Dutch Managerial Leadership Strategies: Managing Uncertainty Avoidance, Feminine-Related Social Roles, Organisation Prosperity Focus, and Work Orientation within A Polder Framework

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ABSTRACT

This paper extends Schama's (1988) notion of moral geography where there is a determinacy link between an ecology and those managing organisations within it. We emphasise that the link is framed by its historical legacy of social ideals. This paper hypothesises that the egalitarian influence of the polder philosophy leads Dutch managers to value cooperative partnership based on consensus decision-making, in a symbiotic relationship between the manager and the community. Structural equation modelling of the data obtained from surveying 808 managers across occupational industry sectors in the Netherlands support this hypothesis. Results reveal that in the Netherlands (1) the external environment has an unique influence, through its impact

on managerial behaviour; (2) the external environment has a profound influence on managers' personal qualities underpinned by their feminine-value-oriented social roles; and (3) organisational prosperity and work orientations are driven by environmental uncertainty avoidance and managers' feminine-valued social roles.

Keywords: Uncertainty Avoidance, Social Roles, Organisation Prosperity, Work Orientation, Preferred Leadership Styles, Polder Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we explore leadership as a human phenomenon embedded in culture (Koh, Fernando and Spedding, 2018; Franz and Jain, 2017; Ciulla, 2008). In the context of cultural embeddedness, Luhmann (2017) and Wittfogel (1957) explained that power was influenced by its environment. Wittfogel's 'hydraulic society' expresses the need for large-scale coordinated and directed group activity undertaken over a wide territorial area with a centralised bureaucratic management of the affairs of the society; one that involves large-scale and government-managed works of irrigation and flood control. Following Wittfogel (1957), Welzel (2013), working on decades of World Values Survey[1] data, proposed that the ecology of human evolution, since the emigrations from the African Rift Valley that have evolved over 50,000 years, varies over two main types of adaptive ecologies.

(1) There were key survival responses to natural resources, especially in tropical river valleys. Water control could prevent flooding, but allow for annual regeneration of fertility via controlled irrigation, food storage to, and in the absence -- due to population density and land shortage -- of hunting and gathering, strong public discipline over resource ownership and re-allocation, over defense and taxation, and provision of a physical and administrative infrastructure to sustain high population densities. This ecology accounts for most human evolution since the emigration from the African Rift Valley 50,000 years ago. It leads to authoritarian leadership and government bureaucracy as necessary for group survival.

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[1] The World Values Survey (WVS) Association, Sweden was founded in 1981 as a non-profit organisation. WVS is a global research project that explores people's values and beliefs, how they change over time and what social and political impact they have. It is carried out by a worldwide network of social scientists who have conducted representative national surveys in almost 100 countries.

(2) Other ecologies have had permanently available steady supplies of cool water via rain, plus vast areas of land for hunting and gathering, as in the plains of Northwest Europe. The low density population's survival response led to greater small group autonomy, individualism/freedom, consensus, and anti-authoritarian societies, like the Dutch.

Cool water ecologies have emerged in democracies with all their underpinning (but societally varied) ideologies. None have lapsed into despotism as a survival response, so despotism was gradually replaced. Only one cool water society has depended on water control for its survival. It solved the problem with a democratic response of strong implementation, based on consensus and decentralised empowerment animated by a strong civic consciousness. This is missing from the alternative despotic response condition because of the absence of societal trust beyond the particularistic networks. The earlier millennia of socialisation in Northwest Europe led the Dutch to manage water control in a way that was different from societies in which strong government established early, and then (due to path dependency, vested elite interests, and especially compatible ideational structures) stayed totalitarian. These totalitarian states invariably engaged in modern means of propaganda, surveillance and control supported by governmental patrimonialism and organisational paternalism.

Researchers have neglected the links between the ecological conditioning and the managerial response. Dutch society is inclusive, characteristic of a nation that has united against the common threat of an ever-invading sea. The incentive to unite an ethnically diverse population places a premium on *polder*[2]-driven values as the basis of national identity. In a sense, water management has become symbolic of the *polder* values of tolerance, respect and liberty (Schreuder, 2001; Sterling, 2013; Wallace, Mathias, and Brotchie, 2013). These *polder* values are not just a philosophy for the Dutch, but a framework that for the unification of society. Consensus decision-making – the hallmark of the *polder* philosophy (Wallace et al., 2013) – stresses optimal solutions from farmers, shippers, railroads and the public (Sterling, 2013).

The Dutch *polder* model is a successful consensus-model of the 1990s that is based on the philosophy that employers, trade unions, and the government should solve socioeconomic problems together (Fokkema, et al., 2008). The term *polder* refers to the combined effort that was required from the Dutch society to reclaim land from the sea and to keep it drained. Dutch society may be characterised as a

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[2] See the theoretical framework for more explanation of the Polder model.

'consensus democracy' in which citizens participate in political decision-making through their representatives or delegates. These representatives or delegates seek broad-based decision and coalitions to link debate with political decision-making, and to reach their goals through cooperation and compromise (see De Vries, 2014 for an historical overview) (see Woldendorp and Keman, 2007 for a critical reflection of the Polder model).

Yet the form of collegiality that is inherent in the *Polder* model has been tested as the Netherlands wrestles with changes brought about by globalisation, influences from the European Union, the global financial crisis, and changes in its ethnicity framework based on new migrant populations. The *polder* philosophy is challenged by these environmental factors and provides the dialogue for this research. In this study, 'the environment' is external to the organisation – private or public – that has the potential to affect its performance. 'Environmental influences', as explained in section 2.1, have the potential to contribute to the performance of the organisation.

There is a Dutch saying: '*God schiep de wereld, maar Nederlanders creëerden Nederland*' or 'God created the world, but the Dutch created the Netherlands' (Byun and Ybema, 2005). The formation of a Dutch national identity was an evolutionary process to understand cultural encounters (Frantz and Jain, 2017; Koh, Fernando and Spedding, 201). One such cultural encounter is the Dutch perception of leadership excellence.

The extent to which leaders strive for excellence is critical (Dunning, Leuenberger and Sherman, 1995). Thus, examining perceptions of excellence in the workplace can provide insights on how to best develop effective leaders for specific environments. In this study, the development of preferred leadership styles is presumably easier in the Netherlands where assigning uncertainty avoidance, feminine-valued social roles, power-sharing and work orientation have been influenced by the *polder* framework.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The excellence in leadership (EIL) model developed by Selvarajah et al. (1995) will be examined. Next the *polder*-driven cultural variables that permeate the Netherlands (Byun and Ybema, 2005; Feikema, 2004) and influence perceptions of its organisational leaders will be hypothesised. The testing of the resulting hypotheses is then reviewed, followed by this study's empirical results. In conclusion, the implications of these findings and areas of potential future research will be discussed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As in the Global Leadership and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) studies (Chhokar, Brodbeck and House, 2008; House, et al., 2004), this study's theoretical framework is founded on implicit leadership theories (ILTs). ILTs identify individual cognitive representations of the external environment; thereby using those preconceived notions to interpret surroundings and control behaviours in the workplace (Lord, Brown and Freiberg, 1999).

Hall (1976), Hofstede (1984), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2009), and the GLOBE studies have based their cultural categorisation on specific dominant cultural value dimensions whilst, in this study leadership perceptions are viewed as knowledge that is mentally organized in the form of schemas or mental structures (Singh 2002). The underlying theory in this study is similar to the cultural models presented by social anthropologists such as D'Andrade (1995), Hinton (1998), and Holland and Quinn (1987), where the cultural frames provide social representation in the form of practice, rituals, customs and language. These cultural models are therefore based on shared ideas, attitudes and modes of behaviour in a society. Hinton (1998: 96) recognised that 'while individual variations exists, some cultural models are salient within a society and may motivate the action of large numbers of individuals'. In other words, a cultural model is a simple mental tool for understanding other people and their environment.

This study relies on this anthropological perspective on Dutch culture and its influence on the perceptions of leader behaviors. The next section explains the development of the EIL model.

The EIL Model

The EIL model, based on Western and Eastern literature, was developed for the study of managerial leadership in the Asia literature (see Selvarajah, Meyer and Davuth, 2012 for more details). A group of researchers from six Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) -- Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – participated in the development of the EIL framework. They isolated 94 value statements on managerial leadership (Selvarajah et al., 1995; Taormina and Selvarajah, 2005), and tasked managers at the Asian Institute of Management in Manila with placing each statement in one of four managerial leadership categories: (1) personal qualities; (2) managerial behaviours; (3) organisational demands; and (4) environmental influences. This data reduction through a Q-Sort procedure resulted in 58 statements. The participants were then tasked with ranking the 10 statements they believed contributed most to leadership excellence. This became the fifth category,
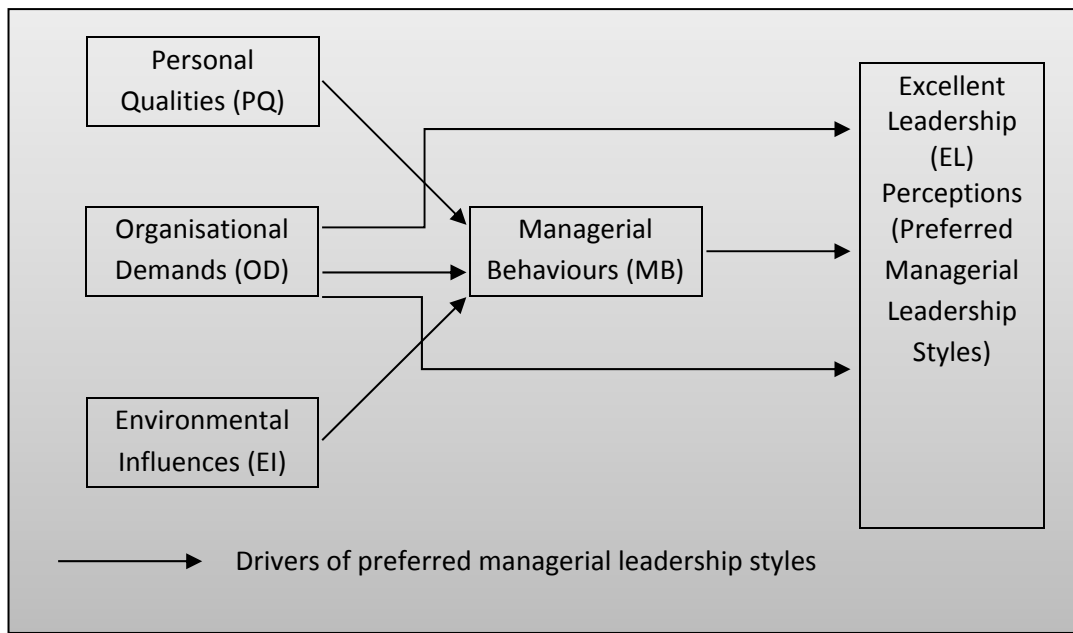
'Excellent Leader'. These five constructs, central to the EIL framework, are defined next (Selvarajah, Meyer and Donovan, 2013a, p. 359):

> *Excellent Leadership* (EL) describes the combination of behaviours and attitudes desirable for good leadership within a certain cultural context. These good leadership dimensions provided the context-driven base for the preferred managerial leadership styles. *Environmental Influences* (EI) are external factors that influence the performance of the entire organisation. These influences emphasise the importance of scanning and evaluating the external environment for opportunities. *Personal Qualities* (PQ) are the personal values, skills, attitudes, behaviours and qualities of an individual. These qualities emphasise morality, religion, interpersonal relationships and communication. *Organisational Demands* (OD) are the ways a manager responds to the goals, objectives, structures and issues in an organisation. These demands emphasise the importance of organisational prosperity and perhaps at the expense of the individual and wider community. *Managerial Behaviours* (MB) cover a person's nature, values, attitudes, actions and styles when performing managerial duties. These behaviours emphasise a centralized as opposed to participative work orientation.

These five constructs are universally applicable in the sense that their relationships are critical for understanding ILTs across countries, societies, sectors, industries or organisations. This is demonstrated in much of the EIL research in Asia (see Selvarajah and Meyer 2008a; 2008b; Selvarajah, Meyer and Davuth, 2012; Selvarajah, et al., 2013b; Selvarajah, et al., 2014; Selvarajah and Meyer, 2017; Selvarajah et al., 2017), South Africa (Shrivastava, et al., 2014) and the Netherlands (De Waal, et al., 2011). Thus, the EIL model's leadership perceptions are influenced by national and societal culture. Cultural influences are, therefore, ubiquitous and the EIL framework recognises that it can – and repeatedly does – foster different facets of OD, EI and PQ into sharper relief, which has a bearing on MB and EL perceptions (see figure 1 for a generic EIL framework).

This EIL framework has been validated through cultural value interpretations in several countries. For example, in Thailand these values include non-confrontational style, respect and deference for authority (Selvarajah et al., 2013a). In Cambodia, pragmatism is underscored by Buddhist beliefs, which often influence managerial behaviours (Selvarajah et al., 2012). This study posits that if *polder* values are as pervasive in Dutch culture as *ubuntu* is in the South African (Shrivastava et al., 2014),

and Confucianism is in the Chinese (Selvarajah and Meyer 2008b; Selvarajah, et al., 2013b), then they might affect several EIL variables to produce a unique cultural model for the Netherlands. Accordingly, the next section focuses on *polder*-driven values to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the affected EIL variables in a Dutch research context.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  ┌─────────────────┐                              ┌──────────────┐    │
│  │ Personal        │                              │ Excellent    │    │
│  │ Qualities (PQ)  │                              │ Leadership   │    │
│  └─────────────────┘                              │ (EL)         │    │
│                            ┌──────────────┐       │ Perceptions  │    │
│  ┌─────────────────┐       │ Managerial   │       │ (Preferred   │    │
│  │ Organisational  │──────▶│ Behaviours   │──────▶│ Managerial   │    │
│  │ Demands (OD)    │       │ (MB)         │       │ Leadership   │    │
│  └─────────────────┘       └──────────────┘       │ Styles)      │    │
│                                                   │              │    │
│  ┌─────────────────┐                              └──────────────┘    │
│  │ Environmental   │                                                  │
│  │ Influences (EI) │                                                  │
│  └─────────────────┘                                                  │
│                                                                       │
│        ─────────────▶   Drivers of preferred managerial leadership    │
│                         styles                                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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All factors immersed in and influenced by a ubiquitous culture

Figure 1. The generic EIL

POLDER: A DUTCH WORLDVIEW

In this study, the *polder* is positioned as a Dutch cultural framework that has leveraged national convergence around Dutch values (De Vries, 1974; Feikema, 2004; Pley, 1998; Schama, 1988; Wallace et al., 2013). The term, Dutch *polder* framework, is therefore used as a reference point where leadership behaviours can be explained using cultural interpretations of the Netherlands. In supporting the Dutch *polder* framework, Schama (1988) asserted that the Dutch cultural values are an extension of what he termed moral geography, which embodies cooperation and consensus as aspects of Dutch traditions. As Feikema (2004: 393) stated, 'In the Dutch culture, morally complex matters are often dealt with in a pragmatic and procedural way as opposed to following a principled approach'.

Dutch *Polder*-Driven Framework Supporting Preferred Managerial Leadership Styles

This section presents a conceptual framework in which the *polder* values of uncertainty avoidance, feminine-valued social roles, organisational prosperity focus, and work orientation are linked to the EIL dimensions of Environmental Influences, Personal Qualities, Organisational Demands and Managerial Behaviors respectively.

Given the strong environmental influence on the origins of *poldering* in the Netherlands, it is theorised here that the *polder* philosophy is environment-driven and will influence EIL-related perceptions of a unique managerial leadership style for the Netherlands, as depicted in figure 2 .
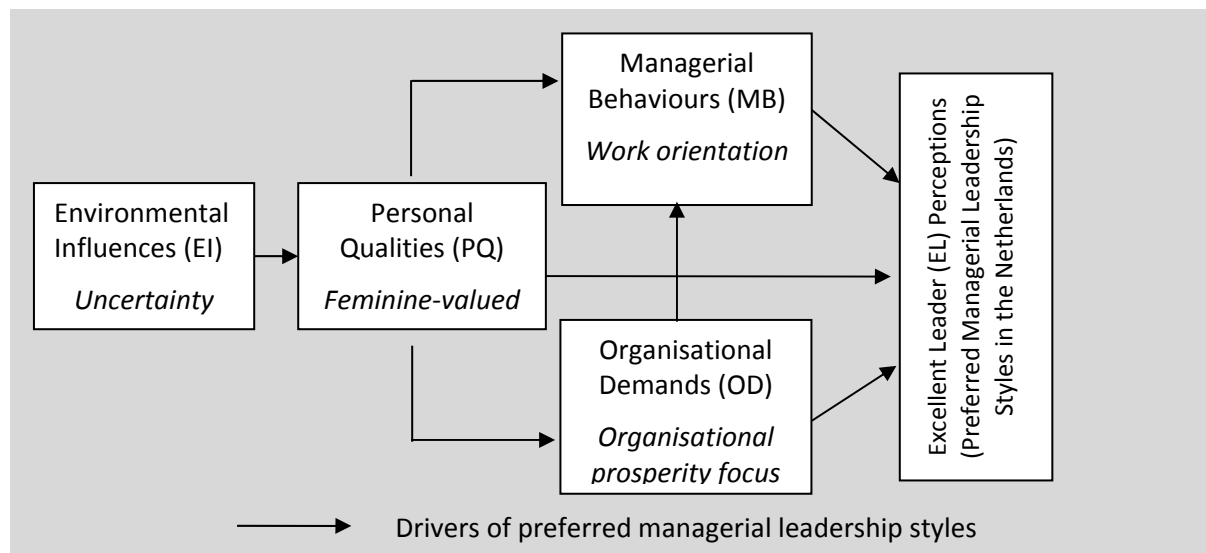
Figure 2 Conceptual framework of preferred managerial leadership style in the Netherlands

Based on this conceptualisation, it is proposed that:
- In the Netherlands, Environment Influences will affect the Personal Qualities of managers in terms of what constitutes preferred managerial leadership styles.
- In the Netherlands, Personal Qualities will influence the Managerial Behaviors and the Organisational Demands as to what constitutes preferred managerial leadership styles.

As reflected by Magsaysay and Hechanova (2017) a fundamental factor in any organisational change is the effectiveness of the leader in fostering change. Furthermore, the *polder* values depicted in figure 2 provide reference for:

(1) uncertainty avoidance, where the Dutch seek harmonious development as change occur (Milikowski, 2000);
(2) feminine-valued social roles that support pragmatism, procedural justice and human interdependence;
(3) work orientation that empowers behaviour;
(4) organisational prosperity focus among the constituent bodies of the national economy.

Relating Uncertainty Avoidance to Environmental Influences

Based on Hofstede's (1984) interpretation, de Waal et al. (2016) defined uncertainty avoidance as the extent to which people in a society or culture are comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. Members of societies with high uncertainty avoidance are often anxious in unstructured situations and either avoid or develop strategies to combat them. They tend to prefer a structured workplace, technology, rules and detailed planning. In contrast, members of societies with lower uncertainty avoidance are capable of working in ambiguous situations, taking risks and accepting change. Uncertainty avoidance is particularly relevant in terms of organisational responses to environmental effects.

Miller (1992) identified five generic environmental responses to workplace uncertainty: avoidance; control; cooperation; imitation; and flexibility. He also determined that the associated risks with regard to these five responses often stem from the environment, industry and the organisation. In another study of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) conducted in Finland, Norway and Sweden, Babakus, Yavas and Haahti (2006: 4) confirmed this link between uncertainty avoidance and environmental influences. They concluded that 'Based on their cultural values [Scandinavians] are low on uncertainty avoidance and therefore are not threatened by environmental uncertainties, and consequently may not feel compelled to engage in networking to reduce uncertainty'.

Managing Environmental Influences thus becomes important for the effectiveness of organisational leadership. Based on this understanding and the Dutch situation of having to deal with environmental conditions both inside and outside of the country, it is postulated here that where uncertainty avoidance is high in organisations, the influence of the environment is likely to have a greater impact on leadership behaviour. Hofstede's (1984) research of more than 50 countries using IBM organisational data revealed that the Dutch rated moderately on uncertainty avoidance, a finding supported in the GLOBE study (Thierry, den Hartog, Koopman and Wilderom, 2008).

Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: In the Netherlands, unique environmental influences will have a significant effect on the perception of what constitutes preferred managerial leadership.

Relating Feminine-Valued Social Roles to The Personal Qualities of The Manager

The organisational social roles of managers are influenced by interconnected personal behaviours that transform into obligations, beliefs and norms specified by their status and role in the organisation (Frantz and Jain, 2017; Kahn, et al, 1964). This paper asserts that the personal qualities of managers, which reflect their values, skills and beliefs, influence their behaviour in their organisational roles.

Furthermore, numerous studies have associated the assignment of organisational social roles to the masculinity-femininity dimension (e.g., Dennis and Kunkel, 2004; Hofstede 1984; Powell, Butterfield and Parent, 2002). Studying the personal qualities of leaders in the USA, Dennis and Kunkel (2004) found that while masculinity continues to be associated with organisational leadership, both male and female CEOs who have feminine-valued orientations supported the importance of femininity as a leadership factor. A more recent study by Kark, Waismel-Manor and Shamir (2012) found that femininity was more strongly related to leadership effectiveness than masculinity. Such findings, although contradictory, suggest that in the West there has been a shift towards feminine-value-oriented work situations, which affects what constitutes effective leadership. This highlights the importance of developing personal qualities that support a feminine-valued orientation in egalitarian organisations.

In feminine-value-oriented cultures such as the Netherlands, Hofstede (1984, 2001) identified that the social roles of men and women often overlap and accentuate interpersonal relationships, sympathy and concern for the weak. Although Hofstede did not directly perceive an association between the social roles played by managers and their personal qualities, a significant correlation between them is likely based on culture. Based on this association, managers in Dutch organisations are likely to support personal qualities that emphasise morality, interpersonal relationships and communication – qualities that are often viewed as feminine (Hofstede, 2001). Arrindell and Veenhoven (2002) emphasised that feminine-value-oriented societies such as the Netherlands encourage the feminine-valued traits of modesty, tenderness and concern with quality of life.

In line with these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: In the Netherlands, a preference for feminine-valued social roles will have a positive influence on the preferred managerial leadership styles.

Relating Organisational Prosperity Focus to Organisational Demands

At the organisational level, the *polder* philosophy has two defining attributes: (1) a strong governing authority; and (2) a habitual preference for cooperation and consultation (Peet, 2002). Sterling (2013) believed that such a 'compromise culture' had allowed the Netherlands to weather recent global economic crises. In other words, the country's stakeholders are more concerned with negotiating deals than fighting over principles.

The effects of the economic recession of the 1970s in the Netherlands persuaded trade unions, employers and government bodies to remain committed to consensual politics in what became internationally known as the Polder model (Jones, 2002). Despite the numerous policy changes since the 1970s where the power base transferred from the traditional polder system governed by the ruling elite to organisations and the judicial systems, the consensus decision-making system embedded in the polder values remained (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005). As a result of this transformation, consensus among interest groups was now achieved at lower levels of the sociopolitical hierarchy (Hay, 2004; Pellikaan, Van Der Meer and De Lange, 2003).

Another key value of the Dutch polder framework is a broader community focus in relation to prosperity. The interests of the community outweigh those of organisational prosperity. This value was borne out of necessity, as the Dutch political system is based on a merging of the seven provinces[3] that made up the United Provinces. Major decisions require the support of all the provinces. This paper therefore addresses the dynamics relating to the centrality of organisational decision-making values as a measure of organisational demands.

In the Netherlands, the *polder* philosophy places organisational prosperity within the national cultural dimension, where the relationship between an organisation's performance expectations of its employees and the way employees subsequently behave to satisfy these expectations affects community prosperity. That is, power sharing is as a central concept in achieving 'culturally natured goals' (Torelli and Shavitt, 2010: 704), where culture fosters normative standards for the legitimate use of this power (Chiu and Hong, 2006). Chiu and Hong (2006), and Torelli and Shavitt

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[3] Hence, the name 'the Netherlands' rather than just 'Netherland'.

(2010), emphasise power as vested in communal-oriented people, where those with relationship exchange orientations behave differently from those that are organisation-centred. Therefore, in support of the *polder* philosophy of seeking a compromise culture, legitimate use of power is seen to engage community prosperity. Due to culture's relationship with organisational behaviours, it is proposed here that power structures in an organisation may enhance excellence in leadership when there is a similar level of power sharing. Sterling (2013) asserted that in the Netherlands, power is shared with stakeholders seeking optimal solutions in organisational decision-making. This is consistent with the view that a pragmatic cooperative framework rather than centrality of power is the hallmark of *polder* philosophy (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005; Schama, 1988).

A devolved decision-making power structure such as in the Netherlands suggests an egalitarian system of shared power that has greater interdependence in decision-making and communality than one that has centralised power (Winsemius, 2010). Managerial behaviours that emphasise executive decision-making are therefore more common in organisations with a centralised organisational culture, and less common in those with a strong interdependence between organisational stakeholders. The following hypothesis is therefore put forward:

Hypothesis 3: In the Netherlands, where the common good is emphasised, organisation demands that allow for the sharing of power and responsibilities is the preferred managerial leadership style.

Relating Work Orientation to Managerial Behaviours

As Mullins (2002) argued, it is important to build organisational relationships that influence and empower the behaviours and actions of others to reach their potential to achieve organisational success. Moreover, in the Netherlands organisations emphasise lower executive-level decision-making, a more participative management style, and greater dependency between organisational levels (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005). Thus, an egalitarian decision making behavioural framework is preferred, marked by respect for, individual work, work engagement, problem solving, and trusting employee integrity in decision making across levels.

Based on these arguments in relation to centralised versus communal decision-making, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 4: In the Netherlands, where there is greater dependence between levels, consultative managerial behaviours are positively related to the

preferred leadership styles. This suggests low centralised Managerial Behaviours and a preference for a more participative style of leadership.

METHODOLOGY

This study has considered the common characteristics of Dutch managers at all levels in a standard organisation in the Netherlands. A managerial position is defined as one in which the manager has at least one subordinate. Potential respondents who were managers in the Netherlands were approached online via the website of the country's largest management periodicals, *Management Team*, and through a formal approach to 25 organisations that were known to one of the authors. As the average number of visitors to *Management Team* is unknown, an accurate response rate could not be calculated. Furthermore, the identification of respondents including their organisation was kept anonymous to increase the response rate. A total of 808 usable questionnaires was received.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The largest industry represented in the sample was professional services, which included financial, accountancy and consultancy services (28.3%), followed by education (21.3%) and construction (10.6%).

Table 1 Demographic details of respondents

Age	%	Organization type	%	Industry	%	Gender	%
Under 35	12.9	For profit	59.7	Professional Services	28.3	Male	64
35–40	20.2	Not-for-profit	40.3	Education	21.3	Female	36
41–45	19.9			Construction	10.6		
46–50	20.2			Healthcare	9.5		
51–55	24.8			Government	7.7		
Over 55	2.1			Manufacturing	6.8		
				IT	4.5		
				Other	0.3		

Base: n=808

MEASURES

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of Selvarajah et al.'s (1995) 94 behavioural value statements based on what constitutes an excellent leader in their position using an importance rating scale ranging from 1 (*very unimportant*) to 5 (*very important*). In this way the questionnaire identified which managerial values

most contributed to perceptions of good leadership in an organisation. This line of enquiry was also used to develop preferred context-specific managerial leadership styles. Using principal component analysis for all 94 behavioural items, Harman's (1976) method suggested that common-method bias was unlikely because less than 20% of the variation in leadership excellence measures was explained by the first principal component.

In this study, those behavioural items which featured in the original Q-Sort technique described in Selvarajah et al. (1995), and additional items (i.e. 'be socially and environmentally responsible', 'identify social trends which may have an impact on the work', 'respect the self-esteem of others', 'return favours', and 'accept that others will make mistakes') found to be significant in other studies (e.g. Selvarajah and Meyer, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Selvarajah et al., 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Selvarajah, Meyer, Vinen and Trung, 2010; Selvarajah et al., 2014) were used to create the five EIL constructs. The fifth measure is an overall measure for leadership excellence based on those items that the Q-Sort considered to be the epitome of leadership in any organisational context. This measure was used to create a formative rather than a reflective model for preferred managerial leadership styles.

This study applies a formative model for leadership excellence. A formative model for leadership excellence treats Personal Qualities, Environmental Influences, Organisational Demands and Managerial Behaviors as predictors of preferred managerial leadership styles; a reflective model regards them as indicators of the preferred styles. This approach also offers some protection against common-method bias – this decreases when additional independent variables are included in a regression equation, because controlling for several predictors means that the common-method variance is effectively removed, allowing the true effect of each predictor to emerge (Siemsen, Roth and Oliveira, 2010).

In this study, confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 22 was conducted to test whether the Excellence in Leadership (EIL) model was observable in the Dutch context. This consisted of generating separate measurement models for the four hypothesized predictors of leadership, as well as the Excellent Leader construct (see tables A1 to A5 in the Appendix). Cronbach's alpha and a composite reliability measure are used to check the reliability of the scales

Based on these analyses, the measurement models showed an acceptable fit (Byrne, 2010) with Goodness of Fit Indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI) all above 0.90, a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) below 0.05, and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) below 0.06, for all five constructs. Tests for discriminant validity were carried out for the four predictor constructs using the nested

models approach of Bagozzi, Yi and Phillips (1991). The fit for the combined measurement model deteriorated significantly when any of the correlations among these four constructs were set to 1, confirming these were indeed four distinct constructs. As shown in table 2 in section 6, the correlations between the resulting scales for the four predictor constructs and Excellent Leader had a maximum value of 0.71, further supporting the discriminant validity of these measures. Scales with a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70 are regarded as reasonably reliable with values above 0.80 indicating good reliability. Values above 0.60 are considered adequate for an exploratory study such as this (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 2006). Similarly values above 0.60 are considered adequate for composited reliability (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017) even when average variances extracted are low (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

These results confirmed that the proposed excellence in leadership measures originally derived for an Asian context also supported the development of preferred managerial leadership styles in the Dutch context.

RESULTS

As shown in table 2, the average scales for four of the five constructs exhibited reliabilities above 0.65 for Cronbach's alpha. Only reliability for Environment Influences was slightly lower with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.61. Similarly, the Composite Reliabilities (CR) always exceeded 0.6, despite low average extracted variances. All the correlations were significant ($p<.001$).

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Scales

	Variable	M	SD	α	$\sqrt{AVE}$	CR	**1**	**2**	3	4
1	Excellent Leadership (EL)	4.42	0.388	0.749	0.53	0.756				
2	Environmental Influences (EI)	3.74	0.494	0.606	0.48	0.622	0.53			
3	Organizational Demands (OD)	3.91	0.465	0.662	0.48	0.669	0.64	0.61		
4	Personal Qualities (PQ)	4.15	0.380	0.765	0.48	0.778	0.71	0.57	0.62	
5	Managerial Behaviors (MB)	3.79	0.412	0.669	0.44	0.675	0.64	0.57	0.65	0.67

Base: n=808

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was then used to test whether the Excellent Leader scale was predicted by the four constructs of leadership: Environmental Influences; Personal Qualities; Managerial Behaviours; and Organisational Demands. In this model, these four dimensions represent a formative model of Excellent Leadership for identifying preferred managerial leadership styles in the Netherlands. The model shown in figure 3 explains 58% of the variance in Excellent Leadership, and providing satisfactory goodness of fit (Chi-square = 1.292; df = 1; p = 0.256).
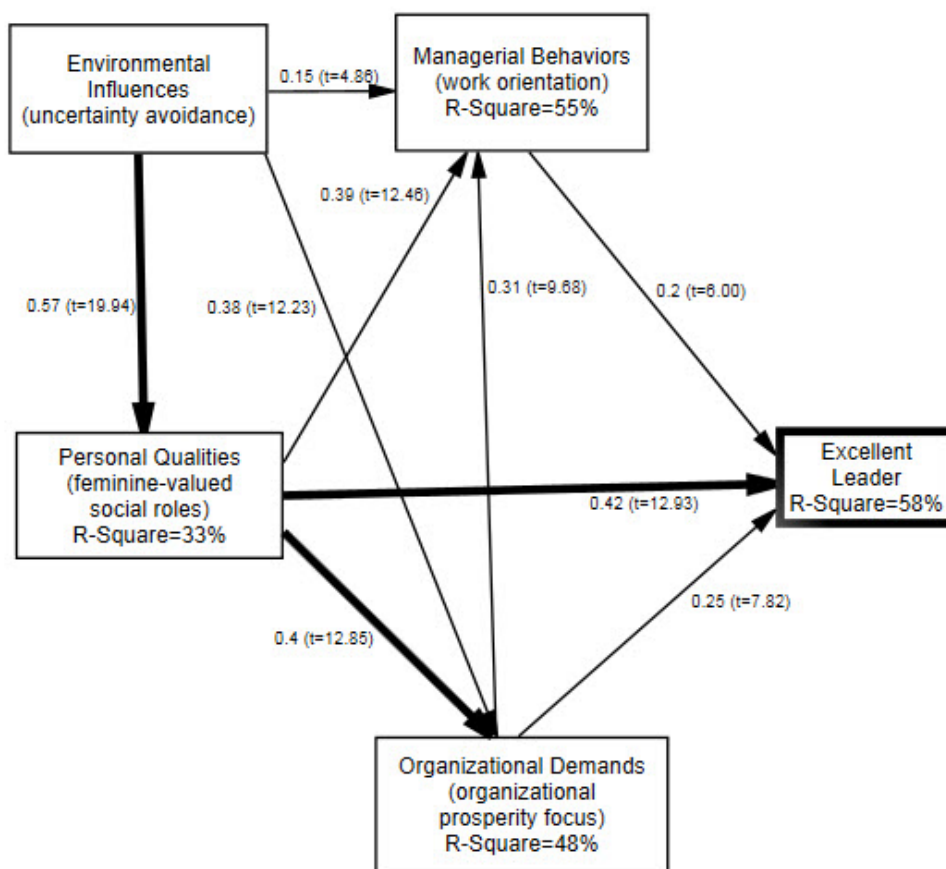
Figure 3 Structural Model for Preferred Managerial Leadership in The Netherlands[4]

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[4] Values in brackets are *polder* values; with thicker lines for loadings equal to or greater than 0.40

The beta coefficients and explained variance associated with each dimension (construct) are also shown in figure 3, which fully supports the original model in figure 2 except that in the former model it was hypothesised that Personal Qualities completely mediates the relationship between Environmental Influences and the constructs of Managerial Behaviours and Organisational Demands. In contrast, in figure 3, Personal Qualities only partially mediates these relationships in that there are also direct but weak links between Environmental Influences and the constructs of Managerial Behaviours and Organisational Demands. However, as theorised, there is no direct link between Environmental Influences and perceptions of Excellent Leader; herewith supporting the conceptualisation suggested in figure 2 and providing some evidence for the mediation effects of Personal Qualities.

The top row of table 3 shows the overall standardised effect sizes for each of the four constructs that support Excellent Leader in organisations in the Netherlands. The predictive power of the independent variables clearly suggests that in the EIL framework, Personal Qualities of the manager is the strongest indicator of Excellent Leadership (η^2=0.622), followed by Environmental Influences (η^2=0.506), Organisational Demands (η^2=0.310) and Managerial Behaviours (η^2=0.201). However, the 95% confidence intervals (CI) generated using 1,000 bootstrap samples appeared to overlap to some extent, suggesting that Personal Qualities and Environmental Influences have similar importance, while Managerial Behaviours and Organisational Demands also have similar but less importance.

As a final step, invariance tests were conducted to establish whether the same model weights could be used for males and females (chi-square = 26.959; df = 9; p = 0.001), across all age ranges (chi-square = 80.98; df = 36; $p < 0.001$), and for profit versus not-for-profit organisations (chi-square = 25.88; df = 9; p = 0.002). In all test cases, different weights were required for the categories. Yet as shown in table 3, the ordering of the four constructs determining what constitutes Excellent Leader remained the same in all cases except for the 36–40 age group, suggesting that cultural influences on perceptions of managerial leadership excellence are consistent across gender, age and organisation groups in the Netherlands.

The managers in the 36–40 age group rated Managerial Behaviours above Organisational Demands, but otherwise the ranking of the constructs is as follows: (1) Personal Qualities; (2) Environmental Influences; (3) Organisational Demands; and (4) Managerial Behaviours. This supports this study's hypotheses that Dutch managers perceive the importance of the feminine-valued social roles and influence of the environment. However, there was less support for the hypotheses relating to shared

power and responsibilities (organisational demands) and consultative managerial behaviours.

Table 3 EIL's Total standardised Effect Sizes for The Prediction of Excellent Leader

EIL Constructs *Polder* values	Personal Qualities Feminine-valued social roles	Environmental Influences Uncertainty avoidance	Organisational Demands Organisational prosperity focus	Managerial Behaviors Work orientation	R-square (%)
Overall	0.622	0.506	0.310	0.201	58.3
95% CI	0.560 to 0.701	0.442 to 0.602	0.247 to 0.359	0.133 to 0.277	50.8 to 69.7
Males	0.599	0.523	0.343	0.200	57.7
Females	0.657	0.485	0.340	0.164	61.3
For profit	0.621	0.551	0.364	0.203	61.6
Not-for-profit	0.600	0.411	0.296	0.166	51.2
Under 35	0.500	0.495	0.316	0.153	46.5
36–40	0.539	0.377	0.260	0.346	46.2
41–45	0.723	0.589	0.365	0.135	73.0
46–50	0.605	0.498	0.330	0.182	57.1
51 plus	0.562	0.511	0.381	0.108	55.2

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore cultural embeddedness by empirically studying the link between an ecology and the managing organisations within it. In so doing, this study also tested an organisational leadership model developed within an Asian context in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, *polder* values were factored in to offer a more fine-grained analysis of the EIL variables. Dutch cultural values were used to help define Dutch management styles via the *polder* philosophy and the four-construct EIL model consisting of Environmental Influences, Personal Qualities, Organisational Demands and Managerial Behaviours. The relationships between the EIL constructs within the cultural context of the Netherlands using SEM were also tested.

This study is based on the understanding that the EIL framework does not provide a framework that can be structured the same across all countries or cultures. Each country's model would be unique, with the potential to develop sub-constructs to explain the cultural context of each environment. The EIL framework in this study supports an emic cultural context – one in which the analysis of the cultural phenomenon is from the perspectives of the individuals being studied.

Table 4 summarises the support found for this study's hypotheses, using bootstrapped 95% CI for the standardized total effect sizes. In particular, there is strong support for the view that feminine-valued social roles (Personal Qualities) and uncertainty avoidance (Environmental Influences) are a priority of excellent leaders in the Netherlands, while consultative processes (Managerial Behaviours) and power and responsibility sharing (Organisational Demands) have significantly less importance.

Table 4 *Polder* Value Supported Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Corresponding EIL constructs	Total standardized effect size (95% CI)	Importance
H1. In the Netherlands, the unique environmental influences will have a significant effect on the perception of what constitutes preferred managerial leadership styles.	Environmental Influences (EI)	0.506 (0.442:0.602)	high importance
H2. In the Netherlands, a preference for feminine-valued social roles will have a positive influence on the preferred managerial leadership styles.	Personal Qualities (PQ)	0.622 (0.560:0.701)	high importance
H3. In the Netherlands, where the common good is emphasised, organization demands that allow for the sharing of power and responsibilities is the preferred managerial leadership style.	Organizational Demands (OD)	0.310 (0.247:0.359)	low importance
H4. In the Netherlands, where there is greater dependence between levels, consultative managerial behaviours are positively related to the preferred leadership styles. This suggests low centralized Managerial Behaviours and a preference for a more participative style of leadership in the Netherlands.	Managerial Behaviors (MB)	0.201 (0.133:0.277)	low importance

As a reflection of figure 3, the relational effects of the EIL model on preferred managerial leadership styles in the Netherlands are discussed in the following sub-sections. Previous behavioural studies have not measured inter-relational effects, and nation-specific studies have not explored the mediation effects for cultural variances; thus, the value of this study's approach comprises a better understanding of the cultural phenomena underlying managerial leadership styles in the Netherlands and possibly other Western countries.

Uncertainty Avoidance as A Measure of Environmental Influences

The need to avoid uncertainty is an integral part of environmental scanning, and this is a key influencer of the Personal Qualities of Dutch managers. Uncertainty avoidance is closely related to factors such as economic circumstances, political situations, and cultural and legal elements that affect the success of the organisation (Babakus et al., 2006; Berard and Delerue, 2010; Miller, 1992).

Table A2 (see Appendix) shows external influences, 'multicultural orientation' and fostering an international perspective, as the value statements that contribute most to identifying a manager as a leader in Dutch organisations. Fontaine (2007) is of the view that the Dutch business landscape has changed drastically in the last three decades as more citizens from non-Dutch background have entered the workforce, enhancing the disposition of the Dutch disposition for international trade. Furthermore, the managers in this study agreed that the most important behavioural value statement is 'being socially and environmentally responsible'– indicative of Dutch society's increasing attention to environmental issues.

Therefore, from the perspective of national culture, the value statements clearly suggest a balance that suits multicultural initiatives, internationalisation of the economy, and the creation of a working environment that provides social and environmental accountability.

Avoiding the adverse effect of external influences is an important function of Dutch managers. In the EIL model, the dimension that measures these effects is Environment Influences. The Netherlands have always been a seafaring nation with an outward-looking perspective, and this orientation and combined with its multicultural population are possible drivers of the thinking of Dutch managers.

Feminine-Valued Social Roles as Measure of Personal Qualities

In the EIL model, a manager's 'soft' and 'hard' qualities are represented by the Personal Qualities dimension, which includes feminine-value-oriented measures that

promote wider social roles. These personal qualities are often seen as supporting introspection within an organisational culture in the Netherlands.

As shown in table A3 (see Appendix), the Personal Qualities dimension received the highest overall standardised effect size score, indicating that the softer (feminine-oriented) values of Dutch culture influence the egalitarian nature of managers with regard to what constitutes an excellent leader. The Dutch believe that the personal behavioural value statements that are most important to managers are 'respecting the self-esteem of others' and 'consistency in dealing with people'. However, Dutch managers have expressed the desire to try harder to respect others and to accept responsibility for their own mistakes where morality, reliability and excellent communication skills are deemed important.

Reliability, as a characteristic of good personal qualities is exhibited with consistent behaviour in interacting with people, and maintaining composure in a crisis, whilst excellent communication skills transform as clear and concise speaking and writing. The Dutch managers insist that the indispensable personal quality for management is the perception of dependability and trustworthiness. Therefore, from the perspective of national culture, Personal Qualities are viewed as highly important in the Netherlands.

Organisational Prosperity Focus as A Measure of Organisational Demands

In this study, the managers disagreed with the opinion that the Dutch manager's role is solely to support the demands of the organisation. They instead supported the view that the expectations of the organisation should be balanced with the needs of the stakeholders. Table A4 (see Appendix) shows the statements that contribute most to identifying a manager who is excellent in satisfying the demands of an organisation. Such managers have a preference for sharing power, making joint decisions, maximising productivity, and supporting the corporate image. That is, acting as a member of the team is seen as the most important behavioural value when addressing corporate demands.

Joint decision-making in Dutch organisations is therefore commonly carried out where the interests of organisational stakeholders are well-represented. This is where a commitment to the *polder* values of consensus and corporate partnerships prevails when factoring in organisational prosperity. In the Netherlands, organisations commonly share responsibility or decision-making.

Organisational Demands is viewed as a mediating influence on what constitutes managerial leadership styles in Dutch organisations. However, managers' feminine-oriented personal qualities also have a direct influence on what constitutes preferred

leadership styles. Thus, Organisational Demands, as a determinant of leadership excellence in Dutch organisations, has a weaker but still significant influence on what constitutes an excellent leader compared to the other EIL constructs. Organisational prosperity is important, but not at the expense of the community.

Work Orientation as A Subject of Managerial Behaviors

In a highly centralised power culture, there is a tendency not to question or challenge authority (Das, DiRienzo, Cort and Burbridge, 2007; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2006). Instead, respect, obedience and deference to higher-status individuals are valued. The dimension that best measures these constructs in the EIL model is Managerial Behaviours, which includes measures such as a manager's ability to make work decisions, prioritise the workload, focus on tasks, and independently make decisions.

As Table A5 shows (see Appendix), the Dutch believe that managers should be quick at decision-making and prioritise their workloads wisely. In addition, these managers should be task-focused, innovative, autonomous and adept at delegating work. In an egalitarian system, autonomy of employees and having managers who trust their work is essential. This is in line with the emphasis for greater autonomy in the Dutch workplace. This means that managerialism – where the primary value is economic efficiency and support for class-consciousness is perceived to be a unifying force among managers (Alvesson, 2004; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2011; Locke and Spender, 2011; White, Carvalho, and Riordan, 2011) – is relatively unknown in the Dutch corporate system. From a national culture perspective, the Netherlands, characterised by consensus-based decision-making and a highly feminine-value-oriented culture, will attach little importance to Managerial Behaviors as supportive of economic efficiency and a managerial class. Rather, an egalitarian participative style of managerial behaviour is preferred to a more centralised work orientation.

These results imply that managers in the Netherlands view their role as allowing them a certain amount of independence as opposed to purely pursuing centralised control in support of economic efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The value of this paper to managers is that it improved our understanding of the phenomena underlying managerial styles in the Netherlands. The polder philosophy has a strong influence on the psychological interpretation of life, and therefore heavily influences the culture of Dutch society. The findings suggest that the Dutch organisational systems are geared towards power sharing, which is reflected in most

business operations where stakeholder representations are valued components of decision-making. This decision-making procedure is enhanced through a consensus-based process rather than the typical anglicised adversarial response; suggesting managerialism as a value base in business operations does not have much support in Dutch organisations.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

A cross-sectional study like this, using data collected from a single survey instrument, always raises concerns about possible common-method bias, even when a questionnaire has been used successfully for multiple studies in many different countries, as is true in this case. However, this study's results of the principal component analysis of the leadership importance data suggest that less than 20% of the variability can be explained by the first principal component. According to Harman (1976), this indicates that common-method bias is unlikely to be a problem in such data. Further, the use of a formative rather than a reflective model for leadership excellence ensures the minimisation of any common-method bias in the results.

Another limitation relates to the method of questioning. This EIL study has been conducted from the perspective of managers, not their subordinates, which could be perceived as biased or as self-reporting. However, the intention here was to measure managers' perceptions of their positions in organisations; therefore, seeking followers' perceptions would not have been as relevant.

In addition, as explained by this study's Dutch co-researchers, the term 'polder' has been widely used – even overused – especially in politics and in negotiations among government, employers and employees in the Netherlands. Therefore, a detailed understanding of the Dutch polder framework, its use and potential use should be investigated, potentially via a qualitative study that supports this initiative.

Practical Implications

As highlighted in this study, the polder philosophy has a strong influence on the psychological interpretation of life, and therefore heavily influences the culture of Dutch society. Its effects can be seen in both the in-group and out-group behaviours. The advantage the Dutch have is accumulated knowledge of the world economy from their seafaring days, and an acute knowledge of the uncertainties they face as a small water-bound nation. This confidence has enabled them to develop a highly pragmatic worldview as regards to systems that enforce egalitarianism. Although we have raised caution about the generalization of gender equality, a sense of fairness prevails in the Netherlands that supports values across gender as well as communal differences.

The Dutch organisational systems are highly geared towards power sharing, which is reflected in most business operations where stakeholder representations are valued components of decision-making. This decision-making procedure is enhanced through a consensus-based process rather than the typical anglicised adversarial repose. Therefore, managerialism as a value base in business operations does not have much support in Dutch organisations.

What does all this mean for leadership development in the Netherlands?

The excellence-related perceptions generated in this study provide some insights into how best to train and develop effective organisational managers in the Netherlands. Six perceptions are worth exploring as polder values that could reinforce organisational culture in the Netherlands. First, understanding Environmental Influences, especially those of a workforce of multicultural employees, and showing respect for the sensitivities of the social and natural environment are important. Second, the importance of the feminine-oriented social roles that are valued by Dutch managers must be reinforced in an increasingly multicultural organisational framework. Third, power sharing with less emphasis on centralised power provides an important framework that entails and reinforces interdependence among stakeholders, suggesting that organisational prosperity is important, but not at the expense of the community. Fourth, work-oriented behaviours in the Netherlands support decentralised management control, with less emphasis on the managerial prerogative. Fifth, developing strategies that provide incentives for good work and honesty are highly perceived activities among managers. Finally, the polder philosophy that has an underlying unifying effect for the nation needs to be incorporated into human resources capacity-building programs in the Netherlands.

All these efforts will also have implications for expatriate training of foreigners in the Netherlands, and for the adaptation of the Dutch to foreign business cultures.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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APPENDIX

Table A1 Statements to Identify Excellent Leadership (EL)

Value statement	Loading	Mean	SD
EL1. Have confidence when dealing with work and people	0.628	4.43	0.609
EL2. Give recognition for good work	0.615	**4.63**	0.533
EL3. Create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in the workplace	0.601	4.44	0.659
EL4. Motivate employees	0.569	4.51	0.632
EL5. Continue to learn how to improve performance	0.509	4.19	0.729
EL6. Have a strategic vision for the organization	0.454	4.37	0.694
EL7. Organize work time effectively	.425	4.16	0.706
EL8. Be honest	0.412	**4.65**	0.568

Normed Chi-square = 2.199; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.039; SRMR = 0.040

Table A2 Characteristics in The Environmental Influences (EI) Dimension

Value statement	Loading	Mean	SD
EI1. Have a multicultural orientation and approach	0.596	3.62	0.994
EI2. Be socially and environmentally responsible	0.526	**4.14**	0.733
EI3. Identify social trends which may have an impact on the work	0.594	3.93	0.708
EI4. Constantly evaluate emerging technologies	0.306	3.31	0.935
EI5. Use economic indicators for planning purposes	0.389	3.61	0.855
EI6. Be responsive to political realities in the environment	0.354	3.84	0.846

Normed Chi-square = 2.241; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.039; SRMR=0.029

Table A3 Characteristics in the Personal Qualities (PQ) Dimension

Value statements		Loading	Mean	SD
PQ1.	Respect the self-esteem of others	0.578	4.45	0.597
PQ2.	Be consistent in dealing with people	0.553	4.32	0.725
PQ3.	Be dependable and trustworthy	0.548	**4.79**	0.464
PQ4.	Accept responsibilities for mistakes	0.532	**4.53**	0.611
PQ5.	Deal calmly in tense situations	0.521	4.22	0.665
PQ7.	Listen to the advice of others	0.466	4.14	0.666
PQ8.	Return favours	0.456	3.46	0.914
PQ9.	Write clearly and concisely	0.445	3.95	0.747
PQ10.	Follow what is morally right, not what is right for self or for the organization	0.423	3.40	0.949
PQ11.	Accept that others will make mistakes	0.403	4.28	0.723
PQ12.	Have a sense of humour	0.398	4.05	0.713
PQ13	Be an initiator, not a follower	0.376	4.24	0.727

Normed Chi-square = 2.644; GFI = 0.97; AGFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.045; SRMR=0.037

Table A4. Characteristics in the Organizational Demands (OD) Dimension

	Value statements	Loading	Mean	SD
OD1.	Share power	0.557	3.58	0.953
OD2.	Support decisions made jointly by others	0.557	4.04	0.747
OD3.	Focus on maximising productivity	0.386	3.65	0.793
OD4.	Sell the professional or corporate image to the public	0.611	4.14	0.795
OD5.	Act as a member of the team	0.443	**4.36**	0.721
OD6.	Give priority to long-term goals	0.396	3.93	0.759
OD7.	Adjust organizational structures and rules to realities of practice	0.346	3.65	0.874

Normed Chi-square = 1.525; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.026; SRMR=0.023

Table A5 Characteristics in The Managerial Behaviors (MB) Dimension

	Value statements	Loading	Mean	SD
MB1.	Select work wisely to avoid overload	0.518	3.69	0.836
MB2.	Focus on the task-at-hand	0.496	3.56	0.823
MB3.	Listen to and understand the problems of others	0.496	4.10	0.709
MB4.	Be logical in solving problems	0.429	3.90	0.751
MB5.	Persuade others to do things	0.419	3.54	0.814
MB6.	Make decisions earlier rather than later	0.369	3.45	0.859
MB7.	Trust those to whom work is delegated	0.405	**4.38**	0.622
MB8.	Keep up-to-date on management literature	.396	3.24	0.946
MB9.	Delegate	0.360	**4.27**	0.666

Normed Chi-square = 2.808; GFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.047; SRMR=0.040