# CULTURE GENERAL GUIDEBOOK

## FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS

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# CAVEATS

This document contains sections adapted from unclassified materials that also were used in the production of various military education and training curricula, as well as the Culture Generic Information Requirements Handbook (C-GIRH), DoD-GIRH-2634-001-08, and the Cultural Intelligence Indicators Guide (CIIG), DOD-GIRH-2634-001-10, which are available from Marine Corps Intelligence Activity's dissemination manager, and in other products and publications.

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# FOREWORD

> And so in the military:
> Knowing the other and knowing oneself,
> Not knowing the other and knowing oneself,
> One victory for one loss.
> Not knowing the other and not knowing oneself,
> In every battle certain defeat.
>
> — The Art of War[1]

Understanding people, whether "knowing the other" or "knowing oneself," is not the kind of straightforward task with which military trainers and leaders are familiar. In fact, we often attempt to avoid the problem all together and look for technological solutions to human problems. This is in part a natural consequence of the U.S. military having held a decisive technical and industrial advantage on the battlefield for the past century. Yet in this advantage lies a corresponding weakness when faced with problems that cannot be solved by technology. Although our theory of war emphasizes that the human dimension of war is the most critical element, we often fail to sufficiently account for it in our training and planning. At the core of understanding people is culture, a concept that is both useful and ambiguous. In order to overcome our natural aversion to ambiguity and uncertainty, we must admit that a deliberate and persistent effort is required to develop competence in the art of understanding people through culture.

This guidebook, an important step in adopting such a methodical approach to culture in operations, presents an evolutionary approach to understanding the human dimension. The concepts and skills presented here under the umbrella of Culture General provide leaders, trainers, and educators a pragmatic toolkit to prepare service members for global employment. The absolute diversity of spoken languages in the world, estimated to be around 6,900 by some methods, and cultures guarantee that no nation's military will ever be perfectly prepared to operate

1 Sun-tzu, ***The Art of War,*** trans. The Denma Translation Group (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001). As presented in the online resource, "The Art of War," ***Bowdoin College,*** accessed December 19, 2017, http://learn.bowdoin.edu/suntzu/.

in foreign environments. Nonetheless, the deliberate application of Culture General knowledge and skills to specific cultures and regions will produce forces as prepared as possible to deal with the complexities of the current operating environment both as individuals and as units.

We should take satisfaction in the idea that this guidebook positions us well to extend the Culture General approach more broadly across the services. Based on a solid interdisciplinary foundation and grounded in accepted social science methods, this guidebook provides a bridge to more effective operations across the range of military operations.

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# PREFACE

## WHY FOCUS ON CULTURE GENERAL?

With the ongoing institutionalization of culture-related programs in military services, the availability of regional and culture-specific education and training, as well as opportunities for building language skills, have improved dramatically since the early 2000s. It is, therefore, natural to ask why we would create a guidebook focused on concepts and skills that can be used anywhere.

The approach of equipping military personnel with culture general concepts and skills arose through ad hoc coordination among social scientists and military personnel starting around 2006. The intent was — and is — to complement the regional, culture-specific, and language approaches already in place or being developed. Culture general concepts and skills help make learning about a new area easier, enhance personnel's ability to apply regional and culture-specific knowledge, and improve their ability to interact and operate effectively in culturally complex situations.

As of 2017, there are numerous culture general courses offered across the services. While there is some reference material available, there was not a basic guide to relevant culture general concepts and skills. This guidebook serves to fill that gap and to provide a foundational document upon which others may build to grow the culture general resources available to military personnel and those who support them.

Perhaps less interesting to operators, culture general approaches also were specifically designed to help mitigate several inter-related challenges facing the organizations charged with equipping military personnel with culture-related capabilities. Although we will not address them in the guidebook, these issues have enough significance historically and currently that they bear mentioning in this preface.

**1. Culture-related programs are designed to do many different things.** Regional knowledge and culture-specific knowledge overlap but are not identical. Likewise, language skills and culture-specific knowledge overlap but are not the same. Purely regional or language approaches are still fairly common in the Department of Defense (DoD).

While regional knowledge and language skills are critical parts of learning, programs focused exclusively on these topics are not designed to thoroughly address detailed culture-specific information. This is not to suggest a flaw in regional or language approaches, only to point out that they are designed to provide particular capabilities and are not, in isolation, sufficient to address required cultural capabilities. This is especially significant for programs providing capability to the total force rather than specialists.

**2. Culture-specific information may not always be available.** There is no government system in place to gather and update detailed culture-specific information on every place, group, and human network. For a whole host of reasons beyond the scope of this text, it is unlikely any such system would be successful. Scholars, analysts, and instructors in a wide range of agencies work to maintain and apply knowledge within their areas of expertise, but there are limits to how accessible such knowledge can be across organizational lines and how thorough coverage can be.

**3. Culture changes, especially in times of disruption.** Military personnel, especially those focused on expeditionary capabilities, sometimes deploy into situations where conflict, catastrophe, or other disruption lead people to change behavior, meaning that on-the-shelf culture-specific information may be an unreliable guide. When current, detailed culture-specific information is available and can be provided to personnel in these situations, it is useful. However, when it is not possible to provide such information as quickly or as frequently as needed, culture general concepts and skills provide a toolset that personnel can apply immediately.

**4. Learning time is limited.** The education and training processes of the services do not always afford sufficient time for personnel to become deeply familiar with the details of every possible place to which they may deploy and groups with whom they may interact. While each service does have some personnel who receive more in-depth professional development and can hire outside experts as advisors, the need for the capability far exceeds the capacity of such specialists. Most of the force needs at least a basic capability to operate in culturally complex



situations. Ideally, this foundational knowledge involves all the learning domains described in Chapter 1, including culture general concepts and skills.

**5. DoD's resources and attention are limited.** Although this is difficult for those who know the operational value of cultural capabilities to accept, the historical pattern of DoD's interest in "culture" strongly suggests that attention and resources may not be not sustained over time.[2] Approaches focused solely on combinations of language skills, regional knowledge, and culture-specific knowledge are expensive, requiring experts and resources to keep knowledge up-to-date, and, historically, have been reduced or cut as money and interest waned. Culture general approaches, while imperfect, are less resource intensive and may be more feasible to sustain over time.

**6. Practice improves performance and retention.** Military personnel advising us on this approach report that education and training schedules sometimes leave a significant amount of time between culture-related training and the mission in which it is to be used. Culture general concepts and skills can be practiced in any location, including at home, which we believe may make it easier for some personnel to retain.

**7. U.S. foreign policy decisions cannot always be predicted.** While some specialization and regionalization is possible, services have to arrange their main "train, man, and equip" functions in such a way that they produce a global capability.

These conditions underpin the organizational rationale for the including culture general concepts and skills in the development of the force as part of the overall cultural capability. However, we cannot overstate the fact that military personnel will be most effective when equipped with knowledge and skills from across all the learning domains: regional, culture-specific, language, and culture general.

2 For overviews of past and current culture efforts in DoD, see the recommended readings provided in Appendix D.

# CHAPTER 1:
# INTRODUCTION

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For well over a decade, various members of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) have been discussing differing perspectives and strategies for teaching culture to military personnel. It is very easy to get tangled up in different policies and white papers describing what DoD's "cultural capability" should be, the roles of different kinds of professional development, who needs what kinds and depths of learning, how individual and collective capability should be measured and tracked, along with a host of other issues. It also is easy to be overwhelmed by all the different and sometimes contradictory approaches, frameworks, and definitions that are codified in policy, concept papers, doctrine, and program documentation throughout the department. This guidebook does not take an official position on any of these issues. Rather, it is intended to provide scientifically sound, operationally relevant information that can be used within the context of many different programs, policies, and frameworks.

In designing and writing the book, we were guided not only by our scientific backgrounds and experiences with military education and training, but also by extensive interactions with military personnel from all the services. We are grateful to them for the time and good advice they provided. We also were guided by the knowledge that this is not the first time the U.S. military has focused on how to prepare its personnel for culturally complex operating environments, as publications such as the *Marine Corps' Small Wars Manual*[3] demonstrate. We were able to draw on and learn from that history. While many past efforts were laudable, not all were successful. For those who are interested, the references in Appendix D include several critical assessments of DoD's efforts to integrate social science and cultural knowledge. However, as this is a guidebook rather than a scholarly book, we have focused the narrative on placing its contents within the contemporary context and presenting concepts and skills military personnel can use.

3 Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, ***FMFRP 12-15: Small Wars Manual*** (Washington D.C., 1940, 1990 reprint).

The remainder of this chapter situates the guidebook contents in the contemporary DoD context, provides an overview of the concept of culture, and discusses different frameworks. If you want to jump right into the concepts and skills, we recommend skipping to Chapters 2 and 3.[4]

***

Military personnel use cultural capabilities across the full range of military operations. The most obvious ways personnel use cultural capabilities is when engaging with foreign military partners or populations and in mission planning to anticipate and account for the way cultural patterns (of a local population or an adversary) will intersect with operations and the second and third order effects of operations. Less obvious is the value of these capabilities during every day interactions with others, when navigating organizational culture patterns in joint operations, or in interactions with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations. In each type of activity, military personnel have to be mentally prepared to learn something about the other people involved in (or affected by) the activity. This preparation is not only about making interactions go smoothly. It also helps military personnel understand contextual factors that may affect their mission and to anticipate second and third order effects of their actions.

It goes without saying that the wide range of missions across the U.S. military, the hierarchical rank structure, and the variety of military occupation specialties (MOSs) require a broad, multi-dimensional approach to culture training and education. Such an approach involves diverse programming, diversified content, and a range of delivery methods. The content area that is the focus of this guidebook is the interplay of intercultural concepts and skills — the more generalizable thinking processes, concepts, and skills that will help you make sense of and act effectively in any operating environment. We refer to these as culture general concepts and skills. The concepts, addressed in Chapter 2 of this guidebook, provide some ways of understanding and managing information as well as clues about what to look for. Chapter 3 provides skills you can use to recognize when information is available and how

4 Except where explicitly cited, the descriptions of concepts and skills in this guidebook were developed based on the general educational, research, and experiential backgrounds of the authors and contributors. Whenever possible, military personnel were consulted during the selection of which concepts and skills to include and how to describe them.



to get it and improve your ability to accurately interpret it. Mastery of these concepts and skills is fundamental to developing cross-cultural competence.

We do wish to stress that culture general concepts and skills are only some of the cultural capabilities relevant to military personnel. Although they are our focus for the purposes of this guide, they are at their most useful when combined with knowledge and skills from other learning domains. The most commonly referenced culture-related learning domains are described in the next section.

We have written this guidebook for you, the military professional,[5] to deepen your understanding of this content area. In it we capture and attempt to make accessible what contemporary social science says about culture, the experiences of our military colleagues, some of our own experiences, and those of civilian colleagues. As much as possible, we have written this guidebook so that you can look at sections independently of one another rather than needing to move linearly from beginning to end.

## CULTURE GENERAL IN CONTEXT: THE LEARNING DOMAINS IN DOD'S "CULTURAL" CAPABILITY

The culture general concepts and skills we discuss in this text comprise part of DoD's "cultural" capability. You will see references to "LRC" (Language, Region, Culture) or "LREC" (Language, Regional Expertise, Culture) in both departmental and service policies and programs. Individual organizations break up the associated knowledge and skills in different ways according to their different functions or the training, education, and experience opportunities they can make available. Common among them are loosely categorized learning domains, such as region-specific, culture-specific, and communication or language. The various learning domains provide you a sense of the scope of capabilities encompassed in DoD's "cultural" capability and the learning areas involved in cultivating it. It is important to remember

5 This guidebook serves to inform curriculum development as well. Curriculum developers for military practitioners will find this guidebook useful in explaining the culture general concepts and skills military operators need to carry out their missions and can leverage its content in their curricula.

that these descriptions are not necessarily universally shared across the services or within the department. This lack of universality within DoD should not be a stumbling block for you. Instead, read the following with an emphasis on the content of each to gain insight into the types of knowledge and skills involved. This will help you locate "Cultural General" within DoD's "cultural capability."

## REGION-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

This learning domain includes information about a broad geographic area, such as transnational issues, nation-state interactions, trends, and cultural patterns that are common or prominent in groups of the region. Region-specific learning focuses on strategic level knowledge and trends that will improve your understanding of the global security environment. Having an understanding of the region-specific component is useful for you, as this can help locate your missions in the global context and reveal potential connections that can influence the outcomes of what you do.

Regional designations are useful, but they do have a few limitations. The boundaries drawn around regions may not always be perceived as relevant by governments or populations in those areas. People are unlikely to organize their activities and relationships neatly within such defined lines. It is important to remember that how regions are represented or broken down reveals the interests and needs of the group defining them, not necessarily how other groups or the groups being defined view the region. DoD commonly aligns regional knowledge with combatant command (COCOM) areas of responsibility (AORs). This regional configuration represents U.S. security interests, resource considerations, and, in some cases, political positions. You may encounter other approaches to regionalization that make more sense for other purposes. For example, some regionally-oriented offices or education programs may focus on a subset of a broader region, such as the Trans-Sahel rather than all of Africa. Likewise, there are some issues or threats where it may be more useful to consider a country or area in a context other than COCOM AORs. For example, many issues in Afghanistan need to be considered in the contexts of Asia, Russia, and Europe rather than CENTCOM. Additionally, the greater transportation and communication



afforded by globalization mean that regional geography is not always a sufficient lens for understanding an area that is influenced by distant economic and geopolitical trends, non-state actors, and transnational relationships.

## CULTURE-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

This learning domain includes detailed information about the cultural patterns of a particular group or network. Sometimes groups and networks are geographically defined, and other times they are not. For example, through diaspora and migration, a group may become geographically dispersed but maintain network connections and continue to have some cultural patterns in common. There is usually at least a little overlap between region-specific and culture-specific knowledge. However, not all regional patterns hold true for every group in the area. For example, in a particular region, Catholicism might be the predominant religion, but there are likely to be specific groups who practice other faiths. Culture-specific learning focuses on fine-grained knowledge that will reveal this variation and help you plan and interact with distinct groups.

It is common to find "cultural" products that provide an overview of culture across an entire country or large population — think travel books or field guides for Afghanistan and Iraq in DoD. These can be useful starting points to provide you context and some general information about potential cultural patterns within the group. It is important to keep the limitations of such texts in mind, as they often present generalizations about a group of people that are not universally shared by all members. This potential for generalization is similar to the limitation of region-specific knowledge. In this text and recommended readings, you will learn that "culture" does not really mean a set of beliefs and behaviors that members of a neatly bounded group all follow in the same way. The anthropologist Tim Ingold wrote that it is "more realistic, then, to say that … people *live culturally*, rather than that they *live in cultures*."[6] What this means is that no one simple description of "a culture" is going to hold true for every subset

6 Tim Ingold, "Introduction to Culture," in ***Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology,*** ed. Tim Ingold (New York: Routledge, 2002), 330.

of a population or for every situation or for every individual. Although this may sound complicated, having a more accurate understanding of what culture is actually simplifies things. For example, if you have been reading about cultural patterns in Guatemala and are assigned to work with military partners there, keeping in mind the limitations of such information will help you anticipate some differences between broader cultural patterns and military culture. Anticipating this variation better equips you to notice relevant differences and operate more effectively.

## LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

This learning domain contains two areas, both of which are useful for military professionals. The first is the ability to speak a language, often referred to as linguistic competence. This ability facilitates rapport building and operational effectiveness on multiple levels. The other area is the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in context, often referred to as communication competence. A key component of communication competence is intercultural communication. What does this mean? Intercultural communication looks at the transferrable concepts and skills associated with communication competence, such as identifying communication styles, decoding nonverbal cues, and managing paralinguistic (e.g., tone, gestures, facial expressions, etc.) use and perception. It helps the military practitioner think through such questions as: How does paralanguage influence the way I perceive and am perceived by others? How can I manage my nonverbal communication so as to be more effective in my intercultural interactions? How can differences in communication styles affect the production and interpretation of messages? What are some common communication barriers that stand in the way of achieving intercultural competence?

The duality of this domain is often underemphasized in DoD with many of DoD language efforts focused on linguistic competence. It is important to keep in mind the difference between the ability to speak a language and the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in context. This distinction can be illustrated in a number of ways and is captured well by the attempt of television producers in Dubai to bring the series *The Apprentice* to Arabic-speaking viewers. The producers "translated" the show's signature phrase of "You're fired!" with "May



God be kind to you[7]" — noting the importance of formal indirectness in the Arabic language. This interpretation highlights both the importance of understanding how cultural values manifest themselves in communication behavior as well as how language is can be used differently by culture groups in conversation. Although there is no question that linguistic competence is important and a great start, it is not enough to ensure effectiveness in both your personal and military endeavors. This text focuses on intercultural communication skills as part of the culture general skills; they are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

## CULTURE GENERAL

The culture general learning domain is the focus of this book. It involves concepts and skills that will help you learn about, plan for, and interact in many different kinds of intercultural situations. U.S. military personnel come from many distinct cultural backgrounds, work with U.S. interagency partners and non-governmental organizations, partner with foreign military personnel, interact with local populations abroad, and try to understand and anticipate adversary intent. Each of these activities involves understanding interactions among cultural patterns of different groups, sometimes in times of significant change or disruption. Culture general concepts and skills are the underlying thinking concepts, content areas, and skills that help you be better consumers and users of available information and find your way when specific information is not available or is rapidly changing.

Culture general knowledge is similar to how you learn broad principles about driving a vehicle. When you get into a new car, you know that you will probably find controls for things like headlights, windshield wipers, monitoring speed or fuel level, adjusting the seats, and shifting gears. They may not be in the same place or work the exact way as the last vehicle you drove, but you can look around, identify them, and figure out how to use them fairly quickly. You also know that not every vehicle has the same set of features. Your last vehicle may have had a gauge for RPM (revolutions per minute) and a backup camera. If you find that your new vehicle does not have these things, you will not assume it is

7 Ian Parker, "The Mirage," *The New Yorker*, 81, no. 32 (October 17, 2005), 128.

broken. You will know it is in the normal range of features and be able to adapt your driving accordingly. Culture general concepts and skills give you a range of things to look for and some general principles for how to adapt. Because they are abstract, some people find these concepts and skills a little harder to learn, but the more you understand them, the broader the range of situations you will be able to navigate.

## CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cross-cultural competence (3C) is the capability for thinking and interacting that a person develops through combinations of experience, education, and training across all of the learning domains above: region-specific, culture-specific, language/communication, and culture general. It is a term you will see across DoD and service-level policies and programs and as an outcome of the services' culture training and education programs. 3C is often described as a multi-dimensional construct that includes various knowledge components, skills, and characteristics. Each branch, of course, approaches the definition slightly differently. Greene Sands & Greene-Sands[8] review each military branch's definition as well as the research, policy, learning, and application considerations for military contexts, to include the historical development of 3C in professional military education and training. Also, a "living" annotated bibliography devoted to Cross-Cultural Competence in the Department of Defense[9] surveys the hundreds of articles, reports, and book chapters that have emerged from a wide variety of academic disciplines and military branches in the past decade. Throughout the department, you may encounter different terms (such as "intercultural competence," "cultural competences," or "cultural capabilities") that seem to explain the same or similar ideas. There are nuanced differences with each of those terms, some policy-related, others scientific, that are beyond the scope of this text. In this guidebook, we generally use cross-cultural competence or 3C, as it has broad recognition in DoD and captures the totality of the cultural capabilities that military personnel need to be effective

8 Robert Greene Sands and Allison Greene-Sands, *Cross-Cultural Competence for a 21st Century Military: Culture, the Flipside of COIN* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

9 Jessica A. Gallus et al., "cross-cultural competence in the Department of Defense: An Annotated Bibliography" (Special Report 71. U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2016), accessed December 12, 2017, http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA599260.



throughout their careers. The information presented here is designed to help you build a foundation for cross-cultural competence through deepening your understanding of culture general concepts and skills.

## WHAT IS CULTURE?

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs.
>
> — Clifford Geertz[10]

The emphasis on the term "culture" is an artifact of the historical gap in relations between DoD and certain scientific disciplines. By the late 1990s fields such as cultural anthropology had stopped using the term beyond introductory level classes or as a broad, umbrella term for more precise concepts. Unfortunately, the lack of communication between field social sciences and DoD meant that, after 2003, when military organizations began to increase efforts to prepare the military to operate effectively among and in partnership with different groups, they did not have easy access to scientific developments of the last 40 years, and most programs used the term "culture." The term has little value in terms of explaining human behavior and tends to introduce confusion, rather than clarity, into discussions. Still, given its continued use in DoD documents and programs, it is important to clarify how we are using the term here.

Establishing a universal definition for culture is a difficult if not impossible task. Both within and across disciplines, social scientists cannot agree on a set definition and resort to broad statements to capture complex processes that prove of little practical value. Is this just academic turf warfare? No, it reveals the complexity of the human experience and the messiness of people.

Culture is how we get through the day, make decisions, figure things out, etc. In more scientific terms, culture is the creation, maintenance, and transformation of semi-shared patterns of meaning, sense-making, affiliation, action, and organization by groups. In a practical sense,

10 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

this means that culture is not an unchanging set of rules and beliefs that controls every aspect of people's behavior. People in a group have developed roughly shared patterns of understanding about how the world works, how to behave, how to interact with each other, and so forth. There is a reciprocal (feedback) relationship between individual thoughts and behaviors and these patterns. On the one hand, individuals perceive patterns and use them to understand what is going on around them and how to behave. You know how to behave differently in a cafeteria and a fancy restaurant because you have learned patterns that clue you into the situation and expected behavior without anyone needing to give you a list of rules each time you go out to eat. You have a sense of what "the right thing" is in many different situations because you have learned patterns of values that help you make choices.

On the other hand, these patterns of meaning and behavior do not appear out of thin air. It is common to hear people talk about "U.S. culture" or "Iraqi culture" as though culture is a thing that floats around and magically influences people's behaviors. Of course, you know from your own experience that this cannot possibly be true. The reality is a little more complex. These patterns are created by people and are maintained or changed by people repeating them. Sometimes people deliberately try to change a pattern or keep it the same, but more often patterns emerge and evolve just by people going about their normal daily lives. In the United States it used to be very normal for sons to "follow in their fathers' footsteps," to take over a family business, or to go into a similar line of work. While there always were exceptions, that was a common pattern that people understood as right and proper. Over time, individuals made other choices, sometimes taking advantage of other changes in society, and this pattern has changed. Some children do still follow their parents' occupational choices, but it is just as common for children to choose a completely different career. In some cases, people work very hard to maintain existing patterns. This can be seen in the military services where people spend a great deal of time talking about, enacting, and conducting ceremonies related to values such as honor, commitment, and courage. In short, the patterns exist and stay the same or change only through people making choices about how to think, behave, and interact.
To help you understand the meaning of culture, you should keep in mind the following general principles about culture:



1. **Culture is something people are doing, not something they live in.** Culture is not a predetermined set of rules that drives behavior but rather semi-shared patterns of meaning and behavior that people develop and use (often creatively) to understand the world and interact with one another.
**2. Culture is learned.** People are born with the capacity to live culturally and learn the patterns of people around them as they grow up. Over time, ideas and behaviors may be so thoroughly learned that they seem instinctive. It is important to remember that they were learned. This aspect of culture is especially important to remember when you encounter ideas or behaviors that pose real challenges to your ideas of right and wrong.
**3. Culture is shared,** but not perfectly. You will encounter internal variation and should not expect individuals to behave in lock step with a broad description of their culture.
**4. Culture changes all the time.** Sometimes this is very slow. Sometimes it happens quickly. The key is to not fall into the trap of expecting that a broad description is going to hold true over time, especially in conflict or disaster.

## A NOTE ON SERVICE FRAMEWORKS

In each service, you will encounter different ways each approaches organizing cultural (e.g., regional- and culture-specific) information. Typically, they divide the information into domains, dimensions, or categories to facilitate management of such information at both the organizational and individual level. As of this writing, the Marine Corps uses five dimensions while the Air Force uses twelve domains, and the Army uses four. These organizational strategies, or frameworks, can be used to feed information into planning tools across the services, such as ASCOPE and METT-TC[11].

Each framework draws attention to certain aspects of culture while minimizing attention to others. Each may be more useful in some applications than others. A framework with only a few categories can

11 ASCOPE is an acronym for Area, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, and Events. METT-TC is an acronym for Mission, Enemy, Terrain & Weather, Troops, Time Available, and Civilian Considerations.

be easier to remember and to use for short reports or presentations. However, smaller frameworks also can mask details. For example, while a category called "social structure" can be used to include things like gender roles and identity, it does not specifically call attention to those considerations. A framework with more categories will remind you to look at more cultural considerations in greater detail but may be unwieldy for reporting or recording observations in the field. Another example is that the Air Force domains include one that specifically calls out health. There is no reason you could not look at health using the Marine Corps dimensions, but you would have to remember to do so on your own. There are some missions where health matters a great deal, such as those involving humanitarian assistance, and some where it may be less important, such as a large scale exercise of major equipment with foreign military partners. So, it is not necessary that you memorize any one set of domains as long as you are able to remember to pick a set that will help you focus your attention on what matters for a mission.

Keep in mind these frameworks serve to familiarize you with a new operating environment on a basic level but are unlikely to prepare you to navigate the more unpredictable events that may occur when boundaries are blurred and you are faced with unexpected intercultural interactions. The value of culture general concepts and skills lies in the fact that they are transferrable (in other words, applicable regardless of the specific culture) and can be elevated to higher levels of learning.

A culture-general foundation can help you identify and understand relevant information and, by employing these thinking concepts, content areas, and skills, determine connections among different aspects of culture. For example, a general understanding of how people think about and use kinship relationships might help you identify and understand the way kinship relationships are being used to move resources and information. Furthermore, it provides tools for taking full advantage of culture-specific information using different lenses so that you are a better consumer and user of such information. For example, when you are provided a culture-specific pre-deployment briefing, you are not just receiving basic facts about that culture group. Culture-specific information focuses on the patterns of behavior and meaning



that are specific to a particular group or network at a particular time. This information is sometimes relevant to more than one knowledge area and, if you are tuned into potential connections, can help you understand better both the "what" and the "why" of what is going on around you. The fact that older men make most of the decisions in a group is a piece of information that can add to your knowledge about social roles, who has authority to influence decisions, and the values of the group. Understanding the multiple layers of meaning beneath the surface of your observations can assist in mission planning, in your interactions with others, and in your ability to anticipate second and third order effects of your decisions.

## RULES OF THE ROAD

Before you start the next chapter, we think it is helpful to consider the following four basic rules of the road:

Rule #1 — *The local people have not organized themselves, their beliefs, or their behavior patterns for your convenience.* Figuring out what is going on can be complex. Accept it and move on.

Rule #2 — *Things you take for granted may not be true here.* Basic concepts such as honesty, fairness, respect, winning, finished, ownership, and agreement may mean fundamentally different things to local people. Be prepared to cope with both your confusion and theirs.

Rule #3 — *You do not have to like it to understand it.* Some things you learn about the local people may anger or puzzle you. That is OK. View these differences as significant factors that shape the area of operations and affect a unit's ability to carry out missions. Figuring out what is going on (that means getting inside local peoples' heads) may require temporarily suspending your own beliefs, assumptions, and expectations as much as possible to focus on learning over judging. This takes mental discipline.

Rule #4 — *Local people are not just reacting to you.* They are reacting to their entire perception of U.S. influence. Before the first U.S. forces hit the ground, local people have a perception of the United States based

on U.S. products, media (such as films and television), and perhaps U.S. companies, non-governmental organizations, or charities. These previous experiences shape the way people will react to you.

These rules serve as overarching guidelines for navigating the complex cultural situations you will encounter in your military profession. Keep them in mind as you read through the next two chapters on culture general concepts and skills.

# CHAPTER 2:
# CULTURE GENERAL CONCEPTS

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Culture general concepts are those underlying thinking processes, ideas, and knowledge areas that help you identify, understand, and use region- and culture-specific knowledge more effectively. Whether first on the scene or a veteran in theater, these foundational concepts help you process the information you encounter, vet it against what you already know, and determine how best to incorporate it into your thinking, planning, and actions. No one has 100% understanding of culture at any time. No matter how much culture-specific preparation you do, your knowledge will always be imperfect. Culture general concepts help you refine your understanding, make adjustments for the misalignments between your preparation and reality on the ground, and deepen your insights into underlying connections among different aspects of life. They help you figure out the ways people organize themselves, think about their worlds, or construct their identities. Using these culture general concepts will prepare you to identify relevant information, ask the right questions, and identify change, challenges, and opportunity more readily.

You will see that we have broken down culture general concepts into a larger number of sections than you would commonly see in a planning framework or learning schema. This way of breaking up the subject matter is not intended as another framework. Instead, it is designed to convey as many useful concepts as possible in relatively short segments. The more concepts you understand, the more rapidly and easily you will gain the understanding you need to inform your thinking, planning, and interactions. First, we will describe some concepts for thinking systematically about culture — holism, variation, and change. Second, we will discuss some concepts for understanding behavior.

## CONCEPTS FOR THINKING SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT CULTURE

When learning about culture, you often will hear people say things about how culture is constantly changing and how everything is interconnected. That may sound complicated, but there are three concepts for thinking — holism, variation, and change — that can help you navigate through this complexity.

## HOLISM — BUILDING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS WITH A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The concept of holism is a thinking tool you can use to ensure you maintain sufficient situational awareness. The frameworks that the military services use to help you systematize your thinking about culture place cultural information into discreet categories. Regardless of the framework you use, you need to remember that the real world will not arrange itself perfectly to fit into it. You need to remain attentive to interactions and connections that cross-cut any set of categories you use. Likewise, you need to remember that these interactions and connections mean it will rarely be effective to focus exclusively on one aspect of culture. Whenever you hear anyone say, "It's really all about … (tribes, economics, religion, politics, etc.)," you should immediately be suspicious. There are almost no questions to which a military person needs answers that can be fixed with an answer that begins with "It's all about …." It is inconvenient, but it is true. **Holism is the idea that all socio-cultural aspects of human life are interconnected in ways that vary greatly from culture to culture.** From your own experience, you know that politics affects economics. Family structure affects job choices. Religion affects politics. Every aspect affects every other aspect in some way, even if it is indirectly.

As an example, in the United States family ties and economic choices are usually pretty loosely related. Children typically make their own choices about what job to take, though their family may try to influence them. However, family and occupation may be tightly related in other places. A young man might be allowed to take only certain kinds of jobs approved by his family, or he may be raised to expect that his family members will be instrumental in getting him a job. With your own culture, you have a somewhat easier time predicting how aspects of culture affect one another. When operating within or analyzing another culture, it can be harder. What we think of as "a culture" is something like a fabric that is constantly being woven and pulled apart by all the people in a group. The threads are things like social organization, kinship patterns, symbols, political processes, systems for getting resources, beliefs, organized religion, identities, ideas about social status, etc. While people around the world have similar materials to use,



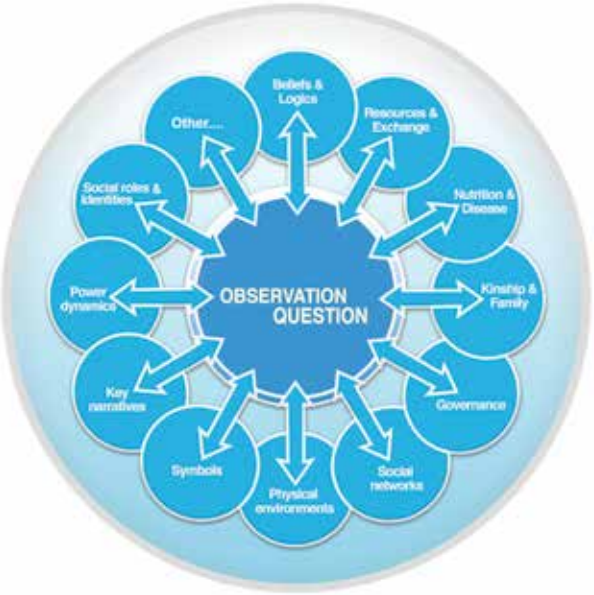
they combine them into different patterns and use different styles of weaving. What is common across all cultures is that tugging on any one thread will tend to move other threads around.

If you tug on, for example, an economic thread, such as closing down a market temporarily for security purposes, you might think you understand what will happen. You could, therefore, end up surprised when the local reaction seems to be about religion or family instead of economics. This interconnectedness means that a cultural factor that appears to have little military relevance in many places may be highly significant elsewhere. Consider wedding rituals. They would not seem to be something worth learning about; however, once you learn that some ceremonies commonly involve firing weapons or that weddings may lead to heightened sensitivities toward mounted or dismounted patrols in close vicinity, they take on a military relevance.

> **Remember Rule #1:**
>
> The local people have not organized themselves, their beliefs, or their behavior patterns for your convenience.

If you do not try to figure out the local version of these interconnections, you will not understand how a local population, the population you are analyzing, or your partner military will react to your plans, presence, and actions. A group's response to your operations may be hard to anticipate or appear nonsensical, leading the commander and staff to draw erroneous conclusions as to the source of the reaction. Failure to understand a group's reactions can significantly undermine your ability to carry out a mission. Many of you have probably thought about this when you have considered the "second and third order effects" of a decision.

Holism also explains why some information may seem to fit in more than one place in a database, checklist, or framework. Human life has not organized itself into categories or checklists for our convenience. There is no absolute framework for figuring out what aspects of culture are going to be relevant to a mission or a campaign in advance. However, learning to look for and trace the interconnections will help you make those assessments as you go.




*So, what's the right approach?* Do not limit your thinking to the obvious, the simple, or the singular. Looking at culture holistically means thinking about how your question or action might affect or be affected by many different things. Picture putting your question/action at the center of a circle. Around the edge of the circle are all the different aspects of culture that you know about. If you are considering helping the community build a clinic, how might a clinic be connected to other aspects of culture? Would you be helping or hurting part of the economic system, perhaps a taxi service that provides transport to a clinic further away? Is there some part of the belief system that is relevant, maybe ideas about what causes illness? How might social structure and social roles be involved? Are women, men, and children all allowed to seek health care in the same ways and from the same people? Are local political leaders likely to see the United States building a clinic as something that increases their power and influence or as something that threatens it? Will clinic leadership selection ignite a local power struggle? You cannot ever be 100% positive that you have considered all possible connections. Still, going through the process of holistically assessing a situation greatly increases the likelihood that your actions will have the effect you intend. It also helps you anticipate and mitigate or leverage potential second and third order effects.



## VARIATION AND CHANGE

Variation and change are critical concepts for military personnel to integrate into their thinking about culture. How many times have you learned about a group of people only to find that what you learned did not hold true for a particular individual you met? It happens all the time. That is not to say there is no value in preparatory learning; there is. However, military personnel must always remember that people do not always the exact things in the exact way even if they belong to the same group. That is variation. And what was true yesterday or last year may not hold today. Cultures do change, and, at times, very rapidly. Unfortunately, it is still fairly common to hear people talking about a "culture that hasn't changed in thousands of years." There is no place in the world where such a statement is true. Even if not immediately apparent to outsiders, all groups are constantly making changes to their cultural patterns. If you allow yourself to believe that culture is static, you will set yourself up for surprise and missed opportunities.

*Variation*[12]

Marines are accustomed to women primarily being confined to the private sphere in Afghanistan, a conflict zone in a predominantly Muslim country. It is easy to assume that the same case applies in a country like Somalia, a predominantly Muslim country that is also a conflict zone. While men remain in place as decision makers in Somalia, it varies from place to place — in refugee camps and in villages with a minority male population, women are more likely the decision makers. In some cases and because of Somalia's intricate clan system, women have played a key role in mediation because of their role as wives and mothers — they are born in one clan and marry into another and are thus able to bridge clan divisions. It is therefore essential to be aware of the informal structures in place and how to tactfully involve women in order to meet objectives. Non-governmental organizations in Somalia and in refugee camps outside of Somalia often reach out to women's groups when they need to mobilize or to negotiate contentious issues.

12 Example based on research/expertise provided by Catherine Kihara, Professional Solutions, a contracted regional analyst at CAOCL, who consulted the following source during development: Faiza Jama, "Whose peace is it anyway? Connecting Somali and international peacemaking," *Accord,* 21 (2010), 62-65, accessed December 7, 2017, http://www.c-r.org/accord/somalia/somali-women-and-peacebuilding.

The thinking concepts — variation and change — help you understand and move beyond the inevitable disconnect between what you may have learned in advance and what you see on the ground. They also help you avoid stereotypical thinking that can leave you surprised or confused as well as make it easier to anticipate challenges and seek out opportunities.

**Variation**

Variation is the idea that culture is imperfectly shared within a group. It is not realistic to assume that any particular individual will always behave in lockstep with a broad description of culture. People within a group do not all know and believe the exact things or to the same extent. They may not practice beliefs and express ideals in the same way or even think the same things are beautiful, right, or logical. Even though they may have a great deal in common, individuals within a group will put their own spin on things. The idea in intra-group variation is very familiar in U.S. culture. For example, in the United States most people would say they value the idea of individual rights, but there is a great deal of variation in how they think individual rights should be balanced with other values such as equality, duty, and public safety.

You encounter these kinds of differences in every group, even those considered particularly cohesive like the Marine Corps. Within the group, there is usually a range of acceptable thoughts and behaviors. There may be general agreement about an "ideal," but usually there is tolerance for deviation up to a point. So, when observing a group, you should not be surprised if people's actual behavior is a little different from what you have learned about the values and beliefs of the group.
Variation also is at play in cultural patterns that are shared across different groups. So, an aspect of culture may be shared across groups but be used differently. For example, large religions, such as Islam or Christianity, may be shared by groups across the globe. However, they are understood and practiced very differently in different places.

Visiting the congregation of a Catholic church in rural Guatemala would give you a very different understanding of how much religion influences behavior than you would get from visiting a Catholic congregation in a major urban area of the United States. Even within a smaller area,



there can be operationally relevant differences. For example, let us look at Pashtunwali, the Pashtun honor code. Within and among Pashtun groups, it is not understood or used in a uniform way. People in the various Pashtun groups may emphasize some aspects of Pashtunwali and deemphasize others. Some may see Pashtunwali as a very important set of values and organize much of their behavior around it. Others may see it as an important part of their heritage but not something that guides day to day behavior. It is still important to understand the cultural pattern but equally important to remember that there will be variation in how people use it.

*Variation — the shared value of commitment*[13]

Often, there is a tendency to use cross-cultural examples where two groups are very different from one another. Sometimes, it can be trickier to navigate military partnerships when values and practices appear to overlap. For instance, many Marines who have advised Georgian troops have remarked favorably on their tendency to endure hardships and be ready for the fight. Taking these reflections into account, it is possible to imagine how Marines and Georgians feel they have many shared values. For instance, a Marine and a Georgian officer may uphold the same values of "honor, courage, and commitment." However, how they live out those values may differ considerably. A Georgian field officer could display such values by patrolling on point with his men in territory where IEDs and firefights are common. To Marine field officers, this behavior is understandable, but also risky. Their view of commitment could be to remain healthy so that they can fulfill their primary duties as leaders and remain in the fight for the long term. But to a Georgian officer, even if he is severely injured and has to leave his unit, he has demonstrated commitment by accepting the same/similar risk as his soldiers.

No matter if the cultural pattern is shared across the globe or across the mountains, military personnel need to be cautious in drawing conclusions about a group of people based on past experience with or learning about similar groups to avoid cultural blinders that do not account for variation.

13 Example from contributing author Kristin Post, based on conversations with an anonymous Marine during research conducted in collaboration with the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group under USMC IRB Protocol MCCDC.2013.0003, Longitudinal Assessment of Security Cooperation Training (SCT), Culture Training, and Mission Effectiveness.

## Change

Change is a normal part of culture and can arise for many different reasons, such as variation, innovation, and contact with other groups. Sometimes, change happens fast and is easily noticed. Other times, there is slow, incremental change over time. Understanding how change happens can help you notice important changes that are relevant to your mission and help you anticipate second and third order effects of your decisions.

Internal variation is a common source of change. In the United States, what is considered normal and appropriate is not the same as it was 100 years ago. Those changes did not happen overnight. Often, they did not happen as the result of some outside force. Many of the changes happened as the result of gradual shifts in the daily behavior, thoughts, and interactions of hundreds of thousands of people. An idea held by a small part of the group may grow in popularity, becoming the majority opinion, as was the case with abolitionist views on slavery. In contrast, part of a group might give up an idea or practice, resulting in its gradual disappearance from the culture.

Changes resulting from innovation are more familiar. The introduction of the automobile contributed to change in many aspects of U.S. culture, e.g., the way we think about distances, our ideas about what it means to be independent, the kinds of relationships we are able to maintain, where and how we work or go to church, our economic and foreign policies, and the idea of a beautiful automobile and the open road as classic symbols of the United States. The automobile alone was not enough to drive all these changes. Other things had to be in flux too, but the innovation served as a catalyst for far more than just transportation.

Contact with other groups can be a major source of change. When groups come into contact, whether through trade, warfare, migration, or some other reason, they exchange ideas. In extreme cases, such as one group conquering another, change may be imposed on the losing group, although even in these cases, there is usually some change in both cultures. More often groups will adjust, sometimes exchanging ideas, sometimes coming up with entirely new ideas or practices as a result of interaction.



*Pink is a girl's color — or is it?*[14]

To those living in the United States today, pink might seem like a naturally feminine color, while blue seems inherently masculine. However, just the opposite was true prior to the mid-20th century, when pink — described as "a more decided and stronger color" — was typically a boy's color, and blue — "more delicate and dainty" — was frequently a color for girls[15]. More often, all infants, regardless of sex, were dressed in gender-neutral clothing that appears frilly and girly to the modern eye. For example, there is a famous and startling picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the age of two, wearing what now appears to be a frilly dress and girl's hat, but are actually clothes considered appropriate for both boys and girls during that era. Families at that time could easily reuse infant clothing from one child to the next no matter the child's sex. Many factors contributed to the pervasive "gendering" of children that we see today, as well as to the "re-gendering" of pink and blue in the mid-20th century; one of these factors was the rise of consumer culture. Clothing manufacturers saw an opportunity to increase profit if they produced gender-specific infant clothing, which could not be as easily passed between brother and sister. Girls were to be dressed like tiny versions of their mothers, while boys had to look like their fathers, meaning that dresses were increasingly reserved for girls. And while pink ended up being the color more associated with the female sex, it could have just as easily remained blue, as neither color has an immutable and inherent association with either gender; these associations are instead fluid and produced through cultural mechanisms.

There are a few additional aspects of change that are relevant to military personnel.

***1. Change does not always happen in a way that is pervasive or consistent.*** So, for example, in the United States we still "dial the phone" even though telephones with dials are extremely rare now. People who are 18 are allowed to vote and go to war but are not allowed to drink alcohol or gamble in most U.S. states. The United States has laws prohibiting

14 Example based on research/expertise provided by Dr. Rebecca Lane, Davis Defense Group, a contracted researcher at CAOCL, who consulted the following source during development: Jo B. Paoletti, *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 89, 95. Note — a version of the Roosevelt image can be accessed on Wikimedia Commons at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franklin-Roosevelt-1884.jpg, accessed March 7, 2017.

15 "Pink or Blue?" (*Earnshaw's Infants' Department*, 1918), quoted in Paoletti, Pink and Blue, 85.

discrimination based on sex, but most women continue to earn significantly less than men doing the same job. Within your own culture, these internal mismatches and contradictions often are accepted without much comment. In a cross-cultural interaction, they can be jarring or confusing. Do not assume that an individual or group is illogical just because everything about their culture is not perfectly consistent. It is also not safe to assume that some aspects of culture "just haven't caught up." There may be other influences at play. To take the example of age restrictions on drinking, it seems illogical that people who can fight for their country are not allowed to have a beer afterward. Still, there is resistance to lowering the drinking age because of historical American attitudes toward alcohol and concern about alcohol related injury and death rates among teenagers.

***2. Change often occurs during times of conflict or disruption.***
Since military personnel are often early on the scene when a conflict erupts or a disaster strikes, it is important to recognize the role these major disruptions can play in shaping the local culture. During times of conflict or in a disaster, the usual methods for getting through the day may stop working for the local population, and they may begin to tinker with cultural patterns. They may try adopting new ideas or ways of solving problems. They may also try to preserve what is familiar, highlighting "traditional" ways of doing things and resisting efforts to introduce new ideas. They may switch rapidly among a range of possible behaviors. This is normal for people trying to cope with a new, confusing, or frightening situation. In these rapidly shifting, sometimes chaotic situations, older analyses of culture may become irrelevant and the predeployment cultural preparation outdated. Although it can be complex, tracking these small shifts can help you understand and perhaps influence the changes that are occurring.

As with holism and variation, the important part of thinking about change is to keep your mind open to it. You will never be able to perfectly predict change, just as you will not be able to perfectly predict connections among aspects of culture or the way an individual will interpret a cultural pattern. However, if you remember the concepts of holism, variation, and change, you will be alert to connections, variations, and changes that can affect your ability to accomplish your mission.



# CULTURE GENERAL CONCEPTS FOR UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOR

In this section we discuss concepts and knowledge areas that will help you understand human behavior. Although the importance of a concept may be greater or lesser depending on the area, most apply globally. They are underlying concepts about the way humans live — how people organize themselves, interact with and explain their world, conceptualize self and other, etc. You can use these concepts to improve your understanding of available region- and culture-specific information and analysis of it and to help in times when such information is absent or incorrect to make sense of what you are observing and experiencing. For each knowledge area, we provide an overview section and then, for some areas, a "Digging Deeper" section to broaden or deepen your understanding.

## INTERACTION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

### Overview

This knowledge area comprises the different ways people interact with and use their varying physical environments in order to live and the cultural landscapes that result. All groups have a unique and interdependent connection with their physical surroundings. The physical environment, to include resources such as land, water, food, and materials for shelter, terrain, climate, etc., influences the people living in it by providing a range of possibilities within which they act. The physical environment may set certain limits on human actions. For example, in order to live, people need to build different types of shelter in hot versus cold climates. However, people have the ability to adjust to their physical environment and choose a course of action from many alternatives. These alternatives are cultural and vary from place to place. They are not predetermined by the environment. Consider the threat of river flooding. In one location a group may choose to respond by building houses on stilts. In another location a different group may develop a park on the flood plain and build their houses farther away from the river. And in a third, the people may decide to ignore the threat of flooding completely and, for aesthetic and economic reasons, build low lying houses on the flood plain overlooking the river. All three groups

live in similar environments and face a similar threat, but they choose to interact with their environment in different ways. It is important to remember that the human relationship with the environment is an interaction rather than thinking only that environment is a driver of human behavior.

In Afghanistan[16], the Helmand river floods on average every two-three years, flowing over its banks and destroying or damaging significant numbers of homes along the river. U.S. forces stationed in Helmand have normally been tasked with humanitarian assistance/disaster relief when such an event occurs. It is difficult for Americans deployed to Afghanistan to envision that the flooding Helmand River is actually beneficial, as it drowns vermin and replenishes top soil even as it destroys the mud brick structures Helmanders live in. The local Afghans, far from viewing this as a disaster, simply take the few important items they own (pots, pans, clothing, maybe a Quran) and self-evacuate away from the river, generally supported by local fellow tribesmen as the stay is only temporary. Americans tend to want to over-react, treating every flood as something akin to a Katrina-type event. It is difficult to do nothing, as fitness reports, upon which promotion is based, almost demand proactive activities. Yet doing nothing except being prepared to assist may be the exact response required, maybe just a requisition of thousands of water bottles to be provided to Afghan security and relief personnel to hand out. The destroyed homes will be rebuilt (with mud bricks reinforced with opium poppy stalks or sometimes with straw), the farmland is renewed and the rat/mice problem is greatly diminished for months, saving on food loss. Still, imagine this U.S. Marine fitness report, "Did nothing, distributed nothing, Afghan locals became self-sufficient, mission accomplished." While probably culturally appropriate for an Afghanistan scenario, is also likely very much against the pro-active U.S. military culture in which accomplishment is everything.

Military personnel need to understand the close relationship between a local community and its environment. Most importantly, when preparing an analysis or devising a plan, you need to determine what features of the local physical environment are used by people and how these features are used and understood. This is because your presence in any area of operation will affect locals' interaction with their environment

16 Example based on personal experience provided by Vern Liebl, Major, USMC (RET).



and, without careful planning, could jeopardize the locals' ability to live and survive. For example, if your operations divert or impede access to resources such as food or water, they may inadvertently cause real shortages or upset the local balance of power by allowing greater access to one group over another. This, in turn, may lead to unwanted conflict. You need to incorporate such thinking into your plans and analysis. You also need to recognize that, since use of the environment is cultural, operational impacts may significantly differ from what would be an expected outcome in the United States.

People's interaction with the environment will also inform the range of options available to military forces entering an area. For example, understanding the choices people have made about transportation within the constraints of available resources, climate, and terrain in a local area can help military personnel make their own locally effective decisions with respect to the vehicles they use and the equipment they carry.

The ways people change and shape their physical environment create cultural landscapes that reflect their social, economic, and political attitudes as well as their beliefs and values. A careful reading, or interpretation, of a cultural landscape can provide useful information about the people who create it, use it, and live in it. Certain features of the cultural landscape may be imbued with a significance or symbolic value that goes far beyond their mere physicality or utility. These items of cultural property, to include archeological, historic, and sacred sites, are extremely important as they represent a group's identity and heritage. Damage or destruction by either U.S. or enemy forces can create great distress among local populations and prompt mobilization in opposition to a mission. In contrast, protection by U.S. forces can aid in mission success. Unfortunately, items of cultural property are often not immediately obvious or easy to spot. However, careful reading of the cultural landscape using observation and interaction skills, discussed at length in Chapter 3, can help uncover what is important to which groups and why.

Finally, as military personnel learn to read cultural landscapes, it is common for them to begin to notice material culture. At its most basic,

the term material culture refers to things people make. It includes everything from symbolic objects, such as religious totems or ceremonial swords, to the more mundane items that surround us in everyday life, such as furniture, tools, computers, and clothes, to the things we throw away, such as plastic wrappers and broken dishes. The value of particular items depends heavily on cultural context and personal meaning. For example, what might appear to be a worn, dull knife to an outside observer may be a valued family heirloom to its owner and, because of the object's heirloom status and the importance placed on family history in his culture, he may be unwilling to sell it, even if he is in dire financial straits. What a group takes time and resources to make, what they protect, and what they discard can provide insights that are useful in understanding interaction with the environment, but also other areas, such as exchange and beliefs. Also, the value of particular objects may not be obvious at first. The same observation and interaction skills can help military personnel successfully interpret material culture.

## GETTING, SHARING, AND SAVING RESOURCES: SUBSISTENCE AND EXCHANGE

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses the concepts and information used to understand how people get, store, share, and exchange resources, commonly referred to here as subsistence patterns and exchange systems (or economies). Subsistence patterns refer to the primary ways a group gets the resources it needs and wants. A group rarely relies on only one mode of subsistence. For example, one group may engage in agriculture and herding to feed themselves and also plant more of certain crops, mine gems, and fish specifically for the purposes of being able to trade with other groups. In the United States, most people engage in wage labor for subsistence, and it is also common for people to garden, hunt, and trade, sometimes as a means of supplementing their own resources, for monetary income, and/or because they enjoy these other subsistence activities.



Exchange refers to all the ways a group stores, distributes, and exchanges resources. Exchange includes practices that are formally recognized as part of the economy as well as those that are not officially recognized, such as gift giving, charity, barter, reciprocity, and remittances.
It also includes practices that are considered improper or illegal in the group, such as bribery or the sale of prohibited items. With regard to this last category, it is important to remember that what is considered improper varies across and within groups. While some practices may be officially illegal, they still can be considered normal and proper by most people, as is the case in areas where it is normal practice to tip or bribe government officials.

**On Gift Giving**

It is important to note the dilemma gift giving can face military personnel as regulations forbid gift giving or receiving past certain monetary and annual amounts. Being handed a gift with nothing to give in return may place the individual in an awkward and embarrassing position or, because of honor and/or pride. It might also leave the person feeling in "debt" to the other individual. Always be aware of the policies in place regarding the giving of gifts and work out in advance how you will handle such situations. See also the section below on reciprocity for information on how to understand the kinds of social relationships that may be created by engaging in gift exchange.

When you think about economics, you may tend to think about money, banks, stores, the stock market, farms, factories, jobs, and the market system. This pattern is widespread now but is not universal. Military personnel need to think beyond these to gain a full understanding of the exchange systems at play locally. Money, taxes, and market exchange systems are common parts of exchange but rarely the only means by which resources are stored, distributed, and moved. Older, more persistent economic systems are often still at work. There is usually some degree of resource and labor sharing among family, friends, and social networks. Trading is still very common, even when money is supposedly available, as it may save time or provide access to a resource that cannot readily be purchased with money. Trading also can increase where local currency is so unstable that people choose to avoid it. Whether

trading, sharing among friends, or something else, people are unlikely to entirely abandon older exchange systems quickly or ever. In a time of crisis, they may even rely on the old familiar ways more than a newer, market-based system. These other means of exchange may be less visible and harder to discover, yet they can still be critical parts of how resources are used and moved in a group or network.

Also, other aspects of non-market economic systems can be a little harder to see and understand. Even something as seemingly simple as the straightforward exchange of goods of equal value may not exist in some regions. Instead, the exchange may be partially about what we expect — moving resources — and partly about building a working relationship (see section on reciprocity below). If you fail to see what the local people expect from the exchange, it may be very hard to understand or anticipate people's behavior. Remember, in our economy, we focus on the goods being transferred. In other groups, it is very common for economic activity to serve a critical role in building and maintaining social relationships. In turn, these social relationships, rather than faith in an abstract idea about economic forces, ensure the stability and reliability of the economy. Consequently, if an outsider attempts to avoid the relationship aspect of an exchange, he or she may be seen as behaving rudely or as untrustworthy. Seeing economic patterns from the insiders' perspective will help you understand, use, and influence the system rather than being surprised and frustrated by it.

*Baksheesh*

*Baksheesh* is a practice in parts of Asia and the Middle East that involves the gifting of sums of money for a range of reasons. Baksheesh can come in the form of alms given for charity or a tip given to a powerful or important individual as a form of respect. While some in the West interpret this as corruption, it can also be viewed as part of an elaborate system of interpersonal power relations.[17]

17 This research-based example was provided by a contributor who wished to remain anonymous and who consulted the following source during development Frank J. Cavico and Bahaudin G. Mujtaba, *Baksheesh or Bribe: Cultural Conventions and Legal Pitfalls* (Davie, FL: ILEAD Academy, 2011).



Subsistence and exchange are tied to other aspects of culture. A group's laws, beliefs, and values may limit how certain goods, such as family heirlooms, or kinds of labor, such as work by children, can be exchanged.

**Subsistence strategies — past and present matter**

Some common types of subsistence strategies include hunting and gathering, agriculture, nomadic herding, and wage labor. Although many groups now use some mix of strategies, there may be important aspects of collective identity, narratives, ideals, and beliefs associated with the strategy that was most prevalent in the past.

For example, many U.S. communities are proud of their agricultural or ranching heritage. Even in communities where few people still make their living by farming or ranging, their ideals, material culture, and rituals reflect this heritage. They may choose to display identity markers associated with this past, such as clothing or manner of speech. They may have agriculture-themed parades and events and people may wear western-style clothing, even if most people in town now work behind a desk.

People in communities with strong ties to past subsistence strategies may hold positions on political or social topics that are more aligned with this past than their current situation. This can be confusing for somebody who is new and sees only current economic activity. However, the visible indicators, such as rituals and identity markers, can be important clues to the history and values of a group.

People with certain social roles may have limited access to some aspects of exchange. As mentioned above and below, certain types of exchange may be important in maintaining social relationships, as giving and receiving of resources reinforce the bonds among individuals. While not every aspect of exchange will be critical to military operations, it is important to be aware that there are different kinds of exchange taking place and that people may interpret assistance from or to military personnel in terms of a kind of exchange other than a simple transaction or gift.

## Digging Deeper

***Corruption***

Across many types of missions and in all areas of the world, military personnel report seeing exchanges that, according to United States norms and departmental and service-level rules, constitute corruption. However, some exchanges that we categorize as corruption are perceived very differently and are actually just evidence of a different economic system at work. What we see as a bribe between villagers and the military may be perceived as a gift or normal payment by locals — the equivalent of bringing a bottle of wine to a dinner or tipping a waitress.

Something that looks like nepotism to us may be seen by others as honorable attention to family needs. In short, some practices that seem illicit to us may be not only acceptable but expected in other places. So long as everyone understands the rules, the system works. This does not mean military personnel should ignore corruption. The central requirement is opening your eyes to what is *really* there and how people are *really* getting things done rather than how you *expect* things to work or think they *should* work. Suspending judgment and perspective taking, two skills discussed in Chapter 3, will help you determine how the action is understood by the people involved. That additional moment of data gathering and thought can help you make a well-informed and effective decision about how to respond.

***Reciprocity — connecting exchange and social relationships***

One particular aspect of exchange warrants special mention, reciprocity. In the simplest terms, reciprocity is a series of exchanges over time that creates or reinforces a relationship — the sort of thing that is implied in our expressions "what goes around comes around," "return the favor," "pay it forward," and "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." You buy somebody a coffee and, in U.S. culture, there is an implied need for that person to reciprocate — to return the favor — at some indeterminate point in the future. The fact that the exchange takes place over time creates or maintains some sort of relationship. The established relationship is not necessarily discussed openly, meaning you may be establishing and/or reinforcing it without realizing you are doing so.



**Reciprocity and holism**

Reciprocity is an example of a common cultural process that does not fit neatly into any one dimension or category in the service level frameworks. Reciprocity is about building and maintaining relationships, so it is part of social structure. It also involves exchange and may be an important part of an economic system. Since reciprocity is commonly linked to people's ideas about fairness, honor, and other values, there also is likely to be a connection to belief systems. The most effective way to understand reciprocity in any cultural context will be to apply the concept of holism described above.

This can cause issues in the long run for military personnel.

Perhaps someone you do not know well buys you a birthday present. It feels awkward because now you feel like you should reciprocate, and you may feel that the person is trying to build an unwelcome relationship. In the United States, reciprocity now seems like it is mostly about gift giving and maintaining friendships and family relationships; most resources move around using a market exchange — what you would traditionally think of as economics. However, throughout history, reciprocity has been a fundamental mechanism in building and maintaining social organization and moving resources around in the population. For many people, this is still a fundamental way to get through life. Reciprocity is used to accomplish the following:

- Create and maintain relationships — the specifics of local culture influence the type and intensity of the relationships that are part of a particular kind of exchange.
- Store resources — many cultures use reciprocity to build social networks that store wealth in the form of favors or resources that can be called upon in time of need.

People can build relationships through reciprocity within a group and also across a social network or among groups. There are several types of reciprocity, but two matter most for military personnel.

*Generalized reciprocity ("what goes around comes around")* is when people help one another and share resources without calculating on an individual basis. It is assumed that things will even out eventually. This is the strongest form of reciprocity in terms of supporting group cohesion and ensuring everyone has enough resources. When military personnel become enmeshed in this sort of network, it can build tremendous trust with and among the local population but presents dangers in that it can be difficult for the military personnel to extract themselves from the network without causing harm and creating the potential for conflict.

*Balanced reciprocity ("you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours")* is when both people involved know that an equal exchange is expected at some point. A foreign counterpart, interpreter, or local may offer a gift with the full expectation that the service member will, at some point, return a gift of equal value. This kind of reciprocity can be helpful in building trust with individuals and is somewhat less dangerous than generalized reciprocity. You have to learn how value is calculated with your counterpart in the exchange to avoid inadvertently over- or under-giving. It also is critical to understand that, in most cultures, the return gift does not end the relationship. "Balancing the scales" does not necessarily mean that you can leave the relationship gracefully. Instead, it may establish an expectation of future exchanges.

*Making "deposits" — a Marine Corps example*[18]

Marines who have lived with or advised foreign forces have described balanced reciprocity as a "bank account." They often make "deposits" into the bank account in the form of the extra time they spend having tea and talking about non-mission related topics. They "withdraw" from this account when they advise their counterpart to do something that is unpopular (e.g., not using cell phones on watch) or when they need to deny a request (e.g., not filling their trucks with fuel). Even though goods are not exchanged in this example, the elements of exchange and relationship building are present. It is important not to take metaphors like this too far. In a banking exchange, none of the people involved expect a personal relationship to develop, whereas in the situation these Marines describe, some form of relationship is expected.

18 Example from contributing author Kristin Post, based upon multiple interviews with Marines conducted under USMC IRB Protocol MCCDC.2013.0003, Longitudinal Assessment of Security Cooperation Training (SCT), Culture Training, and Mission Effectiveness.



There can be negative aspects of building a reciprocal relationship. A person from another culture may presume a continuing relationship based on gifts given or assistance rendered (either by or to U.S. personnel), leading to misunderstandings and unintended offenses. A person may also deliberately try to use reciprocity to make U.S. personnel feel obligated to return favors. Not understanding the role reciprocity plays within and across cultures can lead to problems, as U.S. actions that disrupt or restrict normal social patterns may severely undermine the economic base and resource stability of an area by disrupting these seemingly "informal" flows of resources and favors, which, of course, can have unintended second or third order impacts on your mission.

***Division of Labor***

In almost all groups, there is some form of division of labor — not everyone does every type of work that needs to be accomplished in a family or a group. Sometimes the division is formalized, but more often it is so deeply entangled in cultural patterns that it is seen as the normal and right way things work.

Division of labor is most often found along age, sex or gender, and class or caste lines, although you may also see distinctions made based on racial categories, ethnicity, religion, or some other factor. In the United States with a few exceptions, children below a certain age are not expected or allowed to participate in wage labor. A small child may take on a paper route or do family chores, but most people would be shocked to see a child going to work in a factory in the twenty-first century. Likewise, we have a general expectation that very old people should not have to work. These patterns do not hold true across the globe. There are many places where the very young and the very old are expected to work, whether inside or outside the household.

Stratification and beliefs about the inherited capabilities of people who belong to a particular segment of the population inform groups' division of labor. Stratification systems, such as the historical caste system in India, limit the educational and employment opportunities of people based on the caste into which they were born. Similarly, many societies divide labor based on sex, with women doing work around the home or in limited sectors of the market economy and men being more

involved in economic activity outside the domestic sphere. In the military and law enforcement, service in particular positions or levels can be restricted based on sex, race, class, or some other factor, such as tribal affiliation.

**The "Third Gender"**

In some reference materials, you'll see the term "third gender" used to refer to a way that outside women are sometimes categorized by a group that does not normally have women in whatever role the outside woman is performing. While the term is problematic for a number of reasons (and also does not apply only to women), the basic idea has relevance for military personnel.

For groups that place restrictions on the roles females can hold in society, encountering women serving in the military, as aid workers, or in other professions locally perceived as male-only roles, can be challenging. Rather than changing their beliefs or rejecting the presence of the new woman, they may choose to socially process her as a person who is neither male nor female. They may already have a category and associated words and expected behaviors for such encounters or they may simply try to avoid using gender-related language and behavior around the woman. While this arrangement can ease a potentially tense situation, it bears watching, as the novel categorization may not be accepted by all or seen as an acceptable excuse/explanation for all behaviors.

This pattern is not well studied with regard to female military personnel. Therefore, if you notice it happening, it is important to pay attention and not make a lot of assumptions about how it will affect people's attitudes and behavior.

Note that this use of the term "third gender" is complex. It does not necessarily indicate a formal social role or ascribed identity (as discussed later in the guidebook). Rather it is more a process people are using to address or manage an anomaly.

As with all aspects of culture, division of labor can change, even in very rigid systems. In our own history, we have seen changes in division of labor based on sex, with more women entering the wage labor market and more men taking on responsibilities for domestic work. Also, both men and women have access to a broader range of occupations than



they did a century ago. Men now work as nurses, a historically female profession, and women work as engineers, a profession limited to men in the past. Other groups have and are managing similar changes.

Military personnel need to be aware of division of labor to ensure they understand the expectations of locals and military partners about who can and cannot be involved in certain activities. Observing how labor is divided also can provide clues about historical or current assumptions about sub-groups that may be important in understanding social structure, politics, or some other relevant aspect of culture.

***Resources — distribution, access, and ownership***

Certain aspects of exchange are often involved in cross-cultural misunderstandings. Thus, we want to reiterate the following about resources:

*Distribution.* Most groups now participate in some form of market exchange and a system of taxation, but some may continue to distribute resources in other ways, a few of which were addressed previously. Other forms of distribution frequently reinforce some aspect of social relations or beliefs. For example, charity redistributes wealth in a community and can simultaneously reinforce a belief that those who have been fortunate have a responsibility to share that fortune with others. In contrast, in some groups, charity reinforces social stratification, emphasizing socio-economic differences rather than mitigating them. The important thing to remember is that all forms of distribution, including market and taxes, are connected to other beliefs, relationships, and power dynamics. When getting involved in the distribution of resources, it is best to find out as much as possible about these other connections in order to anticipate second and third order effects of your proposed actions.

*Access.* It is important to remain mindful of the fact that parts of the population will have differential access to resources and the means of distributing resources. As with division of labor, access to resources can be limited by such factors as sex/gender, age, religion, etc. You may find that one sex is not allowed to have money or that only some parts of a population have access to public utilities, such as water. People in lower classes or castes may not be allowed to open a business, or there may

be quiet discrimination that makes it harder for them to get an education, a loan, or some other resource that would allow them to improve their socioeconomic status. While differential access is an important aspect of exchange systems in all places, its relevance is highlighted in situations where military personnel are involved in the distribution of resources. If you provide resources to a government official for distribution to people who have just experienced a natural disaster, it is good to know if that official will distribute them evenly across the population or will be using a social calculus different from your own.

*Ownership.* Although Western concepts of formal ownership are becoming more pervasive, military personnel may still encounter alternative models from time to time. For example, grazing lands may not be owned by any one individual, but each family may have a right to use them, a factor that becomes relevant when thinking about whether or not to set up a facility on land "nobody owns." The same may be true with resources such as wild game or plants. Additionally, some groups retain some sense that ownership is affected by need, not only by purchase or possession. This could lead to confusion about whether an act is theft, a misunderstanding of the concept of ownership, or somebody deliberately manipulating an older concept of ownership to get away with taking something. It is not always easy to identify these other conceptions of ownership in advance; therefore, it is worth remembering that they may be a factor when interpreting behavior.

19 Example based on research/expertise provided by Hala Abdulla, Professional Solutions, a contracted regional analyst at CAOCL, who consulted the following sources in development: "Road to Inclusion Report Challenges Previously-Held Notions of the Unbanked and Underbanked in Egypt," MasterCard Engagement Bureau, accessed December 7, 2017, https://newsroom.mastercard.com/mea/press-releases/road-to-inclusion-report-challenges-previously-held-notions-of-the-unbanked-and-underbanked-in-egypt/, and Humayon Dar, "Common pools: Crowd Financing and 'Committee' System," *The Express Tribune,* October 20, 2013, accessed December 7, 2017, https://tribune.com.pk/story/620038/common-pools-crowd-financing-and-committee-system/.



### *Jami'ya*[19]

*Jami'ya* is an informal banking/loan-giving system in Egypt. It is interest-free and is based on an honor code where formal contracts are not involved and members join through referral after being vetted and then approved by the group. The name *Jami'ya* in Arabic means organization, club, association, committee.

This informal economic practice also takes place in different countries, mainly in the Middle East, South Asia and Africa. However, it has different names in different countries. It is called *Selfa* (loan) in Iraq, *Sanduq* (box) in Sudan, *Cammittee* (committee) in Pakistan, and *Chama* (group) in Kenya and Tanzania. It is considered a vital lifeline for many middle class and below families, where the family's future-plans revolves around these different (small and big) *Jami'yas.* The *Jami'ya* can be organized for big project such as buying a car, house, wedding, religious pilgrimage, or down payment for a startup business, to small *Jami'ya* to pay debts, and cover monthly household expenses.

This informal loan-giving is mainly a women's affair. A group of women convene once a month to contribute with an equal amount of money, decided upon by the organizer and members of the group, on a rotational basis. The collected money is then given to a member of the group each month. The sequence of this informal loan-giving is based on a name drawing that takes place at the beginning of the establishment of this *Jami'ya.* There are often exceptions to this order, especially when a member is in dire need. However, all members of the group must approve of an advance payment. Also, it is common for the organizer to demand that she be the first person to receive the *Jami'ya.*

This informal loan-giving has evolved over time. It started among housewives of close-knit neighborhoods where members of the group have already established comradery and trust. As women entered the workforce, the practice also moved to the work field where men started to contribute to this informal exchange. The *Jami'ya* exchange in the workplace usually takes place around salary payments. Trust is already established between members as they happen to work at the same place, vetted by employers, and members of the *Jami'ya* are aware of each other's paydays.

Although this practice would be perfectly categorized under economy, the entire process also offers members, mainly women, a form of social bonding and support network.

## ORGANIZING AND INTERACTING: RELATIONSHIPS, ROLES, AND IDENTITY

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses the concepts and information needed to understand a group's patterns of roles, relationships, and social organization as well as how people use those patterns to shape interactions within the group and between the group and others. It includes topics such as social stratification, sub-groups or other divisions, kinship, status, and identity. This is a particularly complex knowledge area because many different patterns are likely to coexist within one group, and there may be people both within and from outside the group trying to change the accepted patterns.

Every group has common social roles that involve expectations about behavior, status, and interaction, such as politician, brother, priest, wife, or community leader. Social roles often, but not exclusively, are linked to kinship or occupation. A person may take on a different social role depending on context or at different stages of life. There also is variation in the flexibility or inflexibility of social roles both within and across groups. For example, in some groups, there may be an absolute expectation that part of the social role of being an adult son or daughter is to provide for older relatives, but a different group may see that responsibility as being balanced against the individual desires and aspirations of the adult children.

Social roles and identity patterns share a reciprocal relationship. When a person assumes a certain role, such as community leader, that role may become an important part of his personal identity. Also, some social roles may be restricted based on identity factors, as was the case historically in the United States when married women were not allowed to be teachers and people identified as a race other than white were not allowed to serve in political roles. Some social roles and aspects of identity are ascribed, meaning they are determined by the group and cannot easily be changed by the individual. Other aspects are achieved or avowed, meaning the individual has some ability to choose them.



Social roles play an important part in the way people structure their relationships and interactions. For example, when interacting with an elected official, people often behave more formally and respectfully than they might if interacting with the same individual in a different role, such as a child's sporting coach. In such cases, people are shaping their interaction around the social role, rather than the individual occupying it. Both social roles and identity are commonly linked to social status with some roles or identities being perceived as more or less valuable, important, or privileged. In turn, social status can affect how people interact. For example, a person who has a high social status may expect deferential behavior from people with lower status, and there may be serious consequences if this expectation is not met.

The concept of social organization (also sometimes referred to as social structure) refers to broad, enduring patterns of roles and relationships. You can learn a lot about a group of people by the way that they organize themselves. One of the most basic forms of social organization is kinship, which takes many different shapes and levels of importance across groups. For example, family tends to be a very important theme throughout all cultures, but the exact meaning of the idea does vary from place to place and people to people. In the United States many of us share the idea of the nuclear family (father, mother, and children) as the basic unit of family. That basic unit may interact with other related family units, but it generally moves along its own course, making financial and lifestyle choices that will be of most positive impact for that unit. However, the idea of a tightly bounded nuclear family as the norm is a fairly recent development in the United States and is not particularly common globally. Other groups put different levels of importance on the idea of family and may have much tighter connections to what we would think of as "extended" family members, both horizontally (e.g., cousins) and vertically (e.g., great uncles). For example, it is not unusual for cousins to be linked as tightly as siblings.

Two other variations in how people think about kinship are worth mentioning here — differences in the kinds of ties we think of as kinship and differences in the importance of kinship ties over generations. In the United States we tend to think of the most important ties of kinship being biological and legal (marriage or adoption) and across only

a few generations. Yet, people tend to use kinship categories creatively as ways of indicating ties that extend beyond biology or legal documents. Many of us grew up in families with a friend of the family who was referred to and thought of as an "aunt" or "uncle," suggesting a kinship-like tie and mutual responsibilities. Similar practices are common throughout the world, and these ties may be seen as every bit as real and important as biological or legal ones. The number of generations deemed important also varies considerably cross-culturally. In the United States most people think of distant ancestors as of minimal importance in terms of kinship responsibilities. However, in many places, these historical connections may take on more significance. The fact that two people share an ancestor two hundred years ago may be seen as creating an important kinship relationship with an obligation to support or assist one another.

Relatively few military personnel will be expected to fully understand complex kinship systems or the detailed family relationships in a specific group. However, it is important to keep in mind that people's sense of who counts as family may differ from your own and that these relationships sometimes come with a sense of obligation. (See also the discussion of social networks below.)

Another form of social organization is the formation of sub-groups or sectors within a larger group, based on things like ethnicity or race, occupation, religious beliefs, or socio-economic status. These sub-groups may or may not be tightly organized and formally recognized. Such sub-groupings have significant influence over people's perceptions of how they can interact with one another. Most groups also have some form of social stratification, ways in which some parts of the population have more privilege than others, such as socio-economic classes or a caste system. As is the case with individual social status, these broader stratification patterns can be closed (e.g., the Indian caste system), meaning the individual has no ability to change their position within the hierarchy. Others may be more flexible, giving individuals at least some possibility of changing position, as is the case in some socio-economic class systems.



Social organization also includes the institutions people create and use to organize their lives. These institutions may look familiar to people from the United States, such as churches, educational or legal systems, governance, and social services. Other institutions may be less easy to recognize, such as a system of apprenticeships that is handled separately from the educational system. Oftentimes, those less visible or understood receive less or no attention from those outside the group. That makes sense to an extent, as they are unfamiliar and may not be called out in official documents. However, all institutions — whether formally and officially structured or just understood throughout the group — are important and powerful social tools to the group and need to be accounted for when analyzing, planning, and engaging.

One final aspect of social organization is social networks. Social networks cross the more easily perceived social boundaries of groups, sub-groups, and social stratification and give people a wider range of possible interactions. For example, social networks based on school ties, religion, or political affiliation may make it possible for somebody to have interactions that normally would be made difficult by the boundaries of social groups or stratification.

**Digging Deeper**

***Groups and networks***

It is common to hear groups and networks discussed interchangeably; however, they are not the same thing, and it is important to be intentional in how you think about and use these concepts of social organization. Simply put, groups are able to act as a unit; networks are not an entity and do not act as a unit.

A group is a set of people who share some sense of collective identity and perceive boundaries around themselves. There are people who are in the group and people who are not, although members can be added or subtracted. There is at least the possibility of them acting as a unit. Organizations, businesses, religious institutions, school classes, hobby clubs, political parties, tribes, military units, professional associations, etc., are all types of groups. All have the capacity to act as a unit.

Networks are ways of describing the relationships among individuals. A chart of one person's network would look somewhat different from a chart of the network of a close friend of his. Network analysis is useful for understanding the relationships among people and how those relationships might be used to move information, things, or assistance. It is erroneous to assume that everyone in a person's social network is part of similar groups. For example, the fact that someone is in a social network with a person who is part of a violent political group does not necessarily mean anything about the first person's politics. He may be in a relationship based on school ties or some other affiliation that is too weak for his old schoolmate to effectively mobilize him.

***Identity***

Identity is people's idea of who they are and how they fit into the world. Identity is commonly defined as a set of *social expectations* related to ourselves and others that is shaped by such factors as profession, gender, race, social class, ethnicity, family, sexual orientation, religion, and language. People's sense of identity shapes how they behave, what options they believe are open to them, and how they are perceived by the people around them. In times of conflict, it can be the symbol for which people fight. There are some aspects of identity that are products of choice and personality and others that are shaped more by contexts and relationships (including ascribed—imposed—identity). An individual may shape his or her sense of identity using different combinations of elements, such as:

- Ethnicity
- Corporate group membership — tribe, clan, military service, etc.
- Gender (sex, sexual preferences, social roles)
- Kinship roles — son, mother, sibling, niece/nephew, etc.
- Nationality and state affiliation
- Race
- Religion
- Resource status — wealth/poverty
- Social status (possibly defined by several of the other identity aspects)
- Occupations
- Other group memberships
- Political affiliations/memberships



The elements people choose to emphasize in an interaction will depend on the situation in which they find themselves. For example, a soldier may choose to introduce himself by his military occupational specialty in some situations and as "Jason's Dad" in others. It depends on where he is and with whom he is interacting. Identity contributes to the many roles we play in our lives and is always changing and evolving. With these roles come role expectations. Role expectations are sets of behavior and characteristics associated with particular situations. Meeting a person in his "dad" role at a soccer match sets up certain expectations about how he will behave and how the two of you can interact. However, if you meet the same individual a few weeks later in a work context and find out he is a general officer, those expectations may change. The key to remember is that just because you meet a person in one context does not necessarily mean that s/he will privilege (or that you will observe) the same aspect of his identity the next time you interact.

How we pick up on other people's identities is somewhat culturally dependent, and the signals from one culture may mean something very different in another culture. For example, the concept of men holding hands is generally given sexual connotations in the United States. Yet, in Saudi Arabia, for example, male touching is not assumed to be sexual, and men might be very offended at the suggestion. In the United States, gender does not give as many clues about possible occupation as it might elsewhere (although, still, a "male nurse" may be teased for choosing an occupation historically held by women). Also, many of us in the United States tend to be less attuned to picking up on kinship roles, which are somewhat less important to us than they are elsewhere. So, when conducting business, you may not care whether or not your business partner has a lot of relatives in the area, but in a culture where he is obliged to share profits with all of them, it might be good to know about his family.

There also is a great deal of variation across cultures in how flexible or changeable different aspects of identity are and how they interrelate. In the United States, actively supporting political causes opposed by your family or to having a different set of religious beliefs may be uncomfortable, but is often possible. In other places, a son or daughter might not have this flexibility. What is and is not flexible about identity

will vary, but military personnel can be attuned to noticing the differences. Just keeping in mind that what seems like "no big deal" to us may be a very big deal in other places is a good place to start.

In general, military personnel need to be attuned to identity indicators that help them figure out how to interact and what to expect about:

- danger or safety in a situation,
- likely behavior of counterparts or locals,
- changes in the behavior of counterparts or locals,
- traction points (commonalities/differences), and
- how the person does/does not share your affiliations and loyalties.

Figuring out how to navigate identity issues can seem very complex, so it is worth pointing out that you already have the understanding and skills to identify someone's identity. It is something that you do every day. You may not be fully conscious that you are doing it, but you read clues, assess people, and make determinations about their identity all the time. The challenge is to be disciplined to look for cultural differences in the signals you are reading when encountering an unfamiliar culture.

***Race and ethnicity***

As noted above, race and ethnicity are elements that figure into identity formation. These concepts tend to be used very loosely much in the same way that people tend to use the word "tribe" to mean all kinds of things. In fact, they mean different things. Race refers to categories that group people primarily according to perceived differences in physical characteristics. Racial categories vary greatly across cultures with distinction made on different characteristics or at different places on a spectrum of difference. For example, many South American concepts of race, like those in the United States, are somewhat based on skin color but include more categories between black and white. In many African countries, there are racial categories based on physical distinctions among people someone from the United States would categorize as all being "black." Categories within one culture also change over time. In the United States, there used to be a racial category of "Irish" that was different from being "white." While there is no scientific basis for any culture's concept of race, the categories are socially significant. You



may see racial categories, and related power structures, in a foreign military. The officers may be primarily from a dominant racial category or mixed race, while the enlisted are primarily from a race with lower social standing. Learning the local definitions of race can help in figuring out how people align themselves and how outsiders — like U.S. forces — are perceived.

An ethnic group refers to a group that shares a sense of common history and culture and often geography. Ideas about race may form part of an ethnic identity, but not always. It is possible for two people to be socially the same race and have different ethnic identities or vice versa. In an increasingly mobile world, ethnic identities often take on a trans-national aspect, with people maintaining family and cultural ties across great distances. Like racial categories, ethnic categories have no scientific basis. They are ideas entirely constructed by the group. The criteria used to include or exclude members may change over time for political or other reasons. In fact, entire ethnic identities may be constructed rapidly with potentially devastating consequences. For example, historically, the "ethnic" identities of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda seem to have been fairly fluid social groupings based on a distinction between farmers and herders. These identities were made more significant and expanded into quasi-racial identities by the actions of European colonists who used them to categorize the local population. Those colonial distinctions became a useful way to mobilize the population during the genocide in the 1990s, where many of the Tutsi ruling minority were injured or killed by the majority Hutus.[20]

Both race and ethnicity vary in importance at different times in a group's history. While the sense of shared racial or ethnic identity may barely be mentioned during times of peace, in times of tension or conflict, people may "rally around" an identity, lending it more power for a time. This points to an important consideration when assessing a situation where a particular element of identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, etc., seems to be at the core of the problem. Sometimes, people outside of the culture and the conflict assume such conflicts have

20 Jack D. Eller, "Rwanda and Burundi: When Two Tribes Go to War?," in *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on Ethnic Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 195–241.

been going on "for thousands of years" and are, therefore, unsolvable because they do not understand how elements of identity can be mobilized. Making observations about the role of race, ethnicity, and other elements of identity in a conflict is important, but it is equally important to determine why people are rallying around those particular identity elements and elicit examples of how the groups managed to get along in the past. Again, what is important is not our terms, "race" or "ethnicity" or something else, but recognizing the criteria local people use to categorize each other (and us) and understanding the current significance of those categories. See also the discussion of mobilization later in this section.

***Group membership***

Group memberships also inform identity formation. People belong to many different groups at the same time, such as hobby groups, churches, political parties, or the military. Each group affiliation provides each member something, a sense of belonging, security, purpose, opportunity, etc. At times, the various groups to which people belong hold conflicting beliefs or ideals, and members reconcile this incongruity in different ways. Furthermore, the fact that a person belongs to a particular group does not necessarily mean that he believes in everything the group espouses (remember variation above). In the United States many people are members of churches or political parties without fully sharing the ideals of those groups. Throughout the world people join groups because they think it will advance their careers, find them a better spouse, make their parents happy, or just help them get through their days more easily. This may be particularly true in authoritarian regimes, such as in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. People may have joined political parties or tried to marry into a tribe or clan, not because of any deeply held belief, but simply because they thought it would make life easier.

This means that you should not assume that every member of a group is going to move in lockstep with its purposes. Even in places where religion or tribal identity or a political party is strong, there are members who pick and choose which parts of a group's expectations to follow. People also may behave differently depending on context — perhaps being more relaxed at home, but carefully following "the rules"



in public. Understanding the **importance of context** and how people make decisions about their behavior can be key in avoiding accidentally embarrassing, alienating, or angering a potential ally. Additionally, in any group, there are almost always a few members who are open to different ideas. If they can be identified, these people may be helpful in shifting the group's opinions or understanding the group. On the flip side, do not underestimate the power of these affiliations. They shape the way a person thinks about things, sometimes even when that person is not fully invested in the group. For example, in the United States people tend to think in terms of a two-party political system, not even imagining what it would be like to have an equally powerful third or fourth party. It is not that they do not like the idea; it just does not really occur to them to think about it. Even for people who are not Democrats or Republicans, the traditional dominance of those groups tends to create mental "blinders" that do not exist in countries with multi-party systems.

***Organizations***

One type of group needs specific attention — organizations, such as businesses, militaries, churches, non-governmental organizations. It is easy to start thinking about an organization as though it is one entity and forget that it is really just a group of people that has come together for a specific purpose and, thus, has created shared patterns of meaning, behavior, and symbols just like other groups. People in organizations create some of these patterns deliberately as a way of creating cohesion among members, and some patterns emerge over time from the habits and ideas of members. Each organization develops particular decision-making processes and has preferences for how to interact with outsiders. For example, do they do business with outsiders only in meetings or do they prefer quasi-social settings? This consideration is especially important if you are advising or training a military partner. For instance, you could have several meetings in the commanding officer's elaborately decorated office and never get anywhere. It is not until you happen to share a ride in a vehicle with him one day that you end up agreeing on a training schedule in less than a half an hour. Military personnel who have worked alongside military counterparts from different countries usually notice similarities and differences between the military's culture and the cultures from which military personnel are

drawn. When working with organizations, it is important to remember that those within the organization are shaped both by their organizational affiliation and by their affiliation with other culture groups. You should approach trying to understand an organization and those within it just like you would any culture group and its members.

**Military Culture and Organizational Culture**

As you learn more about cultural concepts, you may come across discussions of "organizational culture" and "military culture." These terms can be useful in focusing your attention on a particular group or subgroup. However, as indicated in this chapter's section on Organizations, there is usually no need for a separate set of concepts and skills for learning about and interacting with people in these types of groups. The ones in this guidebook will work.

Some military personnel have reported that the most important aspect of understanding the cultural patterns of militaries and other organizations has been managing their own expectations. When you're busy or there is an ongoing crisis, it is easy to make the assumption that a partner's cultural pattern, such as appropriate behavior between officers and enlisted personnel or how mission success is defined, will be the same as they are in your own military or organization. Keeping your own assumptions from blinding you to relevant differences can be especially difficult when working with partners who share some, but not quite all, of your patterns. Skills such as suspending judgment and perspective taking, described in the next section, can help you notice and manage differences so you can focus on the mission.

***Tribes***

Another type of group warrants particular attention — tribes. Within DoD, there has been a tendency to see any sub-state group as "a tribe." In reality, there were and continue to be many different types of social/political organizations other than nation-states.[21] Then there is a

21 In reality, the term "tribe" is so vague that it does not have much utility as a means of understanding social organization and political process. It is used to describe small groups of indigenous people attempting to keep themselves distinct from a larger nation-state, but also to attempt to explain the complex entanglement of kin-based relationships with the functioning of a nation-state in Iraq. For this and several other reasons the term is rarely used in scientific discussions of culture. However, it is firmly rooted in military documents and, therefore, must be addressed.



further assumption that all non-state groups are organized the same way and will operate and make decisions the same way. Historically, in the U.S. campaigns against Native Americans, this led to a number of different problems. First, commanders wanted to see every group as a tribe because it would mean that there would be a convenient leader with whom to negotiate. In reality, many Native American groups had different leaders for different aspects of life. Many groups with band structure (based on small kin groups who come together only for special events) did not have anyone who would have been recognizable as a political leader to Western eyes. This led to negotiations being conducted with the wrong people. A commander might make an agreement with one family elder, mistaken for a tribal leader, only to find out too late that other families did not think the agreement applied to them. It is understandable that a commander with experience with tribes in one area (Iraq, for example) might try to apply that experience in a new place (Afghanistan or the Philippines, for example). This may work, so long as the commander realizes that tribes are organized and make decisions in very different ways. Even something as seemingly unrelated as a clan structure that cuts across tribal lines or different marriage patterns can make a huge difference in the way tribal leaders determine courses of action.

"Tribe" is just a convenient, catch-all word that we use instead of having to list all the specific characteristics and expressions of this type of group. In social science terms, a tribe is simply a non-state corporate group (corporate group just means that it has membership rules) at a certain level of organizational complexity. There are many types of tribes. Most have somewhat more formal leadership than would be found in smaller units of social organization. Most are made up of smaller segments. Most tend to use kinship as an organizing principle, often with clans or lineages involved that may cross-cut tribal lines. Some organize themselves into confederacies but usually only for special events or threats, preferring to maintain autonomy at other times. Leadership can be inherited, but there is usually some flexibility to allow leadership to pass to those who have achieved recognition for their actions. Leadership often is based on persuasion rather than the ability to exert force or withhold or provide resources. However, none of these things holds true for all tribes in all places. Just like with any other

group, military personnel must remain open to observe, be critical of what they see, and avoid being blinded by familiarity, as assuming familiarity can lead you to false conclusions and, thus, impact your effectiveness.

***Cohesion — ritual, narrative, and symbol***

Groups stay together over long periods of time, even through changes in cultural patterns, for many different reasons — shared interests or beliefs, habit, identity, etc. While these reasons for group cohesion may be discussed overtly, especially in times of change or stress, there are subtler ways that people reinforce the importance of the group and a collective sense of identity.

Three of the most easily observed ways are ritual, narrative, and symbol. Celebrations, ceremonies, stories, myths, jokes, music, and symbolic objects (flags, emblems, etc.) can be used to give individuals a shared experience that reinforces their sense of belonging or the importance of group membership. For example, military life is full of these constellations of symbols, stories, and activities that reinforce group identity. Unit insignia, service symbols, the stories units or services tell about themselves, all of these help people define the group and their membership in it. In situations where a sense of collective purpose and identity has to be forged, such as in a complex multinational operation, people often will create symbols and rituals to help the emerging group cohere to accomplish its purpose.

The ways rituals, narrative, and symbols are used can highlight important values of the group or can indicate when a group is being mobilized for a political purpose. These aspects of social organization are useful to remember for crafting working relationships and shared purpose when different groups have to work together. Also, they can be very important to a group when it is trying to recover from conflict or catastrophe. For military personnel, it may be necessary to support people's attempts to bring the group together via these means, even when it seems like time and resources are needed elsewhere.



***Mobilization***

The concept of mobilization warrants specific attention, as it has been mentioned throughout this section on organizing and interacting and is particularly significant to the military profession for the role it can play in both fomenting and quelling conflict. When we talk about something being "mobilized," it means the process of how people's attention, conversation, and behavior start to crystallize around some element or marker of identity. You might see more of a certain kind of poster or distinctive clothing. You might notice people talking about social problems in terms of ethnicity when you know that there are political, religious, and economic reasons for those problems. People might start emphasizing a religious or political (or other) part of their identity in how they dress, how they talk, what they talk about, and how they choose to spend their time. Being able to recognize when people are mobilizing can help you anticipate reactions and perhaps shape behavior.

**Note:** In other reference material, you may read discussions of superordinate or group identity as distinct from individual identity. Concepts related to group identity can be useful in analysis and understanding group behavior over time. However, it is important to remember that any group identity is really only a collection of overlapping individual identities and can shift over time. Also, in the mobilization process, people are rarely consciously thinking or talking about a clearly defined group identity of the sort that would be useful in analysis. Any description of group identity should be used as a general tool and not assumed to be a good predictor of the thinking or behavior of any specific individual.

Many aspects of culture tend to stay in low gear or neutral until something happens to focus people's attention. After 11 September 2001, people in the United States who had never given the flag much thought started to fly it, wear flag pins, or put flag stickers on their cars. During election years, people often think and speak more about their party affiliation. In times of conflict, sometimes people start to make ethnic or racial distinctions between themselves and their adversary in ways they rarely did before. During peacetime, these sorts of things can come and go without much cause for concern. During times when tensions are high and the potential for conflict is great, mobilization can be

an indicator of danger. For example, if people start to talk about their problems in terms of ethnic differences and to emphasize their own ethnic identity, it may lead to their simplifying a complex problem and blaming it on another group. Over time, as this kind of talk gets more common, it becomes easier and easier to simplify, to blame, and then to think about doing harm.

Sometimes mobilization happens without manipulation as a result of a social or environmental change. However, sometimes the mobilization is orchestrated for political purposes. For example, a leader or group hoping to gain power might encourage people to identify with a particular political party by linking the party to important values in the group. In times of stress (economic problems, political change or disruption, violence, etc.), people often rally around a particular group or identity even if they were not particularly invested in it previously. Paying attention to how people talk about group membership and changes in the degree to which they seem to be "playing by the rules" of their groups can give you clues to how the operating environment is changing. Take note, as this can reshape the operating environment in a very short period of time.

While mobilization of aspects of identity can lead to tensions, it also can help resolve them. For example, a group that mobilizes around a common sense of community membership may find it easier to downplay religious or ethnic differences. Leveraging a local historical counter-narrative to one causing disruption can help people reframe the situation using their own culture. It must be emphasized that mobilization is not inherently good or bad. When people mobilize, the results can be positive, negative, or neutral in terms of U.S. interests. Mobilization is simply a process, a way to motivate people, albeit a very powerful one, and one that you need to be adept at identifying and using, if the need arises.



## ANSWERING QUESTIONS: BELIEFS, LOGIC, QUESTIONING, AND INVESTIGATION

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses the beliefs, logics, values, learning, knowledge, and modes of questioning and investigation of a group (sometimes referred to as worldview). It includes, but is not limited to, topics such as religion and other beliefs, what people perceive to be logical and rational ways of thinking, what people believe is right and important, how the group thinks about and accomplishes learning and teaching, and the myths, history, and narratives that are important to the group. As with other aspects of culture, it is very common for multiple patterns of belief to coexist, even when an outsider might see them as conflicting. People may be very devout in a monotheistic religion that instructs people to believe that a god controls all activities in the world. However, the same people may place great emphasis on scientific logic and also have shrines to ancestral spirits.

People use beliefs and knowledge to think about not only spiritual questions but also more practical matters of how the world works, why things happen, and what is right or wrong. Beliefs need not be explicitly linked to religion to have significant impact. In the United States many people place great value on individual rights and responsibilities. This value is reinforced by some religious traditions in the country but also is shared by many non-religious people. Myths, historical stories, and other narratives — all of which are vehicles for beliefs and values — also are important in how people interpret events and make decisions. For example, a group with many narratives or myths about past invasions may be more inclined to be wary of U.S. military presence than a group without this sense of shared history.

Groups or sub-groups also form orientations toward developing knowledge through learning that are shaped by beliefs. Some kinds of learning are perceived to be the responsibility of the family or community, others are expected to be covered in more formal educational systems, and others are seen as things that will be handled during employment or apprenticeship. Access to learning can be linked to social roles, status, or stratification, with some parts of the group restricted in what kinds

of learning opportunities they have. Some groups prevent female children from attending formal school. Instead, these children are expected to learn from their families everything they need to know to fulfill the restricted set of social roles available to them. It is important to remember that people's beliefs are not always reflected in official policies. For example, even in places where people place a high social value on education, this value may not be reflected in government distribution of funds, and access to all or higher levels of education may be restricted to those who can pay.

People also use beliefs about knowledge to structure how questions get asked and by whom. In a group where scientific ideas about causation are accepted, questions about the cause of a disease would be perceived as being best answered by medical or scientific professionals using a structured scientific method. Yet, in a group that sees cause and effect as driven by supernatural forces, people see it as more appropriate for a person connected to spiritual matters, such as a shaman or priest, to answer such questions.

The core considerations for this knowledge area are that ideas about what is logical and rational are not universally shared and that beliefs, values, and systems of logic are entangled in all aspects of life. It is important to learn as much as possible about these aspects of culture and to watch for their influence across all other aspects.

**Digging Deeper**

***Questioning and investigating***

The processes of developing and challenging knowledge are heavily influenced by many aspects of culture, such as beliefs, social roles, division of labor, and power. In the United States we have a division of labor that has created specialists, such as scientists and law enforcement officials, who are considered the appropriate people to investigate certain kinds of questions. It would be considered unusual, dangerous, and illegal for a regular citizen to attempt to conduct genetic experiments with pathogens or to investigate suspected criminal activity. Other kinds of questioning, such as challenging political and religious positions, are (at least ideally) seen as the right of all citizens, regardless of



their position or status. There also is a fair amount of freedom of choice in the types of evidence or expertise people use to answer questions. When confronting questions about the origins of the universe, people are free to rely on explanations provided by scientists, philosophers, religious leaders, or some combination.

This type of arrangement may seem natural and normal to people who have grown up in the United States, but it does not hold true in all places. Most military personnel who have travelled outside the United States have encountered situations where political and/or religious dissent was illegal or restricted only to some subsection of the population, based on wealth, kinship, age, or gender. It also is possible for academic or scientific questioning and research to be restricted to certain topics. For example, a group might welcome scientific explanations related to some aspects of biology but restrict scientists' ability to publish on evolution.

A group's arrangements for who can question or investigate certain subjects can affect interactions with U.S. military personnel in a number of ways that may not be easy to identify initially. These patterns affect what topics are acceptable for conversation in certain contexts, who can answer questions or make decisions on certain topics, and what kinds of arguments or evidence will be persuasive. They also can affect work with military partners, as there may be different patterns in who can question orders and who is allowed to raise difficult questions to superiors and how. Since many patterns about questioning and investigation are so deeply rooted that they are assumed to be natural, people may not think to tell you about them in advance. Using the skills in Chapter 3 will help you identify and navigate these different patterns.

***How people use beliefs and logic***

At its most fundamental level, the terms belief, belief system, and worldview refer to the ways people answer basic questions such as: What is important? What is good or bad? Why do things happen (ideas about cause and effect)? What counts as legitimate evidence when you are trying to figure something out? Who are we as a group? The terms also refer to the specific details of beliefs as well as the practices, narratives, sayings, symbols, and material culture that are used to experience and reinforce beliefs.

*Connections:* The use of the term "system" with regard to belief should not be taken to indicate that a group's beliefs will form a consistent, predictable set of ideas and practices. It is very normal for a group to hold beliefs that, from an outside perspective, seem to contradict one another. It also is very normal for beliefs to appear to be a sort of patchwork. Folklore and local myths continue to be an important part of life even when many people accept a new religion or a new "official" history. Rituals that were developed as part of one religion are co-opted by a new one, and new stories are told to explain the ritual's purpose. People tinker with old ideas to accommodate new knowledge or opportunities.

Despite the fact that beliefs may appear to be only loosely connected, it can be difficult to insert new ideas or change old ones. Some aspects of belief do reinforce one another and also are influenced by other cultural factors. In a place with no microscopes, where people believe illness is caused by magic or divine judgment, your assertion that disease is actually caused by tiny, invisible creatures in the blood might make you seem a little crazy.

Beliefs often connect many different elements of life, sometimes in unexpected ways. That is why you may take an action that seems very simple to you, such as building a clinic, only to suddenly find people outraged because this tugs on an important element of their beliefs, perhaps the idea that taking ill people out of their homes and away from the protection of their families makes them vulnerable to witchcraft.

*Explaining ordinary life:* People use aspects of belief to explain ordinary things that happen in daily life, such as erratic behavior, illness, good fortune, the seasons, weather, why dropped objects fall rather than rise, and so forth. They also use belief to help answer more abstract questions such as what happens when people die, why some behaviors are acceptable and others are not, how the universe works and why it exists, or how their group came to be. Additionally, the practices, stories, and symbols that reinforce aspects of belief can be a very important means of maintaining group identity and cohesion.

*Supernatural explanations:* When people in the United States think of belief, they tend to focus on ideas about the supernatural. For example,



organized religion can be one important part of belief. Other explanatory frameworks for the supernatural, such as animism, witchcraft, luck, and magic, may be present instead of religion or exist alongside it.

*Using history and myth:* Not all aspects of belief involve supernatural answers to questions. Groups often develop a sense of history that may be only loosely connected to what we might think of as the "real facts." Sometimes, this history takes the form of myths, stories, or parables that only some in the group take to be the literal truth. Even supposedly true histories take liberties, emphasizing some events or people and neglecting others, casting rivals in a negative light and skimming past the flaws of heroes.

*Choosing kinds of logic and evidence:* Groups use different types of logic and value different sources as evidence. Many people emphasize the scientific method or a particular type of logic as objective ways to explain the world around them. These ideas are broadly accepted as useful, but it is important to realize that they, too, are rooted in certain beliefs about cause and effect, what counts as evidence, and which topics and kinds of questions are most important. For example, contemporary western medicine has long relied on the scientific method for diagnosis and treatment. However, it took more than two centuries for the modern western medical profession to apply those same methods to mental illness rather than assuming the cause was personal weakness or something spiritual. In contrast, some cultures have always treated emotional and cognitive issues as important parts of health.

Different ideas about what is logical or rational can be especially difficult to discover and understand. In the United States we tend to think there is only one kind of logic and one kind of rationality, but our systems are based on certain assumptions that may not be shared in all cultures. We assume that to make a rational choice you have to strip out your emotional reactions and focus on "facts." The exclusion of emotion is a choice. There is no absolute reason why emotion needs to be discounted from rational calculation, except that in our culture, emotion is seen as interfering with an idealized version of the kinds of evidence and thinking we prefer.

*Perceptions of Causality and Evidence in the 2001 Hainan Island Incident*[22]

On 1 April 2001 a Chinese F-8 fighter jet and a U.S. EP-3 surveillance aircraft collided over the South China Sea, resulting in the death of the Chinese fighter pilot, LCDR Wang Wei, and severe damage to the American EP-3, which was forced to make an emergency landing on the nearby Chinese island of Hainan. What followed was a culturally grounded, intense dispute over the related issues of causality and evidence, as the U.S. sought the timely return of both its plane and aircrew, while the Chinese pursued a formal apology for both the collision and the EP-3's unauthorized landing at a Chinese airbase.

The Americans, operating in a Western analytic framework that encourages zeroing in on the single most important causal factor, noted that the propeller-driven EP-3 was much larger, slower, and far less maneuverable than the nimble, jet-powered F-8. With its comparatively superior agility and speed, the F-8 must have crashed into the EP-3, rather than the other way around.

Contrasting with the U.S.'s narrow examination of causality and evidence, the Chinese worked within an Eastern analytical framework that encourages a holistic assessment. The Chinese, therefore, placed the collision within its larger political context, which included the 1999 American bombing of China's Belgrade embassy, the George W. Bush administration's declaration that China was no longer a strategic partner, but a competitor, a marked increase in the number of U.S. EP-3 flights near the Chinese coast, and U.S. determination to build a missile defense shield that could potentially counter China's nuclear weapons capability. The Chinese consequently argued that questions of airplane speed and agility were secondary to the issue of why the jet fighter was compelled to intercept the U.S. spy plane in the first place. In part because of the culturally grounded disagreement about causality and evidence, the Hainan Island incident had to be resolved via diplomatic compromise, rather than agreement of fault. Eleven days after the collision, the American aircrew was repatriated following a U.S. statement of regret that the Chinese publicly equated with an apology. The EP-3 was also sent home, albeit disassembled and in crates.

22 Example based on research/expertise provided by a contributor who wished to remain anonymous. The contributor based the example on information from the following reference: Peter Hays Gries and Kaiping Peng, "Culture Clash? Apologies East and West," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 30 (2002), 173-178.



In contrast, if you are in a place where people think it is natural to include emotions in their decision-making, your attempts to exclude it may seem very strange. It might come across as excluding an important factor for an arbitrary reason, as if you were asked to determine the market value of a load of fruit and refused to count the bananas because you do not like the color yellow. It is easy to imagine a meeting of U.S. military personnel and people from such a group where both parties leave a negotiation frustrated. You might feel that they were unwilling to have a rational conversation because they kept bringing feelings into the discussions. They might feel you were unwilling to be rational because you refused to address the emotional aspects of the problem or players. If neither of you realizes that different concepts of rationality are at play, you could have a hard time reaching an agreement.

*Filtering experience:* People use beliefs as filters. These filters can have a profound influence on how people experience the world, affecting what people notice and ignore, how they categorize things, what seems logical, what feels right or upsetting. The resulting view of how the world works is often taken to be absolute reality rather than a reflection of the belief.

*Change:* Still, like all aspects of culture, beliefs change over time through all the same processes described in this document. Like all cultural change, it may happen in a way that appears disjointed with individuals changing behavior but still professing beliefs that are out of sync with how they are acting. It is not enough to simply insert a new idea and find that people like it. Even as behavior changes, it can take a long time for other aspects of the belief system to shift so the new idea can be accommodated. It also can take a long time for the group to adjust or create associated practices, narratives, sayings, symbols, and material culture that are used to integrate the idea and to pass it on to subsequent generations.

## INFLUENCING: POWER AND MAKING DECISIONS

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses the officially recognized and unofficial ways that power and influence are gained, lost, and used by a group (sometimes referred to as formal and informal political systems). It also includes how different kinds of decisions are made and who gets to make them.

Broadly speaking, power and control are about getting people to do (or not do) something. Authority refers to the official or popular acknowledgement that a person has the right to exert power. These two things do not always come in the same package. It is possible for somebody to have power without authority, especially if he or she controls resources or has the means to use force, as is the case with drug cartels. It also is possible to have authority, but no real power, something that can be a significant challenge for officials in newly formed or unstable governments.

**Is there such a thing as an ungoverned area?**

Simply put, no, there is no such thing as an ungoverned area. Wherever there are people, there is some form of governance. It may not look like the kind of government you would recognize — with officials and bureaucracy. Expecting to see that kind of government can create cultural blinders and make it difficult to see the local system that people are using to govern themselves. Watch for how decisions are made and who is consulted before action is taken. Look for patterns in the way resources and people move in the area. Listen to people's stories for hints about where authority lies. Also, be aware that there may be more than one form of governance at work in a particular place. They may be in conflict, or they may simply apply to different groups who have worked out how to coexist.

A further consideration is legitimacy, which is the degree to which authority and the use of power are perceived as being correct and are accepted by a broader population. It is possible for an official, structured authority to be acknowledged as powerful but perceived as illegitimate. This perception may undermine an individual's or organization's ability to exercise power effectively and create problems for the people in the community, as they navigate different power processes. Legitimacy



can be a particularly important concept for military personnel because there can be great differences in perception within a community or between a community and outsiders. What is seen as legitimate authority and use of power by U.S. military personnel may be understood very differently by people in the local area or region. When these kinds of differences arise, it is important to avoid focusing exclusively on trying to create the perception of legitimacy. It is just as important to understand why people are not accepting something and what alternatives they would propose.

In the United States people tend to think about power and control in terms of formal political processes, government institutions, and nation-states, all arrangements that have the sort of structured authority described above. These are important aspects of how people organize power in many places, but they are not the only aspects of this knowledge area that matter for military personnel. The ability to wield power may be very direct in cases where people have structured authority or control something, such as resources, the use of force, or the ability to give definitive interpretations of important guidelines, such as laws, religious doctrine, regulations, or history. However, people also wield power — and are perceived as legitimate — in more indirect ways, through influencing the beliefs and positions of others or by more subtle control over any of the things listed above. It is very common in many groups for high status community members, such as elders, religious leaders and scholars, highly educated individuals, the wealthy, or people from families with a long history in the area to have great influence and legitimacy. Individuals without high status may gain legitimacy through advocacy for a sector of the population that feels the formal political structures are not acting in its interests. Also, people who can effectively leverage their social networks to achieve their objectives can have significant influence within a group (consider how the "old boys" network in the United States or *wasta* in Arab societies work). Even individuals whose social role or status prohibits them from formal participation in politics or decision-making can have a great deal of indirect influence. This can be seen in any place where women are not allowed a recognized political voice, but who — as individuals or collaboratively — wield power and affect decisions through male relatives. Keeping track of the social roles and individuals

who have influence in particular aspects of culture can seem daunting, but over time, patterns will emerge that make these aspects of culture easier to learn about and understand.

Power and authority intersect with decision-making for groups in complex ways. Official decision-making structures and processes are often layered on top of other expectations about how decisions should be made. For example, a government official may have the authority and power to make decisions about resource distribution for education. However, he may realize that his final decision will be seen as more legitimate, accepted, and acted on more readily if he consults with community leaders, important religious figures, and other influential organizations or individuals. In many cases, this kind of consultation is not officially required and may not be pointed out as a formal part of the decision-making process, but it is still expected by all stakeholders. Also, sometimes the decision-making process can depend on context and topic. For one topic, one or a handful of individuals with authority may be expected to deliberate and make decisions for the group. For another topic, a process such as voting can enable the group to make decisions based on the will of the majority of those allowed a voice in the matter being debated. These kinds of practices should be familiar to U.S. military personnel who have observed military and civilian authorities socializing ideas and building consensus prior to making and announcing a decision. It is as important to observe and understand the activities and narratives leading up to a decision and the processes expected for particular kinds of decisions, as it is to know who makes the final call.

One final note on the intersection between power and decision-making involves implementation. Many of you will have encountered situations, at home or abroad, where a decision is made but not acted on in the expected way. People may creatively reinterpret a decision to suit their own purposes or simply find ways to ignore it. In some cases, this kind of disconnect between decision and action results from lack of authority or legitimacy, as described above. It also can result from corruption, lack of trained personnel to do necessary work, or other problems. However, in places where part of the population does not have access to the formal political system and other decision-making



processes, not acting on a decision or deliberately undermining the decision in small ways may be a form of resistance and protest. People may believe, often quite correctly, that this type of resistance is the only political action available to them, a situation that can have a significant effect on mission accomplishment.

As is always the case, this knowledge area is connected with all the others. Social roles, organizations, and status have a major impact on who can wield power and how. Religious convictions are often deeply entangled with political decision-making. Ideas about how knowledge is gained or what counts as a valid argument are very important in decision-making. Symbols and the built environment are often used to create or reinforce legitimacy. Recognizing these connections will make it easier for military personnel to understand and anticipate the use of power and decision-making processes.

## Digging Deeper

### *Contract and personal trust*

The mechanisms groups use to reach agreement warrant additional attention, as U.S. military personnel, at times, express frustration or confusion over the different processes they encounter. Through recent operations, many military personnel have gained experience with the role of personal trust in the day-to-day affairs of other groups. They tell stories of long strings of meetings in which participants took a great deal of time to get to know one another on a personal level before making decisions or the importance of relationships developed over multiple deployments. Some people have had a difficult time adjusting to the seeming intrusion of personal matters into what they perceived should have been a largely impersonal, professional process. Part of the reason for this adjustment period has to do with the way people in different groups construct trust — through formal, codified practices (collectively referred to here as "contract") or personal relationships.

In the United States, as in many other places, we place a great deal of emphasis on the formal mechanisms of decision-making, governance, social control, and agreements. People in the United States may shake hands on a deal, but most will also want a document that makes the

agreement official in some way. We do have many ideals, stories, and aphorisms about the importance of personal responsibility and integrity (e.g., "a man's word is his bond" or "will you shake on it?" or "reputation is everything.") and often prefer to elect or do business with people we trust. However, in practical terms, we tend to place our trust in contract — processes, structures, positions, and rules — rather than individual people. Given the choice between buying a car based on a handshake and personal assurance about the vehicle's condition on the one hand and a written warranty on the other, many of us would take the warranty. When we buy groceries, we like to be able to rely on a system of governance that requires certain levels of sanitation and safety rather than having to get to know each farmer and baker supplying the store. The use of contract rather than personal trust provides a shortcut, a way around the complexities of assessing the personal integrity of every individual with whom, directly or indirectly, we interact.

In contrast, many groups emphasize personal trust as a necessary precursor to other types of agreements. There is more to this than simply drinking tea and discussing family at the beginning of meetings. Entering into a trust relationship often carries with it the expectation of personal responsibility for ensuring that agreements are carried out. It may also carry an expectation that the relationship carries over into other issues and agreements. Cultural patterns that emphasize personal trust also have an effect on the way social networks are used with information, resources, and instructions moving across a network, perhaps cross-cutting or avoiding formal channels, without the need for official arrangements or hierarchies. Most importantly for U.S. military personnel, when personal trust rather than just contract is required, we lose our familiar shortcuts. This has to be taken into account when planning, whether a meeting or a campaign. As Anna Simons pointed out in her report on challenges in developing knowledge for conflicts outside the cosmopolitan West, "What is much less well appreciated is how trust is routinely secured in the non-western world: never by money, always by time."[23]

23 Anna Simons, "Improving Human Intelligence in the War on Terrorism: The Need for an Ethnographic Capability" (Report for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of Net Assessment, 2004), 11.



## SOCIAL CONTROL AND MANAGING CONFLICT

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses ideas and practices people have developed to regulate social relations, individual behavior, and the rules of a group as well as establish patterns in how rules are used and what happens when people violate them. It also includes accepted processes for disputing and for managing or resolving disputes and conflicts. As such, it includes things familiar to U.S. military personnel like legal systems, structured law enforcement, and official punishment and sanctions as well as different concepts of justice and different ideas about how disputes should be handled, which may be less familiar to you.

All groups develop rules to govern behavior and interactions. The term "norm" is generally used to refer to rules that are commonly understood (although sometimes contested) but not codified in a group. The term "law" refers to rules that have been codified into a formal system, which generally includes concepts and processes for enforcement, dispute resolution, punishment, restitution, and reconciliation. The degree of emphasis placed on aspects of a legal system can vary. For example, in the United States our concept of justice emphasizes punishment and sometimes restitution. In places with different concepts of justice, restitution and reconciliation may be seen as the more important outcomes.

For military personnel learning about social control in a group, it is critical to recognize that, while laws may be easier to learn about, norms may have as much or more power in governing behavior. Norms are the expected and accepted range of variation in a behavior — what counts as the normal for a given situation. People learn group expectations and limits as they grow up or become members. Stories about what happens to people who break the rules or do not fit in are usually deeply embedded in that learning. In our own cultural settings, we pick up on visual and verbal cues and use the knowledge gained over our lifetimes to pick up on the norms for a particular setting. We are able to figure out the applicable norms for a new situation without needing to spend a lot of time analyzing it. For example, in the United States nobody feels the need to formally teach children not to be cannibals. Children learn

it deeply from jokes, horror stories, and the reactions of adults to news stories about violations of this taboo. Also, we do relatively little explicit teaching about norms of career success, what relationships should be like, or how you should treat your family. Despite that, people feel a great deal of social pressure to conform to norms in all of these areas.

The challenge in intercultural situations is that norms are not always called out explicitly in rule books or laws, and people may not be conscious enough of them to warn you about them. This is because, to the people who have lived with them all their lives, norms often seem like the obvious, correct, natural way of doing things. Obviously, you do not eat people, right? Norms usually go unmentioned and unnoticed until somebody violates them. Consequently, it is important to try to learn about norms in advance and equally important to be able to manage your interpersonal interactions using the skills in Chapter 3 so that you can recover when one of you, inevitably, makes a mistake.

It is common to talk about rules as means to maintain social order, and this is true in the basic sense. However, it also is important to recognize that rules, the group's norms and laws, also frequently serve to reinforce social stratification and inequalities, providing advantages to some parts of the group and disadvantages for others. This latter effect is sometimes overt and acknowledged, sometimes more subtle. Likewise, rules do not always form a coherent system. Groups can have some rules that seem contradictory, especially during times of significant change. For example, long after women in the United States were legally allowed to vote, there was still a strong norm of women being expected to vote as directed by a husband, father, or brother.

When rules are broken, there are patterns in how the group responds. In the case of norms, all or part of the group is likely to respond to a rule breaker through social sanction. Social sanction can take many forms including, but not limited to, providing guidance, snubbing or shunning, gossip, shaming, or even violence. When a group believes somebody has behaved in a way that is beyond acceptable limits, members may expend a lot of energy expressing their displeasure through obvious gossip, publicly humiliating the individual, or excluding him from activities and conversations. These activities demonstrate the



group's disapproval and warn the individual to change his ways. These mechanisms can be incredibly powerful influences on behavior. The social sanction employed by the group members can depend on the individual as much as the offense. For example, if a child violates a norm of deference to a person of high social status, she might be gently corrected. An older person might be forgiven the offense without sanction, while a middle-aged offender might be shunned or beaten for the same behavior. As many military personnel have experienced, most groups are willing to make allowances for outsiders not understanding norms. Offenses may be ignored or gently corrected. However, it is important to understand that in almost all situations, the outsider is expected to learn "correct" behavior over time.

**Saving Face**

In many societies, personal status or prestige is a significant aspect of an individual's identity and classification within the social hierarchy. As such, public praise or condemnation can have significant consequences to an individual or even their entire family. Therefore, you need to take care in how you approach both. In some cases, you need to avoid personal identification when assigning blame or poor decisions (especially for senior individuals) not only because of the insult to the individual but also because of the real possibility of loss of trust in you by the entire group over concern that they could also suffer loss of "face." For example, you may need to speak more indirectly, such as "Certain actions have led to unintended consequences that we need to work through." vice "Bill didn't listen to my advice, and now we all have extra work to do to clean up his mess." Everyone will likely know that Bill is at fault. This allows recognition of the problem without creating unintended consequences of insult or broken trust, gives the other side the space to handle it as necessary, and shows your counterparts that you act honorably.

When a law is broken, the situation is usually taken up by the formalized system of justice. This system may look like a familiar arrangement of police, courts, jails, and so forth, or the system may consist of a group of elders convening to hear about the situation and making a decision about what should be done. The system may be multi-faceted, with some matters being handled by local mediators or judges and others entering into a system of courts. No matter what the system looks like, underpinning it will be a set of assumptions about what should be

considered in decision-making and what constitutes a desirable, just outcome. In the United States our ideal is that individuals should be equal before the law, that a person's social status, race, sex, and other such factors should not be considered in the judgment, and that an individual is innocent until proven guilty. Also, while our judicial system is expected to consider some aspects of context, such as killing in self-defense, others aspects are not allowed, or their consideration may be contested. The ideal of "equal before the law" is not a cultural universal, and many groups consider it very appropriate to judge a person differently based on personal characteristics or the particular situation. Likewise, the kinds of evidence that can be considered are influenced by other aspects of culture. So, in a place where many people believe sorcery can cause loss or death, evidence of a person practicing magic might be seen as a legitimate consideration.

Perhaps more importantly, there also is a great deal of variation in what people see as the desired outcome of a judicial process. In the United States people expect that a judgment will include the declaration of guilt/blame or innocence and a prescription for some type of punishment for the zoffender if found guilty. Again, this expectation is not universal. In some places, the outcome of a judicial process is expected to be the restoration of social harmony through restitution and acts of reconciliation rather than blame and punishment. In fact, placing blame and imposing punishment may be seen as making things worse, as exacerbating tensions rather than reducing them.

The preceding paragraphs focused mainly on violations of rules by individuals or small groups. All groups also have ways of handling broader disputes and conflicts that occur within the group or between groups. All groups have tensions of one sort or another with other groups, and these are generally managed rather than fully resolved. It is far more common for such tensions, even very difficult ones, to be managed rather than to erupt into violence. When a tension reaches a point where one or both parties feel some action is required, there are culturally accepted ways of disputing. For example, many forms of public protest, strikes, mediation, seeking greater political power, and legal action are all considered acceptable in the United States. In many places, these disputing practices are not allowed, but there may be others, such as



gaining an audience with a ruler or religious leader and persuading him to intervene.

**Centuries-old conflict**

U.S. military personnel often find themselves in the midst of something that the U.S. public thinks of as an intractable conflict that has been going on for centuries. In reality, violent conflict is usually the exception rather than the rule. The raw materials for conflict exist in every group in every place. However, tensions between different religious, political, ethnic, tribal, or other groups are often managed without violence for hundreds of years. There may be jokes at each other's expense, and there may be discrimination, but more often than not, people figure out how to get along. People rarely fight one another just because they believe different things or act differently. So the question is usually not whether you can "fix" the underlying tensions. They usually do not need to be fixed, but the population may need some help to get the situation back on a stable footing.

Even when a conflict results in collective violence, there generally are forms of violence that are accepted and forms that are not. Historically, some groups have accepted raiding and feuding as legitimate means of addressing grievances. The international community continues to try to impose rules on large scale warfare, such as distinctions between combatants and non-combatants and treatment of prisoners of war.

When violence does occur, the right question to ask is: what happened that led people to take violent action? When answering this question, it is critical to remember three things:

***1. There is rarely only one cause for social unrest or violence,*** although one thing may serve as the match that sets off a ready pile of firewood. Common causes of conflict include resource shortages, changes in land ownership rules or the ability to access resources on certain pieces of land, prolonged differences in economic resources among different groups in an area, rapid social change as a result of cross-cultural contact and/or industrial development, discrimination (actual or perceived), political repression, outside forces mobilizing some part of the population, etc. Any combination of factors, in addition to the

perception that the normal means of managing tensions are not working, can lead to violence. Normally, if you are trying to find the answer to this question, you will hear many explanations for the violence, many of which are likely to be true. Because of cultural variation, not everyone in a group will be reacting to the same conditions.

***2. The reasons people give to explain violence may not always be accurate.*** This does not mean they are lying. It simply means they may be thinking and talking in terms of politics or religion, for example, when the underlying causes may be economic or ethnic (or any other combination) or when there are multiple reasons. This second factor is particularly true when local or regional leaders are trying to mobilize people to a cause. For example, they may feel that couching their goals in religious terms is more likely to get the response they want than if they talk about politics or history.

***3. It is not common for people to resort to group violence unless they feel all other options are gone or unless they are led to it.*** Sometimes, people are led to violence by a leader who mobilizes their feelings of patriotism or faith or their sense of having been discriminated against. People are more easily manipulated by leaders if they feel they have no other options. If they cannot make things physically or economically secure for their families and believe that they do not have recourse to any centers of authority, they may become willing to believe violence will bring about the change they want.

*The Rise of Fascism in Germany*

Germany suffered greatly during the Great Depression after World War I. Pervasive economic and political instability contributed to feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness among the citizenry.[24] Through his anti-Semitic movement of violence, intimidation, scapegoating, and nationalism, Adolf Hitler took advantage of the social instability[25] and rallied many behind one of the largest systematic actions of group violence in human history — the holocaust.

24 Bernd Widdig, *Weimar and Now: Germany Cultural Criticism: Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 223.

25 Ibid, 224.



Again, the tensions that underlie the conflict are not necessarily going to be resolved; they need to be returned to a state where they can be managed. The goal of a mediator in any conflict is to help the parties reach that state. For navigating daily operations, you have to develop information that will help you understand the range of reasons for the violence, how those reasons might be mobilized and by whom, and what lines of influence can be used to manage the situation and produce a greater sense of security for the population.

Finally, all arrangements of social control, disputing, and conflict resolution rely on some mixture of perceived legitimacy and the threat of force or sanction (in the form of confinement, banishment, violence, or some other punishment). When some part of a population or an entire group does not have access to or does not accept the legitimacy of the social controls and patterns of dispute/conflict resolution being imposed, the members of that group or population may try to pursue the conflict in ways that are perceived by other stakeholders as illegal or immoral. In the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2003 and 2014, each side accused the other of illegal and immoral acts, in part because there were different concepts of what actions were acceptable within the conflict. Conflicts in which the rules of disputing are, themselves, part of what is being disputed can be particularly complex to resolve, especially through non-violent means.

## COMMUNICATING: INFORMATION FLOW, SOURCES, AND TRUST

### Overview

This knowledge area focuses on very basic aspects of individual and group communication, including anticipating intercultural communication mishaps, communication patterns, and different modes of sharing information. For this knowledge area, the most important thing to remember is that almost all human behavior involves communication of some sort. All humans communicate, and symbolic communication is one of the few human universals. To do so, humans use verbal, nonverbal, and paralinguistic cues as well as objects, space, and various forms of behavior. We communicate nonverbally (via cues like body stance, gestures, and facial expressions) about such things as our perceptions

of the social roles and status of the people in the conversation, power dynamics, or willingness to compromise. We convey meaning with tone or pitch of voice or with speed of speech (paralinguistic cues). By accepting or rejecting hospitality or a gift, we communicate something about the kind of relationship we have with the person making the offer. We build structures that communicate subtle cultural cues about the purpose of the structure and expected behavior, such as the use of high arches, pillars, and large open spaces associated with public and religious buildings in the United States. Even very large scale, complicated group behavior communicates a message, such as when the United States communicates the capacity for force by placing a carrier group off a coast.

The meanings associated with particular behaviors or symbolic objects and structures can vary a great deal, and misinterpretations of communication are some of the most common intercultural errors. Getting very close, making large gestures, and speaking loudly may be interpreted by us in the United States as rudeness or aggressiveness when the speaker is intending to convey sincerity and engagement. You may see your foreign military partners' showing up late for an exercise as lazy or disrespectful when the partners did not intend to communicate anything of the sort. Likewise, actions by you can be misinterpreted in intercultural contexts. For example, establishing a dumping area in a field used for grazing might have been a simple mistake but be interpreted as your communicating absolute disregard or contempt for local farmers. In any intercultural interaction, the more stakeholders can learn about each other, the easier it is to avoid and recover from potential problems.



*Question-asking in Afghanistan*[26]

In 2008, while employed in the Canadian Task Force Afghanistan, I and a small number of Canadian and Afghan soldiers deployed to Maywand District, Kandahar Province, in what was to be the first permanent Coalition presence in the area to date. After a couple months of operations, we wished to implement some [measures of effectiveness] to give us an azimuth check regarding our strategy. We canvassed the local population, asking such questions as: "Do you feel secure? Are you happy with the government? Do you trust the coalition and the Afghan security forces?" Inevitably, the responses were overwhelmingly positive; one would think that we were hugely successful—undoubtedly unrealistically so.

What we did not understand was that there were social norms, part of the cultural dimension of belief systems, at play when the local population was answering our questions. It was eventually explained to us by our Afghan security force partners that, when locals are engaged in conversation with people in positions of authority, the most likely responses are generally very positive in nature. Essentially, they were saying that most Afghans simply tell you what they think you want to hear. They do this primarily because they want to give the impression of being a "good" citizen and, secondly, because they do not want to cause trouble for themselves by appearing to be critical of the authorities. From a Western perspective, our questions were designed to elicit direct and honest responses, regardless of whether these responses may have been an indictment of our efforts. Our failure to understand this social norm (also, perhaps, the Afghans' inability to understand our true motives in asking the questions) led to an inaccurate evaluation of the population's true perception of their environment, something that eventually became clear to us through the actions of the population as well as the insurgents.

Eventually, we learned that the problem was not the questions we were asking but rather the manner in which we asked them. By offering a list of issues and asking the local population to prioritize the most important concerns that the government should address, we were able to ascertain a more accurate picture of their perceptions. Instead of asking, "Do you feel secure?" or "Is the government doing a good job?" we said, "Please prioritize where the government should focus its efforts: security, building schools, the economy, or eliminating corruption." By changing the structure of the question, we were able to get the answers we were looking for, while still respecting the social norms of the population.

26 Vignette taken from Corey Frederickson, "Culture & Evaluation of Methods and Assessment," in *Case Studies in Operational Culture*, eds. Paula Holmes-Eber and Marcus J. Mainz (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2014), 51–52.

Learning about communication also involves understanding different communication patterns. It is a mistake to think about communication as purely transactional, a simple exchange of information. Communication involves behaviors (such as tone, style, physical stance, presence or absence of honorifics, inclusion or exclusion of personal information) that people use to signal things about social relationships, the relative status of people involved, the stakes involved in a discussion, and so forth. Social roles, status, and situation can have a great deal of influence on who can communicate with whom and the way such discussions play out. The following example relayed by a major from the Canadian Infantry illustrates this point:

> The more you learn about social organization, social norms, and other aspects of culture, the easier it will be to anticipate common patterns of communication.

Communication also involves different modes of sharing information and means to determine the legitimacy of information. All groups have many different ways of sharing information. There are usually at least some structured channels such as official announcements, education, town halls, sermons, public lectures, organized protests, scholarly publication, and news media. There also are always less structured ways information is passed, such as gossip, individual media broadcasts or publications, street corner sermons and talks, and ad hoc gatherings. The availability of internet access has made some of these less structured venues available to far broader audiences than in the past. Less structured information channels offer great insights into the ideas and concerns of the population. Understanding how information is passed and consumed is critical for military personnel in gaining a deeper understanding of the local environment and ways to influence it. Also, if you need to control modes and content of communication, it is important to remember that these less structured modes are harder to gain control of, as they are not easily shut down, and if they are shut down, people simply create new ones. It may sometimes be possible to build relationships with influential voices, thereby making it possible to shift the content rather than trying to control the communication venue.



Groups determine legitimacy of information in various ways. Sometimes, it is the source that offers legitimacy. In the United States people often perceive information from structured venues as more legitimate and place value on the perceived objectivity or "fairness" of such a source. Other groups, especially with populations with high inequality or segregation and in times of conflict or disaster, may place more emphasis on the social position of the source. They may trust an account from a neighbor or local religious figure more than official pronouncements or news accounts from people whose motivations and allegiances are unclear. Little or no value may be placed on the idea of objectivity. Sometimes, it is how comfortably the information fits with what people already know or believe. People often place more legitimacy on information that fits with their existing ideas. For example, in places where foreigners are believed (sometimes with good reason) to have spread disease in the past, people may not immediately believe in the good intentions of foreigners responding to a medical crisis. They may distrust official messages about the response and be more willing to believe a local leader or media personality spreading rumors about outsiders' bringing disease to kill the people and take their land.

## STAYING WELL AND DEALING WITH ILLNESS: HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND WELLBEING

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses the beliefs, social relationships, institutions, and other aspects of culture that intersect with the overall health and wellbeing of a group. It includes topics such as beliefs about the causes and treatments of disease, power dynamics that affect access to sufficient water and food, how beliefs and social relations affect how care is provided, and how people are expected to behave when sick or injured. It involves not only what we would think of as physical health and nutrition but also cultural orientations toward mental health and whether health is an individual or social matter. It also includes the health and treatment of wild and domestic animals that may be important for subsistence, labor, exchange, or symbolic reasons. Cultural ideas about health matter not only for medical missions but also more broadly for any type of military operation. Because health and other aspects of culture (beliefs, social relations, exchange, etc.) are frequently tied

together, a disease event or some U.S. action related to health may have a ripple effect throughout the group that may impact your operations.

### *Empacho*[27]

*Empacho* is an illness in Latin America that is associated with indigestion, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and other minor symptoms. It is believed to be brought on by a mass of food becoming stuck within the digestive tract and is treated by some local healers — *curanderos* — with powdery substances known as *azarcon* and *greta.*

During the 1980s, there were recorded instances of young children being brought into emergency rooms exhibiting signs of heavy metal poisoning. Parents told medical care providers that their child was suffering from empacho. Upon investigation, doctors found orange or pink powder inside the stomachs of the children brought in for the condition. Testing of the material revealed that the children had ingested azarcon and greta, which contain lead tetroxide and lead oxide respectively. The materials were responsible for the deaths of many children throughout the region.

How could this have happened? Why would the families not go to the hospitals in the first place? In this case the families in these situations are dealing with two separate medical systems at the same time. On one hand, they are dealing with western biomedicine when they bring the child to the hospital. Going to a *curandero* or medicine man is a different type of medical system. It is important to note that people rarely stick to one medical system, often seeking help from multiple sources. Even in the United States a person who contracts a type of cancer will go to a special doctor and begin radiation treatments. That same person may also go into church and ask that their congregation pray for them to be healed. One course of action is physical and scientific, while the other is metaphysical and faith-based.

As military personnel, it is important to understand the medical systems you may run into when deployed and how they interact. The medical assistance offered by the United States is a very specific kind of medicine based on our understanding of science and the physical world. Locals may have other medical systems you have not heard of that play an important role in their lives. Taking time to understand how locals conceive of disease and illness as well as how they treat it will help reduce the possibility of unwanted surprises when it comes to treating the population in question.

27 Robert T. Trotter II, "A Case of Lead Poisoning from Folk Remedies in Mexican American Communities," in *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology,* ed. Peter J. Brown (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Pub. Co., 1998), 279



Health issues affect other aspects of culture in both short-term and long-term ways. For example, in many countries, epidemics of AIDS occurred at times when there were weak public health and medical infrastructures, and aid from the international community was insufficient to provide the levels of care common in the West. The outbreaks killed many young and middle-aged adults, leaving large numbers of children and elderly people on their own. Over long periods of time, this resulted in significant changes in economic patterns and family structure. It also altered social roles, with the elderly and children having to head households and support the family. As is often the case with lingering illnesses or debilitating injury, caring for the ill added additional time and resource burdens on families and communities. Disease burdens or health and nutrition insecurity can contribute to instability as well as affect the social, political, and economic contexts you will encounter when carrying out your missions.

When assessing the health situation of a group, the physical, psychological, environmental, veterinary, agricultural, and infrastructure aspects of health matter. It is important to include both individual medical issues and broader public health challenges, such as those arising from insufficient clean water, nutritional problems, or the presence of environmental toxins, in your assessments. It also is necessary to assess less visible aspects of health, such as beliefs about what causes disease and how it should be treated or how social divisions, roles, and status may affect people's ways of seeking care. In many places, you need to be aware of the involvement of different kinds of practitioners, such as midwives, religious figures, herbalists, and community leaders in parts of care that may seem unusual to you, as in the case of empacho on the preceeding page. Overall, the goal is to balance learning about the community's health from the standpoint of U.S. ideas about health with learning how the community thinks about health and what is necessary to maintain it or solve problems.

In the case of health and wellbeing, many common assumptions in the United States are decidedly uncommon elsewhere. Consider what aspects of U.S. beliefs and norms about health may be considered unusual by the local population. Many military personnel are familiar enough with other cultures to recognize that certain normal U.S. practices, such as

a male physician treating a female patient, may be seen as unacceptable among certain groups. However, in some places, even more basic assumptions may not be shared. For example, most people in the United States believe that many diseases are caused by tiny organisms, invisible to the naked eye, that travel in people's blood and other bodily fluids. To some people, this may seem stranger than believing disease is caused by witchcraft. The idea that teeth and eyes are not part of routine medical care in the U.S. system seems illogical to people in many other areas, as does the idea that mental illness is something separate from physical illness. Even the idea that a patient might be divided from his family or social network during treatment, something we take for granted, could be perceived as strange or dangerous to other people. This last assumption caused problems in some past responses to the Ebola virus when people became afraid, sometimes even hostile, as relatives disappeared into isolation and treatment centers. In some areas responders were able to remove tarps around treatment units so that families could monitor how patients were treated and communicate with them, greatly reducing tension.[28] Understanding such differences in fundamental beliefs and values can help you understand reactions and plan more effectively.

At the most basic level, having an understanding of the health situations and practices of a group will help military personnel understand what the community is contending with that can affect the mission. For example, if you know your local partners are coping with exhaustion from malarial parasites or worried about malnourished children, you can make more realistic plans for how much can be accomplished in a day. At a more complex level, understanding the cultural aspects of health can provide insights into many other aspects of culture as well as help anticipate the second and third order impacts of and on operations.

28 For an overview of cultural considerations in Ebola outbreaks, see Barry S. Hewlett and Bonnie L. Hewlett, *Ebola, Culture and Politics: The Anthropology of an Emerging Disease* (Belmont, CA: Thomson, 2008).



## LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Overview

One of the most important things groups do is share knowledge across the group and to new generations as they grow up. While there is great variety in the details of learning and teaching, most groups have broad-based processes for helping new members learn the cultural patterns of the group (socialization) and more structured processes for learning specific knowledge and skills or for explicitly passing along a particular ideology (educational institutions).

All groups pass on cultural patterns to new members — children, immigrants, etc. — through both overt and subtle means that are collectively referred to as socialization (or sometimes acculturation). Children and other new group members pick up their sense of right and wrong, beliefs, understanding of social roles and behavioral expectations, and a host of other knowledge through observing and interacting. Some aspects of socialization are more formalized with specialized learning for a population segment (a sex or an age group) or for particular topics (such as religion, keeping house, hunting, etc.).

U.S. military personnel all experience socialization processes as adults when they go through basic training and as they move through ranks. As recruits and at each promotion, military personnel experience some learning that is explicit and organized, and they also learn a great deal simply through observing or doing, through the subtle cues given by peers, superiors, and subordinates and through stories and images. As is the case with socialization into a military group, group members may not always be able to explain all the details of how socialization works, but they can usually provide examples of how members set good or bad examples or tell stories about awkward or funny moments in a new member's learning. These stories can help you learn about how socialization occurs.

Why might understanding socialization matter? If you are trying to introduce something new, perhaps a new kind of training for military partners, simply saying "do it this way" may not be enough. To stay with the example of military partners, you might be working in a

situation where there is no explicit prohibition on enlisted personnel taking initiative, but personnel have been strongly socialized against it. If what you are trying to accomplish requires initiative, you need to understand what might be causing personnel to resist or not act on what you are teaching. Once you understand the background, you can figure out whether it is possible and desirable to overcome the socialization or if you need to adjust your approach to accomplish the goal.

Groups generally also have a more structured process for ensuring that new group members are able to gain the knowledge and skills that are thought to be useful for the population as a whole and/or to formalize transmission of ideology. These more structured processes are referred to as educational institutions. Often educational institutions now look like the types of schools familiar in the United States with classrooms, professional teachers, and clearly defined subject matter. However, other educational institutions may be present or emerging, and it is important that the familiarity of the other type not blind you to their presence and influence. For example, apprenticeships may be the only route to a particular occupation. Also, the role and status of educators within these institutions vary considerably across groups. In some places, anyone can set up a class or school. This is increasingly true online in places where internet access is broadly available. In other places educators must have some type of official sanction, whether religious or governmental. Standards for educators also vary a great deal and may be lower or higher than those found in the United States. Additionally, within some groups, educators are highly respected and influential community members, even though they may not have an official role in political or legal structures. Whether formally or informally, they may be involved in decision-making on a broad range of community issues, not only those involving schools.

Each group establishes policies and practices that regulate access to educational institutions. In some places even primary school must be paid for and is not always within financial reach of the whole population. In the United States wealth makes it possible to have greater choice in the kind of education your children receive. Segregation by sex, race, or other factors is also still in place in many areas, sometimes by official policy and sometimes as a result of custom or the geographic



separation of different sub-groups in a population. Understanding who has access to which types of institutions and the types of learning is helpful in understanding the levels and types of capabilities of your counterparts, which helps you shape your actions and interactions accordingly.

## EXPRESSING IDEAS AND IDENTITY: ARTS, LITERATURE, MEDIA, AND PERFORMANCE

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses the different ways a group engages in expression of ideas and the use of different expressive forms to reinforce, challenge, or change aspects of culture. It includes history, myth, stories, oratory, the arts, and literature as well as venues, such as various kinds of media, public performance, museums, and archives. The military relevance of this knowledge area may not be immediately apparent. However, the concepts and information included in this area can provide critical insights into every other aspect of culture — values, beliefs, rules, identity, etc. — as well as into how people in the group may interpret current events and how they think about their own history. Just as importantly, creative expression often is a means of challenging old ideas or trying out new ones. This can help you assess when and how ideas are evolving in the local environment.

Forms of creative expression, such as art, music, literature, and performance are found in every group. These kinds of expressions convey a great deal about both group identity and aspects of culture that are being contested, as can be seen when a painting or film creates controversy. Artistic forms sometimes enable people to convey feelings or ideas that have few other social outlets. For example, the fact that young Bedouin men in Egypt write poetry was surprising to many of the U.S. personnel who first encountered it, but really this is no more unusual than the fact that male country music performers in the United States can sing about feelings that many men would feel uncomfortable bringing up in normal conversation. While creative expression can be an important part of individual and family life — the private sphere, military personnel are most likely to encounter it first in more public forms. Many groups expect that almost every individual will be involved

in some form of public creative expression, even if only through participation in group events involving dance and music or by incorporating creativity and beauty into daily work. In such places efforts to dismiss creativity as unimportant or impractical may be met with confusion or be rejected.

Every group constructs stories about its past and present that contribute to people's sense of shared identity and help them interpret new events. When narratives, whether about history or current events, are constructed, certain aspects are included and emphasized; others are not included or are de-emphasized. In some cases this is deliberate, such as when a political party wants to emphasize particular values or de-emphasize the contributions of a sub-group. In extreme cases, a government or powerful sub-group may seek to insert deliberate distortions into narrative to shape public perceptions. However, in many cases the selection of information is less deliberate, following patterns in people's expectations about what stories and histories should include. For example, in the past, U.S. history textbooks rarely included information on the roles of minorities or women and focused on major political figures and events rather than the daily lives of people. This was not so much a deliberate choice on the part of the scholars as it was a reflection of the assumptions and values of the time in which they were writing.

Myths, parables, and folktales are no less important than efforts to report factual accounts of past events. These kinds of stories often provide important insights into the beliefs and social relations of a group. In some groups telling such stories can be an important social event, which can be important for building rapport. Additionally, telling a story can be used as a way of conveying information about a current event or expected behavior if the speaker feels it could be dangerous or rude to speak more directly. Children in the United States often heard stories about Davy Crockett or Paul Bunyan and the frontier of the American West. These tales contained some facts, some distortion, some fiction. They are not useful as historical accounts of the formation of the United States, but they do communicate a great deal about group values such as "rugged individualism" and the importance of the ideas of frontiers, exploration, and wilderness in the formation of early collective identity.



Likewise, fiction, poetry, movies, television, and other means of telling stories can be important for understanding values, changing or controversial ideas, and deep patterns in how people expect events to unfold. In the United States stories have a fairly straightforward progression of characters and events, heroes and villains, clear resolutions, and happy endings, a particular kind of narrative optimism. Therefore, people from the United States may sometimes have difficulty following the thread of stories constructed in different patterns or identifying the intended message. As with many other aspects of culture, being able to understand these kinds of expressions can be difficult at first, but patterns will emerge over time.

*Art or smear campaign?*

In March 2016, the German Satirist, Jan Böhmermann, used his television show to read a poem about the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, mixing highly inflammatory lewd comments with criticism of crackdowns on the media and civil liberties. When Erdoğan heard the poem, he requested the German judiciary permit the prosecution of Böhmermann for violating an obscure exception to German freedom of speech laws that forbids abusive criticism of foreign heads of state. If Germany did not investigate Böhmermann, Erdoğan threatened to pull out of a recently established, highly politicized refugee deal.[29] The German government acquiesced to Erdoğan's request and sanctioned the prosecution, but also expressed the intention to remove the abusive criticism exception from the law.[30]

Böhmermann and his supporters argued that the Turkish President was abusing his official position to pressure the German government into restricting legitimate artistic expression, highlighting civil liberties concerns. Critics argued that the poem crossed the line from a satire piece to an insulting smear poem bordering on racism. At its core this is a discussion about what constitutes critical artistic expression and where that line stops.

29 Editorial Board, "Will Ms. Merkel Defend Free Expression?" *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2016, accessed December 12, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/will-ms-merkel-defend-free-expression/2016/04/13/7f4ab7d8-0199-11e6-b823-707c79ce3504_story.html?utm_term=.23b00d75c073.

30 "German Chancellor Merkel Allows Investigation of Satirist Böhmermann," *Deutsche Welle*, April 15, 2016, accessed December 12, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/german-chancellor-merkel-allows-investigation-of-satirist-böhmermann/a-19190684.

Often, more powerful parts of a group try to impose restrictions on creative expression intended for the public to control what "counts" as artistic, whether through overt political pressure or more subtle social pressures. Restriction of public creative expression also can happen more subtly as a few individuals become professional artists, writers, or performers through finding a patron or being able to exchange their work for goods and currency. These restrictions can have the effect of reinforcing social stratification or other social distinctions. In some cases as part of an overt political strategy to promote a particular ideology, political leaders use or impose restriction on the arts, literature, and music. Under these circumstances creative expression by people or in forms that challenge these controls can be an important part of protest and mobilization.

As open access to the internet has become more common across the globe, more individuals have the ability to contribute publically to stories, historical narratives, and forms of creative expression as well as use creative expression for political purposes. Involvement of many individuals is not necessarily new, but the medium of the internet does introduce some differences in terms of access, processes, and scope. The long-term implications of how people choose to use and/or restrict the internet are not yet known. However, it is important to pay attention to how people use various internet venues, including but not limited to social media, to construct and contest identities and narratives, support and challenge values, norms, and ideologies, and engage in various forms of creative expression.

## HAVING FUN: LEISURE, PLAY, AND HUMOR

### Overview

This knowledge area encompasses activities that people in the United States would typically consider distinct from work, done for enjoyment, or as personal pursuits. It includes things like sports, social gatherings, hobbies, sport hunting and fishing, using media (films, television, websites, etc.) or reading for pleasure, relaxing at home, and outings or vacations. It also includes the special rules and expectations that apply to these activities.



Leisure activities can give important insights into a group's culture. At the most basic level, things people choose to do with free time can show what they think is important or provide windows into other values. Some groups spend a lot of leisure time in sports or other activities that provide opportunities for individual or team competition. However, competition is not universally valued, and people from other groups may choose to spend their leisure time on activities that focus on artistic expression or more directly building social bonds. Additionally, some groups do not have clear distinctions between work and leisure activities and times. Most frequently, military personnel will encounter groups where there is a broad range of available leisure activities.

All groups have ideas about and activities they consider to be fun. Talking about and participating in leisure activities are well-established ways of building rapport. Many military personnel have reported that discussions of sports, hunting, or movies are the initial ice-breakers in discussions with partner forces and local populations. What groups consider fun is not necessarily shared across groups, as there are cultural differences in what counts as fun. For example, local people may enjoy a goat roast and spend as much time discussing all the details of killing and preparing the goat as you might spend discussing the nuances of a football game. The global entertainment industry and increasing internet access mean that it is now sometimes easier for military personnel to encounter people who have seen the same films, websites, and television shows. These commonalities can be useful for rapport building, but interactions should not be limited to what is familiar and comfortable. If facing an unknown leisure activity, observe and ask about any special expectations for behavior. For example, when an individual is invited to a dinner party at a family home, some groups expect the guest to bring a small gift. However, in other places, such a gift may be perceived as rude because it suggests the host cannot provide for the guest. There is no universal pattern. It is necessary to observe and ask questions.

Social stratification, roles, and status may be reflected in who chooses (or is allowed) to participate in certain activities. In the United States attending the opera tends to be associated with the upper

socio-economic classes, although the only formal barrier to other people's attending is cost. Participation in sports is still segregated by sex and/or race in many places, and the rules about segregation can be very strict. There also is cross-cultural variation in assumptions about who should have leisure time and why. People in the United States often assume that children and the elderly should have more leisure time than young and middle-aged adults, in particular that they should not have to be involved in wage labor. In other groups, this may not be perceived as desirable or may be impractical. This does not necessarily mean that children and the elderly are unhappy. They may value the chance to be make a contribution to the family or community.

As is the case with artistic expression, leisure activities are sometimes a context in which broader issues are challenged. For example, watching sports matches and sport hunting were traditionally male-only activities in the United States until recently. Over time, more women have chosen to challenge traditional gender stereotypes by openly displaying their interest in these activities or trying to participate. In cases where one part of a group is disadvantaged in ways that are not openly acknowledged, it can sometimes be safer for people to highlight the issue in leisure activities rather than openly challenge the more powerful group. So, it might be easier for people to try out the idea of ethnic integration in a series of soccer games than in the political process. This is not to suggest that people perceive leisure activities as unimportant. After all, Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby received threats after breaking baseball's color barrier in 1945. However, as with the arts, sometimes people are more willing to allow challenges and exploration in these kinds of activities.



*The fable of the banker and the fisherman*

*(NOTE: This vignette is a fable rather than a factual account of an intercultural conversation. Many different versions of it, often involving different nationalities, can be found online.)*

An American investment banker was vacationing in Africa. While visiting a coastal fishing village, a lone man in a small fishing boat pulled up to the pier. The American walked over to the boat to see three large tuna inside. The American complimented the fisherman on the quality of his catch and asked how long it took. "Only a couple hours," the fisherman replied. The American pointed out the nice weather and how early it still was in the day. "Why don't you stay out and catch some more?" he asks. The fisherman said that he had enough for his family's current needs. "But what will you do with all the rest of your time?" the American asked again.

"Well, this morning I slept in a bit then walked with my kids to school. I'm about to take a nap, then will go get my kids from school. I'll play with them and the dog on the way home, where I'll meet my wife. We'll go to the market and see some of our friends, try some new wine that somebody's selling down there. After that we'll have a nice big dinner and relax, maybe play some guitar." The American's eyes light up enthusiastically. "Aha!" he exclaimed. "I can help you out! What you need to do is start working longer days. Catch two, three, even four times as many fish! Sell the fish you don't need at the market and keep the money. Save up and buy a bigger boat and hire a crew too! That way you can catch even more fish. Eventually, you'll have enough money to buy more boats! From there you can move into a bigger city and look into ways to process and distribute the fish as well! You'll own your own company!"

The fisherman raised an eyebrow at the American, a quizzical look on his face. "How long will that take?" The American responded, "Probably fifteen or twenty years, but you'll be rich! And then you can retire!"

"But what would I do then?" asked the fisherman. The American replied, "You could move to a small fishing village, sleep in, walk your kids to and from school, take naps, spend time with your wife, drink wine, spend time with friends and play guitar!"

As illustrated by this tale, groups of people conceive of leisure time differently. The basic western idea surrounding work and leisure is that you do your job first, work hard and eventually be rewarded. Other groups do not always draw such hard boundaries around what is or is not considered work, nor is there a universal emphasis placed upon 'a hard day's work.'

**Digging Deeper**

***Leisure and Work — are they two different things?***

The idea of leisure and work as separate activities is not universally shared. In the United States people often compartmentalize the times and spaces where leisure activity is to take place. These kinds of separations are not followed in many places military personnel may operate. The concept of leisure itself, in the way it is commonly understood in the United States, seems to be a fairly recent development in human history. This is not because people in the past never had time to relax or pursue activities purely for enjoyment. It is just that the perception of a need to make a distinction between work and leisure does not seem to have been widespread. Blurred lines between work activities and non-work activities have sometimes created friction for military personnel. A typical example is when a meeting includes time spent socializing, gossiping, making and eating food, and other activities military personnel think of as not work-related. U.S. personnel may become frustrated, wanting to "get down to business" and stop "wasting time," or become uncomfortable because they feel this is not acceptable/legal behavior for them when on official business. The other people at the meeting may see no reason that a business meeting should not also be enjoyable. They may see the maintenance of relationships and exchange of information and hospitality as being equally important to the specific topic of the meeting. In fact, the lines between leisure and work are also blurred in the United States. Most military personnel have had to participate in "mandatory fun" where something cast as leisure was really just an extension of work. Most people in the United States also have had experiences where an activity that we might normally characterize as work, like helping somebody move, took on some characteristics of a social gathering.

It is not critical to determine what "counts" as leisure and what "counts" as work in the group being studied. Just keep in mind that the separation between work and leisure activities is not universally shared. For interaction, what matters is being able to identify opportunities for participation and the different assumptions that may cause friction if not addressed and being able to understand what leisure activities mean to partners or local people and what clues they provide to other aspects of culture.



## CONCLUSION

The culture general concepts presented in this part of the guidebook serve to help military professionals improve their understanding of human behavior and the connections among different aspects of culture they may observe. The concepts describe the underlying thinking processes and knowledge areas that are relevant no matter your counterpart or operating environment. As indicated in many of the examples, the concepts describe aspects of culture you already know and have experienced in your own life, but need to learn how to "see" in other places, with other people. In short, the concepts just give you the words to help make familiar ideas more transparent and transportable. For example, you have probably engaged in reciprocity many times, but knowing the concept helps you notice reciprocity at work, even if people are not acting or talking about it in familiar ways.

As you read through the text, you probably were eliciting examples in your mind for each of the areas discussed, drawing from your personal and professional experiences and previous learning. Having a firm understanding of these concepts will serve you well as a military professional and help you be more effective with your analysis of and in your encounters with people, both those within your groups and those without. Now that you have a solid understanding of the underlying factors shaping behavior, let us move to the next chapter where we discuss the culture general skills that you can use to shape your own behavior to improve your effectiveness in your military career.

# CHAPTER 3:
# CULTURE GENERAL SKILLS

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In this chapter, we discuss various culture general skills that you can employ to shape your thinking and improve your intercultural interactions. You use culture general skills every day as you interpret your environment and interact within it. You may not realize you are using these skills, or you may need to be more aware of how to adapt them to different cultural contexts; however, they are applicable to all environments at home and abroad, just like the concepts for understanding human behavior from the previous chapter.

The chapter begins with a review of skills for *thinking,* to include: observation, suspending judgment, self-regulation, and perspective-taking. The focus then shifts to the intercultural communication skills for *interacting,* to include: leveraging communication styles, employing effective interaction skills, active and appreciative listening, managing paralanguage use and perception, and decoding nonverbal messages. The chapter concludes with applications: building rapport, identifying and managing culture shock, and working with an interpreter. The intent here is to make these skills more transparent and accessible so as to ensure you have the requisite understanding of how they can help you do your job more effectively.[31]

## OBSERVATION

### DISCUSSION

As a military professional, you have been taught the skill of observation, e.g., how to identify communication infrastructure, transportation arteries, enemy positions, etc. in your operating environments, to gain situational awareness and plan your missions. Additionally, in your everyday life, you also routinely observe others' behaviors to adapt yours to the situation. You gain insights about your surroundings based

31 It is not our goal to capture every cultural skill, as there are too many. We have selected those that military personnel have found to be the most helpful and relevant. Others, such as negotiating space and identity and managing ambiguity, are important, as are the individual characteristics that contribute to cross-cultural competence, e.g., flexibility, adaptability, openness, curiosity, intrinsic motivation, etc.; however, they will not be covered here due to resource and space constraints. We welcome follow-on work to broaden the materials presented here.

on your observations of the activities, people, and places around you. You make decisions and take actions everyday based on your interpretation of all this information.

Oftentimes, you do not realize you are doing this, as the process is so routine. When facing the unknown, however, we must employ the same skills and techniques to make sense out of what we are experiencing. Observation is a conscious activity that requires you to slow down, look closely, and question each element of a scene. It is an intentional process. Knowing what to look for and how to interpret what you are looking at are key components to observation, which are challenging when in a new or evolving situation. As culture groups shape their physical space, each operating environment or situation is as unique as the groups present. Being able to discern the components of a cultural landscape and understand the behavior of those within it requires well-honed observation skills.

As military personnel, you are routinely sent into unfamiliar situations with unfamiliar landscapes and people and asked to make sense of what is going on. When in such a situation, remember the following four questions to help you gain a more accurate assessment of what is happening around you.

1. What can I see/hear/smell/touch? To answer this question, you are directly observing your environment using all your senses. Look systematically at what is going on around you and consciously take in the details. Think about the various sounds and smells that are present. Consider what is not present. For example, you might notice that no one wears watches, that you can hear yelling, or that certain men are dressed all in black. These observations might turn out to be meaningful when combined with other information. But if you do not deliberately notice and remember it, the information will simply be lost.

2. What is the wider context [place and time]?
   a. Where are you - Place? [Immediate vicinity, e.g., on the street or in a market, specific town, region, country, region of the world, etc.]



   b. What time is it? [Time of day, day of week, month, season, culturally significant time, e.g., religious holiday, etc.]

3. What do my observations in context tell me? What can you infer from the information you have? Given that you are in a particular place at a particular time observing very specific details, can you make sense of what you are seeing?

4. How can I be sure? You need to validate your interpretation. Confirm your understanding of what you are experiencing. Have you seen the same thing in a similar context several times? Can you identify a pattern? Does what you are experiencing seem to be 'normal' for the area or not? If necessary, ask someone to help you interpret what you think you are experiencing.

These observation skills can be used in a wide variety of intercultural contexts. They can be tested anywhere from the commissary to an overseas assignment. When in an area where you are unfamiliar with the people, their language, the way they live, or what they believe, you can still establish a solid understanding of your area and the people within it to inform your plans and actions through observation. For example, observation can teach you something about appropriate greetings and gestures, who to talk to, and perhaps who to avoid as well as what kinds of information you might be able to obtain from someone. If you stop for a few minutes and actively observe what is going on around you, you will be surprised by how much you notice and can figure out. Use the steps described above to answer the following questions: Who is there? Are there different culture groups or people from different sectors of the population? Do they dress or behave differently? What are they doing and with whom? Are they in a hurry? Are they actually shopping or just hanging out, walking, or browsing? Who is not there? What is not there? Why?

When in a new or evolving environment, you are likely to go through this sort of observation process several times a day. Over time, you may be able to distinguish between what is normal or usual (the baseline) for an area or group of people and what is out of the ordinary and then

incorporate this into your planning. In certain military communities, you may hear people refer to this baseline as "pattern of life."

## KEY POINTS

### Interpreting the cultural landscape

Observation is a key component to interpreting the cultural landscape, which is vital to gaining situational awareness in an unfamiliar environment or one in which the situation is fluid, rendering the available information outdated or inaccurate. The cultural landscape is the original physical environment of an area as adapted and interpreted by the people who live there. It is human-made and dynamic, created by the constant shaping of the physical environment by humans. Everything created by humans is part of the cultural landscape, such as buildings, roads, farms, dams, etc., as are natural features that have special meaning to people, like a sacred mountain or a river that forms a boundary. People are reflected — often unintentionally — in their ordinary, daily landscapes. Landscape interpretation can reveal significant insights into how specific culture groups display the culture general concepts discussed in the previous chapter and, thus, help you better understand their behavior.

Every element in a cultural landscape offers clues about the people in it; however, these elements cannot be looked at in isolation but rather need to be interpreted holistically within their wider spatial, temporal, cultural, and environmental contexts. Landscapes represent significant investments of money, time, and emotions and oftentimes carry symbolic or sacred value. The mundane often is more revealing than the spectacular, especially when it comes to identifying culture groups, localized economies, social networks, and impacts of local security and development efforts. People will not change their landscapes without good reasons. Therefore, changes in ordinary features of a cultural landscape can signal important shifts that need to be recognized and understood. Also, differences in the landscape usually equate with differences in various cultural aspects between or within the culture groups present. With this understanding and using keen observation skills, you can more accurately interpret the unknown cultural landscapes you encounter.



### Common pitfalls

There are three common pitfalls that people fall victim to when using the skill of observation. The first is mirror-imaging. Mirror-imaging is interpreting what you see through the lens of your own cultural background and experience. While natural and very common, this, obviously, can lead you to make inaccurate assumptions about what you are experiencing. Instead, put your observations into the context of the place you are in and the people you are with. For example, do not automatically assume that a common gesture in the United States such as a nod means yes everywhere else. In some places, such as Bulgaria, a similar gesture actually means no. Before jumping to conclusions about significance, observe the scene as a whole, go through the four questions above, and consider what the gestures you observe seem to be achieving or leading to. As another example, in the Middle East, it is very common to see men holdings hands. Mirror-imaging might lead you to assume that these men are romantically involved. In contrast, active observation should make you question whether this is really the case — given the frequency with which you see it and the cultural environment — and then encourage you to go and gather more information before choosing a course of action. This holds true for physical structures and natural objects as well. For example, a fence or a wall can mean different things depending on how the culture group interacts with it, as can a mountain or a pile of rocks.

> **Remember Rule #2:** Things you take for granted may not be true here.

The second pitfall is what can be referred to as looking without seeing. Military personnel on deployment can be especially busy and focused on their mission. In such circumstances, you might "look" right at a landscape without "seeing" important aspects of the scene. You would likely notice the spectacular or dramatic, but you might miss the ordinary everyday aspects of the landscape. Beyond missing out on that knowledge, you also may miss out on noticing revealing local changes.

*Foot Patrols in New Environments*[32]

Foot patrols are a good opportunity for military personnel to practice observation skills. When new to an area, there is a lot to observe, and it may be difficult to know what information to prioritize. This was true for a Marine sergeant during a field training exercise. The patrol he was leading had completed their objective, and they were headed back to base as the sun was setting. Just then, a lance corporal at the end of the formation spotted an arrangement of stones and sticks that seemed out of place. He called this out to his sergeant, but they pressed on. During the debrief session, the Marine evaluator explained that the sticks and rocks were a terrain model left by the enemy, and so it would have been better if the sergeant had paused the patrol long enough to capture or investigate what the lance corporal had observed.

The outcome was different for a newly arrived platoon in Helmand, Afghanistan. On their first patrol, a corporal noticed that a white substance occasionally appeared on the ground. It was not frost or easily recognizable to the corporal, so he stopped the patrol. Everyone waited as the message was sent forward to the interpreter at the front of the formation and as he doubled back to talk to the corporal. The Afghan interpreter and security forces on patrol all agreed that this substance was common. In fact, the white substance was salt, which sometimes accumulates when crops are poorly irrigated. The corporal learned something new about his terrain. As was stated earlier, observation is a conscious activity that requires you to slow down, look closely, and question each element of a scene. Sometimes, it is difficult to balance the needs of the mission with the time it takes to observe and investigate. However, the investment of time on the front end can make the mission easier to accomplish in the long run, especially in intercultural contexts.

32 Vignette drawn from personal experience of contributing author Kristin Post in 2010. Training exercise observed aboard Camp Pendleton in August 2011, as part of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Longitudinal Study of Impact of Culture Training Products, deemed to be not human subjects research by an Institutional Review Board Applicability Review, dated 31 March 2011.



The third pitfall actually occurs in familiar environments and is referred to as adaptation. How many times have you said, "I have been through here 100 times and never noticed that sign."? When in familiar territory, people tend to ignore visual information that they see frequently because they are used to seeing it and have long ago figured out and filed away (internalized) a cultural understanding of its meaning(s). They tend to overlook common details and not think about things that are in clear sight. If you have adapted to your environment, one of these details could change in important ways, and you would not notice. When moving through a very familiar landscape, you should make a special effort to actively observe and look for anything that is new or unexpected. It could hold a clue to some important local change. Both looking without seeing and adaptation involve being blind to what is actually present. Observation requires a fully present mind and intentional focus when approaching your environment.

## SUSPENDING JUDGMENT

### DISCUSSION

Oftentimes, we as humans rush to judgment when confronted with a situation or a behavior that confuses us or challenges our sense of right and wrong. This can happen, for example, when we read a news story, meet someone new, or travel to an unfamiliar place. We rely on our own understanding, cultural background, and experiences to interpret the experiences and actions of others. In other words, we fall victim to mirror-imaging. One skill to help mitigate that tendency is to suspend judgment. Suspending judgment is taking a step back and *temporarily* suspending your own beliefs, assumptions, and expectations to assess the situation neutrally and try to understand what is going on.

*Too Much Training*[33]

When it comes to values like honesty, it is difficult to suspend judgment. But if you feel someone is being dishonest, that is an ideal time to step back and assess the situation. One Marine found out how beneficial this was when he conducted a security forces training mission in a Middle Eastern country. He was eager to help them learn land navigation and set up the practical application to test their knowledge. He soon realized some of the partner nation soldiers were copying other people's answers. He was frustrated and was tempted to think these soldiers were both lazy and dishonest. When he talked to his interpreter about it, he realized that they had been doing the same things for 18 months. His team was just one of many that jumped into the mission without first discovering what the partner nation forces knew or what they wanted to learn. When he thought about this from their perspective, he knew he would be bored too, if he had been in School of Infantry for one and a half years. He reported the incorrect answers and possibility of cheating to the partner nation platoon commander, but because he understood their actions in context, he was no longer frustrated.

33 Vignette based on notes from an interview with a sergeant on 01 October 2016. Interview conducted as part of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Longitudinal Assessment Project, under USMC IRB Protocol USMC.2016.0005.



The purpose of suspending judgment is to ensure that your personal likes and dislikes, your sense of right and wrong, and your idea of what is logical or illogical do not get in the way of understanding what is happening and why. Without being clouded by your preconceptions, you are more able to integrate your understanding of the cultural context at play into your thinking and arrive at a more accurate assessment of the situation.

For example, in conducting a theater security cooperation exercise, you may witness foreign military officers treating their enlisted members in ways you deem completely inappropriate, e.g., more like servants than colleagues. However, to react and express disapproval based on your own military norms may invite resentment and be counterproductive to completing the mission. Different militaries have different cultures, and what is acceptable and normal to one may be unacceptable to another. Keeping in mind that they are doing what makes sense to them, it is better to step back and think about why they behave this way and how you can work within this framework to best complete the mission, provided that you can do so within your unit's legal constraints.

As another example, you may find that your counterpart's approaches to training are very different from what you have grown up with in your military training. For instance, in your eyes they may place undue emphasis on sporting activities such as soccer at the expense of weapons or skills training. However, if, instead of reacting to this seeming waste of time, you step back for a moment and think about the purpose of your mission, is there really a problem? Ultimately, you are not just trying to build skills; you are also trying to build lasting relationships with foreign partners. Therefore, even if you feel that playing soccer will slow down the mission, it might help build connections that will be beneficial in the long term.

Suspending judgment is a useful tool in a multitude of situations, such as in the field, at a desk drafting an intelligence report based of varied sources, or at an interagency planning session. It is an internal check to ensure you do not jump to conclusions before objective consideration of the situation at hand.

## SELF-REGULATION

### DISCUSSION

The following description of self-regulation underscores the importance of this fundamental life skill:

> Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and control our own behavior, emotions, or thoughts, altering them in accordance with the demands of the situation. It includes the abilities to inhibit first responses, to resist interference from irrelevant stimulation, and to persist on relevant tasks even when we don't enjoy them.[34]

Self-regulation is a skill that humans develop in early childhood to varying degrees. In the military, we refer to this as **maintaining tact and bearing.** This is something that you do many times throughout the day. Most often, we are not even aware that we are doing this, as it has been integrated into our daily living. However, it is a critical skill for military personnel across the range of military occupational fields. As an example, a 2009 Army Research Institute study[35] surveying 565 Army and Marine advisors returning from Iraq and Afghanistan reported that, of all the skills the advisors noted as being most critical to their cross-cultural effectiveness, impression management rated highest, and being able to do this requires you to be able to control and adjust your thoughts, behavior, and emotions effectively. It is a skill you can sharpen by recognizing you do this (making the skill explicit) and through understanding what it involves and intentional practice. It requires you to be constantly aware of how you are feeling, pause before acting, maintain focus on the task, and adapt your response as necessary to advance your mission/goal.

**Remember Rule #3:**
You don't have to like it to understand it.

34 Joan L. Cook and Greg Cook, *Child Development: Principles and Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2009), 352-355.

35 Michelle R. Zbylut et al., "The Human Dimension of Advising: An Analysis of Interpersonal, Linguistic, Cultural, and Advisory Aspects of the Advisor Role" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2009), 39, 89-93, accessed December 12, 2017, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA507713.



Let us look at an example to see how this plays out. While training a partner force, you recognize (monitor) that you are feeling angry in response to what you are seeing, as how the members of the partner force behave is very different from what you are used to and goes against your sense of right and wrong. Your first response may be to become angry or yell at them. However, if the people you are training see you visibly upset, angry, or even surprised, it may challenge your ability to interact, build rapport, and ultimately complete your mission. Instead, it may prove more effective to inhibit your first response (anger), remain focused on your task (persist), and adapt your response (control) to be able to keep training going and maintain rapport. What this means in practice is that you should pay close attention to what you say and how you say it as well as to your body language — remaining aware of the ways in which your behavior might be interpreted. Be aware of other people's body language and how they respond to you as well and adapt as necessary. You can integrate the two skills previously discussed, observation and suspending judgment, into this process as well. Your goal is for the intention of your behavior to align with its interpretation. Of course, there will be times when an emotional response is the appropriate one. What you choose to display will depend on the specific situation. By understanding when you are actually employing this skill and making your response an explicit (versus implicit) process of discernment, you are better able to control the outcome by adapting yourself to the needs of the situation. As a military professional, the goal is not to be transparent; it is to present an appropriate image of yourself for the situation at hand in order to advance your mission.

**Cultural Variation in the Display of Emotion**

How groups talk about emotion as well as express it varies. We learn from a young age what kinds of nonverbal actions to display for the range of emotions humans experience and who should display them (e.g., do you laugh when you are embarrassed, when you are nervous, when you are happy, none of the above, or all of the above?). Understanding that there are cultural differences in expectations surrounding the expression of emotion helps you avoid mirror-imaging and prompts you to solicit that kind of information before you engage with others. Such information also helps you collect clues about underlying attitudes and values.

## PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

### DISCUSSION

Perspective-taking is, quite simply, the ability to see things from another point of view. It is common to hear it described as putting yourself in the shoes of someone else or walking a mile in them. Perspective-taking is often referred to as a foundational cultural skill simply because it begins the *process* of recognizing and articulating how a situation could appear from someone else's standpoint. This recognition, in turn, sets the stage for a conversation that is open to alternative perspectives and finding common ground where it may not have been immediately obvious. Perspective-taking is viewed in *contrast* to ethnocentrism, in which a person is often locked into a single viewpoint and is unaware of associated limitations or that other viable views may exist.

*Chinese Footbinding*

Consider the creative way in which the skill of perspective-taking was used to challenge the practice of foot-binding. The practice involved binding young girls' feet tightly, deforming them in an attempt to create the impression of "golden lilies" that were four inches in length. After enduring for nearly one hundred years, the practice was ended because, it is believed, of a letter written by the Confucian scholar, Kang You-wei, asking the Emperor to consider how other nations perceived the way China treated its women. Tradition holds that his letter convinced the Emperor that nothing caused others to ridicule and look down upon the Chinese more than footbinding. This effective and creative use of perspective-taking brought about change for millions of women.[36]

This skill is useful when confronted with confusing or troubling information about a group or behavior. It is also useful when you are discerning how to shape your thinking, emotions, and behavior in response to the presented situation. Have you ever read an article that explains a troubling practice and thought, why would they do that? To be able to understand the why behind others' thinking, emotions, and behavior, you cannot rely solely on your own understanding of

36 Vignette drawn from Kwame A. Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).



the world, as your cultural blinders could lead you to an inaccurate interpretation or design an ill-fated mission. Employing the skills of suspending judgment and maintaining tact and bearing provide you the cognitive and emotional space to incorporate the perspective of others into the interpretation of the presented situation. What this means in practice is that once you have resolved not to rush to judgment, and you have your emotions and body language in check, put yourself in the other person's or group's shoes and think about how they see the situation and what their priorities and constraints are. This will help you gain a fuller understanding of the situation and design more appropriate responses and actions.

For example, imagine that the temperature is over one hundred degrees and that you and your foreign counterparts are filling sandbags to use on the firing range. While your subordinates are toughing it out, your counterparts are complaining that they are being worked too hard and not getting enough rest breaks. From a U.S. military perspective, your initial response is to think they are weak and tell them so; their apparent 'laziness' makes you annoyed, and it is difficult for you to maintain tact and bearing. However, when you take a moment to step back (maintain tact and bearing and suspend judgment) and think (cognitive space), you realize your counterparts have grown up in a different military culture than your own (consider another perspective). They are conscripts and not part of a professional military group, and they may not be used to this sort of intense work. Incorporating that knowledge into your thinking and planning upfront could accommodate these differences to minimize impact on mission. If discovered in process, by considering their perspective and the mission at hand, you are in a better position to find a viable solution to ensure mission accomplishment.

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### DISCUSSION

The focus up to this point has been primarily devoted to culture general skills for thinking. This section discusses skills for interacting. *Intercultural communication* is a foundational culture general skill that helps you manage your interactions, anticipate misunderstanding in your interactions, and increase the likelihood of achieving your mission in

culturally diverse environments. Communication is important because, as psychologists have been saying for years, if you have a *good relationship* with a person and something goes wrong (you missed a deadline!), that person tends to blame external forces (Major Jones has a lot on his plate right now). Whereas if you *do not* have a good relationship with that person and something goes wrong (you missed a deadline!), they will blame you (Major Jones is completely disorganized). We know that the quality of our relationships is connected to the quality of our communication. As our partnerships expand along with our mission sets, military professionals will be planning, partnering, and operating with and among people from all over the world and need to have effective intercultural communication (ICC) skills, in general, and interaction management skills, in particular. These ICC skills are defined as ***actions*** and ***behaviors that***:

- Use *appropriate* and *effective* communication processes to successfully navigate an intercultural encounter and
- Are intentionally *repeatable* and *goal-directed* during interaction.

In other words, for communication to be competent, it must be both **effective** in its achievement of desired outcomes (shared meaning) and **appropriate** by meeting the expectations of the receiver and the situation. Why is this important? ***Consider the message the U.S. military sent with the following action: use of military working dogs in Iraq.*** Using military working dogs makes perfect sense to the U.S. military. Dogs are able to detect explosives and narcotics where humans cannot and potentially keep their human handlers from harm. Unfortunately, dogs are considered unclean to Iraqis, and using them to search homes sent a message of disrespect. This had a negative impact on the mission. As always, context matters, and cultures vary. Aligning our communication through words, actions, and behaviors to account for the potential cultural triggers that may disrupt our mission helps us more effectively manage the interaction.

The other key words associated with ICC skills are: **intentional, repeatable,** and **goal-directed.** This means, like our other intentional and goal-directed human behavior, we should have a plan or script. Similar to a film script, this gives us as actors an idea of what to expect as well as



some suggested lines and movements. Preparation for communication is essential, and just as in Hollywood, ad-libbing and improvisation are integral parts of the production process. Through our own cultures, we learn common scripts for interaction that provide us with *if-then* guides for our own communication. An obvious military example is that, when a salute is rendered, there is an *if-then* script followed to return the salute. When greeting someone, *if* they extend their right hand to us, *then* we typically offer our hand in return for a handshake. This seems simple. However, culture throws a wrench in these plans and presents unique challenges. Instead of co-communicators following the same cultural script for interaction, it is often as if they are in two different films. What should you do if you extend your hand for a handshake and your colleague responds with a bow? This is where ICC skills come into play, allowing you to modify your communication to be more competent across a variety of cultures.

The following intercultural communication skills will enable you to better make sense of and prepare for *both anticipated and unanticipated intercultural encounters:*

1. Leveraging communication styles
2. Employing effective interaction management skills
3. Practicing active listening
4. Managing paralanguage use and perception
5. Decoding nonverbal messages

This section will look closely at a variety of intercultural interactions that have caused misunderstanding and provide suggestions for using these skills to manage interaction outcomes. Employing such skills leads to greater communication *resourcefulness* that can benefit all interpersonal exchanges. The pages that follow provide brief ***introductions and illustrations*** of these skills and culture-specific examples intended to demonstrate the complex relationship between culture and communication in a particular military-relevant context.

## KEY POINTS

### Skill 1: Leveraging Communication Styles

*Sometimes "no" means "yes" and "yes" means "maybe."*

"Can you complete this by tomorrow?" Although it seems like a straightforward question, the way it is answered will depend largely on where in the world it is asked. Culturally variant approaches to giving a negative answer are good examples of how different communication styles manifest in our everyday interactions with others and how these styles frame how we interpret others' messages and how others interpret ours. In high-context cultures with a preference for indirect messaging, flexible words like "inshallah" (Arabic for "if God wills") or "Da nyet" ("yes-no" in Russian) can mean everything from a solid yes to a firm negative, requiring military personnel to read between the lines and seek out other clues as to meaning.

> **Remember Rule #1:** The local people have not organized themselves, their beliefs, or their behavior patterns for your convenience.

Military members working with a variety of cultures have encountered numerous ways of saying "yes" and "no" as well as conflict due to instances of perceived deception. To individuals from cultures that value directness, the communication of well-meaning individuals from indirect cultures can seem like outright lies. In "What happens after the third cup of tea?"[37], a scenario plays out in which a U.S. officer approaches an Afghan commander to plan troop movements. This interaction sounds typical until we discuss communication style. The U.S. captain asks the Afghan officer to lead the troops in front of his men. Due to the drive to preserve his face and safeguard the respect of his men, the Afghan commander cannot say no or intimate lack of readiness or willingness in front of his men and agrees to lead the convoy as requested by the U.S. officer; he then backs out just before troop movements, requiring a last-minute mission reorganization. In cultures where reputations and respect are paramount, people structure their responses to avoid public

37 Louise J. Rasmussen and Winston R. Sieck, *What happens after the 3rd cup of tea? A Cultural Sensemaking Guide to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 17.



disagreement or outcomes where face will be lost. This is an understood communication style in certain cultures. However, it is very difficult to understand when you have a different communication style.

Of course, communication style affects much more than just how to say "yes" and "no" in a particular culture and shapes such things as how to make a request, extend an apology, give a compliment, and even tell a joke. Communication style can be defined as "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that comprises our preferred ways of giving and receiving information in a specific situation."[38] One essential cross-cultural dimension of communication style is understanding the emphasis placed by those involved in the interaction on the actual words being said and the cultural context in which those words are used. Edward Hall, in his original work, described cultures as on a continuum from high- to low-context based on the amount of information that is typically conveyed explicitly in verbal speech.[39]

High-context communicators privilege the cultural context in which words are spoken over the actual words and rely on indirect communication to convey meaning. There tends to be a lot of information essential to understanding the interaction that is conveyed indirectly whether nonverbally or through culturally shared knowledge. Cultures in Asia, Africa, and South America employ high-context communication patterns. Characteristics include collectivist values like self-effacement, preference for silence, use of spiral or circular arguments, and the use of communication as a social lubricant to help relationships run more smoothly. With high-context communication, the listener is responsible for appropriately interpreting the message.

Low-context communicators do the opposite, placing more emphasis on the actual words than on the cultural context and prefer direct communication (explicit words) to impart meaning. Low-context communication patterns can be found throughout Europe, North America, and Australia. Characteristics include individualist values like

38 Dianne H. Saphiere, Barbara K. Mikk, and Basma I. Devries, *Communication Highwire: Leveraging the Power of Diverse Communication Styles* (Portland, ME: Intercultural Press, 2005), 5.

39 Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 91.

self-enhancement, preference for talk over silence, use of linear or direct argumentation, and an understanding that the primary function of communication is information. With low-context communication, the speaker is responsible for clearly communicating the message.

The concept of face, discussed earlier, is germane to the discussion of communication styles. It goes without saying that no one likes to be shamed or embarrassed. When communicating with others who employ the same or a similar communication style, it is relatively easy to avoid unnecessary or unintended loss of face, as you tend to know where to look for intended meaning. However, when low-context and high-context communicators interact, there is increased potential for misinterpretation of meaning on both sides as they value different sources of information during the interaction. This can lead to embarrassing or, worse, negative outcomes. Being mindful of style differences can help you interact more effectively and assist you in both the interpretation of others' messages and the creation of your own.

### Skill 2: Employing Effective Interaction Management Skills

> *In January 1994, a simple handshake was the subject of great deliberation and discussion between two world leaders and U.S. President Bill Clinton. The occasion was the history-making accord between Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin. According to news reports, considerable discussion occurred over if, when, and how the two leaders should shake hands at the press announcement. Rabin was reticent, but Arafat was eager. Rabin reportedly agreed when Arafat assured him there would be no kissing of cheeks. Even then, via international television, the world witnessed as Arafat made the first move with his outstretched hand and Rabin exhibited momentary hesitation.*[40]

Interaction management skills are the goal-oriented behaviors enacted while communicating. The above excerpt is a reminder of how even something as quick and ordinary as a greeting has the potential to build up or break down a relationship. No matter where you are in the world,

40 Roger E. Axtell, *Gestures: The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World,* 3rd ed. (New York: Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998), 17.



the greeting process entails a variety of interaction skills. It is well worth the effort to learn more about the interaction management skills that promote competent intercultural communication. Whether these skills are enacted effectively and appropriately is a matter of competence. The ways in which people communicate are strongly affected by cultural preferences for direct or indirect messaging as well as an orientation toward task or relational outcomes. Such skills as recognizing the cultural barriers to interaction and perception-checking help make conversations (and relationships) run more smoothly.

Some of the cultural barriers to interaction involve the variety of cultural differences associated with conversational topic management and information-gaining strategies. How do violations of communication behavior expectations affect the outcome of an interaction? There are culturally diverse ways of managing conversation topics and gaining information that can answer this question. As noted above, the communication patterns associated with individualist cultures tend to focus on the *content* (e.g., what exactly is being said) of a message in a conversation, whereas many communicators from collectivist cultures tend to focus more on the *context* (e.g., who is saying it, where they are saying it, etc.) of a message. In cross-cultural interaction, the individualism/collectivism dimensions influence how people approach topics in conversation. Here are some examples of the way conversational topic management can differ across cultures:[41]

Collectively-oriented culture groups:

- Organize topics in an interdependent fashion, keeping "like" topics close together.
- Use a significant amount of repetition.
- Complement verbal interaction with supporting nonverbal behaviors to further support a message.
- Consider the interaction implications for the relationship as more important than the actual topic.
- Employ harmonious, simultaneous talk in an effort to promote high connectivity.

41 William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 205.

Individually-oriented culture groups:

- Organize topics independent from one another.
- Show interest in the conversation through asking questions and making comments.
- Orient their attention to the explicit topic content.
- Perceive simultaneous talk as jarring and often leading to conflict.

While these are generalizations, they offer you insights into why it can be difficult to hold a conversation with a person from a different culture. Recognizing cultural barriers helps you overcome them. Instead of jumping to the conclusion that your counterpart is a bad conversationalist, you can seek alternative means to facilitate the interaction to achieve your desired outcome.

Along with differences in managing topics in conversations, ***information-gathering*** strategies can also vary across cultures and present a possible cultural barrier. Gaining information allows us to reduce the amount of uncertainty we have in an interaction. When we initiate an interaction with an unfamiliar person, we strategically plan our communication behaviors to reduce the level of uncertainty we have about communicating with them. The uncertainty reduction process certainly happens in interaction with strangers, but it can also happen in any interaction, regardless of how well we know someone or how often we interact with them. There are three main strategies for information-gathering:

- **Passive strategies** involve observation and taking mental notes. Passive strategies allow us to reduce the amount of uncertainty we have in an interaction, but they do not involve any direct communication behaviors.
- **Active strategies** involve actually asking questions of secondary sources like people intimately familiar with a culture or a particular person. Looking for other sources of information like in a library or documentary is also an active strategy.
- **Interactive strategies** are those that directly involve interaction. Two main strategies are direct questions and self-disclosure. These strategies require caution regarding the context of the interaction as well as how comfortable the person might be with direct questioning.



Cultural considerations infuse the information gathering process, no matter the strategy employed, and can present barriers. Methods and subject matter that are appropriate in some cultures may not be in others. For example, it is inappropriate for an unrelated man to address a direct question to a Muslim woman in certain contexts. It may seem as though this is always the case, but what if that Muslim woman is a colleague at work at the Pentagon? Being able to recognize potential barriers and also keeping in mind, for example, variation and suspending judgment will help you to structure your actions appropriately for the context in which you find yourself.

"Perception-checking" is a useful skill that can help you address the potential complications that come with cultural differences in communication preferences and clarify and align intentions with interpretations during the communication process. It implies "I know I'm not qualified to judge you without some help."[42] How you employ the skill is dependent on your specific situation. When interacting with those who prefer direct communication (e.g., individualistic, low-context communicators), you may want to take a more direct approach, by asking for clarification from your counterpart. Direct perception-checking involves three parts:

- A description of the behavior you noticed
- A statement about how you interpreted the behavior
- A request for clarification about how to interpret the behavior

It would look something like this: after a discussion with an Indian colleague, you might say, "When you bobbed your head back and forth while I was talking (**described behavior**), I wasn't sure whether you were agreeing with me (**first interpretation**), disagreeing with me (**second interpretation**), or just confused (**third interpretation**). Can you explain what the head bob means?" (**request for clarification**).

42 J. Dan Rothwell, *In the Company of Others: An Introduction to Communication* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 60.

In most cultures, nodding the head means "yes," while shaking the head means "no." In India, however, there is another gesture, often referred to as the Indian head wobble, which consists of bobbing the head from side to side. This gesture can mean yes or no, and is intentionally ambiguous, often meant solely as an acknowledgement of what is being said, or its interpretation being left up to the other party to oblige them or to avoid coming across as impolite. As a guest, one does not want to be an imposition on their host by giving a definitive yes in response to an offer that may have just been a courtesy. However, giving a definitive no may come across as rude or ungrateful of the hospitality extended to you as a guest. Thus, the purpose of the head wobble is to oblige the host by leaving the interpretation open to meaning "yes, I am happy to do this" but also "no, it's okay if we don't."[43]

For those who employ more indirect communication, such direct questioning of them may not provide you the clarification you seek. There are other perception-checking methods you can employ like practicing culture-sensitive paraphrasing skills. The paraphrasing skill has two major characteristics: (a) verbally restating the content meaning of the speaker's message in your own words and (b) nonverbally echoing back your interpretation of the emotional meaning of the speaker's message. The verbal restatement should reflect your tentative understanding of the speaker's meaning behind the content message, using phrases such as "It sounds to me that ..." and "In other words, you're saying that ..." Nonverbally, you should pay attention to the attitudinal tone that underlies your verbal restatement (i.e., it is critical to display a genuine tone of the desire to understand). You will want to structure your statements according to your specific situation. Some guidelines: high-context communicators may respond better to deferential, qualifying phrases such as "I may be wrong, but what I'm hearing is that..." or "Please correct me if I misinterpret what you've said." For low-context communicators, your paraphrasing statements can be more direct and to the point. Again, what method you choose is up to you and the specific situation and counterpart.

43 Example provided by Fahad Malik, Corps Solutions, a contracted regional analyst at CAOCL who consulted the following source during development: Presh Talwalker, "The Indian head wobble as strategic move," *Mind Your Decisions* (blog), September 21, 2010, accessed December 12, 2017, https://mindyourdecisions.com/blog/2010/09/21/the-indian-head-wobble-as-strategic-move/.



### Skill 3: Practicing Active Listening

*"The average person suffers from 3 delusions:*
*That he is a good driver*
*That he has a good sense of humor*
*That he is a good listener"*[44]

People in all cultures use a variety of methods to indicate to a speaker that they are listening, including nonverbal behaviors (e.g., eye contact), paralanguage (e.g., silence), or verbalizations (e.g., "uh-huh"). It goes without saying that listener behavior and feedback styles vary widely across cultures. For example, while it is common to hear a mother in the United States saying to her child, "Show me some respect, and look at me when I'm talking to you!", a Korean parent is more likely to say, "Show me some respect, and don't look at me when I'm talking to you." In some southern European cultures, if you were nodding your head to indicate that you were following along, you would actually be telling them no! Listening feels like a "no-brainer" activity; however, these cues and signs are not universal, and we must be mindful of cultural as well as individual differences.

Military personnel encounter a broad range of situations in which listening skills are key — and different situations call for different listening behaviors. Your work life, home life, social life, etc. all require different kinds of listening behaviors. Recall that "communication competence happens in context" — this includes listening. What makes you a competent listener in one situation (e.g., the lecture hall) will not necessarily make you a competent listener in another (e.g., talking with your spouse) — hence the importance of keeping the context in mind as you prepare for the listening situation.

So what is effective listening? Examining how the Chinese approach listening can provide great insight into the intricacies of effective listening. The Chinese word for listening, "ting," is defined as "attending

44 Steven B. Sample, *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 21.

closely with our 'ears, eyes, and a focused heart.'"[45] It means paying attention to all the sources of information the speaker is giving us. The word "ting" reminds us that people communicate not only with words but also with their facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, and shared cultural knowledge. To understand someone fully, we must listen to the spoken — and to the unspoken.

One technique is to practice active listening. Active listening is a structured communication technique that helps improve the way we listen and respond to others. As opposed to simply hearing, active listening implies that we are making a conscious effort to understand, interpret, and evaluate what we hear. Active listening entails 1) focusing all attention on the speaker, 2) suspending judgment, and 3) summarizing/clarifying what the speaker says.

Employing these four behaviors can help you to become an active listener:

- **Prepare to listen.** Have you ever noticed that you tend to lose focus more when people are talking about something you are unfamiliar with, using words you do not know, possibly in a difficult accent? Active listening takes energy and involvement. Preparing yourself by researching and building vocabulary and knowledge of relevant acronyms, pronunciation, or communication styles will help you tune in.
- **Adjust to the situation.** All listening situations are different, so be mindful of the variables that affect listening, such as rest, hunger, comfort, location, etc.
- **Accept responsibility for understanding.** People become good listeners by accepting responsibility to understand the message and taking an active approach to ensure understanding. Recall the techniques described in Skill 2: Interaction Management. These will help you ensure that you understand the message as the sender intends it.
- **Avoid listening barriers.** Several behaviors impede effective listening and impair dialogue, and the majority involve thinking (or vocalizing what you are thinking) while someone else is talking. Whether spoken or internal, dreaming, judging, playing "devil's advocate," or advising someone, instead of listening to them while they are speaking, all block your ability to receive their message or respond effectively.

45 Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Cultures* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 220.



Another technique is being aware of the diversity in feedback mechanisms people use to demonstrate they are listening. Feedback styles are culture-specific and can be very disruptive or confusing for those unfamiliar with the culture. Oftentimes, they are misinterpreted as disrespectful instead of as a demonstration of attentive listening. How do you show your speaker you are listening? Do you vocalize? Nod your head? Lean in? Touch the speaker? Look at the speaker, look away? Each participant in the interaction will have a preference based on cultural and situational influences. Consider the Japanese listening feedback style, *aizuchi.*

*Aizuchi* involves the listener using frequent verbal acknowledgements to let the speaker know the listener is involved in the conversation. Aizuchi is often perceived as a constant stream of words and sounds with a variety of meanings all meant to signal to speakers that they have the listener's attention. In Japan, this type of listener feedback is customary, even necessary, to show the appropriate amount of involvement in a conversation. For those unaccustomed to this, it can be a very surprising, confusing behavior. Without an understanding of this Japanese cultural feedback preference, it would be easy to assume a Japanese counterpart is being rude or even disrespectful.

### Skill 4: Managing Paralanguage Use and Perception

If you have ever listened to a conversation between people speaking a foreign language and had no idea what they were saying but had a good sense of whether they were happy, upset, or shocked, then you already understand the importance of paralanguage. Paralanguage is everything you do with your voice when communicating, aside from using words. Paralanguage focuses not on what you say but on how you say it. No matter where you are in the world and no matter which language you speak, it is impossible to communicate verbally without using paralanguage.

Looking at it through a cross-cultural lens, we know that paralanguage influences the way we perceive others and are perceived by them. In a study of impressions based on voices of people from the United States and Korea, researchers found that speaking quickly conveys power and competence to people in the United States but not to Koreans, who believe that faster speech conveys youthfulness and immaturity.[46] This illustrates the point that, when it comes to paralanguage, what works *in* one culture will not necessarily work in another.

There is a great deal of cross-cultural variation in vocal qualities, such as:

- Volume — loud to soft
- Pitch — high to low
- Pitch intensity — emotional or unemotional
- Rate of speech — fast to slow
- Articulation — precise to imprecise

Sarcasm, for instance, is conveyed entirely through tone of voice, and comedians often find that sarcasm does not cross cultures well because of the cultural variability of paralanguage. We also know that different aspects of paralanguage can alter and even contradict the meaning of a message. Consider the role of the voice in lie detection. Studies routinely acknowledge the importance of volume, intonation, pitch, and tempo in distinguishing truth from deception.[47] Research connecting tone of voice with medical malpractice suits indicates that "the manner or tone in which a physician communicates might be as important to malpractice as what is said."[48] Specifically, researchers have found that surgeons who were perceived to have a "dominant tone" were more likely to be sued than those who sounded less dominant. The study's findings remind us of the ways in which respect is communicated through tone of voice.

46 Ying Peng, Leslie A. Zebrowitz, and Hoon Koo Lee, "The Impact of Cultural Background and Cross-Cultural Experience on Impressions of American and Korean Male Speakers," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 24 (1993), 214-15.

47 Judee K. Burgoon et al., "Detecting Deception in the Military Infosphere: Improving and Integrating Human Detection Capabilities with Automated Tools" (Arlington, VA: Air Force Office of Strategic Research, 2007).

48 Nalini Ambady et al., "Surgeons' Tone of Voice: A Clue to Malpractice History," *Surgery* 132 (2002), 5-6.



Obviously, the possibility exists for cultural differences in paralinguistic cues to cause misunderstanding. For example, when native speakers of Arabic are asking questions, they can sound aggressive and possibly threatening to native English speakers' ears simply due to the fact that Arabic speakers use a higher pitch range.[49] Everyone perceives and evaluates paralanguage based on their own cultural background. According to "Communication Accommodation Theory," we tend to view people who sound like us as more friendly and attractive and people who sound different as strange and/or distant. This is exemplified in the following situation that occurred at a British airport:

> Newly hired Indian and Pakistani cafeteria employees were viewed as surly and uncooperative by both customers and their supervisors. The reason was due to intonation used when asking customers if they wanted gravy on their meals. While the employees said "gravy" using falling intonation, the British customers expected rising intonation. The British customers interpreted the employees "gravy" as — "this is gravy ... take it or leave it" — not as a polite request, which is what the employees intended. Both sides left this encounter feeling frustrated because of the different cultural backgrounds that bring entirely different sets of assumptions to the same communicative event.[50]

In this situation, the new cafeteria employees could have lost their jobs simply based on the fact that the way they ask a question differed from what the customers expected to hear. If you think about it, how do you know someone is asking a question (verbally) if you cannot see the question mark at the end of it? For the most part, we rely on intonation (rising, for example) to let us know that we are being asked a question. As the story above reminds us, however, the way this is done in conversation will vary across cultures. Communicators, armed with the knowledge that paralanguage can have varying meanings, are able to thoughtfully evaluate cross-cultural messages and seek additional information before jumping to conclusions about intended meanings.

49 Ellen Feghali, "Arab Cultural Communication Patterns," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 21, no. 3 (1997), 368-369.

50 John Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 173-174.

**Skill 5: Decoding Nonverbal Messages**

> *The car rapidly approached the checkpoint. The Soldier signaled the driver to slow down by pumping his hands palms down, arms outstretched toward the ground, but the driver failed to respond. The Soldier then signaled the driver to stop by holding his arms out and his palms up towards the driver; again there was no response. The Soldier then fired warning shots in front of the oncoming car, but the driver merely swerved away from where the bullets impacted and sped up. Interpreting this action as hostile, the Soldier then fired at the driver, killing him. Surviving occupants of the car said they were only trying to get away from a hazardous area. When questioned on why they did not slow down or stop, they said that they did not know what the hand signals meant and that they thought the first shots fired were intended to hit them but missed. To an Iraqi, the hand signal for "slow down" is to clasp all four fingers together with the thumb over them, palm up and extend your arm with the back of the hand toward the driver.*[51]

Although not all nonverbal communication misunderstandings have such tragic consequences, this example reminds us never to assume we can predict the message intended by cross-cultural nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication, compared with verbal communication, often has a greater impact on receivers,[52] and yet, it is a subject on which very few of us have received much training or education. The interpretation of nonverbal messages varies from culture to culture. Unlike the rules for verbal communication, the rules for nonverbal communication are generally unwritten, making accurate interpretation very difficult. Specific study of nonverbal communication makes us more aware of the ways we communicate very loud messages without even opening our mouths.

An interesting research example is a study where prison inmates

51 Edwin B. Nelson, "Cultural Awareness: Resources Can Help Prepare Soldiers Before Deployments," *Infantry Magazine* Jan/Feb (2007), 6.

52 Howard Giles and Beth Le Poire, "Introduction: The Ubiquity and Social Meaningfulness of Nonverbal Communication," in *The SAGE Handbook of Nonverbal Communication*, eds. Valerie Manusov and Miles L. Patterson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), xv-xxvii.



provide "muggability" ratings for videotaped pedestrians and identify which pedestrians have "the look of a victim." The researchers found that those with the "look" were communicating similar messages nonverbally.

> Their strides were either very long or very short; they moved awkwardly, raising their left legs with their left arms (instead of alternating them); on each step they tended to lift their whole foot up and then place it down (less muggable people took steps in which their feet rocked from heel to toe). Overall, the people rated most muggable walked as if they were in conflict with themselves; they seemed to make each move in the most difficult way possible.[53]

In short, these inmates indicated that they chose who to mug on the street *just by observing a person's nonverbal behavior.*

> Turkish norms of personal space are not very different from the ones in the U.S. However, Turkish sellers in small shops, stores, and restaurants tend to invade personal space, aggressively advertising their products and services, including physically directing potential clients to their place of business. Local residents, who know how to avoid this experience, and tourists who seem amused by this practice, do not seem to mind these sale tactics. For those unfamiliar with the practice, however, those tactics can seem intrusive and aggressive. In June 2017, Tokyo police detained two Turkish employees of a kebab shop after locals filed a total of 27 complaints over their alleged aggressive approach to passersby in front of their kebab shop. According to complaints, they "grabbed the arms of potential customers and blocked their paths while boasting of the deliciousness of their kebabs." The Turkish employees responded "that they were not ill-willed and approached potential customers with courtesy."[54]

Although it is often used interchangeably in popular culture with "body language," nonverbal communication is much more than that. It also includes the ways in which people use space, time, dress, smell, and touch to communicate. There are many types of nonverbal

53 Loretta Malandro and Larry Barker, *Introduction to Nonverbal Communication* (Ann Arbor: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1982), 112-113.

54 *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Tokyo police detain two Turkish kebab shop employees over aggressive touting," June 26, 2017, accessed December 7, 2017, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/tokyo-police-detain-two-turkish-kebab-shop-employees-over-aggressive-touting-114757.

communication. We are going to discuss four:

1. **Haptics** (how touch is used to communicate)
2. **Proxemics** (how space is used to communicate)
3. **Chronemics** (how time is used to communicate)
4. **Kinesics** (how bodies are used to communicate)

People use touch to communicate feelings and emotions, both positive and negative. It can convey physical intimacy or absolute rejection. What constitutes acceptable ways to communicate through touch and the interpretation of meaning are both determined culturally and vary across and within cultures. For example, displays of physical intimacy, such as kissing, in some cultures are reserved for the private sphere, as such behavior in public conveys certain messages about the character of those involved, especially the women. Columbia Pictures learned this lesson the hard way in Egypt. Its 1983 production, *Sadat*, showed the Egyptian president publicly kissing his wife. Such touching is an unacceptable public act in Egypt. This demonstrated a lack of understanding of how and when Egyptians use touch to convey physical intimacy. This in combination with politics and several other controversies in the film led the Egyptian government to ban Columbia Pictures from Egypt.[55]

Haptics (the use of touch) is closely associated with proxemics (the way we use space) and cannot be fully understood without taking proxemics into consideration. Because we all have needs for both privacy (distance) and interdependence (nearness), one way we manage this tension is by defining and defending a territory. Decades of work devoted to nonverbal communication by Edward Hall revealed four kinds of distance observed among U.S. adults: intimate distance (contact to 18 inches), personal distance (1.5 to 4 feet), social distance (4 to 12 feet), and public distance (12 to 25 feet).[56] Although the limits of each zone are certainly varied, such distances exist in many cultures. Of course, what you consider to be an appropriate amount of space between you and a stranger on an empty beach (you probably do not want that stranger right next to you) might be completely different for someone from a

55 Judith Miller, "Upset by 'Sadat,' Egypt Bars Columbia Films," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1984, C17.

56 Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 116-25.



different culture. Likewise, there is cultural variation in who is allowed or expected in the various zones. In Iraq, for instance, contact inside one's intimate zone (contact to 18 inches) is common among friends and associates. Being within this zone with someone of the same gender is a sign of admiration, not homosexuality, and is expected once rapport is established between two people.

Beyond touch and space, the use of chronemics (how people perceive the use of time and how they structure time in their relationships) is another important form of nonverbal communication that differs substantially across cultures. Despite the significant differences in the way people around the world look at time, there is one thing to keep in mind: time is the only resource distributed equally to everyone! We all do not have clean air or adequate drinking water, but every person on this earth is given 24 hours a day. There are dozens of examples which illustrate how different cultures use those 24 hours. For example, some cultures view time, but not the clock, as important. As a result, schedules are flexible and are secondary to relationships. The following example of differences in time orientation is taken from an article by the psychologist, Dr. Helen Klein, who studied the impact of intercultural interactions on civil aviation:

> For American aviation personnel, keeping aircraft safely in the air and on schedule is a high priority. For them, maintenance personnel must be ready to support this goal. In China, workmen will stop to socialize or have lunch instead of doing a needed repair. An American field service representative interpreted this behavior as showing that the workers do not understand the big picture of what the task implies. For those workers, maintenance can wait, but relationships with people cannot be postponed.[57]

The fourth category of nonverbal communication is kinesics. The technical term for the study of movement and gesture, kinesics comes from the Greek word "motion" and includes gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and eye behavior. Even for one of the most common

57 Helen A. Klein, Gary Klein, and R.J. Mumaw, "Culture-Sensitive Aviation Demands: Links to Cultural Dimensions," (Technical Report, The Boeing Company under general consultant agreement 6-1111-10A-0112, Fairborn, OH: Wright State University, 2001), 15.

human expressions such as affirmation (e.g., saying "yes"), there is cross-cultural variety in the ways in which it is expressed nonverbally:

- In the United States, it is nodding.
- In Ethiopia, it is throwing one's head back.
- In Malaysia, it is thrusting the head sharply forward.
- For a Borneo tribe, it is simply raising an eyebrow.[58]

It bears repeating that you can never assume that a different culture will associate the same meaning you do to any particular gesture. Understanding variation in nonverbal communication is an important step in the development of cross-cultural competence. First impressions can set the tone for the entire duration of a relationship, so becoming familiar with greeting rituals across cultures is a good start. As you become more skilled in decoding nonverbal cues, you will become more keenly aware of the ways in which nonverbal communication can define a message, regulate a message, or be the message itself.[59] Remember: *all nonverbal behavior communicates a message. Although you can never truly control how others interpret your actions, learning about cross-cultural variability in nonverbal communication familiarizes you with the patterns that have the potential to build up a relationship or break it down.*

**Preparing for interaction**

The five intercultural communication skills discussed above can serve as a toolkit designed to help you prepare for and behave during intercultural interactions. They have equipped you with a variety of explanations for the causes of misunderstanding during interactions and strategies to work through them, thereby increasing your communication resourcefulness. Such resourcefulness becomes very useful when trying to make sense of unexpected or confusing behavior. As you prepare for an interaction, it is important to take a moment to consider the following questions:

1. Are my interaction skills ready? Have I thought about how I will reduce uncertainty in the conversation and get more information if I need it?

58 Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter, and Edwin R. McDaniel, *Communication Between Cultures*, 7th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), 248.

59 David Matsumoto, Mark G. Frank, and Hyi Sung Hwang, eds., *Nonverbal Communication: Science and Applications* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013).



2. How might paralanguage come into play? Could volume, tone of voice, or rate of speech impact the way I perceive this person or the way they perceive me?
3. What kind of nonverbal messages might be problematic? Do we use touch, space, time, and body movements to communicate in the same way?
4. What is my own communication style? If it is direct and task-oriented, how might that shape the course of a conversation?
5. How will I show my counterparts that I am listening? Can I expect that they might use different active listening techniques?

*Cultural Repair: It Takes Time*

Addressing mistakes immediately when they happen helps inform those affected that you are aware of what you have done. It is important to note, however, that repairing the relationship is more than just offering an apology; it involves rebuilding the trust lost and time. Harsh words are like nails in a board; when removed, holes still remain. This allegory shows that through this experience the board has changed, as do relationships when impacted by misunderstanding, carelessness, or frustration. Note the experience recounted by a Marine gunnery sergeant on a training mission in the United Arab Emirates,

> *when we had a problem - we offended one of them once you know, [one of our guys] when he said ... "[expletive removed]* inshallah"*... how do you repair that right in front of all the soldiers and it was [our Marine] literally going up there and eating his ego, and saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I apologize." And he would apologize, and we were really good friends with that soldier, so he knew he didn't really mean it, and they are all American culture based, so they understood. So we fixed it, but yet, even after that it was a wall for a little bit. They didn't really want to hang out with us for a while, the soldiers just kind of backed off for a while.*[60]

These questions can build on one another to increase the chances that your interaction will have a desirable outcome (effectiveness) and not offend anyone or damage the relationship (appropriateness). Employing

60 From the interview with Gunnery Sergeant #15, 21 September 2016. This transcript is part of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Longitudinal Program Assessment Project, under USMC IRB Protocol USMC.2016.0005.

these skills during the interaction reduces the likelihood of the kinds of negative reactions that often lead to unnecessary conflict and undermine mission accomplishment.

***When things go south — trouble recovery***

When mistakes are made — and they will be, it is very important first to recognize what has happened and then address the issue right away. This is referred to as trouble recovery. Problems may arise from minor issues with speaking, hearing, or understanding, using an incorrect gesture, getting someone's name wrong, or trying to take notes and maintain eye contact at the same time. They may also arise from more major issues such as entering someone's home without permission or using excessive force. Whatever the case, it is usually more effective if the person who is responsible for the trouble addresses it explicitly and as soon as possible. For example, during an interaction you might become distracted by having to take notes and ask questions at the same time, and so find it hard to maintain eye contact.

If this happens, apologize. Then either explain why you have to take notes during the interaction or find a scribe to take notes. Whatever you do, it is generally best not to try to minimize or avoid the situation. If you want to build rapport and achieve your goals in the interaction, it is important to show respect for your counterparts, to look at things from their perspective, and to make the situation right. Of course, depending on the cultural context, your counterparts may not share your approach to trouble recovery. They may prefer to save face by pretending a problem did not happen or address issues later in another setting, especially if they have caused the issue. That is okay, too. It requires flexibility and adaptability on your part.



***POCESAD***[61]

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) set up a research program to determine how to improve military personnel's interaction skills, especially in situations with little or evolving local information. One of the outcomes of that research was a check list of sorts that details seven steps of the interaction process. We include it here as it may help you visualize how the concepts and skills we have discussed up until this point in this guidebook intersect with and support intercultural interactions. Also, as it was designed for military audiences, you may encounter it in future training. The seven steps are: Plan, Observe, Contact, Engage, maintain Self-control, Adapt, and Disengage.

*Step 1: Plan*

Just as if you were going in front of a meritorious board or on a first date, plan out the interaction ahead of time. Even if you only have a few minutes, think about who you expect to talk to, anything you already know about them (cultural concepts), how you wish to present yourself (maintaining tact and bearing), what you hope to achieve, how you think they will respond to you (perspective-taking), and any obstacles you might encounter. Include the questions from the section above on preparing for an interaction. If possible, come up with a plan that has several alternatives depending on what actually ensues. And even if the interaction unfolds differently than you expect, just having thought it through should put you one step ahead of the game.

*Step 2: Observe*

Use the active observation skills described earlier to look closely at the situation and, if possible, the person/people with whom you intend to interact. Observe body language, how people use gestures, eye contact, and body positioning, and the other nonverbal messages they may be conveying through positioning, clothing, use of touch and time, etc. Think about whether it would be appropriate to mirror this. Assess the mood. If necessary, make adjustments to your plan.

61 Derived from observational notes made by a CAOCL researcher observing Tactical Social Interaction (TSI) training, SOI West, January 13-17, 2014, sponsored by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC) as part of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) funded Strategic Social Interaction Modules (SSIM) Program.

*Step 3: Contact*
This is where you first make contact with the individual or group and begin your actual interaction. Having done your prep work, you should be well positioned culturally to greet your counterparts and adjust as necessary to set the interaction off on the right foot. Remember cultural variability may require you to adjust your strategies. And of course, in some cases, you will be operating absent any specific information, which is okay, because you understand the fundamentals of human behavior and have the skills to navigate such culturally complex situations. It is in this initial stage where, when appropriate, you explain the purpose of the interaction.

*Step 4: Engage*
Remember at the end of your interaction you want not only to have achieved your goal but also to have built enough rapport so that you or the next person in your billet can come back another time. Therefore, think carefully before jumping into the primary reason for your interaction. Leverage your understanding of human behavior and the techniques to build rapport and communicate interculturally. The expected pattern of conversation may be something you can find out ahead of time through research or observation, or you may just have to feel your way through. Either way, it is better to err on the side of caution and move more slowly rather than jump right in. It is also helpful to try to frame your interaction appropriately and intentionally. What this means is you need to be aware of what you are trying to achieve and how you are going about doing it. For example, are you using the language and tone (paralinguistics) of asking or offering help or are you actually giving a lecture or making a joke? It is important to be self-aware and to assess continually how you are coming across, whether you are making progress, and whether you need to shift your approach to move the interaction along in a positive way.

*Step 5: Maintain Self-Control*
Suspend judgment and maintain tact and bearing. Try hard to control your emotions. Pay attention to your body language and how you are presenting yourself. Notice how you are being read by your counterpart(s) and adapt as necessary. Above all, remember that your end goal



is to achieve the overarching purpose of your interaction. Regardless of how frustrating the interaction may become, do not compromise your self-control.

*Step 6: Adapt*
All interactions are dynamic. Therefore, you will have most success if you adapt as you go along. Employing the myriad skills discussed above will help you determine how best to act. When mistakes are made, acknowledge them and enter into trouble recovery mode. If your counterparts do not share your suggested method, adapt and move forward to your goal.

*Step 7: Disengage*
This is one of the more important stages and one often overlooked or minimized. How you part sets the tone for the next encounter. At the end of the interaction, try to use appropriate expressions of gratitude or farewell and do not make any promises you cannot keep. Regardless of whether you have met your overarching goals, a positive departure will improve your chances in the next round of interactions.

DARPA has developed this relatively easy process to help you think intentionally through the steps of an interaction. Will each interaction follow these steps linearly? No, of course not. The steps serve as a guide, a tool that you can use to practice, so that eventually this type of thinking and behavior is routine for you.

## BUILDING RAPPORT

### Discussion
One of the key outcomes desired as a result of the appropriate and effective application of intercultural communication skills is the ability to build rapport. Rapport is defined generally as the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people and is often mentioned as a critical step in gaining trust and cooperation in intercultural interactions. Researchers who conducted extensive interviews with four dozen senior military officers ranging from colonels to four-star generals devoted to the *characteristics of strategic leadership* found "the ability to communicate

across cultural divides"[62] to be critical for mission and career success. Further, several senior officers were quoted in the study as saying, "This is a people business. Success comes from relationships." But how is this done? Building rapport goes beyond being friendly and does not emerge automatically from two people talking. It is a culture general skill that you can sharpen by attending to certain considerations, such as face concerns, nonverbal expressions of rapport, and managing identity threats.

**Key Points**

***Face***

The term face is an identity resource that is manifested and co-managed in our communication with others.[63] Face is, simply speaking, your image in the eyes of others — or others' credibility in your eyes. There are two aspects of face:

- *Self-face* means your honor or respect in the eyes of someone else.
- *Other-face* means honor or respect toward someone else as judged by you.

Think of one of the most embarrassing moments of your life. Was it so embarrassing because of what ***you did*** or because of ***who was there to witness it***? If the latter was your answer, you understand why saving face is so important. Because face is public, it is defined by our social interaction. Where does face come from? It is based on others' perceptions and judgments of a person's moral conduct, position, status, and/or reputation. If we need to boil down face to a single word, it means "honor." The opposite of face is humiliation or shame. If a person loses face, he or she feels humiliated or ashamed because of the judgments of others. If an entire group loses face, group humiliation or group shame occurs. Face is dynamic. You can gain it or lose it. You can help someone else gain it or lose it.

There is considerable variation across cultures regarding what constitutes face and what will cause one to lose it. Losing face, or causing someone

62 Barak A. Salmoni et al., "Growing Strategic Leaders for Future Conflict," *Parameters* Spring (2010), 74.

63 Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Cultures* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 38.



else to, is one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of positive cross-cultural relations around the world. In cultures where honor and others' perceptions of you are fundamental to life, such as in collectivist, high-context cultures, losing face can carry a much higher social cost than in individualist, low-context cultures, such as many cultures within the United States and across Europe. Therefore, it is important to consider, for example, when working through a conflict or negotiating with someone from a culture where face does play a large role in social interaction, how you can shape your behavior and communications so that you do not compromise the face of your counterpart unintentionally and you ensure you get the outcome you need.

*Saving face*[64]

Erving Goffman invokes this metaphor for the study of face saving, "[it] is to study the traffic rules of a social interaction; one learns about the code the person adheres to in his movement across the paths and designs of others, but not where he is going, or why he wants to get there."[65] A U.S. government worker in Afghanistan was surprised by the "traffic rules of interaction" when he had to decide how to navigate a delicate situation between his interpreter and the commanding officer of the Afghan police. The situation started with a miscommunication between the U.S. worker and the interpreter. The U.S. worker purchased some Korans as gifts in Egypt to bring to some important Afghans. The interpreter, a Muslim, carried the Korans and handed them to the Afghan recipient when cued to do so by the U.S. worker. There was one Koran left. The U.S. worker intended to give it to an Afghan friend, but the interpreter thought it was meant for the commanding officer and gave it to him while the U.S. worker was busy. When the U.S. worker figured out the miscommunication, he felt it would be possible to explain the mix-up. But the interpreter was emphatic; one cannot "ungive" a gift, especially a Koran. The U.S. worker had a few options. One was to let the Koran stay where it was, which would save the face of the interpreter and the commanding officer. The other option was to, in effect, save his own face because it was his intention to deliver the Koran to a very respected Afghan man, whom the commanding officer also knew. It was difficult for the U.S. worker to accept that this mistake could not be corrected. On the other hand, "face" is such that, once it is lost, that is even more difficult to "correct." What decision would you make in this situation?

64 Vignette drawn from personal experience in 2010 of a contributing author who wished to remain anonymous.

65 Erving Goffman, "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction," *Psychiatry* 18, no. 3 (1955), 216.

***Revisiting perspective-taking, suspending judgment, and self-regulation***

Fundamental to rapport-building are three skills discussed above: perspective-taking, suspending judgment, and self-regulation. These skills help you avoid stereotyping, particularly when your initial interpretation proves inaccurate, and move beyond your first impressions or prejudgments to take a fresh approach. For example, suppose that in the United States we believe that fatalism is an unrealistic, counterproductive superstition that impedes prosperity and modernization. Of course, this attitude could prove problematic when interacting with people from a society that tends toward fatalism. By suspending your preconceived bias and controlling your response, you have the cognitive and emotional space to consider their perspective and seek to understand *why* certain people consider fatalism a realistic approach. Perhaps their beliefs have been influenced from a history of suffering economic and political hardships such as civil wars, genocide, lack of industrialization, and slavery, which have over time imbedded fatalistic religious roots into their society. Maintaining an open-minded approach unclouded by your own interpretations of the world can help you first find understanding and then encourage you to modify your behavior and communication style during an intercultural interaction.

Processing an intercultural interaction can be difficult and confusing. When we encounter thinking and behaviors that are different from our own, it is natural for us to judge those according to our own standards. However, passing judgment does not help the process of building rapport; changing how we think about and approach intercultural relations can. Using these three skills can help, as can incorporating the following four tenets into our interactions:[66]

*Teachable attitude:* Having a teachable attitude means we have a "willingness to learn from others." When we are willing to learn from others, it does not imply that we are going to permanently change our behaviors to match someone else's. It does mean keeping an open mind and not immediately discounting something or passing judgment just because it does not match our own ideas or beliefs.

66 Bradford J. Hall, *Among Cultures: The Challenge of Communication* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2005), 348-9.



*Mutual Legitimacy:* Believing in mutual legitimacy means believing that there can be more than one possible right way to do things or more than one right answer. The right way depends on whom you ask. A light-hearted example is the process of mowing a lawn. Is it better to mow horizontally or diagonally? In both cases the grass gets cut, but there are personal or even cultural preferences involved when deciding just how to get it done.

*Dialogue:* Dialogue is the process by which we interact with people and through which we learn about each other. To have successful dialogue, we must be genuine, include the perspective of others, recognize the worth of other people, prioritize the interaction, view the co-communicator as equal, and encourage a positive environment conducive to communication.

*Considering Context:* Just as with anything else, context matters. It is an important factor to attend to during intercultural interaction. Misperceptions and disagreements can often be avoided if the context of the situation and the larger cultural context are taken into account.

***Nonverbal expression of rapport***

You might have heard that when it comes to real estate, the key focus is "location, location, location." In dealing with other cultures, the focus becomes "relationships, relationships, relationships."[67] Rapport not only is the built through words but also is expressed and recognized *nonverbally.* Rapport has been described as a socially "optimal experience" characterized by smooth, harmonious, and enjoyable interaction.[68] Decades of research devoted to rapport-building in the U.S. assert that rapport develops when mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination occur and are reciprocated in interaction.[69] Mutual attentiveness involves "the feeling of mutual interest and focus during interaction," positivity is associated with feelings of "friendliness and

67 Richard A. McConnell, Christopher L. Matson, and Brent A. Clemmer, "The MiTT and Its 'Human Terrain': Transitioning the Iraqi Army into the Lead," *Infantry* Nov/Dec (2007).

68 Linda Tickle-Degnen, "Nonverbal Behavior and Its Functions in the Ecosystem of Rapport," in *The Sage Handbook of Nonverbal Communication,* eds. Valerie Manusov and Miles Patterson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 392.

69 Linda Tickle-Degnen and Robert Rosenthal, "The Nature of Rapport and its Nonverbal Correlates," *Psychological Inquiry* 1 (1990), 285–93.

warmth," and coordination involves the "feeling of balance and harmony."[70] But what does that look like?

Chances are, even without being able to hear or understand the words being said in a conversation, you could detect the establishment of rapport by observing nonverbal behavior. Observing nonverbal communication exchanged between a couple at a restaurant or individuals during a greeting can tell you a great deal if you know what to look for. Even though you most likely did not use words like "positivity" and "coordination" as you were noticing what was happening nonverbally during these interactions, you were still able to make sense of the behavior if you were in tune with the facial expressions, eye behavior, body language, and spatial distance between the people interacting. You were likely "framing" these behaviors and using them as a map to provide cues about how to interpret the communication acts within this context. When you are familiar with the cultural context, it is easier to accurately interpret these acts. It becomes more complicated when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.

It is important to keep in mind that the way in which rapport is expressed nonverbally is not universal. Each culture has a range of social norms and behaviors governing each of these three components. For example, mutual attentiveness includes mutual gaze, closer distance, and more direct body orientation. The appropriate use of space and eye contact will differ according to an individual's cultural background. The same behaviors that might work for you in the United States to build rapport, such as sustaining eye contact, can be perceived as threatening by others. Likewise, you can feel threatened or uncomfortable when someone stands too close to you when interacting. Such feelings can inhibit feelings of positivity, which impedes the development of rapport between counterparts. Similarly, positivity is characterized in conversation by smiling, touch, and mutual gaze (and you can probably guess how variation in what is considered appropriate would come into play with this one). Levels of comfort and appropriateness are dictated by the cultural norms of the groups present in the interaction, and oftentimes, they differ. Reaching the level of coordination — the behavioral balance

70 Ibid., 286.



of smooth responsiveness between conversational partners, which involves matching postures and gestures, mimicked expressions, and finely timed conversational turn-taking — takes time and a willingness to understand the cultural dynamics at play. Perspective-taking can facilitate this. Additionally, employing the skill of observation can help you obtain clues as to what is appropriate, and then, you can adjust your behavior as needed to achieve your goals.

*Revisiting the concept of identity*

A key consideration in the process of building rapport is the concept of identity. We covered identity earlier in the culture general concepts chapter. Here, we would like to discuss the role of identity, specifically the interplay between avowed and ascribed identity, in building rapport.

As you recall, there are two identity categories: avowed and ascribed. Avowed identity is how we choose to identify ourselves. An avowed identity is one which we envision for ourselves both consciously and subconsciously. Our actions and behaviors define who we are and then communicate that identity to people with whom we are interacting. Sometimes, we choose deliberately to do certain things to create a particular identity for ourselves like choosing to be a member of the U.S. military. An ascribed identity is an identity assigned to us by others. This could include, for example, some of the general qualities associated with being a Republican or a Democrat or with professions such as nursing or elementary education. Whether we agree with them or not, many people identify individuals aligned with these political parties or professions as having specific qualities and even of being a specific gender.

Because expectations vary so widely between individuals as well as different groups and cultures, people often experience having an ascribed identity that does not fit their avowed identity. This lack of congruence often depends on with whom we are communicating. For example, some veterans may have similar ideas of what it means to have served and ascribe an identity to other veterans that aligns with his/her avowed identity. A conscientious objector, on the other hand, may ascribe an entirely different identity and meaning to behaviors associated with military service. The process of rapport-building can begin when the identities that are ascribed to an individual "appropriately

and effectively" match those that are avowed by that person.[71] As it may be difficult to find that balance, it is important to put some thought into this when trying to build rapport with your counterparts. By emphasizing what you (as individuals) have in common — whether it is desires such as family security or shared identity as military professionals — and remembering collectively that identity is multifaceted and complex, you can work to lessen the feelings of mistrust and prejudice (see research on "managing identity threats"[72]) and work toward finding commonality between you. Another way to find common ground is to ask questions about cooking, sports, or family or inquire as to the "why" behind a ritual you have observed, noting its similarity to something in your personal experience. This helps to lessen the divide between self and other, demonstrates attentiveness to other, and can lead to a growth in positivity between self and other — all of which are fundamental to rapport building.

## IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING CULTURE SHOCK

### Discussion

As military professionals you face a lot of stressors in your job. There is, of course, the stress of combat and trauma and the stress of often finding yourselves operating from rough facilities while under significant logistical constraints. There is the stress from spending long periods away from home and your families. One form of stress that you encounter frequently, but may not recognize, is the stress that comes from encountering people whose values and ways of doing things are different from your own. Psychologists and sociologists frequently refer to this stress as "culture shock." Severe culture shock can result in lack of sleep, irritability, depression, a sense of helplessness, and a fear of losing control. Almost everyone will experience some form of culture shock when interacting with different cultures, no matter if you are a military professional, diplomat, humanitarian aid worker, or businessperson. If you are able to recognize and mitigate culture shock, you will

71 Mary J. Collier and Milt Thomas, "Cultural Identity: An Interpretive Perspective," *International and Intercultural Communication Annual* 12 (1988), 99-123, 101.

72 Walter G. Stephan and Cookie W. Stephan, "Cognition and Affect in Cross-Cultural Relation," in *Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Communication*, ed. William G. Gudykunst (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 111-26.



be less likely to experience it in its most severe forms.

In both the military and scientific literature, you may find mention of either culture stress or culture shock. Most of the time, both terms mean the same thing: a person's emotional reaction to the ambiguities of interacting with people and living in environments that are different from what he/she is used to. We use the term culture shock to avoid confusion with "post-traumatic stress," as these are two very different types of stress.

### Key Points

***Causes of culture shock***[73]

We are just going to say this up front: culture shock is not a sign of mental weakness. It is a real, normal stress that all people encounter. Treating it as anything but that is counterproductive and actually perpetuates the negative impact it can have on the individual, the unit, and the larger community. Culture shock tends to result from three sorts of situations: value conflicts, uncertainty, and failure of other cultures to live up to your expectations. In all three situations, culture shock occurs when people from a culture different from your own do things differently from how you would. Boredom and questions about whether your actions are producing results that match the intentions of you or your command can make these stressors more difficult to manage. Keep in mind that you can experience culture shock — or reverse culture shock — upon returning home as well as things may have changed or you may have grown accustomed to different values and routines.

*Value Conflicts*

Value conflicts provide the first source of culture shock. Enemies or foreign military partners might not play by the same rules of warfare that you do. For example, they might place little value on the rights of civilians or life itself, using disproportionate force, showing a reckless disregard for collateral damage, or even causing civilian casualties intentionally. Also, local soldiers and civilians may engage in drug use,

73 For a more comprehensive overview and additional sources related to culture shock, see Kristin Post, "Making the Case for a Renewed Focus on Culture Shock for the U.S. Military," *The Journal of Culture, Language, and International Security* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2015), 35-44.

practices that *you* regard as corrupt, such as bribery and nepotism, or other behaviors that conflict with your cultural norms. These all can and do cause an understandable amount of stress.

*Uncertainty*

Uncertainty provides a second source of culture shock, especially when it is related to the need to make high-stakes decisions. When you are already performing a difficult and stressful mission, possibly with enemies shooting at you, it can be nerve-wracking not to know what the people around you are doing, or why, because they do not behave like you. For example, if people do not smile when meeting you, you may not be sure whether their cultural rules about smiling are different or whether they have hostile feelings toward you. Also, unfamiliar eating or communication habits can cause stress, as you may be uncertain about how to behave so as not to offend.

*Unmet Expectations*

Culture shock can also occur when people in other cultures do not live up to your expectations. It is important to remember that your expectations are shaped by what you think is right and appropriate and that others have expectations as well, shaped by their own sense of right and appropriateness. Military personnel often experience culture shock when working with foreign military partners. Foreign soldiers may have different standards for weapons handling and security, or they may show up late, display minimal marksmanship skills, or do things that you might regard as unprofessional. Local civilians too may act in surprising ways. For example, they may have different hygiene standards (e.g., expectations of how food is to be prepared) or displays of respect (e.g., greeting expectations at meals). As another example, a local contractor may do work that does not match the standards you would expect from a contractor in the United States.

***Recognizing culture shock***

Before you can deal with culture shock, you have to be able to recognize it. Look for signs that something is bothering you. You may not be aware of what it is, or you may not even be thinking consciously about it at the moment. The following are signs that you may be experiencing some form of stress, possibly culture shock:



- Fatigue or insomnia
- Anger, disgust, frustration, or other uncontrollable emotions
- Fear and anxiety
- Confusion or disorientation
- Excessive worry or a sense of helplessness
- Changes in your routine, including what and how much you eat and how much and how fast you talk
- Others' reacting to you differently
- Changes in relationships

Bottom line is you need to know yourself. Reactions to culture shock can occur in the presence of the people who and in the situations that are causing the stress, e.g., a foreign military partner. However, culture shock can also manifest itself once you are away from the source of stress, such as when you get angry at a subordinate for no real reason. You may not even realize that you are acting differently. You, therefore, need to get regular feedback from other colleagues or your family or friends. Talk to people you can trust to tell you if there is a problem. Get feedback from a few different people because everyone may not see the same things or agree on whether you have changed.

Also, be aware of how your unit members are responding to the same or similar situations. Are they experiencing some of the symptoms above? They, too, can be experiencing culture shock and need to recognize it in themselves. Being able to recognize the source of the stress is the first step to managing its impact on the individual, the unit, and the larger community.

***Dealing with culture shock***

Once you recognize culture shock in yourself, you can take steps to deal with it. Just as you have techniques for dealing with combat and operational stress, there are techniques to handle culture shock. These techniques will help you operate with it "in the moment" and in the long term. There is no one formula for managing stress, but it is something you can do — "I can't help getting angry" simply is not true.

Even the most trivial kinds of events can cause culture shock when they cause you to question your assumptions and values. There are several things you can do that can help you face the challenges that culture

shock poses to mission accomplishment. These recommendations are very similar to the *Rules of the Road* provided at the beginning of this text and involve many of the skills we have just discussed.

*Accept things you do not like*

You may see things that you do not like. You do not have to accept that the beliefs and practices of a foreign culture are "right," but you do have to accept that they exist. They may violate your values, and you may feel that that they violate universal human values. You are allowed to feel this way, and feeling this way shows that you have a moral compass. In the short time that you will spend operating in a foreign culture, you will not be able to change the things that bother you. In these situations, getting angry at "them" for "making you" feel bad or frustrated will not achieve anything. You will have to put these issues aside to accomplish the mission. Practice letting go of things you cannot change.

*Suspend judgment, maintain tact and bearing, take alternative perspectives*

To accept things you do not like and move on requires you to suspend judgment, self-regulate, and look at things from different perspectives. Many times frustration mounts because of a failure to suspend judgment. We jump to conclusions, based on our own cultural background, about people's values and behaviors that inform our thoughts and feelings. Suspending judgment is the first step to changing that internal dialogue. Through self-regulation, you create the space to explore alternative explanations. Take the time to try to understand why the people in a foreign culture do what they do — that is, take their perspective. While there will be some things you do not agree with, if you understand people's motives, you will likely find it easier to accept those things. The locals were not brought up the same way as you, but most of them are not bad people. As discussed earlier, honing these skills when working with cultures different from your own will improve your ability to manage the (sometimes difficult) situations associated with mission accomplishment. They will also help you manage your internal responses to and think differently about, or reframe, the stressful situations you may encounter.



*Reframe your problems*

Reframing your problems presents a different way of thinking about the situation at hand. Instead of seeing aspects of another culture as obstacles to your mission, see them as challenges that you must overcome. Change the internal conversation you are having with yourself about the situation. You can look at the people from a different culture as the pieces of a puzzle, a puzzle that moves as people change and make new decisions. Challenge yourself to solve the puzzle rather than let it worry or frustrate you.

*Take Control*

While you may have to accept some things in the culture that you do not like, you choose how you respond to them. By using the concepts and skills discussed in this guidebook, you can explore creative ways to respond to get the job done. These concepts and skills will help you identify the things you can change and control. Focus on those rather than worrying about the things you cannot change. When you concentrate on the things you can control, you are more likely to feel confident than helpless.

*Relax*

When things are bothering you, find activities that help you relax like PT, sports, reading, a movie, or a conversation with a friend. Seek positive activities, not those that have a negative impact on your health and ability to accomplish the mission, e.g., junk food, alcohol, and drugs. When possible, consider including those from the other cultures, e.g., non-governmental agency workers, the local population, or partner forces, in these activities. Periodic "U.S. military personnel only" activities are acceptable, but keep in mind that groups who fully remove themselves from other cultures tend to experience even worse culture shock when they, once again, interact with them.

*Culture Shock and Partnering with Foreign Security Forces*[74]

Any combined partner exercise will likely involve co-habitation, possibly with partners who are armed. In Afghanistan and Iraq, there have been cases of insider attacks, causing U.S. military personnel to feel constantly vigilant around local security forces who, through ill will or accident, may hurt or kill U.S. forces. Take one Marine lieutenant, who was in charge of a quick reaction force (QRF) on a patrol base in Afghanistan. He was called to a scene on his patrol base (PB) late one night that appeared to cause him culture shock, even though he was not directly involved.

That night, a Marine on the PB was taking his "wag bag" (system of disposing of human waste) to the burn pit near the watch tower, which was located close to an entry control point. The Marine heard a noise in the brush near the burn pit and shone his flashlight on a man. He asked in Dari what the man was doing. It turns out the person was an Afghan policeman who lives on the same PB. The policeman racked his weapon in the Marine's face. The lieutenant's QRF quickly arrived, and the situation was de-escalated. No one was hurt. Afterward, the Afghan said he thought he was racking his weapon in a fellow Afghan's face as a joke. And though it was the Afghan who put the Marine in danger, it was the Marine who was reprimanded by his chain of command for his involvement, according to the QRF lieutenant. This illustrates a clear conflict of values between the Marines, who constantly emphasize safe weapons handling, with the other forces who see poor muzzle discipline as funny and who might rack their weapon as a joke.

Furthermore, this story seems to be about a miscarriage of justice, where the Marine gets punished and the Afghan does not. Without knowing more about the Afghan National Police, it is difficult to know what kinds of actions are punishable in what way. By comparison, the Marines have an extremely rigorous system of discipline and punishment that is likely unrivalled by most foreign militaries and U.S. civilian organizations.

In this example, we do not know if the Marine who was threatened by the Afghan policemen ever had feelings of culture shock. We know the QRF lieutenant had ongoing feelings of outrage, even after returning to the United States. Interestingly, culture shock is not only due to direct experience. It can also result from minor incidents, rumors, stories, and cumulative events.

74 Based upon interview notes with a lieutenant, conducted 04 January 2012. This interview was part of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Longitudinal Study of Impact of Culture Training Products, deemed to be not human subjects research by an Institutional Review Board Applicability Review, dated 31 March 2011.



*Talk*

Talking out your responses to such stressors with trusted agents is helpful when dealing with culture shock. These conversations can help you to understand the other culture better and also why aspects of it bother you. They can also reassure you that you are not crazy because you think something is disturbing. During a mission, you may want to talk things out with unit members or one of your leaders. Outside of the mission, you may want to reach out to friends or to someone who can give you an objective perspective, such as a combat psychologist or someone else trained in counseling.

## WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER

### Discussion

We have yet to discuss the added complexity of the presence of an interpreter in interactions with foreign populations. More often than not, your interactions as military professionals with foreign populations will involve the need for an interpreter. An interpreter is someone who takes oral messages in one language and transforms them into another language, maintaining the cultural nuances, tone, and intent of the original meaning. Note: a translator does this with written text. While the presence of interpreters in an interaction typically is value-added, there is the potential for increased uncertainty, conversational strain, and misunderstanding during the interaction without intentional planning and management of the interaction. In addition to the variation in values, languages, communication styles, and nonverbal preferences between you and your counterparts, you now have a third party in the mix with distinct values, views, and behaviors. Furthermore, you have to keep a variety of goals in mind, those that deal with the outcome of the interaction as well as those that support the interaction process. Thus, using an interpreter requires some additional thinking and preparatory work to maximize the potential for a positive interaction outcome.

Before you start working with an interpreter, it is critical to know who your interpreter is. Here are just a few considerations and questions you should consider: Is this interpreter ... a native speaker? Fluent in English? Familiar with the military (U.S. or other)? Reliable? Loyal (and to whom)? Of a high or low social status? Skilled in areas outside

of interpreting (e.g., a former professor/doctor/merchant)? Familiar with your operational environment (refugee from the local area; if so, from how long ago)? Compatible (with you and with the population or counterparts)? Where is this interpreter from? Interpreters' cultural, personal, and professional backgrounds will shape their perceptions, their language proficiencies, and possibly their interpretations. Interpreters may be filling a standardized job description, but each one comes to the position with different capabilities, motivations for taking the job, commitment to the mission, expectations about treatment and safety, and concerns about doing the work. The more you know about your interpreter, the more effectively you will be able to work together and the more likely it is that you will be able to anticipate problems and opportunities and obtain the interaction outcome you are seeking.

When you first meet your interpreter, as with most initial meetings with someone you do not know and with whom you are going to work, you will want to take some time to build rapport and get to know each other. Asking about professional background and familiarity with your area of operations are good places to start. Depending on where you are, family (keeping in mind cultural taboos that may be relevant) and non-mission related topics, such as sports preferences or travel, also can be good to bring up.

To be a successful team, there needs to be a sense of mutual trust between the two of you. Continuing to build rapport through meal sharing and informal conversations and demonstrating willingness to take care of the interpreter with necessary food, sleeping arrangements, equipment, and down time or time off as the mission allows both go a long way in establishing that trust. As with any relationship, trust often comes with genuine caring and interest in one another. You need to get to a level of trust where you both feel like you can come to the other when there is confusion or lack of understanding, even if that is during an interaction. Minimizing the potential for misunderstandings through planning and rehearsing prior to interactions helps. For instance, if you are teaching a rifle range class and your interpreter does not understand the term "marksmanship," you will want to figure this out before you and the interpreter are standing in front of a hundred foreign soldiers, where saving face for both of you is now at risk.



Good interpreters are extremely valuable; most of them know this and take pride in their work. By showing your appreciation through your actions, your time, and your respect for their work, you are validating how valuable interpreters are. You are also building rapport and trust. All of this will enable a better relationship, which is likely to have a positive impact on your mission.

**Key Points**

*Unique considerations when involving an interpreter in your interactions*

Earlier, you learned about the POCESAD process. When using an interpreter, many of the same procedures apply. With or without an interpreter, the pre-planning, planning, and disengaging steps are critical as are your observational skills, your ability to suspend judgment, and your ability to maintain tact and bearing. With interpreters, additional considerations apply and will be discussed here.

*Planning*

If you have ever launched an exercise, patrol, or training and suddenly realized that three people needed an interpreter for three different reasons, you would not be the first one to do so. As you know, planning does not take care of every contingency, but it is useful in anticipating friction. As you start your planning process, think about what is going on and who needs interpreters. In many situations, enlisted personnel and officers may be doing different activities, and both groups may need interpreters. Also, think about who or what the priority is. If you are hosting a gathering of officials, you may think it is important to place your only interpreter side-by-side with the officers. But perhaps you are better off putting the interpreter at the security checkpoint with the lance corporal, at least at the beginning, because the arriving dignitaries are not used to being frisked nor being done so by a younger man, and as a result, these dignitaries may be offended, may hold up the security line, could delay the start of the meeting, or even derail the whole thing because of a perceived affront. These kinds of considerations require an understanding of the culture of your area of operations. Interpreters oftentimes can help with this if they are already available. Once you have established position and quantity, you can start planning for the interaction.

*Planning Questions*

Using the "four Ws and how," here are some basic questions that can help you and your interpreter prepare for the interaction.

1. Who
   a. Who are you going to speak with? How many people?
   b. Are there any obvious areas of concern with regard to your interpreter and the person/ people you are engaging (differences/similarities in age, gender, ethnicity, historical perspective, rank, etc.)?
2. Where
   a. Are you going to be outside or inside?
   b. Does your interpreter have any suggestions for how to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere?
3. When
   a. What time of the day is your engagement?
   b. Are there any daily routines or religious activities to consider?
4. What
   a. What are you going to discuss?
   b. Will this topic be difficult for any reason? Are there sensitive areas to be aware of or to avoid?
   c. Does your interpreter understand the words that are associated with this topic (acronyms, phrases, important concepts, etc.)?
5. How
   a. What type of engagement is this? Is this a meeting? A negotiation? Are you stopping him or her on the street?
   b. Are there appropriate greetings and rituals to know given your anticipated approach?



**So you're John Smith. Is your father Ed Smith of Decatur?**

Foreign names can be particularly hard to hear, remember, spell, and pronounce. If you know who you are meeting, ask your interpreter to help you properly pronounce your counterparts' name. If you do not know their names prior to the meeting, ask your interpreter to bring some paper and a pen to write down names when introductions are made. This avoids back-and-forth transliteration, it should help your meeting start more smoothly, and it can be especially helpful if the language does not use Latin alphabet (e.g. Russian, Georgian, Arabic, etc.). Your interpreter may not always know how to read and write, so ask. Also, keep in mind people do not always introduce themselves first name/last name. For instance, in Chinese and Korean, the last name is usually said first. Others may introduce themselves with an honorific (e.g., Professor Bob, Governor Jones). Make sure you clarify with your interpreter, especially if you are still fairly new to an area.

Finally, in some places and in some religious and ethnic groups, certain names are very common, so you may end up meeting many "John Smiths." Just as the "Global Address List" uses middle initials to distinguish between common first/last name combinations in different branches of the military, people have different ways of distinguishing between common names in their communities. Ask your interpreter what question to ask. It may be that a location, ethnic group, or mother's or father's name will be useful in distinguishing this person from others in the area with the same name. Getting a person's name accurately is not only polite, it may be also important for security purposes.

***Rehearsing***

Rehearsing lessens the opportunities for unnecessary mistakes and cultural missteps and heightens the opportunity for a smooth start to the interaction. Work with your interpreter to ensure that you have the proper pronunciation and the proper terms of address (for example, using "usted", the formal "you" in Spanish) for initial greetings and introductory remarks. Also, ask the interpreter to help you practice physical greetings. If individuals in this culture expect you to kiss both cheeks as a respectful greeting, they may approach you in this way, and you should be prepared. If this gesture makes you uncomfortable, you might need to get over your discomfort prior to the engagement. Also, review any possible confusing or unknown "terms of art" or acronyms

that may arise during the course of the interaction. You will want to make sure that your interpreter is familiar with military concepts enough to be able to explain them to your counterparts if necessary. While it is best to avoid acronyms, you will want to introduce your interpreter to those that may surface to avoid confusion during the interaction. Depending on the type of engagement and level of formality, you may need to also rehearse where you will enter and leave a room, who enters the room in what order, seating arrangements, presentation of food or drink, and other protocol, as each of these sends messages to those involved in the interaction. In addition to greetings, it helps if you know enough of the foreign language to know when certain points are being conveyed. If your bottom line in a contract negotiation is $5000 and you know how to say that in Tagalog, then you will know when your interpreter is faithfully interpreting that part of the conversation to the Philippine contractor.

***Contact and Engage***

The key to execution is making sure you are perceived as the person giving and receiving the message despite the fact that the interpreter is the main conduit of the information. You need to manage the interaction. The culture general concepts and skills covered in this chapter can help you. Specifically in relation to using an interpreter, you need to be mindful of positioning, pacing and phrasing of your speech, and the nonverbal messages being sent from you, your interpreter, and your counterparts.

You need to be positioned in the role of the authority. Therefore, you need to consider how to place yourself and your interpreter in relation to your counterpart (whether an individual, an important individual in a group, or a group of equals) to create that message (remember proxemics). Make sure your interpreter can still be heard. Circumstances and your own preference will determine how this looks. For beginners, try putting the interpreter to your right and slightly behind you, so you do not make the mistake of talking to the interpreter instead of the person you are engaging. Ensure you address your counterpart directly. If culturally appropriate, maintain eye contact with your audience. It may be useful to glance at your interpreter every once in a while, but you do not want to appear as if you are having the conversation with your interpreter.



To help your interpreter, establish a steady pace and use simple words and short phrases. Break what you want to say into short phrases with pauses in between; however, do not pause so much that the interpreter does not understand the meaning of what you are saying. Remember sentence construct varies among languages, and your interpreter may need the complete sentence or your complete thought to be able to convey your meaning.

During your interaction, you need to listen both with your ears and eyes to the verbal and nonverbal messages being sent by both your interpreter and your counterparts. Watch for cues from your interpreter, such as the following:

- Is your interpreter showing you signs to slow down or speed up?
- Are your counterparts speaking too quickly or too long for the interpreter?
- Is your interpreter showing discomfort over something that you have just said?
- Is your interpreter showing signs of not hearing or understanding what you have said?
- Is your interpreter showing signs that you are being insulted?

Also, be mindful of the messages you are sending to ensure you are conveying what you intend. This will help you steer the conversation appropriately. You can use strategic pauses in the conversation to confer with your interpreter. Do this when you need to clarify, when you sense a loss of rapport, or when you need to plan your next step. Brief and infrequent interruptions will generally not be perceived as overly rude. All of this is a lot to do while you are also thinking of what to say and listening to what your counterpart is saying. It will take practice.

***Debrief and check for understanding***

It is always important to have a conversation with your interpreter after the engagement is finished. Sometimes, this will be a simple conversation, checking for your understanding and assessing the general demeanor of those involved in the interaction. If you were instructing, ask your interpreter how much the students seemed to understand what you were teaching. If you were talking to a civilian in a combat environment, you may want to check whether or not the interpreter

felt the responses to your questions were reliable. When the engagement was confusing or went poorly, explain to your interpreter what you think went wrong, identify the confusing responses or reactions, and get the interpreter's opinion about why the response was not as expected. Perhaps the reason is cultural (people here tell stories that indirectly answer questions) or perhaps you are stumbling over different meanings for the same word. There also may be power dynamics that your interpreter was not able to explain during your engagement.

The debrief is a good time to reinforce what you like about the interpreter's style and identify ways he or she could do better. Make sure you also ask the interpreter to let you know how you can improve. If necessary, take notes, so that you can benefit from lessons learned and have more successful future interactions.

**Common mistakes**

| Common mistakes military personnel make | Common mistakes interpreters make |
|---|---|
| 1) Looking at the interpreter and saying "tell him ..." | 1) Looking at the person next to you and saying "he said ..." |
| 2) Speaking too long before breaking | 2) Not admitting when they do not know a word or phrase |
| 3) Using acronyms and military terms | 3) Over- or under-interpreting or inserting their own thoughts |
| 4) Not remembering how much time it takes to interpret and planning for too much during the meeting/training period/etc. | 4) Being helpful by having a side conversation to explain something but not explaining the conversation to you |
| 5) Not planning and rehearsing the engagement with the interpreter | |
| 6) Treating the interpreter like a military person | |



## CONCLUSION

The skills presented in this chapter of the guidebook serve to help you structure your thinking and behavior to maximize your effectiveness throughout your military career no matter your mission or operating environment. They are the fundamental skills that you use every day to navigate and influence the world around you, albeit mostly subconsciously as they are so integrated into your thinking and behavior. This text aims to help you understand how you can consciously employ them to affect relational and mission outcomes. Whether you are an intelligence analyst, a foreign military advisor, and a small unit patrol leader, these skills help you build awareness of and shape your response to the information, people, and situations you encounter to obtain the outcome you need.

The culture general concepts and skills we have covered in these two chapters of the guidebook are tools, not silver bullets. You can still misinterpret or draw inaccurate conclusions about the information, behavior, and situations you encounter. In almost all intercultural interactions, inevitably somebody makes a mistake or unknowingly does something that upsets or angers the other people involved. In such cases, your understanding of human behavior, mastery of the skills here, and the relationships you have developed may not prevent the incident, but they can help you work through it. Also, there will be times when you are not able to find a way to accomplish the mission without some disruption to local patterns. However, your ability to observe, accurately assess a situation, and build relationships makes it more likely that you will be able to:

- carry out effective analysis that will have positive impacts on mission planning and execution,
- design policies, plans, and programs that will have the impact you need,
- be a more effective leader, both of your unit and out in the field,
- accurately assess when you are truly at an impasse rather than experiencing a cross-cultural challenge that can be worked through,

- preserve the good will and rapport you have established for when you really need it, in operations or to make essential changes, rather than depleting it by pushing for unnecessary changes,
- design and implement changes in partnership with the people you encounter rather than imposing the changes yourself, which makes it more likely the changes will stay in place without your active involvement, and
- makes accurate assessments of the obstacles and opportunities in the situation and choose the most effective course of action.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A: REFERENCES


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# APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This appendix provides supplemental materials for readers who wish to delve deeper into particular culture general or intercultural topics. The appendix beings with a basic book list. The remainder of appendix contains annotated references. As much as possible, we have associated references with specific areas of the guidebook. However, many of the references provided speak to multiple concepts and skills.

## BOOK LIST

1. Abramowitz, Sharon, and Catherine Panter-Brick, eds. *Medical Humanitarianism: Ethnographies of Practice.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

2. Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

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# ANNOTATIONS

## GUIDEBOOK PREFACE

### Area: Why focus on culture general?

Eriksen, Thomas. *What Is Anthropology?* Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004.

DISCUSSION. *What is Anthropology* is a well-written and easy to understand introductory text for non-anthropologists to get a good overview of anthropology and fore-grounding culture in general. This text will likely contribute to enticing the reader to think about culture by providing concise and interesting examples throughout the history of the anthropology to illustrate the foundational theories that have contributed to the field of anthropology.

GOOGLE BOOKS SUMMARY. *Leading anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen shows how anthropology is a revolutionary way of thinking about the human world. Perfect for students, but also for those who have never encountered anthropology before, this book explores the key issues in an exciting and innovative way. Eriksen explains how to see the world from below and from within - emphasising the importance of adopting an insider's perspective. He reveals how seemingly enormous cultural differences actually conceal the deep unity of humanity. Lucid and accessible,* What is Anthropology? *draws examples from current affairs as well as anthropological studies. The first section presents the history of anthropology, its unique research methods and some of its central concepts, such as society, culture and translation. Eriksen shows how anthropology helps to shape contemporary thinking and why it is inherently radical. In the second section he discusses core issues in greater detail. Reciprocity, or exchange, or gift-giving, is shown to be the basis of every society. Eriksen examines kinship in traditional societies, and shows why it remains important in complex ones. He argues nature is partly cultural, and explores anthropological views on human nature as well as ecology. He delves into cultural relativism and the problem of understanding others. Finally, he describes the paradoxes of identity - ethnic, national, religious or postmodern, as the case may be.*

Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

DISCUSSION. This text demonstrates why cultural understanding is critical and how difficult intercultural interaction can be despite the best of intentions. In this case, the outcome of cultural misunderstanding is tragic—a young girl suffers irreparable brain damage. For military professionals, the cost can be as high and at times at a grander scale. When involved in the human endeavor, things get messy. This text exemplifies that and shows the depths of the divides that are possible between peoples. It also describes in human story the concepts and skills detailed in the guidebook.

AMAZON DESCRIPTION. The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down *explores the clash between a small county hospital in California and a refugee family from Laos over the care of Lia Lee, a Hmong child diagnosed with severe epilepsy. Lia's parents and her doctors both wanted what was best for Lia, but the lack of understanding between them led to tragedy. Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Current Interest, and the Salon Book Award, Anne Fadiman's compassionate account of this cultural impasse is literary journalism at its finest. The current edition, published for the book's fifteenth anniversary, includes a new afterword by the author that provides updates on the major characters along with reflections on how they have changed Fadiman's life and attitudes.*



## GUIDEBOOK CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Area: Cross-Cultural Competence

Bennett, Janet. "Cultivating Intercultural Competence." In *Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence.* Edited by Darla Deardorff, 121-140. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009.

DISCUSSION. Bennett's chapter frames a discussion of intercultural competence in terms of knowledge, motivation, and skills that enable us to interact effectively and appropriately. The examples she provides to illustrate cultural humility, perspective-taking, and curiosity as enablers of intercultural competence are applicable in a wide variety of contexts.

Additionally, Bennett's explanation of cultural variability with regard to cognitive styles should resonate well with military audiences. She draws from Nisbett's *The Geography of Thought* in her explanation of a culture map (p. 129) by referring to the following differences in thinking styles: "patterns of attention and perception...preferred patterns of explanation for events...habits of organizing the world...use of formal logic rules...application of dialectal approaches." Although the chapter appears cluttered with parenthetical citations, the content provides a strong jumping-off point for those wishing to become more familiar with intercultural competence as a multi-dimensional construct.

EXCERPT. *This chapter will establish a shared terminology, review relevant contexts for intercultural competence, and explore an approach to cultivating intercultural competence, either individually or in a team, a classroom, or an organization. We will examine an intercultural positioning system as a key part of this process and illustrate a series of steps for developing intercultural competence based on attitudes, knowledge, and skills. ... When we use the intercultural positioning tool, we are looking at the interface between two or more individuals with differing cultural maps and attempts to develop a strategy for integrating their values, beliefs, and behaviors in order to enhance the effectiveness of their interaction. (pp. 122, 126)*

Turnley, Jessica G. "Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are." JSOU. MacDill AFB: Joint Special Operations University, 2011. Accessed December 11, 2017. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/jsou/why_sof_are_the_way_sof_are_turnley_mar2011.pdf.

DISCUSSION. This monograph addresses a few questions specific to special operating forces (SOF) by first taking a step back and exploring the concept of the "warrior diplomat." This concept merges kinetic and non-kinetic roles. Turnley writes that to achieve this combination, a training curriculum needs to include cultural concepts, culture general and culture specific knowledge, and cross-cultural skills. In Chapter 3, she explains cross-cultural competence simply and elegantly using graphics and text. The rest of the monograph deals with questions specific to SOF, including how the four branches of service have incorporated cross-cultural competence into special forces training and the benefits of a small team size in regard to flexibility, creativity, and cohesion. This text is a well-written illustration of how cross-cultural competence fits into the broader concepts of war and mission accomplishment.

EXCERPT. *There is evidence that culture-general knowledge alone is more valuable for effective cross-cultural interaction (i.e., movement among cultures) than regional (culture-specific) knowledge alone or linguistic knowledge alone (assuming that the regional or linguistic knowledge is not of the target area). That said, the zone of greatest effectiveness is clearly at the intersection of the three where the operator has culture-general knowledge, information about a particular region, and linguistic proficiency in the target language. (p. 26)*



**Area: What is Culture?**

Ingold, Tim. *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2002.

DISCUSSION. While encyclopedic in name, the editor of the volume designed this text to serve beyond the bounds of a reference book. Its purpose: "namely to lay the foundations for an integrated and synoptic perspective on the conditions of human life that is appropriate to the challenges of the next century" (p. xxi). A bit heady, yes, but the text is written to be readable, accessible to the serious student as well as the curious-minded peruser. It provides under one cover a good compendium of knowledge to provide military professionals a solid foundation for understanding human thinking and behavior upon which to place their experiences and interactions. Each of the three sections opens with an introduction by the editor, who is cited within the guidebook's introductory section, *What is Culture?* Each chapter discusses a particular theme, the heading of which could serve as a "look here if you have questions about ..." flag, per se. For military professionals, whose profession is ultimately a human endeavor, understanding what makes people tick, how they think, and the diverse range of lived experiences is fundamental to being effective across the range of their military operations and throughout their military careers.

EXCERPT. *This is an encyclopedia of anthropology, it is not an encyclopedia about anthropology. The distinction is critical, and underwrites both the content of the articles that follow and the structure of the volume as a whole. ... This volume, then, is about human life in all its aspects, and each article, focusing on some specific aspect, sets out what current studies in anthropology (and in several cases, in contingent disciplines) have to say about it.*
*The same principle informs the division of the volume into its three parts, respectively entitled 'humanity', 'culture' and 'social life'. The emphasis, in the first, is on human beings as members of a species, on how that species differs from others, on how it has evolved, and on how human populations have adapted to - and in turn transformed - their environments. The second part focuses on the origination, structure, transmission and material expression of the symbolically constituted forms of human culture, and on the role*

*of culture in action, perception and cognition. The third part examines the various facets - familial, economic, political, and so on - of the relationships and processes that are carried on by persons and groups, through the medium of cultural forms, in the historical process of social life. Each part begins with an introductory article that sets out the substantive areas to be covered in greater depth, and places the articles that follow in their wider anthropological context. (pp. xviii-xix)*

D'Andrade, Roy G. "Schemas and Cultural Models." In *Human Motives and Cultural Models,* edited by Roy G. D'Andrade and Claudia Strauss, 23–44. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

DISCUSSION. The chapter, "Schemas and Cultural Models," while somewhat academic in tone, is a reasonable short overview of an important line of thinking in connecting culture and individual human action. In DoD, it is fairly common to hear culture discussed as a "driver" of human behavior. However, on a practical level, we all know that there is no external cloud of culture surrounding people and forcing them to do things. So, what is really happening. The patterned thought and behavior we think of as culture arises from the actions of thinking and behavior of individual people. In turn, those people are influenced by their perception of the patterns. There is, in short, a reciprocal or feedback relationship. This chapter focuses on the relationship between individuals and culture with a specific emphasis on motivation. For military personnel who want to understand how culture shapes behavior and how individual behavior can change culture over time, this chapter provides one avenue into the way social scientists think about these issues.

PUBLISHER'S ABSTRACT. *A full understanding of human action requires an understanding of what motivates people to do what they do. For too many years studies of motivation and of culture have drawn from different theoretical paradigms. Typically, human motivation has been modelled on animal behaviour, while culture has been described as pure knowledge or symbol. The result has been insufficient appreciation of the role of culture in human motivation and a truncated view of culture as disembodied knowledge. In this volume, anthropologists have attempted a different approach, seeking to integrate knowledge, desire, and action in a single explanatory framework.*



*This research builds upon recent work in cognitive anthropology on cultural models, that is, shared cognitive schemas through which human realities are constructed and interpreted, while also drawing upon insights from developmental psychology, psychoanalytic theory, and social theory. Most of the research described here was conducted in the United States and deals with some of the pressing concerns - romance, marriage, parenthood, and success - of women and men from different class and ethnic backgrounds. A study of gender roles in Mexico provides comparative cross-cultural data. Several of the chapters deal with oppressive social ideologies, exploring cultural models of gender and class. The careful, in-depth case studies and innovative methods of discourse analysis used here turn up findings about the relation of ideology to people's thought and action that challenge any kind of simple social determinism.*

**Area: A Note on Service Frameworks**

Salmoni, Barak A., and Paula Holmes-Eber. *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications.* 2nd ed. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011.

DISCUSSION. This is an example of the service frameworks. As noted in the guidebook, each service has its own framework to systematically organize cultural information. As the reference for the Marine Corps' Five Dimensions of Operational Culture framework, this text has been integrated throughout Marine Corps culture-related training and education curricula to facilitate Marine understanding of how to "think systematically about culture and apply that thinking" (p. 2) to their planning processes and mission execution. The five dimensions — environment, economy, social structure, political structure, and belief systems — are portrayed as interwoven features of a culture group, not as silos of information. The text was originally designed to fill a noted gap in Marine preparation and planning processes — that of incorporating the local population and its culture and considerations into mission planning and execution. The culture operator's questions in Appendix B are useful tools to get interested practitioners started on thinking about culture and how it could impact mission outcomes.

FROM BACK COVER. Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications *is a comprehensive planning tool and reference. It addresses the critical need of the Marine Corps to provide operationally relevant cultural teaching, training, and analysis. This book links social science paradigms to the needs of Marines using an applied anthropology approach. The text explains how fundamental features of culture (environment, economy, social structure, political structure, and belief systems) can present challenges for military operations in different cultures around the globe. Drawing on the research and field experiences of Marines themselves, Operational Culture for the Warfighter uses case studies from past and present cross-cultural problems to illustrate the application of cultural principles to the broad expeditionary spectrum of today's and tomorrow's Marine Corps.*

*This new and expanded second edition of Operational Culture for the Warfighter extends the concepts of the original edition to the Marine Corps Planning Process. New sections on transportation and communication, law and ethics, and culture and planning will assist both military planners and operators with the practical aspects of incorporating culture into military decision-making. This book is intended for use by Marine leaders at all levels of professional military education, planning, and operating.*



## GUIDEBOOK CHAPTER 2: CULTURE GENERAL CONCEPTS

### Thinking Process: Holism

Varhola, Christopher H. "Cows, Korans, and Kalashnikovs: The Multiple Dimensions of Conflict in the Nuba Mountains of Central Sudan." *Military Review* 87, no. 3 (May/Jun 2007): 46–55.

DISCUSSION. The author as both an Army reservist and a cultural anthropologist offers unique insight into the culturally complex challenges facing military professionals. In this case, he was part of an international team monitoring the 2002 ceasefire agreement in the Sudan (pre-split). He describes the competing, contradictory motivations of the various players on the ground, ranging from the international team members and government personnel to NGOs and interpreters to the rebel fighters, how that shaped actions and behaviors, and how he navigated this through "constant analysis of the social, economic, religious, and cultural factors that influenced the conflict." His account depicts holistic thinking in action and reinforces the necessity of approaching any mission, partnership, and interaction with the understanding that there is never a single cause for or explanation of human behavior and that it takes diligence, observation, and analysis of the interwoven cultural factors to make sound decisions to influence mission outcome.

AUTHOR'S NOTE. *With continued massive human suffering and violence in Darfur, there is discussion about increasing U.S. and international military involvement in the Sudan. With that in mind, this article provides an overview of the 2002 cease-fire monitoring mission in the Nuba Mountains of central Sudan. Singular, bounded, and often inchoate causes-"It is a religious conflict "; "It is a competition for diminishing resources "-are often given as explanations for the conflict there and in Darfur. These explanations are not wrong in themselves, but they are inaccurate and misleading, if one examines them in isolation. The discord in the Nuba Mountains, for example, predates the actual fighting that began in the 1980s and has roots more complex than ethnic or racial difference between the Arab (primarily Islamic) North and African (mainly Christian) South. The current conflict is the most recent product of historical enmities and clashes that coalesce along socioeconomic lines.*

Rubinstein, Robert A. "Intervention and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Peace Operations." *Security Dialog* 36, no. 4 (2005): 527–44.

DISCUSSION. This article talks about the role of culture in peacekeeping missions. First, it discusses how peacekeeping interventions are not necessarily objectively good endeavors and can run up against complications if the cultural context is not taken into account. Additionally, the author discusses how peacekeeping interventions are surrounded by rituals that legitimize the intervention. For peacekeeping, the legitimization is based in a "cultural inversion" that makes actions that would seem weak on geopolitical and economic world stages seem just and appropriate. With the UN as its main legitimizing organization, peacekeeping is validated at the global scale. The author refers to this as the "root metaphor." However, the author asserts that in more recent years, the cultural inversions that support the root metaphor are disappearing, and as a result peacekeeping missions are beginning to look more like economic competition or even warfare. This is important to military professionals because it details not only why culture is important in any intervention, peaceful or otherwise, but also how intervention is legitimized through certain organizations and their attendant ideologies.

AUTHOR'S ABSTRACT. *Culture is increasingly an important consideration in peace operations. Efforts to ameliorate culture-based difficulties between organizations participating in missions and between mission elements and local populations are proliferating. These focus on providing guidance about what to expect and how to act toward individuals from other cultural groups. This article shows that such advice is insufficient for understanding how culture affects peacekeeping. A general framework is presented for linking cultural elements to a deeper symbolic level from which peacekeeping derives its legitimacy, standing, and authority. The importance of the root metaphor of the United Nations as an institution for creating a world in which national interests and cut-throat geopolitical power relations are trumped by collective action is explicated. Peacekeeping is shown to be linked to this root metaphor through a number of behavioral inversions. When those inversions are not part of a peacekeeping mission, the entire instrument of peacekeeping is destabilized.*



**Thinking Process: Holism**
**Knowledge Area: Staying Well and Dealing with Illness**
**Culture General Skills: Perspective Taking**

Abramowitz, Sharon, and Catherine Panter-Brick, eds. *Medical Humanitarianism: Ethnographies of Practice.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

DISCUSSION. This book uses twelve different ethnographies to examine the practice and predicaments of medical humanitarianism, which is defined as "the field of biomedical, public health, and epidemiological initiatives undertaken to save lives and alleviate suffering in conditions of crises born of conflict, neglect, or disaster" (p. 1). The authors stress that it is important to look at medical intervention through a critical lens, noting that not everything done under the banner of medical humanitarianism yields positive results. For example, executing an intervention based on the ethical belief that all humans should have access to clean water might have unintended negative political consequences. In using case studies, this book demonstrates that cultural context is important and that each intervention is unique, meaning that medical humanitarianism is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. This is important for military professionals because it highlights the imperative to take a holistic approach to any intervention, both in its execution and in evaluating its aftermath.

EXCERPT. *Since the nineteenth century, when humanitarian aid emerged as an important moral force in the modern era, medical humanitarian interventions have been present at battlefields to provide care, triage, and comfort to the dying and have delivered material goods such as bandages and prostheses to the survivors of war and disaster. Throughout the twentieth century, and especially after the end of the Cold War, medical humanitarianism grew in scale and complexity, moving far beyond its early goal of direct physical and spiritual support to the creation of clinics, hospitals, and camps where refugees can seek services ranging from surgery to mental health counseling and HIV/AIDS treatment. Today medical humanitarianism holds a prominent presence in international development, global health, human rights advocacy, and international peacekeeping and diplomacy. (p. 4)*

**Thinking Process: Holism**
**Knowledge Area: Interaction with the Environment**
**Culture General Skill: Perspective Taking**

Oliver-Smith, Anthony. *Defying Displacement: Grassroots Resistance and the Critique of Development.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

DISCUSSION. This book begins by explicating "development" as it is commonly conceived, noting how the predominant notion of development is concerned mostly with economics over, for example, biodiversity and cultural connections to land. Because of its inherent power hierarchy in which economic development supersedes most other variables, the predominant notion of development has directly and indirectly caused the displacement of millions of people. Grassroots and non-traditional concepts of development counter this through placing emphasis on concertedly applying an ethical and holistic approach to development. This book is important for military professionals because it challenges the reader to think about the often taken-for-granted subject of development in a new light, much like a Marine, soldier, airman, or sailor has to remember not to assume that all the concepts s/he knows will be seamlessly accepted and equally valued in the culture in which s/he is working.

EXCERPT. *When people are displaced by development projects of whatever stripe or order, the disruption and trauma that are afflicted may be profound, an unintentional result perhaps, but one that has been considered by decision-makers to be an acceptable risk or cost, whether or not efforts are made to mitigate it. People displaced by development, now many millions a year, face enormous material losses, as well as the radical necessity of reinvention of self and community. Resettlement imposes forces and conditions on people that may completely transform their lives, evoking profound changes in the environment, in productive activities, in social organization and interaction, in leadership and political structure, and in world view and ideology. Resettlement means uprooting people from their environments in which the vast majority of their meaningful activities have taken place and on which much of their understanding of life is based. (pp. 10-11)*



**Thinking Process: Variation**
**Knowledge Areas: Organizing and Interacting, Expressing Ideas and Identity**

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

DISCUSSION. This book is a firsthand account of an anthropologist's time living with a Bedouin community in Egypt for nearly two years. The central focus of the book is the oral poetry used by young men and women in the community and the personal and interpersonal purposes that it serves. According to the anthropologist, poetry is used to express experiences and desires that are outside of the norms of society, such as immodesty and lust. The book's take-home message of the "peaceful" coexistence of cultural norms and taboos is relevant to military professionals because it deftly illustrates that cultures are more complex than they might at first appear and that cultures always contain contradictions between ideology and experience. Just think of all the contradictions between US cultural values and the US citizens that you know!

EXCERPT. *What are individuals symbolizing about themselves through expression of these non-virtuous sentiments? What is it about poetry that allows it to be used to express sentiments contrary to those appropriate to the ideals of honor without jeopardizing the reputations of those who recite it? What are individuals communicating about themselves and the society they live in through poems that express sentiments suggesting defiance of the moral system? Recognizing that both sets of responses are conventional, what is the significance of having two cultural discourses for the articulation of individual sentiments? To the extent that what people say, within in ordinary discourse or in the conventional and stylized discourse of poetry, can serve as a window into their experience, what does the discrepancy between the two modes of discourse tell us about the power of the ideology of honor and modesty to shape experience? (p. 35)*

**Thinking Process: Change**
**Knowledge Area: Organizing and Interacting**

Lubkemann, Stephen C. *Culture in Chaos: An Anthropology of the Social Condition in War.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

DISCUSSION. This piece is an in-depth anthropological examination of the many social struggles and complications brought about by violent conflict in a region. At 400 pages, it is not a short read, but it does provide a very specific look at how conflict shapes the lives of those living in regions where a continuous state of warfare has become the norm. Lubkemann's work gives the reader a unique look at the often unseen, long term consequences of warfare for those who are forced to live in battlespaces and places of long-term historic conflict and the social changes that come with this adaptation.

PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION. *Fought in the wake of a decade of armed struggle against colonialism, the Mozambican civil war lasted from 1977 to 1992, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives while displacing millions more. As conflicts across the globe span decades and generations, Stephen C. Lubkemann suggests that we need a fresh perspective on war when it becomes the context for normal life rather than an exceptional event that disrupts it.* Culture in Chaos *calls for a new point of departure in the ethnography of war that investigates how the inhabitants of war zones live under trying new conditions and how culture and social relations are transformed as a result.*

*Lubkemann focuses on how Ndau social networks were fragmented by wartime displacement and the profound effect this had on gender relations. Demonstrating how wartime migration and post-conflict return were shaped by social struggles and interests that had little to do with the larger political reasons for the war, Lubkemann contests the assumption that wartime migration is always involuntary. His critical reexamination of displacement and his engagement with broader theories of agency and social change will be of interest to anthropologists, political scientists, historians, and demographers, and to anyone who works in a war zone or with refugees and migrants.*



**Knowledge Area: Getting, Sharing, and Saving Resources**

Stack, Carol. "Swapping: 'What Goes Round Comes Round.'" In *All Our Kin: Strategies for Surviving in a Black Community.* 2nd ed. 32–44. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

DISCUSSION. A personal and intimate look at urban, mostly domestic, life in "The Flats," a fictional name for a real urban area somewhere outside of Chicago where blacks have migrated from the South over prior decades. This fundamental ethnographic text explains concepts like social networks, exchange, reciprocity, kinship, ethnicity, and identity on an individual and group level. For example, Chapter 3 explains reciprocity and exchange through the words of Ruby Banks, "Sometimes I don't have a damn dime in my pocket, not a crying penny to get a box of paper diapers, milk, a loaf of bread. But you have to have help from everybody and anybody, so don't turn no one down when they come round for help" (p. 32). As with other ethnographies, this depth of detail is possible because the author formed intimate relationships with these individuals by witnessing and hearing about their lives over a sustained time period in the 1970s, and her observations are still relevant today.

EXERPT. *Black families living in The Flats need a steady source of cooperative support to survive. They share with one another because of the urgency of their needs. Alliances between individuals are created around the clock as kin and friends exchange and give and obligate one another. They trade food stamps, rent money, a TV, hats, dice, a car, a nickel here, a cigarette there, food, milk, grits, and children. ...*

*"Trading" in The Flats generally refers to any object or service offered with the intent of obligating. An object given or traded represents a possession, a pledge, a loan, a trust, a bank account—given on the condition that something will be returned, that the giver can draw on the account, and that the initiator of the trade gains prerogatives in taking what he or she needs from the receiver.*

*... A person who gives something which the receiver needs or desires, gives under a voluntary guise. But the offering is essentially obligatory, and in The Flats, the obligation to repay carries kin and community sanctions.*

*An Individual's reputation as a potential partner in exchange is created by the opinions others have about him (Bailer 1971). Individuals who fail to reciprocate in swapping relationships are judged harshly. ...*

*Degrees of entanglement among kinsmen and friends involved in networks of exchange differ in kind from casual swapping. Those actively involved in domestic networks swap goods and services on a daily, practically an hourly, basis. Ruby Banks, Magnolia Waters' twenty-three-year-old daughter, portrays her powerful sense of obligation to her mother in her words, "She's my mother and I don't want to turn her down." Ruby has a conflicting sense of obligation and of sacrifice toward her mother and her kinsmen. (pp. 32, 34, 35)*

**Knowledge Area: Organizing and Interacting**

Eller, Jack D. *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on Ethnic Conflict.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

DISCUSSION. This book, particularly the chapter on Rwanda and Burundi, is a good case study of how our conceptions of ideas like race, ethnicity, tribe, etc. can blind us, leading to operationally damaging surprises, or cause us to misunderstand the causes of conflict. In the case of Rwanda, our incorrect assumptions about "centuries old animosities" between "tribes" (which somehow got further conflated with "ethnic groups") led us to misunderstand what was happening. The chapter also examines how and why, despite a similar "tribal" or "ethnic" composition, the situation in Burundi did not evolve in the same way. The book as a whole provides numerous examples of how people use culture (especially identity factors, narratives, and symbols) in conflicts as much as, if not more than, they are constrained by it.

PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION. *In the post-Cold War era, the most common and often the most violent conflicts are ethnic conflicts. Many people, including many scholars, see ethnic conflicts as a return to the past, as contests between ancient and well-defined groups with long-standing grievances and animosities. Jack David Eller argues instead that these conflicts are a defining phenomenon of the "new world order"--that they are, in many ways, modern-day inventions based only loosely on "traditional" cultures and hostilities.*



From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict *presents in-depth case studies on Sri Lanka, the Kurds, Rwanda and Burundi, Bosnia, and Quebec, along with two theoretical introductory chapters that offer the reader the tools to understand the relationship between "culture" or "tradition" and contemporary ethnic conflicts. Eller finds that ethnicity is not a simple instantiation of "traditional" culture, nor is conflict a simple consequence of ethnicity. Rather, each is constructed out of certain raw cultural materials, through a process of remembering, forgetting, interpreting, and inventing. Ultimately, Eller demonstrates, these groups are fighting not about culture, but with culture.*

*No other book combines the level of analysis offered here with in-depth case studies of several important examples. It will appeal to anyone with an interest in understanding these conflicts. It will be assigned reading for students and scholars of cultural diversity and ethnic conflict in anthropology, history, political science, and peace and conflict studies.*

Hoffman, Danny. *The War Machines: Young Men and Violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia.* Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2011.

DISCUSSION. The civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia (and periodic violence in Guinea) that collectively spanned the decades between 1989-2003 are often treated as separate conflicts. In his book, Hoffman treats these violent events as one war conducted along the Mano River, which runs between the two countries. By analyzing these conflicts together, Hoffman is able to consider the larger implications of future wars, as well as the processes through which young West African men have contributed to the labor of violence, just as they have contributed to the global capital landscape. A reader who is interested in a theoretically based, anthropologically dense examination of war will enjoy this book.

PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION. *In* The War Machines, *Danny Hoffman considers how young men are made available for violent labor both on the battlefields and in the diamond mines, rubber plantations, and other unregulated industries of West Africa. Based on his ethnographic research with militia groups in Sierra Leone and Liberia during those countries' recent civil wars, Hoffman traces the path of young fighters who moved from grassroots community-defense organizations in Sierra Leone during the mid-1990s into a large pool of mercenary labor.*

*Hoffman argues that in contemporary West Africa, space, sociality, and life itself are organized around making young men available for all manner of dangerous work. Drawing on his ethnographic research over the past nine years, as well as the anthropology of violence, interdisciplinary security studies, and contemporary critical theory, he maintains that the mobilization of West African men exemplifies a global trend in the outsourcing of warfare and security operations. A similar dynamic underlies the political economy of violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and a growing number of postcolonial spaces. An experienced photojournalist, Hoffman integrates more than fifty of his photographs of young West Africans into* The War Machines.

Rubinstein, Robert A., and Sandra D. Lane. "Population, Identity and Political Violence." *Social Justice: Anthropology, Peace, and Human Rights* 3, no. 3/4 (2002): 139–52.

DISCUSSION. Pulling from recent historic examples, this article provides a basic overview of ethnic conflict from an anthropological perspective. This paper examines how ethnic violence is political violence carried out in order to shape, reform, or eliminate entire populations, as well as various ways in which this is done. Specifically, it is pointed out that while men often fight on the frontlines of these conflicts, it is the women back home who bear the outsized burden of both being responsible for the upkeep of family needs on a day to day basis as well as being cultural symbols themselves. This places women in the precarious position of being both essential to maintaining their group's way of life and also a target for those who might want to eliminate that way of living entirely.

EXCERPT. *During the past decade there has been a sharp rise in the prominence of ethnic conflict and collective violence throughout the world. This has been expressed through dramatic and horrifying ethnically-based violence, such as that in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. As analysts have struggled to understand and intervene in these conflicts they have sought new models for the international stem. In this paper we have discussed a number of ways in which ethnic conflict has been used to manipulate the demographic character of regions throughout the world. (p. 147)*



## Knowledge Area: Answering Questions

Button, Gregory. *Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010.

DISCUSSION. Military professionals are often called in as part of an international response to disaster. It is a time of chaos and uncertainty with varied players working their particular agendas. The author gives voice to this complexity and dissects through case studies how individuals, governments, and organizations use and create and are impacted by uncertainty during crises. He notes, "Uncertainty does not simply exist — it is produced" (p. 11) with resulting impact on social relationships, power arrangements, and economic processes. Military professionals, when entering into such a situation, need to be aware of how uncertainty is being manufactured, by whom, and for what purpose — often multiple players/multiple messages — and the potential effects the resulting uncertainty can have on the myriad players and outcomes on the ground, recognizing all the while their institutional contribution to and motivations for uncertainty management. Additionally, the author's discussion on science and how US citizens and institutions routinely turn to science for answers may not hold true in all culture groups and in all disaster settings. Recognizing that and understanding how to identify sources of legitimate inquiry and how those are being leveraged in crisis will help clarify the situation on the ground.

PUBLISHER'S SUMMARY. *When disaster strikes, a ritual unfolds: a flood of experts, bureaucrats, and analysts rush to the scene; personal tragedies are played out in a barrage of media coverage; on the ground, confusion and uncertainty reign. In this major comparative study, Gregory Button draws on three decades of research on the most infamous human and environmental calamities to break new ground in our understanding of these moments of chaos. He explains how corporations, state agencies, social advocacy organizations, and other actors attempt to control disaster narratives, adopting public relations strategies that may either downplay or amplify a sense of uncertainty in order to advance political and policy goals. Importantly, he shows that disasters are not isolated events, offering a holistic account of the political dynamics of uncertainty in times of calamity.*

## Knowledge Area: Influencing
## Thinking Process: Holism

Farmer, Paul. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor.* 2005 ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

DISCUSSION. This book offers a different discussion about power than present in the guidebook. The guidebook focuses on how to discern who has power and authority in a given group and how that shapes the decision-making process. In this book, the author details through case study how power in the form of social and economic systems, structures, and processes denies the basic right to survive to the poor throughout the world and calls for a revitalized strategy to address this most fundamental of human rights. His cause is to make you uncomfortable in your privilege and to think differently about the suffering seen and silenced around you. He is very compelling. His accounts challenge those who consider the ails of poverty the fault of the impoverished and reveal the intentionality of the suffering through the actions or inactions of those with power to shape the economic and social forces that perpetuate the structural violence on the poor. His case studies depict how interwoven the various facets of the human condition are and how separating them out to accommodate disciplinary division or narrowly defined organizational missions can exacerbate existing or usher in greater problems, even despite the best of intentions. For military professionals, approaching each situation, each mission, holistically and understanding how to discern how those invisible power structures are impacting the situation at hand are critical to designing effective plans and minimizing unintentional second and third order effects.

EXCERPT. *This book is a physician-anthropologist's effort to reveal the ways in which the most basic right — the right to survive — is trampled in an age of great affluence, and it argues that the matter should be considered the most pressing one of our times. The drama, the tragedy, of the destitute sick concerns not only physicians and scholars who work among the poor but all who profess even a passing interest in human rights. ... Human rights violations are not accidents; they are not random in distribution or effect. Rights violations are, rather, symptoms of deeper pathologies of power and are linked intimately to the social conditions that so often determine who will suffer abuse and who will be shielded from harm. (pp. 6, 7)*



## Knowledge Area: Staying Well and Dealing with Illness

Hewlett, B. S., A. Epelboin, B. L. Hewlett, and P. Formenty. "Medical Anthropology and Ebola in Congo: Cultural Models and Humanistic Care." *Bulletin de La Société de Pathologie Exotique* 98 (2005): 230–37.

DISCUSSION. Medical anthropology is a subset of the field of anthropology, and one of its focuses is the control of infectious and parasitic diseases by employing "humanistic care and interventions" (p. 230). This article describes how two different teams of medical anthropologists traveled to two different villages located in tropical rainforests in the Republic of Congo during an Ebola outbreak and the two methods they employed to inform better Ebola response procedures. One group focused on "understanding local cultural models of Ebola and identifying beliefs and practices that may amplify or help control the outbreak" (p. 232). This team asked exploratory questions such as "how do individuals refer to the illness? How do they explain it (e.g., cause)"? What they discovered was that biomedical explanations existed alongside local understandings of disease, such as sorcery. The second group introduced actual practices (such as the use of disinfectant) but within the context of ongoing systems of belief and practice (such as communal handwashing ceremonies at burials). These teams, deployed to remote areas with few resources, had to establish trust and rapport to accomplish their intended task of mitigating the spread of Ebola. Military practitioners may find useful best practices in this article that they can adapt to their deployments and related humanitarian missions.

PUBLICATION SUMMARY. *Seldom have medical anthropologists been involved in efforts to control high mortality diseases such as Ebola hemorrhagic fever (EHF) This paper describes the results of two distinct but complementary interventions during the first phases of an outbreak in the Republic of Congo in 2003. The first approach emphasized understanding local peoples' cultural models and political-economic explanations for the disease while the second approach focused on providing more humanitarian care of patients by identifying and incorporating local beliefs and practices into patient care and response efforts.*

## GUIDEBOOK CHAPTER 3: CULTURE GENERAL SKILLS

### Skills: Observation, Suspending Judgment, Perspective Taking, and Building Rapport

Rubinstein, Robert A., Diana M. Keller, and Michael E. Sherger. "Culture and Interoperability in Integrated Missions." *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 4 (2008): 540–55. Accessed October 30, 2017. doi:10.1080/13533310802239857.

DISCUSSION. According to the authors, the main purpose of this article "is to suggest a framework for approaching issues of vertical interoperability in integrated missions.... [in other words] how to take into account local cultural factors that affect coordination and cooperation among and between integrated missions and local populations" (p. 541). The authors definition of integrated missions, in general, "enshrines in doctrine the conception that all 'stakeholders' at all levels of a mission will work together as equals from earliest planning through to implementation [typically in multinational organizations]" (p. 543). The main point the authors assert about culture when dealing with local populations (vertical interoperability) is to engage the local community in a manner in which its members feel respected and treated as equal partners in the rebuilding process. Written primarily as guidance for international peacekeepers, the authors conclude by presenting the following seven principles to help peacekeepers understand local culture and use that understanding to improve the success of their missions:

1. Be aware of meaning
2. Pay attention to symbols
3. Avoid attributing motive
4. Be aware that conflict management and culture will be different than your own
5. Ensure cultural expectations are explicit
6. Avoid creating In-Group/Out-Group formations
7. Stay apprised of power differences

AUTHORS' ABSTRACT. *Integrated missions require people from diverse backgrounds to work together and to work with local populations with whom they may be unfamiliar. In both instances, cultural differences can present challenges or opportunities. This article extends a model of how culture affects interoperability among members of an integrated mission — horizontal interoperability — to the understanding of how culture affects an integrated mission's work with local populations — vertical interoperability. The article identifies seven principles of action which allow integrated missions to take account of culture in engaging local populations.*



### Characteristic: Openness

Roberts, Peter. "Openness as an Educational Virtue." *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2011): 9–24.

DISCUSSION. Openness is one of the characteristics that contributes to cross cultural competence. As it is not covered in the guidebook due to time and space constraints, openness is discussed in this resource to inform military professionals of its importance not only to enhancing their cross-cultural competence but also to their overall success in life-long learning and individual development. In this article, the author discusses, among many other things, how openness is a necessary disposition for perspective-taking and managing ambiguity and is associated with human creativity. The author notes on pages 16-17,

> An attitude of openness is a permanent orientation: as unfinished beings, we should, Freire believed, always be open to new ways of understanding the world, new approaches to addressing old problems, new forms of learning, and new modes of communication. ... To be open in our orientation to education, and to human life more generally, is to accept that the world (including the inner world of thoughts and feelings) is undergoing constant change. Transformation thus becomes not merely possible but one of the defining features of our existence. A commitment to openness, for Freire, also implies a willingness to not only live with but actively embrace uncertainty (Freire, 1997a, 1998a, 2007).

He also discusses how education is fundamental to helping humans overcome their cultural conditioning that can serve as blinders, inhibiting deeper understanding and continued individual enlightenment. This philosophical discussion of openness serves as a concise resource for military professionals to reference to deepen their understanding of this critical disposition.

AUTHOR'S ABSTRACT. *This paper undertakes a detailed conceptual analysis of openness as an educational virtue. It begins with Aristotle's classic account of intellectual and moral virtues in the Nichomachean Ethics, turns briefly to the broader intellectual currents that might be said to have contributed to an emerging philosophy of openness, and then pays detailed attention to the work of the Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire. I argue that, from a Freirean perspective, openness is inclusive of, but not limited to, open-mindedness. Openness, I suggest, has ontological, epistemological and ethical dimensions, and can be understood as a principle for both lifelong learning and social organisation. I contrast openness with various forms of closure and discuss its links with other virtues in Freirean education. I conclude by discussing limits and possibilities in both Freire's work and the idea of openness.*

### Skill: Anxiety/Uncertainty Management

Griffin, Em. "Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory of William Gudykunst." In *A First Look at Communication Theory,* 6th ed., 426–38. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006. Accessed December 11, 2017. http://www.afirstlook.com/docs/anxietyuncertainty.pdf.

DISCUSSION. This article discusses Bill Gudykunst's anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory through the experience of the author in the Philippines. The text is written is a very accessible narrative style and provides examples of the concepts — or axioms — that comprise the theory, making it easily digestible. It complements the guidebook's discussion on intercultural communication, broadening the discussion of many of the ideas presented there and offering examples of the concepts in action. Gudykunst's AUM theory rests on the idea that effective communication requires reducing the potential for misunderstanding. The author notes that Gudykunst "believed that uncertainty and anxiety are the twin threats that must be managed to achieve effective communication. They are the basic cause of intercultural misunderstanding." Gudykunst, while developing the theory to help individuals adjust to those from foreign cultural backgrounds, notes that the stranger does not have to be a foreigner, but rather is anyone who is from a different cultural background. This discussion will help military professionals to improve their interpersonal communication with foreign partners as well as with other U.S. service and agency personal and the individual members of their service and units.



EXCERPT. *During a sabbatical leave from Wheaton College, I spent a month in the Philippine Islands. When a Filipino couple I knew heard that I was coming to their country, they asked me to spend a week with them on an "academic adventure." Ping and Lena were former graduate students of mine who occasionally taught at Mickelson College, a small, church-related school in the remote province of the Davao del Sur. Lena had used a text of mine for a course at the school, and she invited me to be the commencement speaker at their graduation. … Bill Gudykunst's anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory focuses on encounters between cultural in-groups and strangers. Gudykunst, who died in 2005, was professor of communication at California State University, Fullerton, and he developed his interest in intergroup communication when he served as an intercultural relations specialist for the U.S. Navy in Japan. His job was to help naval personnel and their families adjust to living in a culture that seemed very strange to Americans. … In an effort to avoid the ethnocentric trap of thinking that my view of the world is the way it* ***really*** *is, I'll illustrate Gudykunst's theory by applying it to the situation of my Philippine Belaan hosts. They wanted to bridge the culture gap through effective communication just as much as I did. (pp. 426, 427)*

### Skill: Saving Face

Goffman, Erving. "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction." *Psychiatry* 18, no. 3 (1955): 213–31.

DISCUSSION. This text offers an in-depth look at face and face work. In much of the curriculum generated for military personnel about face, face and "saving face" are treated as more important or relevant to other social groups. What is useful about this text is how the author explains how the concept of face informs individual behavior in all social groups. The author addresses specifically the implicit bias people may feel underlies his work—that "people everywhere are the same." What he is saying is that all people are shaped by their social environment and enact face and face work in accordance with the moral rules prevalent around them. What face looks like is particular to each group, defined and shaped by the moral rules "derive[d] from requirements established in the ritual organization of social encounters." While a bit dated and quite heady in language, it is a useful text for those interested in exploring this concept more fully and learning how to employ it effectively.

EXCERPT. *Every person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him either in face-to-face or mediate contact with other participants. In each of these contacts, he tends to act out what is sometimes call a* ***line****—this is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself. Regardless of whether a person intends to a take a line, he will find that he has done so in effect. The other participants will assume that he has more or less willfully taken a stand, so that if he is to deal with their response to him he must take into consideration the impression they have possibly formed of him.*

*The term* ***face*** *may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes-albeit an image others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself. … By face-work I mean to designate the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-works serves to counteract "incidents"-that is, events who effective symbolic implications threaten face. … Whether or not the full consequences of face-saving actions are known to the person who employs them, they often become habitual and standardized practices; they are like traditional plays in a game or traditional steps in a dance. Each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. It is to this repertoire that people partly refer when they ask what a person or culture is "really" like. And yet the particular set of practices stressed by particular persons or groups seems to be drawn from a single logically coherent framework of possible practices. It is as if face, by its very nature, can be saved only in a certain number of ways, and as if each social grouping must make its selections from this single matrix of possibilities. (pp. 5, 12, 13)*



**Skill: Negotiation**

DISCUSSION. In military education, negotiation is often reduced to the "across the table" experience, where two parties are seeking to reach an agreement. While this is an important aspect of negotiating, it is but one. The back and forth that occurs between individuals also happens within individuals and through space. Negotiating, while not addressed in the guidebook due to time and space constraints, is a fundamental cross cultural skill and is something that people do on a daily basis. Yes, it is something that occurs between people — both formally at the table and informally in social contexts as people negotiate their identities in response to others and contexts and their position within the interaction. These two articles address the internal aspect of negotiating one's identity. People negotiate their identity in every encounter, adapting and adjusting self to fit and influence the context in which they find themselves. Identity is covered in the guidebook, and these articles expand on that work by linking the concept to the skill of negotiating. For military professionals, broadening their understanding of negotiating beyond the BAFTA deepens their understanding of human behavior.

Chatman, Celina, Jacquelynne Eccles, and Oksana Malanchuk. "Identity Negotiation in Everyday Settings." In *Navigating the Future: Social Identity, Coping, and Life Tasks*, edited by Geraldine Downey, Jacquelynne Eccles, and Celina Chatman, 112–39. New York: The Russell Sage, 2005. Accessed December 11, 2017. http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/archive/garp/articles/chatman05.pdf.

EXCERPT. *Throughout their lives, individuals are continually faced with new experiences and situations that, somehow, must be integrated with existing aspects of the self (see James 1890/1910; Erikson 1968). Some of these experiences involve major life events such as entering new contexts where people may espouse attitudes, beliefs, and values that are different from one's own. Other experiences involve single encounters with new people or new information that may create conflicts with one's existing set of beliefs and values. In either case, these events and experiences can challenge individuals to reevaluate aspects of the self and subsequently engage in various negotiation strategies in order to maintain a sense of continuity in the self while adapting to changing circumstances (see James 1890/1910; Erikson 1968). The focus*

*of this chapter is to show that such processes can be particularly adaptive for members of racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States. Our aim is to show that members of racial and ethnic minority groups are afforded additional identity-relevant resources from which to draw upon as they negotiate new contexts, situations, and information, thereby facilitating their positive overall adjustment. (p. 116)*

Lacy, Karyn. "A Part of a Neighborhood? Negotiating Race in American Suburbs." *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 22, no. 1–3 (2002): 39–74.

PUBLISHER'S ABSTRACT. *Social constructionists insist that ongoing racism and persistent inequality limit the identity options of middle-class blacks. Through a comparison of race relations in two suburban communities, I show that middle-class blacks meet with some success when they temporarily exchange their racial identity for a class-based identity. Using data collected through ethnography and individual interviews, I examine the conditions under which middle-class blacks construct and assert a suburban identity. I find that middle-class blacks engage in a process known as boundary-work - a type of cultural work - to manage their interactions with their white neighbors. Middle-class blacks' success in this regard varies with the racial composition of the suburban community and with their white neighbors' level of satisfaction with the community.*

**Area: Intercultural Communication Skills**

Mackenzie, Lauren. "Strategic Enablers: How Intercultural Communication Skills Advance Micro-Level International Security." *Journal of Culture, Language & International Security* 1, no. 1 (2014): 85-96.

DISCUSSION. This article argues that intercultural communication skills are fundamental to Professional Military Education (PME) and require deliberate inclusion at appropriate learning levels. The article begins with a discussion of the ways in which communication sits at the intersection between language and culture and then moves to a description of specific intercultural communication skills and a suggested framework for incorporating these skills into PME curriculum. Skills such as interaction management, impression management, decoding nonverbal cues, managing paralinguistic use and perception, and identifying communication styles are reviewed for relevance and put forth as enablers of micro-level international security.

PUBLISHER'S ABSTRACT. *A fundamental assumption of this article is that effective intercultural communication is a strategic enabler of micro-level international security. It will be argued in three parts that the knowledge and skills at the heart of the field of intercultural communication are a natural platform for advancing international security. First, an explanation is offered for why current Professional Military Education course offerings do not sufficiently address the pressing need our military has for improving the quality of intercultural communication. Next, an overview is provided of the specific communication skills that are research-proven enablers of cross-cultural competence. Finally, a framework is offered for institutionalizing intercultural communication into Professional Military Education.*

Ting-Toomey, Stella. *Communicating Across Cultures.* New York: Guilford Press, 1999.

DISCUSSION. Intercultural miscommunication often occurs because individuals use cultural-laden habits and assumptions to interpret each other's verbal and non-verbal messages and styles. This short book is often referred to as a primary source on intercultural communication skills and has chapters devoted to both verbal and nonverbal communication. Ting-Toomey introduces a variety of communication styles that impact intercultural communication, including low and high-context communication patterns, self-enhancement and self-effacement verbal styles, and direct and indirect interaction styles. The chapter devoted to the functions and patterns of nonverbal communication emphasizes its impact on impression formation and conversation management across cultures. Each chapter ends with concrete recommendations for improving intercultural interaction.

PUBLISHER'S ABSTRACT. *This text presents a new framework for understanding the impact of culture on communication and for helping students build intercultural communication competence. With illustrative examples from around the globe, the book shows that verbal and nonverbal communication involves much more than transmitting a particular message—it*

*also reflects each participant's self-image, group identifications and values, and privacy and relational needs. Readers learn to move effectively and appropriately through a wide range of transcultural situations by combining culture-specific knowledge with mindful listening and communication skills. Throughout, helpful tables and charts and easy-to-follow guidelines for putting concepts into practice enhance the book's utility for students.*

**Skill: Identifying and Managing Culture Shock**

Pedersen, Paul. *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents Around the World.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995.

DISCUSSION. Pedersen's *The Five Stages of Sulture Shock* has become a foundational work on culture shock. It focuses on the experiences of students on the study-abroad program, a Semester at Sea. Using the critical incident technique, the author details the five stages of culture shock through the students' critical incidents, or stories describing their experiences. Such description offers a deeper understanding of the personal experience with culture shock, which military professionals may find helpful when experiencing culture shock themselves or within their units.

GOOGLE BOOKS SUMMARY. *The educational literature suggests that international contact contributes to a comprehensive educational experience.* The Five Stages of Culture Shock *examines an international shipboard educational program and seeks to identify specific insights resulting from informal extracurricular contact between students and host nationals in the context of culture shock experiences. Using the critical incident methodology, Pedersen analyzes students' responses to nearly 300 specific incidents which resulted in insights that apply to the students' own development, as well as the sociocultural context of the host countries. This use of critical incidents shows one way to evaluate and assess the subjective experiences of the informal curriculum. More broadly, the analysis sheds light on the concept of culture shock as a psychological construct.*



# APPENDIX C: TEACHING TOOLS

Our intention for this section was to gather short narrative or graphic teaching tools that can serve as a basis for curriculum developers to create their own teaching tools. This includes several different "one-pagers" such as: "Cross-Cultural Communication", the "Rules of the Road" guidelines introduced at the beginning of the Guidebook, "The Value of Culture General", and "Perspective-Taking." This content could be used in a variety of ways to include: introductory video scripts, classroom handouts, or discussion prompts for educators. Additionally, we include a teaching activity devoted to rapport-building across cultures designed for the community college-level classroom as well as an "Introduction to Culture" course card designed for the graduate-level classroom.

**Articles of Interest**

Mackenzie, Lauren, Patricia Fogarty, and Angelle Kachadoorian. "A Model for Military Online Culture Education: Key Findings and Best Practices." *EDUCAUSE Review* 48, no. 4 (2013): July/Aug. Accessed December 11, 2017. http://er.educause.edu/articles/2013/9/a-model-for-online-military-culture-education-key-findings-and-best-practices.

DISCUSSION. This article will be of interest to those beginning the process of developing online culture courses for professional students. The authors provide recommendations based on their experiences developing the self-paced, community-college level courses, "Introduction to Culture" and "Introduction to Cross-Cultural Communication." They offer the following best practices:

1. The flexibility of self-paced courses improve completion rates.
2. Military frameworks and scenarios improve course relevance.
3. Opportunities for student interaction improves course quality.

Specifically, the authors recommend preparing introductory videos by the instructors of record and incorporating class wikis into each lesson/module. When possible, the student wiki contributions can then be (with permission) transformed and used as content to create case

studies or situational judgement tests in future iterations of the course. The article provides detailed examples of how this was done at the Air Force Culture & Language Center as well as results of the research that was devoted to the connection between wiki participation and student learning outcomes.

PUBLISHER'S ABSTRACT. *This article outlines the course content, key findings, and best practices associated with two ongoing online culture courses offered by the Air Force Culture & Language Center: "Introduction to Culture" and "Introduction to Cross-Cultural Communication." Sharing best practices has been cited by numerous scholars as an important strategy for knowledge transfer both within and across organizations. In an effort to contribute to the scholarship on best practices in distance learning and military culture education, the authors argue that the design and assessment processes utilized in these courses can serve as a model for teaching culture online throughout the DoD.*

**Preparing Practitioners — Examples from other fields of practice**

DISCUSSION. Many fields of practice provide cross cultural competence education and training to their practitioners. The two texts below provide examples of how two fields of practice — Social Work and the Peace Corps — conceptualize and operationalize cross cultural competence. The social work text details the standards, goals, and indicators expected of social workers and the organizations, programs, and policies that support them. The Peace Corps text offers conceptual explanations and examples that complement the concepts and skills in the guidebook. The breadth of diversity that social workers and Peace Corps volunteers encounter is similar to that of military professionals, as the social workers' clients can come from anywhere in the world and Peace Corps volunteers engage individuals from all over the world and different organizational affiliations. While humans all live culturally, people are not necessarily aware of the concepts and skills they are employing as they navigate these complex social contexts. As noted in the excerpt from the Peace Corps text, exposure does not equate to understanding. It is through training and education on the human experience and behavior that individuals deepen their understanding and hone their skills to effectively engage cross-culturally.



National Association of Social Workers. "Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice," 2015. Accessed December 11, 2017. https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=7dVckZAYUmk%3d&portalid=0.

EXCERPT. *These standards provide focus for the development of culturally competent social work practice. These standards provide guidance to social workers in all areas of social work practice in responding effectively to culture and cultural diversity in policy and practice settings. (p. 17)*

Storti, Craig, and Laurette Bennhold-Samaan. "Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook." Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange, 1997. Accessed December 11, 2017. http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/T0087_culturematters.pdf.

EXCERPT. *Welcome to Peace Corps' cross-cultural training, one of the most challenging and rewarding dimensions of the toughest job you'll ever love. … We all would like to find a magic pill for crossing cultures, the "right" answer, a simple list of do's and don'ts, and you will get some useful do's and don'ts from your trainers. But crossing cultures is a dynamic, complex process, where context is everything. A list of behaviors or a script can only take you so far, for what is a "do" in one set of circumstances might very well be a "don't" in another. This workbook will help you function outside the script, to understand the values and beliefs behind behavior, and, ultimately, how the local people think.*

*Cross-cultural training involves not only learning about the place you've come to, but comparing it to what you've come from-to the assumptions and values that have shaped you. In Culture Matters, therefore, you will be examining the behaviors and values of people in your host country in relation to those of people in your own. This workbook does not intend to suggest that American culture is necessarily superior or inferior to your host country's culture.*

*… Living in the country does expose you to the host culture, of course, but cross-cultural exposure is not cross-cultural knowledge. Having an experience, in other words, does not necessarily mean understanding it. You need to make sense of the contact you're having, which is what cross-cultural training and this workbook are designed to do. (p. 1)*

## Cross-Cultural Communication

### I. Why is cross-cultural communication education important?

We do not interact with cultures; we interact with people. It is often only through the process of interaction that differences in cultural values become noticeable. Cross-cultural communication education can improve the quality of interactions, thereby minimizing misunderstanding and conflict. Extensive interviews with four dozen senior military officers ranging from colonels to four-star general devoted to the characteristics of strategic leadership found "the ability to communicate across cultural divides"[75] to be critical for mission and career success. The knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures (also known as cross-cultural communication competence) are most necessary for military professionals to be competent in the diverse operational environments of the 21st century.

### II. What is the difference between cross-cultural and intercultural communication?

There is a commonly understood description of the distinction between cross-cultural communication (CCC) and intercultural communication (IC) that states whereas CCC focuses on the comparison of communication behavior across cultures, IC focuses on the interaction that occurs when the two individuals from different cultures interact. For example, if one were to examine greetings, a CCC researcher would compare the greeting process in Honduras and El Salvador (focusing comparatively across cultures) while an IC researcher would look at what happens when those individuals greet each other (focusing on the interaction itself).

75 Barak A. Salmoni et al., "Growing Strategic Leaders for Future Conflict," *Parameters* Spring (2010), 72-88.



### III. What are the goals of cross-cultural communication?

- To encourage communicators to notice cultural distinctions in others' behavior and interpret these distinctions appropriately
- To provide communicators with resources to create a variety of explanations for confusing intercultural interactions
- To pave the way for the establishment of rapport. As rapport is the foundation for gaining trust and building relationships across cultures, it is often a key motivation for interaction.

### IV. What would be included in a cross-cultural communication course?

- Discussion of the ways in which cultural values impact communication acts/events (e.g.; apologies, requests, greetings, etc.)
- Introduction to communication skills, such as:
    1. Decoding nonverbal cues
    2. Managing paralinguistic use and perception
    3. Identifying communication styles
    4. Recognizing cultural variation in active listening techniques
    5. Strategies for rapport-building

- Critical incidents: Use of situational judgment tests in which communication concepts and skills are applied in culturally complex, military-relevant contexts

## Rules of the Road

As you prepare for a cross-cultural situation, keep the following ideas in mind:

**Rule #1** — *The local people have not organized themselves, their beliefs, or their behavior patterns for your convenience.* Figuring out what is going on can be complex. Accept it and move on.

**Rule #2** — *Things you take for granted may not be true here.* Basic concepts such as honesty, fairness, respect, winning, finished, ownership, and agreement may mean fundamentally different things to local people. Be prepared to cope with both your confusion and theirs.

**Rule #3** — *You do not have to like it to understand it.* Some things you learn about the local culture may anger or puzzle you. That is OK. View these differences as significant factors that shape the area of operations and affect a unit's ability to carry out missions. Figuring out what is going on may require temporarily suspending your own beliefs, assumptions, and expectations as much as possible to focus on learning over judging. This takes mental discipline.

**Rule #4** — *Local people are not just reacting to you.* They are reacting to their entire perception of U.S. influence. Before the first U.S. forces hit the ground, local people have a perception of the United States based on U.S. products, media (such as films and television), and perhaps U.S. companies, non-governmental organizations, or charities. These previous experiences shape the way people will react to you.



## The Value of Culture General

Culture general concepts are the underlying thinking processes and knowledge areas that help you identify, understand, and use region- and culture-specific information more effectively. The unpredictable nature of military operations calls for a foundational set of concepts that can be applied no matter where you are in the world.

Think about, for example, the difference between giving someone directions to *get to a place* (culture-specific information) versus teaching somebody *basic principles* of land navigation (culture general information). Directions from one point to another are relatively easy to convey and will work for most situations, but *as soon as something changes* in the route, things can get complicated. A baseline knowledge of culture general concepts and skills can provide the tools you need to fill in the gaps when something unexpected happens. Having a culture general mindset will prepare you to ask questions to find out more about such ideas in your particular context and to identify change, challenges, and opportunity more readily.

One culture general concept (of many, of course) that is useful for military personnel to know is reciprocity. *Reciprocity* is typically defined as the kind of social exchanges that create and reinforce relationships — think of the common expressions, "What goes around comes around" (also called *generalized* reciprocity) and "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" (also called *balanced* reciprocity). Whether first on the scene or a veteran in theater, understanding the ways in which *balanced* and *generalized* reciprocity are at play in a new environment can help you build trust and avoid misunderstanding.

A culture general foundation can also help you determine *connections* among different aspects of culture. For example, a general understanding of how people think about and use *kinship* might help you identify the way relationships are used to move resources and information. It can also provide tools for taking full advantage of culture-specific information using different lenses.

Culture general concepts (like reciprocity and kinship) are designed to help you process the information you encounter, vet it against what you already know, and determine how best to incorporate it into your thinking, planning, and action. How you refine your understanding, make adjustments for the misalignments between your preparation and reality on the ground, and deepen your insights into people's assumptions about what makes sense require an understanding of these concepts. They explain the ways people organize themselves, think about their worlds, or find solutions to problems, for example, rather than provide details of a particular group of people.

These concepts can be useful to apply when planning to work with an interpreter. While there are clearly important region- and culture-specific aspects to take into consideration when working with each individual interpreter, you can set yourself up for success by learning about some culture general concepts that will apply to **all** intercultural interactions. There are at least three important points to keep in mind here:

- First, the ways in which *nonverbal cues* — facial expressions, touch, timing, and personal boundaries — are used differently across cultures to communicate a message.
- Second, there is a difference between the ability to speak a language and the ability to *use* language in conversation. For example, in Somalia, you could certainly directly translate the U.S. phrase "How are you?" as a greeting, but it would not be the most appropriate *use* of language in a country where the typical greeting is often "From whom do you come?"
- Finally, do not underestimate the impact of differences in perceptions about *paralanguage*, for example, how things like rate of speech, tone of voice, volume, and silence affect the interpretation of a message.

It is important to remember that no one has 100 percent understanding of culture at any time; yours will always be imperfect. Taking the time to understand culture general concepts will make the process of learning region- and culture-specific information more efficient. These are mutually reinforcing and will add value to the professional growth that military personnel are committed to at home and in theater.



## Culture and Operational Planning

*Provided by Michael Purcell, LtCol USMC (RET)*

The effective integration of culture into operational planning requires a Commander and his or her staff to accomplish two very different but equally important actions. First, it is imperative to ensure that the staff as a collective possesses sufficient cultural knowledge, self-awareness, and meta-cognitive learning strategies to avoid adopting false planning assumptions. False assumptions can lead to the development of Courses of Action that are ineffective or even counterproductive to achieving the desired end state. As with all effective planning, success also requires a planning design methodology that uses a problem-solving framework founded on a holistic understanding of the environment. Second, as with other capabilities, it is essential that staff processes are in place to identify, understand, source, and employ the cultural capabilities required for a specific mission or operation. Both imperatives require deliberate education and training as well as the development of appropriate staff references, procedures, and a command climate conducive to holistic planning. Some planning considerations to accomplish these tasks follow below.

### Integration of Culture into Operational Planning

- Explicit consideration of relevant cultural factors is most essential during Problem Framing, when staffs work to understand the environment and problem set. Staffs conduct dialogue to deepen their collective understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics, begin to generate hypotheses (planning assumptions) about how people will react to the actions of friendly forces, and converge on a shared understanding. That shared understanding forms the foundation for planning steps such as Course of Action (COA) Development and Evaluation, Assessment of Effectiveness, and Re-Framing.
- In planning, the focus is on group learning and dialogue. Even if individual planners possess sufficient intercultural competence and critical thinking skills, commanders and lead planners must still ensure that teams don't engage in any culturally influenced dysfunctional thinking or decision making.
- A common trap to avoid is groupthink, which occurs when a desire to avoid conflict and/or a desire for conformity leads members of a

group to reach conclusions without sufficient consideration of alternative viewpoints. This could result from the suppression of minority viewpoints or isolation from outside influences.

- Another trap to avoid is the adoption of collective cultural contempt. This occurs when commanders and staffs are aware of cultural differences but discount or hold them in contempt. This typically manifests as collective arrogance, or even bigotry, and leads to the underestimation of the capabilities and motivations of others, whether it is enemy or partner populations.
- Lead planners should encourage continuous dialogue and group learning that elevates cultural knowledge and skills to an organizational level and establishes a common language that facilitates the integration of socio-cultural concepts and considerations in all steps of planning. The staff, working from known "anchor definitions", should debate the operational application of Culture General Concepts essential to the problem set. The Team Lead should then work to reinforce operationalized definitions of these concepts. This "common language" also facilitates COA Development, War Gaming, and Comparison as well as the establishment of sound qualitative Measures of Effectiveness.
- While specific staff sections such as Green or Red Cell may focus on culture or certain populations, consideration of culture shouldn't be compartmentalized.
- Cultural knowledge is relevant to all populations in the Operating Environment, including partners, the population, and the enemy.
- Planning tools and products ultimately need planners to possess some sort of actionable culture and region specific knowledge. Plan for continuous development of socio-cultural knowledge, through both open and closed sources as well as accessible SMEs. Have a plan to collect and evaluate social science data.
- Staffs should consciously choose mission-appropriate frameworks to generate Culture and region specific information to feed into planning tools such as ASCOPE-PMESII.[76]

76 Note: see Chapter 1 of the Guidebook for a discussion of how different frameworks may be appropriate for different types of missions.



**Cultural Capability Identification, Planning, and Sourcing**

- Planners must get comfortable with the inherent limitations of cultural capability. The near infinite diversity and ambiguity of "cultures" is exacerbated by the uncertainty of future operational requirements such that the only constant is that any unit or organization is unlikely to have sufficient cultural capability available. Deliberately accept and mitigate this challenge.
- Planning for intangible capabilities is inherently challenging, staffs must get comfortable with the inability to quantify cultural capability and accept that it is necessary to catalog and utilize organic capability across an organization. For example, a Supply Clerk who is a heritage Amharic speaker may be the most valuable cultural asset immediately available in a Crisis Response.
- The Department of Defense's current effort to solve the preceding problem for Joint Planning is detailed in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3126.01A *Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture Capability Identification, Planning, and Sourcing.*

## Perspective-taking

Perspective-taking is, quite simply, the ability to see things from another point of view. It is often referred to as a foundational cultural skill simply because it begins the process of recognizing and articulating how a situation could appear from someone else's standpoint. This recognition, in turn, sets the stage for a conversation that is open to alternative perspectives and finding common ground where it may not have been immediately obvious.

Perspective-taking is viewed in *contrast* to ethnocentrism, in which a person is often locked into a single viewpoint and is unaware of associated limitations or that other viable views may exist.

The following example from a deployed Marine explains why:

*Too Much Training*[77]

When it comes to values like honesty, it is difficult to suspend judgment. But if you feel someone is being dishonest, that is an ideal time to step back and assess the situation. One Marine found out how beneficial this was when he conducted a security forces training mission in a Middle Eastern country. He was eager to help them learn land navigation and set up the practical application to test their knowledge. He soon realized some of the partner nation soldiers were copying other people's answers. He was frustrated and was tempted to think these soldiers were both lazy and dishonest. When he talked to his interpreter about it, he realized that they had been doing the same things for 18 months. His team was just one of many that jumped into the mission without first discovering what the partner nation forces knew or what they wanted to learn. When he thought about this from their *perspective*, he knew he would be bored too, if he had been in School of Infantry for one and a half years. He reported the incorrect answers and possibility of cheating to the partner nation platoon commander, but because he understood their actions in context, he was no longer frustrated.

77 Based upon interview notes with a sergeant taken on 01 October 2016. Interview conducted as part of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Longitudinal Assessment Project under USMC IRB Protocol USMC.2016.0005



Decades of research in the social sciences have supported the claim that perspective-taking is a key enabler for building relationships across cultures, as it leads to increased knowledge and reduced prejudiced about other groups.

Perspective-taking requires an appreciation of the fact that *you might not have all the information* you need to accurately assess a situation.

Researchers recommend a three-step process for practicing perspective-taking:

1. Keep in mind that you do not know what you do not know
2. Come up with two or three hypotheses for the other person's behavior
3. Check to see if your perception is accurate

When you begin to think beyond your first impressions and try to see things through the eyes of the local population or your military partner, you are engaging in perspective-taking.

The value of this practice is echoed by former U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Edwin Reischauer, who when reflecting back on his career, stated: "We had acquired the habit of looking at things two different ways — from the Japanese angle of vision as well as from our own national viewpoint. This proved to be the key to my career and, extended worldwide, it is the only hope I can see for world peace and human survival."[78]

78 Janet M Bennett, "Cultivating Intercultural Competence: A Process Perspective," in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. Darla K Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 135.

## Classroom Activity

### The Sights and Sounds of Rapport-Building Across Cultures: Intercultural Interaction Analysis in *The Last King of Scotland*

Mackenzie, L. (2017). In Seiter, J., Peeples, J., & Sanders, M. (Eds.) *Great Ideas for Teaching Students (G.I.F.T.S.) in Communication.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.[79]

**History:** This activity was presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Communication Association, April 2014, Providence, RI.

**Primary courses in which this activity might be useful:** Intercultural Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Introduction to Communication, Nonverbal Communication

**Concepts illustrated:** Rapport, Intercultural Communication Competence, Paralanguage, Nonverbal Communication Categories

### Purpose

The value of intercultural competence for college students cannot be overstated. Preparing students for the culturally complex interactions they will face throughout their college years and beyond entails the introduction of key intercultural communication concepts and skills. This purpose of this activity is to take the educational process one step further and provide students with an opportunity to observe and discuss an intercultural interaction in context. The activity was first introduced at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama in 2013 in an effort to connect culture, communication and rapport-building for military students with varied educational backgrounds.

One of the goals of intercultural competence is the ability to build relationships across cultures, and rapport is fundamental to this process. Defined generally as the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people, rapport includes the following components: coordination, mutual positivity, and mutual attention (Tickle-Degnan & Rosenthal, 1990). This activity is designed to introduce a unique way in which communication skills and concepts can be applied in the classroom to better understand how rapport is developed in intercultural interactions. Students are asked to examine several communication concepts and skills: paralinguistic use and perception, the decoding of nonverbal cues, as well as the ways in which prominent symbols are used to develop rapport. As a result of participation in this activity, students are afforded the opportunity to practice and give each other feedback on a variety of communication skills in a low-threat, low-stakes environment.

The "Sights & Sounds" activity has been presented to over 1,000 military students at U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps Bases and enables students to:

- Bring together the communication components associated with rapport-building.
- Apply their knowledge of these components to a film-based intercultural scenario.
- Observe, listen to and discuss the complex ways in which rapport is built and respect is communicated across cultures.

### Explanation of the Activity

This activity consists of five steps and is designed for a one-hour class. The instructor begins with a review of several communication categories that impact the process off rapport-building across cultures: paralinguistic use and perception (i.e., intonation, word emphasis, volume), decoding of nonverbal cues (i.e., proxemics, haptics and kinesics), and the different ways in which symbols can be interpreted across cultures (i.e., colors appropriate to wear at weddings and funerals, unlucky numbers, food that is good luck vs. taboo to eat, etc.).

The instructor then introduces the intercultural communication exchange between Ugandan General and Scottish Doctor from the film, *The Last King of Scotland* (MacDonald, 2007). The clip (just under 3 minutes) can be accessed on "YouTube" using the search terms "Last King of Scotland Nicholas shoots a cow." In order to provide some context

79 Reproduced with permission of copyright holder, Lauren Mackenzie.

for the scenario, the instructor might state: "The scenario you will see occurs as a Scottish doctor working in Uganda is called to assist General Amin - whose arm was hurt when his vehicle struck a large animal. This is the first meeting between these two men."

After the first viewing of the clip, divide students into groups of four. Distribute assigned questions (see Appendix) for students to discuss as a group, and ask each group to designate one speaker who will present the group's responses to the class. Show the film clip again and ask each group to watch it through the lens of their assigned questions. Conclude the activity by connecting each group's responses to the nonverbal components of rapport, with an emphasis on coordination, positivity and mutual attention. Common themes found in student responses will be discussed in the section to follow.

**Debrief**

Each group presents its responses based on the specific questions they were assigned. Discussion often leads to students' personal experiences with rapport-building and the power that nonverbal communication has to improve or degrade the quality of a conversation. Examples of typical student responses to the questions (See Appendix) illustrate this point and tend to revolve around three themes. First, students react to the paralanguage used by the General to convey rapport in the way he says "Scottish!" This often leads to responses that emphasize that how something is said can often be more important than what is said. Students in the past have pointed to the way a supervisor or professor asks questions as an indication of respect or disrespect. Discussion typically leads to how the voice is used to sound inquisitive (sometimes rising intonation) or condescending (often falling intonation) and the cultural variation that surrounds our expectations. A second in student responses pertains to history and the "why" behind the General's reaction to learning the Doctor is Scottish. This can be an opportunity to practice the intercultural competence skill of "perception checking" and ask students to think about why a Ugandan might relate better to a Scott than a Brit. The third common theme in the responses is focused on attribution. That is, the meaning of a suffering cow to a farmer who may require it for his/her livelihood vs. the meaning of the suffering to



a physician who may have taken an oath to alleviate suffering whenever possible. Again, the question of "perspective taking" may arise as a skill that could have helped the doctor anticipate the second and third-order effects of his decision to shoot the cow.

The instructor can then connect the communication skills or concepts mentioned (such as: managing paralinguistic use and perception, decoding nonverbal cues, etc.) to the rapport-building categories of *coordination* (mimicked expressions, smooth responsiveness between conversational partners), *positivity* (smiling, touch) and *mutual attention* (direct body orientation, mutual gaze), to underscore the "sights and sounds" of rapport in an intercultural context. If time allows, a final question for discussion could be posed: Intercultural communication competence is defined as the "knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (Wiseman, 2003): Was it achieved in this interaction? Responses tend to differ widely but provide the instructor with an opportunity to remind students that the concepts "effective" and "appropriate" are largely dependent on the context of the interaction and the relationship between those within it.

Since the exercise was piloted in 2013, students have responded enthusiastically. Not only is it a memorable case study to which students can apply the communication skills and concepts they've read about and heard about in class, but it opens the door for fascinating discussions about students' own intercultural experiences. The key take-away for most students is that rapport, like respect, is often communicated not just by what is said but by how it is said. They walk away from the activity with a new appreciation for the role of nonverbal communication in the rapport-building process.

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## Appendix

a) Verbal Communication: Are there any words stated during the interaction that communicated respect/disrespect? Which specific words change the course of the interaction in this scenario? (i.e.; "Scottish).

b) Paralanguage: Pay close attention to the paralanguage of the doctor and the general during the initial interaction and note how it changes as time goes on. What differences do you notice in their volume, intonation, word emphasis as the interaction progresses?

c) Nonverbal Communication Categories: Pay close attention to other types of nonverbal communication used by the doctor and the general during the initial interaction and note how it changes as time goes on. For example, what differences do you notice in their use of space (proxemics), touch (haptics), and facial expression (kinesics) as the interaction progresses?

d) Symbols: What are the meanings of the cow, the exchanged shirts, and the pistol to the *Africans* in this scenario? What are the meanings of the cow, the exchanged shirts, and the pistol to the *Westerners* in this scenario? How might the symbols have been misinterpreted by these two members of very different cultures?



## USMC Command and Staff College Course Card

**Lesson Title: Introduction to Culture**
**USMC Command & Staff College**
**Author: Dr. L. Mackenzie**
**AY 17-18**

*If Marines want to be prepared for the next fight they are going to have to prepare themselves to adjust rapidly to whatever culture they're going into. We are always operating in other people's cultures. We've got to be able to adapt to those cultures and make certain that we do not create problems.*

- General James Mattis

### 1. Introduction

An understanding of the ways in which culture shapes our behavior and impacts our interpretations of others' behavior is crucial for mission success, regardless of rank or context. This lesson will illustrate the ways in which culture impacts operational effectiveness by providing a diverse set of cultural concepts and skills to help make sense of the complexity inherent to intercultural interaction. Academic study devoted to culture provides a relevant set of processes and alternative viewpoints for Marines' toolkits, to include: innovative approaches to problem-solving, exploratory thinking, re-framing, and integration of alternative viewpoints into decision-making, among others. These skills remain relevant for those leaders faced with the challenge of building relationships across cultures — whether geographic or organizational. Inherent to overcoming this challenge is recognizing that culture is a process and not a "thing" people live in. The anthropologist, Tim Ingold put it bluntly, stating that it is "more realistic to say that . . . people *live culturally,* rather than that they *live in cultures.*" The Marine Corps University Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) defines culture as "a web of meanings shared or partially shared by members of a group." To be successful, commanders and staff consider five fundamental aspects of culture when planning and executing military operations: (1) People use culture to understand the world and make decisions; (2) Aspects of culture are interconnected,

sometimes in unfamiliar ways; (3) Culture is learned; (4) Culture is not homogenous in a group- there will be internal variation; (5) Culture is created by people and can and does change.

Culture has been examined by various academic disciplines over the past century and its inclusion in the CSC curriculum heightens students' awareness of the multiple lenses through which culture can be studied, for example:

**Cross-Cultural Psychology** = individual level analysis of the personal characteristics that predict competence
**Cultural Anthropology** = group and individual level analysis focused on how people create and change patterns of behavior and meaning
**Cultural Geography** = analyzes the patterns and interactions of culture in relation to the natural environment and the human organization of space
**Cultural History** = examines the relationship between artifacts and the world they purport to represent
**International Relations** = institutional level analysis of political/economic systems
**Intercultural Communication** = small group analysis of normative interaction to identify difference and anticipate misunderstanding

Since we don't interact with cultures, we interact with people - communication is a natural point of entry for understanding cultural difference. Extensive interviews with four dozen senior military officers ranging from O-6 to 4 star General Officers devoted to the characteristics of strategic leadership found "the ability to communicate across cultural divides[80]" to be critical for mission and career success. The field of intercultural communication provides skills and strategies for anticipating misunderstanding (thereby reducing uncertainty) and providing multiple, creative explanations for confusing or ambiguous behavior. Enhanced *interactions* stem from better *explanations* — both of which contribute directly to the process of building partnerships

80 Barak A. Salmoni et al., "Growing Strategic Leaders for Future Conflict," Parameters Spring (2010), 74.



across cultural divides[81]. Further, *cultural sensemaking* is the process and strategies we use to explain the behavior and intentions of those who are culturally different. The ability to learn and reason through ambiguous situations is one way in which cultural sensemaking differs from culture-specific competence. A variety of strategies for cultural sensemaking will be introduced in the lecture and readings that are designed to both promote student reflection on past experiences as well as plan for future intercultural interactions.

The assigned readings will introduce concepts, skills, and guiding questions that will likely reappear over the course of the academic year and well beyond. The *Strategies for Developing and Practicing Cross-Cultural Expertise in the Military* article proposes seven mental habits organized around three metacognitive strategies, to include: adopting a cross-culturalist stance, seeking and extending cultural understanding, and applying cultural understanding to guide action. Bennett's "Cultivating Intercultural Competence" chapter frames a discussion of intercultural competence in terms of "attitudes that motivate us", "knowledge that informs us", and "skills that enable us to interact effectively and appropriately." Finally, Rubinstein's *Humanitarian-Military Collaboration: Social and Cultural Aspects of Interoperability* explores how cultural factors affect the ability of military and humanitarian actors to work together to achieve common goals, and how cultural factors affect work with local populations.

An increased understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with cultural difference can improve the quality of both conversations and relationships. This lesson seeks to have a "broadening effect" on student learning by introducing a wide variety of strategies for managing intercultural interactions and proposing that more productive outcomes become possible as a result of such knowledge.

**2. Student Learning Outcomes**

3.1 Define culture, its key components, and its applicability to tactics, operations, and strategy.

81 W.R Sieck, J.L. Smith, and L.J. Rasmussen, "Metacognitive strategies for making sense of cross-cultural encounters," Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 44 (2013), 1007-1023.

3.4 Apply appropriate modes of cross-cultural interaction to planning, programming, and operations.
3.5 Analyze the dynamic interaction between cultures in conflict across the Range of Military Operations.

## 3. Supporting Educational Objectives

a. Assess the key aspects of culture affecting planning, programming, and operations. [CSC 3.1, 3.5, JPME 4f]
b. Assess the effects of organizational culture on inter-organizational operations. [CSC 3.4, JPME 4f]

## 4. Student Requirements

| Event | Prep |
|---|---|
| • Attend Guest Lecture "Introduction to Culture" on 14 August 2017 | 1 hr. |
| • Contribute to Seminar on 14 August 2017 | |
| **Read the following articles/chapters:**<br>• Bennett, J. (2009). *Cultivating Intercultural Competence: A Process Perspective.* In D. Deardorff (Ed.), *Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence.* (pp. 121-140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.<br>• Rasmussen, L. & Sieck, W. (2012). *Strategies for Developing & Practicing Cross-Cultural Expertise in the Military. Military Review.* Mar-Apr: 71-80.<br>• Rubinstein, R. (2014). *Humanitarian-Military Collaboration: Social and Cultural Aspects of Interoperability.* In R. Albro & B. Ivey (Eds.) *Cultural Awareness in the Military: Developments and Implications for Future Humanitarian Cooperation* (pp. 57-72). London: Palgrave MacMillan. | 49 pp. |
| **Supplemental Materials:**<br>• Nisbett, R. (2003). *The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently and why.* New York: Free Press.<br>• Simons, A. (2005) *Seeing the Enemy (or Not).* In A. McIvor (ed.) *Rethinking the Principles of War* (pp. 323-343). Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press. | |



## 5. Issues for Discussion

a. Bennett's chapter begins with an anecdote that many would refer to as a "first world problem." She uses this experience to begin a discussion about "cultural humility" as a predictor of intercultural competence. Provide one example of when cultural humility worked for or against you in an intercultural interaction. See example (p. 135) from the US Ambassador to Japan, Edwin Reischauer (1986) in Bennett's conclusion: "We had acquired the habit of looking at things two different ways — from the Japanese angle of vision as well as from our own national viewpoint. This proved to be the key to my career and, extended worldwide, it is the only hope I can see for world peace and human survival."

b. Bennett refers to Nisbett's *The Geography of Thought* in her explanation of a culture map (p. 129) by referring to the following differences in thinking styles: "patterns of attention and perception...preferred patterns of explanation for events...habits of organizing the world...use of formal logic rules...application of dialectal approaches." What level of challenge have different thinking styles presented for you in your work as a military/DoD professional?

c. Rubinstein discusses the dangers associated with characterizing culture as generalizable and static. On p. 67, he warns that generalizations about military and civilian organizational cultural differences (as depicted in Table 5.1) can lead to the "fallacy of detached cultural descriptions." What does he mean by this? Do any exceptions to the lists in Table 5.1 come to mind?

d. In their research devoted to cultural sensemaking strategies, Rasmussen & Sieck's findings reveal that the ways cultural experts make sense of "cultural surprises" aligns with the reasoning processes of scientists. How might this be useful to you as you plan for future cross-cultural operations?

**6. Relationship to Other Instruction**

Having a better understanding of culture and role that it plays in conflict is essential to understanding much of the Command and Staff College curriculum. Many if not most of the historical case studies you will examine in War Studies will be set in foreign lands with cultures dissimilar to the United States. In Security Studies, we will begin with an examination of American culture with a particular emphasis on our political culture. In Leadership, you will study military culture contrasting it with external organizations that you will increasingly deal with as you rise in rank. In each exercise in Warfighting, you will have to consider culture in your planning.



# APPENDIX D: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE MILITARY

The relationships among the social sciences and various military and intelligence organizations have had complex and often rocky history. The tension and mistrust on both sides of the divide created a situation where, between late 1960s and early 2000s, there was little systematic contact. As a consequence, at the beginning of the most recent period of increased military interest in culture, many efforts were not informed by the most recent scientific and conceptual developments. When some of these early efforts became known to the scientific community, some took it as proof that the military was wedded to outdated, inaccurate approaches while others took it as a signal that better communication was needed. There was some truth in both positions and there are ongoing debates about the viability and ethics of trying to bring contemporary science into the military context.

The references below are sources of information about the history of the relationship and contemporary debates. Additionally, they provide historical information on past efforts by national security organizations to develop culture-related capabilities. For those whose interest is exclusively focused on the history of military culture programs, we recommend the works by Allison Abbe and Seymour Deitchman.

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