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**Multicultural Communication**  
**Awareness for Police**

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Research Contractor

**TECHNICAL REPORT**  
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Submitted by:  
The Canadian Police Research Centre  
The Canadian Police College  
The Centre for Race Relations

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## Executive Summary

A research study on improved communication between police officers and selected cultural groups was conducted. Specifically, cultural “taboos” taken from a comprehensive literature review were presented to preselected cultural groups and participating embassy official(s) for confirmation. Results of these meetings indicated that there were indeed cultural differences worth noting, and some stereotypical images to be dispelled. Furthermore, twenty-five ‘recommendations concerning the improvement of community/police rapport were elicited from those involved in the study. Although a number of these suggestions have been, or are currently being attempted, a number of these original ideas should be considered for possible implementation. Limitations on the timely completion of the study, including group arrangement and lack of pertinent information regarding the primary objective are listed. Additional research strategies, North American behavioural norms, as well as findings of interest and key recommendations are provided.

## Sommaire

Dans le cadre d'une étude de recherche sur l'amélioration de la communication entre les policiers et des groupes culturels particuliers, on a présenté à des groupes culturels choisis à l'avance et aux représentants des ambassades participantes des «tabous» culturels relevés par suite d'une analyse documentaire détaillée aux fins de confirmation. Les résultats des réunions ont révélés l'existence de divergences culturelles dignes d'attention, et de stéréotypes à éliminer. De plus, les participants à l'étude ont formulé vingt-cinq recommandations concernant l'amélioration des relations sociopolicieres. Même si certaines recommandations ont été mises en oeuvre ou sont en voie de l'être on devrait envisager de donner suite à plusieurs de ces suggestions originales. Les obstacles à l'achèvement de l'étude en temps opportun, dont l'organisation des groupes et le manque de renseignements pertinents sur l'objectif principal, sont mentionnés dans l'étude. Des stratégies de recherche **supplémentaires**, des normes de comportement nord-américaines, des constatations intéressantes ainsi que des recommandations clés y sont également présentées.

**This Study was Funded**

by

**by**

**The Canadian Police Research Centre**

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**The Centre For Race Relations**

## **Final Report: Multicultural Communication Study**

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## **Background**

During the past ten years, there has been a significant influx of immigrants into Canada from countries whose social and cultural “norms” of behaviour have been quite different from those of individuals from traditional North-Western European descent (Canadian Citizen and Immigration Statistics, 1986- 1996). These particular cultures tend to merge into large urban centres in immense numbers, creating a truly heterogeneous society. With this cultural diversity come many specific cultural nuances, which are frequently unfamiliar to the already existing population.

Although maintaining one’s cultural identity and traditions is accepted and encouraged in Canadian society, it does however, create a unique problem for those who must effectively communicate with a diverse and rapidly changing population. At the forefront of this communication imperative are police officers. Few people come into contact with such a wide spectrum of the population as do law enforcement personnel. Members of this profession are expected to deal with all those in the community equally, often concerning sensitive or stressful issues. Effective communication under these conditions is essential for both police officers as well as the citizen. Unfortunately, police officers are usually unaware not only of specific cultural traditions and customs, but also of the distinct verbal and nonverbal demeanour found among members of certain minority groups. For instance, the difference between Canadian cultural “norms” and the behavioural norms of other cultures can be quite extreme. This can include orientations such as time and space, as well as the degree of physical contact and verbal exchange. As a result of this lack of cultural awareness, many police officers have found it difficult to adequately communicate with these individuals. A distinct lack of knowledge on the part of the police officer with respect to a citizen’s ethnic background will normally be met with resistance and discomfort almost immediately.

Researchers have indicated that approximately ninety percent of the messages that people send to each other are not communicated verbally, but rather by an individual’s posture, facial expressions, body gestures, eye contact, or a lack thereof (Shusta, Levine, Harris & Wong, 1995).

The large degree of cultural variation in nonverbal mannerisms can lead to many misinterpretations. For example, if a person from a particular culture were to avoid eye contact with an authority figure, this may lead the police officer to believe, based on his or her own standard of behaviour, that this individual was being uncooperative or even deceptive. In a further example, among members of some ethnic groups, words and gestures are used for effect rather than intent. In other words, exaggerated or overly dramatic gestures and manners of speech are used simply to relay feelings or to convey a message, and are not intended to be threatening. A police officer armed with this knowledge, could more effectively deal with an individual of another culture who is reacting in an unfamiliar way. By understanding that certain verbal and nonverbal nuances are not to be taken as threatening, a police officer can better diffuse a tense situation.

Communication can be awkward when there is no obvious common ground between participants. According to Shusta et al (1995), the “just treat everyone with respect advice argument falls short when one learns that there are basic differences, especially in the area of values which influence behaviour and basic communication” (p. 117). For instance, during an interview, officers cannot assume that the key motivations and values applicable to themselves are necessarily the same for all others. Police officers who realize that there are cultural differences in motivations and the manner in which family and social matters are handled, will be better equipped to deal with a cross-section of people and situations. The values of “saving face” and the preservation of personal and family honour, for example, are extremely strong and entrenched motivators for people of Asian, Latin and Middle Eastern descent. To foster a situation where someone of this background is forced to publicly relinquish personal honour would be extremely distressing to that person, perhaps leading to a serious breakdown in communication. Furthermore, some cultures express sadness and grief openly, whereas others are more subdued and silent in their emotional expressions. An open display of emotion is considered socially unacceptable in these latter groups. Without this awareness, a police officer may wrongly conclude that an unemotional person is not troubled, again based solely upon his or her own cultural norms of behaviour (Shusta et al, 1995).



Law enforcement officers need not feel that they are required to communicate differently with each and every member of an ethnic group. However, an understanding of the variations in communication styles among all citizens within the community, will aid the officer in more accurately interpreting culturally based behaviours. This combination of cultural awareness training and improved communication skills would enable police officers to become more comfortable with diverse religions, races, ethnicities and cultures that are significantly different from their own. With increased personal comfort comes the ability to establish improved rapport. Each positive interaction with citizens will promote an overall improved police-community relationship. In addition, cultural communication skills such as knowing certain words, gestures and labels which are offensive to particular groups, will allow a police officer to better control his or her use of them (Shusta et al, 1995). Responding in an appropriate way to an individual's cultural style of communication, will eventually replace the traditional trial and error methods which have led to many misunderstandings and stereotyping by both parties.

The need for improved inter-cultural communication has repeatedly arisen during lectures conducted at the Canadian Police College in Ottawa. Advanced law enforcement training such as the Polygraph Examiners Course, Major Case Management Course and Forensic Interviewing Course are examples of the seminars which require up-to-date and reliable information concerning cultural variations in verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Without sufficient information, instructors in many instances have been at a loss for correct answers and are often forced to give vague information. What is needed is a simple and comprehensive manual for police officers whose goal is to improve inter-cultural communication skills.

## **Objectives of Study:**

Based on the background information described in the introduction, the current study was first proposed and subsequently funded in June 1997. Financial support was the result of a collaboration between the Canadian Police Research Centre, the Canadian Police College and the Centre for Race Relations. The objectives and design of the study were as follows:

### **Primary Objective**

1) To establish specific verbal and nonverbal cultural “taboos” which when presented during a social interaction may unintentionally offend a member of a respective society. This may involve either a sensitive interview situation or a face to face encounter on the street. Based on Canadian Immigration Statistics (1986 to 1996), the study sought to identify these cultural taboos for the following: China; India; Philippines; Vietnam; Lebanon; Jamaica; Iran; Guyana; Pakistan and El-Salvador.

### **Secondary Objective**

2) During the interview phase of the study, suggestions concerning improved community-police relations were elicited in an open-ended fashion from those in the community, as well as representatives from selected embassies. Proposed recommendations will be noted in the Appendix section of this report.

**Project Design:**

1) The initial phase of the project involved consulting Canadian Citizen and Immigration Statistics for the past ten years (1986 to 1996) to determine the largest groups of immigrants entering Canada during this time period. Countries selected for the study were judged most likely to contain verbal and nonverbal cultural behaviours most dissimilar to those of traditional North American cultural norms. For example, although Great Britain and the United States of America were among the top ten countries with citizens immigrating to Canada, they were excluded from the study. The rationale behind this decision was that these two countries had verbal and nonverbal cultural behaviours comparable to Canadian norms and thus were of little value. With this selection parameter in mind, the designated groups according to both country of birth and country of last permanent residence<sup>1</sup> were:

- 1) China
- 2) India
- 3) Philippines
- 4) Vietnam
- 5) Lebanon
- 6) Jamaica
- 7) Iran
- 8) El Salvador
- 9) Guyana
- 10) Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> Results of both categories are nearly identical in their ranking of immigrant population entering Canada between 1986 and 1996.

2) The second phase of the study involved a comprehensive literature review, as well as a review of videos depicting verbal and nonverbal behaviour of the selected cultural groups. The search was conducted utilizing cultural awareness training videos, library abstracts, reference texts, bibliographies and computer databases (e.g., CD-ROM) .-pertaining to subjects such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, and effective communication skills. Resource material was categorized according to the verbal and nonverbal social indicators which proved to be the most distinct from traditional North American cultural norms. These norms have also been researched and a brief synopsis is included as a precursor to the study's cultural findings. The two information categories were defined as follows:

Verbal: This category contained spoken words. In addition to indicating what should not be said during interactions, this category also includes intonations such as tone of speech, silences in speech and accelerated speech.

Nonverbal: This category contained all intentional and unintentional messages that are neither written or spoken. This includes facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and gestures, clothing, personal appearance, objects or artifacts, conversational distances and physical environment.

**Progression of the Study:**

Results of Literature Review

The number of cultural taboos varied for each group. This was due to the lack or abundance of related literature on each country with regard to cultural specifics. Each group's taboos were tabulated and presented for confirmation during the validation phase. Cultural taboos designated for validation were based on:

A) the taboo was somewhat different from Canadian norms.

B) a general consensus from the majority of the literature that this was indeed a common and documented cultural taboo.

C) the likelihood that a Canadian police officer may unknowingly engage in that taboo during the performance of his/her duties. For example, in several Arab countries, placing the tips of one's own little fingers in one's ears, with the rest of the hand fanned out sideways while pointing behind the head is considered a sexual insult. However, the chance that this action would be performed by an officer on duty would be rare or nil. On the other hand, inquiring about someone's wife, daughter or mother of Arabian descent, may be considered very impolite by men belonging to that culture. This could conceivably occur during an exchange with a Canadian police officer.

D) A limit of twenty taboos was pre-established as the ceiling criteria for each cultural group.

**Results of the Interview Phase:**

3) Group Discussions:

Group interviews with representatives from each cultural group (see selected countries) were conducted between September 22 and December 5, 1997. The purpose of these discussion groups was to validate the findings obtained from the literature review.

The initial closing date of November 14 for this phase of the project was extended due to several cancellations and unreliable community contacts. This extension was agreed to by all parties involved in the financial aspects of the project and no additional costs were incurred as a result. Unfortunately, new contacts within the community needed to be sought out in order to form alternative groups. Group contact representatives were located through a variety of sources including: law enforcement liaison officers, immigration personnel, the Centre for Race Relations, community and university cultural organizations, as well as the researcher's contact with embassy officials. The size and physical makeup of each group varied according to the level of participation attained. Groups ranged in number from four to ten participants. In four cases, discussions were broken down into two groups of two individuals and were conducted on consecutive evenings. However, five meetings were held in one location and with the entire group intact.

Groups were comprised of members from various backgrounds. In only one discussion group was solely one gender represented. However, represented within this particular group was a variation in the amount of time each spent living in Canada, as well a range of age groups. In four groups, adult males and females were included, who had spent a varying amount of time living in Canada. In the remaining four groups, both genders and various age groups were represented, as well as a varying amount of time that each spent living in Canada. Although the diverse makeup of the aforementioned forums was attempted with all participating groups, it could not be arranged. This will be recorded as a limitation in the study. The remaining group could not be assembled and therefore was not applicable. This will also be noted as a distinct limitation.

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The duration of the meetings ranged from one and a half hours to nearly three hours. The time required with each group fluctuated as a result of the number of participants, amount of taboos elicited for verification, as well as the depth and breadth of the ensuing discussion.

Although many religions and numerous peoples could have been represented within the ten countries involved, to include each segment of that country's population was well beyond the scope of this study. One exception was made in the case of India. A session was held with a Sikh group in addition to those of Hindu background. Not only was the opportunity available, but it was also suggested by the researcher's contact, that the Sikh's overt presence in Canada made them a necessary part of the East Indian contingent which could not be overlooked. Interviews were conducted either at a mutually agreed upon location within the community, or at the Polygraph Training School located at the Canadian Police College in Ottawa. As stated previously, on several occasions, the researcher was required to conduct meetings on different evenings and in separate locations with members of the same cultural group at their request.

Information derived from the literature review, with the inclusion criteria pre-established, was presented to the group. They were asked to simply confirm or negate the stated cultural taboo. In the case that a general consensus by the group was not met on data presented, that particular cultural nuance could not be taken as bona fide, and thus was either excluded from the final report or was accompanied by a specific notation. In addition to the information derived from the literature search, each group was given the opportunity to suggest any other form of verbal or nonverbal cultural taboo(s) not presented by the researcher. The outcome of this query, however, offered very little information worth noting.

A somewhat pleasing portion of the group discussions involved the recommendations for improved police-community relations put forth by the participants. Though several of the ideas are currently, or have been attempted to some degree, some fresh and innovative views were expressed. This forum, allowing for community input was verbally acknowledged and appreciated by the majority of participants.

The only cultural group in which a discussion assembly could not be formed was Pakistan. Although numerous attempts were made with community contacts and organizations to convene a viable group, a seeming lack of interest in the nature of the study made this a particular disappointing aspect of the project. For validation purposes, cooperation was obtained from the Pakistan embassy and the findings based on two meetings with an official will be included. Inability to properly confirm the Pakistan information with a discussion group will be listed as a significant limitation.

#### 4) Embassy Interviews:

Interviews with representatives from almost all of the ten embassies of the selected countries were conducted within the Ottawa area. The intention of these interviews was to further validate literature findings with the help of individuals who have a good indication of that country's cultural practices or customs. When possible, meetings were held with officials from each embassy's cultural department. The meetings were conducted at the respective embassies and involved either one or two official delegate(s), lasting approximately one hour in most instances. Embassy official(s) were asked to respond to the same questions put before the community groups, for the purpose of comparisons later on. Again, any information lacking a general consensus from all cultural members will be either excluded or a notation will accompany that specific piece of information.

This discussion phase was also a gratifying experience for the researcher in that many willing participants came forward to lend support to the study. Officials expressed a very sincere enthusiasm in the nature of the report, and believed that it would benefit the community as well as police in a most pragmatic way. Not only were they able to comment on cultural matters, but they also offered some suggestions on improved police-community relations.



Embassies involved in the **study<sup>2</sup>** in alphabetical order were:

- 1) China\*
- 2) El Salvador
- 3) Guyana
- 4) India
- 5) Iran
- 6) Jamaica
- 7) Lebanon\*
- 8) Pakistan
- 9) Philippines
- 10) Vietnam\*

The researcher submitted the first interim report on September 23, 1997 indicating the results of the literature review and the progress of the discussion group-embassy arrangements. The second interim report submitted on December 8, 1997 reported the progress of the validation phase of the project. The remainder of this report provides the following: a brief synopsis of North American cultural norms; verbal and nonverbal cultural findings; recommendations posited by those that participated in the study, as well as suggestions and recommendations by the researcher; and a bibliography of selected works for future reference.

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<sup>2\*</sup> Indicates embassy not participating in the study in a formal capacity following several written and verbal requests.

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## North American Verbal and Nonverbal Norms:

Before one can appreciate another's verbal and nonverbal cultural behaviour, a realization of one's own cultural norms must be achieved. This is the first step in understanding and being sensitive toward a small portion of our diverse and rapidly changing population. This section further permits members of other cultures, notably those involved in the study, to make simple cultural comparisons. As with all cultures, there are common and identifiable traits which are exhibited by the majority of those within that culture. However, it must be stated that cultural generalizations are approximations and not absolutes (Samovar and Porter, 1991). There are many exceptions to the standard cultural "norm", especially after an individual has been assimilated into a new society.

**It must be stated that the results found in this section, as well as the entire report, must merely be taken as guidelines and not as definite or precise patterns of behaviour for every individual from that particular culture.** It must always be remembered that individuals from any country will differ on a number of dimensions including: personal life experience, specific sub-cultural and family backgrounds, educational level, religious affiliation and degree of assimilation into the existing population. As the true dynamics of any cultural group can never be fully captured as a static entity, the ideal method to either research or simply appreciate any society is to immerse oneself in that environment for an extended period of time.

The following is a brief overview of cultural behaviours which are found to be common among inhabitants of North America. The findings are based upon numerous observations and studies over a number of years. The list is somewhat limited, as a truly comprehensive summary was not the primary intention of this report. As the publication on this topic is quite voluminous, supplementary information on North American culturally based behaviour can be found by looking in the bibliography section at the conclusion of this report, or by simply visiting any university library or bookstore.

**Proxemics:** (The study of how people orient themselves to other individuals and objects)

North Americans are typically referred to as belonging to a “non-contact” culture (Burgoon, Buller and Woodall, 1996). This term suggests that there is very little physical and non-physical contact between two people during communication. This category may also include those of Asian and North European descent. Conversely, “contact” cultures prefer more physical contact, closer conversational distances and direct body orientation. This group would include those of South European, Middle East and Latin background (Leathers, 1997).

According to Knapp (1978), conversational distance will always vary depending upon: the subject matter (personal or impersonal); the setting for the interaction (known or unknown); physical characteristics (appealing or not appealing); the attitudes and emotional orientation of the participants (friendly or unfriendly); nature of the relationship; and the person’s personality type (extrovert or introvert). Although these variables will inextricably play a role during social interactions, North Americans on average will typically incorporate a two foot area of space surrounding them. It is within this space that no person is permitted to enter without the individual feeling threatened or uncomfortable. When uninvited persons violate another’s personal space approaching intimate space, the intrusion will normally invoke tension (Pritchett, 1993).

Generally, there are four distinct zones of communication: Intimate; Personal; Social and Public. These zones normally increase as intimacy decreases. At intimate distances (6 to 8 inches) you are obviously aware of the other person. It is here that two members of the same sex are usually very uneasy. Close personal distance (1.5 to 2.5 feet) allows for a certain amount of intimacy. Far personal space (2.5 to 4 feet) allows for a certain amount of privacy such as meeting a stranger on the street. Close social space (4 to 7 feet) permits a transaction of impersonal business, whereas far social space (7 to 12 feet) is more for formal social or business relationships. Personal protection and the option of not having to discuss something is allowed at this distance. Lastly, close public distance (12 to 25 feet) is reserved for informal gatherings such as a person addressing a roomful of patrons at a conference. Far public distance (over 25 feet) is mainly for a person

addressing a very informal public audience (Ashcraft & Schefflen, 1976; Fast, 1970 and Leathers, 1997).

Females tend to interact with others of either sex more closely than males do, as long as they are involved in friendly or neutral interactions (Knapp, 1978). Females also tend to respond negatively to side to side invasions by strangers, whereas men respond negatively to face to face invasions (Leathers, 1997).

Interactions are usually closer among those individuals of similar age range, except the very old or very young, where closer interactions are observed. Typically, interaction distances expand from about age six to early adolescence when adult “norms” seem to be reflected (Knapp, p. 162). Conversational distances also increase with someone perceived to be of a higher status within society (Danziger, 1976).

### **Touching and Posture:**

There is less touching found between men from North America than other cultures such as the Middle East and Latin America (Axtell, 1991 & LaFrance and Mayo, 1978). North American norms usually dictate that friends and intimates are expected to refrain from anything beyond perfunctory touching in public, where touching by strangers is seen as deviant (Leathers, 1997). Touching among females is much more common, both as touchers and as recipients of being touched. Men tend to act ambivalently toward touch, whereas women tend to act positively to it. Furthermore, the very young and elderly are more inclined to be touched than other age groups (Burgoon et al, 1996).

In regard to posture, men normally assume a more potent, dominant and less intimate posture than females. They use less direct body orientations and appear more relaxed than their female counterparts. In fact, leaning forward conveys a more positive attitude among the listeners than if the person speaking leans backward. It is also more common for people of higher status such as an employer, to take more relaxed positions such as legs placed on some object, leaning back and

arms in some upward position (Danziger, 1976).

**Eve Contact:**

When two individuals from North America are communicating, they have been socialized to look in the direction of the speaker's face, specifically the eyes. Direct eye contact is normally maintained except for periodic glances away (Burgoon et al, 1996). Prolonged eye contact between two men is typically interpreted as a challenge to a man's masculinity or an actual invitation to fight. Extended eye contact with a female by a male, however, is interpreted as having sexual connotations. If a woman looks at a man for too long, she has perhaps committed herself to a verbal approach on the part of the male (Fast, 1970). Females tend to look more than males on almost all measures of gaze frequency, duration and reciprocity. It has been found that females typically look at others more often, but also tend to avert their eyes more often than men do (Knapp, p.307 & Eakins and Eakins, 1978). Usually, if someone stares at us and we meet their stare, it is usually his or her duty to look away first. If the person does not look away, we normally become uncomfortable and tension surfaces as a result. Discomfort is felt if a gaze is longer than ten seconds in duration (Samovar, Porter and Jain, 1981).

Lack of eye contact can also indicate a wish not to communicate. By breaking eye contact a person may be conveying that they want to end the conversation. The lack of eye contact on the part of the listener is normally interpreted as disinterest or even disrespect (Harris and Moran, 1991). Lack of eye contact may also be interpreted by North Americans as either a lack of credibility, or as an attempt to conceal something. Also, sideways glances are sometimes interpreted as being part of a "distrusting" attitude (Nierenberg and Calero, 1971). Typically, North Americans attribute positive eye behaviour as sustained contact while talking to others. Negative eye behaviour on the other hand would include: looking down before responding to a question; shifty eyes; not looking at the other person during a conversation, and excessive eye blinking (Leathers, 1997).

Facial Expressions:

Although many facial expressions of emotion are universal, cultural differences do occur due to rules of display imposed by that particular society (Ekman and Friesen, 1975). For example, the Japanese communicate less intense anger if they include raised, eyelids, whereas North Americans signal more intense anger when their expressions include raised eyebrows (Burgoon et al, 1996). Likewise, when we smile at someone we expect a smile in return. If not received, this would be considered as socially inept. However, there is no cultural norm for returning a smile in Israel (Alexander and Babad, 1981).

In North American culture for instance, the simple smile with teeth unexposed is commonly seen when a person is not participating in any outgoing activity. The upper smile where the upper teeth are exposed, normally indicates a friendly greeting. The broad smile where upper and lower teeth are exposed signifies genuine laughter (Nierenberg and Calero, 1971). Examples of facial expressions resulting from a conflict situation include the eyebrows down at the inner ends producing a frown, with the lips tensed and the teeth not showing. The head and chin are thrust forward, with the eyes glaring at the other individual. During a shock or astonishment situation, the mouth and eyes are typically opened widely and the hand is sometimes brought up to the mouth. Females in North America are normally more expressive facially than men as they tend to smile more in almost all occasions. Men usually reserve smiling for times they feel genuinely happy or friendly (Danziger, 1976).

North Americans are inclined to illustrate more facial expressions in connection with certain emotions than other noted cultures (Eakins and Eakins, 1978). This may be due to a lack of socially implemented constraints on expression. It has been suggested that North Americans belong to an "individualistic" culture, where less emphasis is placed on group cohesion and value is placed on outside relationships. Basically we act and think more as individuals with much less thought given to a group. "Collective" cultures on the other hand, foster emotional displays that maintain group cohesion, cooperation and harmony. These cultures put less value on relationships

with strangers and include less tolerance of cultural variations in behaviour (Matsumoto, 1991). It is therefore postulated that collective cultures behave in ways that will minimize emotional displays. This may also be seen with respect to their verbiage. A person from a collective culture may refer to themselves as “we” or orientate themselves in reference to a family, community or region. North Americans in contrast, tend to rely on small talk such as the weather, and will usually always refer to themselves in the singular form “I”.

As a result of these cultural differences, smiles at inopportune times, lack of surprise, grief or anger, are occasionally misinterpreted. Facial expressions alone cannot be used as the only distinguishable symbols of emotions, as this method commonly leads to wrongful assumptions and conclusions.

### **Verbiage:**

In North American culture, verbal messages tend to be explicit where the words chosen convey most of the message intended. However, in some cultures originating from Asia and the Arab world, more information is contained in the actual context of the words (Anderson, 1988). People from these backgrounds are more reliant on, and tuned into, the nonverbal communication processes. Members from North American society frequently concentrate on what is actually said, not focussing so much on the nonverbal language exchanged.

To North Americans, active emotions such as anger and fear are expressed by a fast rate of speech, loud volume, high pitch and tone. Passive emotions such as sadness are communicated by a slower rate of speech, lower volume and pitch. A “high ratio of pause time to speaking time characterizes grief, while anxiety produces non-fluency or blockages in speech” (Pritchett, p.23). Prolonged silences in speech are usually perceived as uncomfortable and awkward to North Americans. We tend to be blunt during conversations, getting to the point quickly while expecting others to be just as forward (Lewis, 1996). In numerous cultures silence is actually seen as a virtue, or a sign of someone with superior status.

**Body Gestures:**

**Defensive or close body positions:**

Crossed arm and leg positions are usually observed when a person is feeling defensive. This form of body language serves as either a protective guard against an anticipated attack, or a fixed position from which the person would rather not move. The person could also be demonstrating that they have withdrawn from the conversation (Lambard and Watson, 1979 & Neierenberg and Calero, 1971).

North American males will quite often cross their legs in a “figure-four” pattern. One leg is horizontally crossed with the ankle resting on the other knee. This is performed along with the typical European method of crossing one leg over the other (Myers and Myers, 1980). It is also common for males to prop their feet up on objects such as chairs, desks, etc., with the sole of their shoes facing towards another person in the room.

Unassertive gestures include: hand wringing and lip licking; out of context smiling; hunching shoulders; covering mouth with hand; rigid body; throat clearing; evasive eye contact and pauses in speech (Leathers, 1997).

**Open body positions:**

These would include leaning backward in a chair with one’s legs stretched out with knees apart, or with the legs crossed in the figure four pattern. The hands are relaxed with the elbows away from the body, hands held outward (Knapp, 1978). This is in opposition to the closed position, where the elbows are next to the body, arms crossed or folded on one’s lap and the knees are pressed together (see defensive positions). Assertive gestures normally involve: relaxed gestures; sustained eye contact; loud voice when appropriate, and a certain degree of touching (Leathers, 1997).

**Reassurance gestures:**

Reassuring oneself can be observed when an individual clenches their hands with the thumbs



rubbing against each other. Also, hand picking, self pinching the fleshy part of the hand, or the chewing of a pen or pencil are also common reassurance gestures. Females will also tend to bring their hand up to their throat slowly or play with their necklace (Neierenberg and Calero, 1971).

Frustration gestures:

These can be demonstrated by rubbing the back of one's own neck or tightly clenching one's hands. The closed fist is normally seen as a masculine gesture which accompanies verbal language such as extreme emphasis, a declaration, determination or desperation (Nierenberg and Calero, 1971).

Deceit and Honesty gestures:

In addition to the variations in the amount and manner of eye contact associated with dishonesty ( i.e., such as being evasive, increased blinking and dilated pupils), deceit has also been observed by a covering of the mouth by one's hand and a light scratching or rubbing of the nose, ear or head during questioning. Other signs of deception include: fidgeting in a chair; clearing one's throat; tugging at one's own collar as to loosen it; locked ankles, hands or arms. A deceptive individual may also become less fluent in speech and stutter more frequently. Deceptive answers are normally less plausible, containing more fillers such as "uh" and "ya know". Deceitful individuals normally gesture inward toward their bodies, as opposed to honest individuals who gesture outward **from** their bodies (Pritchett, 1993). Honest or confident people tend to engage in more frequent eye contact with the other person, engage in open hand gestures, steeple fingers and lean back in their chairs.

Greetings:

Typically handshakes are acceptable for both males and females as a greeting during social interactions. However, most North Americans react negatively to the flaccid or "dead fish" handshake. It has been found that both men and women respond positively to a firm shake from

men, but females feel negative toward women who give firm handshakes (Neierenberg and Calero, 1971). A variation to the normal handshake involves, while shaking hands with the right hand, the person initiating the greeting grasps the arm of the intended companion with his other hand, generating a stronger and more emotional impact (Morris, 1994). Superiority can also be expressed in a handshake, by an individual taking your hand and turning it over so that his or her palm is directly on top of your own. This action demonstrates a form of physical domination.

Nodding the head downward once will occasionally replace the handshake (Sims, 1996m-p). In greeting small children, an adult may gently pat a child on the top of the head as a substitute for the handshake greeting (Morris, p. 142). The greeting “hi” is usually reserved for friends, whereas “good morning” is occasionally left for superiors or mere acquaintances. Females have also been observed to tilt their head upon meeting males, perhaps conveying an attitude of coyness or submissiveness (Key, 1975). North Americans also tend to use someone’s first name when addressing them after their initial contact (Sims, 1996m-p).

#### Farewells:

Leave-taking gestures include: looking at one’s watch; gathering one’s possessions; facing a door; placing hands on one’s own thighs for leverage in standing up, or sitting on the edge of one’s own seat (Knapp, 1978). Upon departing, a simple handshake, a nod of the head or a wave goodbye with either hand are common.

#### Beckoning:

Typically to beckon or call someone nonverbally, the palm of either hand is turned upward with the index finger curling inward several times. Another form of beckoning is performed by the head being jerked backward to summon someone to “come over”.

Pointing:

One finger (almost always the index) is used to indicate a direction or an object. This gesture is also used to accompany a very direct verbal command or statement toward another.

Height Indication:

The height of an object or person is demonstrated by the whole hand extended flat with the palm facing downward toward the floor.

Insulting gestures:

The middle finger pointing upward with all other fingers down is considered a negative gesture in North America, as well as is the *crotch scratch* ( a male reaches down outside of his pants and conspicuously scratches his genitals, thus signifying a sexual insult such as “your are scum” or “up yours” toward another). Another negative gesture is the double *elbow flap* signifying that the intended person is a coward. This is performed by raising and lowering the elbows rhythmically while making a “clucking” noise like a hen (Morris, p.49).

Subsequent negative gestures include the *fist jerk* which signifies the male masturbation movement. The loose fist is moved up and down rapidly in front of the body toward the intended person. The significance of this gesture is sarcastic in nature, signifying that the other person is telling a foolish or mundane story. *Sticking out the tongue* is associated with despisement or a teasing directed toward someone else. Within a public setting, *yawning* is a perceived indication that the person is bored with the situation, which can be considered as insulting by others present. *Spitting* is a sign of disgust and contempt. *Hissing* or *booing* are performed as a disapproval of a particular performance.

*Wrist Flap*, where the hand is flapped limply up and down in the air with the arm bent at the elbow, indicates effeminacy in a male and is normally intended as an insult. Sarcasm can be demonstrated by the *cheek crease*, where one corner of the mouth is drawn back strongly forming a crease in the cheek. This is a deliberate distorted version of the smile denoting a sarcastic

compliment (Morris, 1994). *Throwing the bull* is indicated by the arms miming the action of shovelling up a substance and throwing it over the shoulder. The intended person is seen as talking nonsense. The *temple screw*, or the symbol for being crazy is demonstrated by an individual employing his forefinger to his temple while twisting his hand as to if tightening up a loose screw. This is also performed by making a circular motion with the forefinger while it his held in the same position (Morris, 1994).

Nonverbal indicators of dislike generally include: indirect bodily orientations; short averted eye contact; unpleasant facial expressions; absence of or closed gestures; body tension and incongruent postures. Conversely, nonverbal indicators of liking include: forward leaning during conversations; direct body orientations facing the other person; mirroring (i.e., exhibiting similar or congruent postures as the other person) open body positions; head nods; moderate gestures; close proxemics; body relaxation; touching; maintaining eye contact, and smiling (Leathers, p.8 1).

Other noted gestures:

The *thumbs-up* gesture (meaning good luck or fine job) and the *ok* sign performed with the thumb and index finger, palm facing outward, are positive gestures in North America. The signal for ‘no’ is performed by either waving the forearm and the hand (palm outward) in front and across the upper body in a back and forth motion, or a simple movement of the head from side to side (Axtell, 1991). “Yes” is performed by moving the head up and down several times.

The right arm raised to shoulder height and held with the palm facing forward symbolizes the *I swear* gesture, indicating the intention of complete truthfulness. *I am not sure* gesture is observed when someone thoughtfully rubs his or her own cheek or chin, signalling that they are confused and do not understand what the other person has conveyed. The *mouth shrug*, where the corners of the mouth are pulled down briefly as far as possible, signifies “I don’t know or that I don’t understand”. This gesture usually accompanies the shrug complex which includes raised eyebrows, shoulders and

spread palms (Morris, 1994).

The *palm slap* is seen when two individuals slap their right palms together. This normally indicates that a celebration is intended. One person will normally hold up or out their palm inviting the other person to slap it (Morris, 1994).

The *temple shoot* or pointing one's forefinger toward one's own head mimics the action of shooting oneself in the temple with a handgun. This often follows a stupid action or faux pas at a social gathering where the person feels disgusted with themselves.

The *eye wink* denotes a collusion between two participants. This is performed while looking at the other person, and one eye is closed and then opened again. The action signals that a shared secret between two people known to each other has occurred. Between strangers, this gesture is commonly taken as a flirtation signal requesting some sort of intimacy.

The *finger flick* is a gesture where the thumb and second finger are pressed together and then "snapped" apart. It is commonly used to raise attention by the person performing the action.

The *forefinger rub* signalling "shame on you" is demonstrated by one forefinger rubbing up and down along the forefinger of the opposite hand.

The *forehead wipe*, where the hand wipes imaginary sweat from the forehead in a single horizontal sweep ending with a slight flicking movement of the hand, commonly signifies that the person has either made a lucky escape, that it is a hot day, or that some degree of hard work is being performed (Morris, 1994).

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*Whistling* is normally engaged in and considered acceptable if it is done as a personal musical preference. This is done occasionally when the person is bored or preoccupied with a task. Whistling is also employed to signal approval or get someone's attention rather than shouting. This action can be offensive to some people.

*Standing* when a female enters a room, demonstrates good manners, however, is quickly becoming obsolete in North American Society.

### Time perception:

The concept of time has been divided by some into two forms: *Polychronic* and *Monochronic*. Polychronic cultures tend to do many things at one time and seem to have a casual attitude toward meeting appointments and deadlines. Monochronic societies, however, concentrate on one thing at a time and follow a very strict format regarding time related events. North Americans are generally classified as a Monochronic culture. We are obsessed with time and urgency. Appointments are made for one person at a time and an intrusion on this time is taken as a violation. Waiting is considered an enormous waste of time and almost always causes anger and resentment. North American culture judges time with a clock and not by natural events, where time is broken down into precise increments. Great monetary emphasis is placed on the cyclical and hierarchical units of our calendar (Leathers, 1997 & Samovar and Porter, 1997). Punctuality is expected in nearly all instances as opposed to other cultures where time is a relative measure. In those cultures appointments are made with numerous people at the same time, only to be seen at the appointee's convenience. This relaxed view on time is typically very frustrating to most North Americans.

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## **Cultural Findings:**

The same general format of responses was sought for all of the cultural groups included in the study (e.g., greetings, family, verbiage, etc). However, these responses varied to some extent with several of the groups for the following reasons. First, many topics relevant to the study's objectives were simply not found in the literature. For example, data concerning the amount and type of eye contact with the Guyana group as a whole was virtually non-existent, thus could not be presented to the group for confirmation. Second, information derived from the literature could not be significantly agreed upon by all members of that respective culture. Hence, it was omitted from the study. Third, a small amount of information was submitted by some of the groups and embassy officials which did not exist in the literature. This particular datum was agreed upon by all within that cultural group and thought to be of benefit to police officers in a profound way. For instance, in some cultures a common practice when stopped by the police for a routine traffic stop, is to get out of your vehicle and get back to the police vehicle as quickly as possible. This practice, a demonstration of respect in some cultures, may lead to negative results for all involved if performed in Canada. As a consequence of these particular limitations or suggestions, there is a degree of variation in the quantity and consistency of the findings concerning several of the cultures. In addition to cultural norms, specific holidays are listed at the end of each group's section. These particular days are considered important to members of that specific culture and a recognition of them would demonstrate a certain degree of respect.

**It must be reiterated that the following information is to be used as a guideline for cultural comparisons only. The information is merely a set of generalizations drawn from existing literature and small group gatherings comprised of community and embassy sources.**

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**China:** Religion is predominately Buddhist, however, Taoists, Muslims and Christians are also represented.

Greetings a simple handshake by both males and females is now common in Canada. However, this handshake is generally lighter than we are generally accustomed to in North America. A double handed shake normally indicates great respect to males. Older generation females may not offer their hand to a male. Rather than a handshake, a slight bow or nod of the head may be performed. Offense should not be taken if a person does not present his or her hand in a-greeting. Very little touching is exchanged between the Chinese, so slaps on the back, friendly hugs or touching of the head are not normally permitted. Excessive gesturing with the body is also very limited and is not very familiar to the Chinese people. Proxemic or conversational distances are similar to North American standards, with perhaps a little more distance required. When visiting the home and a beverage is offered, it is best to accept it in order to demonstrate good rapport. Furthermore, removing one's shoes upon entering is considered a must. Lastly, it is polite to pass someone an object with two hands rather than just one to indicate respect.

Eye Contact - the amount of direct eye contact will vary. Traditionally, very little direct eye contact was made with authority figures and may still be quite common among elders in Canada. However, although eye contact is not as direct by North American standards, according to group sources, it is changing due to assimilation effects. New immigrants may, however, tend to demonstrate this indirect contact. It was suggested by one group member that the lower eye level gaze was perhaps due to the height difference generally found between North American and Chinese people. In any case, it should not be taken as a sign of deceit or lack of cooperation if a member of this culture does not maintain constant eye contact during a conversation. Furthermore, the winking of one eye is considered very impolite and may have serious connotations when directed toward a female of



Chinese descent.

Facial gestures - overt emotional expressiveness is uncommon among the Chinese people. Public displays of this nature are often viewed as socially unacceptable. However, smiling and laughter are sometimes engaged in to hide embarrassment or humiliation. This should not be taken as a “smart-ale&” response but a cultural trait.

Verbiage - the Chinese as with other Asian peoples, may tend to answer “yes” to many questions even though they may not actually agree with what was asked of them . Yes can mean many things, such as “yes, I understood that question” or “yes, I heard what you said”. The individual asking a question may misinterpret the answer as a definitive “yes” to his or her intended question. This response may stem from the belief in China that it is considered rude to say “no” to authority figures. It is suggested to phrase questions as not to get a simple “yes or no” answer, but rather a more informative request allowing for clearer interpretation. It is also best to avoid double negatives during the phrasing of questions. For example, the statement “didn’t you not go to work that day” may lead to confusion and an incorrect response by any individual who is unfamiliar with the English language.

The Chinese language incorporates an indirect form of communication where silences in speech are common. Impatience, loudness and assertiveness are generally not valued, whereas politeness, humility and grace are. The bluntness of the North American language is normally seen as abrasive. Loss of respect may occur if one becomes engaged in too much domineering verbiage. Furthermore, a “round table” sitting arrangement, as opposed to a long table arrangement, is preferred during conversations where everyone is equal and has the same chance for conversational input.

Insulting gestures - to call someone with the palm up and curling the index finger inward is considered very offensive. It is best to use the entire hand with the palm down while curling the fingers inward. Also, to point with the index finger will also bring about disrespect. It is better to

point with the entire hand with the palm upward. The middle finger gesture common to North American culture, is also considered as an obscene gesture to the Chinese here in Canada. Do not “snap” your fingers to attract someone’s attention as it is also considered very ill-mannered. In addition, it is preferable to sit without sprawling about or pointing the sole of your feet toward someone.

Family - in order to reduce possible confusion, it must be remembered that within the Chinese culture, the family or last name appears first in a person’s full name.

Elders are very respected among the Chinese people. The father is typically the head of the household and should be consulted first before wanting to speak to any individual within the family.

Furthermore, it is best to address the entire family after receiving permission rather than any individual alone. This particular action will demonstrate respect, allow time for family discussion, and allow the father to exhibit a certain degree of control over the situation. The family unit in China centres around a group or “collective” mentality mind set, where the family and its decisions are based primarily upon the total family’s input. Caution should be taken in statements made involving “we” and “I”. This may cause confusion as to the number of individuals referred to.

Although avoiding shame and protecting family honour are socially established concepts valued by most cultures, the concept of “saving face” has profound implications to individuals of Oriental background. To lose face is to lose all self respect. In some cultures, the sense of family honour and personal status in the eyes of others is well beyond what we as North Americans consider typical. To lose face will result in severe emotional and social distress. Where possible, it is best to avoid situations where an individual may encounter these conditions during a social interaction. For example, if a police officer were to give a gentleman a ticket in front of those that highly respect him, especially in an overly authoritative or sarcastic fashion, this would undoubtedly cause that person to lose face. The result of someone losing face may lead to further complications, such as forcing the individual to regain “face” in some other manner. Always attempt to demonstrate respect of age, title and social position.

Personal Items - items that should not be mishandled without consent from the individual are those of a religious significance. One of these items includes a protection necklace of Buddha, normally worn around the neck. Another is the statue of Buddha commonly found in most Chinese homes or businesses. These religious artifacts are sacred and permission should always be sought if their handling in any manner is required.

Holidays to Remember: National Day (October 1-2) and the Chinese New Year ( Three days in January or February according to the Lunar Calendar). Numerous festivals such as the **Lantern** (15th of first Lunar month) and the **Dragon Boat** (5th of fifth Lunar month).

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**El Salvador:** Religion is overwhelmingly Catholic.

Greetings - A firm handshake with males, and if known, a kiss on the cheek of a female are common. Otherwise, a light handshake with a female is acceptable. Proxemic distances are generally closer by North American standards but this does depend on the nature of relationship of the two parties. There is a large degree of touching (arms and shoulders) and gesturing among the people of El Salvador once relationships are established.

The term ***simpatia***, translated into any “behaviours that demonstrate pleasant and social relationships” is an important expression among the Salvadoran people. For example, if you were offered a beverage, you should accept it to indicate your willingness to participate in “*simpatia*”. Formal titles also convey great respect when incorporated into a conversation, especially where elders are concerned (Don for males and ***Dona*** for females).

Family - the entire family unit, including the extended family, is very strong among the Salvadorians. Expect a substantial amount of interference from other family members if an incident should arise concerning any family member. Family values are kept intact even after immigrating to another country, thus elders remain highly respected and utmost respect should always be directed toward them.

As in other cultures, many immediate hospitable associations are made by asking an acquaintance what their last name is and what region or community they are from. This allows a person not only to form an opinion about the other individual based upon his orientation and family, but opens up a communication line between the two. This particular associative process is a major initiator of positive rapport in some cultures. Negative remarks regarding these associations or the family should be avoided.

The celebration of festivals is a very important part of the Salvadorian culture and must be respected at all times. This would not be a place to raise issues pertaining to a police matter where an

individual may be forced to lose face.

The concept of *machismo* is very inherent among males within the Latin culture. This term is very similar to the concept of saving face and personal honour found among other cultures. This masculine self-image should not be challenged, most notably in front of family and friends where it would be met with negative consequences. If a situation arises which requires speaking to a gentleman in public, it is best to politely ask the person to step aside in a calm manner in order to speak to him. In fact, to allow the person to control the situation to a small degree would demonstrate respect and may diffuse a tense situation.

Eye Contact - the amount of direct eye contact is similar to that found among North Americans. However, according to the group, this may vary depending on: what area the individual has immigrated from, past experience with police in their own country, or the age of the individual. For example, a poor person from a rural area may lack self confidence and will tend to look down more than those of higher social status. Also, police in El Salvador are generally feared by their citizens and to look an officer in the eye directly for any length of time would be considered taboo. This attitude toward police officers may be carried over to Canada. Furthermore, younger individuals may tend to look away from an authority figure out of respect, or conversely, "stare" the other person down to demonstrate his machismo image. Agreement on this last example, however, was divided among the group members. Nevertheless, these incidents should not necessarily be construed as a sign of deceit or a lack of cooperation if they should occur.

Verbiage - the formal pronoun "*usted*" is used when someone is not known or if a person wants to demonstrate respect. It commands more authority in conversations as it is generally reserved for those of mid to upper classes. The informal "tu" is used when individuals are known and of equal status. It would demonstrate more respect if the formal pronoun was utilized.

Loud, heated discussions may appear as quarrels to outsiders, but this non-threatening dialectic

exchange is common among many cultures of Latin background. Intervening in an offensive, authoritative manner during these situations prior to learning the actual circumstances involved, would be inappropriate on the part of the police officer. Any negative reference to someone's mother, such as "**tu Madre**" (your mother) is considered very offensive and should be avoided.

Topics of conversation for good rapport include: culture, family life and sports. Bad topics may include the police, history and politics.

Insulting Gestures - The curling index finger with the palm facing upward should not be used. In order to call someone nonverbally, use the whole hand as if waving toward yourself. To indicate cowardice in El Salvador, one would hold their hand upright with their fingers tips moving together in a continuous fashion. This is considered an insult to the male "machismo" image. Other offensive gestures in El Salvador include: placing one's thumb between the index and middle finger and directing it toward someone. Also, cupping one's hand in an upright position as if clutching an object is considered an offensive gesture if directed toward someone.

To indicate the height of a person, one should not hold the extended palm downward facing the floor as would be done by someone from North America. In El Salvador this is reserved only for animals. The hand should be facing outward with the fingers pointing upright (as if indicating someone to stop) to indicate human heights.

Time perception - time is a relative concept to many individuals from El Salvador. It would not be inconsiderate if a person arrived at an appointment up to one hour late without an explanation. It should not be taken as a sign of tactlessness if this should occur. However, this is more noticeable at social functions in Canada rather than business affairs.

Holidays to Remember: Numerous religious festivals (August 1 to 5), Independence Day (September 15), Columbus Day (October 12) and the Christian Holidays.

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**Guyana:** There are six main cultures which comprise this country: East Indian, African, Chinese, Portuguese, Amerindian and English. Religion is predominately Christian, however, Hindu and Muslim are also **significant**<sup>3</sup>.

Greetings - handshakes for both males and females is common. This may, however, depend on the specific cultural background from which the individual belongs to. According to all sources, the numerous cultures in Guyana blend well together, and as a consequence, a number of distinct cultural customs and traditions are either shared among the total population or dispelled completely. "Good morning" or a form of slang is used as a proper greeting to another. Proxemic distances are similar to those of North American standards. The Guyanese people are normally very gesturing and this should be expected during interactions.

Formal titles are very well received as they demonstrate genuine respect or social standing. The terms "Auntie" or "Uncle" are incorporated quite often even though the individual to whom it may be addressed to is not related to the person. Surnames are important to use even when the person referred to is not present. Overall, proper manners are expected and respected when engaged in at all times.

Family - the family unit, including the extended family are very strong. Elders are highly respected and this should be observed when dealing with the family.

Insulting gestures - a shaking of the forefinger suggests great displeasure. This may signify an aggressive act when accompanied by a change in the individual's tone of voice.

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<sup>3</sup>The information on Guyana pertaining to the primary objective of the study was quite limited, as well as the degree of consensus among sources. This limited the amount of applicable data which could be utilized.

Sunerstition - plays a large role in the lives of many individuals from Guyana. This belief does, however, depend on each individual's personal background and should not be ridiculed in any manner.

Verbiage - the terms "Coolie " (i.e., a person of East Indian descent) and "**black**" or "nigger **man** " (i.e., a person of African descent) are two derogatory names which would be considered offensive. Generally good topics of conversation for rapport would include: sports (especially cricket) and the arts such as music, poetry, and plays.

Holidays to remember: Independence Day (May 26), Republic Day or **Mashramani** (February 23), Freedom Day (First Monday in August) and numerous festivals and religious days associated with the various cultures including: **Phagwah, Devali**, Easter, Christmas and **Eid-ul-Azha**.



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**India:** Religion is overwhelmingly Hindu, however, Sikh and Muslim have a significant presence.

**Sikh:** No caste system is present in this religion.

Greetings - Men shake hands firmly but females will never shake hands with males. Females traditionally greet with a pressing of palms together at chest level with a slight bow.

Formal titles are used to indicate great respect, most notable **Sardar** which indicates a leader of a group. Conversational distances are comparable to those of North American standards, however, this will depend on the relationship.

Family - It must be remembered that all Sikh males who have been baptized retain the surname of Singh (lion and truth tinder) and the females will retain the surname Kaur (lioness). This may cause confusion upon questioning.

The extended, as well as the nuclear family, are very strong among the Sikh people. The community also plays a very important role in their lives. As with other cultures and religions, family honour and the concept of saving face are very important to the males. Public confrontations are generally looked down upon, as the Sikh religion dictates that each individual has the right to live his or her own life in any way they see fit while not imposing on another. A person exhibiting a confrontational disposition would lose respect immediately among those in attendance.

Religion - One of the many tenets of the Sikh religion is the belief that "Truth is God and God is Truth". Sikhs consider that lying is an especially disrespectful trait and those that participate in it are looked down upon. Reincarnation is central to the religion and thus should not be ridiculed. When entering a Sikh temple, you should always remove your shoes and have your head covered.

This would most likely be a handkerchief tied to your head to indicate respect. This would not include any other form of head wear that is normally worn in North American society. The handkerchief will most likely be placed on your head by members of the temple.

The greatest respect should be given to the Sikh's Holy Book, the **Adi Granth**, which when placed within any room in the home is considered a sanctioned holy area. This book is to be always carried above the person's head if moved. Furthermore, respect should be always be given to the male's religious practices and his artifacts; referred to as the 5 K's: **Kesa** (beard and uncut hair); **Kirpan** (dagger); **Kara** (bracelet worn on the right wrist); **Kachhh** (shorts) and the **Kangha** (comb). These items are not to touched without permission and should only be removed in private by the individual wearing them. Morning and evening prayers should not be interrupted under most circumstances. The traditional colours of the Sikh turban have significant meaning: white signifying purity; black denoting a wrong has been done; saffron (yellow or gold) signifying sacrifice for a good cause, and blue which is a common colour worn. These are very important to the Sikh males and should not be belittled or removed without permission.

Rapport may be fostered by engaging in discussions about the Sikh religion so that any myths can be dispelled or curiosities satisfied. A good contact within the community is the elected community leader, as this person is not only highly respected but is well informed of community events and situations,

Gestures - Insulting gestures include the bent forearm that is directed toward another, and the middle finger symbol we are accustomed to in North America. According to the Sikh religion, touching of a youth's head is not considered taboo. Smoking and the drinking of alcoholic beverages are, however, considered prohibited. Although some Sikh's do indulge in the occasional drink, smoking is strictly forbidden and should not be engaged in when in the company of a Sikh.

Eye contact - The caste system does not exist in the Sikh religion, thus direct eye contact with authority figures is acceptable. Females may tend to look away out of shyness but there is no

standard customized taboo.

Gestures - The left hand is not considered taboo among the Sikhs and a fair amount of body language is used during social interactions. It is considered polite to point with the entire hand and not merely with the index finger. To call someone, it is preferred to use the open palm with all the fingers curling inward.

Holidays to Remember: The birthdays of Gurus Nanak and Gobind Singh which follow the lunar calendar. **Baisakhi** festival in the middle of April.

Hindu: Caste system is present in this religion.

Greetings - Handshakes are common among men but females are not to be touched unless they offer their hand first. Females will normally greet with **the namaste** (i.e., press palm together at chest level with a slight bow). Those of Hindu religion will normally let a visitor enter first into a room to demonstrate hospitality. Formal titles are very important as they demonstrate respect. “Sir or madame” are proper titles often incorporated. Conversational distances are similar to North America with a greater space given to females. Accept refreshment to establish good rapport when offered.

Family - The extended family is very important in the Hindu religion, as members may stay with the central family for lengthy periods of time. The belief in reincarnation is a major part of the religion. This should not be made light of in their presence. Elders and family honour are very important and these should be respected at all times. Upon visiting a home do not expect a man’s wife to invite you in as it is customary to wait for the husband to return home first.

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Gestures - using the left hand when gesturing is considered taboo notably with recent immigrants. Excessive gesturing is not common among the Hindu people and some may be intimidated by certain gestures. To call someone, the palm should be downward and the fingers curling inward. To point, the whole hand should be incorporated with the fingers extended. Abrupt, assertive behaviour is looked down upon, and if incorporated will lead to a loss of respect in their eyes. Do not direct the sole of the feet toward someone as it would indicate great disrespect to that individual.

Note that the cow is considered sacred among the Hindu people and discretion regarding this topic should be observed.

Holidays to Remember: Republic Day (January 26), Independence Day (August 15), Ghandi's birthday (October 2) and numerous festivals from October to March.

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**Iran:** Religion overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim. This country is not part of the Arab world.

Greetings - a firm handshake is fine between males. Frequently, men hug and kiss on the cheeks if known to each other. There is no touching of females when 'greeted unless she offers her hand first, which in most instances she will not. This should not be taken as a lack of friendliness but a cultural practice. The shaking of a young child's hand upon an initial meeting will demonstrate respect toward the parents. "*Salaam*" and to inquire about someone's health are common when greeting someone. When in a situation of being offered a refreshment by an Iranian host, it is good to accept it. This is a sign of fairness and the wish to develop good rapport.

For males, a closer conversational distance is preferred when compared to those of North American background, however, females are not to be approached too closely. The veil which the Iranian female wears in public is never to be touched. If it is required to be removed, allow the person to do it themselves or allow another female to remove it.

Eye Contact - Males generally prefer direct eye contact at all times. Females are not to be stared at for any length of time. This would be considered very inappropriate by females as well as Iranian males. Sunglasses are considered very rude and it would be best to remove them when speaking with someone. Also, winking with one eye connotes a sexual intention by that person, and this was reported to be quite noticeable and frequent here in Canada by Iranian sources. This sometimes unconscious gesture is a significant social taboo, not only in Iran, but other cultures included in the study as well.

Family - The extended family unit is very strong within this culture. The father is head of the household and by his title is expected to take care of the family in all circumstances. The concepts of saving face and family honour are very important to Iranian males. A man should never be put in a situation where the male is forced to "lose face" or dishonour the family in any way. This

shame would be reflected on the entire family and may have devastating consequences. It is best to involve a third party or a mediator during a confrontation between two individuals. This will allow a tense situation to diffuse with neither person losing face.

Gestures - The Iranian people are normally a very gesturing people with a fair amount of touching among males. This tactile expression should not necessarily be mistaken as an aggressive or threatening act during social interactions.

In addition to moving the head from side to side to indicate a “no” response, another common negative indicator is to tilt the head backward and make a clicking sound with the tongue. This should not be confused with a positive or “yes” response.

As in nearly all Islamic countries, the left hand is traditionally reserved for sanitary functions only. Its use in gesturing or the handling of objects is typically refrained from. However, the stringency of this particular custom has somewhat subsided in recent times. It would be more of a taboo among older generations.

It is also very respectful to stand when an elder person enters a room. This mannerism was commented on by all sources as being very meaningful and adhered to in Iran.

Insulting gestures - would include: moving one’s own hand over the entire face and continuing the movement with the hand down and outward, pulling away from the chin towards the other person with the palm downward. Another gesture involves the “thumbs up” gesture that we in North America associate with good luck or a job well done. This is very insulting if directed toward a person of Iranian descent, being somewhat equal in meaning to the North American “middle finger” gesture. Beckoning with the hand, palm turned upward while curling the index finger backward, is a gesture reserved for animals. It is best to use the open hand with the palm upward, as if offering the person a seat. Also, pointing the sole of your foot toward someone is considered very impolite and should be avoided. Normally, no crossing or stretching out of the legs is performed when in a sitting position. Blowing one’s nose in public is also considered a very rude and insulting

mannerism.

A sign of stupidity directed toward someone else is performed by a quick flash of the palm toward the person near the face. To signify that someone is crazy, would be performed by placing one's own hand next to their own head and twisting the hand as if unscrewing a jar. If these actions were conducted toward an Iranian individual they may be interpreted as insulting.

Religion - As with all Muslim's, the interruption of daily prayers conducted three to five times daily is considered forbidden. Furthermore, one is not to stand in between the person praying and his direction toward the Islamic holy city of Mecca. Also, one is not to stand on the prayer mat under any circumstance. Prayers typically only last five to ten minutes, thus any business could be detained until the individual has finished. Permission should always be attained before touching any religious artifact, either worn on the individual or within the home. The Holy **Koran** is never to be mishandled or even touched without washing one's hands. In many Muslim cultures, one is not to turn one's back toward this holy book even if it is located within the home. Occasionally, verses are worn around the neck in a small locket. This custom is sacred to the individual and to remove the locket or make light of it would be considered very disrespectful.

Verbiage - As with the majority of Middle East countries, language and its use is very much respected. Poets and writers are held in high esteem in most of these countries. To convey a message politely, calmly and clearly without too much assertiveness would command respect. Good topics for rapport would include: Iranian history, culture, the arts, wisdom, social affairs and cuisine. Bad topics may include the Iranian Revolution.

Police custom - In Iran it is customary to walk quickly back to a police vehicle if you have been stopped by the police for a traffic violation. This reaction is the opposite behaviour expected from police officers in Canada. This action may be seen as a threat by many police officers and should

be noted as a possible cultural practice.

Dogs are considered taboo among the Iranian people and are not kept as pets, They will most likely make an individual very uncomfortable if put in close proximity.

Holidays to Remember: Iranian New Year or Naw *Ruz* (celebrated at the end of March), Revolution Day (February 11), Islamic Republic Day (April), Khomeini's exile and death (May 4 and 5 respectively) and the holidays associated with the Islamic faith such as: *Ramadan*, *Aid-ul-Fitr*, and *Aid-ul-Adha*, which all follow the lunar calendar, thus specific dates will change from year to year.



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**Jamaica:** Religion is predominately Christian.<sup>4</sup>

Greetings - a handshake for both males and females is acceptable. Also common is “good morning sir or ma’am”. A proper greeting is most appreciated for good rapport. Furthermore, the use of titles such as Mr., Dr., or Professor is a sign of respect. Conversational distances are similar to North American standards and excessive gesturing is very apparent among the Jamaican people.

Family - the entire family unit is strong among the Jamaican people. The children are typically well disciplined and normally taught proper manners. Nicknames are a major part of Jamaican life. In addition to slang nicknames that reflect either a person’s appearance or profession, (such as “shorty” or “taxi-man”) common Christian names are often not that individual’s actual given name. This may cause some confusion and should be noted.

Insulting: gestures - pointing with the index finger is considered very inappropriate. Also, the sucking or kissing of one’s teeth, which is usually engaged in by younger Jamaicans denotes a “brush off” and is considered rude behaviour.

A Jamaican female may express an insult by placing her hands on her hips or by pointing her finger towards the other person in a direct fashion.

Verbiage - Negative comments would include referring to a Jamaican as “native” which denotes a demeaning status, Also, any reference to one’s mother in any fashion is especially offensive. Several sources reported the terms “you people” or “I have a friend who is . . .” to be very demeaning.

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<sup>4</sup>Lack of consensus among this group limited the amount of data which could be utilized in the study.

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Eve Contact - Although not apparent among the Jamaican group included within this study, it was reported by several cultural contacts, that individuals stemming from other parts of the Carribean, may not maintain direct eye contact during conversations. This should not necessarily be taken as a sign of deceit or not wishing to cooperate.

Time perception - it has been traditionally purported that Jamaicans view time as relative and are very relaxed when it comes to meeting appointments. This was reported to be somewhat true in rural areas in Jamaica, however, within urban areas it does not play a significant role.

Superstition - still plays a role among some of the Jamaican people depending on age and rural background. This belief should be not insulted in any way. Religious leaders are usually respected within the community and can be good contacts in order to obtain information regarding community matters.

Holidays to remember: Independence Day (August 6), National Heroes Day (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in October), Emancipation Day (August 1), and the numerous Christian Holidays,

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**Lebanon:** Religion is predominately Shiite and Sunni Muslim, with the Christian faith also represented. This country is part of the Arab world.

Greetings - normally a firm handshake with males is desired. Females are not to be touched unless they offer their hand first. According to one source, it is a general rule that if a female is wearing a veil she probably will not offer her hand, if she is not wearing one then she probably will offer her hand. As an alternative greeting, females may press their right palm against their upper chest and bow slightly. Also, a hug and kiss on both cheeks for males is common among friends.

If not known to the family, it is considered impolite to inquire about a man's wife or mother of Muslim background. Normally, this practice is not significant in regard to those of Christian faith. It is good to discuss health and other small matters initially before attending to the business at hand. Shaking the hands of children will show respect toward their parents until a Muslim female reaches a certain age.

Conversational distances involving men are generally closer than those found in North America, with larger distances given to females. A large degree of gesturing and proxemic distances are associated with this culture, and as such, should not necessarily be considered offensive.

When visiting someone's home, it is a good idea to accept a refreshment if offered to signal the willingness to develop good rapport.

Eve Contact - direct eye contact is preferred among the males, whereas Muslim females will not maintain eye contact with males for any length of time.

Gestures - it is considered very impolite and disrespectful to point the sole of one's foot toward another. To call someone with the palm pointed upward and the index finger curling inward is considered unacceptable. It is better to call someone with the palm facing downward and all the fingers curling inward. Other insulting gestures include the tongue stuck out, signifying "you do

not care” or the middle finger pointing straight out with the palm facing downward.

Lastly, as with all Muslim cultures, the left hand is normally left for toiletry functions and the right hand is used mostly for social purposes

Family - The nuclear as well as the extended family are very strong. Elders are very well respected and the father is almost always the head of the household, especially concerning Muslim families. Saving face and family honour are entrenched concepts in the Lebanese lifestyle. Males will avoid losing face at almost all costs, including engaging in so called halftruths. Expect a great deal of family intervention in almost all matters involving the family. Particularly when a female is involved, it is the duty of the males of the family to protect her. A female most likely will not permit you to enter the house without the presence of her husband. This should not necessarily be taken as a lack of cooperation but a cultural practice. During a family discussion, if at all possible, the entire family should be addressed rather than the individual. Although the father may maintain the title role of family head, the mother has a great deal of influence on family matters. It is best to work with both parents when the family is concerned. Also, a 3rd party is sometimes brought into heated discussions to intervene on behalf of each person so that each party does not have to lose face in the other’s eyes.

In Lebanon, good rapport begins with a conversation inquiring first about someone’s village, family name, region, etc. Associations connected with a name, and where someone originates from are important in building initial friendly relations. In addition, strong loyalty among friends is very important and this should not be challenged.

Religion - common among many people in Lebanon are both religious and non-religious artifacts which have profound significance. Without permission, these items should not be handled. For example, one group member wore a simple packet covered in cloth with a leather strap holding it

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§ Although all agreed on the avoidance of losing face at all costs, the existence of the term “half-truths” (i.e., adjusting the truth somewhat to achieve the higher goal of saving face) was divided among group members.

around his neck. This to him has deep personal value offering comfort and protection. To remove it would be an extremely negative experience. Religion plays a prominent role in daily life. As with any individual of Islamic faith, do not interrupt daily prayers normally conducted five times a day. These last only between 5 and 10 minutes and are necessary to perform.

Verbiage - The tone of voice and the use of words are very important in the Arabic language. There are a lot of personalized arguments, appeals and persuasion incorporated into discussions. This language is normally loud and forceful for dramatic effect. This may be carried over into the English language, and as a result should not be taken as a precursor to a threatening situation. Cursing should never be performed, particularly in the presence of females.

Topics that should be avoided in a conversation is the country of Israel or bad family practices. Good topics may include Lebanon itself and various cultural topics, such as the cuisine of the country, history and family life.

Holidays to Remember: *Ramadan* (40 days of fasting which is based on the lunar calendar); *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Adha*; Muhammad's birth and death; and Independence Day (November 22). Friday is normally a holiday in Lebanon.

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Pakistan: Religion is overwhelmingly Islam<sup>6</sup>.

Greetings - firm handshake among males is normal. As in other Islamic countries, the female is not to be touched unless she offers her hand first. "**Assalaam Alaikum** " (may peace be upon you) is a common verbal greeting. Conversational distances are similar to North America standards. It is considered a sign of good rapport to accept a refreshment when offered. If a person were to visit a mosque, it is proper to remove their shoes to demonstrate respect.

Eve Contact - direct eye contact is preferred with males (even to the extent of staring) but this does not apply to females. It is not acceptable to stare at a female for an extended time period.

Family - the extended family is as important as the nuclear family. The father is normally head of the household. In regard to males, the concept of "saving face" is important in this culture as well. To force an individual to lose face in public would be met with negative responses from that individual.

The Pakistan society is built upon a caste system hierarchy. It was reported that the order of importance in an individual's life were as follows: religion; caste; family; province; city.

Religion - Daily prayers should not be interrupted (5 times daily) and great respect should always be directed toward the Holy **Koran** found either in the home or on an individual's person. If the **Koran** were to be removed, hands should be first washed, followed by the book being kissed and placed against the forehead of the person removing it.

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<sup>6</sup>No discussion group could be formulated for this country.

Gestures - with other Muslim cultures, the left hand is somewhat taboo in handling objects, as is showing the sole of your foot to the other person. Also, the closed fist is considered obscene when thrust upward with the entire arm. To call someone, the palm should be pointed downward with fingers curling inward.

Good topics of conversation may include history, culture, Islam and politics. Cursing in the presence of females is considered in very bad taste.

Holidays to Remember: Pakistan Day (March 23), Independence Day (August 14), Birth of nation's founder *Quaid e Azam* (December 25) and his death (September 1). Also, *Ramadan* and the two festivals: *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Azha* which are based on the lunar calendar are celebrated.

**Philippines:** Religion is predominately Catholic.

Greetings - Handshakes for both male and females are acceptable. A female will probably offer her hand first if she desires to shake hands. Conversational distances are comparable to North American standards with very little touching between individuals. Formal titles are important to use to indicate respect.

Family - the basic unit of society in the Philippines is the family which is carried over when a family moves away from their home. Great respect is given to the elders and to one's parents. As reported by one source, it is not uncommon for a Filipino to swear in the name of their parents to lend credibility to their claims or themselves.

The concepts of *SIR* (smooth interpersonal relationships) and *Pukikisama* (getting along with the group) are very important to the Filipino people. It is felt that one has to belong to a group, as this promotes an easy going attitude among the community. As a result, individual outspokenness and frankness are often looked down upon, whereas politeness is valued. Anyone demonstrating these qualities would be devalued in the eyes of a Filipino.

The term *hiya* (personal shame) plays a significant role in one's social gatherings. A third party is often used to avoid the issue of loss of face. This social situation has negative results on males especially. One of the greatest insults is "*Walang -hiya*" (without shame). This is comparable to a curse word in North America.

*Utang na liib* or a debt of gratitude, is another term which is both a positive or negative force in the Filipino value system. This concept is never forgotten by a Filipino who has received a favour from someone.



Gestures - It is considered impolite to call someone with the upturned hand. This is associated with a master calling his servant. The proper method is a downward motion of the whole hand. Laughter is commonly used to hide embarrassment and should not be taken as a “smart-ale&” response. Another gesture demonstrated by the Filipino people is the act of scratching one’s head as if to say that they either missed something, or something slipped one’s mind after a mistake is made.

Hands on one’s hip denotes either anger toward someone or is a sign of superiority. This may cause disrespect or may be seen as a challenge by another.

Raising of the eyebrows can mean “yes” or “hello”. Pointing is also achieved by pursing the lips in the direction of desired area.

The male “machismo” attitude is very prevalent among Filipino men. “Saving face” or protecting family honour are very important, especially when females or peers are present. To force an individual to lose face in public would be an extremely negative situation.

Eve Contact - Youth may not look authority figures in the eye out of respect to the elders. According to one source, this may even reflect the past history of the Filipino people where it was disrespectful to look his master in the eye. This cultural trait should be taken into consideration and not looked upon as a lack of cooperation. Prolonged eye contact may even be taken as provocation in many situations.

Verbiage - Boisterous conduct and behaviour as well as harsh language are normally deemed impolite. One source quoted: “Although the tongue is boneless it lashes worse than the rod”. It is very important to remain calm and polite while engaged in a conversation with a Filipino. “No” is not said too often in order to avoid the instigation of a possible confrontation. A shrug of the shoulders can also signify a “no”.

The term “oi ” is very impolite and is used to quickly beckon someone or even tease them. The tone of one’s voice is also important in a confrontational situation. A tone that is interpreted as threatening will probably be met with an angry reaction by the other party.

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**Holidays to Remember:** Bataan Day (April 9), Independence Day (June 12), National Heroes Day, Bonifacio Day (November 30), All Saints Day (November 1) and the numerous Christian holidays.

**Vietnam:** Religion is predominately Buddhist. Also represented is Christianity, Taoist and Cao Dai.

Greetings - Handshakes in Canada are now common between males only. The handshakes are normally of a lighter grip than those found in North America. Females will usually offer their hand first if they desire to shake hands, however, most will not. As an alternative, a slight bow or the pressing of two palms together at chest level is common.

Conversational distances are approximately two to three feet with no touching of the females.

The head of a child should never be touched as this body part is considered very sacred.

If one is offered a refreshment, it would demonstrate good rapport to accept it.

Formal titles are very important as they reflect status to people in this culture. Great respect is conveyed when titles are used upon meeting and during conversations.

Facial Expressions - Facial expressiveness is minimal among the Vietnamese. A smile or slight laughter is used to cover up humiliation or embarrassment. As with the Chinese, this trait should not be taken as a "smart aleck" response to an inquiry.

Verbiage - Humility and indirectness are highly valued. Assertiveness, bluntness and loudness are considered rude and not conducive to positive rapport. The Vietnamese people tend to speak in an indirect fashion, thus it is not only important to interpret what is actually said during conversations, but what is not said as well. For example, if an explicit negative response is not uttered to a particular question, this does not necessarily entail that the individual agrees with you. Attention to an individual's possible reluctance in responding negatively toward authority figures, body gestures and potential language limitations should be observed, Politeness at all times should be adhered to as the Vietnamese people always try to make others feel comfortable, and confrontations are avoided at all costs. The tone of voice is most important as

calmness is the behavioural norm. Raising your voice or demonstrating anger will only lower your status to people of their culture. As with other oriental populations, “no” is rarely used in a conversation. The response of “yes” may proceed a series of questions in order to avoid possible contradictions, and as a result may be misunderstood. “Yes” may refer to simply an understanding of the question or an agreement with something the other person said. Refrain formusing double negative questions (see China verbiage), and attempt to ask questions which will not require a simple “yes-no” answer.

Bad topics for conversation may include war and politics. Good topics would include children and the Vietnamese culture.

Family - The family or surname comes first in a persons full name and this may cause some confusion. For example, Mr. Tran Ank Kiet would expect to be called Kiet or Mr. Kiet, not Mr. Tran. Females usually retain their maiden name when married and do not change their family name to that of their husbands. The family unit is very extended, with a certain degree of distrust of outsiders common. Time should be allowed for the family to discuss issues together as they too adhere to a collective mentality mind set. Also, elders are very respected and they should be acknowledged first when addressing a group of Vietnamese people. There is also a strong belief in ancestors and reincarnation. Care should be taken as not to insult this belief.

The concepts of saving face and maintaining family honour are very important to this culture. Caution should be taken as not to force an individual into a situation where they have to relinquish either of these. In fact, it would be dishonourable if a person had to deal with the police in public or if a person was to lose their temper in public. In a title role, the male is the head of the family, but the mother has a great deal of influence in certain matters. Title positions are very significant within the family, with the eldest son assuming the role of head of the family in the father’s absence.

Gestures - there is very little gesturing during conversations as verbal communication is preferred. In fact, excessive gesturing is seen as immature or even unnatural. This is best kept to a minimum.

Pointing the feet towards someone is considered profane as they are regarded as the dirtiest part of the body.

Slapping on the back, pointing with the index finger, beckoning with the palm upward while curling the finger inward, and crossing the index finger with the middle ringer are all considered rude gestures. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for two males to walk with arms around each other or even hand in hand. This common cultural practice should not be mistaken as a sign of homosexuality.

Eve Contact - Females will tend to look away when men look at them directly in the eye. Youth will not look authority figures in the eye, as age and authority are highly respected and taught within the family structure. The younger person will tend to focus on the throat or neck level of an authority figure.

Police Custom - in Vietnam, a custom during a routine traffic stop is to get out the automobile and walk swiftly back to the police officer's car out of respect. This custom should be taken note of as it may appear as threatening by Canadian police officers.

Religious artifacts should also be treated with respect and not touched unless permission is given by the owner.

Holidays to Remember: (May vary due to the communist doctrine). New Year (Tet Nguyen Dan) which is based on the lunar calendar in late January or early February, several other lunar holidays or *Tet* celebrations, Ho Chi Minh's death (September 2).

## **Discussion:**

The present study was successful in achieving several key objectives. First, various cultural taboos were identified which Canadian police officers should be aware of when dealing with members of particular ethnic groups. Although some of the findings were to be expected, others dismissed certain cultural stereotypes that have been established over time. Furthermore, the study brought together several of these taboos within one text for easy reference.

Secondly, twenty-five recommendations were elicited from the participating cultural representatives. It is hoped that a number of these suggestions will be considered for implementation as an attempt to bolster the communication process between the police and the community.

Thirdly, the researcher felt that a positive rapport was established with all of the groups and embassy officials included in the study. The nature of the study was apparently well received by all involved. By taking an active role in promoting better police/community relations, community members and embassy officials felt satisfied that they had contributed to a worthwhile project. The recognition of cultural differences could potentially lead to more patience and tolerance on behalf of both parties.

Lastly, a small bibliography on cited works was compiled on each cultural group included in the study. Although this list is far from complete, it is a starting point for those interested in reading more on each respective group for a better understanding of their background and way of life.

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## **Limitations of Study:**

Several pitfalls were encountered in completing the study. First, a discussion group could not be formed for Pakistan, and as a result, the small amount of information listed in the report could not be properly validated or expanded upon. Furthermore, no recommendations could be offered based on a number of sources from this group.

Secondly, the size and distribution of each of the discussion groups were not as adequate as the researcher would have desired. This was due to numerous cancellations and refusals to participate during and immediately following the group formation period. The great difficulty in trying to gather numerous people together in one location, finding suitable replacements upon cancellations, combined with the overall time permitted for the project posed an array of problems. However, the information obtained from the project is still believed to be of value despite the drawbacks that were encountered.

Thirdly, not all of the ten embassies in the study participated. This was somewhat disappointing, however, their wish not to cooperate was upheld and respected by the researcher.

Fourthly, the lack of literature pertaining to the verbal and nonverbal behaviour of several of the groups involved in the study was very surprising. Although it was initially assumed that this data could be promptly located, albeit in obscure sources from numerous disciplines, the literature revealed a substantial deficit of relevant information, limiting the content of the literature review.

Lastly, the degree of consensus on various cultural taboos varied from group to group. Several groups unanimously agreed upon the information, whereas others could not reach a general agreement on numerous points. Based on the selection criteria for inclusion set forth at the beginning of the study, these discrepancies significantly limited the data that could be incorporated into the final report.

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**Findings of Interest:**

Two particular findings of interest were elicited from the discussion groups. A theme of general apprehension to cooperate with a police related study emerged on the part of several members. This noticeable reluctance bordered on feelings of distrust toward several police agencies. Possible explanations for this finding relate to the social background of certain individuals and any negative experiences that may have occurred involving either police here in Canada, or in their country of origin. Another possibility for this attitude may have been the often dubious portrayal of the police in the media, influencing the image upheld by several cultural groups. The duty of the police officer according to some in the study included: “one of persistent violent interactions, kicking in doors of private citizens, singling out minority groups, uncaring, political pawns of government summoned only to remove someone for arrest”. In reality, the police role involves many different functions such as: acting as a general information centre concerning numerous topics within a city; productive community projects; establishing youth programs; charity work; crime prevention strategists; mediators and counsellors; problem solvers and so on. This alternative image of the police officer should be explained to new citizens entering Canada, and stereotypical images should be discouraged.

A second finding of interest was the assimilation effect present among some group members, and conversely, the lack of assimilation on the part of other members who chose to maintain their traditional beliefs and customs long after immigrating to this country. Some individuals adapted very quickly to North American life and wished to abandon their traditional way of life altogether. Cultural differences to them were non-existent as they now belong to the Canadian mainstream. Others, including both older representatives and young adults, maintained their distinctive cultural lifestyle and wished to continue doing so. The cultural nuances which this study sought to identify were thought to be acceptable guidelines for police departments. Preserving one’s customs, as well as verbal and nonverbal behaviour, seemed paramount to these unassimilated individuals living in



Canada. The existence of these two extremes supports the need for cultural training for police officers. It cannot be assumed that complete assimilation is accepted by every new immigrant over time. There is a necessity for a certain amount of awareness and sensitivity on behalf of major cultural groups present in Canada.

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**Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The majority of the information derived from the literature review, relevant to the primary objective, compared largely with information gathered from each of the groups. This consensus confirmed a number of cultural taboos. A number of recommendations put forth by participating representatives are listed<sup>7</sup>. If at all feasible, those that have not been attempted should be considered for implementation. The project was somewhat limited by several noted obstacles, but still proved to be a worthwhile enterprise based on the amount of cooperation elicited. This report is intended for the police community and the various groups involved to make general cultural comparisons.

**Researcher's Recommendations:**

- 1) Police must be authentic in their dealings with individuals of different backgrounds and should not try to imitate a person's cultural mannerisms. Rather, a certain amount of cultural awareness of ethnic groups even on an elementary level will go a long way.
  
- 2) Read up on the different cultural groups which comprise your jurisdiction. This will allow for a better understanding of their country and of them. However, there is no substitution for actually being in contact with individuals from a different culture, as this is the best method to completely understand their cultural dynamics. Ask questions pertaining to religious beliefs, customs, festivals and family life to gain a better understanding of those in the community. Don't be afraid to explain

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix for cultural group recommendations.

the many service roles that a police agency offers and that they do not exist merely to incarcerate people. This will lead to improved trust and rapport.

3) Take note of the religious beliefs of cultural groups. Although different groups will exhibit certain verbal and nonverbal behaviours based on what part of the world they originate from, religious practices will dictate a large proportion of that social behaviour. For instance, the Islamic adherence to daily prayers, fasting and utmost respect to the Holy **Koran** will apply to all those individuals who follow that faith.

4) Remember that in many cultures a female in an authoritative position, such as a police officer, is unheard of. Males from these cultures may appear uncomfortable or even resistant to a Canadian female police officer issuing them direct orders. Police departments should be aware that this apprehension may exist, specifically among new immigrants initially entering the country.

5) Always treat people as you want to be treated. Although the study exposed several cultural differences, the basic theme which ran throughout all the meetings was that we are basically the same in expecting politeness, a certain amount of patience and personal respect. These qualities transcend all cultural boundaries.

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## **Future Studies:**

Based on the present study, the following suggestions should be considered:

- 1) A larger sample size should be used to ensure more substantiated results in any replicated ventures. This would also allow for more innovative suggestions for improved rapport. If at all possible, surveys should be conducted in that particular country to reduce any possible assimilation effects.
- 2) Interviews with law enforcement liaison officers or Canadian embassy representatives working in those countries, who may be able to offer first hand knowledge of cultural specifics not available in the published literature. Suggestions submitted by these representatives could be validated through similar means undertaken in this study.
- 3) If possible, the ability to live among the population is by all means the optimal method to learn about any culture.
- 4) Conduct a follow up at a later date to establish if any of the group recommendations were adhered to, and if they had any significant effect on overall improved relations. If positive effects are confirmed, these objectives can be implemented in other areas.
- 5) Elicit recommendations from police officers themselves on improved relations. The sometimes negative aspect of their work, and its effect on their community outlook, was not evaluated in this project. Suggestions arising from their perspective may be quite different as well as enlightening.

## Appendix

### **Cultural Group Recommendations:**

The following recommendations on improving police-community relations were put forth by the participating discussion groups and embassy officials. The recommendations will simply be listed and not categorised according to which particular group had offered the suggestion. Nearly every cultural group had some input worth noting, the most practical of which are outlined below. Although some of the ideas have been, or are currently being attempted, it is hoped that the remaining few will be considered by the appropriate agencies and personnel for possible initiation.

- 1) Continued minority recruitment into police agencies to decrease an “us vs. them” attitude commonly found among many groups.
  
- 2) A community outreach program run by police on a continuous basis rather than after a minority group “incident” occurs. The groups felt that frequently, after the initial incident subsided in the media, the problems which may have caused the negative occurrence are forgotten by the police.
  
- 3) Community volunteers of various ethnic groups should be utilized by the police, not only to help translate in certain situations, but also to relay police concerns to the public more effectively.
  
- 4) Have police representatives attend various cultural activities within the community to help officers understand the lifestyles of certain cultures. This should be done on an informal basis to demonstrate that the police are interested in improved relations and not on assigned duty. Pro-active approaches should be a partnership not a work related necessity.

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- 5) Police departments should demonstrate the wish to establish good rapport by sending community organizations cards on religious holidays and festivals as a recognition that they are aware of that particular group's beliefs and what time of year is important to them.
- 6) The police should officially recognize community representatives and report to them on matters concerning their specific culture so that preventive measures can be taken in troubled situations. This should be done on a continuous basis as well.
- 7) There should be feedback to the community on cultural awareness training programs in order for them to highlight any changes that should be implemented or additional suggestions brought forth.
- 8) Information should be provided to all new citizens on the functions and duties of all police agencies in that province. This should include dispelling some of the negative misconceptions that some of the cultures have toward police forces. The exact nature and role of a Canadian police officer and the helpful services they provide should be explained.
- 9) Certain laws that do not exist in other cultures, such as domestic disputes, should be made available to community members in their own language. Perhaps these can be posted on a bulletin board on a regular basis to inform those in the community who may be unaware of the consequences of such laws in Canada. Any further police matters could also be posted here in order to reach the community.
- 10) Increased cultural awareness training in police organizations to remove myths and stereotypes that many police officers have concerning certain cultural groups. This would include bringing into the classroom a cultural representative to explain his or her culture, and to answer any questions that the officers may have. This forum would also allow police officers to discuss their expectations of the community in return.

11) If a problem in the community was an ongoing issue, notification should perhaps be made to the embassy who may be able to provide suggestions as to its resolution.

12) Scheduled community meetings between the police and community members should be conducted to allow venting of social issues, as well as a collective discussion on resolving community crime problems.

13) Have police representatives develop a “hands-on” approach within the community. Several group members commented that there are “too many committees and organizations that function under the guise of improved police/community relations, who in actuality are not doing anything constructive that will actually work”. The police should get out and listen to those in the community on real issues.

14) Have police officers get out of their vehicles more often and interact with the community in a positive way. Keep a two way line of communication open among law abiding citizens to maintain rapport.

15) If a police officer works regularly in a particular cultural setting, perhaps he/she could read up on that culture to become more informed of that specific lifestyle. The background of an individual from a certain acculturation may dictate his/her possible behaviour in certain situations such as: an obvious but unsubstantiated fear of police, or a reluctance to speak with the police within a public setting. Both may be related to an exposure to a totalitarian police force.

16) Have police representatives visit schools at all levels on a regular basis to inform children of the nature of police work and that they are not the enemy.

- 17) Set up community centres involving the police, especially involving sports. Many cultures accept sports as a universal language of cooperation and sincerity.
  
- 18) Basic knowledge of certain languages, or even common key words or phrases among ethnic people in the area where the police officer works, would demonstrate cultural acceptance.
  
- 19) Perhaps taking a youth that has broken the law to a community leader or representative first before rushing him or her off to jail, could function as an early intervention to curb negative lifestyle choices rather than placing them into the justice system right away.
  
- 20) Have police officers clearly explain their actions if forced to call upon a household concerning a police matter. Many immigrants unaccustomed to Canadian laws or even lifestyles will not fully understand why they are causing a problem.
  
- 21) Include simple communication skills training for police officers before they begin their job. Many officers are too assertive and confrontational, not knowing how to talk and listen to people first. With a little respect, an open mind and patience, more will be achieved. Recruit people with a little more education and people skills with less emphasis on size and strength.
  
- 22) Establish an exchange program with other police departments from around the world. Living among a particular culture is the best way to learn of the inherent customs of that population. Canadian police could inform potential immigrants of the police role in Canada, while officers from other countries could inform police in Canada of the exact police role they adhere to. This would allow for comparisons and understanding.
  
- 23) Community substations established where trust could be built within the community.



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24) Racially motivated crime must be identified and documented. Police should receive specialized training in this area to be able to recognize and appropriately deal with this particular offense.

25) Establish an independent citizen review on complaints brought against the police. This would ensure fairness and impartiality as seen by the community.

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§\* Several information sources where used for various cultures.

\* Videos used in the study will be listed at the end of each cultural section.

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