

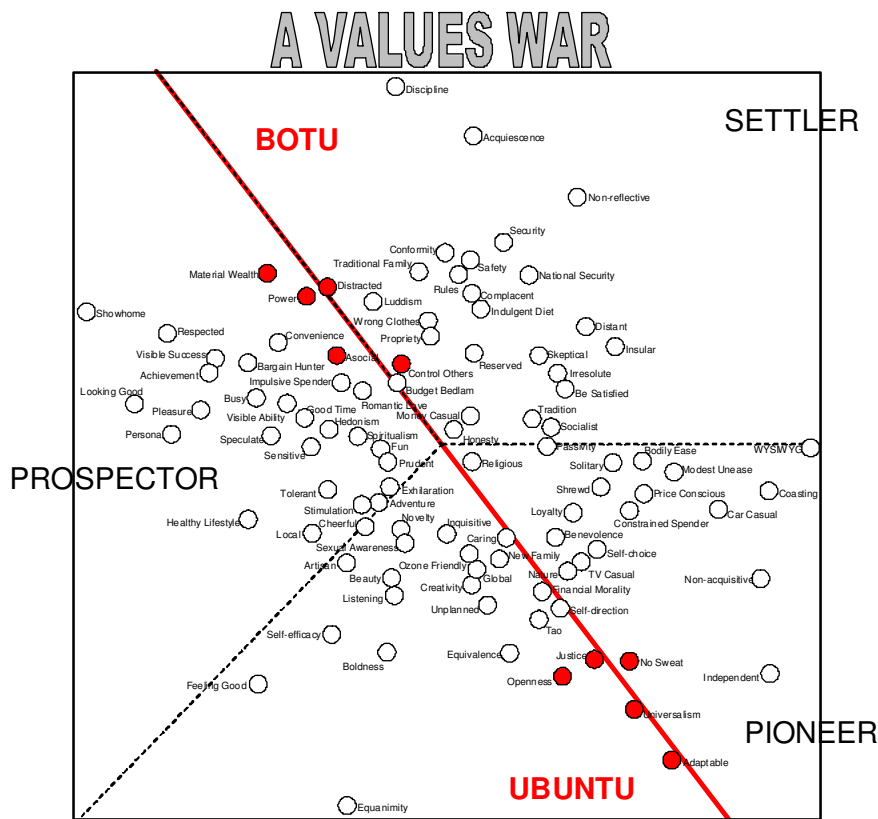


The Ubuntu – BOTU Struggle

Ubuntu is the Zulu word for humanity and promoting kindness.

BOTU is the CDSM abbreviation for “Bastards of the Universe” – a play on the famous self-definition favoured by Wall St. players as “Masters of the Universe” – originally cited in Michael Lewis’ book, “Liars Poker”, about his days as a trainee trader at Solomon Bros in the 1980’s.

Those who have had direct contact with CDSM may be familiar with some of our statistical and psychological explorations and stories about the **BOTU** and their tribes. For new readers, welcome, and here’s a bit of background.



Using our British Values Survey data set of over 1000 questions, with its 100 values systems Attributes, we can plot, in the CDSM Maslow Values Space, the axis which correlates with the most powerful tension measured by fellow values researcher Shalom Schwartz at the University of Jerusalem.

Schwartz calls this the Power vs Universalism Axis and notes that this is the strongest set of “antagonistic variables” in his Portrait Values System, which has been run in over 100 countries.

In the UK, we have been measuring values since 1973 and we have found this same axis in our research – via different methods. This indicates to us that the findings are robust and therefore useful in constructing frames for conceptual



thinking and in providing strong platforms for the task of changing or reinforcing behaviour. We call this the **BOTU** vs **Ubuntu** axis

This dynamic is present in all forms of human endeavour – at personal, interpersonal, family, community, work, legal, political and cultural levels – and, as a result, has an impact across and throughout our lives.

For example, as this is being written, Britain is just a few days away from its 2010 General Election – one about which the pollsters are still scratching their heads and describing as “too close to call”.

The **Ubuntu-BOTU** dynamic is one of the roots of this “uncertainty”. On the one hand are the **BOTU** values and attitudes that rule the lives of the inhabitants of the Westminster “village”. On the other hand are the, largely, **Ubuntu** desires of the British population for a fairer, more trustworthy political alternative to that demonstrated by the two main political parties that have dominated British politics for the last 100 years and more.

Of course, we should not forget the role of the “4th estate” – the media. To restate an old media maxim, “**BOTU** stories sell news”. With **Ubuntu** so much to the fore in the (apparent) will of the electorate, they too are floundering.

So what is **Ubuntu**?

Let’s see what the admirable Wikipedia says.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu further explained **Ubuntu** in 2008:

One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu - the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation.

It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity.

We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.

This is one of the best definitions of the orientation and effect of Schwartz’s “Universalism” value we have seen.

CDSM has a range of 100 Attributes we use in understanding the values, beliefs and motivations of the British population and we find direct correlations between the multiple Attributes:

- Universalism (see Desmond Tutu above)
- Justice (for everyone)
- Openness (listening, even when I disagree)
- No Sweat (not sweating the small stuff)
- Adaptable (comfortable with change)



This complex of Attributes fully supports the “human nature” of the Bantu tribal definition quoted by Archbishop Tutu. CDSM would argue that this is one of the basic elements and building blocks of human values systems anywhere in the world.

Feels good, doesn't it?

But the fact is that, if **Ubuntu** is true about us as human beings, it is very likely that the other end of the spectrum is also true. As before, Schwartz has measured the antagonistic aspect of the axis in many countries, and CDSM has measured it extensively in the UK for many decades.

The **BOTU** – Bastards of the Universe – end of the spectrum of human values on this axis is supported by five closely correlated Attributes:

- Power
- Material Wealth
- Distracted (subject to powerful daydreams/fantasies)
- Asocial (don't get mad, get even)
- Control Over Others

I'm sure that most people would agree - the very antithesis of **Ubuntu**.

As social and psychological researchers and consultants to hundreds of organizations over many decades CDSM does not make value judgments about the rights and wrongs of either end of the spectrum. Our job is to enable individuals and organizations to understand and use the knowledge of the existence of these factors of human values systems in the pursuit of their own desired goals.

That being said, we are also humans and we all have our own orientations to both ends of this axis and our opinions about what is right and what is wrong that sometimes needs to be “aired out”.

The forum in which this article resides is just such a place – a place where we can be a bit less formal, a bit more opinionated, but hopefully more human than the more academic or research heavy papers we hope you read and like in the other parts of this site.

Many of our personal opinions stem from our own positions in the **Ubuntu-BOTU** spectrum. If you take a look at our Corporate Vision & Values statement at <http://www.cultdyn.co.uk/ourvision.html>, it should be pretty clear where we sit. We hope that, by understanding this framework, you will gain a better understanding of the thoughts and feelings that we express in this area of the site.

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