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POWER DISTANCE

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One of the GLOBE dimensions of societal and organizational values and practices is Power Distance. Broadly speaking, this dimension reflects the extent to which a community accepts and endorses authority, power differences, and status privileges. It is an important aspect of a community's culture and has been related to a variety of behaviors in organizations and societies in the literature. This chapter will present a review of the literature relevant to cultural influences on power distance values and practices as well as the GLOBE findings on power distance. We will first explain the concept of power distance and its societal and organizational correlates, and then move on to the historical, religious, and psychological roots of power distance in societies. We will then describe the GLOBE scales used to measure the Power Distance construct at the societal and organizational levels and appraise the effects of power distance on the culturally implicit support for leadership theories at organizational and societal levels. In the last part of the chapter we will report the study of the relationships between power

distance and a variety of indicators of societal economic prosperity and the individual psychological and physical welfare of the members of the societies studied.

ROOTS OF POWER DISTANCE

The concept of power has intrigued writers throughout the centuries, from Pope Gregory VII in the 11th century CE, who attempted to extend the temporal power of the papacy; to Niccolo Machiavelli, who wrote in the 16th century about how to hold and exercise power; to numerous social scientists in the 21st century. In this section we will consider the major themes of the predominant theorists, how they have increased our understanding of both personal and position power, the needs and motivations of people who seek power, and why people might accept a position of less power relative to their perceived superiors.

Two major research streams provide substantial insights into this dimension: psychologists, who have investigated the needs, motivations,