

Introduction

Let us not be blind to our differences—but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which these differences can be resolved.

John F. Kennedy
American University, Washington, D.C., 1963

Enter the word “globalization” into the Google Internet search engine and you will get more than 53 million hits (in .07 seconds). The top result at the time of this writing defines the term “the driving force of our era.”¹ The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and government agencies report the phenomenon, with statistics showing dramatic increases in world exports of goods and services, travel and tourism, international investment flows, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, and Internet usage.

Clearly the current economic revolution—fueled by developments in communications and technology—is creating an interconnected world. Robert House, the lead researcher of a major, ongoing study of culture and organizations, states that the need is great for “international and cross-cultural communication, collaboration, and cooperation, not only for the effective practice of management but also for the betterment of the human condition.”²

Recognition of the interconnected world and the growth of multinational organizations have made clear the importance of negotiating cultural differences. Leadership, management, and employee training have expanded internationally to help organizations accomplish two goals: first, to use teams effectively to organize their work and, second, to focus on retention and training of employees. Not surprisingly, organizations with global and culturally diverse workforces seek quality assessments to anchor their training programs in scientifically sound research.

International Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® Instrument

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) instrument has long been viewed as a powerful tool for self-understanding, individual development, and improved employee relationships among its many users in English-speaking, Westernized cultures such as those of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Now use of the MBTI® assessment is spreading rapidly to dozens of other countries and cultures—from Japan to India, Brazil to Sweden—as companies

In addition to applying the general ethical principles, practitioners who use the MBTI assessment in a country other than their own must respect the territory of the CPP-licensed distributor of the MBTI instrument in that region. This includes working with the distributor to access translations of the MBTI instrument and interpretive resources such as the *Introduction to Type*® booklet, where appropriate; checking technical data such as instrument reliability and validity; and determining whether there are particular issues and concerns related to using the assessment in that region.

Distributors are responsible for ethical use of the MBTI instrument in their regions. They are required to apply the laws and professional standards of their countries regarding use of psychological instruments. Distributors also have the most current information about MBTI instrument translations, available MBTI materials, and training within their regions.

Using This Booklet

Type and Culture: Using the MBTI® Instrument in International Applications provides a beginning guide for MBTI practitioners who are using or want to use the instrument and psychological type in cultures other than their own or with multinational and cross-cultural groups. The information and suggestions in this booklet are based primarily on our work with the MBTI instrument in a wide variety of cultures: we have led in-person qualifying training, MBTI Type II training, and MBTI applications programs in many countries and have researched the expression of type in different cultures.⁵

We also draw on the experience and research of selected colleagues who have extensive experience using the MBTI instrument in more than 75 countries and cultures. The few published materials available on

the subject—a chapter in the *MBTI® Manual*, a chapter in *MBTI® Applications*, and papers presented at conferences—have enriched our understanding as well.

Because publications in this area are scarce, many of the conclusions here will be tentative. As this field develops, some will be questioned, some affirmed, some modified. We hope to encourage expanded professional and appropriate use of the MBTI instrument and psychological type theory internationally and to provide a frame for dialogue as use increases.

The sections of this booklet are organized as follows:

- “Culture” summarizes two widely disseminated and respected approaches to understanding cultural differences and offers suggestions for how to relate these approaches to use of the MBTI instrument and psychological type.
- “Cultural Expression of Type” discusses how individual type preferences may be expressed through different behaviors in different cultures. It includes cautionary examples of possible misinterpretations related to the lens of one’s own culture to evaluate the meaning of behavior within another.
- “Type, Culture, and Training Styles” illustrates eight type-related facilitation styles based on the dominant functions. It also explains expectations other cultures may have about trainers and training styles.
- “Practical Adaptations for Training Internationally” is enriched by the expertise of consultant colleagues who use the MBTI tool in cultures very distinct from the one in which the tool was developed.
- “Understanding Type Distributions” presents two national representative samples of type and samples of type distributions from managers in other countries and cultures. This section also provides the context for ethical and appropriate use of type distribution information.

A Note About Type Knowledge

We assume that most users of this booklet will be type practitioners well versed in psychological type theory and ethics. Should you need a review of core concepts, refer to the *Introduction to Type*® booklet, which provides a refresher on the definitions of the eight preferences and an understanding of the differences and similarities among the 16 personality types. If you are new to type, we strongly recommend that you complete an MBTI qualifying program recognized by the authorized distributor in the country in which you live. For information about distributors and recognized MBTI qualifying programs, see the Appendix or contact CPP, Inc.

The Rewards of Cross-Cultural Training

For the three of us, training with the MBTI instrument in cultures other than our own has been an important route for increasing and sharpening our understanding of psychological type and our appreciation for the instrument. The experience has challenged our traditional Western view of the behaviors typical of each of the 16 types, requiring us to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of type. We have seen that type can provide a bridge of commonality and understanding between people from different cultures.

Further, we have learned that working successfully in different cultures requires us to use all of the preferences identified in psychological type.

Sample

Table 11. MBTI® Types Among Korean Managers			
ISTJ 29.6% n = 359	ISFJ 5.5% n = 67	INFJ 1.0% n = 13	INTJ 6.6% n = 80
ISTP 8.1% n = 99	ISFP 4.8% n = 59	INFP 1.5% n = 19	INTP 3.3% n = 40
ESTP 5.7% n = 69	ESFP 2.5% n = 31	ENFP 1.9% n = 23	ENTP 4.6% n = 56
ESTJ 17.6% n = 213	ESFJ 3.7% n = 45	ENFJ 0.3% n = 4	ENTJ 2.6% n = 32

Note: N = 1,209 Korean managers in a large sample of convenience.
Source: Myungjoon Kim, Korea Psychological Testing Institute Data Bank, January 2006. Used with permission.

Table 12. MBTI® Types Among Indian Managers			
ISTJ 22.8% n = 136	ISFJ 2.7% n = 16	INFJ 1.3% n = 8	INTJ 9.0% n = 54
ISTP 1.2% n = 7	ISFP 0.2% n = 1	INFP 0.7% n = 4	INTP 1.8% n = 11
ESTP 2.5% n = 15	ESFP 0.8% n = 5	ENFP 1.5% n = 9	ENTP 1.5% n = 9
ESTJ 34% n = 203	ESFJ 2.2% n = 13	ENFJ 0.5% n = 3	ENTJ 15.2% n = 91

Note: N = 733 managers in Indian business organizations.
Source: C. S. Mahesh and Janaki Venkat, Asianic Psychologists Press India, 2006. Used with permission.

of a representative sample (similar to the CAPT Data Bank samples reported in the *MBTI® Manual*).

Korean MBTI users have consistently found percentages preferring Thinking and Judging in their clients than are found in similar samples in Western countries. However, since there is no original representative sample of Koreans, this is simply a fact to be noted.

India. The representative of Asianic Psychologists Press in India are C. S. Mahesh and Janaki Venkat. They have been using the MBTI in India with managers in Indian companies for several years and report interesting information about the types of managers and the influence of organizational culture on managers' responses to the MBTI Form M.

As Mahesh and Venkat note, Indian managers apparently see their organizations and responsibilities as requiring the kinds of behaviors characteristic of ESTJ. When they receive an interpretation and choose their best-fit type, they move away from ESTJ (from 34% reported type to 24.6% best-fit type).

Table 13. Best-Fit MBTI® Types Among Indian Managers			
ISTJ 25.3% n = 151	ISFJ 4.0% n = 24	INFJ 1.8% n = 11	INTJ 9.9% n = 59
ISTP 2.8% n = 17	ISFP 0.8% n = 5	INFP 2.3% n = 14	INTP 2.5% n = 15
ESTP 4.0% n = 24	ESFP 2.2% n = 13	ENFP 2.8% n = 17	ENTP 1.7% n = 10
ESTJ 24.6% n = 147	ESFJ 2.8% n = 17	ENFJ 2.0% n = 12	ENTJ 10.2% n = 61

Note: N = 597 managers in Indian business organizations.
Source: C. S. Mahesh and Janaki Venkat, Asianic Psychologists Press India, 2006. Used with permission.