Research Context

There is no shortage of theory and research on leadership and culture. Both topics have been discussed and studied for over 2,000 years. However, in the 20th century there was a great increase in the contributions to the body of knowledge from psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, philosophy, management, business, and more. Leadership and culture are by their nature broad topics with an infinite number of potentials for research. Using the metaphor of a Quibla compass, I this thesis will suggest that etic (universal) (Pike, 1967) patterns exist in the knowledge base that point toward Cross-Cultural Leadership Intelligence (XLQ) dimensions that are effective globally.

Smith (2001) discusses the work of Schon (1987) who was one of the most influential theorists on reflective learning. Smith quotes Schon as saying (Pg. 2): “reflection entails diagnosis, testing, and belief in personal causation. Diagnosis is the ability to frame or make sense of a problem through use of professional knowledge, past experience, the uniqueness of the setting and people involved, and expectations held by others.”

After more than 5 years of practical experience, I decided to reflect upon the lessons learned in my career, to explore the literature, and to attempt to test my experience and ideas for accomplishing my thesis in Leadership. My experience pointed toward threads of commonality in cross-cultural leadership practice, and I wanted to pursue them to a natural conclusion through the published research. The scarcity of academic consideration in the profession forced me to turn my focus to other disciplines like sociology, psychology, anthropology, business, philosophy, etc. In these disciplines, I found a great richness of thought and research, but generally conducted within a specific discipline, and often very narrowly focused. The challenge thus became to consider the aspects of the literature that could be applied to the profession of Security Services where there is a constant requirement for effective Human Resource Management.

My thirst for finding an effective leadership style motivated me to search for a cross-cultural leadership model, or Quibla compass, that could be utilized for Leadership effectiveness, for I found that many were using grass roots or ad hoc type of approach on domestic as well as international ventures. As a result, this research was undertaken to search for a compass for leadership dimensions than could be utilized in different cultures (social and corporate) for projects with multi-cultural teams (virtual and co-located).
Moslems pray facing Mecca. To do this, they must know the direction of Mecca, which they call the Qibla.

In a global economy, leadership skills are critically important. Lean business models that manage change and knowledge effectively, and efficiently are essential today. Firms need individuals that are qualified to lead, and follow, and to embrace change effectively and gracefully. As firms move from regional to transglobal enterprise models, leadership must provide the bridge between cultural diversity and repeatable business processes in a very competitive economic environment. With the pace of business, the ability of a leader to manage change effectively is a critical issue in the international environment.

As competitive pressure and the knowledge economy accelerate, firms must become leaner. As firms trim their workforce, it is more critical that the core people retained are multi-faceted, capable of doing many different tasks, creative and innovative, have the ability to work with multiple cultures in a virtual or co-located environment, and have the ability to lead successfully. The workforce today is becoming younger, with few mentors and coaches remaining, and they have little time to devote to such activities. One of the key aspects of Knowledge Management and the formation of communities of practice (COP’s) (see (Lave and Wenger, 1991); (Drucker, 1988); (Hildreth, Kimble and Wright, 2000); (Brown and Estee, 1995)) is that a firm must find time for people to interact if they are to share more than explicit information.

The speed of business today and the continual connectedness (BlackBerry’s, Treo’s, cell phones, wireless, etc.) reduces the time people have to reflect, consider, and think. This means that there is less time for communication, and more room for misunderstanding. Most scholars agree that leadership skills can be learned, and certainly cultural intelligence (CQ) can be acquired through study. The issue is, are people given the time, mentors or coaches, and the experience they need before they have to react.

Thesis Map

Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of the thesis, and maps the process undertaken in completing the work. It is founded on a combination of practical experience, the JJTU coursework, While I had an outline of what experience showed to be critical dimensions for
XLQ, the hypothesis evolved from this rich research material. I chose a Delphi Panel testing technique to test the hypothesis, and both the hypothesis itself and the testing are described in the following two sections.

After the testing was completed, the results were considered in the perspective of my practical experience to provide a litmus test or sense making check to correlate the findings back to real-world experience.

In the international business world, what I think of as a Formula-1 racetrack, it is obvious to me that a model is desperately needed so that professional Project Managers can acquire the skills that they need to lead cross-cultural teams successfully in a dynamic environment of rapid change. This thesis is an attempt to merge experience with published research in the creation and testing of such a model. The model, like the Quibla compass, is intended to be a directional indicator for Cross-Cultural Leadership Intelligence (XLQ).
Figure 1 - Thesis Map