

IPS Community Leaders Integration Conference

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The Values and Norms that Make Us CLIC

Community Leaders Integration Conference

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Definitions

- ▶ **Values:**
 - ▶ Culturally defined standards held by human individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, beautiful, good or bad that serve as broad guidelines for social life.
- ▶ **Norms:**
 - ▶ the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. These rules may be explicit or implicit. Failure to follow the rules can result in severe punishments, including exclusion from the group



Data

- ▶ Four closed door dialogues

1. Themed discussions

2. Identifications of social norms and values

- ▶ Group Discussion:

- i. Which are the more important social norms to follow when living in Singapore?
- ii. What are some of the social values that are seen as important in the Singapore society?

- ▶ Individual feedback:

- Please list the top 3 norms or values that you think are the most important for living in Singapore:



Findings

- ▶ Similar responses from group discussions and individual feedback
- ▶ Top 4 distinct sets of social values and norms:
 1. Respect/Tolerance/Accept/Understanding
 2. Orderliness/Law Abiding/Queuing
 3. Honesty/Transparency/Integrity/Fairness/Sense of Justice
 4. Language identity/common language/Singlish
- ▶ These were also discussed:
Courtesy/Friendly, Punctuality, Social Graciousness, Cleanliness, English-speaking, Kiasu (pragmatism, efficiency)/, Hardworking



Respect/Accept diversity

Social Values and Norms

- Respect diversities
 - Inclusiveness
- Harmony
 - Cultural, Linguistic, Religious
 - Nationalities
 - Cultural and Social
- Be open-minded to other cultures
- Accept and adapt
 - Social etiquette (e.g., not speaking loudly in public, cleanliness)



Respect/Accept diversity

- ▶ Chinese group:

“...take the initiatives to appreciate the people which are different from us... every person need to take the initiative to say what role you are playing, what you have done for the country or how willing are you to change yourself?”

“...if you take the initiative, the other people will reciprocate”

- ▶ Indians group:

“(show) respect to each other, acceptance of various communities the language and religion, and cultural understanding, as well as secularism.”



Respect/Accept diversity

- ▶ Indians group:

“Integration can never be top down. It has to be bottom up. The ignorance is there, it will continue. That’s a stumbling block for integration so you need to have a approach. You need to appreciate the (different) cultures.”

- ▶ Others group:

“One way to integrate into the society is actually joining community service, because people there are very nice so after a while you get to know about their culture.”



Respect/Accept Diversity – moving ahead

Moving Forward

- Need to move from “tolerance” to “acceptance”
- Expand sites of acceptance
- Take the first step



Respect/Accept Diversity – moving ahead

▶ Indians group:

“(The important values are) rely, commit, trust and acceptance. And remove the word tolerate from your dictionary and change it to acceptance. For a new immigrant, I would say that it is the same as getting married and coming to a new house and trying to learn, and to reach from knowing to acceptance.”

▶ Filipinos group:

“I have the sense of belonging that you are embracing us. But at the same time, when it affects the rice bowl...if I am a Filipino and in a higher position than you, then the so called resentment sets in...In our neighbourhood, everybody is friends. But in my workplace, there is a little bit of tension recently, because of that, it is very true.”



Respect/Accept Diversity – moving ahead

▶ Indians group:

“...a lot of what we do is on food...it is your culture, it is in your genes. A lot of things revolve around food, you guys discuss work stuff over food. I want to be part of that.. why was I not invited...if they provide Indian vegetarian food (for)...maybe two, three courses, Then people might come. This is how Indians become Singaporeans and how I see integration in Singapore. But the problem with implementing these social norms is, who makes the first move, who sacrifice first.”



Respect/Accept Diversity – moving ahead

- ▶ Others group:

“(Being understanding and) respecting privacy.. Singaporeans are very private people. they don't really like interacting too much...so whenever you come towards them, they will move away, sometimes pretend also...to do something else to make themselves look busy. They are quite afraid that you are going to ask them a question that possibly that they don't have an answer to and because they don't want to feel wrong or something to that effect so they pretend they don't have to talk so much”



Orderliness

Social Values and Norms

- Respect the rules of law
- Maintain orderliness
 - Queuing
 - Not speaking loudly in public
- Be law abiding
 - No littering
 - No jay-walking



Orderliness - queuing

▶ Chinese group:

“Queuing is very unique, which we all like in Singapore. No disorder. And my first time when I come here it is also a big shock for me.”

▶ Indian group:

“Queuing is a norm which sometimes is not found in Asian countries.”

▶ Filipino group:

“everybody is queuing...it is a positive thing because people are all in order so they follow the rules. If you are the first in the queue then you get served first.”

“Queuing, I think we should try to find a way to export it”

▶ Others group:

“I feel like the queuing system in Singapore is very nice, very good.. Especially...when I am rushing for my school and somebody is not blocking my way...it is actually a very good system.”



Moving Forward

- Law education to the general public?
- Too rigid with the rules and regulations? Lack human touch?
- Too much conditioning of behaviours?



Orderliness – moving ahead

- ▶ Chinese group:

“laws are different (in different cities)...we have a very good law system but I think that we should have better education of law... cutting across all communities, should we concentrate on law education. This could be a neglected core value.”

- ▶ Filipino group:

“I think I’d like to say that Singaporeans would even create rules to follow when there are no rules to follow. Like, if there are no U-turn signs, can you make a U turn or can’t you?”



Orderliness – moving ahead

▶ Indian group:

“this one we have a good discussion. Is it by structure? Maybe it started off as structure then began to be a habit...conditioning. In the middle of the night when nobody is watching and the traffic light says red I think 5 in 10 might just wait until it turns green. It could be because we are not sure which camera is pointing at you or it could be because I am a law abiding citizen and this is my behaviour. I shall not break the law.”

“A little bit of conditioning is not a bad thing, but a lot of conditioning is also bad.”



Fairness and Honesty

Social Values and Norms

- Honesty
 - Maintain transparency
- Meritocracy
 - Equal opportunities
- Integrity
 - Government
 - People



Fairness and Honesty

- ▶ Chinese group:

“...the foundation value that makes Singapore an ideal place for people to come here to strive for excellence is its fairness. Singapore offers an equal opportunity to everyone who can show their talents, a playground to shine.”

- ▶ Filipinos group:

“Honesty...(I am in civil service)... Everything actually transpires to the point that I cannot even ride a taxi with a client, or have lunch with a client, because that is the norm.”

- ▶ Others group:

“...follow the rules, because Singapore is a fine city...and if you don't obey the rules, you can't stay here.”



Language Identity/Common Language/Singlish

Social Values and Norms

- Be sensitive
 - Mutual respect of each other's cultures and histories
- Be balanced
 - Multicultural concerns
- Be connected
 - Use a common language, whatever it may be



Language Identity/Common Language/Singlish

- ▶ Language and Identity
 - ▶ How much does language define ethnic identity among Chinese Singapore?
 - ▶ Local born : language is only one of the markers
 - ▶ Foreign immigrants: language defines the cultural roots
- ▶ Multicultural society
 - ▶ While some Chinese Singaporeans do not speak Mandarin, some non-Chinese speak very good Mandarin
 - ▶ Generational shift in cultural and linguistic identity
- ▶ Striking a balance and building common grounds
 - ▶ Foreign immigrants to the local language environment and pick up basic English
 - ▶ Local born to appreciate more of their mother tongues and cultures
 - ▶ Connecting with language instead of differentiated by language



Language and Identity

- ▶ Chinese group (local):

“...as Singaporeans we have various culture, races and if our new immigrants, (who are) calling Singapore home, takes the extra effort to pick up one of the most important attributes of integration – (learning to speak) English...not as profound but basic words, simple basic English and understand some of our localities, that will be excellent.”

- ▶ Chinese group:

“...when new immigrants come in, when they have difficulties, if you are able to help them with their mother tongues, if you are able to offer them a point with the native analogy to understand, you will greatly help them to integrate into the society rather to tell them that, hey, we are diversified.”



Language and Identity

▶ Others group:

“One important social norms that we can find in Singapore is that people tend to use their own languages, such as Singlish...like when you are with your own family and friends, you start to use Singlish...and you feel very comfortable...you feel close and more bonded to your friends. You feel like you are in the comfort zone. I think this is one important norm that, when you are living in Singapore, you should follow.”

▶ Others group:

“...speak a common language.. initially I put speak native language and then I realize that Singapore has no native language, so I just put common language, so you can just speak anything you want as long as it is common.”



Closing Remarks

So, what makes us *CLIC*?

Heart to Heart

The willingness

to integrate

to initiate understanding

to embrace differences

to love the imperfect partner



Closing Remarks

“I find that when I join activities, I will empty my mind and use my heart to feel what they like or dislike.. so if you participate in any of their activities, you will find that it is very enriching, Malay, Indian festivals, Mother’s Day, etc. So you can take your time to enjoy these moments, then you understand why having such feelings are important for you to take roots here.”

“...love is not because we are perfect. It is like loving a person. It is not because he or she is perfect, but because you love him or her, so you think that he or she is perfect.”



Thank you!

