

Directions: *There are 2 passages in this section. Each passage is followed by some questions or unfinished statements. For each of them there are four choices marked A), B), C) and D). You should decide on the best choice and mark the corresponding letter on Answer Sheet 2 with a single line through the centre.*

Passage Two

Questions 51 to 55 are based on the following passage.

Look at the people around you. Some are passive, others more aggressive. Some work best alone, others crave companionship. We easily recognize that there is great variation among the individuals who live near us. Yet, when we speak of people from elsewhere, we seem to inevitably characterize them based on their country of origin.

Statistics specialists, when they speak of national averages, often make the same mistake.

Newly published research shows how erroneous such overviews are. Three researchers analyzed decades of values-based surveys and found that only between 16% and 21% of the variation in cultural values could be explained by differences between countries. In other words, the vast majority of what makes us culturally distinct from one another has nothing to do with our homeland.

To determine what factors really are associated with culture, the authors combined data from 558 prior surveys that each measured one or more of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. These are traits, such as individualism and masculinity, that describe work-related cultural values. (They are not a measure of visible cultural traits, such as food or dress.) Though the validity of Hofstede's dimensions has been questioned, they have the singular benefit of having been in use for decades, which allows for historical and international comparisons.

The researchers found that both demographic factors, such as age, and environmental factors, such as long-term unemployment rates, were more correlated with cultural values than nationality. Occupation and social economic status were the most strongly correlated, suggesting that our values are more economically driven than we usually give them credit for.

The evidence implies that people with similar jobs and incomes are more culturally alike, regardless of where they live. Vas Taras, the lead author of the study, puts it this way: "Tell me how much you make and I will make a pretty accurate prediction about your cultural values. Tell me what your nationality is and I probably will make a wrong prediction."

Taras says our erroneous belief that countries are cultures has caused businesses to teach their employees useless or even harmful ways of interacting with their international peers. Chinese and American lawyers might be trained to interact based on the assumption that the Chinese person is less individualistic, even though their similar social economic situations make it probable they are actually quite alike in that regard.

The country, as the unit of authority, is often a convenient way of generalizing about a population.

However, our focus on countries can mask broad variations within them. In the majority of cases we would be better off identifying people by the factors that constrain their lives, like income, rather than by the lines surrounding them on a map.

51. What error do experts often make when describing people from other places?
- A) They tend to overly rely on nationality.
 - B) They often exaggerate their differences.
 - C) They often misunderstand their cultures.
 - D) They tend to dwell on national averages.
52. What do we learn about Hofstede's cultural dimensions?
- A) They are useful in comparing cultural values across time and space.
 - B) They have brought unusual benefits to people of different cultures.
 - C) They are widely used to identify people's individual traits.
 - D) They provide valuable questions for researchers to study.
53. What did researchers find about previous studies on factors determining people's values?
- A) Environmental factors were prioritized over other factors.
 - B) An individual's financial status was often underestimated.
 - C) Too much emphasis had been placed on one's occupation.
 - D) The impact of social progress on one's values was ignored.
54. What is the impact on employees when cultures are identified with countries?
- A) They may fail to see the cultural biases of their business partners.
 - B) They may fail to attach sufficient importance to cultural diversity.
 - C) They may not be taught how to properly interact with overseas partners.
 - D) They may not be able to learn the legal procedures for business transactions.
55. What does the author suggest at the end of the passage?
- A) There is sufficient reason to generalize about a country's population.
 - B) The majority of people are still constrained by their national identity.
 - C) It is arguable that the country should be regarded as the unit of authority.
 - D) Nationality is less useful than socio-economic status as an indicator of one's values.