rather than task-oriented.** In-group reference is strong; self-reliance is low.
- **Inconsistent Results Amongst Samples** relating to studies suggesting that African managers are concerned overwhelmingly about the quality of their relationship with their boss, rather than, for example, with individual or organizational effectiveness.
- **High preferences for Group Integration and Initiation of Structure and low preferences for Tolerance of Freedom and Tolerance of Uncertainty** support that leaders often behave, and are expected to behave, paternalistically. Followers appear to prefer a leader who is kindly, considerate and understanding to one who is too dynamic and productive and, possibly, too demanding. Leaders are seen to possess genuine authority but are expected by their subordinates to use it only sparingly and in a humane and considerate way.

The high preferences for Group Integration and Initiation of Structure and Low Preferences for Tolerance of Freedom and Tolerance of Uncertainty are consistent across sample dimension means, with the other dimension means showing considerable variation in rankings amongst the samples. However, Littrell et al. report the Spearman correlations for samples means are high, significant, and positive, indicating a general consistency of ranking of preference of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about preferred leader behaviour amongst the samples.

**Table 6**  
**LBDQXII Dimension Means for Sub-Saharan Africa Businesspeople Samples**

	1: Represen- -tation	2: Demand Recon- -ciliation	3: Tolerance of Uncertainty	4: Persuas- -iveness	5: Initiation of Structure	6: Tolerance of Freedom	7: Role Assump- -tion	8: Consid- -eration	9: Production Emphasis	10: Predictive Accuracy	11: Inte- -gration	12: Superior Orientation
Gh	4.17	4.29	3.23	4.35	4.46	3.73	4.21	4.14	4.22	4.02	4.60	4.39
Ke	3.97	3.74	3.31	3.76	3.96	3.51	3.64	3.65	3.71	3.64	4.08	3.81
ZA -B	4.00	4.12	3.41	4.03	4.15	4.31	3.80	3.45	3.88	3.86	4.38	3.95
ZA -W	4.00	4.24	3.50	4.02	4.14	4.29	3.88	3.50	3.69	4.04	4.40	3.99
Zb	4.04	4.15	3.16	4.13	4.35	3.52	3.97	3.93	4.07	3.96	4.54	4.14

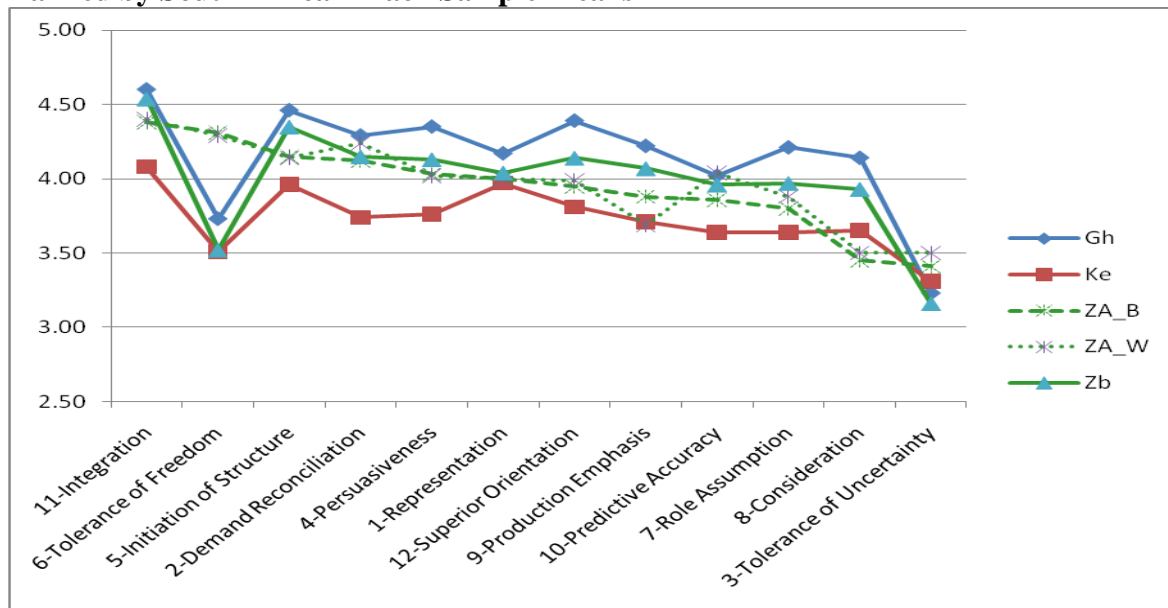
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**Figure 2.**  
**Chart of LBDQXII Dimension Means for Sub-Saharan Africa Businesspeople Samples Ranked by South African Black Sample Means**



## DISCUSSION

“There will be no development without security, and until sustainable solutions to the many conflicts on the African continent are identified and implemented, the quest, often externally imposed, will remain elusive” (Bøås & Dunn 2007:1). Post-colonial Africa is a region of significant intra-national ethnic diversity. According to the index of ethnic diversity used by Easterly & Levine (1995, in commentary from Schuff 1998), fourteen of the world’s fifteen most ethnically diverse countries are in Africa. The constraints imposed by such ethnic diversity go well beyond the social, economic, managerial, leadership, and governing issues which arise in other regions with more homogeneous populations. As Easterly & Levine (1995) state: “High ethnic diversity may lead to increased civil strife, political instability, and destructive competition for rents by ethnic factions”. This statement reflects the situation in most Sub-Saharan Africa countries.

Differences in results in national and sub-national samples concerning preferences for leader behaviour may stem from the major African independence movements that took place in the 20th century, when a wave of struggles in European-ruled African territories occurred. Notable violent independence movements took place in Kenya and South Africa, two of the countries in Littrell et al. (2009), contrasting with peaceful transitions in Ghana and Zambia. These samples yield distinctly different results within the analyses. Additional study of the effects of colonial-independence transition processes is indicated. For example, from Littrell et al.

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1. Kenya has a significantly higher mean for Representation, indicating a preference for a leader who takes control of the leadership process and does not relinquish it to others.
2. Ghana and Zambia have significantly higher means for Persuasiveness, indicating a preference for a leader who uses oral persuasion in the process, rather than a more authoritarian one.
3. Ghana and Zambia have significantly higher means for Production Emphasis indicating a preference for working hard.
4. Ghana and Zambia have significantly lower means for Tolerance of Freedom, with the other samples indicating a greater preference for leaders who are empowering, perhaps less preference for closely controlling leaders, perhaps a mistrust of leadership.
5. Ghana and Zambia have significantly lower means for Tolerance of Uncertainty; one interpretation for a high Tolerance of Uncertainty is that the preference is derived from becoming accustomed to living and working in uncertain times; stress reduction and survival require learning to tolerate it.

These results are compatible with the interpretation that the historical effects of a violent transition from a colony to an independent state affects preferences for leader behaviour.

## CONCLUSIONS

My general conclusions are that:

1. The ubuntu movement may be an inspirational goal promulgated by elites to encourage a more humane, community-oriented set of values for Sub-Saharan Africans.
2. There is little or no evidence of support for behaviours specified by ubuntu in the practice of business in the samples from Wanasika (forthcoming 2010) and Littrell, Wu and Nkomo (2009).
3. Littrell Wu and Nkomo (2009) and Littrell & Nkomo (2005) found the managerial leadership behaviour preferences of Black and White South Africans to be very similar and indicating general acceptance of what are termed “Western” attitudes toward business.

## SHORTCOMINGS AND FUTURE PLANS

Due to various issues, important demographic data such as first language and tribal affiliation are missing from the demographic data for participants in the studies. In Littrell & Baguma (2004) first language identification as included and analyses indicated significant between group effects on leader behaviour preferences. It is highly desirable that future studies identify tribal affiliation to ascertain presence or lack of effects on managerial leader behaviour preferences.

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