

# The Competency Requirements for HR Practitioners in Domestic Firms and Multinational Enterprises

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# Research Aim

- To investigate HR competencies required for HR practitioners for their success in domestic firms and multinational enterprises (MNEs)
- Adopts a situationalist competency perspective which focuses on the contextual nature of HR competencies by differentiating between generic HR competencies (i.e., universally applicable to HR practitioners) and context-specific HR competencies (i.e., relevant to a narrower range of settings)



# Situationalist Perspective

- Challenges the universalist perspective that focuses on identifying generic HR competencies (Ulrich et al., 2013; Long & Wan Ismail, 2009; Dainty, 2011)
- Argues that there are context-specific HR competencies as well as generic ones (Caldwell, 2008; 2010; Graham & Tarbell, 2006; Roehling et al., 2005)
- The HR literature suggests that MNEs are likely to promote a more strategic HR role (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Smale & John, 2011; Sheehan & Scalfidi, 2005; Sumelius, Bjorkman, & Smale, 2008) and standardisation of HRM practices (Belizon, Gunnigle, & Morley, 2013; Farndale & Paauwe, 2005; Stiles & Trevor, 2006) than domestic firms

# Methodology

## Research Question:

What are the **generic** and **context-specific** HR competencies for domestic firms and MNEs?

## Mixed Method Research Design

**Phase 1:**  
Content Analysis  
HR Job Descriptions

**Phase 2:**  
Concept Mapping  
Focus Groups

**Phase 3:**  
Concept Mapping  
Online Survey



# Concept Mapping Process

## Step 1: Brainstorming Focus Groups

3 focus groups of 8 focus group HR participants + 2 HR experts brainstormed a list of 44 HR competencies

## Step 2: Concept Mapping Online Survey

63 New Zealand HR practitioners sorted and rated the HR competencies

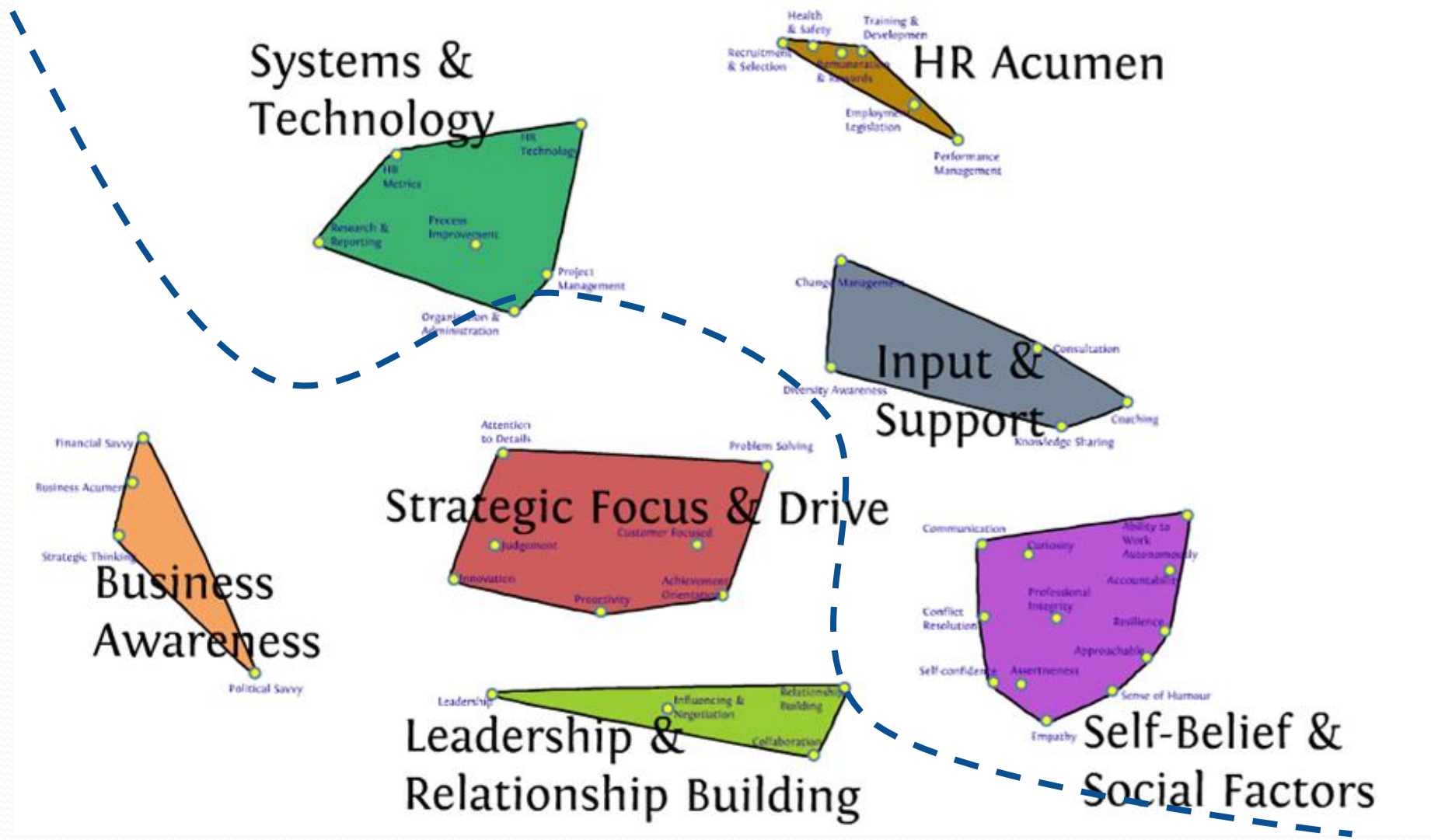
## Step 3: Concept Mapping Analysis

Concept System software was used to produce concept maps

## Step 4: Interpretation of Concept Maps

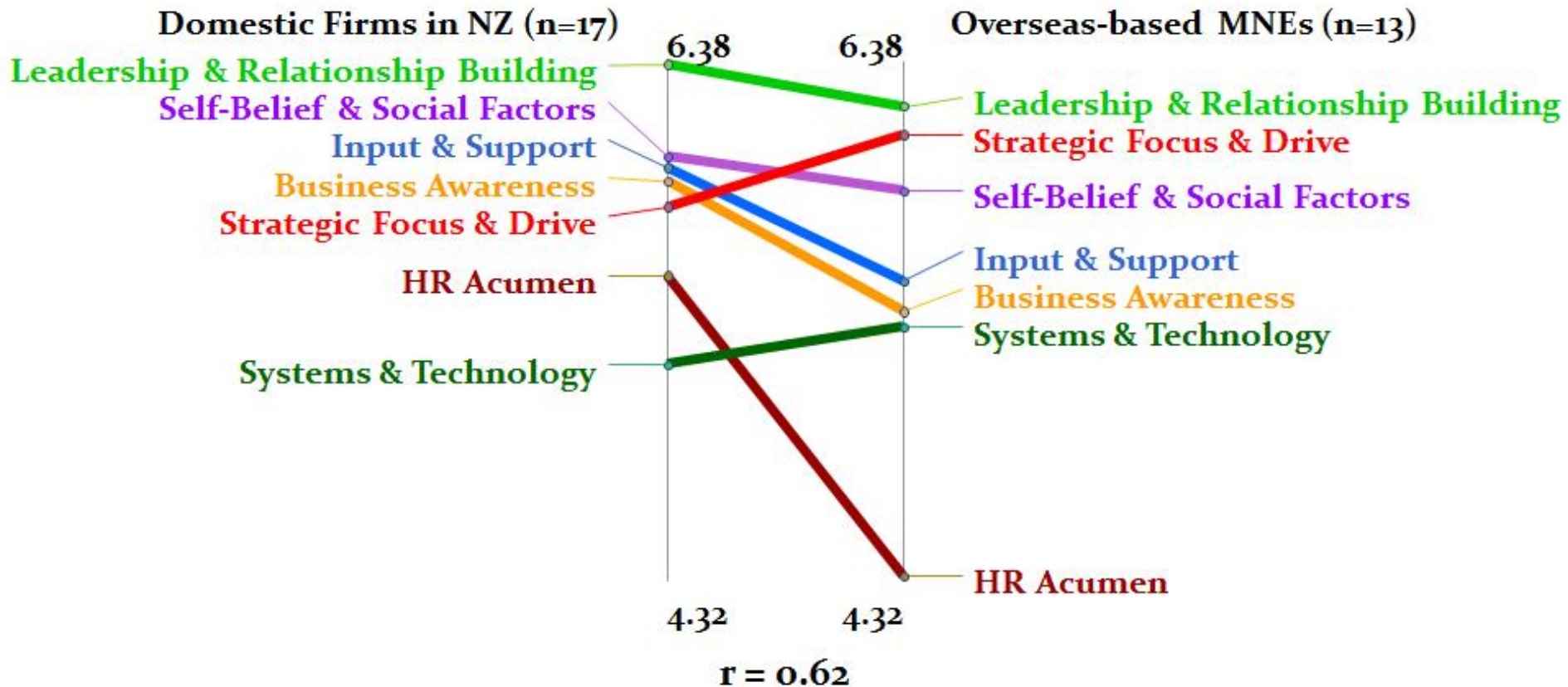
Researcher reviewed groupings and names of the clusters

# HR Competency Concept Map

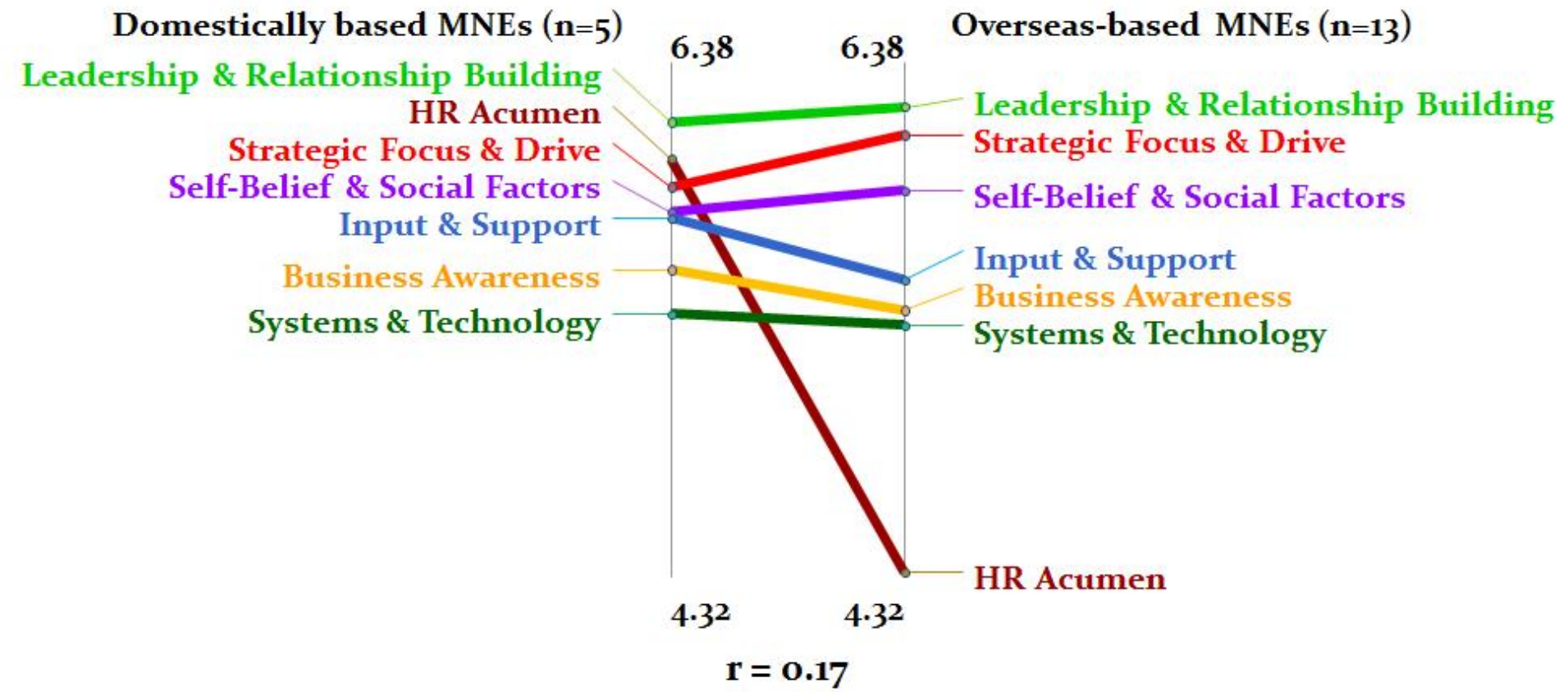




# Domestic Firms vs Overseas-based MNEs

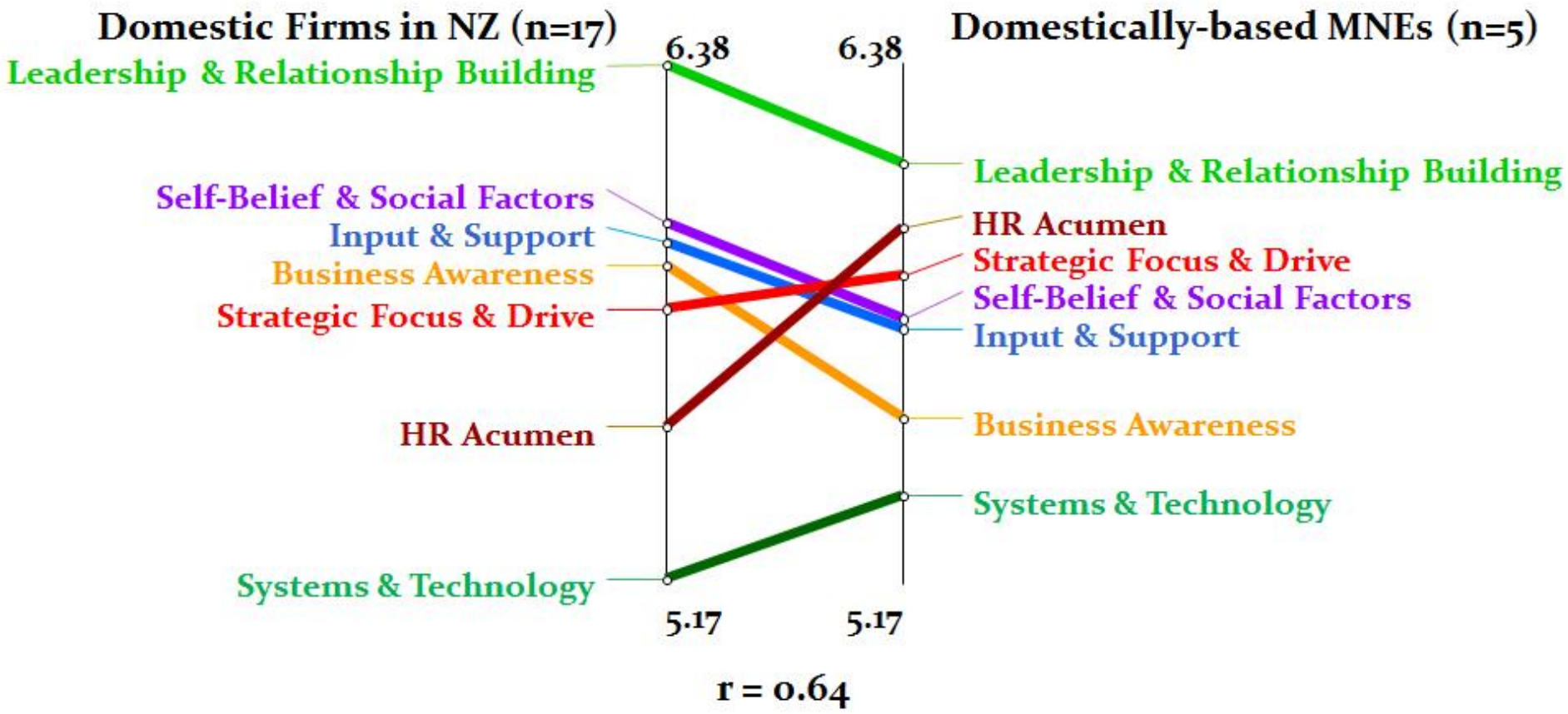


# Domestically based vs Overseas-based MNEs





# Domestic Firms vs Domestically based MNEs





# Theoretical Contributions

- Provides support for the situationalist approach
- Generic HR competencies: Leadership & Relationship Building and Self-Belief & Social Factors
- Context-specific HR competencies: HR Acumen
- Functional HR competencies can be as important as the strategic HR competencies required for adding value in certain contexts ([Antila ,2006](#); [Brown et al., 2009](#); [Truss et al., 2002](#))



# Practical Implications

- HR Acumen competencies are highly context-specific
- Domestic firms and domestically-based MNEs are still highly dependent on HR generalist knowledge
- System and Technology are not important differentiators but MNEs make stronger use of knowledge in HR technology than domestic firms
- Importance of Leadership and Relationship Building and Self-Belief and Social Factors in the selection and development of HR practitioners



# Research Limitations

- Validate the research with a larger sample
- More international comparative studies of a more qualitative nature to get a more nuanced view of HR competency requirements.
- Include the opinions of other stakeholders (e.g., line managers, employees and trade unions)

# THANK YOU

Future research should move away from the one-size-fits-all universalist approach and adopt a situationalist approach to enable more nuanced understandings on what shapes HR competency expectations.

