INTERCULTURAL TRAINING: A THESIS PROJECT

A Thesis

Presented to the Communication and Leadership Studies Program

School of Professional Studies

Gonzaga University

Under the Supervision of Dr. Mike Hazel

Under the Mentorship of Dr. Denise Casey

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies

By

Laura Snyder

May 2013
INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Signature Page

We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

Thesis or Project Director

Faculty Mentor

Faculty Reader

Gonzaga University

MA Program in Communication and Leadership Studies
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my son, Aidan, for giving me a reason to smile every day and forgiving all the nights of macaroni-and-cheese dinners while I was busy researching and writing.

Thank you to my parents Steve and Sara, my sisters Erica and Stephanie, my brother Josh, and my nieces Lilah and Elia for supporting my dreams.

Thank you to my Professor, Dr. Mike Hazel, and my Mentor, Dr. Denise Casey, for their countless hours of editing, reviewing, and challenging me to accomplish my goals.

Thank you to Dr. John Caputo and Dr. Heather Crandall for mentoring me through my academic, career, and personal ambitions.

Thank you God for caffeine and graduation!
INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Abstract
This study examines the scholarly journals and literature of intercultural competency, intercultural communication, and the communication theories examining culture shock, cross-cultural adaptation, immersion techniques, and training methods used in multicultural competence. It then presents intercultural training modules with the ambition to be adopted and incorporated into all intercultural expatriation trainings utilized both by private individuals, as well as international businesses and government programs with employees relocating internationally. The training modules are specifically directed at learners who need to know about the cultural climate, rules, and communication expectations of Singapore.
INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
   Importance of the Study 1
   Purpose 1
   Definitions of Terms 3
   Research Approach 3

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE 4
   Philosophical Assumptions 4
   Theoretical Basis 4
   The Literature 9
   Rationale 24

CHAPTER 3: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY 26
   Scope 26
   Method 26

CHAPTER 4: THE PROJECT 30
   Project Description 30
   Examples of the Work 30

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS 32
   Limitations of the Project 32
   Further Recommendations 32
   Conclusions 33

REFERENCES 34

APPENDIX 39
   Appendix A: Survey Immediately Following Trainings 39
   Appendix B: Survey 3-Months Following Trainings 40
   Appendix C: Screen Shots of the 1st Intercultural Training Module 41
   Appendix D: Screen Shorts of the 2nd Intercultural Training Module 42
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Study

Culture serves as a roadmap for its members to navigate through life understanding what is expected of them. Hall (1969) stated, “There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture” (p. 169). Culture also allows outsiders a “key” into their practices, norms, values, expectations, and social faux pas to avoid alienation or insult.

Cultures exist to serve the vital, practical requirements of human life – to structure a society so as to perpetuate the species, to pass on the hard-learned knowledge and experience of generations past and centuries past to the young and inexperienced in order to spare the next generation the costly and dangerous process of learning everything all over again from scratch through trial and error – including fatal errors. (Sowell, 2006, p. 403)

Without understanding, investigating, and interacting with varying cultures, people are only given the information and tools passed down from their own cultural generation, which decreases the likelihood of successful cross-cultural interactions.

Purpose

In previous generations the knowledge that a person’s own cultural group imparted may have provided enough guidance for those members to successfully navigate communication interactions throughout their lives. However, at this time we have entered an era where people are not just members of one culture, but truly global citizens exposed to culture through immediate access via technology like the internet, world news, and even transportation, making no destination out of reach. Due to this cultural expansion, people require the necessary
INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

information, knowledge and communication expertise to effectively and successfully engage, interact, and send and receive messages with their fellow global citizens. Without these resources and tools, much information, meaning, and intent have the potential to be misinterpreted and lost, which could cause a number of conflicts cross-culturally. This desired level of intercultural competency, awareness, and expertise is achieved with a proper introduction to cultural differences through intercultural communication training. This is evidenced by the statistic of “70-88 percent failure rate of international mergers and acquisitions” (Peterson, 2004, p. 81) due to a lack of employee intercultural competence, in comparison with the successes of employees who received intercultural communication training before and after expatriating.

Intercultural Competence

To understand culture, it must be acknowledged that culture is learned, and not an innate identity that human kind is born with. It is not a physical trait, but repeated constant flows of information given to people and observed every day from birth to death. Therefore, culture can be studied, and competency can be taught. Spitzberg (2000) theorized that intercultural communication competence is “behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context” (p. 375). Becoming motivated to interact with others from a different culture, gaining the appropriate content and procedural knowledge, and then applying the corresponding skills to the intercultural communication interactions can be learned and then applied through effective preparation and training. Culture is a complex concept in that there are a vast number of cultural groups, and each group may have co-cultures or subgroups existing within it, and it comprised of thousands of minute details not easily recognized or understood. However, culture is a concept that can be embraced and enjoyed by many intercultural members if effective intercultural
communication training is utilized. These trainings will prepare cross-cultural communicators to immerse themselves in new host cultures successfully.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this paper and research, *culture* is defined as “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations” (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 8) and an *expatriate* refers to any person living in a foreign country. The researcher defines *intercultural* to mean the communication exchange between two or more cultures, *cross-cultural* as a contrast of two or more cultures, and *multicultural* to represent characteristics or components of several cultures.

**Research Approach**

This paper presents scholarly journals and text examining the concept of intercultural communication training, and its components, including competency, intercultural communication, effective training methods, and the communication theory of Communication Accommodation to introduce the concept to the reader. It then presents original intercultural training modules that include a learning platform for audiences that need to understand the general study of intercultural communication and its purpose, as well as a specific training module that focuses on the country and cultural climate, rules and communication expectations of Singapore.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Philosophical Assumptions

As people develop, their “view of reality is strongly shaped by the language [they have] used since [they] were infants” because as they grew, matured, and learned how to talk, they “produced and reproduced culture” (Griffin, 2009, p. 47). This socio-cultural tradition is evident in all cultures, everywhere. Traits, language, cultural beliefs and opinions are constantly reinforced within a community because the thinking is shared among its members. After studying human interaction and communication, Shepard, St. John and Strphas (2006) concluded that “communication is the simultaneous experience of self and other”, and by experiencing others people are then introduced to cultures perhaps unlike their own. Furthermore, socio-cultural experts found that when this intercultural engagement occurs between members of different cultural groups the participants would attempt to communicate with their counterparts, employing various methods, which thusly initiates “bridging the culture gap that exists between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Griffin, 2009, p. 48). International communication training attempts to accomplish the same objective: provide culturally relevant training and information to be available to all persons expatriating to allow them to successfully communicate with their new host cultures.

Theoretical Basis

Founder of comparative international research, Hofstede stated, “Businesses that seek to succeed in international markets, or individuals who seek to lead effectively with persons from different countries, would do well to have some common referents from which to compare individuals from different societies” (as cited in Shriberg & Shriberg, 2011, p. 40). To gain such
a cultural understanding, theorists like social psychologist Giles (1973) constructed frameworks such as the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to examine the human interaction processes implemented when members from diverse cultures communicate.

**Communication Accommodation Theory**

This paper defines accommodation as “the constant movement toward or away from others by changing your communicative behavior” (Griffin, 2012, p. 395). The two forms of communication employed during a cross-cultural experience are convergence and divergence, and it is theorized by Giles (1973) and his colleagues Coupland and Coupland (1991) that both are in continuous motion toward or away from others while the interaction takes place.

Convergence occurs when a person adapts communication behaviors to relate and be more accessible to others (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). Convergence is achieved using various methods; for example, when interacting with a person who speaks in slow, low tones and is very quiet, a convergent communicator will mirror their communication style and slow their own speech and lower their voice so the other person may feel more connected to them during the interaction.

Accentuating the differences between diverse communicators is the divergent communication strategy framed by Giles (1973), and Coupland and Coupland (1991). Divergence is an example of counter-accommodation which emphasizes and draws attention to the differences between two speakers in a diverse cultural interaction (meaning the two people are not part of the same cultural group whether it be by ethnic, racial, gender, or age classifications) where successful communication may not be the intention (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). Three subtle forms of divergent communication include: self-
handicapping, whereby the speaker tries to save face by excusing poor performance because of age; maintenance, which occurs when a speaker refuses to adopt new communication styles regardless of the communication behavior of the other person; and finally over-accommodation, which occurs when the speaker overemphasizes their communication behaviors in a way that can be potentially offensive to the other person (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). An example of over-accommodation is when a native English-speaking person is attempting to have a conversation in English with a person who is not native to the language and continues to raise his or her voice thinking it will help the other person understand better, but really it implies that the person is hard of hearing.

CAT theorists hypothesize that the main reason speakers employ either convergent or divergent communication strategies is due to motivation (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). This motivation is presumed to be directly linked to a person’s “desire for social approval” in the setting (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). However, this thinking does not explain why speakers use divergent communication strategies. To better comprehend the motivation behind diverse communicators’ desires to either communicate more successfully or to hinder communication, theorists examined how people frame their communication strategies based on group orientations and membership.

**Social Identity Theory**

CAT theorists Tajfel and Turner (1986) theorized that interactions occur and proceed based on the roles people have within a group, rather than as individuals without social connections. Framed in terms of culture, communicators interact and identify according to the cultural group/s that define them. Harwood (2006) theorized that, “We are not random
individuals wandering the planet with no connections to others, and our connections to others cannot be understood purely as a function of individual phenomena” (p. 89). This group of identification is a communicator’s social identity, which guides the communication strategies used during the intercultural interactions. The predisposition a person from one cultural group has towards the person from a different cultural group significantly influences the communication strategies used, as well as how successful the interaction will be (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). CAT theorists and intercultural communication researchers have further evaluated what factors influence cross-cultural interactions.

**Initial Orientation**

The predisposition people have during their first intercultural encounter is their initial orientation in the communication interaction (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). Giles (1973), Coupland and Coupland (1991) categorize these predispositions by five factors of initial orientation, which “increases the odds that the communicator will see the conversation as an intergroup encounter”. The first component is the *collectivistic cultural context* which examines “we-centered” focused communicators who emphasize similarity and mutual concern within the culture and define themselves through social identity. *Distressing history of interaction* occurs if both interactants believe the previous interactions were uncomfortable, competitive, or hostile both will tend to be inclined to assume that is the expectation of the other’s social identity. For example, by lumping all women into the same category after a male had a poor experience with one female by saying, “women are all emotional”. Conversely, if previous times together have been positive, the communication result is ascribed to the individual rather than group behavior of the class with which he or she identifies. This concept is demonstrated in the example of the native English speaker successfully communicating with the non-native English speaker and then
saying something like, “At least one person from their country can speak English correctly”.

*Stereotypes* are when people hold specific and negative assumptions about people outside of their own groups. These communicators are more likely to think in terms of a person’s social identity and not of them as an individual, which can result in divergent communication. It is not uncommon to hear other cultures assume that all Americans are aggressive and arrogant, because this is an assumption they hold about the American Western culture. The *norms for treatment of groups* are the “expectations about behavior that members of a community feel should or should not occur in particular situations” will potentially affect if a communicator regards a person from another group as an individual or as “one of them” (Gallois & Callon, p. 249). Finally, *high group-solidarity / high group-dependence* occurs when a person identifies so strongly with their own cultural group that they solely depend on them for his or her personal identification. These communicators exhibit an “us against them” perspective against almost every other cultural group other than their own (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988, p. 166). CAT theorists propose that these five factors greatly contribute to the cross-cultural communication interaction shared between communicators (Giles, 1973; Coupland & Coupland, 1991). In order for newly expatriated individuals to successfully assimilate into a new cultural environment, much research and findings are examined to show the importance of undergoing intercultural communication training to prepare for such experiences.

**The Literature**

**Globalization**

Globalization occurs when organizations grow beyond their native countries and expand to foreign host cultures (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007). By globalizing organizations, the
culture of their community alters as different opinions about ethics, morals, and principles are manifested through an individual’s national or regional habits (Samovar & Porter, 2003).

Cultural diversity affects the way leaders go about defining their roles as leaders and applying themselves to the responsibilities of leadership. Business has until now been contextualized within a particular set of values based on particular world views. The acceleration of globalization has created a chaotic state of change as businesses struggle to adapt to new paradigms of leadership, in which the established tried and tested approaches may no longer be effective. (Robinson & Harvey, 2008, p.466)

While guidance has always been necessary in an organization, leadership of groups comprised of varying cultural backgrounds is a daunting role many Westernized, or specifically American, leaders are unprepared to fill.

**International Expansion**

There are many reasons why businesses are expanding internationally creating the need for intercultural communication education. Cultural intelligence researcher Peterson (2004) identified five main causes of this international expansion, which causes the world to be more accessible that it ever was before. The first contributing factor to corporate international expansion is technology. Advanced technologies have become readily accessible to more people globally than ever before. Global technology directly impacts the environment of the culture with which it is introduced, allowing organizations to create a familiarity with their new culture by introducing technologies from their home cultures. With technology comes an increased media exposure. Media, which is defined as film, television, radio, music, videos, DVDs, advertisements, newspapers, books, magazines, websites and anything that can be read or heard,
allows people from any place on earth to learn about the cultures of any other person. “The world is ‘shrinking’ in the sense that we can more quickly and easily see how other people in other countries live” which allows communicators to prepare themselves for cross-cultural interactions by investigating the lifestyles of the culture they plan to engage with internationally (p. 73). Next, *lifestyle choices* contribute to this international expansion. The more a person “knows about how other people live, speak, walk, dress, work or play, the more they can emulate them if they so choose” (p.74). This can be seen in an example of an American who has access to studying Chinese history and culture and who chooses to have a Chinese symbol tattooed on their body, which signifies their connection to that foreign culture. *Telecommunications* are the mass-production of telecommunication devices such as the internet and cellular phones has acted as a proponent of “connectedness to community” (pp. 74-75). People are able to travel to Hong Kong on business and still Skype with their family in Seattle as if they were truly there with them even though they are thousands of miles across the world. The last main contributing factor is *speed*. Due to the increased communication abilities made possible by technology and telecommunications, the rate at which productivity is expected has increased in some cultures as well (p. 75). In Western cultures, many Americans expect immediate results such as with a response to a phone call or an email. However, in other cultures such as Southeastern Europe, there is less concern for a quick response. Regardless of the technology available to them, people in those cultural regions chose not to engage in rapid communication. These five factors influence the decision for a company to expand overseas and expatriate their employees.

**Going Global**

According to Peterson (2004), to move internationally, there are six typical strategies companies go about when making their move (p. 79). *Cross-border expansion* occurs when a
domestic company simply expands their organization beyond their national borders. During a *merger* a company purchases or combines with an international organization expanding their now larger company globally. *Joint ventures* take place when a separate third organization is created by two companies already established. Sometimes instead of merging, companies make an agreement to stay separate, but will only utilize each other’s goods or services so each profits exclusively. These are known as *strategic alliances*. *International marketing and distribution* is when “a company directly sells their widgets in another country” (p. 79). Finally, *international licensing* is when distributorships are established in other countries (Peterson, 2004, p. 79). In each of these instances, cross-cultural education is vitally important in that some sort of intercultural communication will occur either on a professional or personal level regardless of how the interaction occurs, through telecommunications or in person.

**Global Interconnectedness**

“Globalization adds complexity to what is already a complex aspect of human functioning at the individual, interpersonal, societal, and cross-cultural level” (Thompson, 2010, p. 17) because it requires a person to think so far beyond their familiar behaviors and investigate the rights, norms, and rituals of a cultural group unlike their own. With such a movement of international growth for companies and the expansion of people expatriating overseas, cultures are constantly colliding and their people learning more and more about the similarities and differences between them. However, theorist Thompson (2010) claimed that “although globalization increases people’s exposure to other people and cultures…it is misleading to suggest that there exists such a phenomenon as global culture” (p. 17). Even with the constant collision of people from all over the world coming together, there is not unified global culture that exists everywhere. People identify with the culture in which they were raised and are
accustomed to, unless they move into a new host culture and decide to assimilate themselves into that culture. This is not easily achieved however, and many expatriates experience many highs and lows with their new intercultural exchanges impeding the success of their international experiences both professionally and personally.

Expatriate Struggles

Barriers. With corporate expansion and individual expatriation, there is a daily exposure to a “bewildering variety of value systems that challenge intercultural communication competencies and skills” which makes seeing “the world as a whole and recognize[ing] the importance of constructively managing stereotypes, controlling prejudice, avoiding discrimination, and reducing ethnocentrism” vitally important to communication success (Schmidt, Conaway, Easton, & Wardrope, 2007, p. 35). Stereotyping is a belief or conviction and the process by which people organize and simplify their perceptions of those outside their cultural groups by categorizing them into mental representations. Stereotyping also creates an expectation a person holds about how members of that particular cultural group will perform and behave (Schmidt, et. al., 2007, p. 35). A prejudice is more of a positive or negative attitude or evaluation people have towards certain cultural groups; like evaluating that all people of Asian descent are intelligent, hardworking individuals because of that evaluation of an interaction with one intelligent, hardworking person of Asian descent (Schmidt, et. al., 2007, p. 36). Discrimination occurs when a prejudice is put into action whereby the group or individual being discriminated against “treated disadvantageously” (Schmidt, et. al., 2007, p. 36). Finally, when people are ethnocentric, they have “the tendency to interpret or to judge all other groups, their environments, and their communication according to the categories and value of [their] own culture” (Ruhly, 1982, p. 28). In addition to these four hindering beliefs, attitudes, and actions,
which can prevent successful intercultural communication, the experience of culture shock greatly impacts the success of intercultural interactions.

**Culture Shock.** Culture shock is defined as the “consequence of strain and anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture and the feelings of loss, confusion, and impotence resulting from loss of accustomed cultural cues and social rules” (Oberg, 1954, p. 177). People experiencing culture shock often feel displaced when they examine the differences between their own cultures and way of life, and that of their new host cultures (Oberg, 1954, p. 182). Four phases of cultural shock include: the *honeymoon phase*, which is characterized by “interest, excitement, euphoria, sleeplessness, positive experiences, and idealizations about the new culture”; the crises phase, whereby a person experiences “increasing disappointments, frustrations, impatience, and tension”; the *adjustment or reorientation phase*, in which a person learns “how to adjust effectively to the new cultural environment” and learns “how to make an acceptable adaptation into the new culture”; and finally, the *adaptation, resolution, or acculturation stage*, which is achieved when a person “develops stable adaptations in being successful at resolving problems and managing the new culture” (Winkelman, 1994, p. 122). The highs and lows of culture shock often manifest themselves in the form of emotional strain.

**Emotional Obstacles.** To capture the level to which unpreparedness can emotionally affect and handicap the success of an international visit or relocation on a person, researchers Copeland and Griggs (1985) conducted an investigation of premature departure from international posts. Their study found that an estimated “20%-50% of people sent on international business assignments return home prematurely…and that those sent to developing nations have an even higher early attrition rate of 70%” (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994, p. 58), and while these numbers will vary culture-to-culture and can truly only be evaluated on an individual
basis, they represent crisis situations of people who experience more stress due to living internationally compared to the stress levels expected if they were in their country of origin. This manifestation presents itself not only in the business person moving internationally on assignment, but also for the spouse and family members who may join them, which directly impacts the entire family or partnership unit (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994, p. 59). According to Brislin and Yoshida (1994), without the proper guidance and preparation for all members of the family who expatriate, internal stress will influence the success of all members in the new host culture.

**Stress and Lack of Control.** Americans who expatriate often experience higher levels of feelings of lack of control and personal stress than expatriates of other cultures (Hooker, 2003, p.169). This can be understood from the perspective that as a First World country, very few of its inhabitants (in comparison with most of the countries in the world) live in an unstable or unpredictable environment, or have a constant worry about basic food or shelter, making the U.S. culture relatively a low-stress environment by those standards (Hooker, 2003, p.169). Therefore, when a person from the American culture expatriates to a new environment that is likely not to place as high of importance on predictability like regular bus arrival times, or a federal organization in place to check the hygiene of living spaces and whether food is consumable, individuals may find themselves experiencing a high level of stress and lack of control of factors directly impacting their lives (Hooker, 2003, p.169). By placing a “premium on effective intercultural communication and mak[ing] every effort to…function effectively anywhere in the world” (Schmidt, et. al., 2007, p. 35) allows a person to overcome the cultural obstacles preventing continued successful cross-cultural communication interactions, which may hinder the success of their roles within an international business for which they moved overseas.
Intercultural Business Success

**Multinational Business Contexts.** The business practices of companies naturally vary from culture to culture, and what is acceptable in one environment may be offensive in another. It is therefore exceptionally important to understand the following concepts and how they relate to successful intercultural business practices. *Business protocols* are the elements of initial contacts, greeting behaviors, personal appearance expectations, gift giving, and office spacial designs across cultures (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007, p. 239). Who a person first engages with, the level of formality in their greetings, the dress code expectations, and what and when to give gifts in a professional setting are essential to establishing a successful professional relationship cross-culturally. *Management styles* will influence the culture in a business setting which directly impacts employees’ expectations of leadership styles, communication behaviors, decision-making processes, negotiation procedures, supervisor/subordinate relations, personnel recognition and reward, considerations for promotion, and many other aspects of the workplace (Samovar, et. al., 2007, p. 244). Next, *negotiation styles* are significant when considering successful business practices of international communicators. International business negotiations are an integral part of the daily business practices of managers, and even many employees internationally (Samovar, et. al., 2007, p. 245). Negotiations are necessary to international mergers, joint ventures, import of raw materials, export of finished products, patent licensing agreements, and any other areas influenced by cross-cultural, commercial undertaking by a company (Samovar, et. al., 2007, p. 245). Cross-cultural conflict can occur when “cross-cultural negotiation participants are influenced by their respective national bargaining styles, which is often a product of contrasting historical legacies, different cultural values, dissimilar decision-making processes, and varying attitudes toward conflict (Samovar, et al., 2007, pp. 245-246). In
international business practices, leaders and general employees alike are often required to make decisions on a daily basis that may impact their co-workers and subordinates, including, but not limited to: personnel management, new product development, market expansion, new hires, sales initiatives, the acceptance or rejection of a proposal, and more (Samovar, et. al., 2007, p. 249). Therefore, decision making practices are an important area for intercultural communicators to be well versed and practiced in. For a decision to responsibly be considered and thusly decided upon, the international communication participant must be cognizant of all the key members of who makes decisions and how those decisions are made across different cultures (Samovar, et. al., 2007, p. 249). Lastly, conflict in cross-cultural business interactions should be expected, which exemplifies the importance of effective conflict management. The very nature of how a person operates depends almost entirely on their natural expectations created and shaped by their identification with the varying values, ideals, beliefs, norms and behaviors constructed by their culture. When two or more cultures collide, the expectation of how business or even personal life should be conducted is at odds against each other (Samovar, et. al., 2007, p. 249). It is therefore essential for businesses and individuals to have insight into the different ways their host country conducts their business so there is a preparation to negotiate and come to an understanding that works for all international business members in the situation. However, communication involves much more than the spoken language.

**Nonverbal Impact.** Gannon (2008) found that “only about 7% of the total impact of a message on a receiver is based on the words used, 38% on the manner in which a person speaks the words (i.e. tone of voice, inflection, loudness), and 55% on nonverbal activities” (p. 76). Nonverbal communication expert, Anderson (2000) classified nonverbal communication into eight categories that directly impact cross-cultural communication: time, which is the level of
importance certain cultures place on adhering to a schedule versus being flexible where their time is spent. The *proxemics* of space created between two communicators either accentuates or diminishes formality. *Eye movement* is the level of eye contact and emotion shown through the eyes. *Body motions* are the hand gestures, physical indicators of mood like blushing or high-fiving a co-worker, where in different cultures these symbols have varying meanings. Studying the power of *touch* is important because it helps prepare individuals for how much touching is or is not acceptable within a culture. For example, within the Islamic culture, Muslim women may not physically touch a male other than her father, brothers, or husband. A person’s *physical appearance* can be important or unimportant given the level of expectation of how one looks. Studying *speech* allows for an understanding of the varying levels of formal versus informal verbal communication and incorporating written word. Finally, the *sense of smell* is important because different cultures have different smells and the level of comfort a cultural member has with being able to smell another person by being close in proximity to them is necessary to be prepared for before entering a new cultural climate.

Without studying culturally-specific nonverbal behaviors, cross-cultural communicators are potentially in a situation where they may offend the person with which they are trying to interact. As in all intercultural communication instances, having a leader instruct and guide organizational members allows a sense of community and support amongst the organizational members who are experiencing the cross-cultural experiences at the same time.

**Leadership.** In business or in personal affairs occurring interculturally, to have success individuals require guidance and leadership to assist in their communication efforts (Maak & Pless, 2009, p. 537). Effective leadership requires a global community whereby cross-cultural interactions flourish and have a shared desired target that is achieved through mutually-
beneficial, successful communication interactions (Maak & Pless, 2009, p. 538). Detailed further, Nussbaum (2006) maintained that, “we must acknowledge right now that we are citizens of one interdependent world, held together by mutual advantage, by compassion as well as self-interest, by a love of human dignity in all people” (p. 217). Individuals able to vocalize their mutually-beneficial cross-cultural goals, as well as guide their peers in achieving successful communication interculturally will serve as a leader in the cross-cultural interactions; this is however determined by many varying aspects (Maak & Pless, 2009, p. 538). “The practices, norms, and values that become commonly shared by members of a society provide a frame of reference for making social comparisons, as well as judgments about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of behavior” (Resick, Hanges, Dickson, & Mitchelson, 2006, p. 349). Who is accepted as a leader in intercultural business settings is defined by those expectations and beliefs, which also directly impacts the expectations employees have about the amount of discretion and authority that leaders are able to exercise over an intercultural group, and the level of follower loyalty they will receive (Resick, et.al., 2006, p. 349). The most effective intercultural leader will be “open to widely alternative views and values, able to integrate long-term considerations and a broad selection of stakeholders’ interests into its strategic choices” and make informed decisions “based on a stable and transparent moral compass which is globally valid” (Jones & Millar, 2010, pp. 2-5). These characteristics will be represented in leaders who are ethical, and take the time and effort to be knowledgeable and competent in all areas of cultural significance, and creates a worldview that embraces sustainability and global justice. These global leaders are responsible for themselves and for their employees to define what ethical and cultural behavior and expectations are in place in the organization, which forces them to evaluate the dominant behaviors of their host culture, as well as the varying cultures of their business members
“Leaders’ actions both directly and indirectly establish the tone of an organization by the actions that are encouraged, rewarded and demonstrated” (Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004, p. 224), in an intercultural environment. This “globalization of the economy requires [a leader to show] some kind of universal standardization with respect to how all human beings are treated” (Poff, 2010, p. 12). An intercultural leader will give his or her group members the insight into understanding that culture must be respected, and that it is “not merely an inner state (feelings and experience), but also a vehicle for commitments, utterances, and actions” (Irina, 2011, p. 32). This progresses into the acceptance of and the admiration for culture, which Swidler (1986) summarized when she theorized,

Culture shapes action, not by providing ultimate ends, but by providing a repertoire or tool-kit of habits, skills and styles from which people construct strategies of action. It consists of symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life. (p. 273)

Intercultural communication interactants can then progress from their initial perhaps negative or conflicting experiences with their cross-cultural involvements to a more connected respect and understanding of their host culture.

**Adaptation**

**Cultural Identification.** During an intercultural communication experience, a person will undergo many stages of their cultural identity and understanding of their position in a new host culture (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004, p. 340). The first positive process a person experiences in a new host culture is *enculturation*, whereby they learn to “speak, listen, read,
interpret, and understand verbal and nonverbal messages...[so that] the messages will be recognized, accepted, and responded to by the individuals with whom [they] interact”; this is also the experience of integrating culturally-acceptable concepts, attitudes, and actions of the host culture into one’s own way of thinking (Landis, et.al., 2004, p. 340). Undergoing acculturation occurs when a person is presented with an “awareness” that causes them to question their mental and behavioral habits and cultural patterns, and compels them to learn the new cultural system of their host environment in regards to daily functioning within the new culture (Landis, et.al., 2004, p. 340). The next process occurs during deculturation in which a person begins to unlearn their old, perhaps national, cultural elements during their adopting of new cultural habits or practices (Landis, et.al., 2004, p. 340). Finally, the greatest level of cultural union a newcomer could achieve would be assimilation into their host culture. If a person is assimilated, he or she has reached the “maximum possible convergence of internal and external conditions to those members of the host culture” (Landis, et.al., 2004, p. 340). In order to create an empathetic relationship with the members of a new host culture, “the person attempting to penetrate a foreign cultural environment must possess an in-depth understanding of the values, norms and behavior patterns of the host culture. Just as importantly, her or she must thoroughly understand his or her own cultural behavior and beliefs so as to modify or suppress them as necessary to facilitate the cross-cultural exchange” (Counihan, 2009, p. 33). This can be achieved through cultural intelligence.

**Cultural and Social Intelligence.** Earley and Peterson (2004) contend that “Culturally intelligent individuals are able to focus attention on culturally inconsistent schemas (ability to detect culturally discrepant information), and consequently, adjust their cognition to incorporate the new cultural schema through intelligent sense making and reduction of cultural dissonance”
The authors found that this cultural intelligence (CQ) is characterized by and directly reveals the ability a person has to “gather, interpret, and act upon” varying levels of intercultural communication interactions and be able to “function effectively across cultural settings or in a multicultural situation” (p. 82). All of these efforts are to effectively communicate with a person of another culture. Theorist Wiseman (2003) explained that effective communication occurs when “people are able to achieve desired personal outcomes. To do so, competent communicators should be able to control and manipulate their social environment to obtain those goals” (p. 193). Social intelligence is “at the centre of rewarding human encounters in general, and non-verbal communication and emotions are much more important for mutually rewarding intercultural communication than has previously been recognized” (Wawra, 2009, p. 164).

Similarly, cultural intelligence can be summarized as:

The ability to engage in a set of behaviors that uses skills (i.e. the language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g. tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture-based values and attitudes of the people with whom one interacts. (Peterson, 2004, p. 89)

To be culturally intelligent, a person must possess intelligences in four areas. First, *linguistic intelligence* allows a communicator to demonstrate a genuine interest in clearly communicating verbal messages with a person who speaks another language. *Spatial intelligence* is a communicator’s ability to anticipate and appropriately respond to the spatial expectations within a culture, including “how close people stand to one another in conversation, where the most important person sits at a meeting, how chairs are arranged, whether people bow or shake hands or touch each other, and the ability to understand and anticipate and sometimes appropriately imitate body language” (Peterson, 2004, p. 91). *Intrapersonal intelligence* refers to a
communicator who is self-aware of their own cultural identification so a comparison and study can be examined between personal cultural styles and the hosts’. Finally, a person possessing *interpersonal intelligence* is able to successfully interact with people from other cultures, and therefore it is vitally important for an intercultural communicator to be able to respond and engage appropriately with others regardless of culture. Beyond communication itself, psychologist Gardner (1993) describes interpersonal intelligence as the ability to “read the intentions and desires of others, even when they have been hidden” from us. This cultural intelligence leads to a communicator being cultural competent and able to effectively engage and interact with cross-cultural counterparts.

**Intercultural Competency.** Coulter (2006) urged readers to construct a framework “to embrace thoughts, ideas, and views on global education” (p. 6). This framework was expanded by the American Council on International Intercultural Education (ACIIIE) who declared:

> Global competency exists when a learner is able to understand the interconnectedness of people and systems, to have a general knowledge of history and world events, to accept and cope with the existence of different cultural values and attitudes, and indeed, to celebrate the richness and benefits of this diversity. (Coulter, 2006, p. 6)

To be more interculturally competent, Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2007) identified four main components of an effective intercultural communicator. Motivation is the desire to interact with people from other cultures, and the commitment to the communication process to achieving a successful interaction (p. 315). When a communication has knowledge they have a wealth of cultural knowledge and information about the culture with whom they are trying to communicate (p. 315). Researchers theorize two forms of knowledge necessary for communication competency: “Content knowledge involves knowing what topics, words, meanings, and so forth
are required in a situation. Procedural knowledge is knowing how to assemble, plan, and perform content knowledge in a particular situation” (Morreale, Spitzberg & Barge, 2001, pp. 39-40). The skills are the actual application of specific behaviors that enable a person to interact and successfully communicate cross-culturally (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2007, p. 315). The fourth component of an effective intercultural communicator is character. Communication partners must view their members as being a person of good character, meaning that the image you portray of having a good past and presenting yourself well is vitally important (Samovar, et.al., 2007, p. 316). Philosopher P.T. Fitzwater wrote “Character is the sum and total of a person’s choices”, as a person’s character directly translates into how much trust a person believes they can put into another person (Samovar, et.al., 2007, p. 316).

In addition to these four variables of a competent intercultural communicator, a person must possess intercultural awareness to fully understand and appreciate another’s culture by comprehending how “significant and subtle cultural traits differ sharply from one’s own” (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 346). This cultural awareness has three levels: first, by examining culture-conflict situations and experiencing the feelings of helplessness, hostility, anxiety, and other potentially negative feelings, but also the clarity of recognizing and understanding the full aspects of another’s culture so intimately (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 346). Secondly, a person is able to examine the cultural practices and beliefs of another person to understand why those rights, rituals and norms are necessary and accepted within that culture, which is done through drawing comparisons and contrasts between cultures, and respecting that what works in one culture does not have to translate to another (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 346). Finally, in achieving cultural awareness, the communicator uses empathy to gain cultural perspective from the insider’s point of view through the ability to “project feelings to another” with mutual respect.
for the differences and cultural similarities (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 347). Without cultural competence, awareness, and intelligence, a person trying to communicate cross-culturally is without the tools necessary to achieve a successful interaction. To successfully adapt in a new cultural environment requires a person to accept and respect that it is normal to undergo both positive and negative experiences in this new cultural climate, but it is important to find solutions and face the issues rather than denying the problems all together (Winkelman, 1994, p.125). Anticipating cultural clashes and culture shock is an effective way to prepare for the cultural climate change, which can be achieved by 1) accepting that cultures and the behaviors of their members are right for them and are logical to their environments, and 2) allowing oneself to view their new host culture through a native’s perspective will allow for a better appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the culture (Winkelman, 1994, p. 125). As discussed previously however, achieving these results is a process, and going through the steps to becoming more culturally competent, aware, and sensitive alone makes the highs and the lows of the experiences much more difficult to navigate without the proper instruction, guidance, and support.

**Rationale**

International companies and their host cultures desire expatriate that are be able to navigate cultural boundaries and manage culturally diverse employees within and outside of one’s own company internationally (Harris & Moran, 1979). Likewise, Harris and Moran (1979) found that any organization with plans to expatriate should first construct cross-cultural bridges allowing mutual benefits to freely flow between the foreign and native cultures. Additionally, effective intercultural communication practices should be a priority for organizations that are considering expatriating their employees who are the “central elements in the development and
dissemination of the desired ‘global mindset’ throughout organizations” (Counihan, 2009, pp. 32-36).

However, the cost of being an international company with expatriated employees is high (Counihan, 2009, p. 34). Studies indicate that the typical expatriate costs a company “three or more times their salary” (Counihan, 2009, p. 34), which creates a big expectation from corporations to receive a big return in their employee investment in spending that kind of money. Even with the increased money being spent in expatriating an employee overseas, international expansion strategist Dr. David Bastien found a “70-88 percent failure rate of international mergers and acquisitions and 65-80 percent failure rate of all mergers, acquisitions, and change strategies” (Peterson, 2004, p. 81) due to a lack of employee intercultural competence. Bastien defines failure in terms of not meeting financial goals, divestiture (companies sold within two years of being acquired), bankruptcy, and acquisition of the parent company (Peterson, 2004, p. 81). Cultural intelligence specialist Peterson (2004) studied failed international companies and attributed the failures to their lack of intercultural and international business protocols, as well as not preparing their employees to both professionally and personally transition from their native culture to a new host culture (pp. 81-85). Therefore, this project will present intercultural communication modules that allow expatriating individuals and organizational employees the insight into the cultural competence, awareness, understanding and appreciation for intercultural exchanges.
CHAPTER THREE: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope

Intercultural training professionals strive to enhance individuals’ communication abilities to appropriately act and engage respectfully when interacting with people of a different culture (Wawra, 2009, p. 172). According to Wawra (2009), the ability to perform appropriately during intercultural exchanges has shown repeated historical success during both personal and professional intercultural negotiations (p. 172). Many intercultural training programs only concentrate largely on one of these components: the cognitive aspect. This component does not fully engage the learner as it focuses only on the basic doctrines of communication; including the cultural norms, awareness, and knowledge, but does not extend itself further (Wawra, 2009, p. 172). Bennett and Castiglioni (2004) argue that, “Once again, awareness or knowledge of a culture is insufficient – one also needs to have a feeling for it” (p. 249).

Therefore, this thesis project examined the research conducted by intercultural communication training specialists and professionals and analyzed the literature available including recent studies and examinations of failed and successful intercultural training programs. Then, the researcher constructed two intercultural communication training modules that expanding international organizations can implement for their employees, or private individuals can experience as a way to prepare themselves for intercultural or expatriate experiences.

Method

Successful intercultural communication training programs construct a learning platform that goes beyond understanding and absorbing the materials and information presented. Successful intercultural training programs create activities that give the learners the opportunity
and resources to “change perspectives and deal with the unfamiliar or unknown” as it relates to a person of a different culture (Wawra, 2009, p. 173).

This project targeted international organizations that relocate employees overseas, as well as connect with private individuals who have plans to expatriate, or even simply interact with individuals of another culture. Initially, the training programs will be facilitated once in-person until each of the modules is complete, and will be constructed based on a needs analysis based upon the organization’s expressed desires. As the training programs are developed, it is the intention of the researcher to provide opportunities for long-term continued intercultural training on an on-going basis for any person with continued intercultural communication interactions.

As discussed previously, a complete intercultural communication training platform includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral goals. Cultural intelligence (CQ), a concept developed by Earley and Ang (2003), allows for a demonstration of a person’s ability to gather, interpret, and react to varying levels of multicultural cues cross-culturally and will be included in this thesis project. The intercultural communication training modules include learning exercises for a participant to work through three fundamental CQ elements, including: metacognition and cognition, motivation, and behavior. According to Earley and Ang (2003), the metacognitive facet involves the information-processing experience whereby an individual understands cultural differences based upon their own personal knowledge, experiences, social identity and social roles. Earley and Ang (2003) theorized that to be able to manage a culturally respectful response requires motivation. Motivation is also the aspect of affective learning which Wawra (2009) stresses the importance of because it allows intercultural communicators the ability to control emotions when dealing with people from other cultures. The third main focus of the intercultural
communication training modules is the behavioral component. When a person is then motivated, he or she is able to adapt.

Adaptation is not only knowing what and how to do (cognitive) and having the wherewithal to persevere and exert effort (motivational/affective), but also having the responses needed for a given situation in one’s behavioral repertoire. CQ reflects a person’s ability to acquire or adapt behaviors appropriate for a new culture. (Earley & Peterson, 2004, p. 108)

The thesis project incorporated learning exercises within the training modules where the participants are able to understand the idea of adaptation and its value in intercultural communication further.

**Analysis**

The training modules serve as products to market to international organizations and private individuals who interact cross-culturally to improve the success of their communication on a multicultural level. Therefore, to best determine the success of the training modules, the researcher will conduct follow-up interviews twice: once, immediately following the trainings to ascertain participant feedback, and then again three months after the completion of the trainings. The researcher will ask open-ended questions in an anonymous survey which will include a Likert-Type scale allowing the participants to accurately determine how beneficial the training programs were with the goal of communicating effectively cross-culturally. Depending on the feedback provided by participants, the researcher will further improve and enhance the training modules. Regardless of the feedback, the researcher will expand upon the training modules to
build and develop more programs focusing on culture-specific intercultural interactions to market her training programs further.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PROJECT

Project Description

The researcher initially constructed two intercultural communication training modules as a preface for future work. The first training module is an introduction to intercultural communication, and explains the importance examining intercultural communication and the validity of understanding and accepting cultural differences. This training module is not culture specific, and does not go into explicit detail regarding how to successfully communicate with a particular cultural group. The second module targeted the country of Singapore in Southeast Asia, and the varying cultural groups that are within it. This specific culture was selected as it is not common in Western culture, and the researcher often found Northern Americans to be unaware of its location, or almost any information about its culture or people. This module goes into specific detail regarding the country’s origin, its geography and climate, currency, economy, the people who make up the population and their demographics, unique laws and government, cultural expectations, business protocols, negotiation standards, and general keys to success when communicating with a Singaporean. The modules were created using PowerPoint presentations on Microsoft Office as this is the program the researcher has the most experience using.

Examples of the Work

For the purpose of demonstration, the researcher included samples of two of the slides from the two training modules. The first is a screen shot from the general intercultural communication training module, and the second is a screen shot from the specific module which focused on the culture in the country of Singapore. All the resources are also available upon
request of the researcher, as well further screen shots from the modules are shown in the Appendix section of this paper.

Example 1: Module 1
Intercultural Communication in Business

**MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS**

| 3 main factors of multicultural business communication:
| • Informality vs. Formality: Informal business cultures place high importance on individualism and formal cultures are more group-oriented
| • Assertiveness vs. Interpersonal Harmony: Assertive cultural members value individualism, competition, freedom of expression & interpersonal harmonizers place high importance on mutual agreement, loyalty, and reciprocal obligation
| • Status Relationships: Egalitarians minimize the expectation of formality vs. cultures valuing hierarchical views have protocols that govern organizational activities

Example Two: Module Two
Culture in Singapore

**BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS AND MEETINGS**

- Schedule meetings at least two weeks in advance, and provide details on titles, positions, and responsibilities of all attendees ahead of time
- Be punctual; if a delay is inevitable, explain the reason and apologize profoundly
- Introduce older people and those of higher rank first, and stand up when someone in either category enters the room. Negotiating teams should line up according to importance
- Wait for counterparts to initiate handshakes, which should be light and may last as long as ten seconds. Men should always wait for women to initiate handshakes

**Business Cards**
- Always bring extra, and exchange at the very beginning of the meeting
- Smile and make direct eye contact during the business card exchange
- Take time to carefully inspect business cards to signify your interest in the person
- Lay business card face-up in front of you during the meeting
- Never bend, crumple, write on, or deface a person’s business card in any way
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the Project

As the researcher has not produced training sessions outside of academic projects, she is limited by her experience level. Facilitating trainings and producing audience-friendly and engaging materials is a talent best improved with practice, and therefore it is presumed that the initial training modules and audience handouts will improve with time, audience feedback, and continued research and investigation of successful trainings. Additionally, as the researcher expands her training topic breadth to additional countries, the information will continue to become more valuable to the audience members as it will directly relate to the cross-cultural communication interactions they will experience.

Further Recommendations

While there are many varying levels of successful intercultural communication trainings, this thesis project focused the intercultural communication training modules on the key learning concepts necessary for successful intercultural communication interactions globally. The researcher also created one module examining the cultural communication expectations of Singapore to give example of learning exercises necessary for culture specific communication expectations. After completion of this project when the researcher carries this work into the professional field, more training modules will be created to directly impact people communicating cross-culturally. Further module expansion will allow for expatriates to receive the best training experiences as they will be culture-specific to the countries to which they are relocating.
Conclusions

The purpose of this project was to examine the research and literature supporting the success of incorporating intercultural communication training when Americans expatriate. It further constructed initial training modules to initiate the ambitions of the researcher to professionally train individuals and corporate employees preparing to communicate cross-culturally. The researcher found that intercultural communication theorists and training specialists agree that successful cross-cultural communication interactions require a set of cultural skills, including: awareness, sensitivity, competency and intelligence. These skill set is best acquired through gradual, culture-specific training seminars that introduce the cultural values, norms, and expectations of the new culture which allow the participant to evaluate their own cultural attitudes and take the necessary measures to respect and value different ones.

By taking extra efforts to prepare, educate, and train people planning to expatriate, and those new to a different culture, businesses and individuals allow for the opportunity to fully engage, understand, respect, appreciate, and grow to love their new host cultures. This level of understanding and appreciation allows for success in their cross-cultural interactions both on a business level as well as on a personal level. However, most people and businesses do not possess the necessary education and insight into researching their new cultures. By undergoing intercultural communication training individuals and expatriating families alike are equipped with the resources necessary to adapt to their new environment successfully.
References


Appendix A: Follow-Up Survey Questions

(Immediately following the trainings)

Based on your experiences during the intercultural communication training programs, and the level to which you had success implementing the information you were provided with during the modules, please answer the questions using the numbered scale below:


1. The training programs were beneficial to my success when communicating cross-culturally.

2. The information provided was easy to understand.

3. I am able to remember and utilize the key learning concepts I was taught during the trainings.

4. I would participate in similar on-going training programs to enhance my success.

5. I would like to participate in more culture-specific training exercises.

6. The training facilitator presented the information in an engaging manner.

7. The training facilitator presented her or himself as a knowledgeable professional in this field.

8. I would recommend these training programs to my organization to implement company-wide.

9. I would recommend these training programs to personal contacts to help improve their intercultural communication abilities.

10. I have further input to provide the facilitator regarding the training program.
Appendix B: Follow-Up Survey Questions

(3-months after the trainings)

Based on your experiences during the intercultural communication training programs, and the level to which you had success implementing the information you were provided with during the modules, please answer the questions using the numbered scale below:


1. I refer back to the information I was provided during the trainings during intercultural interactions I currently have.

2. The training sessions directly applied to the intercultural exchanges I experience.

3. Learning about intercultural communication from a broad perspective enhanced my understanding of culture-specific communication.

4. If given the opportunity I would again go through the intercultural communication training programs I experienced three months ago.

5. I saved the handouts and materials given to me during the training sessions and still refer to them in the three months since the training sessions.

6. I have referred others to this training program.

8. I would recommend these training programs to my organization to implement company-wide.

9. I would recommend these training programs to personal contacts to help improve their intercultural communication abilities.

10. I have further input to provide the facilitator regarding the training program.
Appendix C: Screen Shots of the 1st Intercultural Communication Training Module

**EXPATRIATE OBSTACLES**

**Barriers**
- Stereotyping, discrimination, prejudices, and ethnocentrism prevent cultural adaptation

**Emotional Shock**
- 20%-50% of people sent on international business assignments return home prematurely due to uncertainty with their role in a new culture and family unrest among spouses and children

**Culture Shock**
- “consequence of strain and anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture and the feelings of loss, confusion, and impotence resulting from loss of accustomed cultural cues and social rules”

**CULTURE SHOCK...CONTINUED**

**Occurs when...**
- We lose all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse and
  - “involves a powerful disruption in one’s routines, ego, and self-image”

While difficult to completely eliminate, proper preparation for cultural immersion will help lessen culture shock.

**INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

**Culture...**
- Is learned
- Is not an innate identity that human kind is born with
- Is not a physical trait
- Can be studied, and competency can be taught

**Intercultural communication competence...**
- Behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context
Appendix D: Screen Shots of the 2nd Intercultural Communication Training Module

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF SINGAPORE**

- **Population**: 5,638,700 (2011)
- **Languages**: Chinese 49.9%, Malay 12.2%, English 32.3%, Tamil 3.3%
- **Religious and ethnic differences are embraced in Singaporean society and customs and traditions are respected.**

**CULTURE**

- **Singaporeans are descendants from the Malay Peninsula, China, India and Sri Lanka**
- **Singaporeans go barefoot inside their homes, so take off shoes at the front door during visits**
- **Dress modestly at all times**
- **Red is an intense color, while wearing black is discouraged**

**Religious Traditions**

- Singapore has a majority Muslim population who don’t eat pork
- Never bring wine when visiting a Muslim home
- Fasting occurs during daylight hours during the Ramadan month for Muslims
- Hindus don’t eat beef
- Buddhists are strict vegetarians

**CULTURAL BUSINESS PROTOCOLS**

**CHINESE**

- Commonly use a traditional bow, not required for foreigners
- Handshakes are fine, but not too firm. Most commonly used with women
- Formal titles, use Mr. (last name) at all times

**MALAYS**

- Islamic cultural practices
- No touching between women and men (including handshakes)
- Handshakes between men is common
- No family name (first name), may sometimes go by Mr. (first name), or have their father’s name as their last name

**INDIANS**

- Formal titles, use Mr. (last name) at all times
- No family name (last name), may sometimes go by Mr. (first name), or have their father’s name as their last name
- Often uncomfortable shaking hands with women