

**Boundaries Redrawn: Debunking Cultural Clusters
with Local Assessment Data**

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THE SCIENCE OF PERSONALITY

Session Abstract

Administering assessments globally raises important practical questions about consistency and fairness in evaluation models. This symposium will present within-region research findings from several global assessment firms including those pertaining to local leadership expectations and response tendencies. We will also discuss corresponding implications for cultural clusters as they relate to organizational initiatives.

Session Summary

Today's emerging markets have given rise to major multinationals whose operations span continents. Asian electronics and appliances companies, African agribusiness and the South American banking sector are all examples of this global boom (Li 2009; Martinez, De Souza & Liu, 2003; Ruxin, 2011). At the same time, many stalwart multinationals headquartered in established economies found themselves reliant on local leadership in these very same markets, since business operations in these regions carried them through the recent global economic woes.

Accordingly, it is common for psychometric instruments, organizational surveys, and assessment center protocols developed in one country to be applied in another. A key issue that often must be resolved is localizing an assessment or its application to account for cross-cultural variance. This symposium will present the recent findings of several global assessment firms across content domains including personality, judgment, and organizational evaluations, and will challenge whether the typically held views of cultural clusters, such as "Confucian Asia", "East vs. West", and a singular "Latin America" offer enough nuance for accurate interpretation and application in today's complex organizational settings.

Cultural Differences and Talent Management

Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (Hofstede, 1980, p.25), which generally involves a set shared values, knowledge, language, and standards. Bartram (2011) gave Hofstede's definition an application caveat when he explained that for practical assessment purposes culture only matters when a group of people's within-group variability on relevant constructs is smaller than the variability between them and other groups.

Researchers have found meaningful country-based differences in motivators, emotions, and cognition (Hofstede, 1980; Levine & Norenzayan, 1999; Masuda, Gonzalez, Kwan, & Nisbett, 2008), and practitioners also recognize the need to consider these differences. A survey of 27 leading assessment firms (Holt, 2013) found 60% of respondents identified the decision to apply regional versus global benchmarks as one of the most important issues to consider when conducting assessments across cultures. Related issues included cultural bias in standards and interpretation (50%), localization challenges (40%), and accurate and reliable language translation (40%).

Meyer & Foster (2008) note that only after accounting for potential differences in translations and samples can one conclude that differences in country- or region-specific benchmarks

accurately reflect true cultural differences. It is also important to build normative datasets that are as representative of intended populations as possible. But in an organizational context it becomes far more complicated to define the intended population when the inclusion parameters for an identified culture or culture cluster do not match the differences that exist within and between countries in terms of leadership expectations and views on the organization.

The proposed session will follow a symposium format with four presenters and a discussant. The first presentation by Sanger and Yang will posit that modern socioeconomic histories should serve as additional inclusion parameters for local leadership benchmarks. Findings on how business leaders in British-influenced Asian countries differ from leaders hailing from Asian countries that developed independently of European influence will be discussed in terms of personality prototypes. Two different ways “drive” can manifest will be analyzed.

The second presentation by Christensen and Nieminen will review responses to organizational evaluation surveys in Central and South America. The resulting analyses present anomalies in benchmarking that distinguish this region from the rest of the world. The unique data trends and implications on diagnostic and intervention designs as they relate to organizational culture and leadership effectiveness will be explored.

The third presentation by Geimer, Coughlin, and Dowdeswell will examine considerations and changes needed when localizing multimedia situational judgment tests. Scores from a US English implementation of a bank teller simulation will be compared to those from a localized UK and a transported UK version to South Africa. Practical guidance regarding when to invest resources in localizing assessments (other than language considerations) versus using a transported simulation will be discussed.

The fourth presentation by Stehura and Jin will take a behavioral approach as they share leadership data from a virtual assessment center applied across the world. Behavioral ratings will be analyzed to compare frequencies of various leadership behaviors both across and within multiple cultural clusters. Implications for designing and implementing virtual assessment center across the globe will be discussed.

Dr. Terri Shapiro, Associate Provost for Accreditation and Outcomes Assessment and a tenured Associate Professor of Psychology at Hofstra University will serve as the session’s discussant. Her extensive experience in survey and assessment research internationally will bring broadened cultural perspective to the presenters’ findings.

Summary of Hogan's Contribution

With the goal of understanding cross-cultural leadership variations, researchers have demonstrated that cultures differ on multiple constructs such as individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Javidan et al., 2006). When these constructs are evaluated, results tend to be broadly generalized to make sense of regional differences. Accordingly, terms like “Confucian Asia” and “Eastern management style” become commonplace in the literature and practitioner vernacular. However, by clustering countries according to similarity in cultural constructs, two major organizational challenges emerge:

1. Since these constructs are not commonly used to measure individual performance, the conclusions have little applied value in terms of employee evaluation models (Silzer & Church, 2009).
2. As we demonstrate, the generalizations do not hold up when it comes to the application of personality instruments in multinational talent management initiatives, especially in terms of leadership assessment.

Accepted cultural clusters ignore the modern socioeconomic histories that lead to variance in leadership style within a region; China and its semi-autonomous territory of Hong Kong serve as a primary example (Shalhoop & Sanger, 2012). Businesses operating under a singular national umbrella tend to share modern history and as a result a complex business landscape that includes common business practices from a cultural standpoint (such as whether criticism in public is acceptable) and a legal standpoint (such as national labor laws and industry regulations). When clusters disregard these artifacts, nuances of workplace standards and norms are obscured, as is the variance among leadership styles. For practical assessment purposes, culture matters when a group of people's within-group variability on relevant constructs is smaller than the variability between them and other groups (Bartram, 2011). With this in mind, we believe examining each region with validated personality instruments is a way to improve our understanding of country-level effects, leading to fairer selection and development practices in multinational settings involving Asia.

In the current research study, we define leadership style in terms of the personality of managers and executives in the broader workforce. Previous literature (e.g., Benson & Campbell, 2007; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Kaizer, Hogan, and Craig 2008) has supported the role of personality in determining leadership style and its subsequent influence on behavior, leadership environment and culture, and strategic decision making as well as the broader implication on organizational performance (Barrick, Day, Lord, & Alexander, 1991; Peterson, Smith, Martorana, & Owens, 2003).

Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) proposes that individuals develop a cognitive model, schema, or prototype for leaders, which is a set of defining characteristics that distinguish leaders from non-leaders. According to the theory, when perceiving others' behavior, the perceiver determines whether there is a match between the leader prototype and the behavior observed. Thus, ILT is essentially a heuristic for quickly categorizing others' behavior; a number of study

findings support this premise (Bryman, 2001; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984).

From the perspective of Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT; Fischbein & Lord, 2004), candidates for leadership are selected based on the extent to which their personal attributes match an existing leadership prototype (Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984; Lord, Foti, & Philips, 1982). The implications of ILT in this context are that those who emerge as leaders across a large sample within a specific culture or culture-cluster should represent features of a collective theory or belief about leadership within that group.

Based on this approach, we will present results examining managerial assessment scores across Asia using the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 2007) and the Hogan Development Survey (HDS; R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 2009). The HPI is a Five Factor Model assessment that measures normal day-to-day personality characteristics related to leadership performance, and the HDS measures personality characteristics that may inhibit successful performance under times of stress or pressure. We collected the assessment data in this sample from current (at the time) managers and executives. Thus, the analyses are relevant for understanding leadership emergence, which is important for understanding the cultural aspects of leadership.

Building on the research and methods of Shalhoop and Sanger (2012), we posit that the last hundred years of British influence in the region may have shaped business practices and therefore leadership expectations in certain Asian countries, specifically India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Accordingly, we compared these findings to leadership prototypes of countries that developed economically independent of European governance, specifically Mainland China, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea. We compared these eight nationally grouped benchmarks to one another and to that of today's United Kingdom (UK).

Findings from this research support the conclusion that leadership prototypes differ across cultures and within commonly accepted Asian-based clusters in meaningful and measurable ways. Our results showed divergence between leadership prototypes of "British influenced" Asian countries and those with "no direct European influence" along one aspect of the extraversion construct (HPI Ambition) (Tables 1 & 2). We also found an inverse relationship with this aspect and the conscientious construct (HPI Prudence) amongst the prototypes (Figures 3&4, Table 3).

Furthermore, this relationship showed clear divergence between "British influenced" Asian countries and those with "no direct European influence", in that it presents in opposing directions when these two clusters are compared. These findings have direct implications for measurement of common organizational definitions of "employee drive"; that in "British influenced" Asian countries it appears to manifest as self-initiation, whereas in those Asian countries with "no direct European influence" employee drive tends to manifest as persistent follow-through in light of the expectation for consensus driven leadership.

A common pattern of scores across all HPI scales was shared by "British influenced" Asian country prototypes (Figure 1), which comports closely to the UK prototype. Those categorized

as “no direct European influence” did not fit that pattern, and evidence calling for a collective prototype for this broader category was absent. Additional findings present interesting patterns of stress-related behavioral risks (Figure 2). In our presentation, we will outline our methods and discuss the results in further depth. We will also explore considerations for inclusion parameters when building cross-cultural benchmarks.



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Figure 1
HPI Mean Plots across Regions

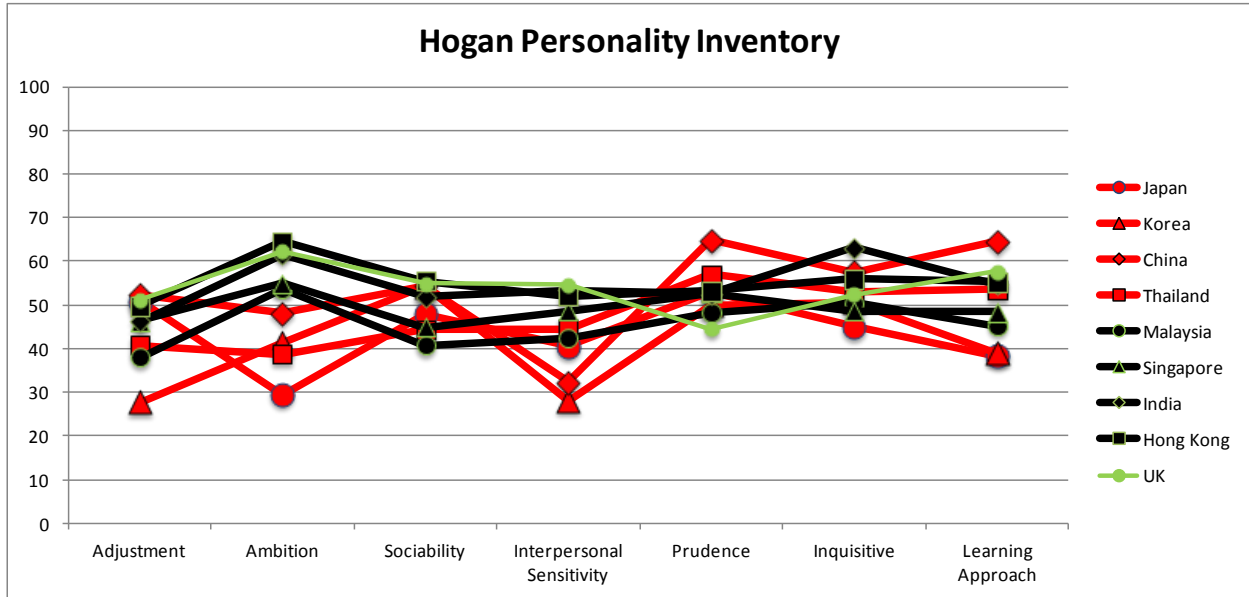


Figure 2
HDS Mean Plots across Regions

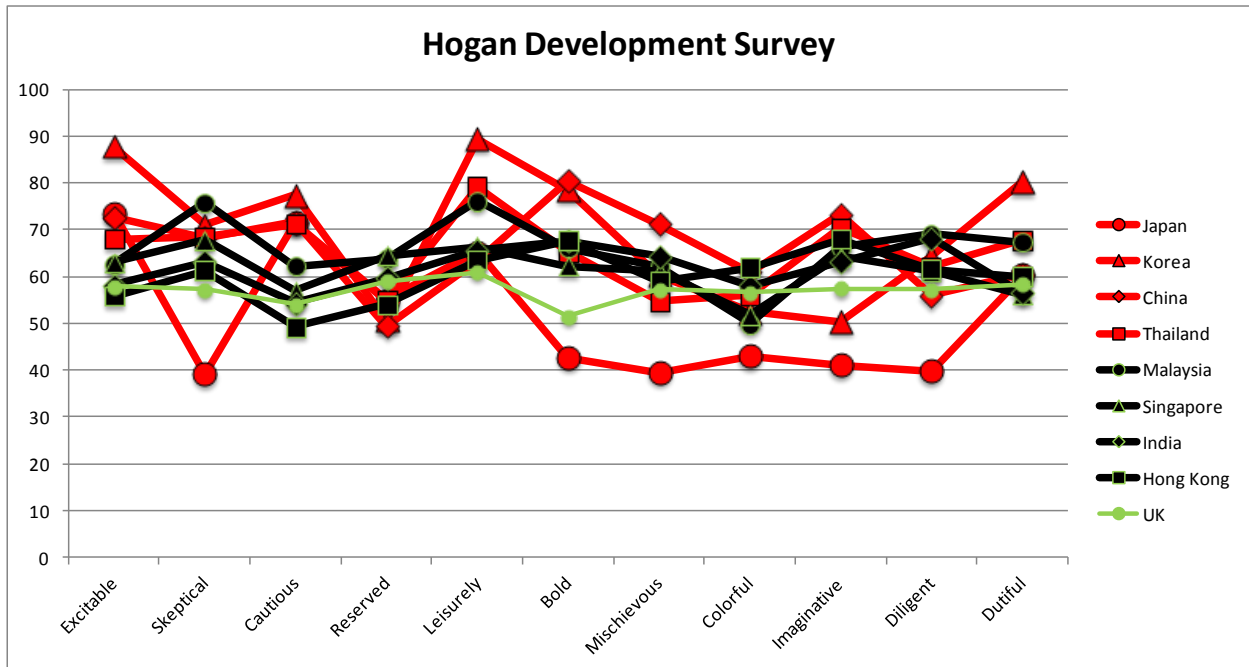


Figure 3
HPI Ambition Comparison by Country Cluster

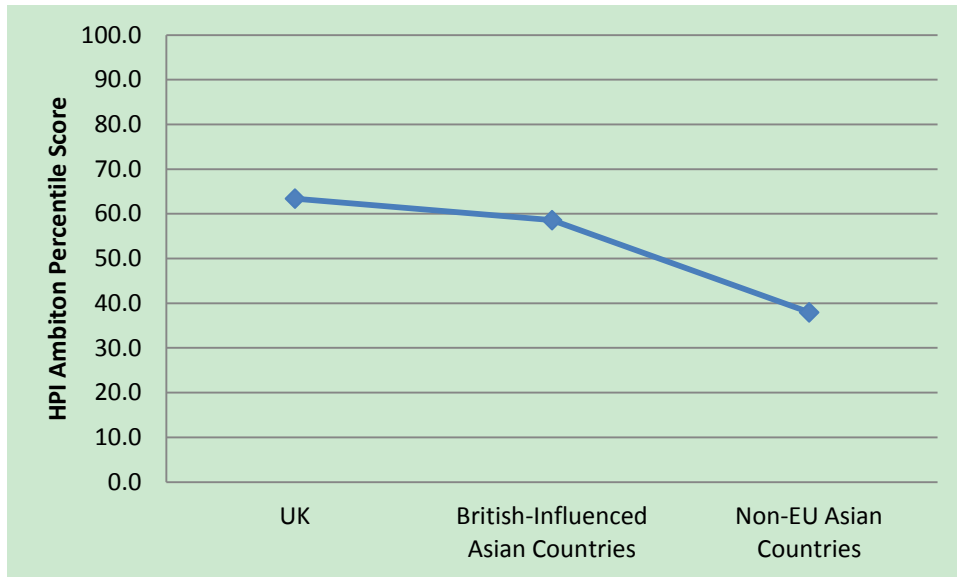


Figure 4
HPI Prudence Comparison by Country Cluster

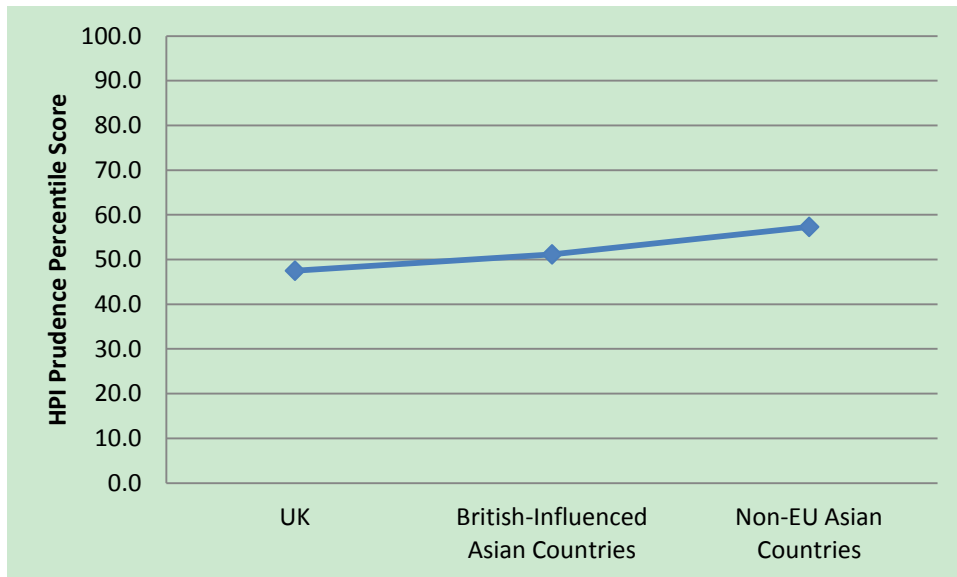


Table 1

Countries Clustered by HPI Ambition Scores

Case Number	Country	Cluster	Distance
1	Mainland China	1	3.28
2	Hong Kong	2	4.91
3	India	2	1.61
4	Japan	1	6.80
5	South Korea	1	0.80
6	Malaysia	2	5.78
7	Singapore	2	4.61
8	Thailand	1	2.72
9	UK	2	3.87

Note. Cluster 1 = Non-EU Asian Countries (M=37.94), Cluster 2 = British-Influenced Asian Countries and UK (M=59.53).

Table 2

HPI Ambition ANOVA & Tukey Results by Country Cluster

Group A	M	SD	Group B	M	SD	A-B Mean Diff.	Std. Error	Sig.
UK	63.40	31.04	British-Influenced Asian Countries	58.58	30.69	4.82	1.01	.00
			Non-EU Asian Countries	37.94	26.85	25.45	1.00	.00

Note: UK N=2311, British-Influenced Asian Countries N=1395, Non-EU Asian Countries N=1429; ANOVA (df=2) F= 334.99, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$.

Table 3

HPI Prudence ANOVA & Tukey Results by Country Cluster

Group A	M	SD	Group B	M	SD	A-B Mean Diff.	Std. Error	Sig.
UK	47.49	28.89	British-Influenced Asian Countries	51.15	28.24	-3.66	0.97	.00
			Non-EU Asian Countries	57.30	28.19	-9.81	0.96	.00

Note: UK N=2311, British-Influenced Asian Countries N=1395, Non-EU Asian Countries N=1429; ANOVA (df=2) F= 52.21, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

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