

ADAPTING NORTH AMERICAN SELLING METHODS TO CROSS-CULTURAL
TECHNOLOGY SALES ENGAGEMENTS IN THE BORDERLESS
GLOBAL ECONOMY

by

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Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

May 2022

Abstract

Successful selling relies heavily upon effective communication, mutual understanding, and other complex interpersonal dynamics. Accordingly, the highly unique qualities distinguishing North American culture from other global regions can create unique challenges for North American salespeople attempting to sell to non-US buyers from different cultural backgrounds, especially when competing against non-US salespeople. This study examined these challenges through a phenomenological framework to identify pattern cultural interactions and their consequences upon selling outcomes from the described cross-cultural sales experiences of twelve highly tenured North American technology salespeople who participated in this research effort. The observed phenomena were analyzed through a qualitative coding process to identify participant selling methods as well as relevant cultural disparities between themselves and their foreign prospects which may have conflicted with such methods to produce selling difficulties or sub-optimal outcomes. Analyses of participant interviews and qualitative questionnaire responses yielded observed patterns of selling behaviors involving, in order of prevalence, Communicating, Connecting, Consulting, Quarterbacking, Serving, Solving, Structuring, Teaching, and Understanding. Furthermore, consequential cultural interactions were most frequently identified across buyer-seller disparities involving Direct vs. Indirect communication, Assertiveness, Power Distance, and Universalism, while other moderate interactions were identified involving Specific vs. Diffuse work-life balance, Sequential vs. Synchronous views of time, and Collectivism. These identified cultural interactions were evaluated alongside the prevalent selling behaviors practiced by participants to determine relevant insights and potential implications for professional practice. From such implications, a recommended framework is proposed for adapting North American selling methods to benefit non-US buyers from foreign cultural contexts.

Key words: global selling, cross-cultural sales, culturally adaptive selling, foreign customers, dimensions of culture, GLOBE project, Trompenaars, Hofstede, Challenger Sale, expatriate sales

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Jim Rohn, whose words continue to inspire and motivate countless people to be their very best selves and to sell with purpose.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to those in my life who have supported me throughout this multi-year research effort. Foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Christopher Bellamy, for the many phone calls, constant encouragement, and countless hours reading, commenting, and advising upon my dissertation content from inception to defense: your kindness, intelligence, and prayerful leadership have directly enabled my success, and I consider myself exceptionally fortunate to have been given the pleasure of working with you in this effort. I would also like to thank Dr. Jonathan Wilson for the many iterations of review and feedback provided throughout the writing process: thank you for your warmth and invaluable insight.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my mom and dad, Jim and Lynnette McKinley, for giving me sales books as a child and instilling in me a deep love for the field of professional selling: you both have always exemplified the very best of what it means to be a salesperson by prioritizing personal development, being true experts in your respective fields, and earnestly seeking the welfare of your customers by serving them with Christlike love.

Finally, I would like to thank my brother, Daniel, my sister-in-law, Rebekah, and my wife Carolina. For your constant love and support over these many years working towards this goal, I cannot thank you enough.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Economic forces of globalization are continually connecting North American firms into business dealings with foreign organizations from diverse cultural backgrounds (Cleveland et al., 2016); however, academics have not yet adequately examined the effects of cultural interactions between buyers and sellers of different national origin, and North American business practitioners have struggled to develop successful manners for adapting selling practices to foreign cultures (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018).

The research of Pornpitakpan (1999; 2003) and Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer (2000) suggests that interactions of different cultural backgrounds negatively affect the business success of buyers and sellers when engaged in cross-cultural dealings with one another, while other research demonstrates how emerging practices for the cultural adaptation of salespeople are positively affecting the business success of buyers and sellers throughout such dealings (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015; Weck & Ivanova, 2013).

In a general sense, these adaptation practices primarily involve the promotion of cultural intelligence through which salespeople are encouraged to understand the cultural differences between themselves and their buyers in the hopes of developing empathic relational equity or preventing potential misunderstandings throughout negotiations (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018; Weck & Ivanova, 2013).

Despite the literature demonstrating the negative effects of cultural interactions upon international sales engagements and the emerging success of cultural adaptation practices in remediating such effects, the current body of literature regarding international buyer-seller relationships does not specifically address the inhibitory potential of cultural interactions

between North American, enterprise technology salespeople and foreign buyers, nor does it propose specific frameworks for culturally adapting North American selling practices to foreign environments beyond the general promotion of cultural intelligence.

Resulting from the complex, abstract, and multifaceted nature of professional selling and international culture, few research efforts have been able to clearly isolate and quantify the specific cultural antecedents of failed international sales engagements, though research suggests that unaddressed cultural interactions constitute the leading cause for the dismal 40–55% failure rate observed across US firms' expatriate assignments (Johnson et al., 2006).

While these failure rates apply across all expatriated business disciplines, the critical importance of interpersonal communication inherent in professional selling activities causes these to be even more sensitive to cultural interactions than other business disciplines (Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015), suggesting that the rate of failure resulting from unaddressed cultural interactions is even higher for expatriate sales assignments (Johnson et al., 2006).

Providing an example of such interactions, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) describe the failed efforts of a North American, enterprise technology sales team engaged with an Argentinian customer. Though the Americans made a “well-thought-out presentation” demonstrating “superior product and lower price,” they were ultimately out-competed by a Swedish team that effectively adapted their selling approach to the local culture and chose to spend five days simply building rapport with the Argentinian buyers, talking about “everything except the product” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

This example demonstrates the subliminal impacts of involving just one cultural dimension (Specificity vs. Diffusion); however, multitudes of additional underlying dimensions have been shown to impact foreign sales engagements in similarly significant and unpredictable

manners if not strategically addressed throughout the selling process (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

While all regions possess unique cultural compositions, North Americans come from a uniquely distinct, unconventional, and dimensionally polarized culture compared to most other people groups, producing substantially different perspectives and selling practices in North America than those in other business environments (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). These dramatic cultural differences produce complex underlying interactions which often inhibit North American salespeople from successfully adapting their selling methods to foreign contexts (Pornpitakpan, 1999; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Thus, cultural differences between buyers and sellers involving personal values, thought processes, and communication styles often produce sub-optimal business outcomes during cross-cultural sales engagements (Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2000; Mintu-Wimsatt, 2002), and many researchers have demonstrated the importance of salespeople adapting their selling methods to the unique cultures of their foreign customers (Pornpitakpan, 2003; Pornpitakpan, 1999; Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2000).

For North American salespeople in the enterprise-technology industry, extremely distinct cultural perspectives—combined with minimal or incomplete frameworks for culturally-adaptive selling—often lead to sub-optimal foreign selling outcomes, limiting the competitiveness of North American salespeople abroad, slowing the international expansion of North American businesses, and reducing the global permeability of domestically-produced technological innovations (Dunning, 2013; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed was the widespread failure of enterprise salespeople to culturally adapt their selling methodologies during international business engagements with foreign customers. Elements of national culture substantially yet often inexplicably affect the communication and negotiation styles of both buyers and sellers (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), with some studies suggesting that more than 55% of foreign assignments may end in failure due to unaddressed cultural interactions (Dunning, 2013; Johnson et al., 2006). Current approaches for international selling involve tremendous complexity and ambiguity, as salespeople continuously encounter phenomena involving the interactions of diverse and impactful cultural dynamics throughout highly relational and abstract selling processes (Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015). The specific problem to be addressed was the inability of enterprise-technology salespeople from the highly distinct cultural background of North America to maintain competitive viability in the globalizing technology marketplace by recognizing the underlying effects of cultural differences across their foreign target markets and employing culturally adaptive measures for engaging with foreign customers during the selling process.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of inhibited, international enterprise-technology sales engagements resulting from the failure of North American salespeople to recognize cultural differences across their global target markets and culturally adapt their selling methods to benefit their foreign customers.

Through an evaluation of the described phenomena experienced by multiple research participants, this study aims to add to the body of literature addressing international selling and culture by exploring the most influential and potentially addressable interactions of national

culture which are encountered by North American salespeople throughout international business engagements.

In application, this study aimed to provide practical guidance to business practitioners for culturally adapting selling methodologies commonly used by North American, enterprise technology sales professionals within international contexts. Focused on the cultural adaptation of North American sales practices to foreign environments, this study intended to examine and understand North American cultural influences upon commonly used selling methodologies and uncover prescriptive methods for adapting such methodologies to a variety of cultures.

Accordingly, this study did not aim to produce in-depth methods for adapting North American sales methodologies to a single location by focused exploration of specific, foreign cultural contexts; rather, this study aimed to develop a practical framework for adapting such methodologies to multiple foreign contexts through in-depth examination of North American culture and its relative differences from the cultural norms most prevalent across the global, enterprise technology industry.

Research Questions

This qualitative study explored the inhibitory effects of cultural interactions between North American salespeople and foreign buyers during international, enterprise technology sales engagements. By focusing the research on the identification of specific cultural interactions that most negatively affect these sales engagements, then transitioning focus to the potential frameworks for counteracting these effects through the adaptation of selling methodologies, the following qualitative research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the most harmful and predominant interactions of national culture observed throughout inexplicably failed, enterprise technology sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign customers?

RQ1a. Which North American selling methodologies are most-commonly associated with such failed international selling engagements?

RQ1b. Which underlying dimensions of North American culture are evidenced through the application of these identified selling methodologies?

RQ2. How can selling methodologies be adapted to address these cultural interactions and improve the success of international sales engagements?

RQ2a. How can predominant North American selling strategies, styles, and tactics be selectively conjoined or modified to produce culturally adaptive selling frameworks?

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study involved a flexible research design and phenomenological method which enabled the observation and interpretation of phenomena encountered across the lived experiences of North American salespeople attempting to engage with buyers from different national cultures.

Discussion of Flexible Research Design

Due to the highly abstract natures of sales processes and dimensions of national culture (Hofstede, 2001; Pass et al., 2004), a flexible research design with phenomenological methods was chosen for this study. Derived from pluralistic or relativistic ontological views of reality, which assert that truth is complex, multifaceted, and defined by the unique perspectives of different observers, flexible (qualitative) research generally involves constructivist research

paradigms through which knowledge is gathered from the collective observations and experiences of different individuals (Willis, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Accordingly, flexible research is focused on qualitative information and is pursued through inductive and subjectivist epistemologies involving the aggregation and interpretation of different viewpoints to derive knowledge (Schwandt, 2014). Under constructivist paradigms, the core goal of flexible research involves the generation of new theory through inductive reasoning by identifying themes or patterns across qualitative data and “constructing” theoretical conclusions which appreciate the complexity of diverse perspectives (Stake, 2010). Such studies are accomplished by addressing open-ended research questions through the collection and analysis of abstract information from sources such as individual testimony, literature review, physical artifacts, or the observation of situations and phenomena (Stake, 2010).

As with fixed (quantitative) research designs, researchers engaged in flexible research begin with a research problem and develop research questions, but such questions are open-ended and qualitative in nature and are not designed to be addressed through the testing of hypotheses (Willis, 2007; Stake, 2010). These questions are crafted to guide the researcher throughout inductive research processes, whereby abstract information is gathered, analyzed for thematic trends, and interpreted to develop theoretical conclusions through the primary qualitative frameworks including narrative, ethnographic, phenomenological, case study, and grounded theory methodologies (Stake, 2010).

Though each methodological framework involves the firsthand or secondhand collection of abstract data such as interviews, artifacts, written text, and experiential observations, each framework has unique purposes to address specific types of research problems or scenarios (Creswell, 2016).

Narrative research is ideal for telling a story regarding one or multiple individuals, ethnographic research is ideal for explaining the culturally driven behavior or perspectives of a group, phenomenological research is ideal for examining unique phenomena experienced by individuals, and case study research is ideal for exploring specific cases composed of both individual behavior and external observations (Creswell, 2016).

In application to business scenarios, the work of Reinecke et al. (2016) describes how qualitative research methods such as narrative design may be used for business problems involving organizational culture and business ethics due to the great attention which such approaches provide to the different perspectives of multiple individuals, while the work of Barratt et al. (2011) describes how case study methodologies can be used to effectively evaluate managerial behavior and inductively determine best practices.

Accordingly, though flexible research designs may be adapted in some cases to examine financial or other quantitative business problems (Ekanem, 2007), they are ideal for business scenarios involving largely abstract information such as human behavior, individual perspectives, or interpretations of phenomena (Barratt et al., 2011; Reinecke et al., 2016). Such information is often encountered through business disciplines involving organizational culture, human resources, management and leadership, business ethics, and corporate social responsibility, suggesting that flexible research is ideal for conducting value-added, applied business research in contexts involving largely abstract information (Barratt et al., 2011; Reinecke et al., 2016).

In these situations, flexible designs have an advantage over fixed designs because they provide inductive methodologies for observing patterns and developing theory from complex, non-quantifiable information; additionally, they have an advantage over mixed method designs

in these situations because they focus the researcher's attention on the complexity of the situation itself rather than distracting them with the additional goals of quantifying abstract data for deductive measures (Creswell, 2016).

Business practitioners seeking to conduct value-added, applied business research in these types of business situations may ask qualitative research questions to inductively study problems from multiple perspectives and thereby acquire unique knowledge through which to address abstract business challenges (Barratt et al., 2011; Creswell, 2016; Reinecke et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the ideal approach for this study involving the complex and abstract influences of professional selling practices and dimensions of national culture is a flexible design which enables the multifaceted observation and thematic interpretation of such interactions.

Discussion of Phenomenological Research Method

While several different flexible research frameworks could be employed to fulfill the purpose of this study, a phenomenological framework has been selected to directly address the many unexplained yet repeated occurrences exposing the existence of the research problem.

Across the enterprise technology industry, interactions between buyers and sellers of different national origins produce multitudes of abstract influences, complex situations, and often inexplicable business results (Javalgi et al., 2011; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

While it is often extremely difficult to attribute direct causes to both the positive and negative outcomes of these interactions, unexplained patterns regularly observed in these situations suggest that underlying cultural factors may be responsible.

Appropriately, these phenomena must be explored through targeted research efforts aimed at identifying thematic trends across multiple firsthand observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once such patterns are recognized and codified, they may potentially be interpreted to

produce more clear definitions of the phenomenological scenarios and, consequently, more direct attributions for their antecedents. If these antecedents prove to suggest either positive or negative influences from specific underlying cultural interactions, they may yield valuable insights for developing culturally adaptive selling frameworks or prescriptive behaviors during cross-cultural sales engagements.

For this study, a phenomenological framework was selected instead of a narrative approach to focus research on thematic trends (identified across interviews and questionnaires) involving cultural phenomena and their effects on the selling process. Such an approach was modeled after the work of Cope (2011) who demonstrates through a study involving new venture failures and organizational learning how phenomenological design may be used to draw out a thorough understanding of significant, abstract business results experienced by different individuals.

The work of Rehme et al. (2013) explains that the global, enterprise technology sales environment has continued to increase in both scale and complexity from the internationalization of buyers and sellers and expanding product requirements, creating the need for participation from a multitude of parties throughout global sales engagements including customer account managers, inside sales personnel, pre-sales engineers, purchasing decision makers, end users, procurement agents, resellers, distributors, and many others (Rehme et al., 2013).

This complexity, combined with the inherent challenges of gathering information from such a multitude of participant types relevant to the “big-picture” of a sales engagement (Rehme et al., 2013), suggests that a case study research framework may be far too deep in scope and narrow in focus to develop insights related specifically to cultural interactions influencing the

behavior of buyers and sellers who engage with one another throughout many different scenarios.

At the same time, ethnographic frameworks are inadequate for this study since the problem involves interactions of people from different cultural groups, and the isolated behaviors of these individual groups were already well-researched by multiple, exhaustive, and well-respected research efforts (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Finally, Javalgi et al. (2011) explain that the great diversity of contextual settings for international sales engagements prevents much domestic sales theory from being relevant or testable in different international settings, despite the significant need for the development of international sales research spurred by continued globalization.

Accordingly, a grounded theory framework may not be viable for this study due to the lack of contextually-relevant theoretical assertions involving cultural interactions between North American salespeople and foreign buyers throughout enterprise technology sales engagements (Javalgi et al., 2011).

Discussion of Triangulation

To ensure the validity and reliability of this study's findings, multiple triangulation approaches were strategically employed throughout the field research design. Triangulation was achieved via equivocal cognitive priming (Denzin, 2017; Glasgow, 2005; Lundh & Czyzykow-Czarnocka, 2001; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Noble & Heale, 2019), by voluntary participation efforts (Décieux et al., 2015), and by using multiple methods while collecting from heterogenous data sources (Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Joshi et al., 2015; Morgan, 1993).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

For the primary field research component of this study, interviews were conducted with North American salespeople to examine phenomena related to cultural interactions encountered while selling to foreign buyers. According to Creswell (1998), five to 25 participants are necessary to achieve saturation throughout phenomenological research designs, and this study aimed to conduct between 12–25 interviews to fall within the upper range of these recommendations.

Participants were selected based on accessibility to me through a pragmatic approach as described by Marshall (1996), and once at least 12 interviews had been conducted and the emergence of new themes was no longer identified, I judged that saturation had been achieved and discontinued further interviews (Creswell, 1998; Marshall, 1996).

Supplemental data sources including qualitative questionnaires, organizational sales trends, cultural measurements, and other artifacts were also used solely to improve contextual understanding of participant experiences, aligning with the work of Creswell and Poth (2018), who recommend the use of multiple supplemental data sources to help guide the identification and interpretation of thematic patterns across phenomenological research efforts. The careful application of a supplemental questionnaire helped to produce enhanced contextual understanding of participants' backgrounds, perspectives, personal sales approaches, cultural intelligence, and other useful insights (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Though some data sources may be quantitative in nature—especially numeric measurements of cultural factors, organizational sales metrics, and Likert-style questions on participant questionnaires—all data was interpreted in a strictly qualitative fashion. In other words, neither hypotheses were proposed, nor statistical analyses conducted with the fixed data;

rather, these fixed data sets were reviewed holistically and flexibly to help identify relevant patterns across participant interviews while also providing a greater contextual depth to the phenomenological situations (Keller & Loewenstein, 2011).

While the interview component of this study focused on a sample of about 12–25 participants, stratification errors from the limited availability or accessibility of potential participants (i.e., salespeople from certain technology industries in which I did not have relational connections, currently expatriated salespeople, very busy salespeople with limited time for study participation, etc.) could possibly have prevented important themes from emerging or cause other themes to be disproportionately revealed throughout the interview process (Marshall, 1996).

The gathering of supplemental data from additional participants who might be unable to fully participate in the interviews helped to produce more accurate representations of the target population by providing a more accessible and less time-consuming medium for study participation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Thus, to achieve full participant stratification, some individuals who were unable to participate in the field interviews were asked only to complete the questionnaire and potentially to provide data or artifacts which would help understand the studied phenomena. Gathered from a full-stratified sample of the target population, thematic patterns identified across these supplemental sources produced valuable interpretive insights when compared to those identified across the primary participant interviews (Keller & Loewenstein, 2011).

Thus, this qualitative, phenomenological study involved first-person interviews intended to examine and reveal thematic patterns across the lived experiences of North American salespeople selling to buyers of different national cultures. Supplemental data sources included

cultural measurements, business information, participant artifacts, and questionnaires. These were used to produce a thorough and deeply contextual consideration of the studied phenomena (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Keller & Loewenstein, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

Establishing the theoretical foundations of this study and providing a framework for addressing research questions, this conceptual framework outlines three key concepts involving the phenomena of inexplicably failed North American sales engagements abroad, along with their definitions and interactions.

Building upon these concepts and their sub-concepts, this framework helped reveal three key emergent themes from the literature which substantiated two theories for interpreting the outcomes of this study. Finally, aligning with the applied nature of the study, this framework provided a means for translating such theoretical outcomes into practical application.

The three key concepts, displayed in different colored boxes in Figure 1, included: common cultural interactions observed across North American business dealings abroad (“Key Concept #1”) in light blue; general enterprise selling methodologies employed by North American salespeople (“Key Concept #2”) in purple; and the lived experiences (i.e., phenomena) of North American salespeople encountering inexplicable failure during foreign sales engagements (“Key Concept #3”) in green.

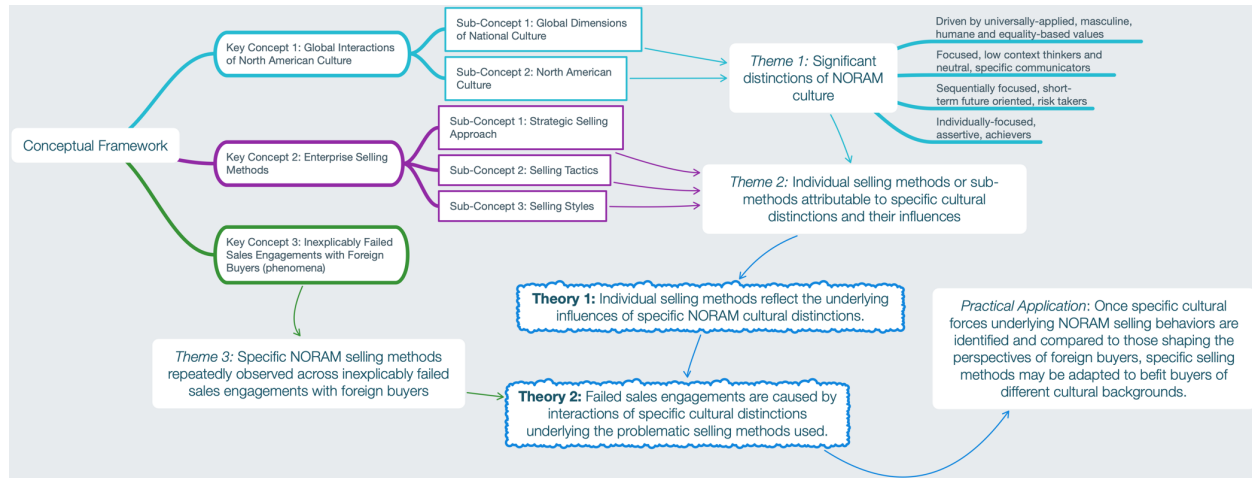


Figure 1. Complete overview of conceptual framework.

Considered together per the design of this conceptual framework, this study sought to identify the underlying influences of national culture upon North American selling practices, and in turn, identify the potential impacts of these influences upon selling outcomes when North American salespeople are engaged with foreign buyers. Accordingly, this conceptual framework, depicted in Figure 1, outlined research efforts to understand the experiences of North American salespeople encountering inexplicably failed sales engagements abroad by assessing the underlying cultural and methodological interactions potentially affecting such phenomena.

Key Concept #1: Global Interactions of North American Culture

Comprising two predominant patterns identified across the literature, Key Concept #1, expanded in Figure 2, involved the general interactions of North American culture observed across the global business environment. To better understand the different forces involved in these interactions and provide the bases for addressing RQ1 and RQ1b, two sub-components were also outlined in the framework, visible in Figure 2 by two blue boxes stemming from Key Concept #1.

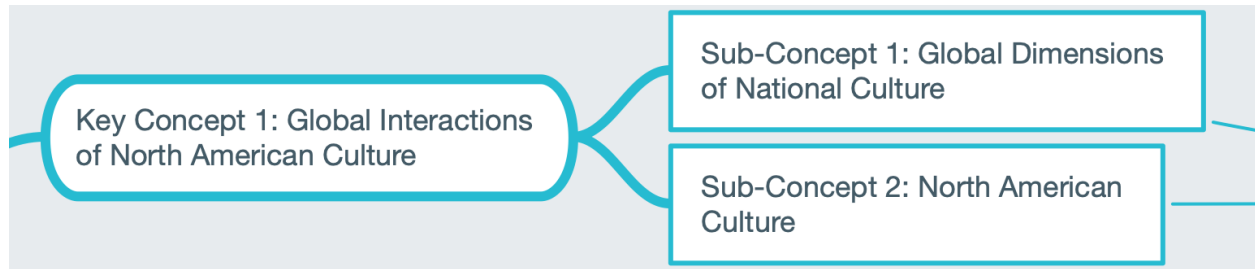


Figure 2. Expanded view of Key Concept #1 along with Sub-Concepts 1–2.

According to the work of Hofstede (2001), many of the behavioral nuances distinguishing individuals from separate nations or regions can be attributed to unique cultural predispositions shaping their motivations, perspectives, and habits. Through a multitude of extensively applied, long-tested, and well-respected research efforts, Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012), House et al. (2004), and other authorities of cultural research have collectively defined these predispositions as cultural “dimensions” or “variables,” proposing numeric, scale measures for quantifying and distinguishing these dynamics across different national or international contexts.

Providing a valuable reference-point for understanding the interactions of different cultures, these measurable dimensions comprised Sub-Concept 1 (see Figure 2) for understanding the global interactions of North American culture. Accordingly, this conceptual framework began with a foundational assumption of culture as defined by these dimensions described in the literature.

Furthermore, through a multitude of research efforts spanning several decades, these measures have been exhaustively applied across nearly the entire globe, providing rich, accurate databases with numeric measurements for defining the unique cultural characteristics of individual contexts.

Along with additional cultural research building upon these datasets, quantitative measurements from the literature were interpreted qualitatively to define and distinguish the specific cultural makeup of North America (“NORAM”). In this manner, Sub-Concept 2 of this framework was defined as the individual cultural context comprising North America as determined through the aggregation and interpretation of these various dimensional measures (see Figure 2).

Thus, collectively considering measures of North American cultural values across several of these dimensions provided a robust, well-rounded, and well-substantiated overview of its unique cultural environment.

Anticipated Theme #1: Significant Distinctions of NORAM Culture. Furthermore, by observing several differences from global norms across these dimensions, many unique characteristics of North America’s cultural composition were evidenced, leading to the first anticipated theme of this conceptual framework.

From cultural dimensions and literature involving ethical and social value systems, emergent patterns suggest that North Americans are characteristically driven by universally applied, masculine, humane oriented and equality-based values (Dash et al., 2006; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Furthermore, patterns across cognitive research suggest that they tend to think with singular focus and lack of attention to context while communicating in a neutral and specific manner (House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Regarding views of time, North Americans tend to maintain sequentially focused perspectives, short-term-future orientation, and comfort with taking risks (House et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2001). Finally, patterns involving individual motivation and views of self suggest that North Americans are individually focused and assertive, with a strong desire to achieve as a

means for self-actualization (Hofstede, 2001; Tifferet & Herstein, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

In comparison to generalizations of many regions across the globe, these NORAM cultural characteristics are very unusual, distinguishing NORAM culture as extremely unique and suggesting the potential exacerbation of negative cross-cultural interactions during NORAM business engagements abroad. Drawn from these patterns in the literature, anticipated Theme #1 (see Figure 3) involved the significant cultural uniqueness distinguishing North America from most other nations across the globe.

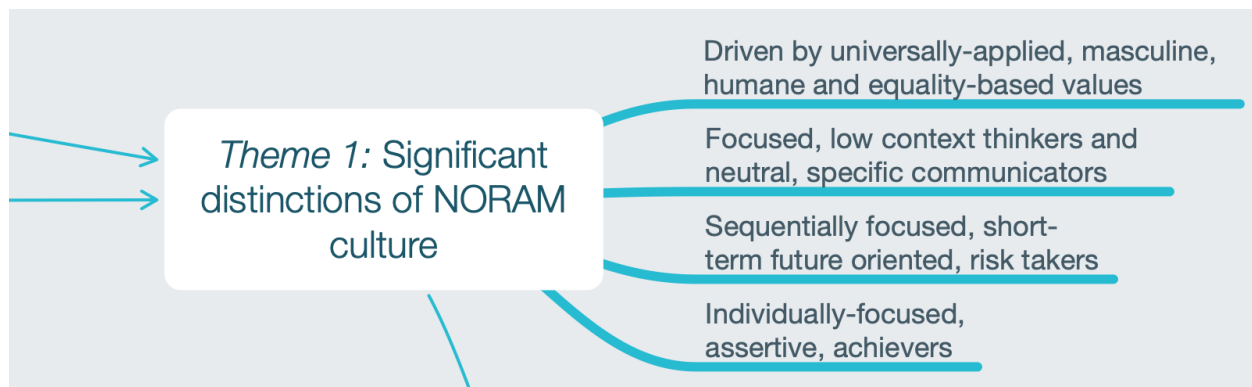


Figure 3. Expanded view of Theme #1.

Relating Key Concept #1 to Theme #1. Accordingly, an identification of these sub-patterns and resulting validation of Theme #1 from this conceptual framework will help to understand the interactions of North American culture when applied abroad through insights into the measurable cultural factors influencing NORAM behaviors and the perspectives of foreign individuals.

In this manner, Key Concept #1, along with its sub-concepts producing Theme #1, helped address RQ1 by providing a frame of reference for recognizing the cultural disparities underlying the engagements of NORAM salespeople abroad. Finally, combined with insights from the other

two key concepts of this framework, Key Concept #1 also helped to address RQ2 and RQ2a by aiding the definition and attribution of specific cultural interactions or antecedents observed across the researched phenomena.

Key Concept #2: NORAM Enterprise Technology Selling Methods

Drawn from the literature describing individual and organizational behaviors observed throughout business-to-business selling practices, the second key concept, Key Concept #2 (see Figure 4) of this study's conceptual framework involved the predominant selling methodologies employed by North American technology sales professionals.

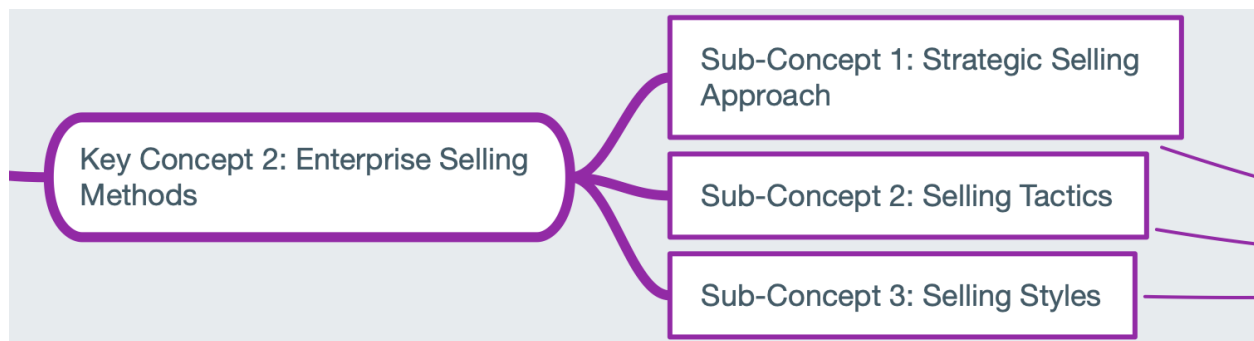


Figure 4. Expanded view of Key Concept #2 along with Sub-Concepts 1–3.

By considering the individual components of these methodologies and contrasting their effects upon both domestic and foreign sales engagements, this key concept and its sub-concepts helped to reveal potential patterns across the experiences of NORAM salespeople to determine if specific selling methods influence or effect the target phenomena.

Involving several dimensions of enterprise technology sales observed throughout the literature, the concept of enterprise selling methodologies may be broken-down into three sub-concepts as shown in Figure 4, including team-level sales strategies (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016), individual selling styles (Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990), and individual selling tactics

(Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006). These sub-concepts from the literature were considered together to better examine the underlying influences and behaviors producing the predominant enterprise selling methodologies of North American salespeople.

Such an examination served to partially address RQ1, RQ1a, and RQ1b by revealing the selling behaviors most-characteristic of North American salespeople which could potentially lead to either positive or negative interactions with buyers of various other cultures. At the same time, an examination of this key concept and its sub-concepts helped to address RQ2 and RQ2a by producing an in-depth view of the relevant facets comprising enterprise selling practices.

Strategic Selling Approach. While much of the literature involving international go-to-market strategy discusses strategic approaches such as multidomestic, global, or transnational design (Gamble et al., 2019), an additional category of strategic approach involving the go-to-market models for field sales teams constitute an additional strategic consideration for many organizations. Examining such field-sales strategic approaches (“Team-level Sales Strategies”), Paesbrugghe et al. (2016) argued that most sales teams demonstrate one of four strategic orientations, determined usually at the business-level unit, which should ideally align with the unique purchasing behaviors of the customers within their target markets.

These strategies involve either relationship-based selling, value-based selling, key account selling, or solution-oriented selling; however, the authors explain that various cost, product, and personnel variables may constrain a team’s options when selecting which strategy to use, often leading to sub-optimal go-to-market selling strategies (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Individual Selling Styles. Through a foundational study in the field of professional selling, Rhoads (1988) demonstrated how individual salespeople exercise different levels of customer orientation, conversational control, and adaptiveness throughout engagements with

their customers, describing these behavioral patterns as components of unique selling styles. Furthermore, Spiro and Weitz (1990) described additional stylistic components demonstrated by salespeople involving self-monitoring, empathy, androgyny, initiation, and locus of control, testing these variables for their correlations with a salesperson's level of adaptability.

While many different stylistic elements could emerge throughout the course of this study's field interviews, these well-established and vetted styles helped guide thematic analyses toward identification of the most evident and understandable styles demonstrated by participants (Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Individual Selling Tactics. In addition to strategic orientations and selling styles, various studies described a multitude of tactical approaches used by salespeople to influence their customers toward making a purchase, many of which could be more-easily adapted and applied to individual customer interactions than personally-engrained selling styles or organizationally-determined selling strategies (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio, et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006). McFarland et al. (2006) described eight such tactics including information exchange, recommendations, requests, threats, promises, legalistic pleas, ingratiation, and inspirational appeals, proposing models for testing the effectiveness of such tactics with different types of customers.

At the same time, Delvecchio et al. (2004) examined the correlation between the use of certain selling methods and the cultivation of adaptive selling behavior, discussing several different tactics for both closing a sale and handling customer objections. For encouraging a customer to buy, the author described closing tactics involving direct requests, incremental incentivization, or passivity, as well as emotional, anecdotal, or urgency-related forms of persuasion (Delvecchio et al., 2004). For handling customer objections, the author described

tactics involving direct, compensatory, or indirect responses to questions, as well as the use of postponement, minimization, or disregard to get past negative customer feedback (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

Finally, the work of Arndt et al. (2018) demonstrated selling tactics involving the use of questions, demonstrating how questioning skills may be correlated with increased selling performance. Altogether, these tactics provided a general representation of those employed by North American salespeople (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006) as well as their potential effects when used during sales engagements with foreign customers.

Combining Key Concepts 1–2 with Theme #1 to Reveal Theme #2. These studies and their revealed insights helped better define and understand the composition of North American selling methodologies, thereby partially addressing all three of this study's research questions (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

With the exception of the research of Paesbrughe et al. (2016) which intentionally drew from a global group of participants to examine international selling strategies, the studies referenced to derive selling styles and tactics were conducted through North American universities amongst primarily North American participant groups, without special attention to the global relevance of research methods or findings (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Accordingly, by examining the practices employed by salespeople encountering the target phenomenon of this study, it was possible for patterns to emerge suggesting that NORAM salespeople demonstrate distinct preferences for specific strategic selling approaches, styles, tactics, or otherwise general selling methodologies. Building upon anticipated Theme #1 which suggested the unique nature of NORAM culture (see Figure 3), NORAM cultural distinctions

could be evaluated alongside components of NORAM selling methods to reveal probable, underlying influences.

For example, the thematic trend from the literature suggesting that North Americans are sequentially focused, short-term-future oriented, and risk takers could be evaluated alongside the observation of NORAM salespeople repeatedly using a certain closing tactic, such as incremental incentivization. Through this evaluation, it could be inferred that such a tactic is inherently driven by underlying cultural influences due to its strategic dependence on a buyer thinking sequentially and possessing short-term motivations.

Thus, combining insights with Key Concept #1 and anticipated Theme #1, Key Concept #2 and its sub-concepts could help to reveal another anticipated theme, Theme #2, involving the direct attribution of certain NORAM selling methods or sub-methods to the influences of specific, underlying cultural distinctions (see Figure 5).

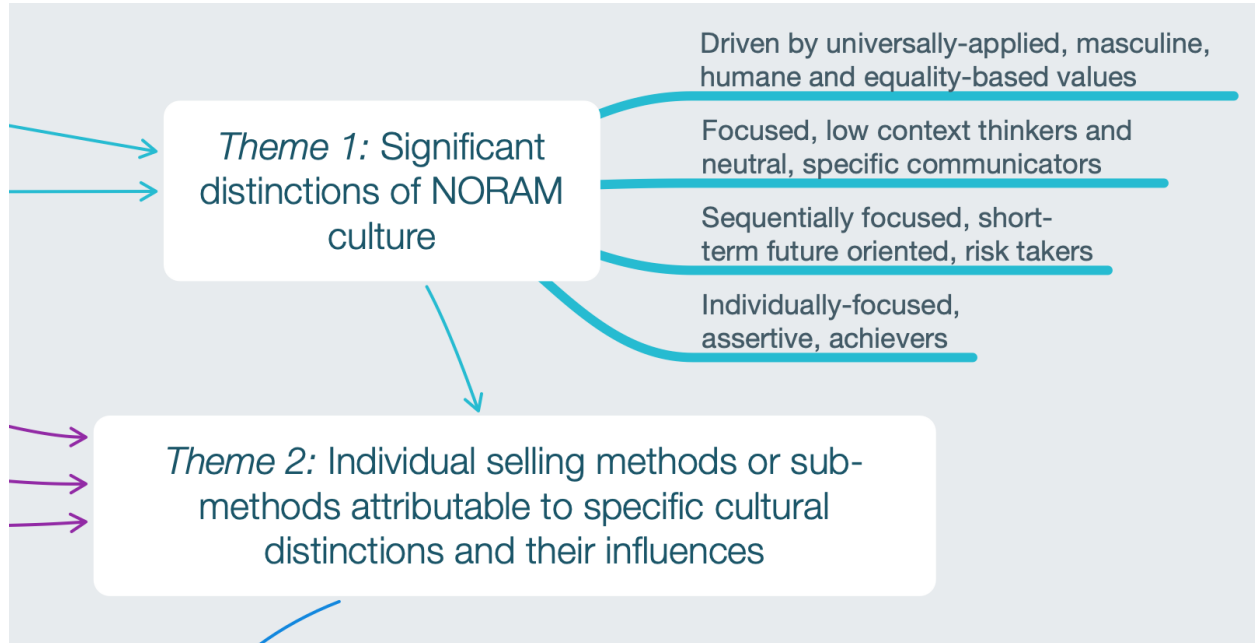


Figure 5. Expanded view of Themes 1–2.

Themes 1–2 to Produce Theory #1. If the literature suggested that distinct cultural influences produce distinct selling methodologies amongst NORAM selling professionals, validating Theme #2, further investigation could also reveal that cultural influences (i.e., Theme #1) were directly reflected by such methodologies (i.e., positively, or negatively influencing their practical application), and thus, that NORAM culture directly influences the outcomes of NORAM selling engagements. Accordingly, the anticipation of this second theme from the literature leads to the proposal of this conceptual framework's first theory, Theory 1 (see Figure 6), which asserted that NORAM culture was directly reflected by NORAM selling methodologies.

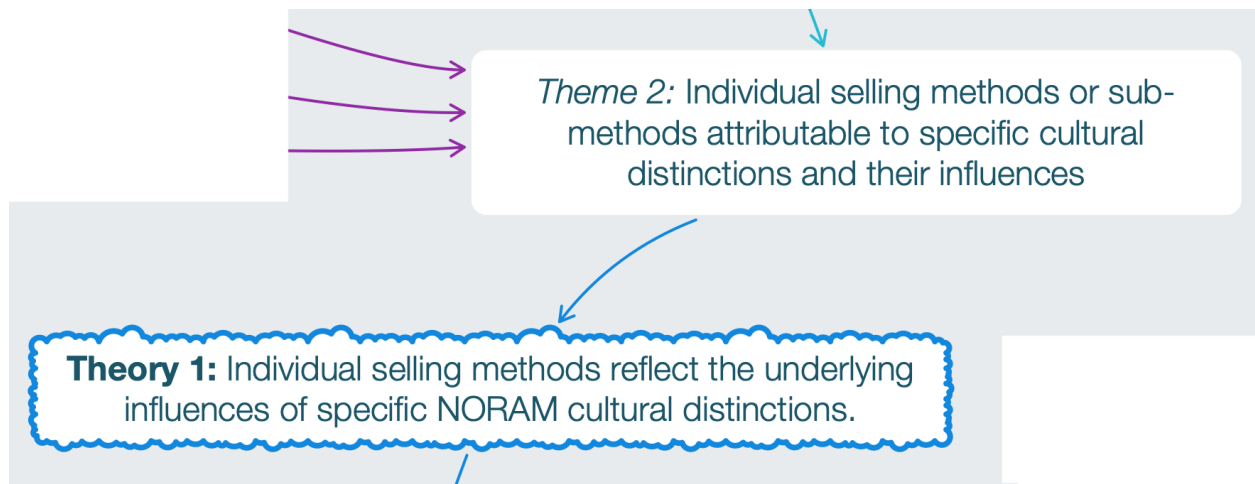


Figure 6. Expanded view of Theme #2 & Theory 1.

Key Concept #3: Inexplicably Failed NORAM Sales Engagements

Following the potential affirmation of Theory 1, this conceptual framework proposed that additional investigation into the studied phenomena through firsthand accounts of inexplicably failed NORAM sales engagements could produce additional themes and theoretical insights involving the effects of NORAM culture upon foreign sales engagements and the remediation of such influences.

Accordingly, Key Concept #3 of this study (see Figure 7) was defined by the phenomenological experiences of NORAM salespeople encountering these inexplicably failed sales engagements with foreign buyers.



Figure 7. Expanded view of Key Concept #3 & Theme #3.

While the overall body of literature involving international selling is quite limited in volume, the literature which does exist demonstrates a few clear patterns. Perhaps the most neglected of these involves the repeated and unexplained failure of enterprise technology sales engagements experienced by North Americans selling abroad for which all traditional criterion of successful domestic sales engagements are satisfied.

Though observed across many of the international selling experiences described in the literature, few studies directly address the potential causes of this phenomenon. Furthermore, seeking implicit causes from the literature results in an ambiguity of potential explanations with limited depth or clarity.

Some research suggests such failed engagements result from the difficulty of assimilating into foreign environments faced by many expatriated salespeople (White et al., 2011), while

others suggest blame upon poor organizational structure or an individual salesperson's attitude and organizational commitment (Naumann et al., 2000). At the same time, some studies suggested that various geographic challenges, weak market segmentation strategies, or poor sales management practices are to blame.

Validating Theory #1 to Reveal Theme #3. Amongst all these potential explanations, however, the most predominant identified across individual accounts of these phenomena involved causation from underlying cultural interactions between buyer and seller. Building upon this pattern, an evaluation of Key Concept #3 could be used to answer RQ1 and RQ2 through thematic evaluations of these individual experiences.

If individual selling methods were shown to reflect the underlying influences of specific NORAM cultural distinctions, thereby validating Theory 1, the individual experiences of NORAM salespeople could be evaluated for patterns and themes to determine if such cultural and methodological influences affected the outcomes of failed international sales engagements. Accordingly, this conceptual framework proposed a final theme anticipated from the literature and field observations, Theme #3, that specific NORAM selling methods were repeatedly found across the failed international sales engagements encountered by NORAM salespeople (see Figure 7).

Combining Theme #3 with Theory #1 to Produce Theory #2. Through these evaluations, it was anticipated that the ineffective use of certain selling methodologies would emerge as a theme across the firsthand descriptions of the phenomena. Combining this anticipated theme with Theory 1 (i.e., that individual selling methods reflect underlying influences of specific NORAM cultural distinctions), this key concept helped answer RQ1 by providing a basis for

determining the most culpable NORAM selling methods to be evaluated for harmful, underlying cultural dimensions shaping their effects upon foreign buyers.

Following such evaluations, patterns emerged to suggest the influences of specific NORAM cultural distinctions across the selling methodologies associated with failed international engagements. Accordingly, this conceptual framework proposed Theory 2 (see Figure 8), that such failed encounters directly result from the application of culturally influenced, NORAM selling methodologies which conflict with the cultural contexts of foreign buyers.

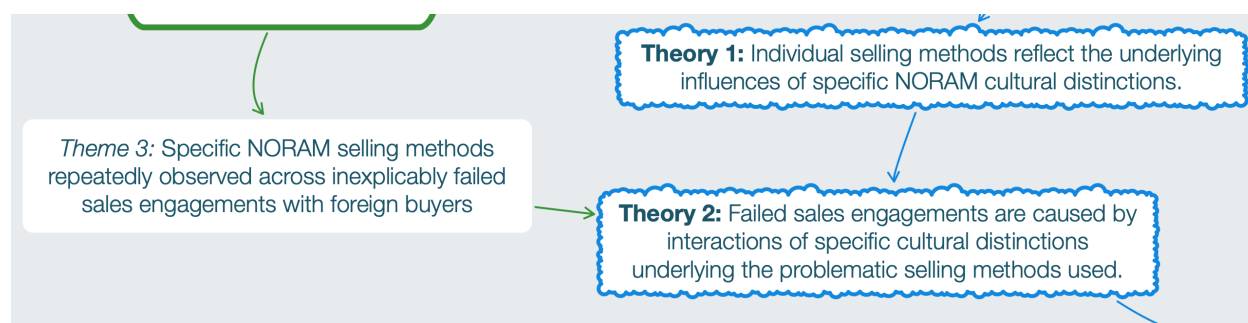


Figure 8. Expanded view of Theme #3 & Theories 1–2.

Interrelations of Anticipated Themes

This conceptual framework proposed three key concepts for evaluation to address the research questions of this study. First, providing a means for defining cultural differences between nations, this framework outlined dimensions of national culture that have a dramatic effect upon international business interactions (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), but the contributions in the literature toward the development of culturally-specific selling methodologies is not yet fully understood due to the understudied nature of the problem and the highly complex international business environment (Javalgi et al., 2011).

Accordingly, this conceptual framework provided a means for examining the underlying cultural influences of NORAM selling methodologies, as well as their resulting impacts upon the success of NORAM sales engagements with foreign buyers. Addressing the research questions in a general sense, the development of selling methodologies involved a variety of influences from the personal attributes of individual salespeople, organizational culture, market factors, and elements of national culture (Arndt et al., 2018; Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2010; Rhoads, 1988).

Accordingly, an examination of the unique selling methods employed by NORAM salespeople (Key Concept #2) could reveal patterns which align with those observed across separate examinations of NORAM culture (Key Concept #2 and Theme #2). If the unique characteristics of NORAM selling methods were shown to align with the distinct qualities of NORAM culture, specific motivational or structural components of common NORAM strategic selling approaches, styles, or tactics could in turn be attributable to the underlying influences of specific NORAM cultural dimensions.

Once these methodological components and their underlying cultural influences were identified, Theory 1 could be supported if the literature demonstrated cases wherein the foreign application of such methods could be interpreted to reveal such cultural influences.

Furthermore, examinations of the lived experiences of individual salespeople could reveal patterns suggesting that specific NORAM selling methods are associated with the emergence of the target phenomena, thereby substantiating anticipated Theme #3. Building upon Theory 1 and Theme #3, Theory 2 could then be validated by interpreting the phenomena's

potential initiation from the specific cultural dynamics underlying these observed selling methods.

Altogether, following review of the literature and the field research findings involving these concepts and their sub-concepts, three themes were anticipated to emerge which, if present, would support two key theories of this study. Along with further interpretation and analysis, support for these theories would potentially enable the development of recommendations for culturally adaptive, global selling practices, denoted in Figure 9 as the “Practical Application” and end goal of this conceptual framework.

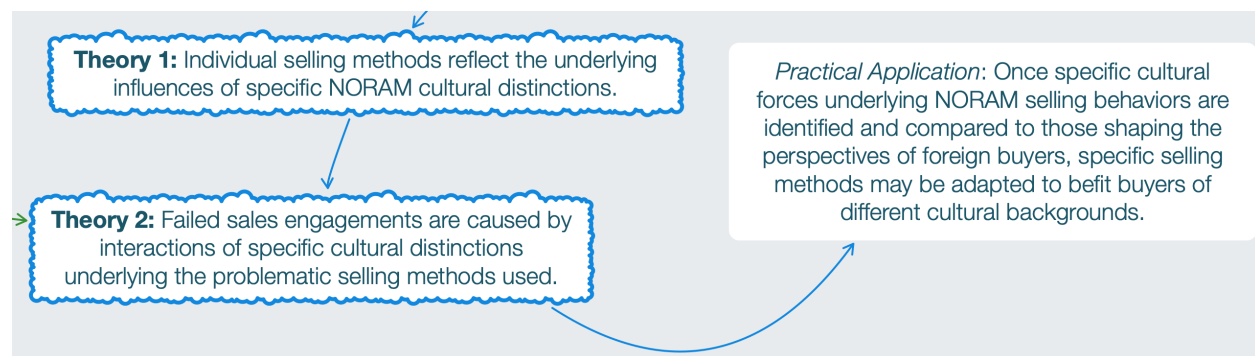


Figure 9. Expanded view of Theories 1–2 & anticipated Practical Application.

Definition of Terms

Enterprise Information Technology (EIT)

Enterprise information technology, or “EIT,” refers to business hardware, software, and technological services shared across an organization in support of business operations and processes (Veiga et al., 2014, Tingling & Parent, 2004).

EIT for Competitive Differentiation. As the technology industry has grown and developed, many organizations have strategically purchased and implemented new enterprise technologies to develop operational competitive advantages (Chae et al., 2018). Accordingly, the

effective selection, purchase, and implementation of such technologies has gradually become a critical organizational discipline, the success or failure of which often differentiates competitors within many different markets (McAfee, 2002; Liu et al., 2016).

Types of EIT. Since these systems support extensive needs across an organization, enterprise technology purchases are often very expensive and constitute a large portion of an organization's operational budget (Veiga et al., 2014). Examples of such purchases include hardware, software, professional services (consulting, technical deployment, etc.), software-as-a-service (SaaS), platform-as-a-service (PaaS), and information as a service (IaaS).

These purchases serve to build, extend, or support a multitude of technical business processes such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), digital asset management (DAM), data storage and archive, business intelligence (BI), big data analytics, supply chain technology (SCT), cybersecurity, enterprise asset management, knowledge management, and many others (Chae et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2016; Seethamraju, 2015).

EIT Purchasing Processes. The functional breadth and growing competitive importance of these enterprise technologies has also greatly increased the focus placed on the sale and purchase of such products and services (Mikalef et al., 2015).

Many organizations have begun allocating great resources and talent toward the effective selection, purchase negotiation, and implementation of these technologies, and a highly skilled and competitive sales force has developed among business-to-business (B2B) vendors seeking to win these large and complex deals (Mikalef et al., 2015).

Accordingly, in defining enterprise technology, this study assumed that such purchases constitute a significant portion of an organization's budget as well as a critical component of

their operational strategy, suggesting that all firms, regardless of national or cultural context, consider the quality of such purchasing decisions to be of critical importance.

Selling Methodology: Strategies, Styles, and Tactics

While the term “selling methodology” is used in a variety of manners to denote different dimensions of sales approaches or operations, this term was used specifically throughout this study to denote a combination of three facets of professional selling described throughout the literature, namely selling strategies (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016), selling styles (Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990), and selling tactics (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006).

Selling Strategies. Focused on the team-level activities of sales organizations, selling strategy refers to the use of one of four primary strategic orientations demonstrated by a sales team as described by Paesbrugghe et al. (2016). These orientations involve relationship-based selling, value-based selling, key account selling, and solution-oriented selling (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Relational Selling. By placing a team’s primary selling focus on developing customer loyalty, this strategy emphasizes strong relational equity during business engagements and the long-term creation of value for both buyer and seller (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Value-based Selling. This strategy involves providing increased value to buyers beyond that provided from the products or services being purchased to improve the total cost of ownership (TCO) for a customer (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Key Account Selling. By prioritizing their “key accounts” over other less-critical customers, teams demonstrating this strategy allocate most of their resources toward meeting the needs of their most important or valuable customers (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Solution Selling. As opposed to selling a specific product or service, this strategy focuses on solving customers' problems by catering the selling process to their unique needs and challenges (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016). Through consultative measures, the sales team seeks to identify a customer's most compelling problems and connect these problems to the best solutions offered by their product or services portfolio (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Selling Styles. Determined by individual personalities, selling styles involve the general behavioral differences demonstrated by salespeople which shape their overall approaches to conducting sales engagements (Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

While a multitude of styles are demonstrated by salespeople, the primary styles considered throughout this study are drawn from the selling styles described by Rhoads (1988) and the personality traits outlined by Spiro and Weitz (1990), involving customer orientation, conversational control, adaptiveness, self-monitoring, empathy, androgyny, initiation, and locus of control.

Customer Orientation. Relying upon mutual goodwill between buyer and seller, customer orientation involves the degree to which the long-term needs and overall satisfaction of a customer are prioritized throughout the selling process (Bursk, 1947; Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

Highly customer-oriented styles demonstrate amicability on behalf of the salesperson and a resolve to meet a customer's needs above all else, sometimes even to the detriment of profitability or expedient closure of a sale (Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Rhoads, 1988).

Conversational Control. Focusing on the overall behavior demonstrated throughout the buyer-seller conversation, conversational control involves the extent to which a salesperson directs or guides the discussion (Weitz, 1981).

High conversational control leaves little room for flexibility or deviations from planned sales discussions, while low conversation control leaves high variability for the ultimate result of such discussions (Rhoads, 1988; Weitz, 1981).

Adaptiveness. Rather than comprising a specific, individual style, adaptiveness refers to a salesperson's ability to adjust their overall sales approach to fit the unique requirements of a specific customer, sales objective, or selling context (Merrill & Reid, 1981; Rhoads, 1988).

Such adjustments commonly involve changes to dimensions of influence such as emotional, logical, anecdotal, or authoritative appeals, as well as changes to communication styles such as directness or indirectness and forcefulness or passiveness (Weitz, 1980).

Self-monitoring. Like adaptiveness, self-monitoring refers to the ability of a salesperson to recognize social cues and change various aspects of their appearance and interpersonal behaviors to suit unique contexts (Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Salespeople demonstrating this style may be able to pick up on the verbal and non-verbal expressions of their customers, change how they present themselves based on context, and look or act differently in certain situations (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984).

Empathy. Driven from a sincere motivation for a customer's well-being, empathy involves the degrees to which a salesperson can understand the unique perspectives of their customers and, subsequently, cares about their recognizable challenges, problems, or concerns (Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Androgyny. Though evolving and varying definitions of Masculinity and Femininity exist even within North American culture itself, the stylistic element of androgyny refers to the ability of a salesperson to adaptively demonstrate either masculine or feminine qualities throughout the

sales process to strategically address different contexts (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1981).

Initiation. Described by Spiro and Weitz (1990) as “openers,” salespeople who demonstrate the style of initiation can draw out information from customers to establish footing for sales discussions.

Viewing initiation as like the discipline of prospecting, this study defines initiation as the degree to which salespeople can gather information, establish relational equity, incite curiosity, and compel customers to begin or rejoin a sales engagement.

Locus of Control. As a highly internal and motivational stylistic element, locus of control involves the degree to which a salesperson believes that the outcome of general sales engagements is determined by either their own effort or by forces outside of their control (Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Adapting the research of Paulhus (1983), a salesperson’s locus of control style may be driven by three internal components involving the degree to which they believe their overall selling approach may affect sales outcomes, the degree to which they believe they can change or adapt aspects of their overall selling approach if desired, and the degree to which sales outcomes are affected by external factors outside of their control (Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Selling Tactics. Involving specific activities to guide the selling process or influence the outcomes of sales engagements, selling tactics may often be applied by salespeople regardless of their individual selling styles or the overarching sales strategy of their teams (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006).

While a multitude of selling tactics exist across the literature, this study grouped the majority of those most prominently used by North Americans into three key categories including influence tactics, tactics for handling objections, and closing tactics.

Influence & Leverage. Involving measures for leading a customer toward a purchase decision through various actions, conversations, or uses of leverage, salespeople may use influence tactics to carefully guide the selling process toward desired outcomes (McFarland et al., 2006).

Information, Consultation, and Direct Requests. Salespeople may use informational tactics to influence customers with compelling data or insights, consultative tactics to help customers see the value in a purchase through recommendations, or direct-request tactics to make customers more comfortable through clear and open dialogues about their intent to secure a purchase (McFarland et al., 2006).

Threats, Promises, and Legal Action. They may also use threat-based tactics to motivate customers to buy out of fear for the negative consequences of postponing or neglecting a purchase, promise-based tactics to make the customer believe that certain positive outcomes will result from a purchase, or legal tactics which appeal toward a customer's various obligations to purchase (McFarland et al., 2006).

Relationships, Emotions, and Questions. Finally, they may use relational tactics to motivate customers toward purchasing through personal equity, emotional tactics to inspire purchasing decisions through appeals to a customer's personal challenges or desires, or question-based tactics to increase a customer's engagement in the sales dialogue and thereby prompt them toward increased understanding of the value proposition and deeper trust in the salesperson's empathic understanding of their needs (Arndt et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2006).

Handling Objections. For situations in which salespeople are faced with critical questions, rejections, or other objections from their customers, Delvecchio et al. (2004) describes several tactics which are often used for regaining control of the conversation and remediating the negative influence of such objections.

Direct tactics may be used by responding to objections as they are made, compensatory tactics may be used by acknowledging objections and then compensating for them with the merits of a purchase, or indirect tactics may be used by simply explaining (or re-explaining) the merits of a purchase to suggest how it overcomes certain objections (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

At the same time, postponement tactics may be used by stating that an objection will be addressed later, minimization tactics may be used by comparing the objection to insignificant or easily addressable issues, or disregard tactics may be used by simply shifting attention to different topics (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

Closing the Sale. Also described by Delvecchio et al. (2004), several common tactics exist for completing a sales negotiation and prompting a customer's official purchase decision. Direct request tactics may be used to clearly ask for the purchase, incremental incentivization tactics may be used to offer closing incentives if a customer agrees to buy, or passive tactics may be used to enable to customer to make a purchase decision without pressure or obligation (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

Furthermore, emotional tactics may be used to leverage a customer's personal stake in agreeing to a purchase, anecdotal tactics may be used to describe how similar customers benefitted from making a similar purchase (i.e., feel-felt-found), or urgency tactics may be used to urge a customer to buy before certain desired elements (i.e., price, product, time) are no longer available (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

Dimensions of Culture or “Cultural Variables”

Established by multiple research efforts which have extensively evaluated different societies across the world using decades of observations and data, cultural variables are measures which describe unique attributes distinguishing the behaviors, beliefs, or ways of thinking demonstrated by specific people groups across the globe (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

By evaluating these differences, many researchers have sought to define the key attributes comprising a society’s cultural composition, and several have established scales for measuring these attributes so that specific cultural dimensions of individual societies may be numerically differentiated from others (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Uniformly termed throughout this study as “cultural variables,” a multitude of literature supports their use for understanding the complex makeup of individual societies, as well as for predicting or evaluating the cultural interactions affecting the business engagements between individuals from different nations (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015; Weck & Ivanova, 2013).

While a broad variety of different cultural variables exists, this study will focus primarily on those observed, defined, and measured by the research of Hofstede (2001).

Hofstede’s Dimensions of Culture. Much of modern-day cultural research builds upon the established work of Hofstede (2001) which poses six dimensions of national culture for which measures may be used to evaluate the primary differences between the unique cultures of different people groups. These measures are established through lateral scales from zero to one

hundred, with lower numbers denoting lower measures of a specific dimension and higher numbers denoting higher levels (Hofstede, 2001).

Following decades of research, Hofstede (2001) has collected and published exhaustive measurements of nearly every nation around the globe, providing a robust and well-respected database for numerically examining the cultural differences between different nations across the dimensions of Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Indulgence, Long-term Orientation, and Power Distance.

Individualism. Involving the scope of an individual's societal obligations, measures of Individualism in a society describe the extent to which a person is responsible for their own life (Hofstede, 2001).

Individuals from highly individualistic societies are obligated to care for themselves and their immediate family members, while being socially driven to develop a strong sense of independence, to constantly consider their personal self-worth, and to highly value individual success (Hofstede, 2001).

Collectivism. Contrastingly, individuals from societies with low Individualism (a.k.a. "collectivistic" societies) are cared for by their surrounding family and/or community and are thus obligated to remain loyal toward these groups and to help look after others in the same manner (Hofstede, 2001). These individuals are socially driven to develop a strong sense of interdependence, to have a limited sense of personal self-worth apart from others, and to highly value the well-being and success of their surrounding family and/or community (Hofstede, 2001).

Uncertainty Avoidance. Centered around a society's approach to the unknown future, Uncertainty Avoidance involves the extent to which a society is comfortable with uncertainty and the extent to which they seek to control future outcomes (Hofstede, 2001).

Individuals from societies with high Uncertainty Avoidance tend to resist change, attempt to control future outcomes, and prioritize stability in decision-making, while those from societies with low Uncertainty Avoidance tend to embrace change, are excited by the potential for the future, and prioritize progress, gain, or improvement over stability in decision-making (Hofstede, 2001).

Masculinity versus Femininity. Related to the overall degree of aggression in a society, Masculinity measures the extent to which individuals are driven by either success and achievement or compassion and cooperation (Hofstede, 2001).

Highly masculine societies tend to value personal success and material wealth while respecting those who are assertive and driven to achieve their goals (Hofstede, 2001). Societies low in Masculinity (a.k.a. "feminine" societies) tend to value immaterial measures of success such as peace and the well-being of the weak, while respecting those who demonstrate humility, empathy, and modesty (Hofstede, 2001).

Indulgence versus Restraint. Indulgence involves the degree to which it is culturally acceptable for individuals in a society to enjoy different facets of everyday life. Highly indulgent societies tend to deem various forms of pleasure, leisure, and entertainment as socially acceptable uses of both time and resources, while societies low in Indulgence (a.k.a. "restrained" societies) tend to criticize such uses of time and resources, deeming them as inappropriate, harmful, wasteful, or forbidden (Hofstede, 2001).

Long-term Orientation versus Short-term Orientation. Influencing a society's perspective of time, Long-term Orientation involves the degree to which a culture prioritizes either the past or the future in its present social values and decision-making (Hofstede, 2001).

Individuals from societies high in Long-term Orientation tend to prioritize the future and progress, while easily accepting changes involving new ways of thinking and doing things (Hofstede, 2001). Individuals from societies low in Long-term Orientation (a.k.a. "short-term oriented" societies) tend to prioritize the past and tradition, while struggling to accept changes to old ways of thinking or doing things (Hofstede, 2001).

Power Distance. Related to perceptions of equality, Power Distance involves the extent to which a society accepts unequal distributions of power or authority (Hofstede, 2001).

Cultures high in Power Distance generally accept inequality of power and demonstrate clear and strong hierarchies in multiple facets of life including business, government, and social status (Hofstede, 2001). Cultures low in Power Distance generally refuse to accept unequal distributions of power, seeking to break down business, political, and social barriers to establish fairness and equality between all participating individuals (Hofstede, 2001).

Assumptions, Limitations & Delimitations

Assumptions

Relying upon the phenomenological field research accumulated from study participants, this study assumes that participants were being honest, that their memory of phenomena and events is valid, and that they disclosed the full extent of information requested. At the same time, this study also assumes that the field research instruments including interview questions and survey questionnaires reliably produced the intended responses relevant to the studied phenomena.

Finally, this study also assumes that qualitative insights may produce an understanding of the studied phenomena involving cultural interactions and the application of specific sales methodologies without the additional application of quantitative methods.

Aside from these methodological assumptions, certain philosophical assumptions should also be considered. The work of Mkansi (2018) demonstrates the substantial impacts which the personal worldview of a researcher may have upon their research decisions and outcomes, highlighting the importance of recognizing one's own worldview when conducting research and carefully examining its influences upon research design, study outcomes, and interpretations.

Furthermore, the work of Killam (2013) posits that a researcher's axiological paradigms (denoting their values) and doxological paradigms (denoting their beliefs) may further influence research efforts by driving a researcher's personal motivations, suggesting that these too should be accounted for throughout the research process.

Founded upon a doxological belief in Christianity, my worldview asserts a realist ontology which argues that reality exists outside of personal perception and is both formed and defined by the God of the Bible. Drawing from Psalm 19:1 wherein King David says, "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork," my worldview also involves an epistemological view of empiricism, asserting that knowledge can be acquired through that which is observable per God's intended design.

At the same time, my worldview also involves a pragmatic epistemology, drawing from Isaiah 55:8–9 wherein God says, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," to assert that God's manners for revealing knowledge may be counterintuitive to man's ways of thinking and thus necessitate the flexibility of multiple research approaches (English Standard Version).

Accordingly, my worldview can be defined as faith-based realism which defines reality as that which God has created, and my epistemological paradigm approaches knowledge through pragmatic empiricism by relying upon observations while remaining flexible to alternative sources of truth.

Considering the flexible research design of this study, my personal worldview aligns with qualitative, subjectivist research paradigms due to a belief that God could reveal truth to people in unique ways, while disagreeing with qualitative, relativistic views of reality due to a belief that reality is defined by God and not individual perception. Guided also by a belief that knowledge can be revealed to humankind by God through multiple avenues, my worldview involves a high degree of practicality, remaining open to multiple sources of information to derive knowledge.

Combining these philosophical components together, this qualitative, phenomenological study is primarily guided by realist ontologies, pragmatic empiricism, and subjectivist epistemologies, seeking to derive information from observable phenomena to pragmatically understand unchanging reality through multiple avenues and the subjective perspectives of multiple participants.

Limitations

Limitations of Qualitative Design. Furthermore, the qualitative, phenomenological nature of this study ignores the application any quantitative data to support or test theoretical assertions and leaves potential numeric insights from field research undiscovered. Though this study focuses on highly abstract components involving cultural interactions and selling disciplines, the qualitative methods used are unable to derive potentially valuable insights from the examination of causality, longitudinal trends, or measurement of numeric data (Apuke, 2017).

Such insights might involve statistically significant correlations between certain selling methodologies and positive or negative sales outcomes in foreign contexts, identifications of causality between cultural variables and purchasing behavior, and other potentially valuable findings which should be pursued further by future quantitative or mixed-methods research efforts (Crane et al., 2017; Tamošaitienė et al., 2011).

Availability of Participant Pool. Through a phenomenological methodology, this study examines the lived experiences of individuals to observe unique phenomena related specifically to the interaction of cultural variables throughout international, enterprise-technology sales engagements. Thus, this study is constrained by both the specific attributes of the North American sales practitioners comprising the research participants and the qualitative phenomenological approach comprising the research methodology.

Accordingly, the characteristic busyness of those in the professional selling industry reduces the pool of potential participants. Furthermore, since participants must be of North American nationality, come from an established sales career in the enterprise technology industry, and have experience selling such technologies internationally to foreign customers, the quantity of salespeople who fit these requirements and have relevant experiences involving the focus phenomena of this study further limits the overall participant pool available for this research.

Delimitations

Limitations of Scope. While qualitative research provides unique advantages over quantitative methods for measuring the behavioral phenomena of cross-cultural sales engagements (Javalgi et al., 2011), this study remained limited by an applied nature and the singularity of a qualitative research framework. As an applied research effort, this study aimed to

provide insights which are applicable to specific business practitioners within the enterprise technology sales industry who are involved in sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign customers and thus constrains the focus of field research to pragmatically suit this end goal.

Therefore, this study did not focus on the cultural interactions of enterprise technology selling within a singular nation, culture, or organization and was thus inherently limited by the breadth of the buyer contexts being considered. At the same time, this study did not focus on the application of a singular selling methodology in foreign contexts, but instead focused on the application of many different methodologies which may be recognized across phenomenological findings.

The breadth of these buyer contexts and selling methodologies being considered suggests that this research framework possible could not reveal the full extent of insights which an in-depth study of a specific cultural context or selling method would potentially yield.

Examination of Effects Versus Origins. In a general sense, the development of selling methodologies involves a variety of influences from the personal attributes of individual salespeople, organizational culture, market factors, and elements of national culture (Arndt et al., 2018; Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2010; Rhoads, 1988). Rather than trying to understand the influences of North American culture upon the development of such methodologies, this study aimed to explore the cultural phenomena affecting the success of these methodologies when used by North Americans during international sales engagements.

In other words, an examination of cultural interactions was not used to describe the cultural origins of observed selling methodologies; rather, these observations were used to

determine which selling methodologies appear to work best and worst in global contexts involving cultural variability and to understand the cultural bases for such results.

Lack of Authoritative Definitions. Due to the largely unresearched nature of national culture's influences upon cross-cultural sales engagements, particularly those of North American sales engagements with foreign buyers, this study purposefully drew from a variety of research involving national culture and business-to-business selling to loosely define the key concepts of this study and leave room for interpretive freedom during thematic review of the phenomenological interviews.

In other words, multiple sources were used to define specific North American or foreign cultural values (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), but rather than selecting several limited definitions from the body of literature and proceeding to interpose these definitions upon interview participants or the buyers discussed throughout their stories, this study instead referenced multiple facets of culture and buyer-seller behavior proposed by the literature which was selectively referenced for interpretive analysis if they emerge from a thematic review of the phenomenological findings.

This same interpretive framework was also applied to definitions of North American selling methodologies, since the global body of research describing professional selling methodologies is highly debated and involves a multitude of findings involving strategies, styles, and tactics which may prove valuable for thematic interpretation of the phenomenological interviews (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990; McFarland et al., 2006).

Significance of the Study

By contributing to the bodies of literature involving global interactions of national culture and international adaptations of selling methodologies, this study will provide insights into the complex cultural impacts affecting the success of international sales engagements. Through a specific focus on the experiences of North American, enterprise technology salespeople during such engagements, the findings of this research may lead to improved understanding of the causes and attributions of certain failed or successful sales endeavors (Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2000; Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018).

Insights derived from an evaluation of contextual factors involving specific cultural variables, team-level sales strategies, selling styles, and selling tactics observed across these scenarios may also lead to implications for the cultural adaptation of North American selling methodologies to international contexts.

Ultimately, this study will contribute to an important gap in the academic literature involving the cultural adaptation of selling methodologies and may provide practitioners with valuable direction for adapting selling approaches to a globalizing business environment (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018).

Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

Globalization is rapidly changing the global business environment (Cleveland et al., 2016), but its specific impacts upon the field of professional selling have yet to be fully understood (Javalgi et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is well-established that elements of national culture produce substantial effects upon cross-cultural business interactions (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), yet the academic literature provides

limited insights into how these interactions affect cross-cultural sales engagements (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018; Weck & Ivanova, 2013).

Broadly, this study sought to reduce gaps related to the effects of globalization by adding to the body of literature examining cross-cultural sales engagements in the evolving global economy. Specifically, this study sought to reduce gaps related to the application and cultural adaptation of North American selling methodologies to enterprise technology sales engagements with foreign customers.

Implications for Biblical Integration

Demonstrating the influences of personal worldview upon academic research, Mkansi (2018) suggested that the values and beliefs inherent in a Biblical Faith held by a researcher may influence their social science paradigms. Doxological beliefs of any kind may form axiological influences (involving a person's values) which drive motivations for specific forms of social science research (Mkansi, 2018; Apuke, 2017). Foundational to a Biblical worldview is the belief that any form of work, including academic research or business activities, should be conducted with excellence to benefit society and thereby glorify God as a representative manifestation of His work through human hands (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012).

God may inspire unique axiological values within individual researchers as personal indicators of His will for their lives and the potentially God-ordained results of their research efforts (Hardy, 1990). These God-inspired values may be stewarded to produce results which edify both business theory and practice and thereby progress God's intentions for blessing humankind through the produce of excellent work (Van Duzer, 2010).

Accordingly, a Biblical Worldview may impact a researcher's social science paradigm by motivating them to see people through God's perspective, promote their God-inspired

axiological values, and glorify God through the excellent work and social change effected through their research (Apuke, 2017; Mkansi, 2018; Van Duzer, 2010).

Aside from its influences upon social science research paradigms, a Biblical worldview may also lead to an increased importance for the business applications of research findings. Suggesting that all righteous things in this world that add value to human life are gifts from God, James states that “every good and perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17, New International Version). From an interpretation of this verse, there may be many “good” things in life that are gifts from God which believers do not fully recognize as such, perhaps because they do not resemble the gifts commonly associated with the Christian Faith. Examples of such gifts suggested by Keller and Alsdorf (2012) are the economic, societal, and material benefits created as the produce of man’s excellent work.

These authors went on to argue that any righteous work conducted by human hands demonstrates God’s love for humankind through a reflection of His own creativity and the Biblically blessed returns which such work produces (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). They argued that when humankind engages in work which produces beneficial outputs, the Lord directly blesses the world by using human hands as conduits for His own execution and demonstrates His love for the world through the Biblically blessed provision which such work produces (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012).

This suggests that engaging in excellent work enables an individual to serve others while also being used by God as conduits for His love toward the world; thus, through excellent work, individuals bless God and God blesses the world (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012; Van Duzer, 2010).

In a separate passage of Scripture, James argued that humankind is “justified by works and not by Faith alone” (James 2:24, New International Version). This does not to suggest that

works alone can justify man without Grace through Faith in Christ, nor does it subtract from the vital importance of the Cross; rather, this suggests that human works (whether good deeds or business endeavors) possess a God-given blessing to externally represent the internal work of Christ and can be used by God to justify and redeem the world through human hands (James 2:24, New International Version).

This establishes an immensely greater significance upon the quality of any work which is conducted by humankind, as that work is not only glorifying to God but also sanctified and strategically important to His plans to bless and redeem the world (Van Duzer, 2010).

Thus, it is imperative that God-following workers in any role or industry exercise stewardship of their personal productive capacity by seeking and engaging in methods for improving performance through strategic measures and excellent effort. Accordingly, if business measures which improve productivity and performance (such as improved selling methodologies) can increase output and enable God to provide increased good to the world, then these business measures are certainly “good gift[s]” from the Lord.

Thus, insights related to the cultural adaptation of international selling methodologies may be viewed as gifts from God through which individuals may improve selling outcomes and business productivity, leading to increased economic and societal well-being.

Furthermore, when a God-fearing salesperson engages in these business measures to improve their performance, they may not only be glorifying God through their output—they may also be glorifying Him through their very conduct by reflecting His nature in new ways. When the apostle Paul addressed the ancient Greek philosophers at the Areopagus in Athens, he explained that God had established the boundaries of one’s life, that “in Him [they] live and

move and have [their] being,” and that He desires for mankind to seek Him out through creation, though “he is not far from any one of [them]” (Acts 17:24–28, New International Version).

Interpreting this and other similar passages of Scripture, Hardy (1990) claimed that God’s very nature is thus woven into and represented through the underlying structure of the universe (including through mathematics, science, business, etc.), suggesting that the discovery and application of new selling approaches may be viewed as the discovery and application of God’s very nature or personality which is threaded throughout this world.

Accordingly, even business principles involving international selling methodologies which are discovered to align with the laws of nature (in other words: discovered to work effectively) can be revealed theoretically to understand God in new ways and can be used to represent Him in new ways (Hardy, 1990). Thus, God-fearing business academics and practitioners alike may benefit from the insights of this research by finding new ways to understand God’s character (Hardy, 1990), to glorify Him through excellent work (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012), and to be used by Him to advance His plans for blessing the world (Van Duzer, 2010).

Beyond these applications of general business research from a Biblical worldview, unique applications involving cultural adaptation and international selling may be found from a reflection on one of the Bible’s earliest stories. In Genesis, the Lord looked upon humankind at the city of Babel as they work together to make a name for themselves by building a tower to the heavens. Bemoaning their arrogance and their failure to remember His provision for them, the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6, English Standard Version).

Following this statement, the Lord confused their languages, preventing them from being able to work together and scattering them across the world as disparate people groups.

Often overlooked, yet clearly implicit in this classic Scriptural anecdote, is the incredible power which the Lord states humankind is capable of when working together. Though in this example humankind worked in vanity and arrogance to make a name for themselves, this passage suggests that God may enable a remarkable power for production and creation by mankind when they are unified in communication, working together, and seeking His will. Accordingly, business insights which enable individuals to communicate and work together more effectively may prove especially valuable for God-fearing business practitioners who seek to glorify God through their work.

Globalization is rapidly connecting different people groups from around the globe, and business communication is evolving through the introduction of new technological mediums, the increased interaction of national cultures, and the heightened complexity of goods and services (Cleveland et al., 2016). Combining these trends with the Biblical implications from the Tower of Babel, it may be likely that those who can improve their understanding of the nuances involved in global communication may find powerfully productive opportunities for international collaboration.

For God-fearing, North American salespeople tasked with selling enterprise technology to foreign customers, understanding how to culturally adapt selling methodologies may produce more than just improved selling outcomes—such an understanding may enable them to harness remarkable, God-ordained blessings upon the collaborative outputs of their work.

Benefit to Business Practice & The Study of International Business

International business (IB) is a complex field involving a broad range of theory and applications across nearly all business disciplines, from economics to business strategy, to human resources and workforce development (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2006). While the complexities of IB disciplines involving concepts such as global economic forces, location-based marketing tactics, or design of global business strategies may each produce many challenges for academics and practitioners alike (Cleveland et al., 2016), it is my opinion that no IB concept produces more complexities or challenges than that of cultural adaptation (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

At the same time, the separate discipline of professional selling stands as a distinctly complex and challenging business field of its own, producing further magnified complexity when combined with the need for cultural adaptation within international business contexts (Javalgi et al., 2011).

Resulting from this magnification, the uniquely complex natures of cultural adaptation and professional selling produce a highly challenging IB discipline which has been termed “International Sales and Sales Management” (ISSM) by several pioneering business researchers (Schrock et al., 2018).

Though ISSM involves broader applications than that of cultural-adaption during cross-cultural sales engagements, this study focuses specifically on the unique, complex, understudied, and critically important facet of IB and ISSM involving the cross-cultural application and adaptation of enterprise selling methodologies (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2006; Javalgi et al., 2011).

Summary of the Significance of the Study

This study sought to address the cultural phenomena affecting the success of internationally applied, North American selling methodologies. As evidenced from trends in globalization and international business, international selling is becoming more critical of a business discipline within the technology sector, providing compelling opportunities for the development of competitive advantages by North American firms which can enable their salespeople to adapt selling methodologies to foreign cultures (Dunning, 2013; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Through a qualitative design and phenomenological research methods, I conducted first-person interviews, apply qualitative survey questionnaires, and collect other supplemental forms of data involving the lived experiences of North American salespeople who have had experience selling into foreign environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Malterud et al., 2016).

From an analysis of the field research findings combined with a thematic review of the academic literature regarding national culture, selling methodologies, and enterprise technology sales, this study aimed to contribute to the body of research involving international selling and provide insights useful for practical application by North American salespeople seeking to sell enterprise technology into foreign contexts.

A Review of the Professional & Academic Literature

Comparing culture to gravity, authors Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) explained that one cannot truly recognize the global business effects of cultural influences until “jumping” into such contexts, stressing that culture itself is not something to be fully understood, but addressed through corrective action after observing its influences upon different business approaches.

Many researchers have explored these global cultural influences across different business disciplines, examining interactions such as those affecting communication processes between Israelis and Indians (Zaidman, 2001), organizational alliances between Germans and Russians (Kulgemeyer et al., 2014), and expatriate assignments between Japanese and Malaysians (Bin Ismail, 2013).

Few studies, however, have examined the specific effects of cultural interactions upon international, enterprise sales engagements (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018). At the same time, few cultures remain as distinct from the rest of the world and more capable of producing complex global interactions as North America (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012; Villatoro et al., 2014), leaving North American salespeople with little direction for adapting their selling methodologies to a global business environment which is guided by extremely different worldviews, motivations, and behaviors than those found within their own culture.

While such challenges involving selling adaptation likely apply to North American salespeople from a variety of different industries, perhaps the most evident of such challenges in today's global environment may be found across the international technology marketplace.

Business Practices: Overview of the Global, B2B, Enterprise Technology Industry

Having long been led by firms from just a few dominant nations, the global enterprise technology market has undergone dramatic changes over the past few years, developing substantially lower barriers to entry and enabling firms from nations such as India (which were once dormant within the global IT industry) to begin marketing their technologies abroad with incredible success (Solanki & Sinha, 2017).

Led by forces of globalization, improved technological connectedness across the globe, and lower costs of software production, these reduced barriers to entry have created substantially

higher levels of international competition for incumbent technology vendors, increasing the competitive importance of effective international business strategy and B2B product selling expertise (Solanki & Sinha, 2017; Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2018).

These heightened competitive pressures not only apply to technology vendors, but also to their customers, as operational innovation through technological adaptation now constitutes a primary market force changing the manners in which nearly all business is conducted, as well as the very forms of market value created through business operations (Gamble et al., 2019; Luzzini et al., 2014).

The research of Chae et al. (2018) and others demonstrated that technological competencies have now become strongly correlated with firm performance, and business models which effectively integrate new technological innovations into operations create the potential for a multitude of competitive advantages (Baden-Fuller & Haefliger, 2013; Liu et al., 2016).

This suggests that a firm's ability to apply new or improved enterprise technologies throughout their strategy development and execution processes serves as a critically important determinant of competitive durability in the evolving marketplace which is driven by continuous technological advancement (Baden-Fuller & Haefliger, 2013; Chae et al., 2018; Gamble et al., 2019). Resulting from this newfound competitive importance, many of the purchasing behaviors of firms from different geographic or cultural contexts have begun evolving substantially (Iastremska, 2018; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Themes across the literature involving such evolutions reveal that enterprise technology is continuing to grow in strategic importance to firms worldwide and across nearly every industry, leading many to allocate decision-making authority to different individuals internally,

while also producing a multitude of new procurement processes and product integration strategies (Baden-Fuller & Haefliger, 2013; Iastremska, 2018; Mikalef et al., 2015).

These trends, along with several non-cultural forces involving global logistics, various systemic inhibitions to international trade, and varying product requirements across different geographic markets have together created a significantly complex and challenging environment for the international sale and distribution of enterprise technologies by North American firms (Zhao & Priporas, 2017).

One key theme that emerges from much of the literature, however, is that the purchase of enterprise technology is becoming incredibly important to decision-makers from nearly any cultural context, creating a unique opportunity for North American salespeople to achieve success abroad by culturally adapting their selling methodologies, potentially by leveraging key North American strengths (i.e., high achievement orientation) to help them carefully demonstrate the value of their solutions for addressing the needs of increasingly solution-oriented, foreign buyers.

Growing Strategic Importance of Enterprise Technology. Organizational investment into IT has grown dramatically over the past decade, with firms across the globe and in many different industries now prioritizing enterprise technology expenditures as a primary strategic focus (Chae et al., 2018) and leading authorities estimating that enterprise IT spending will reach \$3.8 trillion worldwide in 2019 (Gartner, 2018). Even with further anticipated growth, IT expenditures already comprise one of the largest operational expenses for leading organizations (Chae et al., 2018), with approximately 30–60% of most budgets being allocated toward enterprise technologies (Luzzini et al., 2014).

This growth in IT expenditures is well-warranted, as advancements in the development of such technologies have led to new and innovative approaches for managing and conducting business operations and even the emergence of new business models altogether (Poon et al., 2011; Sunder, 2015).

Emerging software platforms designed for managing various forms of critical enterprise information (i.e., ERP, CRM, PRM, WMS, TMS, DAM etc.) have enabled many new and unique business applications through their effective adaptation to various business processes including supply chain management, sales and marketing, ecommerce, customer service, retail management, human resources, and others (Morton et al., 2018).

At the same time, advancements in technologies for applying 'big-data' analytics to the information gathered and supplied by these platforms has enabled firms to acquire powerful insights which can be leveraged to form improved operational and financial strategies via enriched analyses (Begenau et al., 2018). Accordingly, such technologies have evolved the competitive landscapes across many industries, driving organizations to adapt existing processes to new technologies or to redesign processes altogether to align with new possibilities (Morton et al., 2018).

For example, through the application of advanced ERP systems (Ram et al., 2014), organizations may acquire operational flexibility by better coordinating activities across supply chain operations, reducing lead times and on-hand inventory costs (Lobo et al., 2012). Moreover, through the integration of logistical technologies with these ERP systems, firms may develop significant efficiencies through transportation management (TMS) and warehouse management (WMS) systems which apply advanced mathematics to the coordination of transportation, inventory, and distribution activities (Poon et al., 2011).

At the same time, organizations may deploy partner relationship management (PRM) systems and enterprise collaboration programs to improve knowledge-sharing and communication efficiency amongst different internal and external value-chain contributors (Gambetti, 2013). Applying the data gathered from these types of systems to their unique processes, organizations may also conduct ‘big-data’ analytics to reveal highly valuable insights for performance improvement.

In the example of a manufacturing firm leveraging analytics across operational and logistical technologies, firms may significantly improve forecasting, allowing them to refine the accuracy of production schedules, reduce storage costs for raw materials and finished goods, and increase efficiencies across their manufacturing processes (Bowers et al., 2017). Such analytical applications may enable them to produce highly competitive SCM strategies such as production postponement to reduce excess inventory costs at specific supply chain intervals (Nugroho, 2013) or contract negotiations with suppliers and distributors to stabilize supply chain variables (Amornpetchkul et al., 2015).

In a similar manner, many firms are connecting SCM software, ERP, CRM, and other systems to better forecast customer demand through extensive cross-analysis of enterprise data (Venturini & Benito, 2015). Such efforts may also produce unique financial considerations involving calculations of customer lifetime value (CLV) to help direct resource allocations toward marketing efforts, product lines, or e-commerce activities that yield the customers with the highest long-term returns on investment (Borle et al., 2008).

These analyses demand intelligent software and exhaustive computing power, both of which have become available for purchase through a variety of business models involving either physical infrastructure or cloud-based SaaS, PaaS, and IaaS (Shankar, 2016).

Thus, as technology spending across industries continues to increase, many organizations are faced with critical challenges involving the selection and integration of new technologies. Many organizations are now finding that an ability to integrate technological competency and adaptation-planning into executive strategy development processes can serve as a valuable competitive differentiator (Chae et al., 2018; Venturini & Benito, 2015).

At the same time, organizations are also finding that an inability to appropriately select the right technologies or successfully integrate them into their operations can lead to a multitude of costly and debilitating consequences upon performance (Chae et al., 2018; Shankar, 2016; Venturini & Benito, 2015).

Altogether, these advancements in enterprise technology have begun a forceful evolution of business strategy and practices, empowering firms across the globe which successfully adopt such products with newfound operational efficiencies and competitive insights, producing countless strategic implications and changing the global business environment.

Purchasing Challenges & Strategies. Driven by significantly increased market demand, many enterprise technology vendors have emerged with different innovations, pricing models, and value propositions involving both physical and cloud-based product or service offerings, giving organizations a multitude of purchasing options (Souri et al., 2017). Organizations may choose to invest into their own enterprise hardware and software, outfitting physical locations with storage devices and servers running perpetually licensed or self-developed programs, all maintained by their own IT personnel (Tingling & Parent, 2004).

Alternatively, they may choose to invest into more agile, cloud-based infrastructures by licensing virtualized servers, storage, and software which are provided remotely by different vendors via web-based services and subscription pricing models (Shankar, 2016; Souri et al.,

2017). Due to the breadth and complexity of many organizations' technological needs, many choose some combination of these two designs, possessing a hybrid infrastructure composed of both physical and virtual products maintained by both internal IT staff members and vendor-provided service teams (Tingling & Parent, 2004; Shankar, 2016).

For decision-makers sifting through the broad variety of vendors and solutions to address different technological needs, the ability to effectively select the products and services that best meet requirements and budget constraints has become a critical organizational competency (Tingling & Parent, 2004; Shankar, 2016). Accordingly, purchasing decisions for large expenditures into critically competitive enterprise technologies are progressively being made at the boardroom level, with managers and executive-level leadership being tasked with allocating budget and, in many cases, selecting specific products or vendors from which to buy (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Despite this elevated importance of making effective purchasing decisions, many enterprise-technology purchases, indiscriminate of industry or organizational context, fail to meet anticipated budgetary, delivery, deployment, user adoption, or functionality expectations (Veiga et al., 2014). Although greater focus has been made in recent years toward developing strategic approaches for managing IT purchasing functions, many organizations' strategies for handling product selection, portfolio management, vendor relationships, procurement administration, and end-user adoption are often ill-defined or siloed from other operations (Luzzini et al., 2014).

Organizations may often place decision-making authority in the wrong hands, failing to achieve a strategic balance between centralization for uniformity and cost advantages or decentralization for autonomy and business unit flexibility (Luzzini et al., 2014). At the same

time, with a wide range of options for addressing various technological needs through low-end, cost-effective solutions to high-end, costly options, executives or purchasing managers may struggle to identify the right balance between product quality and price to fit different requirements (Luzzini et al., 2014).

Such challenges are often exacerbated by the need for determining a strategic combination of supplier management strategies, as Luzzini et al. (2014) discusses several different purchasing approaches centered around vendor involvement including outsourcing (i.e., for product deployment, integration, and management services), sole-supplier purchasing (i.e., trusting a single vendor for end-to-end delivery of an entire solution), prime contractor purchasing (i.e., allowing a vendor to sub-contract the fulfillment of additional components for a solution), best-of-breed purchasing (i.e., choosing many highly-specialized vendors, each with the best solution for specific needs) and panel purchasing (i.e., having vendors compete based on cost and value for a spot on a ratified panel from which a firm's various departments may purchase).

Even when these decision-makers work diligently to choose ideal solutions based on quality and price considerations and vendor management strategies, siloed procurement departments can slow down the acquisition process and threaten the time-sensitive success of such decisions (Luzzini et al., 2014). Furthermore, poor organizational buy-in or failure from decision-makers to thoroughly consider the needs of the end-users can lead to deployment challenges, poor user adoption, or simply failure to address certain technological requirements which have been overlooked (Luzzini et al., 2014).

To address such shortcomings, business leaders and researchers have begun seeking diverse methods for improving the selection, purchase, and integration of these technologies

(Obal, 2017; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016). Through the example case of an enterprise software deployment across a multinational bank, the research of Veiga et al. (2014) examines some of the causes of failed user adoption during global enterprise technology purchases, concluding that firms may improve post-purchase adoption by strategically establishing pre-purchase expectations across internal teams involving product use, integration, and performance outcomes.

Such findings, along with those from a breadth of other emerging research efforts, together have led many organizations toward developing complex strategies for successfully selecting and integrating new technologies into their environments through dedicated procurement processes and staff members, change management interventions, end-user training engagements, and other efforts (Veiga et al., 2014; Seethamraju, 2015).

These strategies are often unique to the individual organization; the work of Mikalef et al. (2015) explains that different levels of purchasing centralization, supplier breadth or depth, and contracting strength may be used to achieve purchasing alignment in support of different strategic orientations such as product leadership or customer intimacy.

Through a global study on the recent evolutions of IT purchasing behavior, Luzzini et al. (2014) demonstrated that purchasing functions may vary substantially between firms based on their predominant purchasing orientations (i.e., led by the procurement department, the IT department, neither department, or cooperatively by both departments) and the current levels of strategic importance placed upon IT operations. Accordingly, technology vendors seeking to cater their selling efforts to their target markets may be met with a broad variety of purchasing behaviors requiring constant sales adaptation (Luzzini et al., 2014; Mikalef et al., 2015; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

The Problem: A Need for Cultural Adaptation

Sitting at the forefront of global technological innovation, North America is also perhaps the region which has had its technology market most impacted by forces of globalization, with the US' once dominant position in global high-technology exports being surpassed by rival nations in recent years, despite steady increases in percent of GDP devoted to technological research and development (Rehme et al., 2013; World Bank, 2019). In 2000, US high-technology exports stood at a globally dominant \$197.802 B, with the closest challenger being Japan at \$128.902 B and China sitting in fifth position at \$41.736 B (World Bank, 2019).

By 2017, US high-technology exports dwindled to \$110.12 B, being surpassed by Singapore at \$136.161 B and Germany at \$167.746 B, while being dramatically dwarfed by China at \$504.381 B (World Bank, 2019).

These changes may be attributed to a variety of causes, but much research suggests that a primary cause involves the substantial differences in culture between North America and its foreign competitors (House et al., 2004; Villatoro et al., 2014). For example, one contributing cultural factor suggested by the literature involves the internally directed nature of US culture compared to the externally directed cultures of many Eastern nations (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Defined as the degree to which individuals and groups within a society focus on either internal inspiration or external influences for behavioral guidance, measures of internal directedness and external directedness have been shown to directly correlate with a firm's tendency to either pioneer new technologies or to build upon existing technologies (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Accordingly, many North American firms may be more prone to pioneer new technological innovations due to creative insights from internal directedness, while many Asian firms may be more prone to improve upon such technologies due to keen market awareness from external directedness. This suggests that culture may predispose US firms toward innovation and “first-mover” advantages such as initial market dominance or brand precedence, while predisposing Asian firms toward replication and “second-mover” advantages such as lower R&D costs or sensitivity to global market demands (Gamble et al., 2019; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Naturally, such differences in competitive advantages likely enabled many North American firms to achieve dramatic successes at the beginning of the technological revolution, while enabling many foreign firms to gradually build upon these early innovations to grow their global market share slowly yet steadily (Gamble et al., 2019).

While this serves as but one example of culture’s underlying influences upon the global technology industry, the multitude of variables distinguishing North American culture from the rest of the world, combined with growing forces of globalization, together magnify the challenges facing many North American firms in maintaining a leading role within the global technology industry (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012; Zhao & Priporas, 2017).

Despite the great variety of these cultural challenges facing North American technology firms, few are as significant and impactful as those involving the international sale of enterprise technologies (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016). Research suggests that many North American firms are finding they can no longer remain competitively viable without a strong, global presence, creating an urgent need for effective strategies and processes for international expansion (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016).

For many firms, however, the development of even the best global strategies and business processes are incomplete and ineffective without strong foreign selling competencies (Voldnes & Gronhaug, 2015). Among the business-to-business marketplace, many enterprise technology purchases involve highly-complex, extremely expensive, and multi-faceted projects for which skilled sales teams are needed to bridge the gap between customer requirements and vendor solutions (Luzzini et al., 2014; Sourì et al., 2017).

In other words, such projects are nearly impossible for buyers to successfully complete without direct, human assistance from different vendors (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016). Likewise, it is almost entirely impossible for emerging vendors to compete and win the business of different customers pursuing these projects without the use of human-oriented, professional selling efforts, regardless of how innovative or affordable their technological solutions are (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

While such sales processes are complicated and difficult to manage domestically even for the most established and successful of businesses, these realities are faced by even greater challenges when firms offering enterprise products which require human selling processes are forced by competitive pressures to expand their sales operations into foreign markets (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Thus, the increased competitiveness of the global technology market, the widespread need for human-to-human selling processes across many enterprise-technology sub-markets, and the substantial cultural differences between US businesspeople and their global customers (or competitors), together elevate the critical importance of North American salespeople learning to adapt their selling methodologies to a culturally diverse and increasingly competitive, global business environment.

Concepts

Frameworks for Understanding North American Culture. Arguing that cultural qualities derive usefulness only by their comparison to others, intercultural psychologist and business professor, Geert Hofstede (2001), defines culture as a unique set of “mental programming” denoting a particular group’s behaviors and values relative to those of separate groups. At the same time, international management consultant, Fons Trompenaars, defines culture as “the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 8).

While focused on different applications, the first involving comparison and the second involving problem-solving, both definitions for culture provide valuable frameworks for this literature review, as this study sought first to compare North American culture to foreign environments and then to review problem-solving behaviors in the field of professional selling (specifically, North American selling methodologies).

From these frameworks, the cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), and The GLOBE Project (House et al., 2004) served as guiding toolsets for measuring and understanding North American culture from applications both explicit and implied throughout the academic literature.

Evolution of Cultural Frameworks. Through a longitudinal analysis of global business studies, Ferreira et al. (2014) examined the evolving uses of cultural frameworks such as Hofstede’s within international business research. Following his initial work in 1980, Hofstede began a dramatic growth in academic approaches for understanding and differentiating global culture, with the widespread usage of his frameworks shifting over time from focus on refining

cultural research methods in the 1980s toward focus on applying such methods to new and diverse intercultural business disciplines in the 1990s and 2000s (Ferreira et al., 2014).

As of 2016, Hofstede (2001) has been cited by more than 40,000 academic publications, establishing the work as one of the top 25 most referenced Social Sciences books of all time; however, recent trends in globalization suggest that such cultural frameworks will become even more important and more-heavily used in the coming decades (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017).

While globalization is merging cultures and forcing individuals from different societies to interact with one another across the global business environment, research demonstrates that cultural divides are becoming stronger in many ways, making cultural intelligence and adaptability critical factors for businesses which wish to succeed in an increasingly borderless and competitive business landscape (Ferreira et al., 2014).

Accordingly, toolsets such as those created by Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), and the GLOBE project will continue to evolve, improve, and encounter new applications across global business disciplines (House et al., 2004; Ferreira et al., 2014).

Using Frameworks to Observe Positive Impacts from Culture. While much of the current body of cultural research fixates on the negative effects of cultural interactions, many positive and strategic business applications of cultural diversity may have yet to be discovered. By collecting and coding a broad range of cultural research conducted over the past several decades, Stahl and Tung (2015) revealed the significant biases across the academic literature effecting disproportionate focus upon the negative effects of cultural interactions within international business.

Conceding the multitude of complex and challenging cultural interactions which harm intercultural business engagements, the authors argue that there remain many positive aspects of cultural differences across the global business environment which may be strategically leveraged for unique business applications (Stahl & Tung, 2015). Explaining that strong cultural differences often produce more successful mergers and acquisitions, the authors provided one example of such positive business applications by arguing that cultural diversity increases organizational “exploration” (Stahl & Tung, 2015).

These findings aligned with research involving group behavior which demonstrates how cultural differences provide unique perspectives for creative ideation while forcing intercultural workgroups to subvert the negative effects of groupthink through cultural conflict (Martin-Alcazar et al., 2012; Riccobono et al., 2016; Stahl & Tung, 2015).

Through these and other examples for the benefits of cultural diversity, Stahl and Tung (2015) argued that modified approaches to international cultural research are necessary to reveal many additional benefits from cultural diversity and the potentially powerful competitive advantages available to firms which can leverage them through cultural intelligence.

Accordingly, while many of the cultural risks and challenges affecting global enterprise technology sales efforts are evident, there may yet be many positive applications of culture toward the discipline of international selling.

For example, in some contexts, certain studies have shown how cultural differences may produce increased buyer supportiveness and responsiveness toward the efforts of salespeople who seek to culturally adapt their methods (Pornpitakpan, 2002). One such study by Pornpitakpan (2002) discusses how increased success during North American sales engagements

with Thais directly correlated with increases in cultural differences, moderated by the willingness of salespeople to demonstrate recognizable efforts to culturally adapt their behaviors.

Using Caution When Applying Frameworks in Research. Challenging the overextended application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions within many global business studies, Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) argued that culture is not solely defined by a rigid set of measurable variables, but rather, it is defined by a broad array of observable patterns both within and between different cultural groups. The authors suggested that many dimensional frameworks for measuring culture such as Hofstede's have often been applied in improper manners by researchers substituting real-world observations with unfounded conjecture from such dimensional measures (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017).

This speaks to the importance of conducting international business research which is both guided by well-established cultural research yet also flexible to additional or even conflicting insights from observable patterns across the continually evolving global landscape which affects nearly all business disciplines (including international selling).

Summary of Concepts. Throughout this study, the set of cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede (2001) served as the primary guiding framework for measuring and comparing North American culture to that of foreign contexts, with supplemental information from the models of Trompenaars and The Globe Project used to provide additional insights when pragmatically useful (House et al., 2004 Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Since this study did not emphasize the application of North American selling methodologies within a specific foreign context, measures of North American culture were selectively compared to other nations, societies, or regional generalizations to provide insights which were implicitly relevant to the practical purposes of this research.

Many of such generalizations, gathered from the literature, are outlined in tables one through three, with Table 1 and Table 3 displaying The Globe Project's and Hofstede's measures of North American culture compared to global averages (respectively) and Table 2 displaying Trompenaars' measures of North American culture compared to similar and dissimilar global regions or nations.

Table 1

The GLOBE Project's Measures of North American Culture

Dimension	North American (US) Practice & Value	North American (US) Relation to Global Average
Performance Orientation	Med. Practice; High Value	Values performance more than average
Assertiveness	Med. Practice; Med. Value	Values Assertiveness more than average
Future Orientation	Med. Practice; Relatively High Value	Practices Future Orientation more than average
Humane Orientation	Med. Practice; Relatively High Value	About average
Institutional Collectivism	Med. Practice; Med. Value	About average
In-Group Collectivism	Med. Practice; Relatively High Value	Practices In-Group Collectivism less than average
Gender Egalitarianism	Relatively Low Practice; Relatively High Value	Values gender equity more than average
Power Distance	Med. Practice; Low Value	Practices Power Distance less than average
Uncertainty Avoidance	Med. Practice; Med. Value	About average

Note. Interpreted from *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*,

by R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. W. Dorfman, and V. Gupta, 2004, Sage

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Table 2

Trompenaars's Measures of North American Culture

Dimension	North American Disposition	Similar Regions (Generalized)	Dissimilar Regions (Generalized)
Universal vs. Particular	Universal	Northern & Western Europe, Australia & New Zealand	Eastern Europe, East Asia, Latin America
Achievement vs. Ascription	Achievement (strongly)	Northern Europe, Australia	Eastern & Southern Europe, East Asia, Latin America
Individualism vs. Communitarianism	Individual (strongly)	Northern Europe, Australia & New Zealand	East Asia, Latin America, Africa
Neutral vs. Emotional	Neutral (slightly)	Northern & Western Europe	Western & Southern Europe, Latin America
Sequential Time vs. Synchronous Time	Sequential	Northern & Western Europe	East Asia, Latin America
Internal Direction vs. Outer Direction	Internal	Northern Europe, Australia & New Zealand	Eastern Europe, East Asia, Middle East
Specific vs. Diffuse	Specific	Northern & Western Europe	Eastern & Southern Europe, East & South Asia, Latin America

Note. Interpreted from *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business* (3rd ed.), by F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, 2012, McGraw Hill. Copyright 2012 by Fons Trompenaars.

Table 3

Hofstede's Measures of North American Culture

Dimension	North American (US) Score (0–100 scale)	North American (US) Relation to Global Average
Power Distance	40	Below average
Individualism (vs. Collectivism)	91	Very above average
Masculinity (vs. Femininity)	62	Above average
Uncertainty Avoidance	46	Slightly below average
Long-term Orientation (vs. Short-term)	26	Below average
Indulgence (vs. Restraint)	68	Above average

Note. Interpreted from *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.), by G. Hofstede, 2001, Sage Publications. Copyright 2001 by Geert Hofstede.

Insights from these generalized cultural comparisons, together with additional academic literature, were used to examine previously discovered interactions of national culture upon North American selling methodologies as well as to predict additional interactions which may be encountered throughout the field research component of this study.

Theories: Current Sales Frameworks Involving Cultural Adaptation

Though the mindsets and cultural influences of others can never be fully understood, the literature suggests that salespeople wishing to better adapt their selling efforts to foreign customers may begin by first understanding their own cultural influences which guide their behaviors and perspectives, and then by comparing such influences on the behaviors and

perspectives found across their customers' environments (McFarland et al., 2006; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Through such comparisons, salespeople may draw from traditional methods for adapting selling efforts to different types of domestic customers (i.e., task-oriented, interaction-oriented, self-oriented, etc.) to create culturally adaptive selling methodologies based on entirely new frameworks involving cultural intelligence (McFarland et al., 2006; Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019).

From this perspective, the culturally-adaptive salesperson is not a specialist in selling within any one, specific cultural context; rather, he or she is a specialist in adapting selling approaches to a multitude of different cultural contexts through an understanding of their own culture, how it relates to or differs from other major regions across the globe, and how such cultural intelligence can be integrated into traditional adaptive selling techniques (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019 Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Measures of cultural dimensions as defined by Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), and the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004), as well as a breadth of other social science research efforts provide valuable insights for understanding the unique cultural makeup of North America relative to the rest of the world. From these and additional literature involving the evolutions of the global technology industry and the field of professional B2B selling, clear themes emerge which can be synthesized to develop a conceptual framework for the cultural adaptation of North American selling methodologies to enterprise technology sales engagements in foreign contexts.

Accordingly, this literature review works to this end by examining, discussing, and synthesizing key themes from the literature involving several contextual factors shaping the

global technology sales environment, the unique attributes of North American culture compared to other societies, and the cultural assumptions underpinning common North American selling strategies, styles, and tactics.

These themes may be interpreted together to theorize the varying positive or negative impacts of culture upon the success of specific North American selling methodologies when applied internationally and can be used as a basis for creating a culturally adaptive selling framework which combines cultural intelligence with traditional (i.e., domestic) adaptive selling approaches.

By leveraging such a combination, sales practitioners may examine their surrounding organizational contexts (business unit selling strategies, organizational culture, etc.) and their individual personalities (guided by their own cultural influences) to adapt their selling methodologies and address the unique cultural backgrounds of their foreign customers.

Constructs & Variables

Cultural Underpinnings of North American Selling Methodologies. Evolving from the merger of many diverse societies through widespread immigration over the past four centuries, North America stands as a global anomaly, leading Western culture through uniquely strong Individualism, firm Capitalistic values, Christianity-influenced ethics, highly universalist legal and political systems, and a variety of other cultural nuances (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Though the United States is one of the largest and most-developed nations in the world, largely possessing the internal resources and economic abilities to sustain the basic needs and functions of its own population, the US has continually ridden (if not driven) many forces of

globalization, interweaving itself into the global economy to become a dominant political and industrial leader worldwide (Garcia et al., 2014).

These forces of globalization have continued to gain strength, affecting nearly every nation across the globe in a multitude of ways (Garcia et al., 2014). People from different nations have become more connected through advancing communications infrastructures and technologies, while the improved travel systems and evolving trade or immigration laws of many governments have increased the fluidity of people, cultures, and economies across national borders (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016).

Though this has allowed many US businesses to expand internationally more easily or participate with foreign organizations, the research of Beugelsdijk et al., (2017) suggests that, rather than unifying and reducing cultural disparities between nations, the recent reduction of international barriers to trade has caused people groups to reactively cling to their national identities and cultures more strongly. In effect, globalization, while opening borders and connecting people groups to one another in new and dramatic ways, has made the cultural differences between people groups far more important and impactful to international business interactions (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017).

Focusing primarily on the contrasting behaviors of US and Chinese businesspeople, Garcia et al. (2014) determined several key cultural differences distinguishing North American and Asian nations, postulating their effects upon international business interactions. Their research demonstrated several clear disparities between such cultures as well as several surprising similarities, suggesting that many strong cultural influences may underpin global business engagements across a multitude of business disciplines, including North American selling efforts into other nations (Choi et al., 1999; Garcia et al., 2014).

Accordingly, it is imperative for North American salespeople entering foreign markets to understand the complex cultural influences affecting and shaping the global business environment, most critically by understanding the distinguishing cultural factors driving their own values, perceptions, behaviors, and ways of thinking which differ from and interact with those of other societies in powerful yet often overlooked manners.

As the global business environment is constantly merging and evolving, cultural intelligence is becoming a critical factor for the development of competitive advantage throughout global selling activities (Javalgi et al., 2011), suggesting that insights into cultural similarities and differences across regions or nations may prove highly valuable for North American salespeople seeking to close business with foreign customers.

Several dozen well-established cultural dimensions have been defined by researchers over the past 30 years to help distinguish nations from one another (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), yet while many nations exhibit a moderate combination of similarities and differences from one another, cultural measurements taken across North America have continually proven unusual, polarized, and incredibly distinct compared to the rest of the world.

In other words, despite providing significant political, social, economic, and philosophical influences across the globe, the beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors characterizing North Americans are extremely different from those found in most other places throughout the world.

Categorizing the many potential influences of these “differences” upon North American business behavior and organizational culture, themes across the literature are found which demonstrate the culturally driven strengths and weaknesses which underly North American

business practices and selling methodologies. Themes are also revealed involving the many interactions or risks when North American business leaders, entrepreneurs, or salespeople abroad apply such culturally driven business practices.

By examining the literature involving views of self, North Americans can be described as individually focused and assertive achievers (Garcia et al., 2014; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). Furthermore, from themes involving personal and societal values systems, it can be generalized that North Americans possess a unique, very specific, and universal (i.e., “one-size-fits-all” or applied without special exceptions) value system which praises masculine ideas of success (i.e., material success, status, etc.), humane-orientation, and individual equality (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Finally, through themes involving perception and cognition, North Americans can be described as focused, low-context thinkers and Neutral, Specific communicators (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Views of Self: Individually Focused, Assertive, Achievers. Perhaps the most recognizable cultural attribute distinguishing the US from many other parts of the world involves extremely high levels of Individualism (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Across a significant breadth of literature, it can be determined that Individualism involves the degree to which a culture prioritizes self-autonomy, individual responsibility, and personal self-worth, in direct contrast to Collectivism, which involves the degree to which a culture prioritizes collective decision-making, group responsibility, and the well-being of one’s surrounding family, society, or other significant groups (Hofstede, 2001).

While many other Western nations also demonstrate individualistic views-of-self (in-part due to heavy influences from North America), few other nations demonstrate the extreme

degrees of Individualism found within the US (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Moreover, many nations across non-Western regions, including Latin America, East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, demonstrate directly opposing views-of-self involving high levels of Collectivism (Briley et al., 2005; House et al., 2004).

Describing the effects of national culture upon self-perception, Kastanakis and Voyer (2014) explain how the influences of Individualism cause Westerners to perceive themselves as independent from one another and to focus on their own individual qualities, experiences, and aspirations for deriving their personal sense of self-worth.

These influences lead them to strongly value freedom, individual expression, distinction, and personal success, partially explaining why North Americans may commonly leave different social groups such as their communities, employers, or even marriages if such constructs fail to enable the fulfillment of their own goals and priorities (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Compared to global averages, North America is also strongly achievement-oriented (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), valuing Assertiveness and individual performance significantly more than average (House et al., 2004). From a very young age, many North American children are taught via popular culture, their families, or their surrounding societal influences that they can be anything they wish to be if they work hard enough, demonstrating an inherent cultural belief that one's personal and societal value is determined by what they achieve, rather than what is ascribed to them from their surrounding environments such as their demographic backgrounds, familial wealth, or other factors (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

This belief also underscores a cultural assumption that one's situation is highly dependent upon their own, individual intelligence and work-ethic, rather than the result of external forces or

fate. Accordingly, such cultural underpinnings predispose individuals across the US to see themselves as independent, autonomous beings who possess both the ability and responsibility to determine what they want in life and to assert themselves within society for its gain (Garcia et al., 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

These unique cultural attributes differ from those found in many other places around the world, leading to significant variances of personal values and behaviors across global workgroups or international vendor-customer engagements.

Demonstrating the significant business effects of these cultural differences, the research of Garcia et al. (2014) examined the disparities between Eastern and Western cultures, emphasizing how North American Individualism (and its derivations such as Assertiveness and achievement orientation) directly influences the practices and underlying motivations of many US businesspeople abroad, leading to behaviors which can differ greatly from those of their foreign coworkers, partners, or customers.

Through an experimental comparison of US and Chinese workers tasked with making several specific business decisions, the authors found that North Americans tend to be guided primarily by their personal values and career interests when faced with workplace choices, while East Asians tend to be guided primarily by the values and business interests of their employing organizations or managers (Garcia et al., 2014).

In sharp contrast to the effects of Western Individualism, the pervasive influences of Collectivism found throughout many other regions across the globe cause individuals from many regions to perceive themselves as interdependent with one another and to focus on their relations to surrounding social groups for understanding their own value and place in this world (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Accordingly, such groups tend to prioritize the values of security, conformity, and harmony, suggesting that many non-Western individuals may be much more strongly tied to their surrounding social groups out of a sense of commitment, duty, and heightened concern for the success of their groups (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

From these findings, the authors emphasized the importance of US businesses adapting their behaviors to address such cultural differences during business interactions with foreign firms, arguing that North American businesspeople do not naturally prioritize the harmony and relational equity cherished across collectivistic cultures, nor do they place the same amount of weight on the relational equity preferred by East Asian individuals prior to conducting business negotiations (Choi et al., 1999; Garcia et al., 2014).

While these uniquely distinct measures of Individualism, Assertiveness, and achievement orientation certainly help distinguish North America from different regions around the world, differences across these few, specific cultural variables alone may not predict the general similarities or dissimilarities between the US and other nations. For example, despite producing substantial differences across measures of Individualism and Assertiveness, both the US and China demonstrate similar measures of other cultural dynamics such as similarly high measures of performance orientation and humane orientation, as well as similarly low measures of Power Distance (Garcia et al., 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

This suggests that disparities involving one cultural category do not always suggest disparities in others, further exacerbating the complexity in predicting the cultural differences between separate contexts and gravely complicating the process of business adaptations across cultural boundaries (Garcia et al., 2014).

Involving views of self, North America is incredibly more individualistic than many other regions across the globe, with those from the US being driven by internal motivations and a strong sense of personal self-worth—attributes which are magnified when compared to the incredibly high Collectivism found in many other contexts across the globe (Garcia et al., 2014; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). Thus, North American businesspeople selling abroad may encounter significant and complex cultural interactions in areas with high levels of Collectivism or low levels of Assertiveness and performance orientation (Garcia et al., 2014; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Personal & Societal Values: Universalism, Masculinity, Humane-Oriented, & Equality. While many cultural elements discussed throughout the literature are measured and studied independently of one another, certain variables have been noted to have their rooting within a region's underlying cultural bent toward either collectivistic or individualistic values (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017). Partially originating from and driven by North America's pervasively individualistic cultural dispositions, many unique personal and societal values may be identified across the US which further distinguish the region from many others around the world (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017; Villatoro et al., 2014).

At the forefront of North America's value system is a heavy emphasis on individual liberty which permeates across nearly all social domains and influences other cultural dynamics. Aligned with this overarching valuation, additional themes across the literature suggest that North Americans tend to believe in the universal application of ethical and legal systems, while prioritizing masculine value systems (desiring external success, material gain, etc.) and humane virtues (alleviating social inequalities, physical suffering, etc.).

Though North America's high measures of Masculinity suggest that the region generally does not hold material equality as a cultural ideal, other measures involving low Power Distance and high Universalism simultaneously suggest that the majority of North Americans desire social forms of equality, preferring a system rooted in "competitive fairness" wherein everyone has equal opportunities to compete for the successes (and varying levels of consequent material gain) they individually desire.

Demonstrating this dichotomous value system which prioritizes social equality over material equality, many North American organizations praise managerial styles which involve approachability and personal respect for subordinates of all levels while simultaneously promoting competition and individual achievement (Collins, 2016; Mintzberg, 2009).

This can contrast with the managerial styles found across a multitude of foreign organizations, as many non-Western nations strongly value social hierarchies or hold great disdain for competitive dynamics which disrupt the "harmony" between social groups (Garcia et al., 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Furthermore, the Collectivism of many non-Western societies prompts a higher focus on group identity and welfare, while the Individualism of Western societies like North America often produces a higher focus on personal worth and individual self-esteem (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

These different priorities may cause challenges when the personal, ego-driven nature of Western society interacts with the group-conformity nature of Eastern society during international business engagements (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). Such contrasts are magnified across many Asian nations which often possess both cultural distinctions in combination (Garcia et al., 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Through a study comparing the cultures of China, Vietnam, Mexico, and the United States, the work of Villatoro et al. (2014) demonstrated the many potential interactions of these differences in values in the global workplace, particularly emphasizing the great divide between North Americans and Vietnamese. The authors explained how North Americans' high esteem for personal freedom and lack of concern for material equality may prompt them toward a natural preference for capitalistic systems, while the Vietnamese' lack of concern for personal freedom and high esteem for material equality may prompt them toward a natural preference for socialistic systems (Villatoro et al., 2014).

They went on to argue that these characteristics produce significant implications for North Americans conducting business with Vietnamese, as their Vietnamese partners, coworkers, or customers will likely respond best to firm authoritative boundaries, cooperation, and fairness of material gain, in contrast to the freedom of speech, constructive conflict, and meritocracy commonly valued within the North American workplace (Villatoro et al., 2014).

In a sales context, such differences may complicate engagements with Vietnamese customers in a multitude of ways. For example, if North American technology vendors send salespeople of lower corporate tenure or "status" to conduct an engagement, believing that the merit of the product and the skill of the salesperson would together earn the respect of the buyers, they may unwittingly produce natural aversion to their offerings. In this situation, the findings of Villatoro et al. (2014) suggested that the Vietnamese buyers would believe the vendor did not value or respect them enough to send those of "equal" status to conduct the engagement.

North America's low levels of Power Distance may also produce subtle yet very impactful influences upon global organizational behavior. Providing a unique example of the

complex cultural predispositions underpinning cross-national business interactions, the work of Dash et al. (2009) examined the effects of Power Distance upon the development of banking relationships between Canadian and Indian firms. From their findings, the authors discovered that the high levels of Power Distance characteristic of Indian culture produced resistance from Indian firms toward the establishment of business relationships with larger or more powerful Canadian firms (Dash et al., 2009).

The authors argued that the common subjugation of weaker organizations by more powerful ones which is enabled by the Indian legal system and acceptable within high Power Distance societies caused Indian firms to strongly prefer business relationships with more equal partners (Dash et al., 2009).

Such preferences are met with confusion by North American firms which come from a low Power Distance society which rejects displays of inequality and protects the rights of smaller businesses with a strong legal system (Dash et al., 2009). Such cultural influences make it much easier for North American firms to pursue unequal relationships with different sized organizations since they may safely leverage the unique market sensitivities of smaller firms and the strength of larger firms when establishing a global presence (Dash et al., 2009; Gamble et al., 2019).

Applied to global sales relationships, North American salespeople working for larger firms may unwittingly be faced with objections such as subliminal hesitancy toward unequal partnerships when selling to smaller organizations from high Power Distance societies (Dash et al., 2009).

Beyond differences in views of social hierarchies, many other complex differences in values can be found distinguishing the US from other nations. For example, by examining and

comparing the unique ethical systems found across the US and China, Villatoro et al. (2014) found that describes North Americans primarily as “exceptionists” who maintain strong internal sets of universal moral guidelines, while describing Chinese primarily as “situationists” who define morality based on its situational practicality (Villatoro et al., 2014).

These descriptions align with North America’s comparatively high levels of Universalism which correspond with strong preferences for social equality and Specificity of communication, while driving them to prefer a highly legalistic society with extremely well-defined laws, contracts, and business agreements (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Accordingly, these differences suggest that US businesspeople may not understand that their extreme preference for clear business agreements is a unique cultural quality which often differs substantially from the preferences found within other countries.

Such lack of understanding may lead to significant challenges when such individuals engage with foreign business partners or customers from regions with high levels of Particularism (such as Eastern Europe, East Asia, and Latin America) who prefer flexibility, leniency, and “exceptions” to the rules based on relational equity, as these are directly opposed to the well-defined timeframes, rules, and expectations demanded within the North American workplace (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Such misunderstandings could lead a North American salesperson to wrongly assume their Chinese customer understood the rigidity of pricing formerly agreed to during negotiations. This Chinese customer may opposingly believe that their organizational circumstances (i.e., changing priorities, budgetary cutbacks, etc.) would easily merit changes to the agreed upon pricing, failing to understand the great complexity and length of the salesperson’s organizational process for modifying and approving additional price changes.

Accordingly, these differences in underlying value-systems may dramatically complicate or threaten the progression of North American vendor's international negotiations, especially if a salesperson mistakenly assumes that their customer holds the same underlying values or expectations. Furthermore, the influences of North America's universalistic culture extend even into unspoken ethical systems, causing many North Americans entering the global marketplace to wrongly assume those from other nations possess the same moral standards as their own (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017; Villatoro et al., 2014).

Noting the significant lack of research into the global business effects of differing ethical perspectives across regions, Oumlil and Balloun (2017) compared the different ethical frameworks held by business leaders from the US and Morocco to generalize the ethical landscapes of Western and non-Western nations.

Through exploratory research methods, the authors found that Moroccan business leaders demonstrate strong idealism and highly situationist ethical frameworks, arguing that such orientations are driven by the strong, underlying Collectivism found throughout North African and Middle Eastern cultures (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017).

Denoting the contrast of these ethical values with the strong relativism and "exceptionist" frameworks found throughout North American culture, the authors examined the additional influences of individual religiosity upon alignment with one's culturally dominant ethical frameworks, finding that a religiosity had very different corollary effects between Moroccans and North Americans (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017).

Their findings highlight the dramatic variances of ethical frameworks between cultures, as well as the extreme complexity in accounting for such differences given other underlying factors such as individual religiosity (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017). This suggests that North

Americans attempting to anticipate the ethical systems of foreign customers or business associates may be unable to rely on cultural generalizations alone for such understandings.

Views of Time: Sequentially Focused, Future Oriented (Short Term), Risk-Takers.

Comprising one of the most subtle yet significant cultural differences between the US and many other nations, North Americans hold a strongly Sequential view of time through which events are observed as happening in clear succession to one another. In other words, North Americans view time in a linear, progressive, and exacting manner, producing a variety of implications for behavioral and perspective differences compared to many other cultures which hold a contrary, Synchronous view of time through which events from the past, present, and future are seen collectively and cyclically (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Stemming from these guiding cultural predispositions, North Americans are considered highly Monochronic, preferring to focus on one task at a time, clearly plan and prepare their schedules, and highly value personal discipline involving the use of their time (Lindquist et al., 2015).

Though many North Americans venture abroad expecting individuals from other cultures to treat time in a similar manner, many individuals from other countries (those with Synchronous Orientation) are considered Polychronic, preferring to do many things at one time, allow their activities to passively come together, and value flexibility and personal interactions far more than rigid schedules (Lindquist et al., 2015).

While many ramifications of such differences in views of time are clear (i.e., monochronic customers appearing disinterested after arriving late for meetings, North Americans appearing rude when promptly leaving a discussion with a customer after the allotted time is up,

etc.), still more subtle interactions involving time may impact business engagements, particularly those which extend into related cultural dimensions.

Halkos and Skouloudis (2017) examined the effects of culture upon the emerging business discipline of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), identifying correlations between specific cultural dimensions involving views of time with predispositions toward engagement into CSR efforts among businesses from different nations.

According to their findings, organizations from cultures with high Uncertainty Avoidance demonstrate a clear and significant lack of engagement into CSR initiatives, while those from cultures with high levels of Long-term Orientation or Indulgence contrastingly demonstrate significantly high degrees of engagement in such efforts (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

While there are certainly a multitude of potential underlying causes contributing to these behavioral predispositions, this example demonstrates the extensive permeability which contrasting views of time may have across different functions in the global business environment (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

These influences may produce critical miscommunications or misunderstandings in business engagements. For example, North Americans may not understand the probable advantages of aligning their efforts with social causes when engaging in business with potentially CSR-predisposed Swedes who come from a culture demonstrating lower levels of Uncertainty Avoidance and higher levels of both Long-term Orientation and Indulgence than the United States (Hofstede, 2001; Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

North Americans may find equally complex cultural interactions related to time in East Asia, as Chinese possess higher levels of Long-term Orientation along with lower levels of Future Orientation (Garcia et al., 2014). This may cause failed communication between North

American salespeople who mistakenly emphasize the future potential of an innovative, new technical product to a Chinese buyer.

The lower Future Orientation of the Chinese buyer may cause them to not value the future strategic potential emphasized by the salesperson nearly as much as their higher Long-term Orientation would cause them to appreciate seeing how the “new” product was created by improving upon “old” and established technologies in a way that honors past traditions and ways of conducting business (Garcia et al., 2014).

A similar challenge with entirely different implications could arise if the sales engagement were instead in Japan. Though part of East Asia and close in distance to China, Japan has a very different cultural makeup, possessing an extremely high level of Uncertainty Avoidance compared to the US (Hofstede, 2001). If the same sales proposition was made to a Japanese buyer, the North American salesperson might risk negatively prompting the buyer’s aversion to the unknown by emphasizing the “innovativeness” of the new product instead of the secure and established reputation of the vendor’s organization.

As evidenced from the “start-up” culture pervasive across the US, North Americans possess low levels of Uncertainty Avoidance and are thus high risk-takers in the business environment (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). This characteristic combined with other cultural distinctions such as Sequential Orientation and Future Orientation make the US a unique cultural environment considering views of time. Accordingly, it is imperative for North American salespeople to understand the implications of these differences to better engage with foreign buyers with dramatically different perspectives.

Perception & Cognition: Focused, Low-Context Thinkers and Neutral, Specific Communicators. Examining cultural influences upon individual cognition and perception,

authors Kastanakis and Voyer (2014) conducted a literary analysis of Western and Eastern cultures to determine key differences in business behaviors across such regions. To describe the effects of cultural conditioning upon perception, the authors gave an example of how individuals from Western cultures which associate the color white with purity may perceive an advertisement with a woman in a white dress very differently than individuals from Eastern cultures which associate the color white with death (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Cognitive reasoning is also influenced by cultural backgrounds, as Easterners tend to attribute causality to an overall contextual setting, while Westerners tend to attribute causality specific actions, suggesting that Easterners may be naturally predisposed to more holistic forms of thinking and inductive reasoning, while Westerners may be naturally predisposed to more independent forms of thinking and deductive reasoning (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000).

In addition to information processing, culture has also been shown to directly impact decision-making processes, as Easterners naturally process multiple sources of conflicting information without isolating or limiting each source's relevance, while Westerners naturally reduce multiple sources of information to derive singular answers (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). When solving conflict, Easterners prefer to achieve compromise which concedes to both sides' merits, while Westerners prefer to concede to the side they feel is most fit (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Easterners tend to process and analyze information as it relates to its surrounding context, while Westerners tend to analyze information as it relates to individual categories, with unique experiments demonstrating how Asian children commonly associate pictures of a cow with pictures of grass since a cow eats grass and how North American children commonly associate

pictures of a cow with pictures of a chicken since both are animals (Chiu, 1972; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

The low context, specific, and individualistic nature of North American culture (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) may also cause salespeople to wrongly judge those customers are satisfied with the outcome of a negotiation or to prematurely believe they have addressed all relevant concerns throughout the selling process. Focusing on conflict management styles, Friedman et al. (2006) examine the unique behavioral predispositions separating North American and East Asian cultures.

Through a study of participants from North America and several East Asian nations, the Researchers found that North Americans prefer direct methods for addressing challenges, believing that conflict does not harm relationships, while East Asians prefer indirect methods for addressing challenges, believing that conflict seriously harms relationships (Choi et al., 1999; Friedman et al., 2006). At the same time, East Asians tend to place much higher importance upon the value of relationships than do North Americans, being highly sensitive to any sources of contention and often opting to avoid conflict altogether, if possible, especially with their superiors (Friedman et al., 2006).

This suggests that North American salespeople practicing aggressive selling tactics during the sales process may be met with absolute repulsion by East Asian customers, while those asking customer groups to discuss their organizational challenges through consultative, question-based tactics may receive very little feedback from individuals who seek to maintain harmony and avoid stirring up conflict by mentioning their concerns (Arndt et al., 2018; Friedman et al., 2006; McFarland et al., 2006).

This also suggests that salespeople who successfully elicit the concerns of their East Asian customers may risk harming business relationships if they engage in forceful or combative tactics for handling customer objections (Delvecchio et al., 2004; Friedman et al., 2006)

At the same time, North American Individualism can produce culturally distinct emotional responses to a variety of situations, providing the example of an experiment by Masuda et al. (2008) wherein Japanese and US participants were asked to judge the emotional state of a person surrounded by a group of people.

From their responses, the Japanese participants were found to focus on the collective emotional state of the surrounding group, while the US participants focused solely on the subject individual, suggesting that Easterners naturally focus on the surrounding context during personal interactions, while Westerners focus primarily on a singular person or element at a time (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Masuda et al., 2008).

Explaining that Westerners see individuals as independent and autonomous while Easterners see them as interdependent and interconnected, Kastanakis and Voyer (2014) go on to explain that “eye tracking” technology has demonstrated how North Americans look primarily at individuals themselves to determine their emotional statuses, while Japanese look at the surrounding contexts and others nearby to determine the same information (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

These findings also suggest that Easterners may be able to empathize with others far more effectively than Westerners, as a central influence of collectivist culture involves continuous focus on the overall group and a natural awareness of other’s perspectives (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Research also suggests that additional factors such as language can strengthen these cultural predispositions, as some studies have demonstrated how bi-cultural (coming from both Eastern and Western backgrounds) English speakers tend to display independent self-perceptions, while bi-cultural Mandarin speakers tend to display interdependent self-perceptions (Briley et al., 2005; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). In other words, the guiding individualistic or collectivistic self-perceptions of many bi-cultural individuals may often be moderated or magnified by their dominant language (Briley et al., 2005; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Related Studies: Adapting NORAM Selling Methods for Foreign Cultures

Minimal research has combined examinations of geographically disparate cultural forces with the international selling practices of North American salespeople (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018). Naturally, the multitude of cultural variables distinguishing North American perspectives and behaviors from the rest of the world may influence and guide the selling practices of salespeople from the US in ways that are detrimental to multi-cultural sales negotiations (Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2000).

Presently, there are few (if any) formalized approaches for adapting North American selling practices to specific foreign environments; however, research has demonstrated that possession of cultural intelligence alone may enable salespeople to flexibly adapt their approaches to a variety of different contexts (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018).

By promoting an awareness of differences in perspective, cultural intelligence enables salespeople to remain vigilant to cultural misunderstandings and to better empathize with the positions of their foreign customers (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018).

As it is impossible for anyone to truly understand cultures other than their own, the development of cultural intelligence begins foremost with a studied awareness of one's own

culture and what qualities most clearly distinguish it from those of other people groups (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). This understanding then progresses toward a continued awareness that people are very different from one-another, with very different values, beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors. Finally, cultural intelligence is matured through the development of a permeating sense of empathy for the unique differences of other people relative to one's own cultural background.

While increased vigilance and empathy through cultural intelligence may certainly prove advantageous to North American salespeople in any foreign context, the research of Pornpitakpan (2002) suggests that cultural intelligence is most effective in improving selling outcomes when used to adapt selling behaviors to the cultural norms of a buyer's specific environment. In other words, a salesperson's general sense of cultural intelligence may be most-beneficially applied toward the strategic adaptation of selling practices to individual cultural contexts (Pornpitakpan, 2002).

US salespeople who develop improved self-awareness and cultural intelligence by understanding the unique attributes of their own culture may potentially leverage adaptive selling approaches for the cultural adaptation of North American selling methodologies to different foreign environments (Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Through an examination of the literature involving cultural disparities between North America and the rest of the world, it is evident that US salespeople are guided by views-of-self involving high Individualism, Assertiveness, and achievement orientation (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). They also characteristically view time as singular and sequential in nature, prioritizing the short-term future and being far more accepting of risks than most other cultures (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

Furthermore, North Americans tend to focus on one thing at a time, taking in minimal contextual details and communicating with Neutrality and high Specificity (Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). Finally, they possess a universal stance on social values, morality, and legalism, holding everyone to the same standards and strongly valuing masculine virtues (i.e., success, ambition, wealth), humane-orientation, and individual equality (Dash et al., 2009; Villatoro et al., 2014).

These cultural distinctions naturally influence the predominant selling methodologies involving strategies, styles, and tactics commonly practiced by North American salespeople. According to the research of Giacobbe et al. (2006), the personalities of individual salespeople strongly shape their selling approaches, suggesting that the cultural backgrounds of North American salespeople directly influence the selection, development, and application of the sales approaches most used by such individuals.

The authors also suggest that different salespeople possess varying levels of adaptiveness (separate from cultural adaptation) which moderates their abilities to switch between different selling methods as specific situations require, describing this capability as adaptive selling (Giacobbe et al., 2006). They provide several indicators for adaptive selling which involve a salesperson's abilities to see different perspectives, empathize with their customers, pick up verbal or nonverbal cues, modify their own personalities, and modify their selling methodologies to different domestic selling scenarios (Giacobbe et al., 2006).

These adaptive modifications generally involve the adjustment of a salesperson's assumed selling methods or the selection and application of new methods altogether. A variety of common frameworks for business-to-business selling can be identified across the North American enterprise technology industry; however, the literature suggests that most of these fall

into three primary categories including team-level sales strategies, individual selling styles, and individual selling tactics (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016; Arndt et al., 2018).

Each of these categories involves a variety of individual selling approaches which a salesperson can select and apply in combination with others to produce a combined selling methodology (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Firstly, often determined at the business-unit level, team-level sales strategies involving relationship-based selling, value-based selling, key account selling, or solution-oriented selling guide salespeople toward a general approach which befits a unit's overall go-to-market strategy, regardless of whether an individual salesperson has unique international customers with needs which are different from those of the unit's primary target market (Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

Second, heavily influenced by the personalities of individual salespeople, selling styles involve a variety of selling dispositions or priorities which together shape a salesperson's unique and personal sales approach (Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990). Such stylistic elements include degrees of focus on customer orientation, conversational control, adaptiveness, self-monitoring, empathy, androgyny, initiation, and locus of control (Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Finally, while selling styles are certainly much easier for individual salespeople to adapt to unique customer environments, selling tactics which are neither directed by a business-unit nor strongly influenced by individual personality attributes are the most easily adapted facet of a salesperson's overall selling methodology (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006). A great variety of selling tactics exist which salespeople may select and apply for unique circumstances to help guide customers toward purchasing decisions.

Examples of such tactics include exchanging information, providing recommendations, making requests or promises, threatening negative consequences, engaging in legalistic pleas or ingratiation, appealing to inspiration, asking questions, handling objections with different strategies, or closing a sale with different levels of directness (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; ; McFarland et al., 2006).

Naturally, the processes for applying team-level sales strategies and selecting different selling styles or tactics are heavily influenced by a salesperson's unique cultural dispositions, and their resulting, combined selling methodologies may thus have dramatically different effects upon customers from different cultural contexts (Pornpitakpan, 2002; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

While reviewing the literature for themes involving these common North American selling methodologies, general approaches for adaptive selling, and the application of cultural intelligence during business interactions between individuals from different cultures, insights may be gathered to help develop frameworks for the cross-cultural adaptation of North American selling methodologies (Hansen et al., 2011).

From such insights, several common areas of cultural disparity between North America and many foreign environments are discovered for which adaptive selling approaches can potentially be applied to aid a salesperson's selection, modification, and development of strategic selling methodologies to suit different foreign contexts. Through this combined application of literature across these several disciplines, frameworks may be revealed for the adaptation of North American selling methodologies to different buyer motivations, value systems, communication styles, thought processes, and perspectives of time.

For example, North American solution-oriented and value-based selling strategies may be guided by high Performance Orientation which may prove inadequate to win the business of firms from nations that are not strongly motivated by performance alone (House et al., 2004; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016).

At the same time, selling styles involving high initiation and strong conversational control, as well as direct tactics for influencing customers, handling objections, or closing a sale may be guided by a higher-than-average North American measures of Assertiveness (Delvecchio et al., 2004; ; House et al., 2004; Spiro & Weitz, 1990). These styles and tactics may prove ineffective or even off-putting when applied in cultures which hold low levels of Assertiveness and prefer indirect, gentle approaches to communication, problem-solving, and conflict (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Additionally, the below average Long-term Orientation of North American salespeople may cause them to fixate on the wrong timeframes throughout value-based sales strategies with customers from cultures that are predisposed toward long-term investment horizons (Garcia et al., 2014; Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

Summary of the Literature Review

Though limited research has been conducted on the specific convergence of professional selling and dimensions of global culture, combining the extant literature for each field separately produces valuable insights which founded this research effort and substantiated the presence of a significant gap in the study and practice of international business.

In other words, the combined literature suggests that North American salespeople attempting to sell enterprise technology within foreign contexts may benefit by recognizing the cultural underpinnings of their adopted selling practices and then by adapting such practices to

the unique cultural contexts of their different customers, generally by acknowledging the contextual advantages or weaknesses associated with their business unit's current selling strategy, modifying their personal selling styles, and selecting culturally-ideal selling tactics (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Summary of Section 1 & Transition

This section began with an overview of the foundation for this study, first describing the background of the problem which involves the harmful cultural interactions affecting the success of North American salespeople while interacting with foreign customers. The problem statement was then discussed, describing the need which North American salespeople have for culturally adaptive selling frameworks which address these interactions. This transitioned to a description of the purpose statement which proposed the intent to gather and interpret information from field research and academic literature to develop insights which proved valuable for designing such culturally adaptive selling frameworks.

The background of the study continued with a description of the proposed participant group which comprised North American salespeople with experience selling to foreign customers. Then, the specific nature of this study was described as involving qualitative design and phenomenological methodology, followed by an examination of the research questions developed for guiding these efforts. The conceptual framework was then illustrated and described along with a discussion of the relationships between the two, primary study concepts consisting of cultural interactions and selling methodologies.

After this component, the significance of the study was described, emphasizing the academic potential this study has for contributing knowledge to the fields of international culture and professional selling, as well as this study's practical potential for prescribing new

frameworks for culturally adaptive selling. Definitions were then provided for key terms and concepts, followed by discussions of this study's assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and necessary approaches for the reduction of gaps. The significance and implications of integrating a Biblical worldview throughout this study were described, followed by a justification for this study's relevance and value to the field of International Business, my academic field of study.

As the final section, I reviewed the academic and professional literature related to this study, beginning with an overview of the global, business-to-business, enterprise technology industry. Then, I examined the literature involving both established and emergent frameworks for understanding North American culture, followed by a review of the various cultural dynamics which underpin common North American selling methodologies. Finally, I concluded this section with a synthesis and overview of valuable insights for the adaptation of North American selling methodologies to sales engagements with foreign customers.

Building upon the research problem, purpose, and other components of the study discussed in this section, the next section provides a practical overview of the proposed research project. After reiterating the original purpose statement, this section then discusses the role of the researcher, study participants, and specific applications of the research design and method. Then, it described the proposed processes for population and sampling, data collection, and instrument application, as well as my techniques for data collection, organization, and analysis.

Finally, vulnerabilities of the research effort are discussed, and methods for ensuring the reliability and validity of the study are proposed, followed by the section's conclusion and transition to the final section which involves the overall findings, applications, and implications of this study.

Section 2: The Project

This section will discuss the purpose of the study along with a detailed description and justification of the research methods used. Beginning with a reiteration of the study's purpose statement, I then propose the goal of contributing toward the development of effective methods for culturally adaptive selling.

After this discussion, I will describe the role of the researcher and participants in further detail, followed by an examination of the population and sampling methods proposed. Then, I will discuss data collection and analysis, including descriptions of proposed instruments, techniques, and data analysis processes. Finally, this section concludes with an examination of the qualitative reliability and validity of the research, concluded by a summary and transition into Section 3 of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of inhibited, international enterprise-technology sales engagements resulting from the failure of North American salespeople to recognize cultural differences across their global target markets and culturally adapt their selling methods to benefit their foreign customers.

Through an evaluation of the described phenomena experienced by multiple research participants, this study aimed to add to the body of literature addressing international selling and culture by exploring the most influential and potentially addressable interactions of national culture which are encountered by North American salespeople throughout international business engagements.

In application, this study aimed to provide practical guidance to business practitioners for culturally adapting selling methodologies commonly used by North American, enterprise

technology sales professionals within international contexts. Focused on the cultural adaptation of North American sales practices to foreign environments, this study intended to examine and understand North American cultural influences upon commonly used selling methodologies and uncover prescriptive methods for adapting such methodologies to a variety of different cultures.

Accordingly, this study did not aim to produce in-depth methods for adapting North American sales methodologies to a single location by focused exploration of specific, foreign cultural context; rather, this study aimed to develop a practical framework for adapting such methodologies to multiple foreign contexts through in-depth examination of North American culture and its relative differences from the cultural norms most prevalent across the global, enterprise technology industry.

Role of the Researcher

Throughout this phenomenological study, I engaged in several forms of inquiry involving an extensive review of the academic and professional literature, the solicitation and conducting of multiple field interviews, the application of a survey questionnaire, and the collection of supplemental documentation and artifacts. Once the field research was successfully completed, I then engaged in exhaustive review, analysis, and interpretation of the collected data to produce insights relevant to the study's problem statement and research questions.

Specifically, I alone was responsible for drafting interview questions, soliciting the help of interview participants, structuring the interview dialogues, and recording participant responses. Likewise, I was responsible for designing and distributing the qualitative survey instrument, as well as collecting and compiling survey responses and other supplemental forms of information which aided the interpretation of individual interviews or qualitative survey data.

After conducting such field research, I then identified relevant themes across the literature, interviews, survey responses, and other collected information to collectively interpret results and withdraw any insights which may add value to the current body of academic literature. Finally, aligned with the applied nature of this study, I examined such insights for any potential practical applications and then seek to prescribe more-effective frameworks for the cultural adaptation of North American selling methodologies to sales engagements in foreign environments.

Research Methodology

This study involved a flexible design and phenomenological research approach which were fulfilled through the collection, review, and interpretation of qualitative of data from first-person interviews, supplemental survey questionnaires, and other contextual information or artifacts (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A flexible research design befits the highly abstract natures of cultural studies and the field of professional selling, allowing for themes to be revealed across relevant, qualitative information as it is collected (Pass et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2001).

Furthermore, several sources throughout the literature demonstrate the unique capacity for qualitative research frameworks to guide business studies in addressing certain problems, such as accounting for the perspectives of multiple individuals within complex situations, (Reinecke et al., 2016), examining organizational behavior to develop prescriptive best-practices (Barratt et al., 2011), addressing multi-dimensional forms of abstract information (Reinecke et al., 2016), and even deriving practical applications from quantitative business analytics (Ekanem, 2007).

Moreover, while several qualitative methods exist for examining different types of problems, a phenomenological approach was selected for this study to account for the human-oriented and experiential natures of the research problem which addressed the applications of abstract selling processes across diverse cultural contexts (Cope, 2011; Rehme et al., 2013; Hofstede, 2001).

To achieve an accurately representative sample of the target population, 12–25 participants were selected for the interview component of the field research, while an additional, qualitative survey instrument was distributed to both interview participants and additional participants to provide supplemental information for comparative analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). At the same time, contextual information regarding participants' organizations, holistic sales performance, industry trends, and locational details were pragmatically collected to provide additional insights and allow for enhanced interpretation of themes identified throughout the interview findings (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Keller & Loewenstein, 2011).

Altogether, a qualitative research design applied through a multifaceted, phenomenological research method was ideal for the highly abstract and duplicitous nature of this study's research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The complex, qualitative natures of professional selling processes and foreign cultural interactions, combined with the diverse manifestations of phenomena discussed throughout the literature involving North Americans selling abroad, suggest that the chosen phenomenological, interview-led research approach was ideal (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Javalgi et al., 2011; Rehme et al., 2013).

Through such frameworks, themes and insights drawn from multiple forms of qualitative inquiry were applied together toward the development of prescriptive recommendations for the adaptation of North American selling methods to foreign cultural contexts.

Participants

This study drew from participants within the enterprise technology sales field who had engaged with foreign customers, either successfully or unsuccessfully, throughout their careers. Due to the limited amount of North American salespeople who have sold internationally, the difficulty in identifying them, and their busy work schedules which limit access to them, the pool of potential study participants was relatively small. Accordingly, willing participants possessing North American nationality and experience selling enterprise technology to foreign customers were selected based on accessibility.

Following the “information power” model for qualitative sample selection proposed by Malterud et al. (2016), saturation was determined through several indicators including the degree to which individual participants possess the required background (i.e., years of experience selling internationally), the quality of participant engagement (i.e., duration and detail of interviews), and the robustness of interview interpretation (i.e., use of multiple supplemental data sources).

For gaining access to interview participants, I used personal referrals as well as email and phone solicitations to individuals whose qualifications and contact information were available online. Direct messages were also sent via LinkedIn to recruit qualified candidates, as the research of Maramwidze-Merrison (2016) demonstrates how the use of social media may provide a unique and effective medium for gaining access to organizational elites in business research.

As the participant pool comprised experienced salespeople, I engaged in prospecting-style sales techniques to solicit their participation in the study, as this was a familiar manner of communication to them and potentially increased their willingness to engage in the study

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017). When appropriate, I also leveraged personal relational equity, networking referrals, or general intrigue to request individual's participation in the study.

Once scheduled, interviews of one to two hours in length were conducted either in-person or remotely via WebEx' teleconferencing service to provide ease of accessibility for participants and to improve chances of participation. Whether interviewed in-person or remotely, WebEx' software was used to record both video and audio of each interview, as well as to provide an automated transcript of each exchange. After conducting each interview, additional documentation or artifacts to help understand each case were requested from the study participants.

In addition to the participants selected for these interviews, additional participants who did not have the availability to participate in personal interviews were given the option to complete open-ended surveys questionnaires, with the goal of broadening the potential pool of research participants through increased ease of accessibility and reduced time constraints.

A digital questionnaire was created through Zoho Corporation's web-based application called Zoho Forms, and links to the questionnaire were individually emailed to individuals who had previously agreed to participate so that candidates were effectively screened for viability (rather than indiscriminately distributing the link on social media channels or other avenues).

The use of this additional research component broadened the applicability and strengthened the relevance of this study's findings by ensuring that important perspectives are not overlooked due to an inability to meet for a personal interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Malterud et al., 2016).

North American salespeople within the enterprise technology industry are notoriously busy and difficult to reach, due to the high-pressure, commission-driven, and competitive nature

of the profession which demands their constant attention (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016). At the same time, few of these salespeople possess experience selling to foreign customers, and those who do may often be located internationally, greatly limiting the pool of potential participants and complicating access to them (Cleveland et al., 2016; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Beyond these accessibility challenges, research has demonstrated that many of the most successful salespeople possess several unique personality characteristics involving high independence, self-direction, and critical natures, all of which could potentially limit the willingness of some candidates to participate academic research (Loveland et al., 2015). Thus, the processes for selecting, accessing, and engaging with participants throughout this study involved a multitude of complications and challenges which had to be addressed through carefully designed strategies for participant acquisition and engagement.

To overcome participant selection challenges resulting from the limited pool of qualified candidates, I planned to first request qualified participant volunteers and referrals for other qualified candidates from my “warm” personal network. To address potential bias issues inherent in this participant solicitation approach, I abstained from accepting participants from among my family members, close friends, and immediate professional colleagues (i.e., those with whom I currently work or interact with regularly), though I still asked these individuals for referrals to other qualified candidates.

Additionally, I leveraged personal relational equity with several different leaders in the enterprise technology industry to gain recommendations from them for further referrals to potentially qualified candidates across their extensive professional networks.

Finally, online resources and social media were used to find additional, “cold” candidates if saturation had not yet been achieved through the first two groups of prospective candidates

(Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016), with me directly contacting and soliciting the participation of those who were identified across industry-related blogs, professional selling resources, and LinkedIn searches.

I progressively identified and solicited the help of qualified individuals across these three tiers of candidate pools, beginning with the “hot” candidates until all options are exhausted, then moving toward the “warm” and “cold” candidates successively until saturation was achieved according to the “information power” model for qualitative participant selection developed by Malterud et al. (2016).

Separate from the resolution of these participant selection issues, accessibility challenges were addressed through the flexible use of different mediums to conduct interviews and collect additional qualitative information. Participants were given the option for remote, flexibly scheduled interviews via recorded webinar software if meeting in-person was not possible or practical given their unique locations or schedules. Furthermore, the administration of a supplemental, qualitative questionnaire to these participants, as well as to other qualified candidates who were unable to participate in a full interview, provided an even more flexible participative medium, increasing candidate accessibility and contributing to the robustness of the data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Malterud et al., 2016).

Finally, participant engagement challenges were addressed through a sales-oriented approach toward the interview process, whereby I respectfully and empathetically treated participants like “customers,” applying various selling frameworks to develop relational equity, inspire trust, solicit deeper engagement, and increase participant commitment to the study.

In this manner, participants were engaged with in a familiar manner which resembles a professional selling dialogue (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), ideally making them more

comfortable with the interview style, establishing my professional credibility, and potentially preventing objections or distractions resulting from the characteristically critical and self-directed nature of many salespeople.

Such an approach also protected the participants from various ethical concerns by keeping the interviews firmly focused and directed toward the research objectives, ensuring that the goals and bounds of the study were clearly understood by participants and preventing the accidental or misinformed disclosure of irrelevant and potentially inappropriate information (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Altogether, candidates were progressively selected from three different pools, accessibility was increased using multiple participation mediums, and participant engagement was strengthened through the application of familiar selling frameworks throughout the interviewing process. The clear and firm guidance provided by these selling frameworks during the interview dialogues also protected participants from ethical concerns by ensuring that the purposes and boundaries of the study were clearly understood and followed during the interview dialogues.

Population & Sampling

Comprising North American salespeople who had experience selling enterprise technology into foreign environments, this study's target population required the careful selection of an accurate sample via the use of multiple constraints.

Discussion of Population

The sample group was limited to individuals who have lived and worked within the United States for at least 10 out of the past 20 years, and who had at least two years of experience selling enterprise technology to foreign customers.

Such limitations ensured that participants possessed the necessary underlying cultural influences to represent the North American perspective, while also requiring a minimum level of direct exposure to the contexts which produced the focal phenomena of this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Hofstede, 2001).

Beyond these primary limitations applied throughout the participant selection process, additional priority was given firstly to the individuals who had been expatriated on foreign selling assignments for periods greater than three months (versus those who simply travelled intermittently for specific sales engagements or those who sold remotely from the US via video conferencing software, phone calls, emails, etc.), and secondly to those who possessed the most tenure within the enterprise technology sales profession.

Pragmatically applied, these gentle and highly limited purposive measures enabled me to further validate the relevance of individual participant candidates toward the practical goals of the overall study (Malterud et al., 2016).

Discussion of Sampling

After these limitations were effectively applied, stratification of participants constituted another significant challenge for this study, as the levels of diversity across the target population (i.e., age, race, gender, cultural intelligence, etc.) were unique to different technology submarkets, different regions across the United States, and different customer territories (Loveland et al., 2015).

Due to this complexity, I approached stratification and participant selection through convenience sampling, allowing for the availability of individual participants to dictate the composition of the participant pool and thereby applying a strategy of impartiality (except for the

experiential constraints) to derive a diverse and representative sample of the target population (Robinson, 2014).

Finally, sample saturation was determined progressively during field research through the application of several measures for evaluating the robustness and consistency of aggregated interview responses (Malterud et al., 2016). Applying leading recommendations for determining sample size during qualitative research, I conducted interviews with a minimum of twelve and a maximum of twenty-five participants (Creswell, 1998), while also pragmatically applying an additional qualitative questionnaire to as many individuals as deemed necessary to prevent potential stratification errors and improve thematic interpretation of the interview responses (Marshall, 1996).

Summary of Population & Sampling

By continually observing and measuring the cumulative experience of interview participants (measured in years of selling and diversity of foreign selling locations), depth of overall participant engagement (length of the interviews and prominence of key themes across responses), and breadth of supporting materials collected (contextual data, artifacts, and supplemental questionnaire responses), I pragmatically determined, after a minimum of twelve interviews had been completed, when no additional or relevant themes emerged from the findings and saturation had been achieved (Creswell, 1998; Marshall, 1996).

In these manners, the participant sample considered throughout this study was effectively selected, limited, stratified, and saturated during the field research efforts.

Data Collection & Organization

Due to the need to collect multiple forms of both primary and secondary qualitative data during the field research component of this study, several different mediums were employed to collect, compile, and protect such information adequately and securely.

Data Collection Plan

Interview data was collected via video recording software provided by WebEx' video-conferencing platform. For both in-person and remotely held interviews, WebEx' software was used to record and secure all interview content on their secure, encrypted cloud database. Content was intelligently transcribed through WebEx' transcription service and exported as PDF transcripts onto a secure file-storage service provided by Zoho One's cloud business platform. Additionally, Zoho One's form collection tool called "Zoho Forms" was used to collect additional contextual information from the interview participants (i.e., background information, file attachments, information consent, etc.), as well as to distribute additional qualitative instruments to both the interview participants and non-interview participants.

Instruments

Throughout this study, multiple forms of research instruments were employed to account for the multifaceted and complex nature of the qualitative information which were collected. At the same time, the researcher himself may be viewed as an instrument of this study, with certain philosophical influences subliminally guiding the data collection process.

The Researcher as an Instrument of the Study. Naturally, the values and beliefs inherent in a Biblical Worldview may influence a researcher's social science paradigms (Mkansi, 2018). Doxological beliefs of any kind may form axiological influences involving a person's values which drive motivations for specific forms of social science research (Killam, 2013). Influencing

the selection of flexible (qualitative) research for this study, my personal worldview directly aligned with the design's subjectivist research paradigms due to my belief that God could reveal truth to people in unique ways, as well as its transformative social science paradigms due to my Faith-inspired axiological goal to help specific people groups through the results of my research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Moreover, foundational to a Biblical worldview is the belief that any form of work, including business and research, should be conducted with excellence to benefit society and thereby glorify God as a representative manifestation of His work through human hands (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). Accordingly, many Christian researchers may believe that their individual axiological values are inspired by God as personal indicators of His will for their lives and His intended results for their research efforts (Hardy, 1990). These faith-inspired values may be stewarded to produce intentional results which edify business theory and practice, thereby progressing God's intentions to bless humankind through the produce of their own, excellent work (Van Duzer, 2010).

Thus, a Biblical Worldview may impact a researcher's social science paradigm by driving them to see people through God's perspective, acquire axiological values through divine inspiration, and seek manners for glorifying God through excellent work and the promotion of positive social change through their research efforts (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012; Killam, 2013; Mkansi, 2018). Accordingly, I approached this study with the view that my efforts were driven indirectly by divine inspiration, believing that both the opportunity to engage in this specific research and my acquired interest in such a field are potential manifestations (and discrete indicators) of God's will for this period of my life.

Viewing these efforts as a “calling,” I approached this study pragmatically as an instrument for transformation, seeking to promote social change by enabling (solely as an indirect, positive externality of the interviewing process) North American salespeople to re-evaluate their foreign customers and see the immeasurable value of diversity which God has instilled throughout the world.

Foremost, however, I intended to leverage the insights derived from this study to produce directly applicable recommendations for improving the success of international sales engagements, believing that such results would glorify God and serve as a means for Him to bless others through my hands.

Therefore, I served as an instrument of constructive and transformative inquiry throughout the data collection process by asking questions which both elicited relevant information for addressing the research problem and promoted reflection upon the inherent (and valuable) cultural differences between different people groups.

Interview Guides & Questions. This study focused on the phenomenological, lived experiences of North American salespeople who encountered complex cultural interactions when selling enterprise technology abroad, relying upon and interpreting their individual perceptions of these experiences to understand and address the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Accordingly, the interview questions used for this study had been carefully and strategically designed to help reveal relevant and valuable information regarding these sales-related cultural phenomena during extensive participant interviews.

The interview guide involved four components, beginning first with a general examination of participants’ personal and professional backgrounds, then transitioning to the second component involving an examination of their unique cultural influences and estimated

levels of cultural intelligence. Following this component, the interview transitioned to an examination of the participants' generalized selling personas (i.e., style, tactics, etc.), and finally, the interview concluded with in-depth examinations of specific international selling situations (aka., phenomena) encountered by the participants themselves which involved either successful or unsuccessful outcomes resulting from complex cultural interactions.

By asking participants about their perceptions of the cultural differences between different people groups, I sought to estimate their levels of cultural intelligence. Then, by asking participants to discuss the key challenges they experienced selling enterprise technology to foreign customers, I sought to identify joint implications from both sets of questions to together address Research Question One (RQ1) of this study. In this manner, I sought to determine what the most harmful cultural interactions were which impacted cross-national sales engagements, whether resulting from lack of cultural understanding, severity of cultural disparity, or both forces.

Furthermore, by asking participants to self-assess their selling approaches and provide information related to their selling philosophies, I then sought to identify adaptive measures for adjusting selling methodologies in answer to Research Question Two (RQ2). These same insights, combined with the interpreted answer to RQ2, were then applied toward addressing Research Question Three (RQ3), as such information helped determine what specific selling strategies, styles, and tactics may be used to address the strategic selling requirements of different cultural contexts.

While the phenomenological nature of this study necessitated a dominant focus on the specific experiences of the interview participants, the first three generalized sections of the interview were intended to produce relevant background information which could be useful for

interpreting the primary phenomenological component of the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, beginning the interviews with such sections could help “prime” the memories of participants, potentially helping them recall relevant situations from their careers and preparing them to discuss such memories in greater detail with increased emphasis on the cultural and sales-centered situational dynamics most pertinent to the study.

Finally, several weeks following the completion of each recorded interview, I contacted participants to conduct brief follow-up interviews for gathering any feelings, thoughts, or feedback regarding the interview process, questions, or subject matter. These informal follow-up interviews were unstructured and unrecorded, providing me with feedback to better validate and interpret participants’ responses while also providing a mechanism for double checking and ensuring the participants’ continued consent to contribute their experiences and insights toward this study.

Data Organization Plan

Zoho One’s CRM service was used to securely store participant information as “customer records,” and the transcribed interviews were directly tied to their corresponding “customer” profiles in this system. At the same time, responses received from Zoho Forms were automatically connected to the correct customer profile by associations with the participant’s primary phone number.

Such a process ensures additional information security and participant protection through several functions: first, the use of highly-reputable business SaaS platforms (WebEx and Zoho One) automatically ensures integrative security measures threaded throughout the platforms, providing a highly-secure repository for research data; second, the integrative use of several services from a singular vendor (Zoho One) prevents vulnerability by reducing cross-

communication of data between disconnected networks. Altogether, these tools were used to collect research data securely and efficiently throughout this study.

Summary of Data Collection & Organization

Data unable to be collected by these toolsets were collected either in-person or via email, and such information was manually scanned or uploaded by me to Zoho One's services before being deleted from my computer or shredded (if physical).

Copies of the Interview Guide, as well as physical informational forms for use when participants were unable to access the online survey tools (i.e., Participant Background Form), can be found in Appendices A and B. Links to the specific, technical security measures of the cloud services I used can also be found in Appendix C under "Data Security Features of the Research Toolsets."

Data Analysis

Once interviews were conducted with the necessary number of participants to achieve saturation, interview transcripts were compiled and reviewed along with the additional, supplemental materials collected.

The data analysis process involved five parts as follows: a) compilation and refinement of all collected data; b) individual analysis of each participant's experiences; c) identification of pattern themes across collective participant experiences; d) extrapolation of identified themes to the existing literature; e) combined interpretation of individual experiences, collective themes, and insights from existing literature to formulate recommendations for practice.

Emergent Ideas

At the beginning of the data analysis process, I reviewed all data for purity to ensure that the sources, processes, and collection methodologies were both credible and reliable (Creswell &

Creswell, 2017). After this initial review was conducted, I then examined each interview participant's experiences separately, referencing interview transcripts, qualitative survey submissions, and supplemental documentation or artifacts to interpret individualized meaning from their unique, isolated experiences.

After this individualized review, the collective interview transcripts and supplemental information were collectively reviewed to identify pattern themes and emergent ideas related to the research questions.

Coding Themes

Leveraging the qualitative coding software, NVivo, field research data was compiled and analyzed for pattern keywords, phrases, or other commonalities. Once certain patterns were revealed across participant interview transcripts, survey responses, and other data, they were coded into categories within the software to denote specific themes (Malterud et al., 2016).

To effectively isolate themes from the data, I categorized and compiled unique forms of information (i.e., interview transcripts, survey responses, etc.) into "buckets" which were then processed by NVivo to reveal the pattern words and phrases across all gathered information of each specific type (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For example, all interview transcripts were compiled and coded for pattern themes separately from survey responses or other forms of information.

Interpretations

Once pattern themes had been identified across each category of data, they were cross-examined with those from other data categories and then connected to any supporting or contradictory insights recognized across the literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

After comparing the thematic findings to the relevant bodies of literature, I collectively reviewed and interpreted the insights derived from isolated consideration of each participant's experiences, the thematic patterns across the compiled data, and an overview of the existing body of literature to extrapolate relevant insights for the adaptation of North American selling methods to benefit buyers from foreign cultural contexts (Malterud et al., 2016).

Reliability & Validity

Throughout any academic study, especially those of qualitative natures, several precautions must be taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation processes (Malterud et al., 2016).

Reliability

By strategically employing a convenience sampling model, along with a pragmatically progressive process for determining saturation, I ensured that the population and sampling efforts were reliably conducted according to highly credible and duplicatable research approaches (Malterud et al., 2016; Robinson, 2014).

Furthermore, the exhaustive and highly structured nature of the interview guide ensured that participants were asked the same questions and were guided by the same psychological influences inherent in the unique line of questioning presented by me. Such structure and consistency ensured the reliability of participant responses and the subsequent extraction of pattern themes from the interview transcripts, since all participants were engaged with in highly similar manners (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Validity

At the same time, the validity of the study is protected by the collection of multiple forms of data through several different mediums, as well as by the multi-faceted and comprehensive

collection of interview data via first-person observation, audio recording, video capture, and digital transcription (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Bracketing

Bracketing strategies were employed across both research components by beginning each questionnaire and interview process with baseline questions that determine participants' generalized perspectives regarding sales methodologies and dimensions of global culture. In this manner, my preconceived notions regarding the valuations, effects, and interactions of these concepts were moderated by the unobstructed opinions of research participants gathered prior to their engagements in the primary data collection efforts.

Summary of Reliability & Validity

Thus, multiple protective measures were employed throughout this study to ensure the overall reliability and validity of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes.

Summary of Section 2 & Transition

This section began with a reiteration of the study's purpose statement before describing the role of the researcher, explaining my responsibility for reviewing the academic literature, conducting field research involving several forms of qualitative inquiry, and both analyzing and interpreting information for practical application to the field of International Business. The participant group considered throughout this study was then described, defined as North American salespeople who met certain professional qualifications and had certain levels of experience selling to foreign customers.

Chosen methods for participant solicitation, as well as measures for overcoming potential participant-related challenges such as selection, engagement, accessibility, and ethics, were also described. Following these discussions, applications of the research method and design were

described, defending the appropriateness of a qualitative design to fit the abstract nature of the research problem, as well as the use of a phenomenological method to fit the deeply experiential and situational natures of the most-relevant insights for fulfilling the research purpose.

Several field research activities were discussed for applying a phenomenological methodology, including interviewing, administering qualitative questionnaires, and collecting supplemental information; then, the underlying research strategies behind the use of these different measures was described. This section then transitioned to an overview of the population and sampling methods employed throughout the study, describing the limitations applied to participant selection, as well as the strategies used for ensuring stratification and saturation during such processes.

Data collection processes were then examined, beginning with a discussion of the data collection instruments used in this study. Considering myself as the primary instrument of this study, my underlying philosophical determinations were discussed to suggest potential effects upon research goals or interpretive outcomes. The interview guide and qualitative questionnaire were then discussed as instruments of this study, with their composition and strategic purposes described.

Finally, data analysis processes involving the application of thematic coding procedures upon interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, and other collected information or artifacts were outlined, followed by a discussion of the overall reliability and validity of the study. This section concluded with the proposal of measures for ensuring the reliability and validity of the study, with arguments made that the use of multiple forms of data collection and highly structured interviews would effectively help establish the strength of the field research.

The final section of this study (Section Three) will discuss the findings of the field research, the potential applications of insights derived from such findings, and the implications this study has upon the academic field of research as well as the field of practice.

Section 3: Applications to Professional Practice & Implications for Change

Overview of the Study

This study examined the complex, multi-dimensional cultural factors underlying cross-cultural sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign buyers. A total of 12 participants were enlisted and given the option to complete either a recorded interview, a comprehensive questionnaire, or both components (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Data was collected and coded to denote possible cultural interactions, selling styles, and selling outcomes, followed by exhaustive qualitative analyses.

Through exhaustive qualitative analysis, patterns emerged to suggest correlations involving: a) the application of specific selling behaviors; b) the presence of specific underlying cultural measures; and c) the inexplicable failure of cross-cultural selling engagements characterizing this study's examined phenomena.

As described in the literature and predicted in the foundations of this study, themes developed to suggest several prominent cultural interactions, which are likely the most pervasive and impactful upon NORAM selling engagements abroad. Furthermore, associated selling styles also emerged as likely determinants of either positive or negative outcomes when applied in contexts characterized by such cultural interactions.

Implications from these emergent themes were then further evaluated and compared with findings from the literature to suggest measures for avoiding adverse selling outcomes in broadly foreign contexts by modifying NORAM selling methods to address better the most prevalent and harmful cultural interactions identified.

Presentation of the Findings

This section will present the data collected during the field research component of this study, followed by an examination of key themes identified across such data. Then, interpretations of these themes were explored before visual representations of the findings are shown and explained. Finally, this section will conclude with a discussion of how these findings relate to this study's original research questions, conceptual framework, anticipated themes, overall literature, and problem statement.

Themes Discovered

To address the research questions of this study involving two distinct fields of research (dimensions of culture and professional selling), multiple forms of data were collected and then evaluated from several different perspectives prior to joint analyses and interpretations of the combined themes (Forman & Damschroder, 2007).

First, themes involving the most prominent cultural interactions affecting prior sales engagements with foreign buyers identified across the described experiences of the North American participant group (P1–P12) were identified. Then, the experiences and sentiments of the same North American participant group were evaluated to identify themes involving their unique selling behaviors which may be attributable to certain underlying influences from specific North American (“NORAM”) cultural distinctions.

After both analyses were completed, themes across both sets of findings were considered to identify potential connections between the impacts of certain cultural interactions and the unique selling behaviors characterizing the NORAM participant group.

Most Prominent Cultural Interactions. Multiple forms of field data were evaluated to identify patterns involving the cultural interactions possibly affecting the success of participants'

prior cross-cultural sales experiences. From the analysis, several clear themes emerged suggesting the most prevalent and harmful cultural interactions which could explain the phenomena described by North American salespeople who encounter inexplicably failed cross-cultural sales engagements.

The most evident theme which emerged from the analysis involved the pervasiveness of communication-related cultural challenges experienced by the participant group (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12), including patterns of severe misunderstandings in contexts with Indirect communication styles (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P11, P12), as well as difficulties navigating different levels of cultural expectations for Assertiveness (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P11, P12)

At the same time, major challenges involving social roles were observed through patterns of NORAM salespeople encountering major interactions in contexts with much higher Power Distance (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12), as well as moderate interactions in contexts with much higher Collectivism (P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, P10).

Moreover, interactions between conflicting North Americans social values appeared to produce significant challenges, as patterns of significant interactions were observed involving differences in Universalism vs. Particularism (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P12), while moderate interactions were also observed involving differences in Specific vs. Diffuse work-life balance expectations (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P11).

Finally, minor interactions involving Sequential vs. Synchronous cultural perspectives demonstrated the prevalent challenges resulting from different views of time (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P12).

Abundant Communication Challenges. Communication proved to be the most common challenge encountered across participant experiences and sentiments, with cultural challenges involving communication variables being the most coded category for all but one participant.

Though this category is composed of only two and one-half cultural variables, including Assertiveness, Direct vs. Indirect (as a partial derivation of Specific vs. Diffuse), communication issues represent over 34% of all challenges identified across the field data.

Moreover, as shown in Table 2, challenges involving Direct vs. Indirect communication styles account for the largest share of Communication challenges, comprising approximately 57% of the category and 11% of the total codes across all 22 cultural dimensions evaluated in this study.

This section will describe several examples of such communication challenges encountered by the North American participant group during their cross-cultural selling experiences, first examining those involving misunderstandings in Indirect cultural contexts, followed by examining those involving varying expectations for the appropriate degree of Assertiveness employed during sales dialogues (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12).

Severe Misunderstandings in Indirect Contexts. Across many participant responses, a substantial number of warnings and cautionary tales of misunderstandings or miscommunications were found, many of which can be attributed to the disparities between direct and indirect communication styles (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P11, P12).

Though these scenarios spanned a variety of cultures and selling contexts, some of these examples were further exacerbated by limited forms of communication during remote sales engagements, aligning with the findings of Du-Babcock and Varner (2008), which demonstrate

the inherent risks of miscommunication in cross-cultural videoconferencing in a communication experiment between individuals from the USA and China.

In an example of these miscommunication risks, participant P1 described the unique challenges inherent in remote sales engagements—those involving video conferencing solely, phone calls, or other digital means of communication—particularly those with foreign buyers from indirect or high-context cultures, explaining that it becomes very difficult to “pick up on subtle queues and understand the customer’s perspective well” when unable to meet with them face-to-face.

This same participant later mentioned the difficulties in gathering clear information from a potential customer in Ghana with whom he had only been able to communicate remotely (P1). Admitting that he did not change his communication approach for this specific buyer during the engagement, the participant explained that since they could not get the customer to be “forward” with them, they remained engaged in the deal longer than they should have been, thus exacerbating the loss of their time and resources spent pursuing this specific buyer who was truly uninterested from the beginning (P1).

In a separate example of the potential risks from conflicting communication styles and cultural norms, another participant, P7, explained how the way a person receives a business card is very meaningful in Japanese culture and that failing to receive a card graciously, study it to demonstrate interest, and secure it safely for later use can communicate a significant amount of disinterest or arrogance to the one who offered it.

Also referencing Japanese culture, participant P1 described having presented to a Japanese audience who appeared to politely nod in agreement during the entire presentation yet were later found to be highly skeptical of the content presented, completely unbeknownst to the

North American salesperson. This example magnifies the findings of Azuma (2010) which demonstrate how the highly indirect nature of Japanese culture, combined with a strong proclivity to avoid conflict, can complicate business interactions when met with the highly direct and assertive communication styles of North Americans.

Thus, findings from the field research strongly suggest that failure to understand and adapt their own highly direct communication styles when selling internationally may cause salespeople from the USA to misinterpret their communications with Japanese, Chinese, Ghanaians, or clientele from other indirect cultures, especially in contexts where a client's indirect dispositions have made them conceal their overall intentions, potential buying objections, or overall levels of interest (Azuma, 2010).

These risks are further exacerbated in fully remote sales engagements where all communication is conducted via phone, online videoconferencing, or other like services (Dubbabcock & Varner, 2008).

Difficulties with Assertiveness in Communication. Assertiveness proved to be a significant determinant of harmful cultural interactions across the field data, with NORAM salespeople describing scenarios wherein they likely jeopardized outcomes by overstepping cultural expectations and appearing far too aggressive in their communication (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P11, P12).

In fact, after collectively evaluating the patterns across the data, selling contexts in cultures with much higher Assertiveness appeared to be associated more frequently with deal outcomes that were either failed or sub-optimal.

Suggesting the potential confusion in contexts with different expectations of Assertiveness, participant P1 described experiencing difficulties understanding where foreign

buyers are “coming from or what they are subtly trying to communicate,” explaining their specific challenge of being “sensitive to how directly [they] can ask for their business and/or discuss the process to get a decision.”

Patterns of this “confusion” were recognized across several described scenarios in which disparities in Assertiveness appeared to produce misunderstandings for the participants when their foreign clientele did not interject during conversations to address their issues or concerns in an upfront manner as would normally be expected in North American business contexts.

One participant, P12, described a sales negotiation with a female Indian buyer who was completely engaged and happy with the discussion. Afterwards, however, the salesperson came to find that she was extremely displeased with the conversation and felt she was not heard or understood. Since she had not vocalized her concerns during the meeting, the salesperson was left oblivious to the contextual clues hinting at her displeasure and was thus unable to address the issue.

Challenges from Different Views of Societal Roles. Challenges involving disparities between uniquely low levels of Power Distance in the USA and high levels of Power Distance found in many foreign contexts were found (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12).

High Risk in High Power Distance Contexts. Across several accounts, participants referenced scenarios where confusion over authority structures may have affected deal outcomes (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12). In one example, participant P1 shrewdly explained that throughout their global selling efforts, one of the behaviors they had learned to be successfully involved asking: how much does one have “to stroke an ego or help them save face? How much decision power or influence does someone have?”

Confusing Collectivistic Buying Behaviors. The same participant, P1, expressed substantial displeasure with “how much the deck is stacked in favor of Canadian companies over foreign companies,” followed by describing a scenario in which his US-based company had the better product and better pricing yet still lost to a Canadian competitor when trying to sell to a specific Canadian customer.

Though there are many reasons the Canadian buyer could have made this specific purchase decision, multiple references by the participant to the “unfair” nature of the preferential treatment they had seen given to their Canadian competitor, combined with the fact that the largest disparity across Trompenaars’ dimensions of culture between the US and Canada involves that of Individualism vs. Communitarianism (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), together suggest that culture may have been a strongly influential factor in this situation (Adler et al., 1987; Hoberg, 2000; Dash et al., 2009).

Canada is substantially less individualistic than the US, leaning further toward Communitarianism which is defined by the level of importance placed upon the well-being of the group to which one belongs versus that placed upon one’s individual welfare (Adler et al., 1987; Hoberg, 2000; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Challenges Involving Different Social Values & Ethics. Aside from challenges involving societal roles, challenges from differing social values and ethics were also observed across participant responses (P2, P3, P5, P6).

Even Higher Universalism. Despite the high Universalism which North Americans are known for having in contrast to many other nations, Germany is one of the few countries which have slightly higher measures of Universalism in comparison to the USA (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Though the difference in values between the US and Germany for this dimension is not very extreme, a large proportion of the participant group referenced issues with German buyers or other individuals which involved their higher degrees of attention to detail, strictness with rules, or regard for written or verbal agreements (Kulgemeyer et al., 2014).

This could be in part due to German culture also possessing substantially greater degrees of Uncertainty Avoidance which could motivate extreme attention to detail and rigidity in planning when combined with high degrees of Universalism (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

While difficult to interpret through a generalized view of non-US culture (since Germany is an anomaly in this cultural dimension, just as is the USA), this insight serves as an example of the risks from using generalized frameworks to describe broadly “foreign” culture.

Specific vs. Diffuse Work-Life Balance. Many participants described being confused by the degrees to which “work/life balance” was different in various cultural contexts.

While most of the issues described involved acclimating to expectations of higher personal involvement with foreign buyers throughout the selling process, there was one scenario wherein a professional services deal with a buyer in Bermuda was nearly lost because of misunderstanding the local degree of cultural diffusion (P4).

After changing the services personnel assigned specifically to service a CEO’s home office, P4 recounted struggling to understand why the CEO had become very disengaged throughout continued account maintenance discussions. It was not until they were informed of the importance of a strong relationship the CEO had with the original two service personnel that P4 quickly corrected the issue by reassigning the two service personnel back to the CEO’s location.

Challenges Involving Different Views of Time. In one scenario, participant, P12, described having waited on a video conferencing line for an engagement with an assistant CIO from Mexico who still had not joined the call after about 10 minutes had passed from the scheduled start time.

After canceling the meeting and dropping from the call with the assumption that the assistant CIO was unable to join and would wish to reschedule, P12 found out that the assistant CIO had tried to join shortly thereafter and was irate at the impromptu cancellation.

In another example (hereafter, “Meeting with a ‘Rude’ Nigerian CIO”) underscoring the potential challenges from different time perspectives, participant P6 - who was selling for IBM - described having become extremely offended at the behavior of a Nigerian CIO with whom they were engaged in a scheduled sales discussion. P6 explained that the buyer was “so arrogant like [they’d] never experienced” because they kept him and his team waiting for 45 minutes before starting the meeting and then were disrespectfully reading the newspaper at the beginning of the sales discussion.

This serves as a powerful example of the underlying effects of culture, as the disparity in measures of Synchronous time perspectives between the US and Nigeria is substantial. In fact, the US and Nigeria are divided by more than 40 points’ difference on the 0–100 scale between Sequential (single-tasking) and Synchronous (multi-tasking) time perspectives (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Though the behavior of the Nigerian buyer is perhaps rightly considered to be arrogant and disrespectful, it would have been viewed less negatively had the company representatives involved been from a culture that was more accepting of multi-tasking activities in the workplace (Sanzo et al., 2003; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Thematic Summary of Cultural Challenges. It is important to note that the mere presence of these cultural challenges as described across participant experiences and sentiments does not necessarily indicate which cultural challenges are most prominent across the global business environment (Dunning, 2013; Johnson et al., 2006; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

The participant group was composed of many individuals of highly diverse selling experiences and is presumed to represent a general survey of the overall population of North American (“NORAM”) salespeople who are likely to be involved in cross-cultural selling engagements (Hansen et al., 2011; Malterud et al., 2016; Stayton & Mangematin, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

However, since very minimal quantitative research exists which could substantiate or better suggest the proportional volumes of NORAM sales engagements across specific cultural contexts, further research is needed to validate whether the locational experiences of this study’s participant group comprise a fair representation of the those experienced by the overall population.

Nevertheless, until such a study is conducted, the contextual cultural makeup underlying the collective participant experiences described in this study may provide a fair insight into the most challenging cultural settings NORAM salespeople may themselves encounter if tasked by their American employers to sell into foreign environments (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Identified Selling Styles & Sentiments. Across the literature, an abundance of unique sales frameworks can be found which propose various classifications of specified selling practices, many of which involve defined salesperson personas, behaviors, or strategies (Arndt et

al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Though the goal of this study does not involve revealing, categorizing, or defining different generalized selling practices, diverging from the literature's pre-existing paradigms and considering the nine behavioral categories identified across the data analysis serves to better evaluate, in-context, the unique experiences of this study's participant group.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these identified behaviors do not constitute an alternative sales paradigm, though further research into the possible relevancy of these identified behavioral categories in other contexts may be warranted.

Connecting. Across the data analysis, 23 separate patterns emerged from described scenarios and participant sentiments which, collectively, were found to be encapsulated in the selling behavior of seeking a connection with one's buyer (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12). Codes were defined to denote each of these patterns and then used to tag a total of 173 references to the practice of connecting across the field research data.

This behavior of connecting encompassed codes involving salesperson prioritizations of seeking mutual understanding, building relationships, demonstrating sincerity, having fun, telling stories, making friends, using humor, and gaining trust through open and genuine communication (Arndt et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2006). Connecting also included the coded patterns of closing via emotions, influencing via emotions, and salesperson admissions of loving to help people and taking an interest in others (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

Understanding. Composed of nine separate patterns, the selling practice of seeking to understand the complex perspectives of one's buyers was coded 101 times across the field research data (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). Many of these codes were applied

to salespeople directly expressing desire to understand their customers, with all but three participants using the exact word “understand” to describe this behavior (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P11, P12).

This practice also included the handling of objections by postponing (i.e., trying again later to provide time for better understanding the needs of a buyer), as well as high levels of adaptiveness, androgyny (adapting well to customers of different genders), empathy, self-monitoring, and low levels of internal locus of control (perceived ability to control outcomes) or low initiation (creativity in selling and strong drive to achieve; Delvecchio et al., 2004; Paulhus, 1983; Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1981).

Consulting. A total of 10 patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 88 separate references across the field research data to the selling practice of consulting (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). Consulting involved salesperson preferences for handling objections directly (i.e., addressing them upfront), as well as influencing via consultation, questions, or requests, and prioritizing questions, collaboration, and active listening (Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006).

Structuring. A total of 11 patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 73 separate references across the field research data to the selling practice of structuring (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

These patterns encompassed by structuring included preferences for closing via incremental incentivization or structured processes (i.e., promoting clear, upfront buying timeline expectations), handling objections indirectly (i.e., preemptive methodologies), influencing via structured approaches (i.e., heavy use of guided selling frameworks), as well as prioritizing heavy research and attention to detail (Delvecchio et al., 2004).

The individual with the highest personal proportion of cultural challenges from Values & Ethics, participant P3, was also the person with the lowest selling preference for Consulting and Structuring, as well as the highest preference for Teaching and Understanding (all by large margins). P3 was the only participant whose predominant selling experience was not in the technology industry.

Communicating. A total of eight patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 58 separate references across the field research data to the selling practice of communicating (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). Communicating included patterns of closing via anecdotes (i.e., “feel, felt, found”) or direct requests, handling objections by compensating (i.e., negotiating) or minimizing, as well as demonstrating high conversational control, influencing via promises (i.e., establishing a future buying vision), and a general desire to prioritize effective communication (Delvecchio et al., 2004; Rhoads, 1988; Weitz, 1981).

The two with the lowest preferences for Communicating, P3 and P5, also had the highest preferences for Quarterbacking, and both experienced the lowest number of cultural challenges involving Communication. This might demonstrate how strong organizing, coordination, and the general interpersonal leadership skills necessary for successful Quarterbacking might naturally help overcome communication challenges during cross-cultural selling engagements.

Serving. A total of nine patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 49 separate references to the selling practice of serving across the field research data (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P12).

The practice of serving included the preferences for closing passively and handling objections by disregarding (i.e., leaving a deal if buyer-solution fit is not clearly identified), as well as prioritizing adding value, ensuring solution quality, and actively providing excellent

customer service (Delvecchio et al., 2004). Finally, high customer orientation and low conversational control were also attributed to serving (Bursk, 1947; Rhoads, 1988; Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

Quarterbacking. A total of 10 patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 41 separate references to the selling practice of quarterbacking across the field research data (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P11, P12). Quarterbacking included patterns of high internal locus of control (i.e., firm belief in one's abilities to affect selling outcomes), high initiation (i.e., creative selling and overall drive to perform), preferences for influencing via relational navigation (i.e., networking and cross-departmental or cross-organizational communication), and prioritizing coordination, efficiency, and hard work (Merrill & Reid, 1981; Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Rhoads, 1988).

Solving. A total of seven patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 40 separate references to the selling practice of solving across the field research data (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Solving included preferences for solving problems, closing via urgency (i.e., emphasizing time-sensitive risk or opportunity), influencing via emphasis on buyer pain points, and prioritizing the development of goal-oriented buying visions (Arndt et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2006).

Teaching. A total of eight patterns were identified and defined as codes to attribute 25 separate references to the selling practice of teaching across the field research data (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11).

These codes ascribed to teaching included expressions of high homogeneity (i.e., salesperson belief that selling frameworks should work the same across different people groups

or contexts), demonstrations of low customer orientation (i.e., not necessarily absence of customer orientation—simply higher proportional emphasis on solution information versus customer factors), preferences for influencing via information (i.e., telling, showing, teaching), using experience to coach team members, and high prioritizations of formal training and internal knowledge sharing (McFarland et al., 2006; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016; Rhoads, 1988; Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

Interpretation of the Themes

Juxtaposition of Connecting & Understanding with Prevalent Communication

Issues. Though the two most referenced selling behaviors observed across participant responses were Connecting (all participants) and Understanding (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12), these preferences are greatly juxtaposed with Communication issues being observed as the single most referenced type of challenge experienced during cross-cultural sales interactions (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

One might assume that holding connecting and understanding in such high regard would provide a salesperson with the capacity to notice and overcome communication issues, as their efforts to establish rapport and get to know their clientele could help them achieve more clarity in their sales dialogues.

However, the combined data does not substantiate such an assumption, as the salespeople advocating for these selling practices still referenced far more communication issues than any other cultural challenge.

Participants placed a substantial level of importance upon both Understanding and Connecting with one's buyer (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). A variety of manners emerged through which participants promoted accomplishing either or both of these;

however, the salespeople who seemed to have the most success (as well as the most positive outlooks on the practice of selling internationally, in general) were those who advocated for seeking to “understand” customers on a personal level, having a genuine interest in their unique perspectives, and empathizing with them as human beings with the same core characteristics as everyone else (P1, P2, P4, P7, P9, P11).

According to P7, “people are people,” suggesting they believe people to be the same in most ways, even across different cultures, and that they all respond to some of the “same basic human instincts” for connecting with others. They go on to say that demonstrating a sincere interest in other people tends to overcome any misunderstandings or potential miscommunications during the selling process.

In other words, when a foreign buyer believes that you care about them and truly wish to understand them at a deeper level than the “typical” North American salesperson, they are likely to be far more engaged throughout the selling process and potentially far more likely to purchase from you.

It is worthwhile to note that this same participant, P7, expressed multiple times having a deep appreciation for other cultures, referencing repeatedly the beauty of life and of diverse people groups with different customs, beliefs, and art. Perhaps P7 serves as an example of one who sincerely does seek to understand others and to see the beauty in life.

Moreover, several other participants who were also associated with high preferences for connecting and understanding expressed similar sentiment, describing their genuine appreciation for the different traditions and customs of other cultures as well as their gratitude for the extensive international travel opportunities which their sales careers had provided (P2, P4, P7, P8, P9).

Potentially Heightened Attentiveness to Communication Issues. Despite the substantial volume of references to cultural challenges across participant responses, many of these were not always realized by participants as communication-related challenges; rather, many of these determinations were made throughout the data analysis processes whereby specific selling challenges were considered through the lens of their relevant cultural contexts.

While it can be argued that the presence of such a high proportion of communication challenges relative to other challenges suggests that communication-related cultural interactions were the most impactful challenges across the participants' collective experiences (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12), there are several other viable interpretations of this phenomenon.

It is possible that, over the courses of participants' extensive and diverse careers (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12), they had become closely attuned to the importance of communication throughout the selling process (both with foreign and domestic customers), and accordingly have developed a hypersensitivity or keen awareness to the presence of communication difficulties throughout the selling process, even if additional cultural factors are also involved of which they are not as sharply aware or if they even recognize such issues as communicative in nature (Villatoro et al., 2014).

If this is true, it would suggest that those who expressed sentiments categorized as Connecting and Understanding would be even further attentive to Communication-related issues (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). In other words, it is possible that communication-related cultural challenges emerged as the most common theme because of participants' heightened sensitivities for perceiving anomalies or difficulties throughout interpersonal exchanges with their foreign customers.

Though unable to always recognize such issues as communication-related in nature, the participants' increased empathy, social awareness, or attentiveness likely developed throughout their careers as professional salespeople may have enabled them to recognize, at the very least, that something was "off" during these cross-cultural interactions relative to their domestic sales dialogues (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Accordingly, it is difficult to judge whether communication-related challenges were truly the most common or impactful cross-cultural interactions, or if they were merely the most frequently recognized (albeit indirectly) by salespeople with high levels of interpersonal skills and contextual awareness relative to 'normal' North Americans (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Communication Issues Despite Connecting & Understanding. One participant, P4, recounted his time as a senior account manager (SAM) who experienced the tragic and unexpected loss of a \$5–7 million SAP implementation services deal for a Japanese customer which, according to the participant, was almost certainly caused by the "arrogant" and "condescending" comments made by an individual from a local, Japanese partner firm which he had hired to assist with the engagement. In this described scenario, hereafter referred to as "\$7M SAP Loss in Japan," a multitude of underlying cultural factors likely played a role in causing the opportunity's unexpected and significant loss.

According to P4, his organization had successfully sold and completed a series of similar SAP implementation service deals for many of their existing customer accounts in different parts of the world, and this specific customer in Japan was one of the few remaining accounts which they had not yet finalized agreements for such an engagement.

P4's employer was the incumbent services provider of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software integration services for the customer, and the participant described having been very confident that they would win the deal, despite a challenge from salespeople at IBM who were also competing for the contract.

Despite P4's employer having local office and local personnel in Japan, P4 explained that after he and several others traveled to Japan from the US for a multi-day meeting with the client, they decided to contract with a small, local Systems Integration (SI) firm to assist with the technical aspects of the sales proposal since his company's local staff had not yet conducted much work specific to SAP integrations in the area.

In P4's words: "We hurried up and partnered with a company in Japan which would become our partner in the sales pitch," effectively "hiring" the owner of the SI and an SAP integration subject matter expert (SME) to advise on the highly technical aspects of the engagement during sales conversations.

Altogether, P4's sales team consisted of himself as the Primary Account Manager (AM) from the USA, an SAP generalist from Bengaluru, India, a Japanese Account Manager from the local office, and the two Japanese consultants from the SI, including the SI's owner and the SAP integration SME.

Those representing the customer at the meeting included the director of the firm's regional operations and the regional IT director, both of whom were Japanese, as well as the firm's global Chief Information Officer (CIO) who was of Indian origin, and the firm's global SAP excellence leader from the USA. As a side note, P4 remarked that the reason the Japanese firm had the same number of people in the meeting is due to a Japanese business practice of ensuring there is "even" representation during negotiations.

Describing the context and events of the meeting, P4 stated: “It was a cultural mix of teams in the meeting room. And things went well, we were able to present some good capabilities, but something somewhere, did not add up.” About ten days after returning to the USA following this meeting, P4 found out that the customer “gave their business to IBM.”

In a following phone call with the Japanese salesperson from the local vendor office, he explained that during the sales negotiation, some comments made by one of the SMEs hired from the Japanese consulting firm were viewed by the decision-makers as being highly “condescending” in nature, to the point of causing them to completely disregard hiring P4’s company for this specific project, despite the strong pre-existing buyer-seller relationship.

With Japan being about ten percentage points more emotionally Neutral than the USA, Japanese people are likely to show moderately less emotion during business exchanges, potentially making it more difficult for North American salespeople to perceive offense throughout their dialogues with Japanese clientele (Friedman et al., 2006).

This could perhaps explain in-part why the Japanese salesperson was able to perceive the offense taken by the clientele while P4 was not, as P4 described how he perceived no emotion from them: “There were no expressions or lack thereof in the meeting, and everything went well, we were really excited, in fact, they praised some of the things that we said as things that they were not aware of, like saying, ‘even IBM didn’t present those things.’ So, we were really excited, but ended up not getting the deal.”

Japan is an extremely high-context culture and prefers indirect communication over direct communication, qualities which are in stark contrast to the low-context and direct style of communication characteristic of US culture (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Masuda et al., 2008).

It is likely that these differences further obfuscated the offense taken by the Japanese clientele, as any displeasure with the discussion would be dealt with indirectly and discretely. Having been unable to discern the appropriateness of the comments made by the SME, P4 explains that he “felt [the SME] was demonstrating his understanding and nuances and capabilities and the things to watch out for, but the receiving manager felt as if this guy is coming and telling me what I don’t know, like ‘I don’t know what I should be aware of going into this implementation.’ And that didn’t work.”

P4 went on to say, “Now it’s too late. I didn’t have the ability to fix it because I didn’t know if it sounded condescending or more like information sharing or knowledge sharing in the first place.” Discerning from this account, several possible cultural dimensions may have interacted to create both the miscommunication caused by the Japanese SME, the offense taken by the Indian CIO, and the misunderstanding of the North American account manager (aka. P4).

Japan has much higher Masculinity than India (95 vs. 56), while both Japan and the USA have much lower Power Distance than India (54 & 40 vs. 77). In this cultural context, it is quite possible that the Global CIO from India perceived the high-Masculinity communication style of the Japanese SME as aggressive or inconsiderate when they bluntly critiqued or corrected the organization’s IT practices which he oversaw (Hofstede, 2001).

Moreover, subordinate employees in low Power Distance societies enjoy far more liberty in communicating and even challenging the views of their superiors than those in high PDI societies, where it is unacceptable to challenge or correct one’s superiors (Hofstede, 2001; Dash et al., 2009).

Thus, coming from a substantially lower PDI culture, the Japanese SME likely came across as extremely disrespectful to the Indian CIO when critiquing the technical practices of the

organization's IT department which the CIO was responsible for leading (Hofstede, 2001; Dash et al., 2009; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). At the same time, the even lower PDI of North American culture likely made the AM oblivious to any potential disrespect on behalf of the SME.

This aligns with the overall findings from the field research, as thematic patterns suggested that contexts with much higher levels of Power Distance were far more likely to fail or end sub-optimally overall.

While constructive criticism and respectful disagreement with authority figures in the workplace is quite acceptable in low PDI cultures, quite the opposite is true in high PDI cultures, so the North American AM (aka, P4) was potentially unable to perceive neither the higher Masculinity underlying the Japanese SME's communication nor the significant disrespect of a low-level SME essentially telling a CIO from a high PDI context how their IT practices were wrong and telling them how they should instead be conducted (Garcia et al., 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Accordingly, the cultural composition of those in the meeting clearly created a substantial risk of offense which, left unaddressed by the AM, is likely to have directly caused the loss of a very high-value sales contract for an incumbent vendor which, before the meeting, was by far the most likely to win the purchase.

One factor that significantly complicates a post-mortem analysis of this failed sales opportunity is the contrast between the North American preferences for direct and low-context communication styles when compared to the Japanese and Indian preferences for indirect and high-context communication (Garcia et al., 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

This divide likely would have caused P4 to become even further oblivious to any miscommunications by the SME or offenses taken by the CIO, even had they recognized the significantly more assertive nature of Japanese communication compared to Indian, or the PDI disparities making it very inappropriate for a SME to be correcting the technical practices of an Indian CIO.

Essentially, this means that once the miscommunication was made and the offense taken during the meeting, there was no opportunity for P4 to remedy the situation, since the unique chemistry of cultural differences between the AM (aka, P4), the SME, and the CIO made it nearly impossible for P4 to identify the error in the first place.

So, this begs the question: what could P4 have done differently to prevent this miscommunication from happening in the first place had they at least been aware of the unique cultural distinctions shaping their own perspectives?

Insufficiency of Connecting as a Sole Solution. Because most participants in this study substantially favored the practice of Connecting with one's buyer over other selling practices (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9), it is possible that too much reliance on the practice of Connecting could be a significant double-edged sword which juxtaposes its enabling of success with its exposing of vulnerability during the global selling efforts of NORAM salespeople. In this specific scenario, the AM (aka, P4) claimed to have had a significant prior connection with this customer account.

Even still, however, this grave communication error made by a highly transient person involved in the sales dialogue—the outside contracted SME—produced such a negative impact that it may have caused the loss of the sale.

In short, the level of connection between the salesperson (aka, P4) and buyer in this context did not seem to matter considering the unique cross-cultural selling challenges caused by the disparities and interactions of complex underlying cultural dimensions during the sales dialogue.

Heavy Connecting & Strategic Over-Communicating. Without first understanding the potential interactions and vulnerabilities caused by the distinctions of one's own cultural background relative to the global business context, NORAM salespeople may find that reliance upon their own domestic selling expertise is sorely inadequate to consistently produce success during cross-cultural or international sales engagements.

If a NORAM salesperson recognizes that their own cultural perspective is likely very different compared to that of many others encountered across the global business environment, particularly (but not solely) in consideration of communication practices, they may find it advantageous to avoid making assumptions or quick interpretations when conversing with foreign customers, partners, or colleagues.

Many North American salespeople naturally develop extremely effective communication skills over the course of their domestic sales careers (Merrill & Reid, 1981; Rhoads, 1988; Villatoro et al., 2014), but if this produces overconfidence in one's abilities such that they assume their skills apply unilaterally across cultures, this may ultimately be a great limiter to their success when they enter global sales.

Though recommending that NORAM salespeople study culture at length to understand the complex dimensions underlying the perspectives and behaviors of those they interact with abroad might help them achieve greater success in their efforts, such a recommendation is not practical, as salespeople—especially those selling internationally—are often extremely busy with

very little discretionary time to spend on exhaustive training or formal education (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016).

Fortunately, participants (P4 and P7) in this study repeatedly described a few key practices they claim to have learned throughout their global sales experiences for overcoming communication issues. Simply put, these involve increasing attention put onto communication processes to degrees far greater than necessary in domestic sales dialogues.

P4 and P7 referenced making habits of continually over-communicating expectations and timeframes, reiterating key points, and pausing to validate that everyone in a meeting clearly understood what was being said, even when facial expressions, intonation, or verbal responses seemed to suggest so already. Being that professional selling is a highly competitive career field in which those unsuited to the role often do not remain for long, those who succeed rarely do so by sheer chance (Stayton & Mangematin, 2016).

Thus, the participant group's substantial average sales tenure of approximately 25 years suggests that these individuals comprise some of the more successful salespeople in the overall industry (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12). Combined with the fact that many of them have also succeeded in complex international selling efforts (in addition to their domestic selling success), it is realistic to suggest that their unique priorities and behaviors are possible origins of their exceptional success (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Accordingly, participants' heavy emphasis on over-communicating with customers during international sales engagements suggests this practice may be a vital behavior for successful cross-cultural selling (P1, P4, P7, P9, P11, P12).

Additional Cultural Factors Affecting Communication. Though the communications challenges which complicated the \$7M SAP Loss in Japan primarily involved Power Distance,

Masculinity, and Direct vs. Indirect, a multitude of other dimensions may also influence and complicate cross-cultural communications (Friedman et al., 2006; Hofstede, 2001).

For example, disparities between Universalism and Particularism may cause highly universalistic NORAM salespeople to overestimate levels of buyer commitment if such buyers come from a Particularistic culture where the words said (or even written on a contract) are believed to be malleable, open to interpretation (or situational flexibility), and far less binding in nature (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

At the same time, as encountered in the Meeting with a ‘Rude’ Nigerian CIO described by P6, differences between the highly Sequential views of time held by NORAMs may cause confusion or even offense when others from highly Synchronous cultures appear disinterested or disengaged by lack of punctuality or by multitasking during important sales discussions (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Low levels of Uncertainty Avoidance may cause NORAM salespeople to emphasize the wrong value propositions to buyers from cultures with high levels of UA which are far more motivated by safety and security than by new opportunities or innovation (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014). In a similar fashion, the Short-Term Orientation of NORAM salespeople may cause them to overestimate how well they have established credibility with a customer from a highly LTO culture which holds much more regard for a company’s past durability or longstanding traditions than for their current innovativeness or future goals (Sanzo et al., 2003; Hofstede, 2001).

Altogether, the great diversity of possible cultural factors which may derail or confuse communication efforts throughout cross-cultural sales engagements suggests that still additional measures must be taken by NORAM salespeople who seek to prevent misunderstandings.

Salespeople Responsible for All Communications. And for these measures to succeed, they must be applied to both first person and third person communications throughout the selling process. Though an evaluation of the \$7M SAP Loss in Japan may cause one to blame the Japanese SME or even his Japanese boss who owned the SI and was present during the conversation, they are not the ones most responsible for the deal's failure. Despite being unaware of the cultural dynamics underlying the discussion, the AM (aka, P4) still held the title as the Strategic Account Manager for the specific customer account.

While professional sales is an extremely challenging career, it is also tremendously rewarding in several ways, especially financially. But these rewards do not come easily, and they bear with them immense responsibility, as salespeople oversee the human element involved in a sales exchange (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018; Weck & Ivanova, 2013).

While marketing, advertising, billing, contracting, and a multitude of other business functions are all being progressively replaced with higher proportions of technological automation, professional selling is the final frontier into which big data, AI, ML, and technological automation can never cross, as core to the discipline of selling remains the immutable truism that “people buy from people.”

Accordingly, inherent in the role is the requirement that salespeople must understand people, including those from other cultures, for therein lies their only value which cannot be imitated or replaced by a machine. Thus, it is not enough for a salesperson to understand how to adapt their communication to a broad cultural environment, nor is it enough for a North American salesperson to be able to communicate effectively across cultural bounds.

Salespeople are the quarterbacks of the selling operation—they are central in bringing the pieces and people of an engagement together, and accordingly, they hold the most responsibility

for understanding the cultural context and recognizing the potential errors of their counterparts, whether professional services personnel, systems engineers, pre-sales engineers or other participants in the selling process such as the contracted SME previously discussed (Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that North American salespeople likely have the necessary skills to adapt when needed if they can first understand the distinctions of their own unique cultural influences, but their own adaptation is not sufficient to account for the complex cultural dynamics found across the global selling environment, especially for enterprise-level technology sales engagements.

These salespeople must still learn to develop strong bonds with their customers which can overcome their own potential miscommunications or cultural mistakes while also being vigilant and culturally aware enough to recognize risk of potential cultural issues or miscommunications by their team members.

If recognized, they may apply strategic frameworks as well as their own intuitions to preemptively circumvent such issues before they occur; since, as demonstrated by the discussed case scenario, salespeople may not have the opportunity to correct an issue when the indirect nature of a customer's culture warrants no immediate or direct response during the scenario in which a miscommunication occurs.

Importance of Establishing Trust.

Successful \$65m Global Outsourcing Deal. Though P4's \$7M SAP Loss in Japan certainly had an unfortunate outcome, P4 later described a separate, much more positive outcome from a \$65M deal which he successfully closed, hereafter referred to as "Successful \$65M Outsourcing Deal." Describing his competitive strategy which led to the closure of a services

contract to take over the operations for a large, global organization, P4 explained how most aspects of the value proposition for such a large, global deal eventually become homogenous across competing vendors.

P4 argues that the single most-important form of differentiation in this type of situation comes from a salesperson's ability to establish trust:

In a deal of that nature, with everything equal, pricing must be competitive, your services have to be at par, you sign up for SLAs and performance metrics and KPIs and whatnot, you have to showcase your capabilities, you have to prove your skill sets, you have to show them where you will deliver services from. All those things have to happen which all of the competing partners probably would do equally well. What you need to do differently is establish trust, and that's what my style of selling is.

He went on to say, "All of these things have, to a large extent, become commoditized. People still want to do business with people, and establishing trust becomes the primary differentiator" and concluded his remarks: "Build a relationship of trust, and you will win more customers than any other matter."

If P4 is right, it can be argued that for cross-cultural sales engagements, cultural competency which enables connecting and understanding in ways that produce trust are just as critical toward competitive differentiation.

Moreover, interpreting the predominance of connecting as a core selling function used by the participants throughout their successful careers selling abroad, demonstrating sincerity and a genuine desire to know customers on a personal level may prove to be a highly effective method of gaining trust and establishing relationships (Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Accordingly, it is likely that the cultural NORAM cultural trait which promotes very firm boundaries between work life and personal life should be targeted as a potentially critical disadvantage in global sales if not adapted for across relational selling practices with foreign customers (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012; Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Furthermore, this provides an explanation for why the studied group of salespeople—all of whom have achieved some degree of long-term success in their global selling efforts—tended to prioritize the selling practice of Connecting (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9). It is possible that, either by chance or by their own trial-and-effort in global selling, these salespeople (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9) came to possess heightened abilities and/or preferences for connecting with buyers on a deep personal level which enabled their long-term success in foreign contexts.

In effect, this may have produced a form of competitive ‘natural selection’ through which highly Specific NORAM salespeople who enter the global marketplace are tested for their abilities to connect with buyers from more diffuse cultures (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). An inability to accomplish this is partially responsible for the immense turnover rates in expatriate sales and management careers (Salgado & Bastida, 2017).

Understanding Power Distance & Respecting Authoritative Boundaries

Avoiding a Power Distance Pitfall: Response to South Korean VP’s Gesture. Using the same scenario from P4’s Successful \$65M Outsourcing, another crucial example of the challenges made possible when different levels of PDI interact during cross-cultural selling engagements comes from the described interactions between P4 and a key decision-maker from South Korea (Hofstede, 2001).

P4 describes having successfully closed this \$65 million-dollar opportunity by understanding the significance of authoritative boundaries relative to those in North America and avoiding a grave mistake which could have jeopardized the deal's success.

Following sales negotiations with a multicultural team in China over a period of several days, the NORAM salesperson (aka, P4) described having been patted on the back by the most senior level decision-maker who was from South Korea. P4 accurately claimed that the contextual cultural expectations were such that the decision-maker's authority level would exclude himself or anybody else at the meeting from reciprocating the gesture.

In other words, the Power Distance in the culture created significant boundaries and expectations of etiquette which would not have allowed P4 to touch the decision maker in any way. It would not have been appropriate to do so (Dash et al., 2009).

However, the high authority level of the decision maker provided him that exclusive privilege while also magnifying its communicative significance in denoting his satisfaction with the overall process, therefore, indicating to P4 the positive state of the sales engagement and the completed 'soft close' (Dash et al., 2009).

Had the salesperson (aka, P4) reciprocated—as would be the expected response in a North American cultural context (in fact, it would likely be perceived as rude if not reciprocated)—he described that it was possible that the \$65 million-dollar deal, which eventually closed, would have been threatened by such a culturally unacceptable gesture toward the senior level Indian VP.

Aggressive Collaboration: Failed Engagement in China. In a final example provided by P4 which demonstrates the potential interactions between direct and indirect cultures (Friedman et al., 2006), P4 explained how a sales engagement with a Chinese customer failed to

close entirely because of the communication style of the team which had traveled to train and help the customer's technicians deploy the technical solution. In their own words:

The feedback that I got back from the customer (you have to trust the customer) is that our team said, "No, no, no, we did the right things." But what the customer said is, "Your team was very aggressive. They did not show an approach of collaboration. They were pointing more to faults, and issues, and challenges, rather than learning how we do things currently.

This demonstrates, yet again, the accountability held by the salesperson (aka, P4) for recognizing potential cultural challenges across not only their own interactions with foreign stakeholders, but also across those of their team members.

Uniform Preference for Using Questions. All the participants who completed the sales style assessment noted that their highest level of preference was for using questions (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12). Having given consent and expressing his willingness to be publicly referenced in this study, Thomas Freese, author of *Secrets of Question-Based Selling* and creator of the Question-Based sales methodology, served as one of the key participants in the interview component of this research (though his participant alias will remain anonymous).

Thus, his participation became a fitting coincidence which provided highly valuable insight into the question-based selling practices used to some degree by the overall participant group as recognized in their collective responses.

One individual, P9, even referenced the Question-Based Selling methodology by name when asked to describe his predominant selling approach, suggesting either that this study coincidentally acquired participants who strongly value the use of questioning in their selling processes, or that seasoned and successful salespeople with international experience may tend to

favor question-based selling methods. Across all compiled coding references, question-based selling was the single most pervasive approach described by the participant group (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12).

This may suggest that competency in asking questions during sales dialogues is a very strong starting point for effective cross-cultural selling; however, the types of questions asked should likely be adapted quite carefully to ensure mutual understanding between buyer and seller (Arndt et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2006).

Challenges from Different Perspectives of Time. The challenges inherent in different views of time emerged as a very clear theme across the research, with a variety of scenarios and sentiments demonstrating the impacts which different views of time may have upon sales engagements and outcomes.

Several different types of challenges illustrated the impacts of different views of time, each with unique contextual factors and unique cultural differences between the North American salesperson and the associated buyer. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the difficulty in adapting North American culture and North American selling methods for a general difference in views of time across several different facets of time which influenced the sales scenarios.

For example, P1 expressed being frustrated and offended at the perceived rudeness of an Israeli buyer who did not seem to pay close attention to them while present during the sales engagement. This serves as a cliched example of the different perspectives represented in the interaction of Synchronous and Sequential time cultures.

North Americans tend to see time as Sequential and very linear, while Israeli culture views time as Synchronous or having indistinguishable or abstract bounds (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017; Lindquist et al., 2015).

Thus, it is possible that in this scenario, the Israeli buyer, due to his different perspective of time, did not think it would be rude to multitask and work on something else or give attention to something else in front of the American salesperson (aka, P1), as this would be largely acceptable when dealing with other Israeli salespeople or even many salespeople from the regional cultural context (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017; Lindquist et al., 2015; Zaidman, 2001).

In another example P2 described having arrived several minutes late to a meeting with a German customer who did not want to allow them to continue the scheduled meeting. In their own words, the salesperson (aka, P2) had to “beg” to regain the time slot. This is an inverse example of other situations referenced throughout participant experiences demonstrating the difference between short-term and long-term time perspectives (Kulgemeyer et al., 2014).

Despite the implications of these repeatedly observed misunderstandings, the disparity between Synchronous and Sequential views of time may enable a strong advantage for North American salespeople who first learn to address misunderstandings or pitfalls.

Those from Synchronous contexts might savor the unusually high degree of attention given by salespeople from Sequential cultures, thereby deepening the bond between salesperson and buyer while supporting the practice of Connecting as employed by many of this study’s participants (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Representation & Visualization of the Data

A total of twelve highly qualified candidates participated in this study, with eight completing the online questionnaire component only (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P10, P11, P12), two completing the recorded interview component only (P8 & P4), and two completing both the questionnaire and the recorded interview components (P7 & P9), producing a compiled total of 10 completed questionnaire responses and four recorded interview transcripts.

To holistically assess participants' described experiences, the cultural contexts of all 48 cross-cultural sales scenarios or anecdotal references to foreign environments provided by participants were measured and compiled across Trompenaars eight dimensions, the GLOBE Project's 18 (nine dimensions x two perspectives) variables, and Hofstede's six dimensions (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Patterns were then identified involving participants' individual selling styles, cross-cultural selling experiences, and the cultural contexts in which their described experiences took place.

Overview of the Collected Data. Excluding categorical responses or pre-defined answer selections, written responses gathered from all questionnaires totaled approximately 9,800 words of qualitative content (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). Furthermore, cumulative recording time across all four interviews totaled approximately seven hours and 53 minutes, and the compiled transcriptions of strictly-participant audio responses (i.e., excluding all words spoken by me) totaled approximately 57,000 words of qualitative content (P4, P7, P8, & P9).

Finally, total responses to Likert-scale questions gathered from questionnaire participants totaled 1,766 measurements, while another 322 responses were gathered across the remaining categorical or numeric questions answered by participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Thus, the field research involved a total of approximately 66,800 words of qualitative content gathered from written and vocal responses, as well as an additional 2,088 data points gathered from questionnaire responses across Likert-scale assessments, numeric details, and other categorical inputs.

Overview of Interview Component. The interview component of this study led to the gathering of many significant insights and served as a direct form of confirmation for thematic patterns identified across the questionnaire analyses (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Interviews were semi-structured and involved several questions regarding each participant's general background, sales career, cultural influences, selling styles, and cross-cultural sales experiences.

Though the same series of questions was used for each interview, the semi-structured design allowed for participants to deviate from their initial responses to each question and to provide additional information they felt relevant to the discussion (Hammer & Wildavsky, 2018). These deviations proved to be highly valuable and produced significant insights which likely would not have been gathered using a more rigidly structured interviewing method (Hammer & Wildavsky, 2018).

Overview of the Questionnaire Component. For the questionnaire component of the study, participants were asked to provide up to 279 responses across an extensive number of questions in varying formats (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). Aside from those involving basic background information at the beginning of the questionnaire, nearly all responses were completely optional, thus improving the relevance and accuracy of participant responses by ensuring they only needed to answer those for which they had valid input and desire to respond (Décieux et al., 2015).

Responses were gathered across several questionnaire sections via multiple question-styles or instructional prompts, including: 22 qualitative, essay-style questions involving participant sales careers, cultural backgrounds, selling methods, travel experiences, and prior cross-cultural sales engagements; 201 Likert-scale measurements assessing participant selling methods, cultural experiences, and the impacts of specific cultural differences upon a case

scenario they had described previously in the questionnaire; and finally, 53 categorical questions involving numeric data, demographic information, contextual details, etc. (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Across the questionnaires, some participants provided a substantial amount of insight throughout their short answer responses (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Participants were asked to describe their general cultural backgrounds as well as their general sales backgrounds, including why they do sales, why they got into sales, why they still do sales, what they love about sales, what they hate about sales, and what their general approaches to sales are, followed by questions involving descriptions of their approaches to specific dynamics of professional selling, including their approaches to handling objections, their approaches to closing sales, and their approaches to influencing customers (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

They were also asked to describe their overall selling styles to determine if the seven focal styles identified in the literature and framed for the study were effectively represented across participants' qualitative responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sales & Cultural Assessments. At different points throughout the questionnaire, participants were asked to answer groups of Likert-scale questions assessing their general preferences for using different selling styles and tactics as originally proposed in the foundations of this study (Joshi et al., 2015; P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Additional assessments in similar format were also given to gather insights related to their general cultural experiences and perceptions (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12). A final assessment was given in combination with the final scenario description portion of the

questionnaire to help gather contextual details relevant to the cultural contexts of the described sales engagement (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Anecdotal Cultural Differences. Following the first two sections of the questionnaire, participants were asked to select—from a list of several options—three specific cultural differences which they believed had affected selling outcomes during their prior global sales engagements. After selecting these, participants were asked to describe via short-answer responses how these selected “differences” played a role in shaping engagement results (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Case Scenario Description & Assessment. As the final section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to think of a particularly meaningful prior sales engagement in which they believed cultural differences had been of significant influence (Barratt et al., 2011).

As requested of participants, this case scenario could be either a closed-won or closed-lost cross-cultural sales engagement, so long as the participant considered the engagement to be of high importance to their overall career and they believed cultural interactions likely had an influence upon the engagement’s events, challenges, or outcomes (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

This section began with several categorical questions involving the case’s contextual details, followed by several open-ended questions which allowed participants, being fully primed by the prior sections of the assessment (Glasgow, 2005), to describe the challenges, selling behaviors, or cultural influences they believed to be relevant to the case (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

After providing the general background of their chosen scenario, participants described the specific events upon which they believe culture may have had an impact, as well as what they

believe they could have done differently to account for such cultural impacts (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Finally, following the case background questions and written responses, participants were asked to complete one more questionnaire assessment involving the potential influences of specific cultural factors upon their described case outcome (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

For each cultural quality provided, participants were first asked if there was a difference between their foreign customer and their normal domestic US buyers and then what degree of impact they believed this potential “difference” had upon the sales outcome, providing a unique form of insight into their perceptions of the situation (Glasgow, 2005; P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Sufficiency & Validity of the Data.

Saturation & Stratification. Due to the unique nature of this study and the highly specific criteria for prospective research candidates, I encountered two significant challenges in garnering qualified participants for this study: first, difficulty identifying individuals who satisfied the specific criteria to participate, and second, difficulty soliciting the participation of these notoriously busy individuals.

To overcome these difficulties, I employed a pragmatic research approach to find a balance between the number of qualified participants engaged with this study and the amount of data collected from each participant. This balance aligns with the research of Morse (2015) which posited that phenomenological research may achieve saturation with fewer participants than other research methods due to the exhaustive amount of data collected from each participant.

In addition to the amount of data collected from each participant, an earlier study by Morse (1990) explained that participant quality may also be used to help determine the achievement of saturation when small sample sizes are necessary. This argument aligns with the research of Malterud et al. (2016) who proposed using an “Information Power” model for determining the necessary number of participants by considering multiple factors including the quality and volume of the collected data.

Substantiating the information power of this study, the recruited participant group consisted of extremely qualified individuals. These individuals possessed extensive career expertise and a collectively broad range of international experiences, claiming an average of 25 years’ experience in professional selling. At the same time, all but one participant (P9) had at least two decades of professional sales experience (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12).

In addition to the depth of participant backgrounds, determinations of quality may be extended to include measures of participant stratification, suggesting that saturation may be concluded for a small group of participants if these individuals represent a stratified sample of the target population and have provided an extensive amount of high-quality data which comprehensively represents the studied problem (Malterud et al., 2016; Morse, 2015, 2020).

Demonstrating such stratification, all participants came from unique backgrounds and were of high prominence in their respective industries, with participants including, for example, the Director of International Sales for a Fortune 500 company (P3), several individuals with decades of extensive and diverse international sales experience (P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8 & P11), as well as the bestselling author and founder of a highly esteemed sales methodology (PX).

Accordingly, I found the data to be fully saturated in such a manner by considering the diversity of the participant group, the quality of their backgrounds, and the great volume of data collected.

As themes across participant selling styles, selling tactics, cultural challenges, and cultural adaptation methods were gradually coded across the visual and qualitative data, and as patterns across such data were identified, saturation became largely apparent after participants proved to consistently describe and/or select similar experiences and responses on both the questionnaire writing and assessments, as well as the interview responses.

Coding across the interview recordings (P4, P7, P8, & P9) enabled further validation of having reached full saturation by reaffirming through separate data collection means the same patterns identified across the data collected from qualitative participant questionnaire responses and their numeric measures collected from the sales and cultural assessments (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12).

Methods of Triangulation. The overall participant group provided a unique variety of information and perspectives. Due to the different participation levels, data collection methods, data types, and levels of cognitive priming, the field research was triangulated in multiple manners (Noble & Heale, 2019; Denzin, 2017).

Put simply, triangulation involves the verification, rejection, or qualification of a given data source or perspective by comparing it against another (Turner & Turner, 2009). This can be achieved in a variety of different manners unique to the type of research design and methodology employed. In this study, several methods were used to achieve triangulation through a voluntary participation structure, multiple methodologies employed, varied degrees of participant cognitive

priming, and heterogenous sources of data (Denzin, 2017; Noble & Heale, 2019; Turner & Turner, 2009).

Triangulation via Voluntary Participation. Since all participants were given the liberty to decide the extent to which they would participate in the study, they faced no direct incentive to provide untrue or invalid information to questions or sections for which they either did not wish to answer or did not have any relevant past experiences (Décieux et al., 2015).

Resulting from this voluntary structure, most participants chose to complete only the questionnaire (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P10, P11, P12), while two other participants opted only to complete the interview (P4 & P8) and another two chose to complete both the interview and questionnaire (P7 & P9).

Adding another dimension of voluntary participation, interview participants were allowed to respond or not respond to the open-ended questions asked by me while also being given opportunities to contribute their own ideas or insights for which I did not have specific prompts (P4, P7, P8, & P9).

Since participants were able to choose the field research component(s) in which they would participate and were not required to answer any non-essential questions in either the interviews or questionnaires, the structure of this study protected against invalid or forced answers which could have been received had participants not recalled any valid experiences or were constrained by time and decided to complete mandatory questions by fabricating responses (Glasgow, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

Triangulation by Equivocal Cognitive Priming Risks. By making both the interview and questionnaire components optional, it became clear that some individuals would participate in the interview component after completing the questionnaire, and some would not. According to

the research of Lundh and Czyzykow-Czarnocka (2001), emotional Stroop effects—the psychological differences in how the brain perceives categorical information during non-emotional states versus emotionally-influenced states—may potentially cause unintended priming effects during participant-based research.

Accordingly, it is possible that the emotional stimulus experienced by a participant recounting personal life events during a research interview would be different from that of a participant completing a questionnaire (Lundh & Czyzykow-Czarnocka, 2001; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Thus, it is possible that taking these two components in different orders may produce different degrees of cognitive priming

To account for any priming effects made possible by the varying orders in which participants chose to complete the interview and questionnaire components, I did not consider saturation to be achieved until the same number of individuals participated in the interview component (P4 & P8) alone relative to those who had participated in both the questionnaire and interview components (P7 & P9).

As a result, saturation was determined when two participants had completed the questionnaire followed by an interview, and two other participants had completed only the interview. This created a form of triangulation by ensuring that participants primed by completing the interview first were represented in equal proportion to those who were possibly primed completing the questionnaire first (Denzin, 2017; Glasgow, 2005; Noble & Heale, 2019)

Triangulation by Multiple Methods & Heterogenous Data Sources. A final form of triangulation employed in this study involves the use of multiple methods for collecting heterogenous forms of data.

Though this is a qualitative study, robust strategies for guiding and framing the research were needed due to the great lack of extant literature on the study topic, as well as the highly abstract nature of the two primary fields being studied (dimensions of international culture and professional selling).

By following a qualitative content analysis framework (Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Morgan, 1993), quantitative data was collected to provide additional context for framing and better understanding the qualitative content.

Accordingly, in addition to the qualitative information gathered during the interviews, the questionnaire provided a great variety of sub-components involving questions which assessed participants' experiences from different perspectives, across different contexts, and with both quantitative and qualitative question types (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

The questionnaire component involved multiple sections of different topics, alternating between professional selling, cross-cultural experiences, and combined interactions, participants answered successive questions with progressive degrees of familiarity with each topic.

After beginning by gathering written responses, the questionnaire then proceeded through several guided Likert scale assessments, followed by asking written short-answer questions, and concluded by providing one last mixed-form assessment which could build upon the responses provided in the preceding sections (Joshi et al., 2015).

In this manner, a valuable form of triangulation was achieved by using multiple data collection methods and collecting multiple data types, with each data source and type able to be cross-examined in comparison and contrast to the others (Noble & Heale, 2019; Turner & Turner, 2009).

Interpretation of Themes: Hierarchical, Qualitative Coding via NVivo

The qualitative analysis software, NVivo, was used to organize and code all the field research data in a thorough and comprehensive manner. As participant responses were analyzed, many codes were created and defined to denote emergent patterns across the data, leveraging an approach to qualitative content analysis proposed by authors Forman and Damschroder (2007).

As certain patterns were identified and further substantiated by multiple participant responses, they were compiled and sorted into thematic “buckets” which encompassed the insights unifying certain patterns to others. This enabled the use of numeric measures of coding references to better guide qualitative analysis in a manner which the authors argue is consistent with qualitative design (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Forman & Damschroder, 2007).

In this manner, a hierarchical coding system was developed through which patterns could be aggregated with similar observations across all participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12) and data types (Edhlund & McDougall, 2019; Forman & Damschroder, 2007).

For all culture-related patterns, approximately 210 sub-codes were created and used to make approximately 583 coding references across 34 different field data sources or artifacts. These cultural coding patterns primarily involved potential cultural interactions observed across participants’ described experiences and are shown in their entirety in Table 4 (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Table 4

Summary of Thematic Coding for Identified Cultural Interactions

	Coding References		Combined Totals		
	<i>Challenge Specific</i>	<i>Non-Challenge Specific</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Sub-Codes</i>	<i>Files</i>
Communication	192	34	226	49	29
Assertiveness	21	0	21	3	13
Direct vs. Indirect	63	7	70	13	23
Neutral vs. Affective	17	5	22	10	11
Communication (General)	91	22	113	23	
Professional Expectations	27	0	27	19	17
Institutional Collectivism (Resources & Actions)	3	0	3	4	3
Performance Orientation	6	0	6	5	6
Specific vs. Diffuse	18	0	18	7	14
Role in Society	87	2	89	43	24
Achievement vs. Ascription	11	0	11	6	11
Collectivism (Expectations & Loyalty)	21	0	21	9	13
Communitarianism (Social Identity)	6	0	6	5	4
In-group Collectivism (Pride & Cohesiveness)	12	0	12	4	7
Internal Direction vs. Outer Direction	2	0	2	2	2
Power Distance	35	2	37	11	17
Social Values & Ethics	69	1	70	31	22
Gender Egalitarianism	8	0	8	2	6
Humane Orientation	1	0	1	0	1
Indulgence vs. Restraint	10	0	10	5	8
Masculinity vs. Femininity	3	0	3	3	2
Uncertainty Avoidance	13	0	13	4	11
Universalism vs. Particularism	27	1	28	7	14
Social Values & Ethics (General)	7	0	7	10	
Time Perspectives	47	10	57	26	15
Future Orientation	7	4	11	7	2

	Coding References		Combined Totals		
	<i>Challenge Specific</i>	<i>Non-Challenge Specific</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Sub-Codes</i>	<i>Files</i>
Long-Term Orientation	18	0	18	9	7
Sequential Time vs. Synchronous Time	22	6	28	7	10
Other Cultural Codes	17	107	124	42	14
Combined Totals	422	171	593	210	34

At the same time, another 159 sub-codes were created and applied across 44 different field data sources or artifacts to make a total of 771 coding references denoting certain selling behaviors or sentiments.

Finally, case categorizations were established to denote the locations and outcomes of all selling scenarios described by participants across the field research data. These categorizations are provided in Table 5 along with each participant's pseudonym.

Table 5

Described Scenario Contexts & Quantities by Participant

Participant	Scenario Context	Scenario Outcome
“Aaron” (P1)		
	Germany	Anecdote
	Israel	Anecdote
	Japan	Anecdote
	Canada	Failed
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		4
“Benjamin” (P2)		
	Global	Anecdote
	Argentina	Anecdote
	Global	Anecdote
	Global	Anecdote
	Germany	Sub-Optimal
	Brazil	Successful
	Japan	Successful
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		7
“Daniel” (P4)		
	Canada	Failed
	China	Failed
	India	Failed
	Japan	Failed
	Bermuda (Partial)	Sub-Optimal
	South Africa	Sub-Optimal
	Canada	Successful
	Global	Successful
	Global	Successful
	India	Successful
	South Korea	Successful
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		11
“Jacob” (P6)		
	China	Anecdote

Participant	Scenario Context	Scenario Outcome
	Global	Anecdote
	Global	Anecdote
	India	Anecdote
	Nigeria	Anecdote
	Nigeria	Sub-Optimal
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		6
“James” (P7)		
	China	Failed
	Japan	Sub-Optimal
	Germany	Successful
	South Africa	Successful
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		4
“Jeremy” P8		
	South Korea	Sub-Optimal
	China	Sub-Optimal
	South Korea	Successful
	India	Successful
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		4
“Joshua” (P9)		
	Mexico	Anecdote
	Canada	Failed
	India	Failed
	Global	Failed
	Peru	Failed
	Ghana	Sub-Optimal
	Suriname	Sub-Optimal
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		7
“Matthew” (P10)		
	Germany	Anecdote
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		1
“Michael” (P11)		
	Canada	Sub-Optimal
<i>Total Scenarios</i>		1

Participant	Scenario Context	Scenario Outcome
“Robert” (P12)	China	Failed
	India	Sub-Optimal
	Mexico	Sub-Optimal
	<i>Total Scenarios</i>	3
Cumulative Total Scenarios		48

These scenarios were evaluated individually to determine which had adequate information, context, and general relevancy to warrant further consideration as a “pseudo-case.” Those deemed viable were then denoted as either Failed (deal completely lost), Sub-optimal (deal partially won or deal differed), or Successful (deal won). All other scenarios which were too short or inadequate to warrant full consideration were simply denoted as “Anecdote.”

From these evaluations, more applicable insights were then compiled and demonstrated visualized via Venn-Diagrams and Stacked Bar Charts to better interpret the data. Accordingly, Figure 10 shows the overall proportions of different outcomes across all participant scenarios which were determined to be both detailed and relevant enough to warrant consideration (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

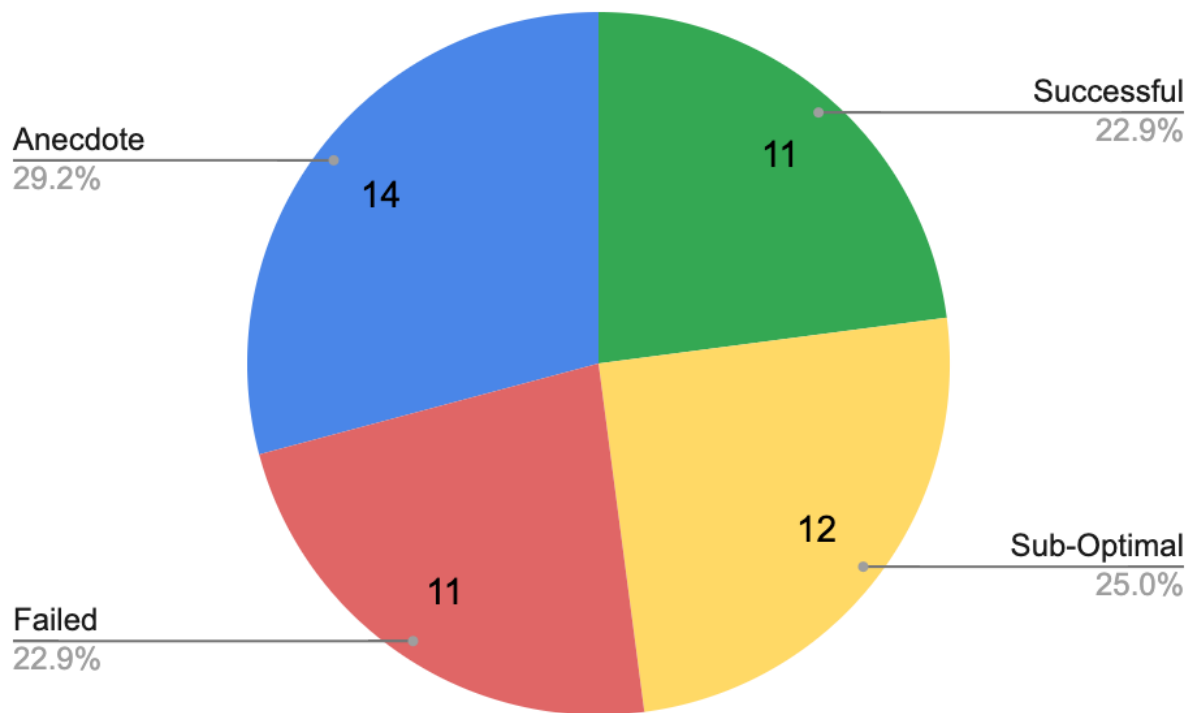


Figure 10. Proportional overview of described scenarios by outcome.

At the same time, Figure 11 shows the overall distribution of scenario locations by proportions of each outcome (or disqualification as Anecdote).

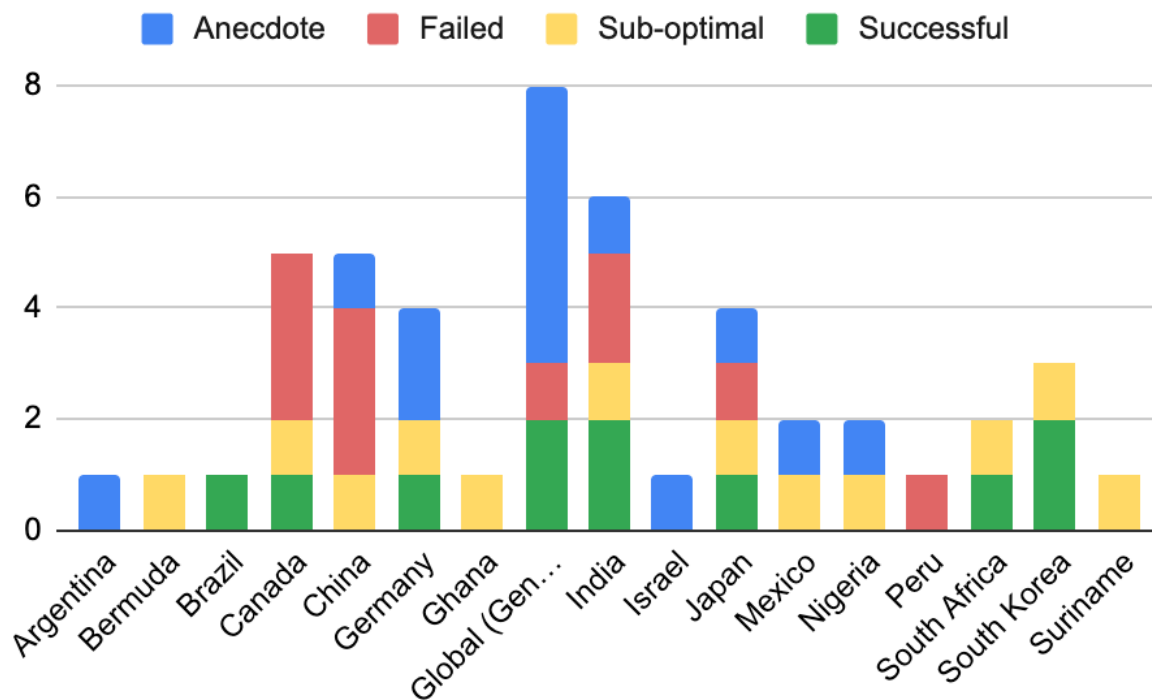


Figure 11. Proportional overview of described scenarios by location.

Throughout the data analysis conducted in this study, various quantitative evaluations were conducted pragmatically to provide direction and perspective for enabling better qualitative data analysis. According to the research of Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2014), a mixed-method approach may be pragmatically employed in phenomenological research for several different purposes.

First, the authors described how quantitative research components can be used to better frame a phenomenological study within a particularly abstract field so that qualitative findings may be assessed and interpreted with better perspective (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). I leveraged this approach across the data collection and analysis to help provide an interpretive framework for this study involving the convergence of two extremely abstract (and highly

neglected) fields of research—dimensions of international culture and professional selling (Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014).

Furthermore, Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2014) also described how quantitative components may be used in phenomenological research to gather data which helped inform my qualitative design, as well as to provide a form of cognitive priming to help participants better reflect upon their experiences prior to a phenomenological interview.

These approaches were employed throughout this study, with insights from the quantitative data providing context and direction for qualitative analysis, enabling me to sift through a substantial amount of information and focus qualitative analysis and interpretation on the areas most likely to provide relevant insights (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014).

Data Visualization—The Most Prominent Cultural Interactions

From an exhaustive analysis of 18 cultural variables coded across the field data, four broad categories of cultural interactions were found to influence the majority of participant-described selling scenarios, with 34.40% overall impact by Communication interactions, 23.90% overall impact by Role in Society interactions, 17.70% overall impact by Social Values & Ethics interactions, and 9.60% overall impact by Views of Time interactions, for a combined weighted overall impact of 85.60% across all described participant scenarios (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Additionally, seven specific cultural dimensions were identified as sub-contributors to the broader categories of identified cultural interactions and subsequently distinguished as causing either Major Interactions or Moderate Interactions based on their proportional overall impacts across all described participant scenarios.

Major Interactions include 21.60% overall impact by Direct vs. Indirect interactions, 9.50% overall impact by Assertiveness interactions, 9.50% overall impact by Power Distance interactions, and 7.40% overall impact by Universalism interactions. Finally, Moderate Interactions include 6.30% overall impact by Specific vs. Diffuse interactions, 6.30% overall impact by Sequential vs. Synchronous interactions, and 5.80% overall impact by Collectivism interactions.

As shown in Table 6, these four cultural categories and seven specific cultural dimensions of national culture were most-prominently observed to be challenging the success of North American sales engagements abroad, as determined by total coding references, weighted proportionally to each participant (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Table 6

Proportional Impacts of Cultural Interactions Upon Described Sales Engagements

Predominant Interactions	Percent of Weighted Total
By Overall Cultural Category	
Communication	34.40%
Role in Society	23.90%
Social Values & Ethics	17.70%
Views of Time	9.60%
By Specific Cultural Dimension	
<i>Major Interactions</i>	
Direct vs. Indirect	21.60%
Assertiveness	9.50%
Power Distance	9.50%
Universalism	7.40%
<i>Moderate Interactions</i>	
Specific vs. Diffuse	6.30%
Sequential vs. Synchronous	6.30%
Collectivism	5.80%

Methods of Calculation. The proportional impact of cultural interactions was found by first dividing the total number of cultural challenge coding references applied to each individual participant by the sub-total of such references for each cultural challenge. For example, if a total of 100 cultural challenge coding references were applied to an individual participant, and 10 of those references involved the category of Assertiveness, then 10% would be the *individual* proportional impact of Assertiveness for that participant ($100/10 = 1/10 = 10\%$).

These proportional calculations, individualized for each participant, are represented via the 100% stacked bar chart in Figure 12 which visually demonstrates several apparent patterns,

including the heavy prevalence of Communication-related challenges relative to all other types of considered interactions.

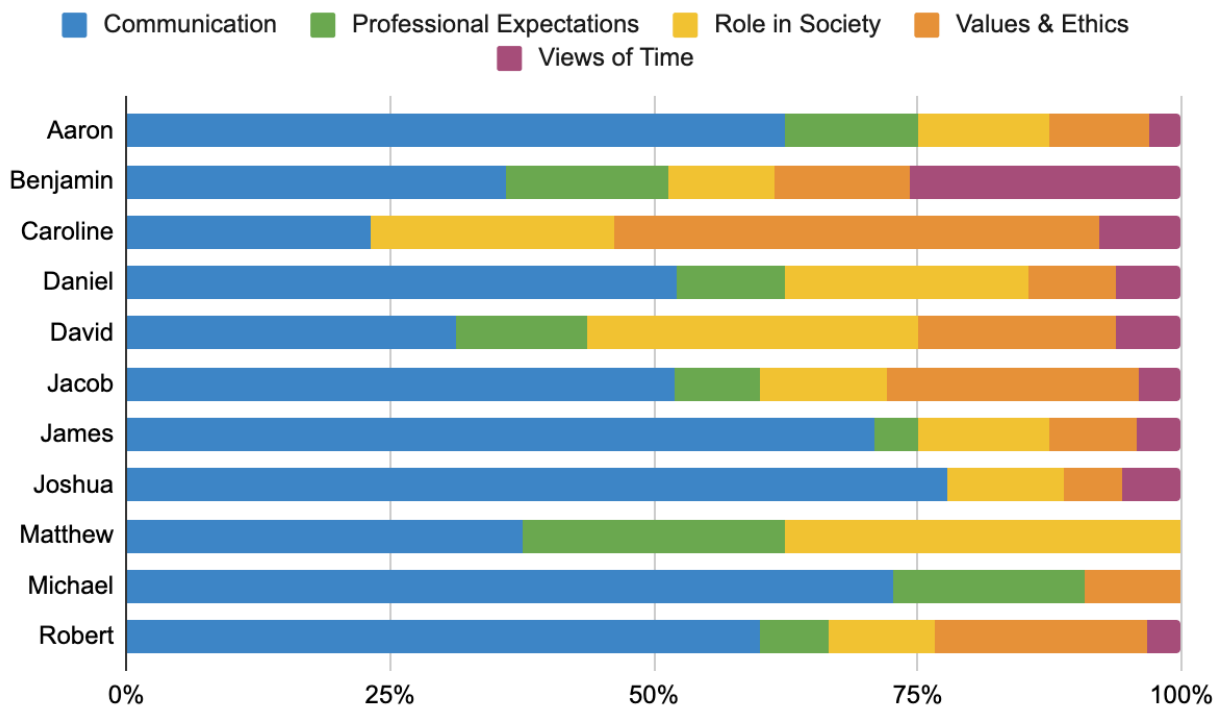


Figure 12. Weighted proportion of experienced cultural interactions by participant.

Once these *individual* proportional impacts were found for all participants across all cultural challenges such that 100% of each participants' cultural challenge codes were determined, then the average of each cultural challenge's individual proportional impacts across all participants was calculated. For example, if Assertiveness was 10% for P1, 15% for P2, and 5% for P3, then the average of such individualized proportional impacts would be (if there were only three participants in total) equal to 10% ($[0.1 \times 0.15 \times .05 = 0.3] / 3$).

Qualitative Applications of the Data. Finally, once the weighted impact was determined for all cultural interactions, these proportions were compared to identify the most prominent

cultural interactions suggested by these numbers (Hohenthal, 2006). These suggestions were then used to better identify areas of the field research data upon which to prioritize evaluation for deeper thematic insights (Hohenthal, 2006). For example, by following these numeric suggestions, the previously emergent theme of Communication interactions being the most pervasive cultural challenge found via flexible analyses was more firmly accepted due to the category's higher relative value compared to the proportional impacts of other cultural interactions.

It is important to note, however, that these calculations do not constitute true qualitative analysis and are not statistically significant. Thus, these determined measures are intended only to help guide qualitative analysis by suggesting potentially relevant patterns to be considered in further depth (Hohenthal, 2006; Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014).

Data Visualization—Identified Selling Styles & Sentiments

Throughout the data analysis, approximately 159 sales-related codes were created and used to make a total of 771 coding references to various selling behaviors or other sales-related patterns. Through analysis of these coding references, 95 separate codes were used to compile nine distinct patterns involving specific selling styles observed across the data.

These selling styles included: 58 references to seven codes involving Communicating, 173 references to 22 codes involving Connecting, 88 references to nine codes involving Consulting, 41 references to nine codes involving Quarterbacking, 49 references to eight codes involving Serving, 40 references to six codes involving Solving, 73 references to 10 codes involving Structuring, 25 references to seven codes involving Teaching, and 101 references to eight codes involving Understanding.

After evaluating all uncategorized coding references involving professional selling, 123 remaining references were labeled as General Sales Themes and divided among three sub-categories, with 47 references categorized to general Selling Beliefs or Philosophies, another 47 categorized to general Selling Tactics, and the remaining 15 categorized to Other Selling Patterns. These selling styles and other sales-related categories are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7

Summary of Thematic Coding for Participant Selling Practices

	Files Referenced	Coding References	Unique Sub-Codes
General Sales Themes	44	123	64
Selling Beliefs or Philosophies	10	47	33
Selling Tactics	28	47	15
Other Selling Patterns	15	29	16
Styles	56	648	95
Communicating	18	58	7
Connecting	21	173	22
Consulting	27	88	9
Quarterbacking	19	41	9
Serving	15	49	8
Solving	21	40	6
Structuring	19	73	10
Teaching	16	25	7
Understanding	20	101	8
Combined Totals	--	1542	309

Since each participant provided varying levels of information, the proportional weight of each participant's selling priorities was individually determined to account for disproportional

interpretations of the data (Ekanem, 2007). Relative preferences were then compared across all participants as shown in Figure 13.

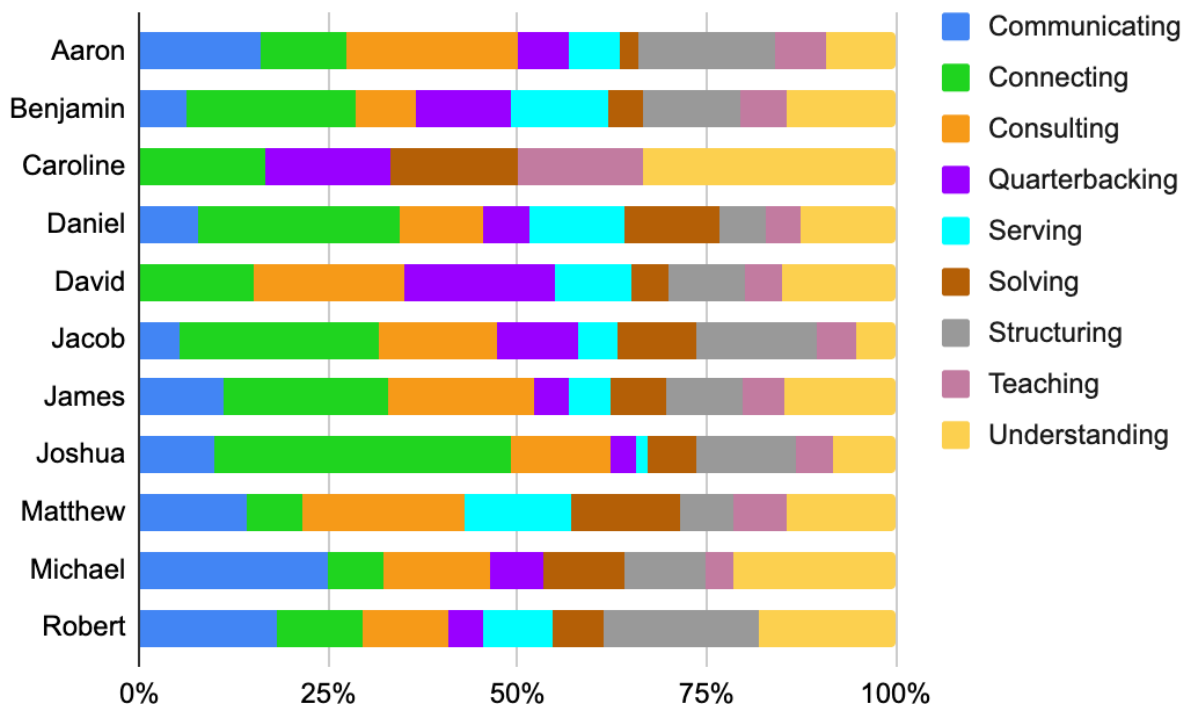


Figure 13. Weighted selling preferences by participant.

Such visualizations provided valuable insight into the most relevant and influential selling styles represented by the overall participant group, while also providing insight into the unique distinctions of individual participants which might help better understand the specific phenomena encountered across their described cross-cultural selling experiences.

Qualitative Applications of the Data. After identifying and visualizing patterns involving the most prevalent selling styles demonstrated by participants, comparisons were then able to be made to the separate findings involving the most prevalent cultural interactions impacting the outcomes of cross-cultural selling engagements described by participants.

Accordingly, three separate Venn-Diagrams were created to depict the collective outcomes of described participant scenarios relative to the compiled selling styles demonstrated by the corresponding participant for each outcome (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12). In other words, for each scenario described, the weighted selling preferences of the describing participant were compiled with all others of the same outcome—if the same participant described multiple scenarios with the same outcome, their weighted preferences were added again more for each scenario. Then, all combined weighted preferences which were compiled for each given outcome were averaged and their results displayed in Figures 3–6.

Thus, the proportional representation of participant preferences for each selling style are shown in Figure 14 for all scenarios with successful outcomes.

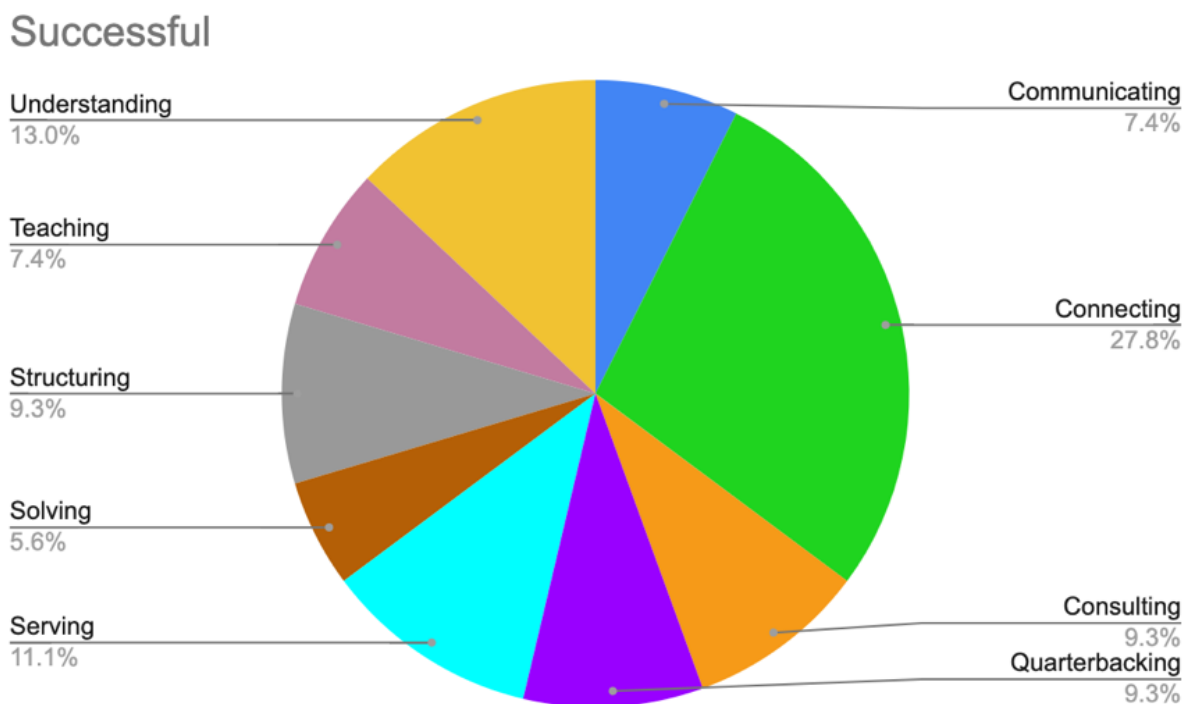


Figure 14. Proportional representation of each selling style for all successful scenarios.

At the same time, the proportional representation of participant preferences for each selling style are shown in Figure 15 for all scenarios with sub-optimal outcomes.

Sub-Optimal

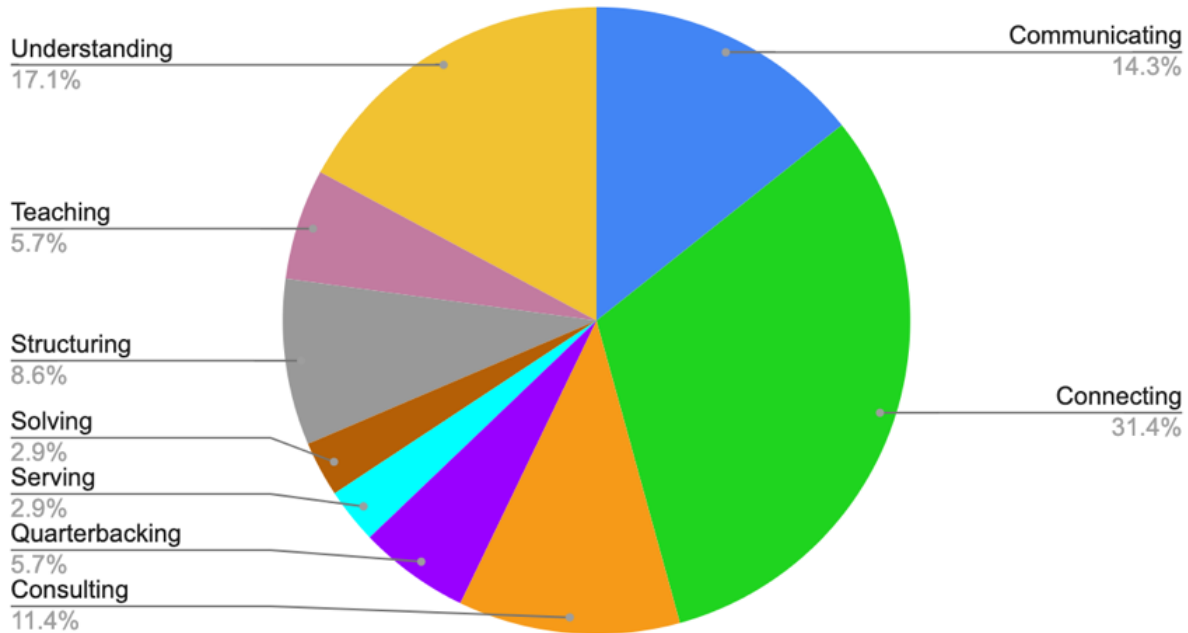


Figure 15. Proportional representation of each selling style for all sub-optimal scenarios.

And finally, the proportional representation of participant preferences for each selling style are shown in Figure 16 for all scenarios with unsuccessful outcomes.

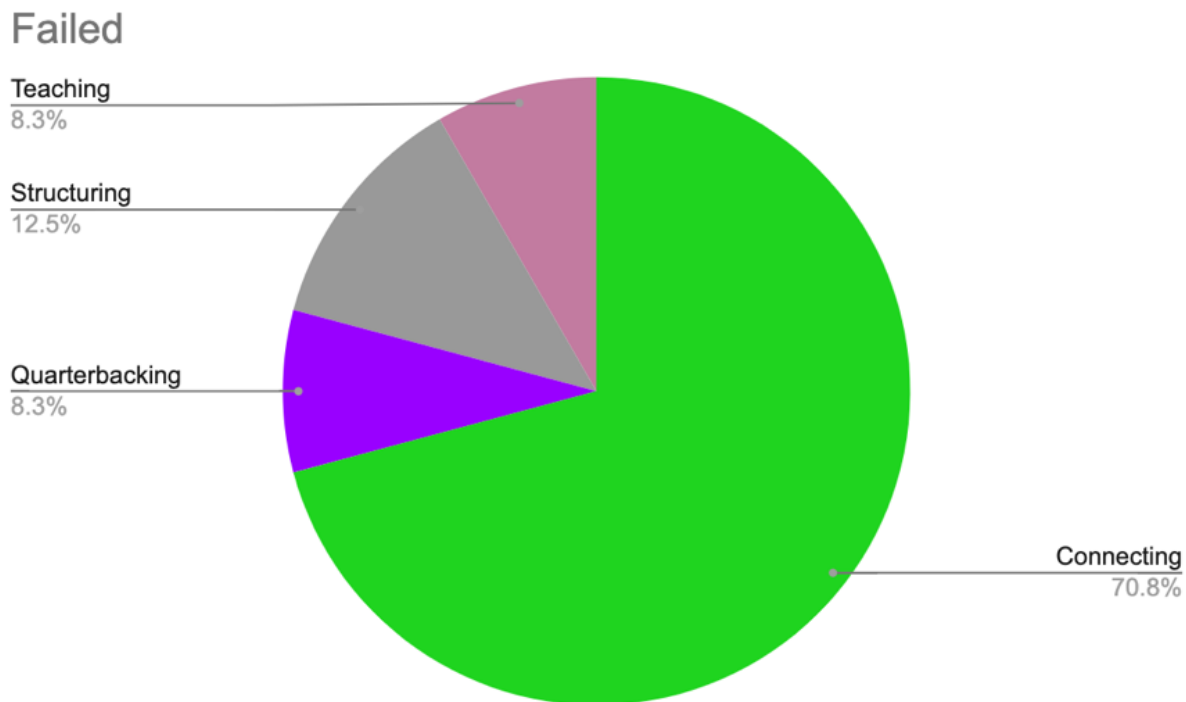


Figure 16. Proportional representation of each selling style for all unsuccessful scenarios.

Relationship of the Findings

The Research Questions.

RQ1 & RQ1(a): Broadening Consideration of Outcomes. As posited in the foundations of the study, RQ1 served as the primary question guiding this research effort, inquiring the following:

RQ1. What are the most harmful and predominant interactions of national culture observed throughout inexplicably failed, enterprise technology sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign customers?

Across the field data, both successful and unsuccessful sales engagements were identified and associated with several different cultural interactions and selling methods described by

participants. Though RQ1 found in search of the harmful cultural interactions affecting inextricably failed sales engagements specifically, many valuable insights addressing RQ1 were gathered from accounts of sub-optimal and successful sales engagements as well.

As suggested by the research of Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006), these insights may be pragmatically applied toward “reformulating” subsequent research questions to better fit the logical intent of this study in addressing the research problem.

Accordingly, to better connect this study’s research problem to these insights, RQ1 can be slightly broadened to include sales engagements with any unexplainable outcome, as follows:

RQ1 (v2). What are the most harmful and predominant interactions of national culture observed throughout inexplicably concluded (either lost or won), enterprise technology sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign customers?

Stemming from RQ1 as it was originally worded, RQ1a built upon the examination of failed deal outcomes to consider their connections to certain selling practices, inquiring the following:

RQ1a. Which North American selling methodologies are most-commonly associated with such failed international selling engagements?

Thus, in line with the slight changes to RQ1, the sub-question RQ1a should also be revised (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006) to focus upon the connection between North American selling methods and harmful cultural interactions observed during international sales engagements, rather than the engagement outcomes, as follows:

RQ1a (v2). Which North American selling methodologies are most-commonly associated with potentially harmful cultural interactions experienced during international selling engagements?

Although the volume and breadth of data collected was substantial, it became clear throughout the analysis that there was an insufficient amount of contextual information for the observed case scenarios to clearly attribute specific selling methods or cultural dynamics to a higher estimated likelihood of deal failure or success. Nevertheless, patterns did emerge connecting certain selling methods with patterns of eliciting certain cultural interactions.

Thus, in answer to RQ1a (v2), several themes across participants' selling behaviors and sentiments provide insight into which selling styles are most culpable for eliciting negative cultural interactions across the global business environment.

While the original framework of this study fixated on the identification of specific selling styles, tactics, and strategies defined in the research (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990), the emergence throughout the field research of multiple joint-characteristics along with unique qualities across participants' selling practices necessitated the modification of this framework to allow for additional selling methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

Thus, searching for specific styles, tactics, and strategies served as an effective starting point in identifying the more dominant characteristics defining the collected data, rather than serving merely as a limited methods bank from which define the observed phenomena (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

RQ1(b): Cultural Underpinnings of Identified Selling Practices. After the identification and qualification of these relevant selling behaviors, probable, foundational cultural underpinnings specific to NORAM culture were sought via the following sub-question:

RQ1b. Which underlying dimensions of North American culture are evidenced through the application of these identified selling methodologies?

By answering this sub-question, improved insight may be gained for connecting specific selling practices used by a salesperson to the identified cultural interactions observed throughout their described cross-cultural selling scenarios (Arndt et al., 2018; Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2010; Rhoads, 1988).

As proposed in the foundations of this study, several themes emerged from the literature which led to the identification of four categorizations most-clearly distinguishing NORAM culture from much of the outside world. These categories and their likely influences upon the selling practices observed from the field-research data help to address RQ1b.

RQ2: Adapting to Address Prominent Cultural Challenges. Intended to combine the three prior thematic data points collected in answer to RQ1, RQ1a, and RQ1b, the next research question inquired into manners for addressing the harmful effects of cultural interactions during NORAM cross-cultural sales engagements, as follows:

RQ2. How can selling methodologies be adapted to address these cultural interactions and improve the success of international sales engagements?

From an interpretation of key themes identified throughout the qualitative data analyses, it is suggested that several specific measures may be taken by NORAM salespeople to address the cultural interactions most likely to challenge the success of their global deals.

RQ2(a): A Broad Framework for NORAM Cross-Cultural Adaptation. RQ2a. How can predominant North American selling strategies, styles, and tactics be selectively conjoined or modified to produce culturally adaptive selling frameworks?

This study has produced thematic findings which, if combined with the extant bodies of literature about cross-cultural business and adaptive selling, can be used to create a general

framework for culturally adapting North American selling methods to a broadly international selling context.

Accordingly, these findings successfully address RQ2(a), and a proposed framework for such adaptation are described further in the Applications to Professional Practice section.

The Conceptual Framework. This study's conceptual framework fixated upon three key concepts as follows: Key Concept #1 involving the cultural interactions between North American salespeople and their foreign customers, Key Concept #2 involving the enterprise selling methods employed by North Americans during business engagements, and Key Concept #3 involving the phenomena observed across the lived experiences of North American salespeople who encounter inexplicably negative outcomes during cross-cultural sales engagements (Johnson et al., 2006).

As the findings illustrate, there are several specific cultural interactions observable across North American selling efforts abroad which are not unique to just one foreign cultural context, thereby establishing a clear definition for Key Concept #1 as outlined in the Conceptual Framework. Observed interactions included a multitude of general communication issues, as well as more specific interactions between disparities of Power Distance, Sequential vs. Synchronous views of time, Specific vs. Diffuse work-life balances, Assertiveness, and several others.

These observations substantiated the first anticipated theme proposed in the conceptual framework (Theme #1) which posits that NORAMs possess several significant cultural distinctions which may appropriately generalize their differences across most foreign contexts in which they are likely to do business.

Continuing the progression outlined by the conceptual framework, these findings serve to further clarify Key Concept #2 by illuminating nine pattern selling styles demonstrated across the described behaviors and sentiments of the participant group.

This improved understanding of Key Concept #2, combined with the confirmed observation of anticipated Theme #1, together informed an evaluation of the conceptual framework's second anticipated theme (Theme #2) which involved the prediction that NORAM selling styles would be influenced by NORAM culture.

Confirmed by this study's findings, Theme #2 then directly supported the qualitative theory proposed in the conceptual framework (Theory 1) that underlying influences of NORAM's distinct culture directly underpin the existence and use of prominent NORAM selling styles.

In tandem with these findings, observations of specific cross-cultural sales engagements described by participants provided a clarified understanding of Key Concept #3 which led to the confirmation of anticipated Theme #3 which predicted that specific NORAM selling methods would be observed (or not observed) more frequently across inextricably sub-optimal cross-cultural sales engagements.

Substantiated per the progression of the field research as guided by the conceptual framework and further evaluated together for significant interrelations, Themes 1, 2, and 3 were analyzed and interpreted to support the confirmation of qualitative Theory 2 which proposed that failed (and/or sub-optimal) sales engagements may likely be caused in-part by the interactions of conflicting cultural influences underlying specific NORAM selling methods and the different contexts of their foreign buyers.

Thus, this study's conceptual framework successfully guided the course of this research by enabling an improved understanding of three key concepts, a confirmation of several anticipated key themes, and finally, the qualitative substantiation of two key theories ideated in response to the research questions and intended to help inform proposed solutions to the study's problem statement.

Anticipated Themes. As proposed in the foundations of this study, several themes emerged from the literature which led to the identification of four categorizations most-clearly distinguishing NORAM culture from much of the outside world which were predicted to serve as underlying antecedents of any cultural interactions potentially found to affect cross-cultural selling engagements.

Driven by Universally Applied, Masculine, Humane and Equality-based Values. It is possible that NORAM's high levels of Universalism (compared to global averages) partially underpin the observed selling preferences for Understanding and largely underpin those for Structuring.

Though NORAM has relatively lower levels of Uncertainty Avoidance, the US 'higher comparative levels of Universalism suggest that NORAMs are very detail-oriented and thus need to clearly define the relevant details involved in any business engagement (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017; Villatoro et al., 2014). Contracts are written very clearly, and many NORAMs tend to assume that all parties consider the meaning of an agreed-upon contract or statement to be unwavering and exclusively determined by the specific wording.

Thus, these preferences could produce salespeople who naturally pursue clear understandings of their clientele and prioritize structuring their selling efforts according to a clearly-defined framework.

Focused, Low-context Thinkers and Neutral, Specific Communicators. Communicating was identified as the fifth-most prioritized selling practice, bringing to question the presumption that NORAMs' extreme preference for specific and direct communication would influence participants' selling practices (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000).

It is possible that Communicating was not prioritized more highly due to a very broadly accepted understanding of the importance of effective communication in the NORAM business environment. This understanding may potentially cause NORAM salespeople to overlook the idea of prioritizing communication out of the presumption that effective communication is a baseline standard for all business professionals and not just a focal practice of professional selling.

While this presumption may be appropriate for NORAM salespeople selling domestically, the literature clearly demonstrates how failure to recognize the tremendous differences in psychological perception between cultures can produce grave misunderstandings for even the most brilliant communicators (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000).

Sequentially Focused, Short-term Future Oriented, Risk Takers. It is possible that the emergent selling behavior of Structuring demonstrates this categorization of NORAM culture best, since structured selling frameworks tend to rely upon the sequential sales progression of business opportunities through short-term future-oriented goals (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

A basic example of this can be found in the high prioritization of "data upkeep" commonly demanded by US sales managers who direct their account managers to continuously update sales opportunities in their CRMs so that sales forecasts are up to date, and opportunity stages are accurately denoted (Morton et al., 2018).

This pervasive and highly linear sales management behavior suggests the influence of the unique underlying views of time inherent in NORAM culture upon the everyday business practices of NORAM salespeople.

Individually Focused, Assertive Achievers. Though the many cross-cultural selling experiences described by participants spanned a broad range of cultures, contexts, events, and outcomes, a unique pattern across all these environments emerged, with all cultural contexts described in this study possessing far less Individualism than the United States. This suggests that North American Individualism a highly important factor for which nearly anyone from the USA seeking to sell internationally is likely to encounter challenges.

Another unique pattern observed across the selling behaviors of participants involves the dominant preference for Connecting with their customers (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, & P9), especially considering the phenomena of Communication challenges appearing as the most referenced cultural interaction.

Though it may initially seem counterintuitive that Communicating is the primary approach used by participants from NORAM's highly Individualistic culture (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), it may suggest that such salespeople have identified the opportunity to distinguish and endear themselves to their customers by seeking to connect with them on a level that they do not normally experience in more Collectivistic settings (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, & P9).

This aligns with a substantial body of psychology-based sales research which proposes that when salespeople demonstrate sincere personal interest in connecting with an individual buyer, the buyer tends to become far more engaged and is likely to consider the seller's value

proposition more favorably, even when alternative solutions may be superior in function or in value (Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Masuda et al., 2008; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

The Literature. As explained in the foundations of this study, the current body of literature involving cross-cultural selling is tremendously scarce, even when including research that is not specific to North American salespeople.

Accordingly, the findings of this study are in some ways first-of-kind, as I have identified no broad frameworks which are intended specifically to help North American technology salespeople culturally adapt their selling methods to a generalized global audience (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2018; Weck & Ivanova, 2013). Nevertheless, the foundations of this study built upon literature involving several different fields of study to substantiate this research effort.

Literature involving global technology markets (Liu et al., 2016; McAfee, 2002), international business (Schrock et al., 2018), adaptive selling (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990), and dimensions of culture (House & Mansor, 1999; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) were together found to have numerous interrelations which informed the state of the research problem, supported the research questions, and helped define an appropriate path through which the conceptual framework could potentially interweave these disparate fields of research to produce relevant insights with meaningful applications to practice.

The findings of this study reveal several inadequacies of the extant literature in its exploration of cross-cultural selling engagements, both from a broad perspective and from the perspective of a North American seeking to conduct business in foreign contexts.

For example, the research of Paesbrugghe et al. (2016), Rhoads (1988), Spiro & Weitz (1990), McFarland et al. (2006), Delvecchio et al. (2004), and Arndt et al. (2018) informed the development a framework for understanding the likely selling methods employed by North American salespeople by summarizing such practices into three main categories, including Selling Styles, Selling Tactics, and Selling Strategies.

During the field research analysis, however, consistent distinctions between these categories and their sub-category selling behaviors were not clearly observed across the participants' (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12) described behaviors or expressed sentiments, creating the need to adapt and slightly recategorize these into a framework which better represented the behaviors of the studied participant group (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014 Morgan, 1993).

These new categorizations were created as derivations or modifications of the selling behaviors described by these authors, building upon their established theory to suggest potential nuances representative of the unique behaviors of North American salespeople with cross-cultural selling experience (Arndt et al., 2018; Delvecchio et al., 2004; McFarland et al., 2006; Paesbrugghe et al., 2016; Rhoads, 1988; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Accordingly, it is reasonable to argue that the deviation of these findings does not conflict with the original sales behavioral frameworks described in the literature; rather, it builds upon it by proposing slight adaptations or updates to befit the specific behaviors of salespeople who have substantial international selling experience which may have influenced or help shape their personal selling practices.

Separate from the literature involving NORAM selling methods, the substantial body of cultural research which was used to determine the lens for assessing cultural differences between

North Americans salespeople and their foreign customers in this study (House & Mansor, 1999; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) provided consistent insight into the complex contextual factors underlying the cross-cultural selling scenarios described by participants.

Moreover, and beyond broad dimensional frameworks for describing cultural facets, the experimental research of authors such as Kastanakis & Voyer (2014) and Masuda et al. (2008) was highly informative of the differences in the degrees of contextual awareness between North Americans and Japanese, as these differences were illuminated by the described scenario involving the \$7M SAP Loss in Japan resulting from an Indian CIO perceiving disrespect from a Japanese Solutions Consultant.

In this scenario, the North American AM (aka, P4) was left oblivious to the contextual information which could have informed of the offense, and he was not made aware of the mistake until another Japanese colleague who had attended the meeting called him to explain what happened. Considering the literature, it is fitting that—although a Japanese individual caused the blunder—it was another Japanese individual who had the contextual awareness to recognize the problem and inform the Account Manager (aka, P4).

The Problem. This study was intended to address the problem of inexplicably failed cross-cultural sales engagements encountered by North American salespeople doing business with clients from other regions (Dunning, 2013; Johnson et al., 2006).

Specifically, this research focused on the problem faced by enterprise technology salespeople from the United States who - coming from an extremely unique culture relative to much of the outside world - have no viable direction for adapting their selling methods to befit the cultural perspectives of their foreign customers and prospects (Voldnes & Grønhaug, 2015).

Potential Sources of the Problem. From the field data, themes emerged which may attribute potential causes of such inexplicably failed sales engagements to several key factors. Such causes include consistently observed disparities of Individualism versus Collectivism, misunderstandings from indirect communication styles,

Consistently Higher Individualism. The substantially higher levels of Individualism found in North America created a grave contextual disparity between US seller and foreign buyer(s) in nearly every failed or sub-optimal sales scenario described across participant accounts (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, & P12). This resonates with the longstanding arguments of Pearson and Stephan (1998) who found that, when compared to highly Collectivistic cultures, North Americans tend to approach business engagements in vastly different manners, such as giving more attention to their own outcomes during negotiations or treating all parties in similar manners by giving less attention to social hierarchies.

Failure to Connect with Foreign Buyers. Another factor potentially responsible for the problem involves the repeatedly observed failure of North American salespeople to adequately employ the selling practice of connecting during their foreign sales engagements (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12). Participants described negative selling outcomes which included attempts to connect with their buyers that were complicated by misunderstandings, miscommunications, and a significant amount of contextual information unobserved or unrecognized by the NORAM salesperson (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Potential Selling Practices Related to the Problem. Interpreted from these thematic observations, the employment of several selling practices appears related to the appearance of the phenomenological research problem. As found from the field data, communicating, understanding, connecting, and quarterbacking proved to be the selling practices either most

prevalent in scenarios with positive selling outcomes or least prevalent in scenarios with negative selling outcomes.

Combining these insights with the identified sources of the research problem leads to the development of several recommendations for adaptive selling frameworks which North American salespeople may use to avoid this problem in cross-cultural selling environments. These recommendations will be provided in the following section involving applications of the findings to professional practice.

Summary of the Relationship to the Problem. As demonstrated by the findings, this research further substantiated the prevalence of the studied problem, providing insight into the complex challenges faced by US salespeople selling abroad, as well as validating the original theory that many of these challenges result from failed selling practices not adapted for the underlying cultural interactions between buyer and seller.

Though this study has revealed several different cultural factors which may challenge the security of these cross-cultural selling engagements, the most culpable factors appear to be those involving North America's unusually high levels of Individualism combined with its generally lower-context and direct forms of communication.

Relationship of the Findings

This section presented the findings of this research effort into the most prevalent cultural interactions likely to challenge the success of North American salespeople when selling to foreign clientele, as well as potential selling methods used by these salespeople which may be adapted to account for the risk of such interactions.

Key challenges resulting from specific cultural interactions were observed across the described participant experiences, including the cultural categories of communication, views of societal roles, values or ethics, and perspectives of time.

Communication issues included severe misunderstandings in indirect contexts and difficulties with Assertiveness; issues from contradicting views of societal roles included the high risk of crossing social boundaries in high Power Distance contexts, as well as difficulties understanding buyer motivations in cultural contexts with high degrees of Collectivism.

Challenges involving different values or ethics included varying degrees of attention to detail stemming from different measures of Universalism, as well as different degrees of work-life balance between buyer and seller. Finally, difficulties involving different time perspectives included misunderstandings of buyer expectations and timeframes, as well as misunderstandings by NORAM salespeople which likely resulted from the highly Sequential time perspectives characteristic of NORAM culture.

Altogether, these findings serve to demonstrate the real-world presence of the described research problem, validate the importance of addressing the problem by answering the research questions, and provide thematic insights useful for producing recommendations to professional practice which may help NORAM salespeople avoid or overcome some of the challenges inherent in the cross-cultural selling phenomena described by this study's participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Summary of the Findings

This study examined the complex, multi-dimensional cultural factors underlying cross-cultural sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign buyers. A total of 12 participants were enlisted and given the option to complete either a recorded interview, a

comprehensive questionnaire, or both components (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, & P12).

Data was collected and coded to denote possible cultural interactions, selling styles, and selling outcomes, followed by exhaustive qualitative analyses.

Through exhaustive qualitative analysis, patterns emerged to suggest correlations involving: a) The application of specific selling behaviors; b) The presence of specific underlying cultural measures; and c) The inexplicable failure of cross-cultural selling engagements characterizing this study's examined phenomena.

As described in the literature and predicted in the foundations of this study, themes developed to suggest several prominent cultural interactions, which are likely the most pervasive and impactful upon NORAM selling engagements abroad. Furthermore, associated selling styles also emerged as likely determinants of either positive or negative outcomes when applied in contexts characterized by such cultural interactions.

Implications from these emergent themes were then further evaluated and compared with findings from the literature to suggest measures for avoiding adverse selling outcomes in broadly foreign contexts by modifying NORAM selling methods to address better the most prevalent and harmful cultural interactions identified.

Applications to Professional Practice

Due to the breadth of selling methods practiced in the USA, this study evaluated the discipline of professional sales at a very granular level, breaking apart the core selling behaviors to arrive at nine selling styles that comprise most leading selling methods used across North America.

Since no single selling method was considered alone in the research foundations and no single selling method was intended to be developed from this study, the applications of this study's findings will involve general measures for adjusting most selling frameworks to benefit broadly foreign contexts. These applications are derived by accounting for the most significant distinctions of North American culture and the prevalence of their negative impacts upon cross-cultural sales engagements as evidenced by the field research findings.

Illustrating such methodological flexibility, the proposed applications to professional practice are described through the adaptation of a leading selling methodology employed across North America—one which, conveniently, represents a very “North American” cultural perspective in its strategic design.

Improving General Business Practice

The world has changed dramatically since the origination of this study, affecting the global business and professional selling contexts relevant to this research effort. Covid-19 and its ensuing global responses forced many organizations, especially those in developing economies, to finally make the transition to remote workforces via digital connection to the rest of the world, where the costs of such investments did not make financial sense prior to the pandemic (Autio et al., 2021).

In this manner, Covid-19 served as a form of catalyst for enacting a global update in technological connectedness and the ability for individuals across the full spectrum of the workforce to finally interact remotely from their own homes or from other various locations.

The implications of this are tremendous, especially for global selling practices, as technology salespeople from the US have now been given increased access to potential customers for whom geographical barriers had once limited their reach (Torkkeli et al., 2022). In

other words, the global customer base for products of all kinds, including technology—especially software-based technology which is not limited by the usual logistical and locational constraints of physical shipping—are now able to purchase products from nearly any vendor from across the globe, which can interact with them digitally (Mikhailushkin et al., 2022).

Thus, resulting from the newfound variety of international salespeople seeking their business, buyers around the world, including those in developing nations which previously had not been heavily engaged across the global marketplace, are now becoming far more selective and competitive throughout their purchasing and negotiation practices.

As a result, cultural Understanding for the modern salesperson has become paramount to their overall success in the field, as domestic salespeople will have quotas that involve global customer accounts which previously had been limited to specialized salespeople exclusively assigned to those foreign territories.

This will change the overall selling environment and force a competitive selection for the salespeople who are best able to adapt to the new global environment by learning the cultural interactions which positively or negatively affect sales success during cross-cultural engagements.

Additionally, although it is possible that this new degree of connectedness between regional economies and global businesses could eventually produce or lead to reduced cultural barriers and thus, reduced cultural challenges as people engage with one another over time and collectively evolve toward a new standard of business practices, other research suggests quite the opposite (West et al., 2017).

In fact, cultural barriers may actually be heightened and strengthened when physical boundaries are reduced, as many cultures, particularly those high in Uncertainty Avoidance, may

defensively increase their cultural adherence to traditional behaviors in direct response to the infiltration of those from other cultures seeking to engage with businesses in their locations (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012; House et al., 2004).

North America has a tremendous influence across the global economy and is the foremost leader in technological production, though influences of US culture will not necessarily produce a flattened global cultural environment. Though US culture will certainly experience increased permeability across former cultural bounds which were enabled through physical barriers to entry, sales is and will always be about the customer.

Accordingly, North American salespeople who seek to conduct business with those from other cultures on their own terms and with the same domestic selling approaches used in North America will not be able to experience the levels of success possible when understanding their global customers and demonstrating the humility and interest necessary for empathizing with them and developing sincere buyer-seller relationships.

As this study demonstrates, there are several substantial differences distinguishing North American culture from that found in much of the outside world (House & Mansor, 1999; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). These differences have been shown to produce significant cultural interactions which may threaten the success of cross-cultural sales engagements between North American salespeople and buyers from foreign cultures.

As initially expressed in the foundations of this study, this research effort does not intend to produce a framework or methodology for an individual cultural context or for the application of an individual selling method. Rather, this study sought to identify a generalized adaptation framework for North American salespeople when selling in the general global context.

Focused on the literature and field research data demonstrating the uniqueness of the United States' culture relative to most of the outside world, this study sought a framework which is broadly applicable and generally effective.

Accordingly, the results of this study will not provide all-inclusive prescriptions for how to adapt to selling in specific cultural environments, but rather will provide a framework which, if leveraged by North American salespeople selling within most potential locations abroad, may help overcome or circumvent the specific cultural challenges they are most likely to face.

In other words, most salespeople from North America who employ the most predominant selling styles can apply this framework in most locations and cultural contexts across the globe as a means of accounting for their North American cultural distinctions in the adaptation of their unique sales approaches.

Thus, these results are applicable to salespeople of a variety of styles and not just one specific methodology. This framework is also applicable to most cultural contexts, so it does not provide the full depth necessary for continued or ideal levels of success which a North American salesperson could have in a specific cultural context.

Potential Application Strategies

From the findings published in their bestselling book entitled *The Challenger Sale*, renowned sales researchers, Dixon and Adamson (2011) describe five selling “personas” characterizing the behaviors of most North American salespeople: the Hard Worker, who loves personal development, is substantially motivated, and continually goes above and beyond in their work; the Relationship Builder, who excels at establishing and growing relationships with customers; the Lone Wolf, who are very autonomous and base their selling approach on their own unique intuition; the Problem Solver, who is very methodological, organized, and consistent

in their work; and finally, the Challenger, who is unafraid of confrontation and seeks to take control of the customer conversation to guide them toward the solution.

According to their findings in the USA, all these approaches are equal in their success across highly “transactional” selling contexts in the (i.e., contexts with low solution complexity, high product homogeneity, and heavy price competition). However, in more complex US sales engagements—such as those characterizing the enterprise technology industry—one persona type experiences a substantially higher frequency of success than any other: the Challenger.

Building upon these findings, the authors developed the Challenger Sale methodology, which prioritizes “teaching” the customer, “tailoring” the solution to their unique context, and “taking control” of the buying conversation (Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

The authors further explain that this approach is rooted in a sincere desire to help customers, combined with the competency to do so and the Understanding that if one does not “teach,” “tailor,” and “take control,” the customer may eventually opt for a sub-optimal solution from another vendor or may never be able to recognize and address the true unmet needs or long-term risks underlying their immediate challenges (Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

Thus, Challengers are characterized as believing they have the right solution for a customer, having done their research to understand the customer’s surrounding industry, environment, challenges, buying stakeholders, goals, risks, opportunities, and other relevant details, all of which enable them to educate customers and provide truly valuable information during sales dialogues (Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

Moreover, they sincerely care about the well-being of their customers and know they must be confrontational enough to take control of the buying conversation if they are to help them effectively as they know they can.

While the Challenger selling method has been proven extremely effective in the US technology marketplace, the findings of this study suggest that such a methodology would likely produce little success if applied within many international contexts without first being adapted to meet the same buyer needs through approaches better suited to broadly non-US cultures.

Thus, the North American prevalence and widespread credibility of the Challenger selling method, combined with clear parallels to the selling behaviors observed across this study's field research findings, make this a highly practical framework through which to illuminate and magnify the relevancy of this study's applications to professional practice.

As proposed by the Challenger selling method, it is the seller's responsibility to "teach for differentiation," "tailor the solution for resonance," and "take control of the buying conversation" (Dixon & Adamson, 2011). While these requirements are no less true in foreign selling contexts, this study's findings suggest that establishing differentiation (or, preferably, distinction), achieving resonance, and effecting deal closure would best be achieved in most foreign contexts through the selling practices of Understanding, Connecting, and "Leading" (as a combination of Serving and Solving).

Teaching, tailoring, and taking control are still important functions of any selling process, including those within international contexts, but this study's findings suggest they would not be the leading priorities relative to other more-critical behaviors. Thus, for international sales engagements faced specifically by NORAM salespeople, these focal tenets would be rephrased as: "Understanding for differentiation," "Connecting for resonance," and "Leading to the close."

Understand for Differentiation. As revealed by the field research data, the participants, by a substantial margin, prioritized the selling practice of Teaching less than any other behavior.

This is likely no coincidence, as the findings also reveal that the behaviors inherent in teaching characterize several North American cultural qualities which are highly culpable for negative cultural interactions within foreign selling contexts, primarily the US' cultural qualities of low Power Distance and preferences for Direct forms of communication.

Naturally, it is possible this study's participants—all of whom come from backgrounds with significant experience in international selling—consciously or subconsciously evolved their cross-cultural selling approaches to abstain from North American tendencies to “teach” due to their likely encounters with inexplicable challenges when employing such methods.

Thus, these findings suggest that Teaching, though highly effective within US selling contexts, is likely to be very risky if applied indiscriminately across many foreign cultural contexts by NORAM salespeople, unless such salespeople are highly trained and aware of the many cultural interactions underlying their unique selling contexts.

Give Utmost Levels of Attention & Respect to Authority Levels. The USA enjoys a significantly lower-than-average degree of cultural Power Distance. Combining this with the fact that the vast majority of North Americans cherish the unique founding principle of equality which is engrained in our value system and way of life (Dash et al., 2006), it becomes apparent that other cultures without such established values and with higher degrees of Power Distance would likely find NORAM culture to be extremely unusual, and their selling behaviors—especially those involving teaching—to be potentially offensive.

For example, consider the \$7M SAP Loss in Japan, wherein P4 failed to recognize the offense taken by an Indian CIO who had been “taught” what his organization was doing wrong by a low-level SME who did not recognize their grave violation of the Indian culture's extremely high level of Power Distance. This catastrophic loss of such a high-value deal was almost

irrefutably caused by the contracted SME unwittingly “teaching” a senior-level executive from a culture which holds the separation of authority levels to be of utmost importance.

Thus, the SME’s behavior was viewed as unforgivably offensive and was later confirmed to have been the only reason why the \$7M contract was awarded to a competitor instead of the incumbent vendor with a preferable solution, P4’s organization.

Accordingly, by understanding that many foreign cultures with higher levels of Power Distance consider hierarchies, titles, or other designations of authority to be extremely important, NORAM salespeople can avoid catastrophic misunderstandings or offenses by being overly sensitive to and respectful of differences in authority, status, or rank while conducting business in foreign contexts.

Prioritize Group-Level Pain Points, Goals, Challenges, and Value. As revealed in the literature and emphasized by the field research data, the grave disparity between North America’s supremely high levels of Individualism and many foreign nations’ generally high Collectivism (a.k.a., low Individualism) consistently produces significant obstacles during NORAM cross-cultural selling engagements (Garcia et al., 2014; Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, P10).

Thus, across nearly all foreign contexts, NORAM Individualism should be accounted for by Understanding that North American views of autonomy, individuality, self-worth, and independence, as well as personal achievement, personal happiness, personal problems, personal autonomy, etc., are almost always more extreme than—and often even contrary to—those held by foreign buyers.

Accordingly, NORAM salespeople seeking to Understand their foreign customers and prospects may benefit by accounting for their own, highly Individualistic viewpoints, continually

reminding themselves to: a) prioritize engaging the group versus the individual during sales dialogues; b) prioritize discussing group buying interests versus personal buying interests; c) emphasize group stakeholder benefit versus decision-maker benefit when creating or communicating value propositions.

This does not mean that NORAM salespeople should avoid discussing individual benefit or value during the selling process altogether. In fact, the field data reveals that NORAM salespeople may have a great advantage at Connecting with buyers during one-to-one conversations (P4 and P7), since foreign buyers are likely far less accustomed to the great level of focus given by NORAM salespeople to decision-makers' individual thoughts, challenges, goals, etc.

However, NORAM salespeople should rank such individual focus as lower in priority compared to group or collective focus when selling to foreign buyers, remaining aware of the fact that all foreign decision-makers, to varying degrees, will hold collective welfare in higher regard than decision-makers in North America.

Emphasize Past Performance Instead of Present Innovativeness. As a final recommendation for demonstrating Understanding of a buyer's cultural context, NORAM salespeople should apply more focus during sales dialogues toward highlighting their organization's past performance versus their innovativeness or ingenuity. North American culture is characterized by an unusually low degree of Uncertainty Avoidance, producing a business context which is very tolerant of risk and continually rewards new ideas, new innovations, and new solutions; however, buyers across many cultures with higher degrees of Uncertainty Avoidance are far less drawn to new innovations and would much prefer purchasing solutions which are stable, reliable, and well-established (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014).

Thus, in many contexts with risk-averse buyers from high Uncertainty Avoidance cultures, a NORAM salesperson's natural gravitation toward emphasizing newness or innovativeness in their value propositions can prove to: at best, distract from the features of past performance or reliability which would best appeal to the prospect; and at worst, convince the prospect that the solution is far too new, untested, or unestablished to be considered a reasonable purchase decision.

Summary: Understand for Distinction. In contrast to the potential for Teaching to produce negative interactions in such cross-cultural selling scenarios, the practice of Understanding can serve as an inverse yet functional substitute which provides the added benefit of helping avoid misunderstandings inherent in critical and prevalent disparities of Power Distance, Universalism, Collectivism, and Uncertainty Avoidance.

Furthermore, fueled by misinterpretations of the US's uniquely elevated levels of Individualism, many foreigners tend to generalize North Americans by believing them to be arrogant, disrespectful, or simply uninterested in "non-American" ways of living.

Thus, in prioritizing the practice of Understanding by demonstrating awareness of key differences in cultural expectations, North American salespeople might occasionally even surprise observant foreign buyers anticipating "yet another clueless American," thus providing further opportunity to earn such buyers' attention and respect during the selling process.

In this manner, NORAM salespeople may distinguish themselves from among other foreign or domestic organizations competing for their buyers' attention, by demonstrating apparent Understanding of the most significant and prevalent cultural expectations found across non-US contexts. Accordingly, it is recommended that NORAM salespeople seeking to conduct

business with foreign clientele should substitute the practice of Teaching for the selling practice of Understanding.

Connect for Resonance. As evidenced by participant responses, North American salespeople highly prioritize the selling practice of Connecting with one's buyer (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, & P9). In fact, they gravitate toward such a selling behavior so strongly, that the work of Dixon and Adamson (2011) specifically addresses an over-focus on developing relationships with buyers relative to providing true value. Accordingly, the authors recommend "tailoring for resonance" by carefully designing one's value proposition to the complex and unique group buying dynamic, rather than overemphasizing the attention given to individual stakeholders in the buying process.

While "tailoring for resonance" is just as important within the foreign business landscape as it is across North America, this study suggests that NORAM salespeople may achieve greater success at establishing resonance in broadly international contexts by partially returning their focus toward Connecting and approaching it in a nuanced and culturally-adaptive manner.

One of the most significant insights from the field research data was the fact that participants greatly preferred the practice of Connecting yet encountered a multitude of Connecting-related challenges during their cross-cultural selling experiences (P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, & P9). This suggests that the second-hand nature by which NORAM salespeople skillfully connect with their buyers in the USA may be a weakness in the global marketplace, as Connecting with buyers from different cultures may not occur in the same manner as in the USA.

Accordingly, NORAM salespeople must step back from trying to employ the same complex selling practices used to distinguish themselves in domestic contexts and instead must apply their focus toward ensuring the basic requirements of a buyer-seller relationship are met.

As one sales truism claims, buyers do business with people they “know, like, and trust.” To accomplish this and gain resonance with a customer, sellers must demonstrate that they are valuable, competent, and credible. In any sales transaction, connecting with buyers in such a manner constitutes table stakes; however, this study has revealed that the manner for accomplishing this in non-US cultural contexts should be adapted if it is to succeed.

So, for NORAM salespeople to mistakenly presume they have achieved Connection with their foreign buyers via the same manners that work domestically is effectively ending a sales engagement before it even begins. Accordingly, it is recommended that NORAM salespeople seek to establish familiarity with their buyers by prioritizing earnestness over value, gain likeability by prioritizing sincerity over competence, and earn trust by prioritizing humility over credibility.

Earnestness vs Credibility & Competence. One of the primary points of emphasis for US salespeople during initial sales conversations involves the demonstration of the value their solution can bring, as well as the value the salesperson themselves can bring, with the intent of helping buyers get to “know” them and their organization.

This is, understandably, a very important relational premise to establish between buyer and seller before any transaction can take place. However, foreign buyers, especially those from Collectivistic and Diffuse cultures, do not base early relationship building on value alone (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Foreign buyers may be far more open to forming meaningful connections with NORAM salespeople if perceiving they are sincere in starting such relationships and truly wish to establish a long-term buyer-seller relationship. NORAM salespeople should try to show a sincere interest in knowing their foreign customers on a personal level and should be prepared to loosen normal

US boundaries between work and personal life to create genuine connections in more Diffuse cultures, where the boundaries between work life and personal life are not sharply defined (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

This means when in Germany, drink with them after hours; when in China, discuss your personal life during meals; etc. When forming connections with foreign buyers, NORAM salespeople should recognize that they likely do not see relationships as unidimensional.

In the US, salespeople are likely to give significant, isolated attention to a single individual at a time while constraining such attention to the individuals they feel are most relevant for influencing an opportunity toward the close.

This is one area in which the Challenger Sale method is universally applicable—salespeople anywhere should learn to account for the entire group of stakeholders while designing or “tailoring” their custom value propositions for each customer engagement (Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

This is where conducting research on a buyer’s cultural norms and demonstrating earnestness through preparedness becomes a crucial selling practice for which NORAM salespeople should allocate increased attention prior to meetings with foreign buyers. If salespeople must conduct extensive research on their US customers to succeed in the domestic marketplace, how much more should they research their foreign customers?

In any culture, it is important that sellers “show them that they know them” (spoken of buyers). However, this is far more difficult to achieve in contexts which are further complicated by cultural barriers. Thus, NORAM salespeople should recognize the need to conduct greater amounts of research on their foreign accounts’ business operations, industry settings,

stakeholders, technical contexts, and other details, so they may combine such findings to produce insights which add substantive value to the buyer during sales conversations.

In such a manner, sellers may earn the right to do business with foreign prospects and will achieve a powerful level of Connection with them by demonstrating their earnest desire to understand them, as well as their ability to add true value.

Lead to the Close. Throughout the data analysis, the selling behaviors of Serving and Solving emerged as pattern qualities associated with participants who had the most positive experiences in global selling while also possessing a unique perspective defined by a sincere interest in people and a great appreciation for their diversity of behaviors, perspectives, and cultures.

While the concept of Solving certainly aligns with the Challenger Sale method of “taking control” of a sales dialogue to lead toward the close, the concept of Serving appears to directly conflict with such a practice. This may suggest that, when selling to buyers from foreign cultures, NORAM salespeople should slightly nuance their efforts to “take control” of the sales dialogue by combining the functions of Serving with Solving, producing a joint behavior fittingly described as the practice of Leading.

By combining these two observed styles, the practice of Leading effectively encapsulates several adaptive behaviors identified in the data which may serve as final recommendations for any NORAM seeking success in their selling efforts to foreign buyers. These four adaptations include a) taking responsibility for all people involved in the selling process; b) relentlessly clarifying and over-communicating; c) lowering expectations and interpretations of certainty; and d) continually anticipating time-related miscommunications.

Take Responsibility for Everyone. NORAM salespeople may address potential miscommunications, misunderstandings, or even potential offenses before they even happen by continually helping their team members, as well as clarification to customers on their behalf. Though nobody can be expected to understand the many intricacies and cultural nuances between everyone involved in a sales engagement, the continual offer to help teammates adapt or to help clients understand may increase group sensitivities to any challenges or miscommunications while also demonstrating humility and earnestness to potential buyers.

Relentlessly Over-Communicate. Salespeople should recognize that, in nearly every cross-cultural selling engagement, there is far more being communicated than is being spoken. While this can be accounted for by paying greater attention to non-verbal cues and continually seeking clarification, the challenges from indirect communication styles are often made worse by NORAM salespeople habitually presuming (wrongly) that they are communicating effectively due to their domestic communication expertise.

Accordingly, salespeople may better lead to the close by humbling themselves and acknowledging the fact that they cannot rely on their intuition alone for fully understanding what is being said, and their eloquent, persuasive, entertaining, or pragmatic communication skills which they rely upon in the US are far less likely to be understood correctly by others.

Thus, NORAM salespeople should constantly clarify and relentlessly over-communicate without ever assuming everyone understands each other fully.

Lower Perceived Interpretations of Certainty. Another way NORAM salespeople can avoid miscommunications is by recognizing the potential differences in perspective inherent in many contexts that have far lower levels of Universalism than had in North America (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

The USA is one of the most litigious societies in the world, predominantly because of high Universalism which effects a widespread belief that what stated or agreed to should be interpreted literally and rigidly based strictly on the meaning of the words either spoken or written. Many other cultures do not maintain the same belief, operating on the presumption that those they are communicating with understand the implicit situational flexibility intended along with their statements or agreements.

Thus, NORAM salespeople should adapt for such cross-cultural disparities in perspective resulting from different levels of Universalism by not assuming that verbal agreements with foreign buyers are as firmly established as would normally be interpreted in the United States (Morton et al., 2018). At the same time, salespeople should be extremely cautious, productively skeptical, and more reserved with pipeline commitments than they would normally be otherwise—perhaps it is best to think twice (or three times) before moving an opportunity into “Commit.”

Plan for Time-Related Miscommunications. Finally, NORAM salespeople can lead their foreign prospects to the close by planning ahead for an abundance of time-related setbacks, miscommunications, and uncertainties. Since the US is a particularly Synchronous culture, time is viewed as linear, rigid, and designated for one thing at a time (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Across many less Synchronous or altogether Asynchronous cultures, time is viewed with far less exactness, precision, or importance—in these places, time is more abstract than defined.

Thus, broadly-speaking, NORAM salespeople may avoid significant time-related challenges by: a) resolving to be endlessly patient with their customers; b) never using time-based pressures or ultimatums to push buyers to purchase; c) always showing up early and being

prepared to stay late; d) not being offended or making falsely negative interpretations if prospects multitask when communicating with you in manners which would be disrespectful in the USA; and, e) continually establishing clear expectations, agreements, and timelines, followed by endlessly reiterating them, clarifying them, explaining them, writing them, sending them, stating them, singing them, translating them into Klingon, ad infinitum.

Recommendations for Further Study

By combining the business field of professional selling with the sociological science of international culture, this research effort has drawn from a great breadth of supporting literature to establish its foundations and guide its progression.

Since I struggled to identify another similar research effort focused on the unique combination of North American selling practices and cultural adaptation to foreign environments, it is possible this has created a new area of research, thereby opening the possibility and need for much additional research to expound upon the subjective findings of this study. Accordingly, there is a great variety of research which may help advance this area of research and ultimately add value and guidance to the business practices of North American salespeople and foreign buyers alike.

Nevertheless, several immediate recommendations for further research which may serve to help better substantiate or clarify this study's findings involve the following: 1. Using grounded theory to test the composition of this study's participant group to determine if it represented a statistically valid (in terms of demographics, industry, and extent of international experience) survey of NORAM professional salespeople with experience selling internationally; 2. Deeper narrative research to fully examine the selling styles identified through this research and determine their general prevalence or applicability towards any possible behavioral

paradigm describing North American selling behaviors; 3. Using this study as a framework for guiding more focused research into the appropriate adaptation strategies for NORAM salespeople in specific global regions or cultural contexts.

Reflections

This study has proven to be a great facilitator of personal, professional, and spiritual growth over the past several years, and I am truly grateful for both the academic knowledge and the lifelong wisdom learned throughout this process.

Personally, professionally, and academically, I've come to recognize the trueness of Proverbs 16:9, in which Solomon so simply describes what I now believe to be the most meaningful truism in business: "We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps" The emotions that come to my heart when considering this perfect phrase are difficult to put into words—all of the planning, all of the hoping, all of the worrying, all of the boasting, all of the uncertainty, all of the surety—every moment embracing such sentiments over the years as I pushed toward completion of this degree—all could have been put to rest in an instant had I simply understood the complete truth in these eleven words.

We always make our plans, but the LORD always determines our steps. He just likes to let us believe we're taking our own path, all the while He's orchestrating every story at the intersection of our veritable freewill and His endless involvement, marveling at our choices, helping us in our weakness, and perhaps even lovingly chuckling at our existential dilemmas as we struggle to make sense of our current situations and plead with Him to take an interest in our future directions.

Personal & Professional Growth

Over the course of this research effort, my life has changed substantially. Being fully briefed from the outset on the widely abysmal completion rates (or—better phrased—“incompletion rates”) of many DBA programs, I was well-aware that completing this study to earn my degree would be a challenge unlike any I had ever faced before.

Facilitated by this theoretical awareness, I meticulously planned out every step of what I believed would be the successful path forward; however, resonant of the core distinction between a DBA program and a PhD, I quickly found that no amount of theory could adequately account for the unpredictable nature of “real life” surrounding oneself when taking on such an endeavor.

Adopting a new German Shepherd. Moving six times across 4,393 miles. Starting six different sales roles at four different employers. Serving countless customers and achieving many big wins (as well as facing a few tough losses). Meeting my best friend in a candy store, falling in love, and applying every sales framework I had ever practiced or studied to convince her somehow to marry me. Facing new and unexpected health issues. Enduring a pandemic. Losing a loved one. Starting a business. Making many new friends. Facing many challenges. Learning many lessons.

As insightfully foretold by Reeves and Deimler (2011) over a decade ago, adaptability has become one of the greatest differentiators across nearly every line of business, and those who expect consistency are consistently disappointed. Learning such a truth from my many unexpected and often unimaginable real-world experiences over the past six years while completing this DBA program has proven to be the most valuable area of both personal and professional growth I have taken from this pursuit.

I've come to realize the great uncertainty of life, both inside and out of the business context, by experiencing it firsthand while completing my degree. Nearly every single word of my original plan was revised, removed, re-added, truncated, or rephrased a multitude of times as life continually required me to adapt for the changing road ahead so I could continue moving forward toward completion of this goal.

That's the difference between the theoretical and the practical: theory works in a vacuum, while practice never has a vacuum to enter. We use theory for Understanding observations from practice and then prescribe theory to practice for making new observations. For this reason, I am grateful to have pursued an "applied" dissertation in working to complete my DBA, as the insights gathered from my research were never limited to informing just the theoretical but were intended primarily to inform the practical.

My hope is that the findings of this study will help salespeople and other business practitioners the same manner in which completing this study itself has helped me: by providing additional evidence for the certainty of uncertainty, reiterating the importance of adaptation, and magnifying the fact that, regardless of what the present is and future appears, there is always a path forward.

Biblical Perspective

Within his widely renowned book, historian Michael Hart (1978) provides evidence and argument for his proposed selection of the 100 most influential people of all time. In addressing critics who challenged his proposition that Mohammed, and not Jesus, ranks number one, Hart (1978) clarified that he was not referring to the "greatness" of any individual, but rather the quantity of human lives they influenced and the degrees to which their actions altered the course of human history.

Regardless of his correctness in ranking Mohammed as first, Isaac Newton as second, Jesus Christ as third, Buddha as fourth, and Confucius as fifth, none of these individuals would be a surprise to find ranked at least somewhere among the top ten most “influential” people in human history.

Who may come as a surprise, however, is sixth, Paul of Tarsus, who started his adult life near Damascus as a well-respected Jewish official, originally named Saul, fixated on halting the spread of Christianity and purging his surrounding communities of anyone “wayward” enough to believe the promised Messiah was a lowly, recently-executed carpenter from Nazareth named Jesus Christ.

As described in the Biblical account of his life, he eventually encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus through a bright light that temporarily blinded him and a voice which asked, “why are you persecuting me?” After committing his life to Christ and changing his name to Paul, he would eventually go on to write most of the New Testament before his execution in Rome and to become responsible for the propagation of Christianity across the world (English Standard Version Bible, 2022, Acts 9:1–22).

While certainly believing Paul to be an influential figure of human history, as well as personally encountering such influence (my parents partly named me after him by making Paul my middle name), it was not until reflecting on my long-time favorite book, *The Greatest Salesman in the World* by Og Mandino (1981), that I recognized the true reason why Paul was so expansively influential and his life so powerfully impactful upon the course of human history.

Paul was a salesperson. In fact, Paul was the greatest salesperson who ever lived. This claim could be offensive to some people who immediately associate the word “salesperson” with caricatures of deceptive or pushy con artists trying to get people to buy things they do not need.

At the same time, it may be offensive to people who would argue that the Gospel is not a cheap commodity to be “sold” by anybody.

But the meaning behind this claim is vastly different than either of these objections would address, and it is rooted in what I believe is the truest definition of being a “salesperson.”

After communicating with countless salespeople throughout my career, across my personal life, and as part of this study, I have heard the discipline of professional selling defined in numerous ways. When asked what defines “selling,” those who have not done it often describe it as: “manipulating,” “negotiating,” “hustling,” “competing,” “convincing,” “marketing,” and several other verbs—some, positive; most, negative.

But those who have done it as a career almost always speak in an entirely different manner about it, with many describing it as: “helping,” “consulting,” “assisting,” “guiding,” “educating,” “supporting,” “challenging,” “asking questions,” “solving problems,” “facilitating,” and more; however, one word seems to be used most often, and I personally believe this word encapsulates all of the aforementioned positive descriptors to truly represent the discipline of professional selling: “serving.”

True selling is serving. True salespeople are true servants. Returning to Paul, he was a man who had been given something he believed to be of such incredible value that he was willing to do anything to successfully share it with the world. He had a solution—a true solution that he as a ‘seller’ knew his ‘customers’ desperately needed, whether they knew it themselves.

So, rather than offering the Gospel to people and then moving on, he did what all the very best salespeople do: he adapted, becoming “all things to all people so that by all possible means [he] might save some” (English Standard Version Bible, 2022, 1 Corinthians 9:19–23). He researched his customers, he negotiated, he handled objections, he followed up, he stayed

organized, he traveled, and he wrote the world's first whitepaper (aka. Acts), datasheet (aka. Romans), and sales emails (aka., the Epistles).

His goal was serving by sharing the greatest gift this world had ever received. But he knew that he could not simply hand it over and it be uniformly received by the masses. So, he sold. He gave an abundance of time to those who refused him, he spoke to them on their own levels, and he gave his very best value propositions.

He communicated with skill. He connected with sincerity. He consulted with urgency. He quarterbacked with diligence. He served with love. He solved with cleverness. He structured with discipline. He taught with excellence. He understood with compassion.

To Paul, nothing else mattered, so long as those who needed the Gospel were compelled to receive it, whatever it took. Driven by his compassion and desire for the welfare of his prospects, Paul stopped at nothing to give them every chance to hear, believe, and receive salvation through Christ.

Because of this sincere, internal goal, he did not care if his prospects struggled to understand the value he was offering, he did not care if the “timing” was not right, he did not care what others thought of his “profession.” To him, selling was a mission, and for that reason, he impacted the eternal fate of countless people and influenced the course of human history more than—almost—anyone else.

Though there are many parallels from Paul's story to the work of a modern-day salesperson, no technology product comes anywhere close in comparison to the value of the Gospel; however, the principle behind Paul's example remains applicable: true success in selling comes from having a sincere desire for the welfare of your customer, combined with a strong and

informed belief that they need what you have. With such motivations, failure is not an option, and success is not a destination.

And certainly, if the greatest gift ever given humankind was offered at no cost and still required mission-driven, servant-minded selling for people to receive it, how much more do technology buyers need the help of earnest and competent salespeople to outcompete vendors with inadequate or low-value alternatives and use every tactic, strategy, and style possible to compel them toward the best purchase decisions for their business?

Summary of Reflections

Sales is more than a profession; it is a mission for which the welfare of the customer is one's greatest priority. To best serve their customers, salespeople must be willing and able to adapt to different cultures. Paul, the apostle, is a great example of how this can be done effectively. He was driven by his compassion for others and his desire to share the Gospel with them, no matter what it took.

His methods were so successful that he influenced the course of human history more than almost anyone else. While technology products cannot compare in value to the Gospel, the principles behind Paul's example remains applicable: a) success in selling comes from an earnest desire for the welfare of one's customer; and b) understanding and adapting to the customer—including their culture—is essential for ensuring such welfare and guiding them toward their best possible purchase decision.

Summary of Section 3

This section began with an overview of the conducted study, explaining the phenomenological problem faced by North American sales professionals seeking to sell into foreign cultural contexts.

The research design and methods were described along with the applied thematic analyses conducted after data was gathered. Findings were then presented including culpable cultural variables and their harmful interactions with specific NORAM selling methods. Relevant insights were gathered from these findings, and their applications to professional practice were proposed.

From these findings and practical applications, several important areas of further study were then recommended. Finally, this section concluded with my personal, professional, and spiritual reflections.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

The following questions are divided into four distinct sections, with the first three involving participants' backgrounds, and the fourth involving descriptions of their lived experiences. Section one focuses on participants' general backgrounds, section two focuses on their underlying cultural influences, section three focuses on their professional selling approaches and dispositions, and section four focuses on their experiences confronting cultural interactions during sales engagements with foreign buyers.

Prior to beginning each interview, participants were asked to confirm (once again) that they meet the appropriate participant criteria and that they understand and agree to the possible emotional risks involved. At the beginning of the interview process, I made an initial explanatory statement to describe the overall format and requirements of the interview process. Furthermore, I gave a brief explanation at the beginning of each individual section.

Initial Statement to Participants

Thank you for agreeing to contribute toward this research study by participating in this recorded interview as someone who meets the participant criteria of 1) having sold or having been directly involved in (either onsite or remotely) a sales opportunity of enterprise technology products (either closed-won or closed-lost) where a primary decision-maker was a non-US citizen who lived outside of the USA; 2) having at least two years of professional technology sales experience; 3) having been born in the United States; and 4) having lived and worked in the United States for at least 10 out of the past 20 years.

This video interview is being recorded, and your responses will be held to the highest standards of individual confidentiality and data security, with only myself (aka, the "Researcher") knowing your individual identity and being able to attribute your unique responses

to your correct name. All personally identifiable information will be carefully removed from any published details, excerpts, insights, or other information gathered from this interview. Several weeks after completing this interview, the Researcher will contact you for a very brief follow-up interview to discuss your responses and gather your feedback regarding the interview questions and process.

Due to the nature of this study, it is required that the Researcher ask you an exact series of questions without diverting to other topics, as the same series of questions must be asked of all participants to maintain academic validity. This interview process will involve four sections comprised of questions involving your general background, cultural influences, selling paradigms, and international sales experiences. Please answer each question with as much or as little detail as desired. If you wish not to answer any specific questions, please simply ask to skip the question and move on to the next. The first three sections are of least importance relative to the final section; therefore, with the time allotted, please consider allocating most of your time toward providing detailed answers and feedback in the final section relative to the first three sections.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research effort. Before we proceed, if you confirm that you meet the participant criteria and consent to the terms of this study, please state the following: “I _____ consent to the terms of this study and agree to participate in this recorded interview.”

Section 1—General Participant Background

This section involves seven short questions regarding your general background.

1. What is your name, occupation, and why did you agree to participate in this study?
2. Where were you born? Raised?

3. Where do you currently call home?
4. Where else have you lived throughout your life?
5. Could you describe your career in a general sense (i.e., work history, professional accomplishments, career goals, current role, etc.)?
6. Could you describe your personal life in a general sense (i.e., family, friends, hobbies, personal accomplishments, life goals, current location, etc.)?
7. Aside from details involving international culture or your career as a professional salesperson, is there anything else about yourself that you feel would help better understand your answers to upcoming interview questions?

Section 2—Cultural Influences (Bracketing)

This section involves five questions regarding your personal cultural influences, four of which are followed by several sub-questions.

8. America has been described as a “nation of immigrants,” meaning that many individuals from many different nations have moved to this country, bringing an incredible variety of their own cultural influences. These influences could consist of different foods, clothing styles, music, artwork, family traditions, and even different ways of thinking, communicating, or interacting with one another. With this in mind, what kinds of different cultures were you able to observe during your upbringing?
9. Aside from work assignments, do you feel you have been able to travel much internationally?
 - 9.1. Where have you travelled, for how long did you stay, and why did you go?
 - 9.2. What have you learned from your travels?
 - 9.3. Have you learned anything about other people or other cultures? If so, what?

- 9.4. In your opinion, what are some of the key differences between people from other cultures?
- 9.5. Could you describe any specific experiences which may have led to these opinions?
10. Aside from international work assignments, have you been in any situations (i.e., foreign-social, domestic-workplace, or domestic-social scenarios) where cultural differences produced misunderstandings or conflict?
- 10.1. Could you provide any examples?
11. In your opinion, what specific cultural differences caused the misunderstanding or conflict?
- 11.1. In your opinion, what could have been done to resolve the issue during the situation?
- 11.2. In your opinion, what could have been done to resolve the issue afterwards?
- 11.3. In your opinion, what could have been done to prevent the issue from occurring in the first place?
12. Have you ever travelled internationally for non-sales work?
- 12.1. If so, where have you travelled, for how long did you stay, and what was the assignment?
- 12.2. From your employer's perspective, did you meet the objectives of the assignment?
- 12.3. From your own perspective, did you meet the objectives of the assignment?
- 12.4. What general challenges did you encounter?
- 12.4.1. Did you have much support from your home office?

12.5. What challenges did you encounter in dealing with local coworkers, customers, or business partners?

12.5.1. Why do you feel they occurred?

12.5.2. What did you do to resolve them?

12.5.3. If you could go back to that time, what would you do differently to address the issue more successfully?

Section 3—Selling Paradigms (Bracketing)

This section involves four questions regarding your personal selling paradigms, three of which are followed by several sub-questions.

13. How did you get into technology sales?

13.1. What was your previous role?

13.2. Are you still in sales now?

13.3. How long have you been in sales? Or, if no longer in sales, how long were you in the profession?

14. Why did you choose sales as a profession?

14.1. What do you love about sales?

14.2. What do you hate about sales?

14.3. Why do you still do it (sales)?

15. How would you describe your unique selling approach (i.e., your value-add as a salesperson)?

15.1. What is your personal selling philosophy?

15.2. What's your approach to handling customer objections?

15.3. What's your approach to closing a sale at the end of the selling process?

- 15.4. How would you define your personal selling style?
- 15.5. What selling tactics or strategies have you learned over the years which have proven useful throughout your career?
- 16. What do you feel is the most important feature or practice of an excellent salesperson?

Section 4—International Sales Experiences

This section involves seven questions regarding certain scenarios possibly encountered across your international sales experiences, six of which are followed by several sub-questions. Since they are focused on individual scenarios, several of these questions may be asked multiple times if you have multiple scenarios to share.

- 17. How many times have you sold (or attempted to sell) to foreign customers (either abroad or remotely)?
 - 17.1. In general, how successful were these ventures? Why?
- 18. Could you provide an example of a venture you view as successful?
 - 18.1.1. Where was the sales engagement, when did it occur, how long did it last, were you working remotely or locally, and who was involved (customer, partners, coworkers, etc.)?
 - 18.1.2. Would your employer have also viewed this as successful?
 - 18.1.3. In your opinion, can you think of any cultural aspects that contributed to the venture's success?
 - 18.1.4. In your opinion, can you think of any cultural aspects that may have hindered or challenged the venture's success?
 - 18.1.4.1. If so, how were they addressed to enable a successful outcome?

18.1.4.2. If not, what do you think caused the absence of cultural challenges in this scenario?

18.1.5. Do you have any additional examples of such “successful” ventures to share?

18.2. REPEAT ABOVE PROCESS UNTIL PARTICIPANT HAS NO ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

19. Could you provide an example of a venture you would view as unsuccessful?

19.1.1. Where was the sales engagement, when did it occur, how long did it last, were you working remotely or locally, and who was involved (customer, partners, coworkers, etc.)?

19.1.2. Would your employer have also viewed this as unsuccessful?

19.1.3. In your opinion, can you think of any cultural aspects that contributed to the venture’s failure?

19.1.3.1. If so, how could they have been addressed better to enable a successful outcome?

19.1.3.2. Do you have any additional examples of such “unsuccessful” ventures to share?

19.2. REPEAT ABOVE PROCESS UNTIL PARTICIPANT HAS NO ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

20. [Referencing the individual examples provided] For sales engagements in which you physically travelled internationally to interact with foreign customers:

20.1. How frequently did you travel and how long were these trips?

20.2. Were you fully expatriated (i.e., abroad for longer than three months)?

- 20.3. Do you feel that you had adequate support from the home office?
- 20.4. Did you work with onsite partners or subsidiaries, or were you alone on the assignment?
- 20.5. How do you feel you interacted with locals?
- 20.6. Did any personal challenges while abroad impact your success on assignment?
- 20.7. Did you encounter any confusing or problematic situations, either with foreign coworkers, customers, business partners, or locals, that may have resulted from cultural differences?
- 21. [Referencing the individual examples provided] For sales engagements in which you only interacted with foreign customers remotely from the US:
 - 21.1. How did you bridge the communication gap between you and your customers (i.e., teleconferencing)?
 - 21.2. How did you handle logistical and locational challenges (i.e., shipping, deployment, etc.)?
 - 21.3. How did you address local competition which was able to be physically near your customers while you could not?
- 22. [Referencing the individual examples provided] For these ventures, both remote and abroad:
 - 22.1. How would you describe the selling style you used? Do you feel it worked or did not work? Why?
 - 22.2. How did you develop a relationship with your customer? Do you feel it worked?
 - 22.3. What communication problems did you encounter? How were they addressed?
 - 22.4. How did you handle objections?

- 22.5. How did you try to close?
- 22.6. What kind of selling strategy did your team or business unit promote for these assignments (relationship-based, value-based, key account, or solution-oriented)?
23. As the final question of this interview, are there any additional insights, opinions, experiences, or reflections you would like to share involving sales, international culture, North American behavior, or cross-cultural selling?

Closing Statement

The above questions comprise the general framework for conducting the field research interviews necessary to fulfill this study. While these questions are intended to be asked exactly and completely, each interview engagement may necessitate flexibility and adaptation to enable the Researcher to effectively elicit relevant insights from participants; therefore, these questions may be partially augmented, reduced, added-to, or deviated from if necessary to account for the unique needs and potential contributions of individual participants.

Appendix B: Qualitative Questionnaire Web Form

Culturally Adaptive Selling: Research Questionnaire

Participant Contact Information & Consent

All personal information is kept confidential and may only be accessed by the researcher.

Name *

First

Last

Phone *

Email *

LinkedIn Username

If you have a LinkedIn account and would like to share this with the researcher, please provide the link here. By providing your LinkedIn account, you consent to having the researcher send you a request to connect after this study.

Personal Website

If you have a personal or professional website and would like to share this with the researcher, please provide the link here.

Please verify that you meet the requirements to participate in this study by selecting each statement which is TRUE: *

- ☐ I have sold technology products (either in-person or remotely) to at least one customer who was a non-US citizen working in a foreign country.
- ☐ I have lived and worked in the US for at least 10 out of the past 20 years.
- ☐ I have at least 2 years of professional technology sales experience.
- ☐ I was born in the United States or Canada.

I would like to participate: *

- ☐ In the survey only.
- ☐ In the survey and in a recorded interview (if asked at a later time).

If the Researcher wishes to contact me for additional information regarding any of my specific responses: *

- ☐ I consent to being contacted by phone and/or email.
- ☐ I consent to being contacted by email only.
- ☐ I do not consent to being contacted.

Culturally Adaptive Selling: Research Questionnaire

Terms and Conditions for Research Consent *

I confirm that I have received, signed, and returned to the researcher (Zachary McKinley) the research consent form required to participate in this study. By proceeding to take this survey, I fully consent to the requirements included therein. I also acknowledge that a copy of the form content is provided for reference below.

CONSENT FORM

CULTURALLY ADAPTING NORTH AMERICAN SELLING METHODOLOGIES TO INTERNATIONAL ENTERPRISE TECHNOLOGY SALES ENGAGEMENTS
Zachary P. McKinley
Liberty University
School of Business

You are invited to participate in a research study of the cultural interactions affecting North American salespeople when selling enterprise technologies to foreign customers. You were selected as a possible participant because you: 1) have sold or been directly involved in (either onsite or remotely) a sales opportunity of enterprise technology products (either closed-won or closed-lost) where a primary decision-maker was a non-US citizen who lived outside of the USA; 2) have at least 2 years of professional technology sales experience; 3) were born in the United States or Canada; and 4) have lived and worked in the United States for at least 10 out of the past 20 years. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before confirming your agreement to be in the study.

Zachary McKinley ("Researcher"), a doctoral candidate in the School of Business at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine which cultural interactions are most impactful upon enterprise technology sales engagements between North American salespeople and foreign buyers, thereby identifying possible insights for the development of culturally-adaptive selling methodologies.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, the Researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Complete an online questionnaire with several parts, including a series of questions involving your personal and professional background, an assessment regarding your personal selling approach, and a series of questions involving your experiences selling to foreign customers. This will take approximately 1-2 hours to complete.
- You may also be asked to participate in a second activity involving a recorded interview regarding your experiences selling to foreign customers. This will be conducted either in-person or remotely, depending on your location and availability, and Webex video conferencing software will be used to record both audio and video throughout the interview. This will take approximately 1-2 hours to complete.
- From within the questionnaire, you will be given the option to denote whether you would like to be contacted by the researcher for additional information regarding your responses. If you consent, the researcher may call or email you with additional questions, and you may be asked to gather and submit supporting documentation or artifacts which provide contextual information related to answers. Your decision to received additional communications from the researcher or to provide various items will remain completely optional, and the amount of time required will vary based on the complexity of specific questions or the time required for gathering different items.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include additions to the body of academic knowledge related to international sales and culture, as well as the potential development of culturally-adaptive selling frameworks for use by North American salespeople when engaging with foreign customers.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any form of report or document published by the Researcher, no information will be disclosed which could make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the Researcher will have access to these records. The Researcher may share the data collected from you for use in future studies, publications, or professional applications, as well as with other researchers; if the Researcher shares any data collected about you, they will first remove any information which could be used to identify you.

- Participant privacy will be protected by the distribution of survey information through a secure, online platform, allowing participants to answer questions in complete privacy. Furthermore, interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for each participant, providing them the ability to participate in a private setting where others cannot overhear their responses. The Researcher will also be in a private location during all interviews so that no one except for the Researcher can hear participant responses.
- Participant information will be protected through encrypted, cloud-based software for the storage of all collected data, including video and audio recordings, survey responses, and contact information.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored permanently on encrypted, cloud-based software. Only the Researcher will have access to these recordings.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision or refusal to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from this study, please contact the Researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The Researcher conducting this study is Zachary McKinley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you

Please notify the Researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

☐ I accept these Terms and Conditions and consent to all requirements for participating in this study.

General Background Information

Please complete the following information to the best of your knowledge and ability. Please skip any questions for which you do not know the answers or would not like to respond.

Date of Birth

dd MMM yyyy

Place of Birth

City

State/Region/Province

Gender

Ethnicity

Marital Status

Current Annual Household Income

Highest Annual Household Income

Please select the answer that best describes the highest level of income obtained for one year during your career.

Average Annual Household Income (estimated, past 20 years)

Please select the answer that best describes your average level of income over the past 20 years of your career.

Personal Religious Affiliations

Personal Political Affiliations

Father's National Origin

Country

Mother's National Origin

Country

Current or Most Recent Technology Sales Role

Please answer the following questions in reference to your current or most recent technology sales role.

Please select the option which best describes your current work status:

- ☐ I currently work in professional technology sales.
- ☐ I currently work in professional non-technology sales.
- ☐ I no longer work in any form of professional sales, but I am NOT retired.
- ☐ I am currently retired.

Company

Please answer in reference to your current or most recent technology sales role.

Title

Please answer in reference to your current or most recent technology sales role.

General Job Description

Please answer in reference to your current or most recent technology sales role.

Sales Territory

Please answer in reference to your current or most recent technology sales role. For example: Enterprise Sales to Biotech Companies on the US West Coast.

Years in Position

Please answer in reference to your current or most recent technology sales role.

Professional Sales Experience

Please answer the following questions in regards to your overall career in professional sales of any kind.

How did you get into sales? Why are you still in sales now?

What are your unique selling focuses or areas of expertise (ie. specific products, verticals, or geographies)?

How would you describe your professional selling approach? Do you have a certain "philosophy" about selling?

Could you describe a general framework, methodology, strategy, style, or set of tactics you have practiced or developed throughout your sales career?

How many years have you worked in sales?

Please estimate the number of years you have worked in professional sales of any kind (cumulative).

Please select all of the SALES-TYPE roles which you have worked for a period of at least 6 months or more:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Account Manager (AM) | <input type="checkbox"/> Inside Sales Representative (ISR) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Engineer (SE) | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Development (BD) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Services or Support Overlay | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Sales Associate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Channel Account Manager (CAM) | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Loyalty or Renewal Sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Operations Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Sales Team Manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inside Sales Team Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Sales Director |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VP of Sales or higher | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Other Sales-Type Role(s) - if not provided above

If you have worked any other sales type role(s) which was/were not included above, please list here (multiple entries separated by semicolon).

Tech Product Markets

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AV & Networking | <input type="checkbox"/> CRM, ERP, or SCM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cloud Computing | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Media Production Tools | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Storage & Archive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enterprise Hardware (general) | <input type="checkbox"/> Enterprise Software (general) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cybersecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Services (general) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SaaS, PaaS, or IaaS (general) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Please select all technologies that you have sold for a period of at least six months throughout your career.

Other Tech Product Market(s) - if not provided above

If you have sold in any other technology markets which was/were not included above, please list here (multiple entries separated by semicolon).

For your convenience (rather than entering your work history into an agonizing form), please simply upload your most recent resume to provide an overview of your unique experiences.



General International Experience

Please select all of the following which are TRUE:

- ☐ I currently live in the United States.
- ☐ At some point in the past, I have lived outside of the USA for a period longer than 3 months, specifically for a previous work assignment.
- ☐ I currently live outside of the USA specifically for an ongoing work assignment.

Please answer in regards to your PRIMARY residence.

Please create an entry for each location you have lived outside of the USA for greater than 3 months:

Location	Arrival Date (est.)	Departure Date (est.)	Purpose
<input type="text"/> <small>State/Region/Province</small>	<input type="text"/> <small>dd MMM yyyy</small>	<input type="text"/> <small>dd MMM yyyy</small>	<input type="radio"/> Personal: Vacation <input type="radio"/> Personal: Education <input type="radio"/> Personal: Charity or Religious <input type="radio"/> Personal: Family or Other <input type="radio"/> Work: Sales Related <input type="radio"/> Work: Non-Sales Related <input type="radio"/> Other <input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/> <small>Country</small>			

If you have not lived outside of the USA, please create one entry denoting your current location in the USA.

Please describe your general experiences traveling internationally for any length of time (ie. where have you gone, why did you go, what happened while you were there, etc.).

Have you encountered any interesting or unusual scenarios with people from other countries which you believe may have resulted from underlying cultural differences? If so, please describe.

As a North American, what are the most significant culture-related challenges you've encountered while interacting with people from other nations (both within the USA and abroad)?

In your opinion, what are the best ways to overcome the challenges mentioned in your previous response?

In your opinion, what are the most significant differences between people of different cultures?

Personal Sales Approach

Personal Sales Approach: Short-Answer Questions

Please answer the following questions in regards to your personal selling habits.

How do you usually attempt to gain influence with your customers? How could you improve?

How do you usually overcome objections (ie. concerns, arguments, etc.) revealed during conversations with your customers?

How do you usually attempt to drive your customer towards "closing the sale" at the end of the selling process?

How do you change your approach or style when communicating with customers from other cultural backgrounds? How could you improve?

Personal Sales Approach: Multi-Select Questions

Please answer the following multi-select questions by reflecting upon your most-consistent selling habits.

Considering your personal selling philosophy, please rate the following from 1-5 in reference to your ideal self (how you would like to feel) and your actual self (how you feel most of the time).

	Ideal Self	Actual Self
The progressions and outcomes of my sales engagements are directly affected by my unique selling approach (ie. style, strategy, communication).	<div>-Select-</div>	<div>-Select-</div>
The progressions and outcomes of my sales engagements are directly affected by my skills, knowledge, capabilities, or level of effort.	<div>-Select-</div>	<div>-Select-</div>
The progressions and outcomes of my sales engagements are directly affected by various factors outside of my control.	<div>-Select-</div>	<div>-Select-</div>
I am able to adjust my specific selling approach to fit the requirements of different situations.	<div>-Select-</div>	<div>-Select-</div>

Considering your personal selling habits, please rate the following from 1-5 in reference to your ideal self (how you would like to act) and your actual self (how you act most of the time).

	Ideal Self	Actual Self
I establish lasting and productive relationships with my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I educate my customers in a unique manner, providing valuable insights for how my products or solutions will help them.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I am an expert in my product field, knowing more than my customers do so I can provide them with the answers they need.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I have no problem sharing my beliefs about what is best for my customers, even if it means they might disapprove of me.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
During negotiations, I understand my customers' perspectives and tailor my messaging to them.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I recognize my customers' underlying business needs, and I leverage that knowledge to adapt my sales approach.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I personally address my customers' problems, and their needs are usually met through my direct involvement or effort.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
During difficult negotiations, I have no problem trying to influence my customers to make a purchase decision.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I successfully address my customers' budget issues and pricing concerns at their own level.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I am likely to spend more time on preparation in advance of any sales calls or meetings as compared to everybody else.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I spend more time preparing for meetings or phone calls with my customers than most other salespeople.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼

Considering your personal selling style, please rate the following from 1-5 in reference to your ideal habits (those you want to prioritize) and your actual habits (those you prioritize most of the time).

	Ideal Self	Actual Self
I prioritize customer satisfaction.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I take control of conversations with my customers to strategically guide the dialogues.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I adapt my overall selling strategy based on the individual situation.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I change my appearance or behavior to suit different contexts.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I earnestly try to understand my customers' perspectives.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I try to discover new opportunities while discussing current deals with my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I prioritize the long-term success of the solutions I sell to my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I habitually plan out the dialogues I will have with my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I adapt my selling approach to fit individual customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I pick up on non-verbal cues, and I communicate to my customers "on their level."	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I seek to uncover my customers' true needs and opinions.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I creatively try to secure my customers' attention.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I prioritize trying to close my deals quickly and efficiently.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I am very flexible during conversations and negotiations with my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I consistently apply the unique sales approach which works best for me.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I value being genuine and acting myself around my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I effectively present the value of my products or solutions.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I try to avoid risk or uncertainty during interactions with my customers.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I prioritize the profitability of each sale.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I respect my customers by allowing them to lead most conversations.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I consistently leverage a few key personal strengths during each sales engagement.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I treat all customers in a consistent manner.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I prove to my customers why they need my specific product or solution.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
I am patient with my customers and allow them space to make their decisions.	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼

Please denote how important you believe each of the following habits are for a salesperson to be successful and how much you prioritize them in your personal selling approach.

	General Importance for Successful Selling	Priority Level to My Personal Sales Approach
Putting the customer's needs first (even if sometimes at a loss to yourself or your company)	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
Strategically guiding conversations with customers	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
Adapting your selling approach to different circumstances	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
Adjusting your communication style for different customers	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
Understanding customers' perspectives (empathizing with them)	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
Continually finding new opportunities for revenue growth	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
Believing in your own abilities to affect the selling outcome	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>

Please denote how effective IN GENERAL you believe the following strategies are for influencing a customer towards a purchase decision.

	1 - Not At All	2 - Slightly	3 - Moderately	4 - Very	5 - Extremely
Providing Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consulting on Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Requesting Things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasizing Risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making Promises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussing Legal Obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leveraging Relational Equity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appealing to Emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asking Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please denote how often YOU use the following strategies for influencing customers towards a purchase decision.

	1 - Never	2 - Rarely	3 - Sometimes	4 - Often	5 - Always
Providing Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consulting on Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Requesting Things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasizing Risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making Promises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussing Legal Obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leveraging Relational Equity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appealing to Emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asking Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please denote how effective IN GENERAL you believe the following strategies are for overcoming customer objections.

	1 - Not At All	2 - Slightly	3 - Moderately	4 - Very	5 - Extremely
Addressing them Directly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing a Compromise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Suggesting Solutions (indirectly)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Delaying an Answer (postponing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invalidating the Objection (defending)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skipping Past the Objection (avoiding)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please denote how often YOU use the following strategies for overcoming customer objections.

	1 - Never	2 - Rarely	3 - Sometimes	4 - Often	5 - Always
Addressing them Directly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing a Compromise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Suggesting Solutions (indirectly)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Delaying an Answer (postponing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invalidating the Objection (defending)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skipping Past the Objection (avoiding)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please denote how effective IN GENERAL you believe the following strategies are for closing a sale.

	1 - Not At All	2 - Slightly	3 - Moderately	4 - Very	5 - Extremely
Directly Asking for the Sale	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incrementally Offering Incentives (ie. "I'll throw in free Doritos if you buy right now.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Letting the Customer Decide When Ready	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Applying Emotional Leverage (ie. "Buying now will reduce your stress and let you get home to your family.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing Stories of "Similar" Customers (ie. "Company XYZ bought and they haven't regretted it.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating a Sense of Urgency (ie. "The price will increase tomorrow.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please denote how often YOU use the following strategies for closing a sale.

	1 - Never	2 - Rarely	3 - Sometimes	4 - Often	5 - Always
Directly Asking for the Sale	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incrementally Offering Incentives ("I'll discount it more if you buy right now.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Letting the Customer Decide When Ready	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appealing to the Customer's Emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing Stories of "Similar" Customers (ie. "Company XYZ bought and they haven't regretted it.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating a Sense of Urgency (ie. "The price will increase tomorrow.")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Foreign Sales Experiences

Please answer the following questions in reference to your entire career in professional technology sales.

To how many foreign countries (outside of USA) have you traveled for sales-related work assignments (estimated)?

Approximately how many weeks have you traveled internationally for sales-related work assignments?

About how many deals have you worked on in some professional selling capacity where the key decision-maker was a non-US citizen living in a foreign country?

Approximately how much revenue was booked from these deals (if any) while you were involved?

\$

About how many deals have you been the PRIMARY account manager where the key decision-maker was a non-US citizen living in a foreign country?

Approximately how much revenue was booked from these deals (if any) while you were the PRIMARY account manager?

\$

How many hours (if any) have you spent in structured training (from any source) focused specifically on international culture?

What were the most significant culture-related challenges you encountered throughout these deals? Please provide as many examples as you can recall.

Drawing from your observations and experiences, what are the most significant cultural obstacles affecting North Americans attempting to sell enterprise technology to foreign customers?

Observations of Cultural Differences

Please answer the following questions in reference to your past experiences selling to foreign customers.

Reflecting upon your experiences selling to foreign customers, please denote the negative impacts (if any) cultural differences (ie. views, beliefs, behaviors) have had upon selling outcomes.

Negative Impacts	
Different Performance Expectations	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Regard for Social Class or Status	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Regard for Personal Achievement	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Preferences for Directness or Assertiveness	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Views of Fate or Ability to Control Outcomes	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Views of Community or Social Bonds	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Preferences for Working Together or Alone	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Expectations Involving Punctuality or Efficiency	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Importance for Social Groups	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Senses of Obligation to Family, Community, or Social Groups	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Risk Tolerance	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Views of Authority	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Excitement for New Opportunities	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Desire for Leisure or Fun	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Need to Avoid the Unknown	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Moral or Ethical Beliefs	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Regard for Organizational Hierarchies	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Needs for Exactness	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Respect for Authority	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Tolerance for Making Exceptions	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Views of Personal Autonomy	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Perspectives Involving Self-Worth	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Emotional Expression	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Styles of Communication	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Expectations Involving Work-Life Balance	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Gender Norms	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼
Different Levels of Attentiveness to Body Language, Inflection, or Other Contextual Details	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/> ▼

Cultural Differences: Specific Observations

For 1-3 of the "differences" you claimed as having significant impact upon prior selling engagements, please describe your observations which led to these claims in further detail. When describing the general context, please consider sharing as many of the following details as possible:

- who was the customer and where were they located?
- where were you located during the engagement?
 - did you travel?
 - did you temporarily relocate?
 - did you interact with the customer remotely from the US?
- who else was involved in the deal?
 - coworkers, resellers, contractors, etc.
 - competitors
- did you have much support from your home office?
 - did you receive any formal training related to culture or international selling before departing?
 - was your home office readily available to assist with different needs?
- did you recognize the cultural "difference" when it was taking place?
 - how was it addressed at the time?
 - how could it have been addressed better?
- what was the outcome of the overall deal and why did it end this way?
 - what could have been done to change the outcome if needed?

Impactful Differences: Observation 1

-Select-

Impactful Differences: Observation 1 - Description

Impactful Differences: Observation 2

-Select-

Impactful Differences: Observation 2 - Description

Impactful Differences: Observation 3

-Select-

Impactful Differences: Observation 3 - Description

Individual Scenarios: 1-2 "Culturally-Challenging" Sales Engagements with Foreign Customers

For this final section, please reflect upon your past experiences and choose a scenario in which you engaged in an opportunity (either as a salesperson or sales manager) to sell enterprise technology (*either* successfully or unsuccessfully) to customers who were non-US citizens and who were living outside of the US during the engagement.

While any situation that meets the above criteria may be referenced to answer the questions in this section, please prioritize any of your past experiences which may also involve the additional factors:

- you can remember the presence of cultural differences having substantial influences throughout the sales engagement or significant impacts upon the selling results
- you were expatriated (relocated) to live in the the customer's country during the sales engagement
- you can reasonably assume that the primary decision maker was born in the foreign country in which you were selling
- deals progressed over a very long duration or involved a high degree of complexity
- deals were of unusually high monetary value or strategic importance to your organization
- you were heavily involved in closing the deal or were the primary account manager

Customer Account Name or Alias (if unable to disclose)

Location of Customer Account

State/Region/Province

Country

Location of Primary Decision Maker

State/Region/Province

Country

Vendor Location (nearest office)

State/Region/Province

Country

Where was the primary office you reported to before, during, and after this individual engagement?

Personal Residence

State/Region/Province

Country

Where did you live during this engagement? Please refer to your PRIMARY residence at the time and do not include temporary travel locations.

Start Date of Engagement (ie. opportunity open date)

dd MMM yyyy

End Date of Engagement (ie. opportunity close date)

dd MMM yyyy

Approximate Value of the Opportunity (net revenue)

\$

Were you assigned to this specific country, region, or account at the time of this engagement?

- ☐ Assigned to Country
 ☐ Assigned to Region
 ☐ Assigned to Account
 ☐ Other

Please select all that apply:

- ☐ I was expatriated (relocated) to live in the customer's home country during this sales engagement.
- ☐ The key decision maker was not a US-citizen and was VERY LIKELY born in the foreign country in which this engagement took place.
- ☐ I was directly and heavily involved in closing this deal from beginning to end.
- ☐ I was the primary account manager for this deal.
- ☐ I can remember the presence of cultural differences substantially affecting the progression of this deal.

Thinking about your nearest level of strategic oversight (ie. specific sales team or business unit), please select the option which BEST completes the following statement. "We allocated most of our time and resources towards..."

- ☐ developing strong customer relationships to increase long-term revenue.
- ☐ keeping customers highly satisfied before, during, and after each sale.
- ☐ highly prioritizing a few key accounts which were the most strategic or produced the most revenue.
- ☐ consulting with customers and designing custom solutions for their unique problems or needs.
- ☐ Other

Please describe the general context of this deal (ie. technical requirements, key players, competition, sales strategy, challenges, etc.)

In your opinion, what were the predominant cultural challenges affecting the progression or outcome of this deal? What was (or should have been) done to address these challenges?

Did you try to change your selling strategy, style, or tactics in any way to fit the different culture of your customer? How? Was it helpful?

Please complete the following statements comparing the behavior of your foreign customer(s) in this situation to common North American customers back home. Then, describe the overall impact these differences had on the sale.

	Comparison	Impact on Sale
The non-US customer(s) seemed to value personal performance:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to appreciate my professional qualifications:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to respond to assertive or direct communication:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to value product specifications and data-points:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to think that their decisions would affect certain outcomes:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to prioritize the group well-being:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed reserved or cautious:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to be resistant to change:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to have more social boundaries based on status:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They took an interest in getting to know me personally:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to look to the past or the distant future:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to fear uncertainty or risk:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to be expressive in their communication style:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They said exactly what they meant:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to interpret body language or other contextual details:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They enjoyed spending time with coworkers outside of work:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to focus on human rights issues (ie, poverty, injustice):	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to believe in gender equality:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed to have strong hierarchies and authority structures:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>
They seemed very concerned with the long-term results of their decisions:	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>	<input type="text" value="-Select-"/>

Do you have another scenario to describe?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Scenario 2 (optional)

For this final section, please reflect upon your past experiences and choose a scenario in which you engaged in an opportunity (either as a salesperson or sales manager) to sell enterprise technology (*either* successfully or unsuccessfully) to customers who were non-US citizens and who were living outside of the US during the engagement.

While any situation that meets the above criteria may be referenced to answer the questions in this section, please prioritize any of your past experiences which may also involve the additional factors:

- you can remember the presence of cultural differences having substantial influences throughout the sales engagement or significant impacts upon the selling results
- you were expatriated (relocated) to live in the the customer's country during the sales engagement
- you can reasonably assume that the primary decision maker was born in the foreign country in which you were selling
- deals progressed over a very long duration or involved a high degree of complexity
- deals were of unusually high monetary value or strategic importance to your organization
- you were heavily involved in closing the deal or were the primary account manager

Customer Account Name or Alias (if unable to disclose)

Location of Customer Account

State/Region/Province

Country

Location of Primary Decision Maker

State/Region/Province

Country

Vendor Location (nearest office)

State/Region/Province

Country

Where was the primary office you reported to before, during, and after this individual engagement?

Personal Residence

State/Region/Province

Country

Where did you live during this engagement? Please refer to your PRIMARY residence at the time and do not include temporary travel locations.

Start Date of Engagement (ie. opportunity open date)

dd MMM yyyy

End Date of Engagement (ie. opportunity close date)

dd MMM yyyy

Approximate Value of the Opportunity (net revenue)

\$

Were you assigned to this specific country, region, or account at the time of this engagement?

☐ Assigned to Country ☐ Assigned to Region ☐ Assigned to Account ☐ Other

Please select all that apply:

- ☐ I was expatriated (relocated) to live in the customer's home country during this sales engagement.
- ☐ The key decision maker was not a US-citizen and was VERY LIKELY born in the foreign country in which this engagement took place.
- ☐ I was directly and heavily involved in closing this deal from beginning to end.
- ☐ I was the primary account manager for this deal.
- ☐ I can remember the presence of cultural differences substantially affecting the progression of this deal.

Thinking about your nearest level of managerial oversight (ie. sales team or business unit), please select the option which BEST completes the following statement. "We allocated most of our time and resources towards:"

- ☐ developing strong customer relationships to increase long-term revenue.
- ☐ keeping customers highly satisfied before, during, and after each sale.
- ☐ highly prioritizing a few key accounts which were the most strategic or produced the most revenue.
- ☐ consulting with customers and designing custom solutions for their unique problems or needs.
- ☐ Other

Please describe the general context of this deal (ie. technical requirements, key players, competition, sales strategy, challenges, etc.)

In your opinion, what were the predominant cultural challenges affecting the progression or outcome of this deal? What was (or should have been) done to address these challenges?

Did you try to change your selling strategy, style, or tactics in any way to fit the different culture of your customer? How? Was it helpful?

Please complete the following statements comparing the behavior of your foreign customer(s) in this situation to common North American customers back home. Then, describe the overall impact these differences had on the sale.

	Comparison	Impact on Sale
The non-US customer(s) seemed to value personal performance:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to appreciate my professional qualifications:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to respond to assertive or direct communication:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to value product specifications and data-points:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to think that their decisions would affect certain outcomes:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to prioritize the group well-being:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed reserved or cautious:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to be resistant to change:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to have more social boundaries based on status:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They took an interest in getting to know me personally:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to look to the past or the distant future:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to fear uncertainty or risk:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to be expressive in their communication style:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They said exactly what they meant:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to interpret body language or other contextual details:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They enjoyed spending time with coworkers outside of work:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to focus on human rights issues (ie. poverty, injustice):	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to believe in gender equality:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed to have strong hierarchies and authority structures:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼
They seemed very concerned with the long-term results of their decisions:	-Select- ▼	-Select- ▼

Appendix C: Data Security Details of the Research Toolsets

Cisco WebEx: <https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en/us/products/collateral/conferencing/webex-meeting-center/white-paper-c11-737588.pdf>

Zoho One: <https://www.zoho.com/crm/data-security.html>