

Taming the Black Lion: Lessons in Crisis Leadership from an Asian perspective

(Alternate Title: *The Distant Uncle, The Watermelon, And The Pao*)

ver 7

GENIUM LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM – CRISIS LEADERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Dr. Majeed Khader, Ph.D.

Director, Home Team Behavioural Sciences Centre

Chief Psychologist, Ministry of Home Affairs

Associate Prof (Adj) Nanyang Technological University

Disclaimer: The information contained in this presentation do not represent the official views of the Ministry of Home Affairs. They reflect the personal opinion of this presenter.

Home Team Academy - 2011



2

Our background

The Home Team
Behavioural
Sciences
Center



Crisis Leadership Research Team at the Home Team Behavioural Sciences Center

- Eunice Tan – Senior Assistant Dir
- Ms Birentha Dhevi
- Dr Sheryl Chua
- Ms Janice Quek
- Ms Charmaine Lee

My experience

- My training
- Research in crisis leadership and personality
- Various major crises in Singapore (Little India Riot, Asian Tsunami, Crash of SQ006, MI 185, Mumbai blasts, Surabaya incident... and others)
- Leading efforts in crisis leadership training

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a black lion's face. The lion's fur is dark and textured, with its eyes glowing a bright, golden-yellow color. The text "Why the Black Lion?" is centered over the lower half of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Why the Black Lion?

Our research experience



Crisis Leaders in Government and MNCs



Large numbers of ground responses from subordinates and employees



Deep learning of our own database of >40 major cases – direct interviews



International research collaboration and experts

WHAT WE THINK ARE THE FACETS OF CRISIS LEADERSHIP

‘PROTECT’ MODEL

P PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

R ECOGNITION OF SITUATION CUES

O PERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

T EAM MANAGEMENT

E FFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

C RISIS COMMUNICATIONS

T ASK MANAGEMENT

Cultural Considerations in Crisis Leadership

My main points

- We have a model of crisis leadership – PROTECT – preparedness for crises, especially Black Lions, Black Swans
- Culture, Local context and Crisis go together (all have an affective component)
- Much of our understanding of ‘human sciences’ is often WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Developed Countries). We need more non-WEIRD understanding (i.e. culturally informed).
- More work needed to understand how cultural sensitivity enhances effectiveness in crisis leadership



CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

CROSS CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Cultural Intelligence

by [P. Christopher Earley](#) and [Elaine Mosakowski](#)

FROM THE OCTOBER 2004 ISSUE



Summary



Save



Share



Comment

Text Size



Print

\$8.95 Buy Copies

You see them at international airports like Heathrow: posters advertising the global bank HSBC that show a grasshopper and the message “USA–Pest. China–Pet. Northern Thailand–Appetizer.”

Taxonomists pinned down the scientific definition of the family Acrididae more than two centuries ago. But culture is so powerful it can

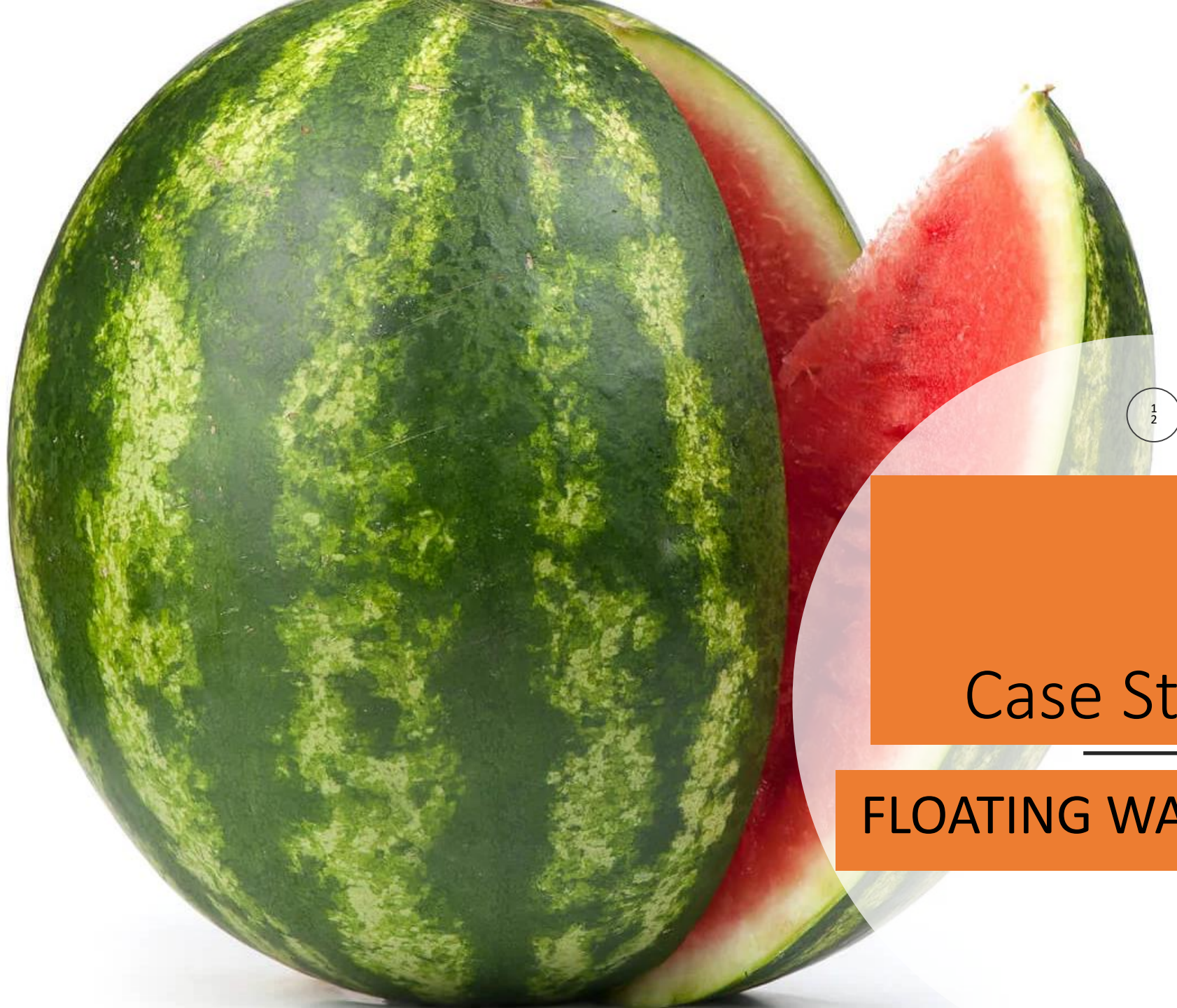
Handbook of Cultural Intelligence
Theory, Measurement, and Applications



Editors Soon Ang and Linn Van Dyne

Cultural intelligence: an outsider's seemingly natural ability to interpret someone's unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures the way that person's compatriots would.

EARLY & MOSAKOWSTY, HBR, OCT 2004



Case Study 1

FLOATING WATERMELON



1
3

Case Study 2

DISTANT UNCLE

Case study 3

PAU AND COFFEE

Key Learnings

- Culture matters in times of crisis.
- How ?
 - Case 1 (Watermelon): Respect for someone's belief systems aids healing and grieving.
 - Case 2: (Uncle): Cultures may carry informal unsaid hierarchies which must be respected for success.
 - Case 3 (Pao and Kopi): Traditional beliefs help co-workers cope and make sense of loss.
- ***What if you ignore cultural rapport?*** – a secondary crisis (e.g. loss of reputation and credibility, loss of trust, loss rapport, social media, race related tensions)

Other Cultural Concepts

Context

(Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai & Lucca, 1988; Kashima et al., 1995)



Individualist, independent, autonomous, agentic, and separate
Personal goals prioritised over the goals of collectives



Collectivist, interdependent, communal, relational
Personal goals are subordinate to the collective goals



Implications: Crisis Leaders in collectivistic cultures may need to appreciate the larger system and context (e.g., who to speak to get things done in a culturally appropriate manner, hierarchies)



CULTURAL DIFFERENCES :

PEACH (Americans) - friendly initially but may not open up a lot

COCONUTS (Asians, Germans, French) - slow to warm up/appear closed but later on may share alot

(Erin Meyer, The culture map)

Stakeholder

(Buckley, Clegg & Tan,
2006; Chen & Chen, 2004)



Guanxi – personal relations

Guanxi ties are highly personal and particularistic (dyadic) rather than impersonal or universalistic



Trust before work.



Implications: Build the relationships ties before the crisis. Building the informal A-team.

Face

(Buckley, Clegg & Tan, 2006; Chen & Chen, 2004)

Saving and maintaining 'face'.

To avoid losing face, do not confront or criticise other people openly and employ an indirect communication style. Losing face has negative consequences on a person's family and other social groups to which the person belongs as well as on individual reputation, credibility and authority.

Implications: People may not say much in meetings, open discussions, presentations. Prefer private conversations. E.g., letting someone own up or surrender, rather than openly arrest someone (at least in some cases). Private family matters are not openly aired in public.

Motivating Resilience, Understanding Coping

(Less, 2001; Guss & Pangan, 2004)

Asian notions of coping are often like
'going with the ebbs and flows of life'

Acceptance as a way of coping, kind of
positive reframing.

To the non-Asian observer – it may look
fatalistic. It appears like you are not
fighting your destiny.

Philippines

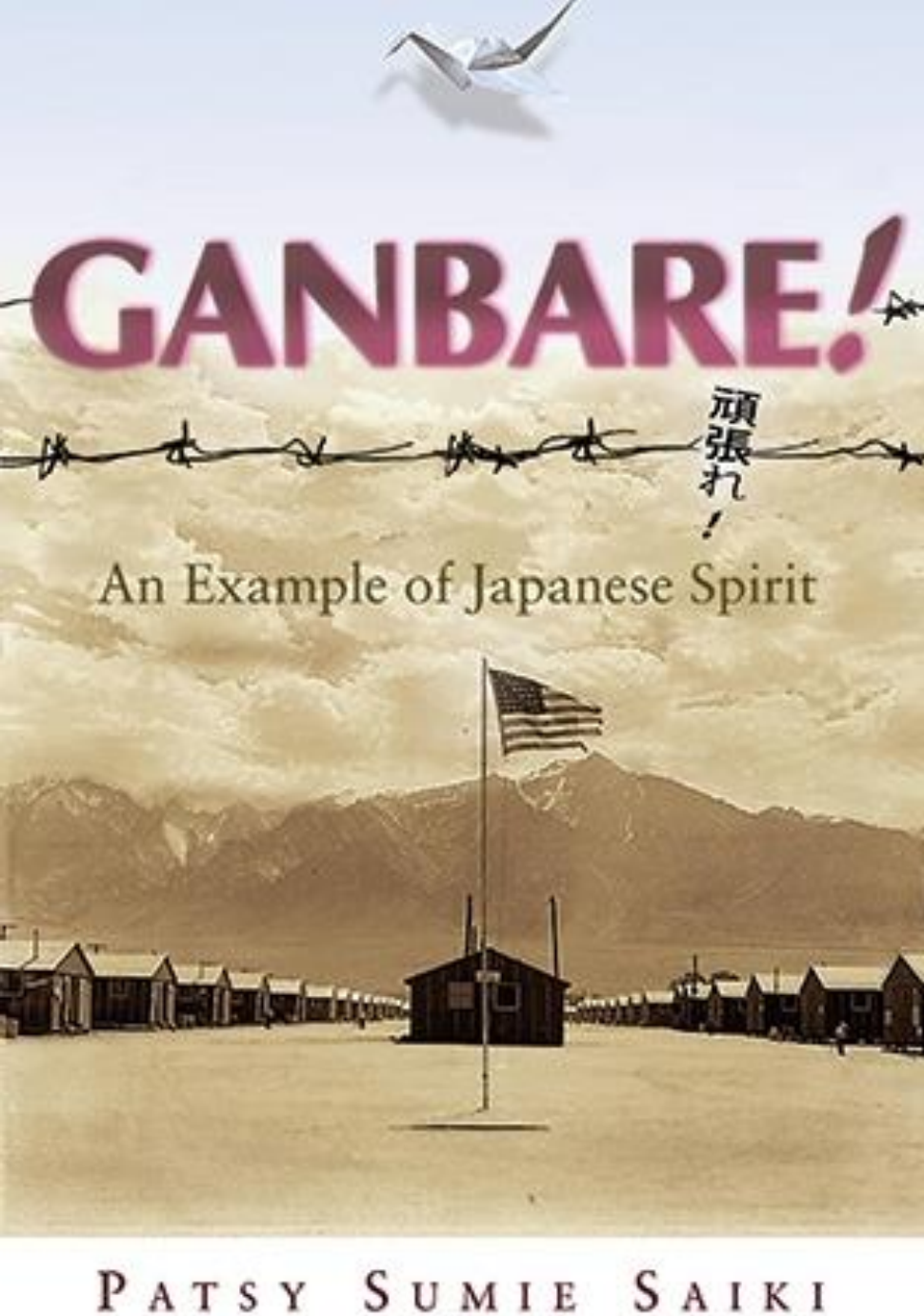
- *Bahala Na* - Acceptance of a given situation, to trust in God, put one's trust in God.
- *Pagkaya* – “ I can do it” coping mechanism that implies courage and a will to survive despite the odds.

Bahala na.

Trust the process
of life. All challenges
have a purpose.

To refine your soul
like fire refines gold.

Finding spiritual gems. BahalaNaMeditations.com

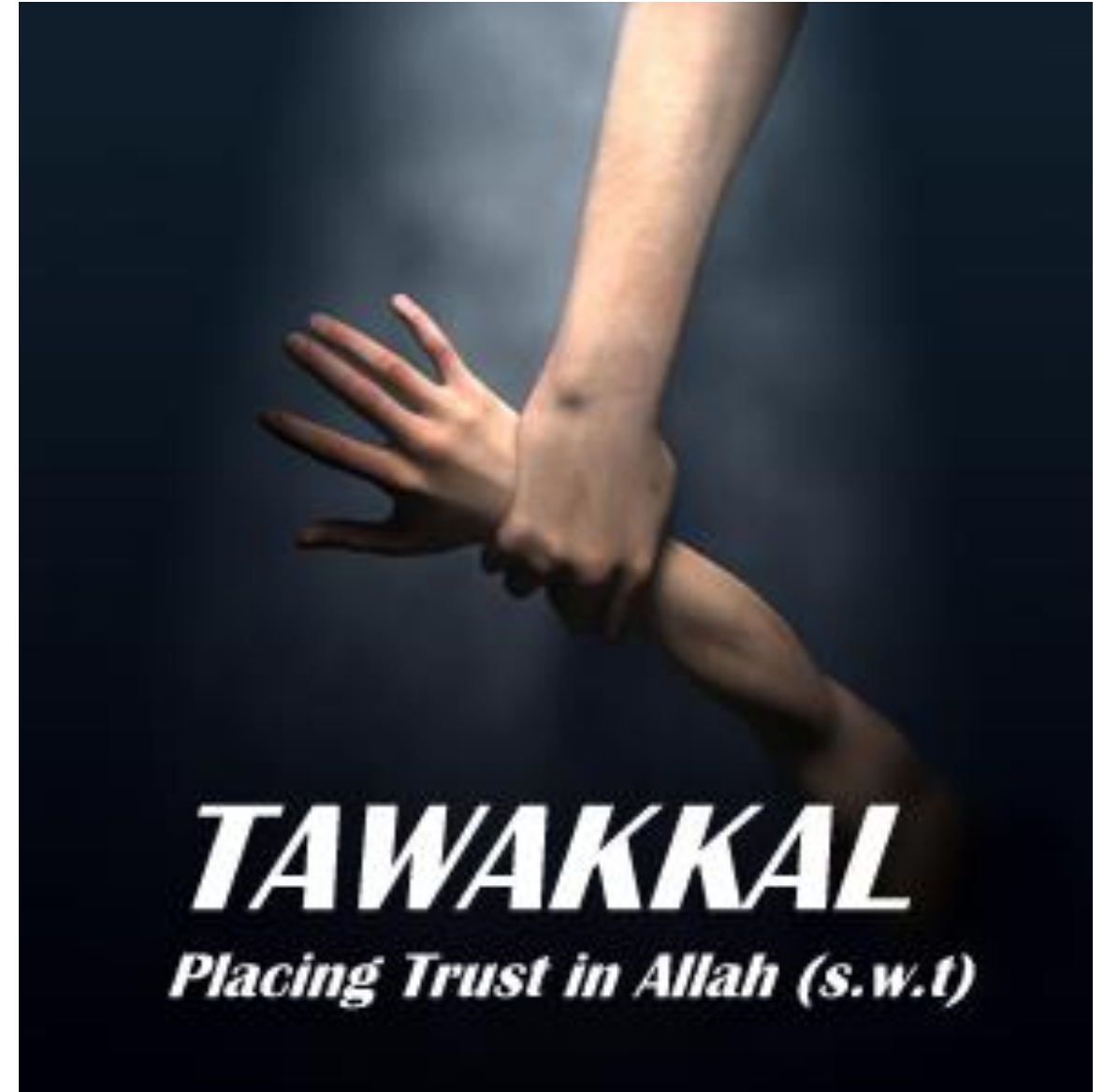


Japan

- *Gaman* – enduring deprivation and making sacrifices. Patience (rooted in Buddhism).
 - Kanji character of 我 is I or me; 慢 is slow literally
- *Ganbare* – trying one's best no matter the difficulty of the situation
- *Shoganai* – it can't be helped

MALAYS, MUSLIMS

Concept of *Tawakkul* - the Islamic concept of reliance on God or "trusting in God's plan"



Other examples

- Japanese victims after earthquake



- Bakso seller resumed business after Jakarta blasts



Fatalistic coping or Asian
coping (acceptance)?



Symbolic crisis communications

Main ideas



Culture is important in Crisis Leadership - when working in Asia and in multicultural Singapore.



Culture and Context (local) matters in Crisis and Crisis Management.

So much more work needed in this complex area.

Competing values (e.g. Kiasu – fear of losing) E.g. How much is someone influenced by their cultures? Or perhaps MNCs Americanise us?



Cultural sensitivity aids in personal effectiveness, rapport building, better cooperation, better healing, and better sense-making during and after a crisis.



This lady is serving American burgers. But she will advice you (like a caring grandma) would in not wasting your money

Thank you

Khader_Majeed@MHA.gov.sg