

How does culture influence student contributions to online group work?

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Introduction

In 2013, universities in the United Kingdom hosted over 425,000 international students. However, both educators and students face challenges in successful collaborative work, particularly when students come from a diverse set of backgrounds and cultures. One explanation for this could be that culture and personality influence behaviour in group work, creating mismatched expectations.

Research Questions

- How do culture and personality traits influence the amount of contributions that students make in online group work?
- To what extent can students' culture and personality traits predict the contributions they make in online group work?

Culture

In this study, students' nationalities were converted to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) to analyse culture.

References

- Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann, W. B. (2003). A very brief measure of the Big-Five personality domains. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 504-528.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (3rd ed.): McGraw-Hill.

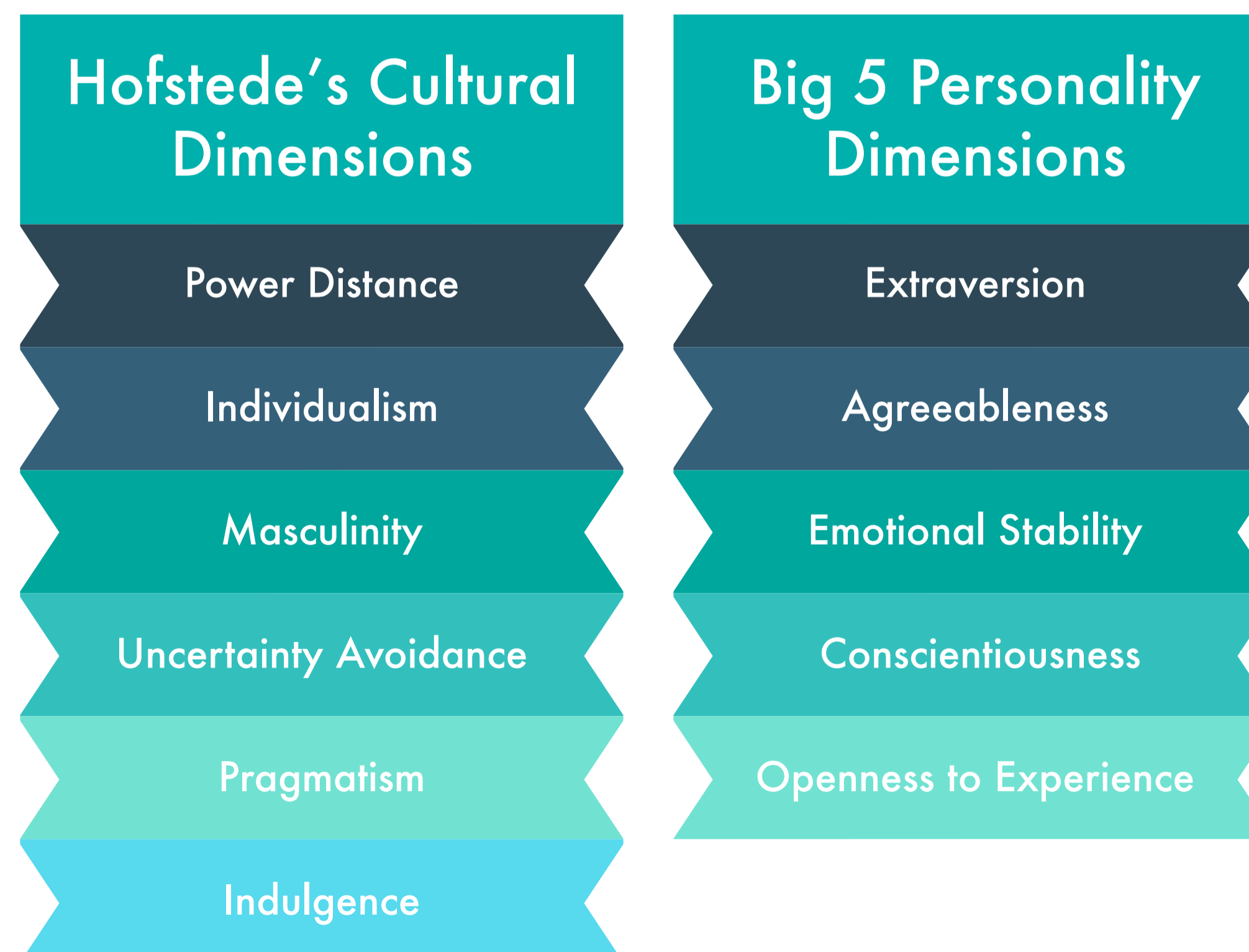
Methods

In a lab setting, 58 Master's level business students worked in small groups on a Harvard Business School Case Study, using an online chat to communicate.

We analysed:

- Number of posts made
- Summed word count submitted
- Number of case study information references
- Student module grades

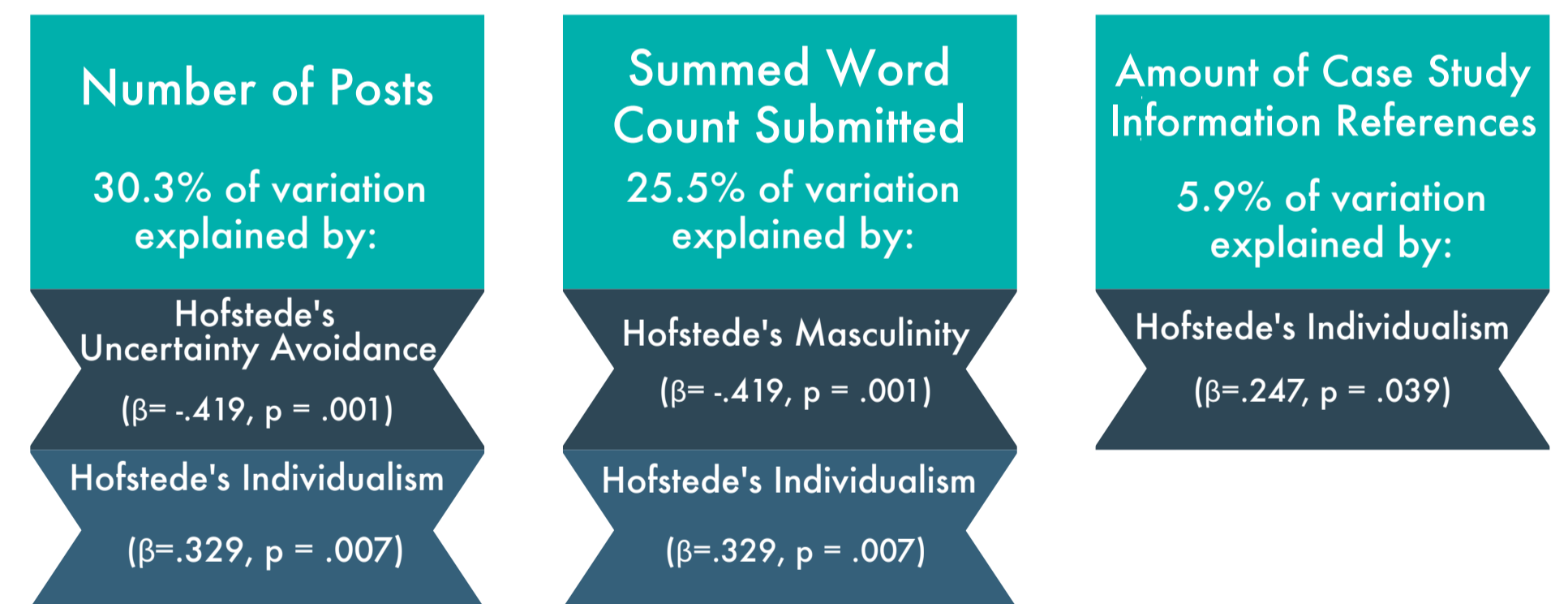
Students were also given a Ten Item Personality Inventory to determine personality traits according to Big Five Personality Dimensions (Gosling et al., 2003).



Results

Bivariate analysis indicated that five out of six Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions correlated with the number of posts made and the summed word count submitted. Two out of five Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions correlated with number of case study information references made. No Big Five Personality Dimensions correlated. Next, we conducted stepwise regression analysis to determine predictors for student behaviours.

We could predict student contributions to online group work using Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions



Findings

- Our analysis suggests that:
- Cultural traits in particular have a powerful influence on the types of contributions that students make to online group work.
 - Students' contributions to online group work can be predicted by Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions