INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION – A STUDY IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

As a result of an increasing globalized business world, international negotiation occupies a large quantity of company time. Moreover, academic research suggests that cultural context shapes negotiation activities. Negotiators from similar cultures who understand one another's behavioural idiosyncrasies achieve better outcomes than negotiators with culturally disparate values, attitudes, beliefs and traditions, which may complicate the negotiation process. Therefore, there is an increasing demand for cultural sensitivity and intelligence. This cross-cultural study makes use of the Bhawuk, Gelfund, Singelis & Triandis values survey (1995) to test for cultural differences and then analyzes how 193 respondents from Thailand and Canada attribute behaviours contained within a negotiation scenario. Specifically, did respondents attribute behaviours from the scenario to direct or indirect styles of communication? It is submitted that the answer to this question is shaped by the cultural context of the respondents.

Although results of the research place Thai and Canadian respondents neatly into the collectivist and individualist categories, respectively, scenario results contradict the hypotheses. In fact, Thai respondents attribute negotiation communication behaviours to a direct style more so than Canadians, who attributed behaviours to an indirect style.

Secondary research contradicts these results, suggesting that they materialized because the negotiation scenario and following questions were not translated into the Thai language for Thai respondents, who could not understand the subtlety of language contained

within the instrument. This study demonstrates not only the importance of a negotiator displaying cultural sensitivity to an opponent's style during negotiations, but also, that negotiators understand the content of language during negotiations.

DEDICATION

To

My Uncle C. Gordon Crick
for helping proof this project,
but more importantly, for encouraging
me to obtain my M.B.A.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized business world, international negotiation occupies a disproportionately large quantity of a manager's time. Simintiras and Thomas (1998), and others have argued that cultural context shapes negotiation activities (Gassenheimer, 2000). The values, attitudes, beliefs and traditions rooted in the cultural context of negotiators have been noted to influence various stages of the negotiation (Parnell & Kedia, 1996) as well as communication styles (Simintiras & Thomas, 1998). Therefore, negotiators who display an understanding of one another's behaviours and idiosyncrasies achieve better outcomes when negotiating with an opponent of similar culture. Complicating matters, cultural differences increase the complexity of the encounter and possibly jeopardize beneficial outcomes and the possibility for a long-term relationship (Parnell & Kedia, 1996). Therefore, in today's globalized business world, with cross-cultural negotiation a mainstay, it is important that negotiators understand a culturally-distant opponent's communication style.

This project was the result of eight months spent on exchange in Bangkok, Thailand. After finishing two semesters at Simon Fraser University and after discovering an interest in cross-cultural communication, I ventured to Bangkok to study a collectivist, high-context culture. Rather than measure behaviour itself, this study measures respondent attributions to behaviours contained within a negotiation scenario. Specifically, it attempts to establish that Thai and Canadian respondents attribute

differing meanings to communication messages in the scenario based on cultural conditioning.

1.1 Kreng Jai Defined

Kreng Jai (pronounced *Graeng Jai)* can be defined as, "being afraid of offending others or being considerate and deferent to others' feelings." (Niratpattanasai, 2002). This paper attempts to establish that Kreng Jai is a form of high-context communication that is also associated with Hofstede's *Individualism* paradigm (linked to *Collectivism*). To test for cross-cultural attributional differences between Thais and Canadians, I wrote a cross-cultural negotiation scenario including points of communication behaviour between a Canadian seller and a Thai buyer. I also created questions based on the scenario with the idea of drawing differing attributions from the two cultures based on culturally disparate perceptions. Specifically, I attempted to determine whether respondents attributed behaviour contained within the survey instrument to be indirect or direct in nature. If they attributed behaviour to be indirect then they would be relating to the cultural concept of Kreng Jai.

Finally, I used the Bhawuk, Gelfund, Singelis and Triandis values survey (1995), to separate Thais and Canadians neatly into collectivist and individualist categories, respectively. The scenario and questions were distributed to graduate students in Thailand and Canada.

There are a number of reasons why this study is potentially both interesting and well-timed. First, an essential aspect of all inter-organizational relationships, including strategic alliances, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions and sales of products and services involves negotiating (Adler, 2002). In addition, statistics show that global

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managers on average spend more than 50% of their time engaged in some form of negotiation (Perlmutter & Howard, 1984). This considerable evidence alone makes a case for the importance of research on negotiations based on the frequency with which negotiations occur. Furthermore, this study is meaningful upon examining an accepted definition of negotiation itself, which characterizes negotiation as *the process of communicating back and forth for the purpose of reaching a joint decision* (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1991). Upon examining this definition, it is obvious that the communication component is crucial to any negotiation activity (Gassenheimer, 2000). Moreover, increasing globalization is forging a change in modern day business climate, characterized by borderless business. Therefore, as the proportion of international to domestic trade increases, so does the frequency of international negotiations among people from differing countries and cultures (Adler, 2002). Consequently, there is a relatively new requirement for negotiators to understand how to communicate and influence people from cultures other than their own (Adler & Graham, 1989).

Additionally, numerous academic studies assert that effective cross-cultural negotiation is one of the single most important global business skills (Fayweather & Kapoor, 1976, & Wells, 1977). One reason for this is that cross-cultural negotiations contain all of the complexity of intranational negotiations with the added dimension of cultural diversity (Adler, 2002). Furthermore, academic literature suggests that much of the cross-cultural communication breakdown can be attributed to problems in understanding communication styles. Specifically, Buttery and Leung (1998), suggest that the disparate styles of high and low-context negotiators serve as barriers toward achieving beneficial outcomes.

Therefore, not only is it paramount that today's global business managers learn how to communicate effectively cross-culturally, but there is every indication that there exists an opportunity for low-context Canadians to benefit from the indirect nature of the high-context communication style.

After conducting extensive secondary research, I discovered that there has never been a cross-cultural negotiation study conducted between Thais and Canadians, especially concerning the concept of Kreng Jai. In addition, Thailand is increasing its trade with G8 countries (Canada included), making it more important for these two cultures to gain some understanding of one another.

This study is divided into five parts. The following section includes a review of the relevant literature on culture and cross-cultural negotiation and communication, which form the basis for the hypotheses. The methodology is then examined, followed by a discussion of the results. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations for future research brings the study to a close.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Individualism/Collectivism

In order to comprehend how individuals become either high or low-context is to first ask the question *why* they become this way. In many respects the answer can be found in motivation, which governs how people define themselves and their sense of self. Most likely, people are universally motivated to maintain a positive self-image. The difference however, is in how the self is defined (Thomas, 2002). One cause for divergence lies in the definition of the inner self or the extent to which people regard themselves as separate from others or as connected to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

People who regard themselves as separate from others take on an independent self-concept, characterized by a desire to express internal needs, rights, and the capacity to withstand undue social pressure (Janis & Mann, 1977). In comparison, those who feel that they are connected to others adopt an interdependent self-concept, characterized by a motivation to be open to others and to accommodate their needs while restraining their own inner needs and desires (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These differing self-concepts are the result of contradictory motivations, which are based on disparate values and beliefs that are adopted in accordance with the unique survival needs of particular cultures.

Academic research suggests that this variation in self-concept is directly related to Hofstede's cultural paradigm, specifically, to his *individualism* dimension which indexes

extreme individualism and collectivism at polar opposites of 100 and 0, respectively. In

particular, those who adopt an interdependent self-concept are *collectivists*, or people

who define themselves as members of communities or groups and consider common

goals and the group's welfare most important (Adler, 2002). Thailand falls well into this

category with a rating of 20 (Table 1). In contrast, people who have an independent self-

concept are *individualists,* or those who use personal characteristics and achievements to

define themselves and those who value individual welfare over that of the group (Adler,

2002). Canada is highly individualistic with a rating of 80 (Table 1). These are not

absolute separations however, as it should be noted that collectivists do pursue self-

interests as well as group interests, only, priority is given to the group (Erez & Earley,

1993). Moreover, self-interests can be influential in attaining group interests (Thomas,

2002). In addition, individualists do pursue group interests but individual interests are

prioritized.

Table 1 Hofstede's Individualism Dimension

	Canada		Thailand		Difference	
	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank
Individualism	80	4-5	20	40-42	60	35-38

Source: Adapted from Hofstede, 1991. (Rankings: 1 = highest, 53 = lowest).

Now that it has been established that collectivists value group welfare and

individualists value individual welfare, it is the consequences that result from those

associations that become much more important to analyze, since it is these that affect the

daily lives of the people involved and are the cause for cross-cultural misunderstanding.

In other words, to say that some person is collectivist or that another is individualist is meaningless until these two groups are contrasted and understood in terms of the thoughts and behaviours that stem from each particular association. Therefore, Hofstede's individualism dimension serves as a convenient category to compare other culturally relevant aspects as well.

Although there are a myriad of significant differences among various cultures along a vast number of varying dimensions in terms of individualism and collectivism, a considerable cause for cultural divergence is manifested through problems in communication. In large part, confusion arises due to language translation problems and therefore, diversity in languages present an important issue in finding a common language that both parties can use to communicate effectively (Thomas, 2002). Beyond language itself it is also important to consider the challenges that are presented through the communication style used, or, the manner in which language itself or *body language* is used to communicate the message (Thomas, 2002).

2.2 High/Low-Context Communication

In countries such as the United States or Canada effective communication is expected to be explicit, direct and unambiguous (Gallois & Callan, 1997). Therefore, people are expected to say exactly what they mean (Thomas, 2002), and resultantly the receiver of the communication message is expected to comprehend the words in their literal meaning and look for no hidden agenda behind the spoken words. This style of communication, characterized by its directness is known as low-context. In contrast, in a high-context culture such as Indonesia (Pekerti, 2001), communication is expected to be more inexact, ambiguous and implicit (Thomas, 2002). Conclusions are often drawn from

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informal interactions (Simintiras & Thomas, 1998), and the intended meaning behind the message is usually conveyed through non-verbal cues such as values, status, tone of voice, body language and associations (Keegan, 1989). In other words, the message is not so much in the literal meaning of the spoken words as it is in the underlying connotation. Therefore, the receiver of the message is expected to *read between the lines* in order to grasp the intended meaning of the communication.

There is a body of literature linking high and low-context cultures to Hofstede's individualism paradigm. Specifically, there is evidence supporting the notion that high-context cultures are similar to the context of relationship-building found in collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1991). Moreover, research suggests that high and low-context communication go synonymously with collectivism and individualism, respectively (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988; Pekerti, 2001; Thomas, 2002), meaning that Thailand employs high-context communication and Canada, low-context.

There are sensible explanations for this apparent link between these cultural and communication contexts. Remember in the case of collectivist cultures that these people adopt a *collectivist self-concept* characterized mainly by a concern for the welfare of the group. *The welfare of the group* is another way of saying that collectivists value harmony over truth. This is not to say that collectivists do not care about truth but rather, that they prefer avoiding confrontation to causing a disturbance to the group. Moreover, the truth becomes an almost impossible end to meet with greater numbers; the truth for one rarely becomes the truth for all. Since harmony is the preferred value truth is sometimes sacrificed to achieve that end. Therefore, messages that are sensitive in nature are learned to be expressed in a delicate, indirect manner in order to preserve harmony.

In addition, increased time spent in groups results in the inevitable creation of *in-groups*, composed of members who know one another so well and in such detail that they benefit from a heightened sensitivity to indirect forms of communication. Research suggests that collectivists form very few of these groups but that the groups are highly interrelated at many levels (Thomas, 2002). Therefore, even if more direct forms of communication were desirable, they become viewed as unnecessary and a waste of energy when more subtle signals are available and easily understood by in-group members.

In contrast, members of individualist cultures adopt an *individualist self-concept*, characterized mainly by a concern for the welfare of the individual. The *welfare of the individual* is another way of saying that individualists value truth over harmony. This is not to say that the individualist does not seek harmony but rather, that he prioritizes truth over harmony. Efforts to harmonize situations come at the expense of truth and therefore, for the individualist prioritising group harmony serves as an unnecessary burden to the individual. On the contrary, collectivists believe that the group will only advance when harmony is preserved and therefore, without harmony the group would most likely break apart. As a result, in their quest to find *the truth*, individualists prefer a more direct style of communication which advances the individual toward her goals with greater speed and efficiency (as opposed to an indirect style, which from the perspective of the individualist, wastes much time in efforts to preserve harmony).

Furthermore, even if individualists did not prefer direct communication, their lack of identification with established in-groups limits their sensitivity to indirect communication (which develops mainly amongst people who have a broad understanding

of one another). Therefore, in individualist cultures, speech will be more direct and explicit while in collectivist cultures it will be more ambiguous and implicit. Communication styles then, manifest through communication behaviours, are extensions of the internalized values and norms of the respective cultures that those styles originate in (Thomas, 2002).

2.3 Using Cultural Frameworks

As Thomas (2002), points out, systematically defining cultural variations is useful for predicting behaviour on a comparative basis. It is obviously not possible for a human to simultaneously synthesize every unique piece of stimuli available to him about each person within a particular culture, and I suspect that not many people would care to anyway. Therefore, in an effort to reduce perception complexity and also in response to time and resource constraints, it becomes necessary to apply stereotypes, which are categorizations of the characteristics and behaviour of a set of individuals (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). For example, thus far I have shown that Thai culture belongs in the categories of collectivism and high-context, as do all Asian, African and South American cultures, to name a few. I have done the same with Canadian culture regarding the individualism and low-context categories. Placing roughly half of the world into one category (collectivist) and the other half (N. America, Europe, Australia, etc.) into another category (individualist) serves its purpose of giving interested observers a glimpse (while reducing perception complexity) into some of the espoused values (Schein, 1985), of these differing cultures.

However, this study focuses in part on Canada, and mainly on Thailand, so now I will outline one popular theory behind the roots of individualism, a theory that lends

itself to low-context communication and which Canadians today are believed to be indirectly affected by. I will follow this with an attempt to narrow the stereotypes of collectivism into a more personal analysis of Thailand. Specifically, I will go into a more detailed discussion about the background of Thais including a look at religion and also one key cultural facet, Kreng Jai, which will reinforce the notion that Thais fit into the broad dimensions of collectivism and high-context communication.

2.4 Cultural Scripts

As previously stated, individuals are born into differing cultures in which certain ideas and behaviours are valued and socialized because they contribute to the functioning of society. According to Brislin (1981), it is the proper mix of cultural socialization and parental discipline that shape an individual's attitudes, behaviours and personality. Often, ideas form a set of romantic myths that are told over and again in the form of bedtime stories to children, books, television and other forms of media. These romantic myths are used (and often *stretched*) to emphasize the positive aspects of society and to downplay the negative (Brislin, 1981). Once people are socialized into a particular culture and therefore, identify with that cultural group, they adopt its norms, which are acceptable standards of behaviour that are shared by members of a cultural group (Thomas, 2002).

Normative behaviour is carried out more or less automatically by way of scripts, which are mental representations that we have about ourselves in a given situation (Abelson, 1981; Gioa & Poole, 1984). Scripts assist people to reduce perception complexity through the categorization of appropriate situational behaviours in much the same way that stereotypes ease the burden of having to synthesize information separately. However, at some point in time there were individuals who did not have the luxury of

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following norms and scripts because there were not any yet established. Therefore, these individuals over generations and in response to basic survival needs became the architects of their respective cultural norms and scripts.

Common sense tells us that these architects, both collectivist and individualist had free choice to choose from the same pool of values, only they ended up prioritising in part, opposing lists, especially in the *communication* dimension. Therefore, history/background factors have a major influence not only for how individuals see themselves but also how they perceive and react to out-group members (Brislin, 1981). Understanding some key motivations behind these disparate priorities is a first step to understanding some communication style differences between individualists and collectivists and to understanding some key perceptual and attributional differences between Thais and Canadians regarding negotiation behaviour.

2.5 Why are Canadians Individualists?

One popular theory is that in order to claim land and survive pioneers went through tremendous competitive struggles (Brislin, 1981). People such as Simon Fraser, who are now individualist folk heroes, are said to have made a point of moving further west as soon as they could see smoke from chimneys of neighbours just two or three miles away, refusing to join together with them to help each other (Brislin, 1981). The reason for moving is that the mere threat of frequent contact with others was seen as placing unacceptable constraints on behaviour. The development of settlements and movement of people away from them led to the valued set of behaviours characteristic of individualism. (Brislin, 1981). Therefore, hard work became valued and expected of everyone and also served as an equalizer, breaking down previous class distinctions.

Status does exist in individualistic cultures, not through some accidental birth but rather, through success dependent on hard work and self-initiative (Brislin, 1981).

2.6 The Origins of Direct Communication

Without the luxury of having vast networks to rely on for support and information, individualists have learned over generations that in order to get most things accomplished one must do it alone (relatively), and therefore, if one is to reach goals alone he must speak his mind directly. Through self-reliance, individualists have learned to trust their own opinion without an over reliance on help from others. Trusting oneself is highly valued and therefore, personal development stemming from the creative input of others is only a recent concept in individualist cultures (Brislin, 1981). Moreover, this lack of vast networks to rely on has also had one spin-off effect in that individualists have a reduced exposure to indirect forms of communication compared to that of collectivists. Therefore, self-trust combined with a lack of tight-knit groups serves as one possible explanation for individualist use of direct communication. In other words, there is an implicit inverse relationship contained within the notion that if one generally only trusts herself, then she does not trust the opinion of other people. Self trust combined with a lack of close personal networks (which serve indirectly as *practice ground* for the conditioning of indirect communication techniques), implies that the individualist primarily requires a direct form of communication in order to perceive correctly any incoming communication messages. As a result, she has a limited penchant for sending communication messages in the same direct manner.

Messages will be sent directly not only for a deficiency in ability to be indirect but also for a desire to maintain the individualist self-concept, which is largely based on a

desire for truth. If the individualist fails to be reasonably direct then he fails himself somewhat, since his values are aligned toward directness. Therefore, assuming that the individualist person is motivated to maintain two of his primary values, in this case, *self-trust* and *truth*, he will speak truth directly to ensure that those values are maintained.

2.6.1 Thai Buddhism

One background factor responsible for how Thai people see themselves (and out-group members), is the Buddhist religion. As the state religion, Buddhism has a significant influence on Thai life since about 95% of people in the Kingdom of Thailand are Buddhists (Nationmaster.com. Encyclopedia, 2003). Testament to the force of Buddhism in Thailand is given by former Thai Prime Minister Tinsulanonda during a speech given on November 26, 1996 titled, "The 21st Century: The Rise of Asia."

> In the past five decades, Thailand has confronted numerous problems, from poverty, political instability, weak democratic governments, dishonesty of public figures, to the Communist threat. Nonetheless, Thailand has cut through those obstacles and dealt with the problems with a certain degree of success. Adherence to the middle way of moderation, perseverance, tolerance of differences and adaptation has been its strength.

In one respect, to understand why Thai people are collectivist, high-context communicators is to understand their religious philosophy.

2.6.2 The Four Noble Truths

The world is full of uncertainties, and arguably the biggest uncertainty of all that uniquely binds everyone on the planet together is the question about life after death. Humans have grappled over the answer to this question for centuries and therefore, a myriad of scientific and religious institutions have surfaced over the years offering a powerfully motivating product known as *freedom from fear*. As a result, many humans

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from all over the planet adopt religious-based normative behaviour and scripts. These norms and scripts serve the primary objective of easing human suffering caused by fear of the unknown but they also contain culturally intertwined side effects, one of those being communication norms.

To understand the four noble truths of Buddhist philosophy is to possibly provide one explanation for the Thai use of indirect communication. The first truth, *all is suffering*, means that life contains both happy and unhappy moments but that the sum total of human experience is imperfect and inadequate (Erricker, 1995). The second truth, *the origin of suffering*, outlines the *five aggregates* responsible for human suffering, which are: matter, sensations (the five senses and thoughts), perceptions, mental formations and consciousness. That is, anything and everything worldly (Erricker, 1995). Unlike Christianity, which promotes the notion that the world is a wonderful place to be, full of interesting life lessons, Buddhist philosophy teaches that the world is a very undesirable place to exist and that in order to achieve *cessation of suffering* (the third noble truth), one must control the human thirst of attachment (Erricker, 1995). *The path to the cessation of suffering*, or, the fourth noble truth, teaches subjects to detach from worldly things by *walking the middle way* and avoiding the two extremes of indulgence in sensual pleasures and self-mortification (Erricker, 1995). The middle way is *walked* via the *noble eightfold path*, which contains eight categories through which purity of mind, calm and insight can be achieved (Erricker, 1995).

2.6.3 The Noble Eightfold Path and Indirect Communication

The eight categories of the noble eightfold path fall neatly under three essential dimensions of Buddhist practice: *Wisdom*, containing right understanding and right

intention; *ethical conduct*, containing right speech, right action and right livelihood; and finally, *mental discipline*, containing right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Noteworthy is that each aspect must be practiced in concert with all others. For example, one must practice ethical conduct to achieve wisdom and one must have mental discipline to practice ethical conduct (Erricker, 1995). Buddhists realize that it is difficult to follow the eightfold path perfectly so they make allowances for imperfection in the form of re-birth. If Buddhists commit sins karma will force them to re-enter the world after death in a new human form for another chance at success. The ultimate goal of all Buddhists is to achieve perfection in an imperfect world by detaching from it, thus, becoming an enlightened person. Only at this point will the truly enlightened person *skip the wheel of re-incarnation* and join God in the universe (achieve nirvana).

This eightfold path may be a powerful motivator for many Thai people but also, it is likely that many Thais do not care so much. The point however, is that there are communication norms implicit in the path that have been socialized into Thai culture whether Thai people are aware of it or not. Remember the discussion about norms and scripts. People adopt norms and scripts largely out of motivation to reduce perception complexity. If people did not they would eventually be frustrated trying to sort through the mass amounts of sensory data (everyday things around us). At some point hundreds of years ago the eightfold path of living was socialized into Thai culture as a method to achieve the primary objective of joining God in the Universe. One spin-off effect of this primary objective, however, is that Thais learned to communicate indirectly and adopted indirect communication as a societal norm. All of it points to the main tenet of the

Buddhist philosophy, namely detachment, which can only be achieved through harmonious action (of which indirect communication is an example of).

The most poignant example of indirect communication is contained in the categories, right intention, right speech and right action, all of which are directly influenced by harmony as the central theme. Therefore, indirect communication may have become a Thai norm for a number of reasons, one of which could be religion. Moreover, those speaking indirectly have learned to do so to the point where it is largely subconscious, meaning that they may or may not be aware of the reasons for their communication style.

2.7 Time Orientation Dimension

There is also evidence that cultures perceive time differently and that time orientation influences communication style. Specifically, research suggests that low-context cultures treat time as a scarcity and value formal documentation while high-context cultures value informal relationships and are much more lenient with the use of time and contracts (Gassenheimer & Minter-Wimsatt, 2000). Therefore, it appears that high and low-context cultures both value trust only they employ different vehicles to obtain it. In a high-context culture trust is obtained through informal relationship-building while in low-context cultures trust is achieved through a signed contract. In order for trust to be obtained in a high-context culture, time must be sacrificed. It is simply a necessary part of the process. In the course of development however, strong bonds are formed and high information networks established (Francesco & Gold, 1998).

The time orientation dimension is related to a culture's focus on the past, present or future (Francesco & Gold, 1998). A past-orientation emphasizes time-honoured

traditions, Italian craftsmanship being an example. Future-oriented societies, on the other hand, value the long-term. A good example of this approach is the Japanese hiring of life-long employees. On the contrary, a present-oriented culture generally focuses on the short-term. There is a correlation between high-context cultures and either past or future orientation, while low-context cultures display a relationship to present-orientation (Francesco & Gold, 1998).

Research suggests that Thailand is both a past and future-oriented culture while Canadians primarily hold a present focus. When making decisions Thais use time-honoured traditions as a compass and respect long-term commitments while Canadians look for the most cutting-edge and efficient method of decision-making and seek short-term profitability (Blake, Walker & Walker, 1995). Moreover, Thais value patience while Canadians are in a hurry, deem punctuality to be a virtue and have a high sense of urgency in business dealings (Blake, Walker & Walker, 1995). Thus, it is clear that people who are allied with past and future time orientations appear to be less concerned with time while those people who are aligned with a present time orientation are consumed with it.

A reasonable explanation for these differing concerns can be understood through a familiarity of contrasting survival needs. For example, countries that exist in tropical climates such as Thailand are generally not in a hurry and do not place such importance on being *on time* as most Western countries define it (Thomas, 2002). The accepted historical explanation for this is that tropical countries have a lack of seasonality and therefore, do not have to meet deadlines agriculturally in the same way that multi-

seasonal countries do. Therefore, the same time orientation is extended throughout society beginning with farmers (Thomas, 2002).

A second historical explanation for time orientation points back to the literature about religion. Buddhists generally believe that they have unlimited chances to re-visit the earth but Christians believe that the present life is the one and only life. Therefore, Christians, which make up roughly 77% of Canadians (Nationmaster.com Encyclopedia, 2003), believe that the present life is the only opportunity to *get things right* in order to join God in the afterlife. Low-context Canadians then, have an urgent need to use the time that they have wisely, while Thais view time as an unlimited resource like the air we breath (Blake & Walker, 1995). Again, it is not the religion that is important for the purposes of this point. The low-context Canadians that do not practice any religion would still be under the influence of the time pressures that Christianity has placed on its believers in that those time pressures have become socialized over hundreds of years into behavioural norms and scripts that operate at a subconscious level, eventually detached from the source (being the path to salvation).

2.7.1 Time Orientation and Implications for Communication Style

Time orientation has direct implications for communication style. As one example, Canadians are trying to *beat the clock*. Related to communication, the logical method for being increasingly efficient is to be increasingly direct. Research indicates that Canadians are informal, direct and use instruments for the sake of efficiency during a communication process (Blake & Walker, 1995). In an effort to achieve accurate, fast results, employees are also encouraged to express opinions freely. Conflict becomes the inevitable result of individual differences but is considered a healthy force leading to

progress (Blake & Walker, 1995). Conversely, since Thais are generally not in a hurry to the extent that Canadians are it makes sense that they are also not in a hurry to communicate.

Keeping in mind the ultimate goals of developing relationships and preserving harmony, while communicating Thais are self-controlled, avoid expressing anger, use indirect and vague expressions and even call in intermediaries on occasion to help each side express its true feelings while allowing the other side to save face (Blake & Walker, 1995). Thai people will go to great lengths to avoid overt conflict. Moreover, constructive criticism is not a Thai concept. Unlike Canadians who generally view constructive criticism as a sign of creative work, Thais interpret it as disrespect, de-motivation and pushiness (Blake & Walker, 1995).

2.8 Kreng Jai-an indirect form of communication

After collecting secondary research for four months in Bangkok and after living amongst Thais for more time than that, I discovered for myself a uniquely Thai cultural concept that is a form of indirect communication. The concept is called Kreng Jai (pronounced *Graeng Jai*), literally translated into English as *awe heart* (Niratpattanasai, 2002). Kreng Jai is a difficult concept to translate for it is a perception that operates intricately through many aspects of Thai life but the most accepted definition is, *being afraid of offending others and being considerate and deferent to others' feelings* (Niratpattanasai, 2002).

Being in awe of another's feelings carries with it an implicit obligation to respect those feelings. This involves two aspects, the first of which is to avoid imposing on other people and the second, to avoid confrontations which suggest dissent (Niratpattanasai,

2002). The second part of the definition in simpler terms is about the idea that Thai

people have difficulty at saying *no* directly to others. The end result is indirectness and

reticence both in language and behaviour (Niratpattanasai, 2002), which often goes

unnoticed by foreigners working and/or travelling in Thailand. When Kreng Jai is noticed

by foreigners working in Thailand it is often interpreted in a negative *light*. After working

in Thailand for three years one senior executive explained at a cultural workshop in

Bangkok that he felt that Kreng Jai was a dishonest approach and that Thai people spoke

differently than the way they really thought (Kriengsak, 2002). Eventually, he realized

for himself that Kreng Jai was not dishonest but rather, that it reflected the Thai system of

values which is largely based on harmony and a desire not to hurt others' feelings

(Kriengsak, 2002).

To understand Kreng Jai is to understand some examples of its occurrence. In one

example, illustrating the first part of the definition of Kreng Jai, after work a person

needs a ride home and knows that one of his colleagues drives somewhat in his direction,

only, he does not ask for a ride for fear of interrupting that person's time. On a similar

note, a street resident advises his neighbours that tonight he is throwing a New year's

party. Being Kreng Jai he apologizes throughout the night for the noise. While in their

hearts the neighbours would say, "I don't like this noise," they publicly say to the man,

"don't worry about it" (Kriengsak, 2002).

As an illustration of the second part of the definition of Kreng Jai, a sales manager

wants to conduct a special sales meeting on a Saturday, so he asks his five sales team

members about their availability. One of them says that he has plans to take his family to

Phuket. In the boss's heart, he feels that the sales person should cancel his family trip but he is too Kreng Jai to say it out loud (Kriengsak, 2002). On the flip side to the same example, if during the week the sales manager issues a memo for a meeting on a forthcoming Saturday, the same sales person would be too Kreng Jai to tell his manager about his commitment to his family.

2.9 High/Low Context communication and International Negotiation

Now that it has been established that collectivist Thais use an indirect, high-context form of communication and that individualist Canadians use a direct, low-context style, it is noteworthy that these styles have been evidenced in negotiation activity as well. According to Cohen (1999), high-context negotiators like *grey areas*, they have a strong aversion to either/or dichotomous thinking and are reluctant to say *no*. Furthermore, out of a dislike for confrontation and contradiction, high-context negotiators have a propensity for understated formulations (Cohen, 1999). Cohen goes on to say that while high-context negotiators take pride in their familial skill at *reading between the lines* and at intuiting an intention behind an elliptical hint, low-context negotiators prefer *straight talking* and often take subtle opacity for evasiveness and insincerity. Moreover, research suggests that low-context negotiators have trouble *reading between the lines*, while high-context negotiators over-interpret messages (Cohen, 1999).

There is research that also suggests that high-context negotiators have an unusual ability and capacity for self-restraint and impassivity which deprive low-context negotiators of the high-context person's true feelings (Cohen, 1999). Finally, while the burden of meaning in low-context cultures is transmitted through the medium of words, high-context cultures are particularly sensitive to sign and symbol (Cohen, 1999).

2.9.1 Attribution and Self-Referent Criteria

It is clear from academic literature that high-context Thais generally negotiate in an indirect manner while low-context Canadians negotiate in a direct fashion. Therefore, it is likely that if Thai and Canadian people were to witness behaviour that could easily be interpreted as being either direct or indirect, then it would follow that Canadians would attribute the behaviour to directness while Thais, to indirectness. The implication is that people will generally come to an attribution based on self-referent criterion, which is the sum of deeply internalized attitudes, values and beliefs that are culturally socialized and embedded subconsciously over great lengths of time. In other words, people will come to an attribution for the cause of the behaviour of others based on perceptions of how they themselves would behave in similar circumstances. For example, Fry & Gosh (1980), compared the attributions for success and failure between white Canadian and Asian Indian Canadian children. The white children followed the expected pattern of self-serving attributions, rating effort and ability higher for success while attributing contextual factors such as luck to failure. Conversely, the Asian Indian children attributed their successes mainly to luck and their failures to lack of ability. Therefore, following from the literature review concerning indirect and direct communication styles and how it relates to Thai and Canadian people, it would be expected that:

H1: Thais will attribute negotiation behaviour to be indirect in nature to a greater extent than Canadians.

Kreng Jai obviously exists in Canada to a certain degree. It would be untrue to say that Canadians are not concerned with others' feelings and that they do not have difficulty in directly saying *no* to others. However, there is no evidence to suggest that

Kreng Jai exists in Canada as a central part of its culture. Therefore, it can also be expected that:

H2: Canadians will attribute negotiation behaviour to be direct in nature to a greater extent than Thais.

3. METHOD

3.1 Negotiation Scenario

The aim of the research was to test for culturally-based communication differences between Thais and Canadians associated with high and low-context communication in connection to Hofstede's individualism paradigm. The research was further narrowed to test for sensitivity to the Thai cultural concept of Kreng Jai. Conducting an experiment which would have measured negotiation behaviour and communication differences between subjects was beyond the scope of this research. Besides the fact that there were time constraints, the research was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand and therefore, finding non-biased Canadian subjects (Canadians who were not culturally-sensitive to Thailand) living in Bangkok would have been extremely difficult. Therefore, I created a cross-cultural negotiation scenario and followed it with a series of questions related to the scenario. I created the questions with the intention of measuring individual attributions of behaviours related to Kreng Jai, rather than measure behaviours themselves.

In order to measure attribution of style of communication I needed to create a story that included points of communication that I could ask questions about. I was hoping for differing responses between the Thai and Canadian groups that I tested. The scenario was a story about two characters, Paradorn and Dick Burton, who were involved in a cross-cultural negotiation. The idea was to have each negotiator represent one side of the secondary research outlined above in the literature review. Paradorn was a Thai man

who represented a collectivist, high-context (indirect) communicator, while Dick Burton represented an individualist, low-context (direct) communicator. The scenario contained ten paragraphs that included one or two main points of communication behaviour between Dick and Paradorn. Respondents were given a questionnaire containing 20 questions with two questions relating to each of the ten paragraphs. All of the survey questions focused on Paradorn's behaviour in specific situations but most importantly, the focus was on his motivations for behaving the way that he did in those situations. Specifically, was his part in the communication with Dick Burton indicative of direct, low-context behaviour, or indirect, high-context behaviour? For example, in paragraph 7, was Paradorn's smile and nod to be taken at face value and therefore, to be interpreted as a form of direct communication to show Dick that he was happy or was it a form of indirect communication to show Dick that he did not think Dick's paintings were a *perfect fit* for his family stores? This is how I formulated my questions, with the hope that Canadians would recognize Paradorn's behaviours at face value while Thais would perceive Paradorn's behaviour through an *indirect lens*.

For easy reference the paragraphs in the scenario were numbered and the appropriate paragraph number was marked in front of each survey question, which was constructed in 5-point likert format, anchored from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Moreover and so that respondents would only have to refer to each paragraph once (to increase the speed of a lengthy survey), related questions were issued in pairs. The survey questions were designed in such a way that odd questions attributed intentions of Kreng Jai to behaviours in the scenario (indirect), and even questions attributed more direct intentions to behaviours (this knowledge was not given to respondents), with the idea of

obtaining differing results based on cultural background. Odd and even questions were thus, *indicators* and *distracters*, respectively.

3.2 The Bhawuk et al. Values Survey (1995)

The Bhawuk et al. values survey (1995), is a set of 16 questions related to beliefs and behaviours that would be either indicative or not of a person in his daily life. The survey is necessary in a cross-cultural study such as this one in order to separate respondents into one of four categories: *vertical* or *horizontal* individualist or *vertical* or *horizontal* collectivist. Therefore, after respondents finished with the negotiation scenario and related questions along with a series of questions related to demographics, they completed the values survey.

3.3 Delivery

During my third semester while on exchange in Thailand, I sent an on-line instrument to Canadian subjects. I decided to solicit a random sample of undergraduate and graduate students from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. I sent the survey instrument via email to mass-email lists totalling just over 1000 students with 87 useable responses returned. That made for a total of an 8.7% response rate.

I decided to distribute the survey instrument to Thai undergraduate and graduate students in paper format for the reason that it became clear to me after months of studying with Thais that they generally do not respond to emails at near the speed of western people. Therefore, I solicited professors from Thammasat University (my exchange University) in Bangkok so that I could distribute the survey to their respective

students. Response rates were much higher in this situation as I had the help of the professors to introduce me during class time and distribute the survey during class time. Even though the research was associated with business communication, I did not feel that it was necessarily advantageous to measure responses strictly from working subjects in that my research measured communication differences based on culture. These communication differences, although relevant to business, are not exclusive to business environments. In fact, they are ubiquitous in nature affecting every member of any society in one way or another.

3.4 Pre-Test

The survey was utilized in Canada and Thailand so I considered translating it into the Thai language for Thai respondents. However, I believed that if Thai respondents were to truly grasp the nature of a cross-cultural negotiation between West and East, then they must be proficient in English since English is the medium through which the vast majority of international negotiations are conducted between western and eastern countries (in which at least one party's native language is English). Therefore, I decided to give Thai subjects (who were fluent in spoken and written English), the survey instrument in the English language in order to maintain equivalence between respondent groups and to maintain as realistic a negotiation environment as possible.

I pre-tested the survey instrument at Thammasat University on a group of 15 graduate students with whom I attended class. After one of our classes together I distributed the survey, which took between 15-20 minutes to complete. There were no complaints regarding language translation problems. There is the argument that English proficiency translates into a cross-vergence of cultural values, meaning that Thai people

who are proficient in English are westernized in a way. However, this research aimed to measure a deeply embedded Thai cultural concept, (Kreng Jai), which still holds for Thais who speak English.

I also pre-tested the survey instrument with the scenario-related questions formatted in random order rather than structuring them into pairs. Initially I felt that placing the questions into pairs might lead respondents to socially desirable answers. However, after the pre-test respondents complained that the questions were difficult to follow. They also complained that the survey took too long (which related to the fact that students had to refer to the scenario 20 times rather than ten as a result of the random ordering of questions). Therefore, I decided to respond to both complaints simultaneously by placing the questions back into their pairs. For example, the two questions for paragraph two would be one after the other rather than separated, and so on. Therefore, respondents would not have to go back to the same paragraph twice which proved to be time consuming.

Finally, I discovered that the negotiation scenario had some content flaws. Specifically, the end of paragraphs four and nine initially included the quote, "there was a moment of silence." I believed that this quote was too *leading* and therefore, I omitted it from both paragraphs. In addition, it became clear that paragraphs nine and ten were filled with obvious points of contention, which were also quite leading in nature. Therefore, I toned down these paragraphs in an effort to let respondents make up their own minds.

4. RESULTS

After the data were input I checked it for any missing data. Subjects that missed seven or more questions were deleted from the file. If respondents missed less than seven questions each question was completed and recoded, taken from the median of the remainder of the sample for each particular question that was missed. In order to protect the data from any cultural bias, in the demographics section I asked respondents (question 28), "In what country have you lived the longest," and I also asked (question 29), "What national culture do you identify with?" Respondents who did not answer either "Thai" or "Canadian" to each of these questions were dropped from the file.

4.1 Tests

4.1.1 Descriptives

Canada: There were a total of 33 male respondents (35.5%) and 60 female respondents (64.5%), for a total group size of 93. Of the total respondents, 16.1% were between the ages of 17-24, 32.3% were 25-29, 19.4% were between 30-34, 6.5% were 35-39, and 25.8% were over the age of 40. 32.3% of total respondents were working students, 30.1% were students and 18.3% were professionals with the balance of subjects working in administrative, managerial or entrepreneurial positions. Of the 93 respondents, 40.9% earned between $1000-$1999 per month, 24.7% earned from $2000-$3499 each month, 11.8% earned $3500-$4999 monthly, while 9.7% earned over $5000

every month. Finally, 33.3% of the total respondents had ten or more years of full-time

work experience with 26.9% in the 1-3 year range and just under 20% with 4-6 years.

Figure 1 Canadian Monthly Salaries

Canadian Monthly Salaries
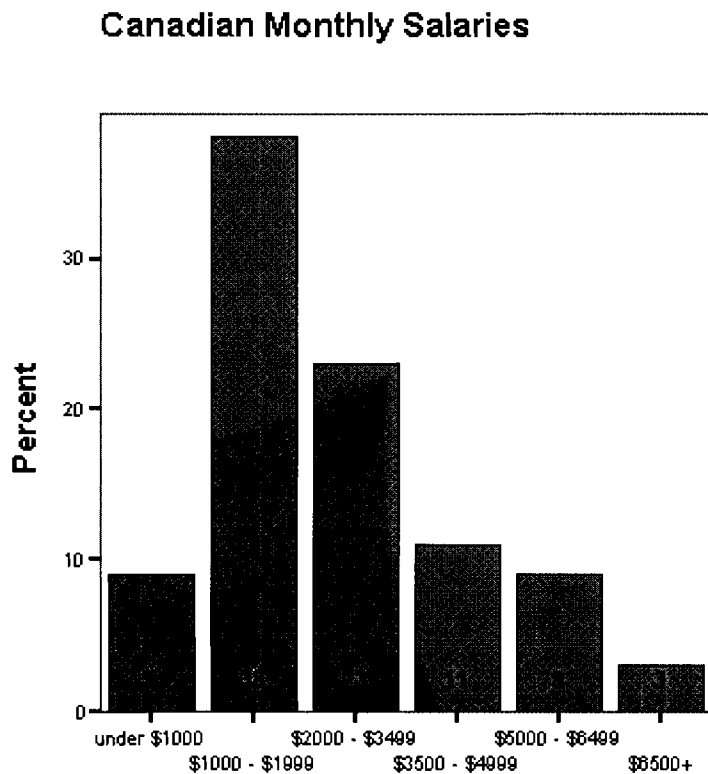
Thailand: There were a total of 39 males (38.6%) and 62 females (61.4%), for a

total of 101 respondents, all of which were between the ages of 17-24. Of the 101

respondents, 99 were students and 2 were working students. 84.2% of total respondents

made fewer than 10,000 baht each month, while 12.9% made between 10,000-14,999

baht monthly. 93.1% of respondents were without full-time work experience, with the

remaining 6.9% with 1-6 years of full-time experience.

Figure 2 Thai Monthly Salaries

Figure 2 Thai Monthly Salaries
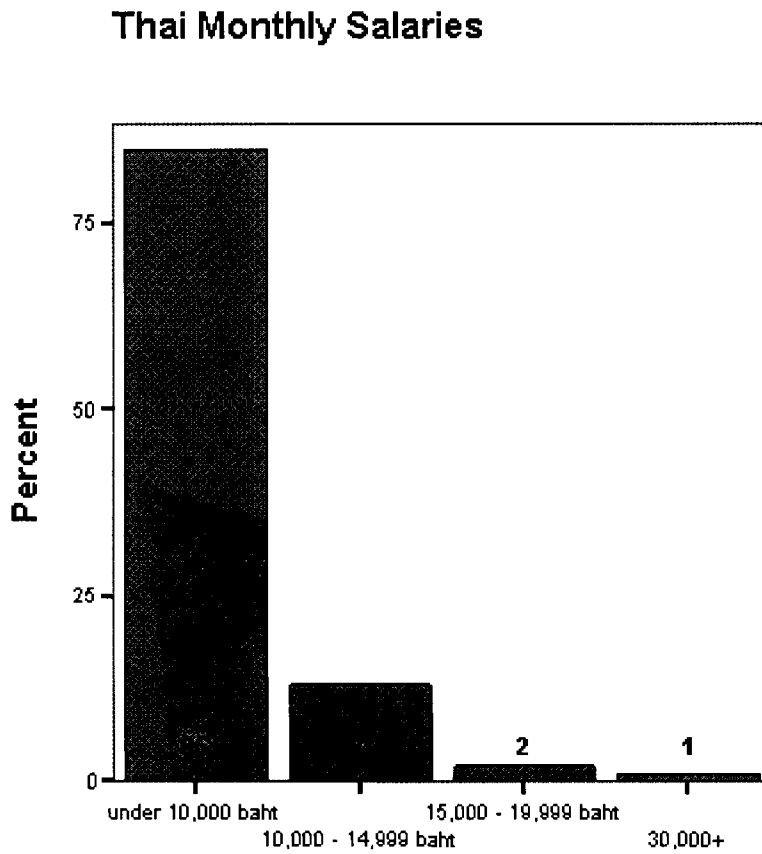
4.1.2 Reliability

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 Indicators/Distracters-Alphas

	Canada	Thailand	Combined
Distracters (even questions)	.694 (10 items)	.339 (10 items)	.722 (10 items)
Indicators (odd questions)	.75 (10 items)	.394 (10 items)	.646 (10 items)

In order to examine the consistency of the scales, reliabilities were run for both even questions (distracters) and odd questions (indicators), and included both country results separately as well as combined. Canadian results were generally good with Cronbach alphas settling at .779 and .801 for Indicators and Distracters, respectively. Thai results however, as shown in Table 2, were very low.

Imperfections in the measuring process were most likely due to the fact that the survey instrument was not translated into the Thai language as discussed in the *Limitations* section below. After careful consideration of the negotiation scenario and the questions contained within, it was recognized that the English language used contained subtleties and difficult words that most likely were missed by Thai respondents. The plausible theory that Thai respondents misunderstood parts of the scenario and the questions that followed would be cause for inconsistent results.

4.1.3 T-Test

Bhawuk et al. Values Survey (1995)

Table 3 Values Survey T-Test Means

Means	Vertical Individualist	Horizontal Collectivist	Horizontal Individualist	Vertical Collectivist
Thailand	22.37*	20.20	18.31*	21.91*
Canada	24.56*	20.43	21.62*	17.48*

*Indicates statistical significance

In order to test for cultural differences between the Canadian and Thai groups, a T-test was run on responses from the Bhawuk et al. values survey (1995), with the results demonstrating cultural variation. With the exception of the *horizontal/collectivist* category, significant cultural differences existed in all other three classes at a 95% confidence interval, supporting Hofstede's categorization of Thais and Canadians as collectivist and individualist, respectively.

The internal consistency reliabilities for the four subscales of the Bhawuk et al. (1995), values survey were: *Vertical Individualist*=.736, *Horizontal Collectivist*=.453, *Horizontal Individualist*=.489, and *Vertical Collectivist*=.628.

4.1.4 Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was conducted to try to distinguish between any cultural differences across factor loadings. The items were forced into two components: Indirect behaviour, representing accommodating behaviour, and direct behaviour, demonstrating genuineness. Canadian results loaded strongly on the *direct* factor, but somewhat surprisingly, Canadian responses loaded strongest on the *indirect* factor.

As expected, results from the Thai sample loaded on the indirect factor. In this case, the three questions that loaded highly corresponded to the reluctance to say *no*. However, Thai respondents loaded stronger on the direct factor. In this case, Thais perceived behaviour to be genuine.

Table 4 Indicators/Distracters Factor Analysis

Structure Matrix

Question	Canada		Thailand	
	Factor 1 (Indirect)	Factor 2 (Direct)	Factor 1 (Indirect)	Factor 2 (Direct)
Paragraph 2 (1)	.213	-.324	**.577**	-.113
Paragraph 2 (2)	.091	**.680**	.026	-.190
Paragraph 3 (3)	.020	-.545	.398	.006
Paragraph 3 (4)	.150	**.763**	.043	-.085
Paragraph 3 (5)	**.529**	-.046	-.007	.409
Paragraph 3 (6)	.092	**.684**	.155	-.497
Paragraph 4 (7)	**.514**	.332	-.102	-.150
Paragraph 4 (8)	-.665	-.199	-.105	**.570**
Paragraph 5 (9)	**.688**	.269	-.050	-.435
Paragraph 5 (10)	-.719	.026	.208	**.428**
Paragraph 6 (11)	**.534**	.181	-.041	-.275
Paragraph 6 (12)	-.397	.102	.171	**.417**
Paragraph 7 (13)	**.604**	-.092	.135	-.283
Paragraph 7 (14)	-.673	.197	-.106	**.571**
Paragraph 8 (15)	**.618**	.173	-.027	-.470
Paragraph 8 (16)	-.292	**.464**	.374	.196
Paragraph 9 (17)	**.565**	-.162	**.808**	-.177
Paragraph 9 (18)	-.600	.175	-.633	.067
Paragraph 10 (19)	**.657**	.175	**.468**	-.531
Paragraph 10 (20)	-.762	.049	-.243	**.588**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Indirect/Direct Communication

In order to test H1 and H2 mean differences between Thais and Canadians, indicator and distracter items were examined. As shown in Table 5 there were significant differences in the samples but not in the direction anticicipated. Unexpectedly, hypothesis 1 was not supported. Based on Hofstede's dimensions I assumed that Thai respondents, who largely rely on indirect modes of communication, would have recognized the indirect communication subtleties contained within the negotiation scenario and subsequently would have related to them. Instead there were significant differences, only, it was the Canadian respondents with a mean of 35.73 who perceived negotiation behaviour to be indirect more so than Thai respondents, whose mean scored at 31.98.

Moreover, hypothesis 2 was not supported. I predicted that Canadian respondents would perceive negotiation scenario behaviour to be direct and thus, score higher on distracter questions but they did not. Canadians, with a mean of 27.17, scored lower than the Thai mean of 30.14, meaning that Thais agreed that behaviours contained within the scenario were more direct than indirect.

Table 5 Indicators/Distracters Mean Differences

	Thais	Canadians	T-Value
Indicators	31.98	35.73	-5.34*
Distracters	30.14	27.14	4.41*

*Indicates statistical significance

4.2.2 Factor Analysis

The factor analysis sheds some light on the possible cause of the results. That is, although the Canadian sample loaded on the direct communication factor on questions 2, 4, 6 and 16, it had a higher frequency of loadings on the indirect factor, which was composed of the odd-numbered indicator questions. Again, the indicator questions were designed with a focus on indirect, accommodating behaviour and Canadian respondents loaded on 8 of the 10 indicator questions. However, three of the four highest loadings for Canadian respondents fell under the direct communication factor.

Unlike the Canadian respondents, the Thai sample loaded most frequently on the direct communication factor. After considering the questions that loaded in this factor (questions 8, 10, 14 and 20), it is clear that Thai respondents generally agreed that my Thai character Paradorn genuinely admired and agreed with his Canadian counterpart, thought that he was funny and would be back to sign a deal.

4.2.3 Culture

As shown in Table 3, significant cultural differences existed in three of the four categories from the Bhawuk et al.values survey (1995). In this case results were as expected, supporting Hofstede's categorization of Thais and Canadians as collectivist and individualist, respectively. The fact that the Bhawuk et al. values survey (1995), is written in basic level English and that in this case Thai respondents answered as expected, may lend support to my explanation in the *Discussion* section of this paper for the Thai results of the non-translated negotiation scenario. Interestingly, 14 Canadian respondents skipped question 35 from the Bhawuk et al. values survey (1995), which

reads, "It is important to maintain harmony within my group." (Possibly suggesting that

this question was not important to them because of the content contained within).

5. DISCUSSION

This project demonstrates that the same communication message can and is perceived differently by members of different cultures. In this case however, Thais attributed a more direct style of communication than Canadians who attributed generally, the communication points contained within the negotiation scenario to an indirect style.

These results were not what I was expecting. Instead, based on academic research that suggests that I should have found the results I was after, the outcome contradicted my hypotheses. The fact that the Canadian respondents perceived the scenario behaviour to be indirect was not entirely surprising to me. After all, writing a negotiation scenario that makes sense and measures what it is intended to measure is challenging and there is evidence suggesting that my Canadian respondents may have already had a *feel* for Thai culture, or at least been able to generalize across a broad spectrum of Asian cultures regarding communication (see section 5.1.3 ahead). However, after learning the Thai results, I suspected that there may have been something faulty with my design, specifically, in translation.

5.1 Limitations

5.1.1 Translation

As already noted, it was taken into consideration to translate the survey instrument into the Thai language for Thai respondents but was decided against for one reason: in international negotiations that involve at least one negotiating party that speaks

English as its native language, the negotiation is usually conducted in English. Therefore, in an attempt to make the experience as realistic to a real-life negotiation as possible I decided to run the instrument in English. I solicited Thai undergraduate and graduate students studying in *English-language only* programs at Thammasat University. All of the respondents were fluent in spoken as well as written English but it became clear after analyzing the data that many subtleties of language contained within the scenario may have been missed by the Thai respondents. It also raised my curiosity regarding a standard definition for fluency in language.

5.1.2 Thai Sample

The Thai sample may have been too young, with an average age of 17-24 years for the total sample. There is also the possibility that I should have sampled working professionals but I decided that these concerns were irrelevant given that I was measuring a deeply embedded Thai cultural communication norm that affects everyone in Thai society (Kreng Jai), regardless of background. The communication medium of *negotiation*, through which I tested this Thai cultural concept was not the essence of the project but rather, a means to an end.

5.1.3 Response Bias

Going back to the *Delivery* section in the *Methods* chapter, I explained that I solicited professors at Thammasat University for my Thai sample. These professors were kind enough to introduce me at the beginning of their respective classes which helped tremendously with class participation in my survey. The Canadian sample, on the other hand, came through email response. Seeing that I had an 8.7% response rate from the

Canadian sample compared to nearly 100% for the Thai sample, there is the possibility that Canadian results suffer from response bias in that the Canadian sample may have included many respondents who are interested in cross-cultural communication.

In hindsight, I realize that keeping language the same for both parties could only have been possibly effective had I conducted an experiment in which both parties could not only listen to words but observe body language (which was beyond the scope of this research project). My learning experience lay within the fact that my negotiation scenario was measuring not behaviour but rather, attributions of behaviour, which could only be understood through a mastered understanding of the words that were used in the negotiation scenario to describe the given behaviours.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This project may be of use to managers who are facing a globalized business climate characterized by business without borders. According to Thomas & Inkson (2004), cross-cultural people skills are important in that managing people effectively is fundamental to overall organizational effectiveness and people in organizations are increasingly multicultural. Moreover, managers spend more than 50% of their time in negotiations, many of which are cross-cultural. Therefore, there is a critical need everywhere in the world for managers to be culturally sensitive, especially communication-sensitive.

This paper did not obtain the clear results it sought after but the results demonstrate that cultural differences do exist regarding communication between Thais and Canadians. Assuming that this research has not broken any new ground by concluding that now, based on the results of this project, Thais are direct communicators

and Canadians are indirect, I think that managers should pay attention to academic research outlined in the literature review of this paper. Moreover, the possibility that the Thai respondents may have had trouble comprehending the negotiation scenario could be taken as a learning experience for managers to ensure that employees using a second language fully comprehend language used during business transactions before making important, related decisions. I believe that this last point applies particularly to those individualist managers who are managing collectivist employees who generally have difficulty in voicing concerns directly. It would be in situations like these that companies could potentially lose millions of dollars through wasted time spent within the confines of misunderstanding.

5.3 Future Research

It would be interesting to see if these results would have turned out differently if the survey instrument were translated into the Thai language for the Thai respondents. In addition, this research was conducted on Thai University students in Bangkok, the metropolis of Thailand. It would be meaningful to see survey results conducted on Thais living in southern cities, who I suspect have a deeper level of subconsciously embedded Thai cultural values than those people living in Bangkok (who are westernized to a greater extent). The same line of thinking applies to the Canadian sample, which was taken from Vancouver, a city with a much different sub-culture than Montreal, for example.

Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to test this research on working subjects who have actual negotiation experience. Moreover, it would be interesting to see this research used in an experiment in which subjects of differing cultures participated in real

negotiations, giving researchers the opportunity to measure actual behaviours rather than attributions of behaviours.

Finally, there is one noteworthy item that may be interesting to research further. Item 35 from the Bhawuk et al. values survey (1995), which stated, "It is important to maintain harmony within my group," was skipped by 14 Canadian respondents.

In conclusion, this study emphasized the importance that negotiators be culturally sensitive and intelligent in an age of increasing globalization. It is not enough for a negotiator to rely on past cultural *default settings* while preparing for a cross-cultural negotiation, like the knowledge that most Thais are quiet. Today this level of preparation is not enough. The amount of trans-national business that is conducted today implies that negotiators must be equipped with a deep level of cross-cultural understanding and an arsenal of cross-cultural communication skills. This study proves that negotiators must not only be sensitive to culturally disparate communication styles but that they must also be able to communicate simplistically with the insight that subtleties of language may be misunderstood by a negotiating opponent.

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APPENDIX 1: NEGOTIATION SCENARIO

International Negotiations and Cross-Cultural Communication: A Study in Thailand

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In today's globalized business world, international negotiation occupies a disproportionately large quantity of a manager's time. Therefore, cross-cultural understanding is of paramount importance. This study is being conducted in both Thailand and Canada. Your responses will help researchers to better understand communication differences and similarities between Thais and Canadians during negotiations. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

The study is divided into two sections. In the first section, you will be asked to read a cross-cultural negotiation scenario and then answer some questions about the scenario, based on your individual perceptions. In the second section, you will be given a series of questions related to values. There are no wrong answers. In fact, all answers are correct, and therefore, your true feelings will make the results much more relevant.

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. Knowledge of your identity is not required. You will not be required to write your name or any other identifying information on the research materials. Materials will be held in a secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. If, for any reason, after starting the questionnaire, you feel that you are unable to continue, you are free to stop at any time.

Thank-you very much for your participation. Again, it is greatly appreciated.

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Negotiation Scenario

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1. Canadian Dick Burton, age 47, sits in his Bangkok office reflecting on the meeting that he completed today with 33 year old Paradorn Tapun, a Thai national and buyer for his family owned Thai silk painting retail stores. Dick came to Thailand four months ago to take over his late father's silk painting manufacturing company, "Suay Silks," ("Beautiful Silks").

2. The meeting was originally scheduled for 1:00 pm, but Dick was busy so he telephoned Paradorn in the morning to change the appointment to 2:00 pm. The time change was inconvenient for Paradorn, and even though he felt certain that he would not make it at 2:00, he accepted the change. Not surprisingly, Paradorn was running late, and phoned Dick at 2:45 explaining that he would not be there until 3:00 pm. "O.K," Dick replied. "When you arrive, come straight into my office. I'll be waiting for you."

3. Paradorn arrived when he said he would, and noticed that Dick was in his office on the phone, so he decided to wait outside. After 5 minutes had passed, with Dick still on the phone, Paradorn decided to continue waiting rather than enter Dick's office, so he found a chair to sit down on. Dick telephoned to Paradorn, asking him if he would be making the meeting, to which Paradorn replied, "yes, I am outside of your office now. I arrived 20 minutes ago, but you were on the phone so I decided to wait outside." Dick walked outside of his office and saw Paradorn sitting there. "I thought I told you to come inside. I said that I would be waiting for you!" Dick exclaimed, with a hint of irritation in his tone. Paradorn giggled.

4. Dick sensed that things were becoming tense, so he initiated some 'small talk,' to ease the tension. Dick told a few jokes in that English 'dry humor' that his Father was so famous for, including one criticizing the Queen of England. Paradorn laughed and then smiled.

5. Dick went on to say, "let's get down to business!" Dick commented, "Now let me start by saying that I think the best way to have a successful business relationship is to just speak our minds and to say what we really think. If we are directly open and honest with each other, not only will we be more efficient with time, but we will have a more sincere feeling for one another." Finally, Dick asked, "what do you think?" Paradorn smiled and nodded in agreement.

6. Dick then asked, "tell me exactly what you are looking for and hopefully I will have it. Paradorn smiled, and then asked, "well, what do you have?"

7. Dick complimented Paradorn's family stores, explaining that their 'old style' Thai character would be a 'perfect fit' with Dick's classical paintings, which he showed to Paradorn. Dick went on to ask Paradorn, "would you agree?" Paradorn smiled and nodded in agreement.

8. "Great then," replied Dick. How does $5000 per shipment of 50 paintings sound to you?" Paradorn smiled, and then replied, "definitely possible." "Why don't we go for a coffee and talk about it?"

9. "Good idea. I'll get some coffee from the staff room," replied Dick. Dick returned five minutes later with some coffees, and then asked Paradorn, the buyer, for his preference for terms of delivery and payment, to which Paradorn answered, "30 days delivery and 14 days payment." Dick, the seller countered with "45 days delivery and 7 days payment," and asked Paradorn if he was OK with those terms, to which Paradorn replied, "OK."

10. "Perfect," replied Dick. "I will make up a tentative contract and we can meet next week to complete the terms." Paradorn smiled and they shook hands.

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY

Please record your response for each of the following items based on the following scale:

SD (strongly disagree)	D (disagree)	N (neutral)	A (agree)	SA (strongly agree)

Please circle the answer that best represents your opinion about each item, based on the negotiation scenario.

Note: for easy reference, please refer to the appropriate paragraph number from the negotiation scenario, noted in front of each question below.

(1) (Paragraph 2) Paradorn did not know how to say 'no' to Dick, so this is why he agreed to the time change even though he knew that he would not be able to make it at 2:00.	SD D N A SA
(2) (Paragraph 2) Paradorn perceived Dick's initial postponement as an indirect message that the meeting was low on his priority list, which he felt gave Dick extra negotiating leverage. Therefore, even though Paradorn knew that he would not make the new 2:00 time, he agreed to it so that he, in turn, could counter with a postponement of his own to send an indirect message of non-interest to Dick.	SD D N A SA
(3) (Paragraph 3) Paradorn waited outside of Dick's office because he did not want to disturb Dick while he was on the telephone.	SD D N A SA
(4) (Paragraph 3) Dick's lengthy telephone conversation insulted Paradorn, making him feel less important. Rather than show his frustration directly to Dick, he decided to passive-aggressively communicate a message of frustration by sitting outside.	SD D N A SA
(5) (Paragraph 3) Paradorn giggled because he was embarrassed by Dick's abrupt communication style, but did not want to hurt Dick's feelings.	SD D N A SA
(6) (Paragraph 3) Paradorn was giggling at Dick, who he found to be quite rude.	SD D N A SA
(7) (Paragraph 4) Paradorn smiled and laughed, in this case, because he was offended by Dick's jokes, but did not want to offend Dick.	SD D N A SA
(8) (Paragraph 4) Paradorn smiled and laughed because he thought Dick was a funny person.	SD D N A SA
(9) (Paragraph 5) Paradorn does not admire Dick's strategy for 'getting down to business.' His smile and nod was just a 'cover' for his real feelings, which he feared would hurt Dick's feelings.	SD D N A SA
(10) (Paragraph 5) Paradorn admires Dick's strategy for 'getting down to business.'	SD D N A SA
(11) (Paragraph 6) Paradorn's counter-question is a preventative measure designed to preserve harmony in the event that Dick has nothing of interest to Paradorn.	SD D N A SA
(12) (Paragraph 6) Paradorn's counter-question is a typical negotiation tactic that he used in hopes of securing a better deal for himself by getting Dick to offer extra information	SD D N A SA

(13) (Paragraph 7) Since he has not seen the paintings in his stores, it is likely that Paradorn is only appearing to agree in an effort to avoid confrontation.	SD D N A SA
(14) (Paragraph 7) Judging by Paradorn's smile and nods, he agrees with Dick that the paintings will be a good 'fit' for his family stores.	SD D N A SA
(15) (Paragraph 8) Paradorn said, "definitely possible," and by saying this, he means that he is not happy with Dick's price but would like to get to know Dick better first.	SD D N A SA
(16) (Paragraph 8) Paradorn is wasting time, knowing that Dick is a Westerner who most likely values time more than Paradorn himself, which Paradorn believes will work to his own advantage in final negotiations.	SD D N A SA
(17) (Paragraph 9) Paradorn is not truly 'OK' with Dick's proposed terms, but does not know how to say 'no' to Dick directly.	SD D N A SA
(18) (Paragraph 9) Paradorn said 'OK' because he means he is 'OK' with Dick's terms. If he could not 'speak his mind,' his family would not have sent him to negotiate in the first place.	SD D N A SA
(19) (Paragraph 10) Paradorn's smile is his polite way of saying "no" to the deal. It would be doubtful for him to return to sign the contract.	SD D N A SA
(20) (Paragraph 10) Paradorn's smile is genuine, and he will most likely return to sign the completed contract.	SD D N A SA

Now please tell us a little bit about yourself:

21. What is your age? 17-24 ¡   25-29 ¡   30-34 ¡   35-39 ¡   40+ ¡

22. What is your gender? M ¡   F ¡

23. What is your Primary Occupation?

Student ¡   Working Student ¡   Looking for Work ¡   Administrative ¡

Manager ¡   Professional ¡   Entrepreneur ¡   Other ¡

24. What is your current monthly salary? (Answer either in CDN$ or Thai Baht)

CDN $
Under $1000 ¡ $1000-$1999 ¡ $2000-$3499 ¡

$3500-$4999 ¡ $5000-6499 ¡ $6500+ ¡

Thai Baht
Under 10,000B ¡   10,000-14,999B ¡   15,000-19,999 ¡

20,000-24,999 ¡   25,000-29,999 ¡   30,000+ ¡

25. Years of full-time work experience?

0 ¡   1-3 ¡   4-6 ¡   7-9 ¡   more than 10 ¡

26. Country of birth?

27. Country of Citizenship?

28. In what country have you lived the longest?

29. What national culture do you identify with?
Please record your response for each of the following items using the following scale:

NEVER   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   **ALWAYS**

Please circle the number that indicates if you are the kind of person who is likely to believe or behave as follows:

30. It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

31. The well-being of my co-workers is important to me.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

32. I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much if my   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
family did not approve of it.

33. I would do what would please my family, even if I   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
detested that activity.

34. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
upset.

35. It is important to maintain harmony within my group.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

36. I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
group.

37. I am a unique individual.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

38. Winning is everything.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

39. Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

40. What happens to me is my own doing.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

41. It is important that I do my job better than others.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

42. I feel good when I cooperate with others.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

43. When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

44. I enjoy working in situations involving competition with   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
others.

45. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Thank-you very much for your time. It is very much appreciated.