

Technical Report 1338

Framework for Rapid Situational Awareness in the Field

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March 2014



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FRAMEWORK FOR RAPID SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE FIELD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

Soldiers in the field are involved in a variety of non-combat activities (e.g., peacekeeping, disaster and humanitarian relief, reconstruction, etc.) carried out in collaboration with local populations, non-US military forces, non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel, or relief agency workers. Such operations require intense and sustained encounters with culturally different groups and individuals. These encounters include activities such as meetings, negotiations, dispute settlement, training and planning.

The Army has placed a high priority on the development of cultural competence among Soldiers, but designing and delivering culturally-appropriate training in advance for such deployments is very difficult due to the range of contexts and cultures involved. In such situations, it makes sense to equip Soldiers with a way to quickly learn on the ground, as they interact with unfamiliar cultural groups to carry out their mission. It is not possible to identify and teach everything a Soldier might need to know about a new culture prior to deployment. In such situations, the ability to uncover salient cultural differences in approach, and to act or react appropriately, is of great value. We set out to develop an easy-to-use tool to help Soldiers navigate unfamiliar cultural encounters, including a structure for understanding encounters, the types of cultural orientations that may be operating in these encounters, and salient questions for Soldiers to ask during the encounter that will help guide their learning and subsequent understanding of similar situations.

Procedure:

Many non-military personnel deal with unfamiliar situations as a routine part of their work; to capture the breadth of these situations, we looked closely at the literature in a variety of different areas -- law enforcement, field research, and first responders, among others. In addition, we drew heavily on more conceptual material from anthropology, sociology, law enforcement, and cross-cultural communication. We also carried out a series of interviews with first responders, focusing mainly on training approaches and techniques designed to enhance situational awareness among personnel. Finally, we investigated – in both the literature and in our interviews – the role of sensemaking in building collective understanding among small teams. In developing the framework, we focused on two major components: situational awareness (which helps Soldiers identify salient aspects of a new environment) and core cultural orientations (which helps Soldiers make sense of what they are experiencing).

Findings:

In this report, we treat culture as a process, rather than a bounded, rigid, and categorizable entity. This allows us to examine cultural orientations rather than cultural “rules” as the primary determinants of what happens during an encounter, and to focus, in particular, on

those orientations that seemed – from our interviews and our literature search – to be most important in shaping Soldiers’ encounters in the field.

The report begins with a short examination of culture and cultural learning, as well as a discussion of core cultural orientations and their importance in interactions. Subsequent sections examine the concept of situational awareness in relation to the types of encounters experienced by Soldiers in the field. In this respect, the report emphasizes the role of effective communication, negotiation, and persuasion in the management of encounters. The report then presents a framework that connects key cultural orientations to the various stages of an encounter. Finally, the report offers some observations on the need for effectively managing what has been learned at the unit level as a means by which to capture and leverage the knowledge and experience gained through successful encounters.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

The findings from this research illustrate and support a somewhat unconventional approach to the development of cultural competence. By defining culture as the product of interactions, and not as a “thing”, one is led to focus on how Soldiers interact with others in the field, and how existing cultural orientations (frameworks, or pre-dispositions) on both sides may affect interactions. By paying attention to the role of such cultural orientations and understanding how they affect interactions between culturally-different individuals, we believe that Soldiers will be better prepared to enter unfamiliar situations and to learn rapidly within them.

This framework does not teach Soldiers what to think, but builds their capacity for “situational awareness” – the ability to identify salient cultural elements of an encounter, decide what these elements mean, and respond appropriately. The framework presented here should prove useful before, during, and after deployment. Before and after deployment, it can be incorporated into existing training programs and modules, as a way to better understand how to carry out basic stabilization activities and tasks. In the field itself, the framework and approach can serve as a structuring device for helping Soldiers rapidly adapt to and manage unfamiliar situations, as well as develop effective understanding within the group.

FRAMEWORK FOR RAPID SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE FIELD

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FRAMEWORK FOR RAPID SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE FIELD

I. Introduction: The Problem and Approach

Although the need for increased cultural competency is almost universally acknowledged within the Armed Forces, training for such competency is difficult. Haskins (2010) notes that “our Army’s greatest gains in cultural fluency have come the hard way, and we have no satisfactory system for passing that knowledge along” (p. 80). The disciplines of math and science, which are the philosophical foundations of our service academies, tend to view problems as measurable, linear, and, above all, solvable in algorithmic terms (O’Connor, 2009), an approach that tends to ignore or marginalize anything subjective, qualitative, or hard to directly measure – in other words, much of what we mean by the term “culture”.

It is likely, however, that our military units will continue to be frequently and closely engaged with other cultures in areas of the world with which we may be relatively unfamiliar. The nature of present-day warfare, moreover, is very different from what it was in World War II, the Korean Conflict, or even the Vietnam War. Asymmetric warfare, counter-insurgency, and winning the “hearts and minds” of local nationals are crucial components of today’s overseas military missions. As a result, the capability to deal with other cultures has become an important key to mission success.

In military training, cultural capability has three intersecting components: regional or culture-specific knowledge, language proficiency, and cross-cultural competence (3C), which comprises the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that enable effective performance in any culture (Abbe, Gulick & Herman, 2007; Abbe, 2008). As Abbe and colleagues (2007) point out, language and regional knowledge help one operate in a specific cultural environment, while 3C enables one to work across a range of cultures and settings.

Because of the increased operational tempo of overseas missions, which simultaneously requires Soldiers to collaborate with foreign counterparts while identifying and countering threats, intercultural competence has been a military priority for some time. As reflected in Army field manuals and DoD strategic documents, intercultural competence is now seen as critical at every level of military operations (Blascovich & Hartel, 2008). Previous work has produced cultural training frameworks (e.g., Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops - Time, Civilians (METT-TC) or Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, Information, Physical Environment, and Time (PMESII-PT)) that strongly emphasized aspects of the local context. However, some of these frameworks are too simplistic, while others are too complex (Haskins, 2010).

Some trainers, too, see culture as a separate entity or topic, while others see culture as something much more integral to military operations. Culture is what organizes human experience; it is the medium through which all interactions take place. In this sense, it is similar to weather, in that it is not really noticed until it becomes extreme or unusual. Pilots, however, must pay close attention to the weather, even though they are not trained meteorologists. Pilots, furthermore, do not learn about weather as something separate from their flight operations; rather, they learn how weather affects things like lift, navigation, fuel consumption and airspeed. So too, must Soldiers, who deal with culture and cultural differences on a daily basis, learn about

how culture affects their performance and interactions with others. Soldiers need not be cultural experts, but they do need to consider culture as a permanent and defining aspect of every encounter they have in the field.

Unfortunately, most Soldiers will have had minimal “cultural” training prior to deployment and the content and quality of this training varies considerably across the force. Although some units - or individuals within certain units - receive specialized cultural training, such as area studies and language, most do not receive such in-depth training or even any training at all. Furthermore, some Soldiers may have had no significant cross-cultural interactions prior to their arrival in a foreign country. As such, there is a need for a simple, yet effective, framework for Soldiers to use in the field; one that is applicable across a range of situations, yet has the ability to be focused on specific situations, as well as the potential for being scaled upwards. By “scaled upwards” we mean a framework capable of being extended outward from smaller to larger military units (e.g., from squad to company level), while at the same time yielding greater detail and sophistication as learning in the field takes place.

The material presented in this report comes from a variety of sources, including anthropology, sociology, cross-cultural communication, as well as a series of interviews with Soldiers and first responders. This research will be primarily useful for those involved with designing and implementing training for Soldiers as a way to incorporate immediately useful field approaches into their existing training.

Methods

At the beginning of this project, we read and reviewed published material from a wide number of sources, covering a variety of topics relating in some way to the focus of our investigation. We found relevant concepts, frameworks, and insights, for example, in the literature on cross-cultural training (both military and non-military), rapid assessment methods, anthropological fieldwork accounts, hostage and crisis negotiation, pilot training, and first responder protocols. The most useful parts of this fairly large body of material are discussed within this report, and are listed in the bibliography.

As we developed our framework, we also interviewed a number of people who dealt, in one way or another, with “encounters” of various types, mainly as first responders. Like Soldiers, first responders often find themselves in relatively unfamiliar situations (or, to put it another way, in situations where they must deal with unfamiliar individuals). Our interviews each lasted about an hour, and focused on a discussion of three main questions:

- What, in your work, would you say constitutes the most difficult or unusual situations you or your people are likely to encounter? What makes them difficult or unusual?
- How does your organization train people to respond appropriately to such situations? What sorts of training methods seem most effective and appropriate?
- Each encounter teaches responders something. How does your organization incorporate new learning from individual encounters to ensure that “lessons learned” find their way into the group’s overall store of knowledge?

We asked these questions as we carried out on-site interviews with individuals from the following organizations:

- The City of Lafayette Police Force
- The University of Purdue Police Force
- The City of West Lafayette Police Force
- The City of Lafayette Fire Department
- The City of West Lafayette Fire Department
- The Lafayette Crisis Center
- The State of Indiana Police Academy

In addition, we conducted telephone interviews with two Army officers in the Washington, DC area who had had extensive field experience in the Middle East. Notes from all of these interviews were transcribed, analyzed for content, and incorporated into the development of our framework.

In the following sections, we outline a basic approach to understanding culture that focuses on core value orientations. We then look at the types of encounters Soldiers are likely to have, and examine some of their key elements and processes. Finally, we attempt to map salient core value orientations to these interactions, identifying the significant questions Soldiers should ask in order to better understand – and successfully manage – these interactions.

Operations Other Than War

Deployments place US Soldiers in unfamiliar cultures across the world. To an increasing extent, the Armed Forces today are involved in situations that do not rely on the use of lethal force (McClosky, Behymer & Papautsky 2010), but rather entail non-combat activities carried out in collaboration with the local populace. These “stabilization operations” include humanitarian operations, peacekeeping missions, disaster relief efforts, reconstruction, and post-combat missions. Such operations typically involve intense and sustained interactions with culturally different groups and individuals during meetings, negotiations, dispute settlements, training, and planning. Not all such activities are confined to interactions with community members; some of them involve other military forces (e.g., NATO or host country units), non-government organization (NGO) personnel, or relief agency workers.

At the same time, it is important to note that, given the current counter-insurgency (COIN) nature of most missions, Soldiers are currently expected to conduct their missions while watching out for an enemy hidden within the populace that may engage without warning. The balance of tactical readiness and cordial interactions between locals and Soldiers is both delicate and crucial, and underscores the importance of cultural situational awareness in the context of threat detection.

As interactions between people of different cultural background progress, it often becomes evident that the different participants have divergent notions of what the common task is and how best to accomplish it. In such situations, the ability to uncover salient cultural differences in approaches, and to act or react appropriately, is of great value.

Unlike many of the military campaigns of the past, where massive firepower and overwhelming force were often determinative, today's conflicts often involve a continuing series of small-scale, ground-level encounters. Here, it is often cultural awareness and cultural agility, rather than brute force, that are the keys to success. "The ability to plan, make decisions, and solve problems in this [new] environment requires, more than ever before, a robust capacity for perspective taking and the ability to understand, hold, and reconcile multiple perspectives on issues" (O'Connor, 2009, p.2). During deployments, whatever the actual combat requirements turn out to be, there will always be a need for ground-level, non-combat interactions with local populations, encounters that have the potential to significantly reduce threat, risk, and loss of life on all sides.

Soldiers as Self-Directed Learners

Training for cross-cultural encounters can be very complex. It is not possible to predict, much less learn, everything one might need to know about a new culture prior to deployment. In other words, we cannot prepare Soldiers for all eventualities. We can, however, provide a framework that takes into account the most significant non-combat encounters Soldiers face, together with a set of suggestions to guide learning in those encounters. Thus, the framework outlined here provides Soldiers with questions rather than answers in an attempt to help them uncover key cultural aspects of a new situation and to do this quickly in a mission-effective way.

The primary reason why this framework consists of questions rather than answers is to help the user understand that the correct answer to a given question may vary considerably across different cultures. Furthermore, even within a single culture, local-level variations are common and often significant. It is impossible, in other words, to provide answers in advance of the many situations Soldiers are likely to encounter. As such, this approach emphasizes learning, rather than lists, and is culture-general in its focus, rather than cultural-specific.

A framework for learning, as opposed to a set of definitive answers or responses, is therefore necessary. In these situations, the issues are what might be referred to as "emergent problems", to which there is no a priori right answer. The ability to learn about culture is, furthermore, a skill in and of itself that will develop over time (see Abbe et al., 2007) as new information becomes available.

This framework does not teach Soldiers what to think, but rather *how* to think about the situations they encounter. There are a variety of names for this in the literature, including "perceptual acuity" (Abbe, 2008), "multicultural perspective-taking" (Rentsch & Mot, 2009) and "heedfulness" (Thomas, Sussman & Henderson, 2001). In this report, we have adopted Endsley's (1995) term "situational awareness" to describe the ability to identify salient aspects of the environment, decide what they mean, and respond appropriately. Situational awareness, which was once recognized as important for pilots in World War I, Korea and Vietnam, has since become a key focus in military research.

This learning framework has several advantages. First, it is relatively simple; it does not require specialized or highly specific knowledge to understand and use. Second, it does not

replace Soldier training, but serves as a complement and addition to existing frameworks such as METT-TC. Within METT-TC specifically, the framework can be used to increase Soldiers' capabilities and understanding with respect to Mission, Enemy, and above all, Civilian Considerations. In other words, the framework can be incorporated within existing training protocols to enhance and extend them, not to replace them. Third, it is highly flexible, and can be adapted to the needs of a wide range of situations. The broad cultural orientations contained within the framework can be narrowed and focused for particular situations. Finally, it is scalable, and could be made more detailed and elaborate (and hence, presumably, more useful) as and when necessary. This framework could be used by trainers as part of an orientation program in pre-deployment situations. It could, of course, be used in the field itself, such as prior to encounters involving negotiations or dispute resolutions.

The next section of this report (Section II) discusses culture, the process by which individuals learn about culture, and a number of important cultural orientations that may affect field encounters. Following this, Section III examines the concept of situational awareness in relation to the types of encounters Soldiers experience in the field. Section III also addresses the role of communication, negotiation, and persuasion in managing these encounters. An overall framework for approaching encounters is presented in Section IV, followed by some observations and thoughts in Section V on sensemaking within military units.

II. Culture and Culture Learning

Culture

Culture is often thought of as if it were a “thing”, a concrete entity that could, with the right approach, be reduced to a spreadsheet, programmed into a computer, and manipulated from a distance. But real human behavior is complex, messy, and often unpredictable (Pew & Mavor, 1997). Clarke (2003) notes that “most research has relentlessly sought commonalities of various kinds while evading and avoiding representations of the complexities, messiness, and denseness of actual situations and differences in social life” (p.556). The cultural landscape, in other words, is cluttered, diverse, shifting, and highly uncertain.

When it comes to human behavior, culture is one of the simplest and yet most elusive concepts. As most anthropologists use the term, “culture” is composed of what humans make (artifacts), what they do (their behavior), and what they think (their ideas). These cultural elements form sets of patterns, which are learned, shared, and passed on to newcomers. Of the three components of culture, artifacts and behaviors (including language) are the most easy to observe. What people are actually thinking, however, can largely be inferred only from their behavior.

The traditional view of culture was that it was a relatively closed, stable system with clear boundaries. Individuals in these systems “had” culture, and used it as if it were a set of rigid rules, similar to the U.S. legal system. Like a legal system, culture was thought to determine, or at least severely constrain, the behavior of most individuals. It applied to everyone operating in a given area or sphere of life. Although lawyers might argue the finer points of interpretation, the law is clear on most points, and it is written down for all to see. But today, this rigid view of culture is not really accurate or useful. Globalization has now brought people, things, and practices into contact as never before. Groups of people are no longer geographically isolated, with clear and relatively robust boundaries separating them from others. Culture is no longer homogeneous within a group, it is no longer monolithic, and it is definitely not static. A given individual has a multiplicity of cultural materials and patterns upon which to draw, and will access various parts of this storehouse in any given interaction or situation.

The work of Goffman (1959) and Schön (1984, 1987) are detailed examinations of how humans create meaning through these interactions with one another. In this view, culture is not “out there”, but it is what happens when people interact (Agar, 2006). Culture becomes visible, in other words, only when an outsider encounters it. It appears as a series of surprises or departures from our expectations, a phenomenon cross-cultural trainers term “critical incidents” or “rich points.” These differences in culture – “surprises” – emerge as people from different backgrounds interact. The operational difficulties with culture begin here, and so it is here, as well, that one’s ability to learn about a new culture becomes important.

Learning About Culture

Cultural learning takes place in several different ways, each involving a different level of engagement and intensity (see Figure 1). For instance, one can read about a different culture, or look at films, photographs, or other materials. One can also listen and observe first hand without interacting much. But the most engaged forms of cultural learning take place when talking with people, asking them questions, and getting involved in their activities in various ways.

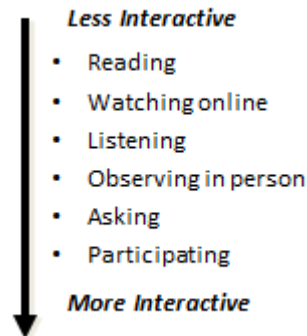


Figure 1. Spectrum of cultural learning modalities

Most of what Soldiers experience during deployed combat operations takes place at the more interactive end of this spectrum. Soldiers are deployed for a considerable period of time and encounters with culturally different people, while usually brief, tend to be intense and frequent. Despite their frequency, however, little research exists on these short sequential encounters. Instead, most of our understanding about how culture is learned comes from the experiences of people who are “immersed” in a new culture on a more or less continuous basis, for periods ranging from several weeks to several years.

This immersion seems to follow a general pattern, which is outlined in Figure 2 (Nolan, 1999; 25-26). At first, individuals literally cannot understand what is going on around them because almost everything looks, sounds, and feels unfamiliar. If there happens to be familiar aspects in the new environment, individuals will tend to focus on these almost immediately. This comprises the first stage of cultural learning, that of *identifying* familiar and unfamiliar things. The second stage involves *learning* something about the unfamiliar things, in the basic sense of “what they are.” Are they significant? Are they important? Are they things one should learn more about? At this point, individuals move to the third stage: that of being able to *cope* at a basic level with these unfamiliar things. Being able to cope does not imply a deep sense of understanding, but rather the ability to respond in some culturally and instrumentally appropriate way. It is at the fourth stage that one becomes culturally able, not simply to cope with or respond to aspects of the new environment, but to actually *manage* them in a proactive way.

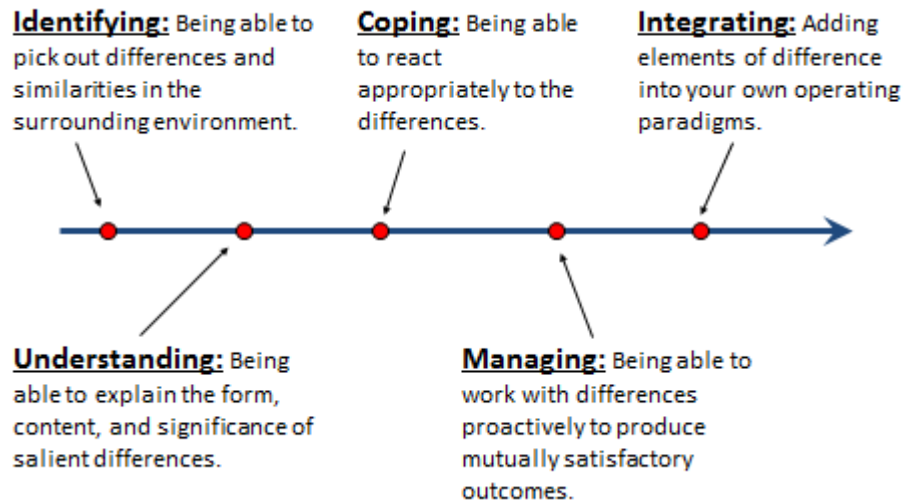


Figure 2. Stages of cultural immersion

At this point, an individual begins to feel fairly comfortable in the new culture. Many people will stop the immersion process here, since their ability level enables them to perform their jobs effectively. Others, particularly those who spend long periods of time in another culture, may proceed further and integrate various patterns of thought and behavior into their normal daily routine. Even after these individuals leave the culture, they may continue to behave – and think – in these new ways. In broad outline, this pattern resembles the Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy’s three-step model of cultural awareness, cultural understanding, and cultural expertise (2009; 12-13).

This pattern also parallels the way in which a new language is acquired under field conditions. For example, in Stage One, the new language is an unintelligible garble. Nothing is understood – neither the words nor the intentions behind them. Eventually, individuals progress to Stage Two, in which a few of the words are identified, together with some notion of their meaning. For instance, people learn that some of the words are actually greetings, and that, in many cultures, greetings are a very important part of the interaction ritual. From this point on, having identified certain speech acts as greetings, an individual can proceed to Stage Three, learning to respond to a standard greeting appropriately, even if that individual does not really know exactly what the person is saying. Eventually, with a better understanding of the language, and more experience at watching and listening as greetings are exchanged, one progresses to Stage Four, where one becomes capable of not only responding to greetings, but also initiating them and greeting people in different ways appropriate to different situations. It is at this point that one has “mastered” an element of the culture. Going further, that individual may continue to greet people – even outside the culture – in formal and complex ways (Stage Five). Additionally, he or she may even consider people who do not reciprocate to be impolite and unfriendly, even though those individuals are not actually members of that culture.

To summarize, learning in an unfamiliar culture is a multi-stage process that involves (1) transforming raw data into useful information, (2) uncovering the relationships and patterns between pieces of information, and (3) understanding what lies behind the patterns. Acquiring

basic information at the beginning of the process helps one to understand the “who, what, and where” of a particular culture. Later on, decoding patterns and meanings helps answer questions of “how” and “why”. This enables someone to not just understand what is happening and respond appropriately to it, but also to predict what is likely to happen, and thus influence how events unfold.

Creating Meanings from Situations

Anthropologists follow the general pattern of cultural learning described above when they conduct fieldwork in other cultures. Initially, much fieldwork is “grounded theory” (Clarke, 2003), wherein the collection of data drives the formulation of hypotheses and ultimately builds theory. Fieldworkers say that, before someone can really begin learning about a new culture, they have to know what to pay attention to, a process they call “learning to count to one.” In other words, understanding what is worth looking at is one of the first steps in learning about a culture.

It is also important to suspend judgment as one learns. This can be practiced through the application of “cultural relativism” – a non-judgmental, non-reactive stance. Often misunderstood as moral or ethical relativism, cultural relativism does not require the investigator to actually like the people with whom he or she is interacting or to approve of their actions or beliefs. Rather, it is the temporary suspension of judgment in an attempt to learn more about the culture. It is taking the time to learn what others are doing, and gaining an understanding– from their own perspective – of how and why they are doing those things.

At the beginning of the fieldwork encounter, uncertainty and ambiguity are high, and the anthropologist’s questions are somewhat irrelevant and off the mark. The investigator cannot know, moreover, whether what is being observed is truly normative (i.e., usual and unremarkable for that culture) or simply deviant. As the investigation proceeds, however, the responses to questions start to reveal patterns, which, in turn, lead to better and more focused questions. Given enough encounters, certain patterns begin to emerge, a few of which will likely explain quite a bit of the variation. Eventually, a detailed and fairly accurate picture emerges of the situation that is being examined.

Core Value Orientations

While all cultures have basic dimensions, such as social and political structure, they manifest these dimensions very differently due to constraints and opportunities presented by the surrounding environment (i.e., water, climate, resources, etc.), their history (i.e., what people have been through and how it has been interpreted), available technology (e.g., horses, aircraft, cell phones), and dominant institutions (e.g., monarchy, democracy, Sharia law). In addition to observing these highly visible, outward manifestations of culture, it is equally useful for Soldiers to look underneath at the thinking and the values that generate the observed behaviors and distinguish one culture from another. These are often referred to as “core values.” These core value orientations are not necessarily held by everyone in the group, and perhaps not to the same degree, but they are, at a broad level, characteristic of a group of people and tend to define who they are and how they prefer to manage the world.

Core values are not rigid. In other words, people may say one thing and do another. Not everyone “buys” a core value to the same extent. Furthermore, a culture’s core values may not apply in certain situations. For example, whereas people may espouse equality and fairness, they may also, on occasion, treat others unfairly. Not everyone in a culture necessarily feels strongly about equality and fairness, and, in certain situations – when the boat is about to sink, for example -- equality cedes place to “women and children first.”

Of course, Americans also have core values, and cross-cultural trainers have used contrastive techniques (Kohls, 1984) to help Americans understand themselves as a way to understand others. Learning about someone else’s core value orientations, in other words, requires learning something about oneself, as well. Like most people, Americans do not necessarily notice or recognize their own core values, but think that their preferences and actions are logical and part of the normal order of things. If and when they do think about their own values, they usually consider them as positive and indeed admirable.

In the box below, we have listed a set of core value orientations, which are likely to be significant in Soldiers’ cross-cultural encounters. We have not tried to be exhaustive here, but to list only the more significant value orientations and their most important and obvious manifestations. Most of these core value orientations are quite different from those held by the majority of Americans. Many of them, to an average Soldier, might appear to “make no sense.” But such different value orientations make perfect sense to those who hold them, and (like Americans) they see what they think and do as normal and right. Such different value orientations arise from history, experience, and a host of other factors particular to a place, people, and time.

Table 1. *A selection of core value orientations*

Time/Control of Time. Cultures think differently about time and use it differently. In the US, time is linear, such that we like to do things one at a time. In other cultures, time may be seen differently: ▪ Multiple tasks may be done at one time ▪ Meetings may be much slower and relaxed, and events may not begin “on time” ▪ Deadlines may not be met ▪ Work and leisure may not be clearly delineated Public and Private Spheres. In the US, public and private spheres are seen as highly distinct and should not normally overlap. Other cultures may define “public” and “private” quite differently. ▪ What is considered public knowledge in one culture may be a closely guarded secret in another ▪ Certain behaviors may not be publicly allowed, while others, which we find strange or offensive, are ▪ Certain topics, places, and people are off-limits as subjects of conversations
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Table 1. *A selection of core value orientations (continued)*

Hierarchy, Inequality, Egalitarianism. In the US, although we recognize hierarchy and inequality, we value equality and equal treatment, even though we do not always act on these values. Other societies may be organized on the basis of inequality, and this may be seen as normal.

- Status and rank may be very important for the success of encounters
- Certain groups and individuals may be “off limits”
- Deference and respect may be required
- Your own status (age, rank, gender, etc.) may determine how people treat you
- Subordinates may be unwilling to challenge their leaders

Male/Female; Sex and Gender Roles and Relations. In the US, gender equality, equal treatment, and a general blurring of gender roles and differences are seen as worthy goals. Elsewhere, very different gender rules and arrangements may apply.

- Women may be separated from men and subject to different standards of behavior and expectation
- Females may be unequal and subservient in many spheres of life and altogether absent from encounters
- Counterparts may be unwilling to treat females in your group “appropriately”
- Men may not want to interact closely with women
- Attitudes toward sexual conduct, sexuality, and sexual orientation may be both different and rigid

Individualism/ Privacy/Initiative. In the US, individualism is generally prized, as is private ownership, initiative, and privacy. Success is due to individual effort and competition is good. Not all societies see things this way.

- Individuals may be defined much more by their groups than by their individual personalities
- Privacy may be seen as anti-social
- The sharing of what we would consider private property may be the norm
- Competition may be seen as socially destructive
- Individuals may feel pressure to “go along” and “fit in,” and may be reluctant to take decisions on their own

Action/Work Orientation Attitudes to Change and Risk. For Americans, work is, in many ways, what defines someone, and people are judged to a large extent by what they do. Someone who is not busy is lazy, while someone who takes risks deserves to be rewarded. Not all cultures value work, risk, and “getting ahead” so highly.

- People may be “busy” only when there is a task to be accomplished
- People may favor the status quo over change, which they may view as destabilizing
- Risk may be avoided in favor of the “tried and true”
- People may believe that there is little they can do to change their circumstances

Informality/Directness/Openness. Informality and frankness are usually signs of good character and trustworthiness in American society. Although Americans will not always tell the whole truth, deliberate lying is viewed very negatively. Other cultures may approach this differently.

- In some cultures, a high degree of formality and reserve in communication indicates maturity and prudence
- The “truth” may be seen as relative to the situation, and may be suppressed in favor of smooth relations
- It may be very difficult to get a “straight answer” out of people, or to get an “unbiased and objective” version of events. Statements may instead be designed to reassure or please the listener

Table 1. *A selection of core value orientations (continued)*

Practicality/ Efficiency/Task Orientation. Americans are highly pragmatic. If one approach does not work, we try another. For most of us, getting the job done is the main goal, and whatever gets the job done is fine with us. Elsewhere, relationships may take precedence over results.

- People may be reluctant to adopt new methods that disrupt existing arrangements
- People may be especially resistant to changes that affect their network of relationships, particularly if these also involve persons in authority
- People may be reluctant to work with certain groups or individuals with whom they do not have good relations

Success and well-being. For Americans, individual success is a good thing. It is something most of us strive for, and are proud of achieving. There is the belief that everyone can be successful if they try hard enough. Other cultures may view success very differently.

- People may believe that there is only a limited amount of success or good fortune in the world; those who have too much will risk bad fortune and disapproval
- People may not necessarily be motivated by the opportunity to succeed
- People may be resentful of someone who has more of a valued resource (e.g., money, good fortune, etc.) and may find ways to “level the playing field”
- Those who gain success (e.g., promotions, recognition or reward) may want this to be kept secret in order not to arouse jealousy or hatred in others

Face/Honor/Shame. Most Americans are concerned about personal “face,” honor, and reputation, but, for the most part, these are individual matters. In other cultures, people may be much more concerned about public affronts to face, and may consider these a group matter.

- Outward appearances and public displays of respect and politeness may be extremely important in encounters
- Enormous emphasis may be placed on avoiding loss of face in public
- Loss of face may be seen as a group issue, not an individual matter
- Once face (or honor, or dignity) has been lost, the mechanisms for restoring it may involve behavior that Americans consider extreme
- “Loss of face” incidents may completely derail other progress made during an encounter

It is important to reiterate that this list is not all-inclusive, but does contain some of the most significant contrasts that appear during cross-cultural interactions. These orientations, while they do not determine behavior, have a shaping effect on both what one does and how one interprets what others do. Consequently, they become differentially important in various types of encounters, which is the subject of the next section.

III. Encounters

Types of Encounters

Soldiers commonly encounter routine situations for which cultural understanding is an important determinant of success. These encounters are temporary social formations, created when two or more people assemble for specific purposes (Lofland, 1971). Such specific purposes may include:

- Meetings
- Negotiations
- Dispute resolution
- Damage control
- Training
- Planning an activity or project
- Sharing food, meals
- Celebrations

All of these encounters involve close and sustained interactions between Soldiers and people from other cultures, and most have been described or referenced in the literature (see van Arsdale & Smith, 2010; Nobel, Wortinger & Hannah, 2007; Bonn & Baker, 2000; Metrisko, 2008; Tressler, 2007; Odoi, 2005).

In these encounters, there is often a high initial degree of uncertainty and ambiguity, coupled with a need to make decisions of consequence fairly quickly. The encounters are assumed to have mutually beneficial purposes and outcomes, but, in case of failure, there may be negative consequences for at least one of the parties.

First responders and others in the civilian world (e.g., police officers, firefighters, crisis negotiators, 911 operators, and emergency medical personnel) also have encounters that resemble, in significant ways, those of Soldiers. Other groups also deal with cultural unfamiliarity and ambiguity, albeit in a somewhat less hurried manner. Field researchers, international business negotiators, development workers, and study abroad students must all make sense of new and different situations, extract relevant meanings, and respond appropriately.

These encounters, both military and civilian, share some important common elements:

Table 2. *Elements of cultural encounters*

Engagement, Interaction and Decision: ▪ Encounters require involvement and decision-making ▪ Decisions, in turn, influence how the encounter progresses ▪ Involvement may initially be reactive, but may rapidly become proactive Uncertainty, Unfamiliarity, Ambiguity, and Contestation: ▪ There is always a degree of uncertainty and tension ▪ There may also be the possibility of threat or danger ▪ In the initial stages of an encounter, the focus may be on ascertaining threat and reducing uncertainty ▪ Until this is done, other aspects of the situation may be ignored Consequentiality: ▪ Encounters are often highly intentional, with clear pressure to get things done ▪ Participants are often aware that failure in an encounter will carry negative consequences later on Multiple Actors and Multiple Agendas: ▪ Encounters usually involve more than two people ▪ Each person may have different perceptions, needs and strategies ▪ Not all agendas are evident at the start of the encounter ▪ Individuals in the encounter may represent others not present ▪ These absent actors may impose constraints, rules and goals of their own Limited Time and a Need for Speed and Accuracy: ▪ All encounters are time-bound in some sense ▪ Most encounters have a clear or implied deadline ▪ Delay in most encounters will have negative consequences Prior History Coupled with Uniqueness: ▪ Few encounters are instances of “first contact” ▪ Prior encounters help to both shape and constrain the present encounter ▪ Despite this, each encounter is in some ways unique Noise and Lack of Control: ▪ Much of what happens in an encounter is irrelevant or distracting to the main tasks ▪ At the outset, what is irrelevant may not be entirely clear ▪ Much of this “noise” may be difficult to control Need for Group Learning: ▪ Differing sides in an encounter often work in teams ▪ Each person in a team will have a somewhat different understanding of the encounter ▪ Fitting together what the team knows or learns becomes important as the encounter progresses

Learning During Encounters

Encounters between parties who are unfamiliar with one another can unfold in random ways, or they can be managed so that outcomes become more predictable. Non-military professionals who deal with analogous situations – particularly those involving crisis or conflict management -- have developed general guidelines that are helpful here, regardless of the specifics. With regard to crisis management, for example, the FBI's Behavioral Change Stairway Model (Vecchi, Van Hasselt, & Romano, 2005) and Taylor's cylindrical model (Taylor, 2002; Grubb, 2010) both approach managing crisis situations in similar ways.

Establishing communication and beginning to build rapport should be the goal of the initial stage of the encounter. At this point, emotions (including anxiety) may be high and venting may take place. During this period, "relational issues such as power, role, trust and status between the different parties may be tested and established" (Grubb, 2010, p. 345).

Slowing things down and allowing intense emotions to be expressed should then become a priority, as the work of communication and relationship-building continues. Empathy, active listening, and the further development of rapport become very important at this stage. Once people are more at ease, substantive communication on the issues of the moment can begin, together with a great deal of information exchange. At some point, this exchange of information begins to turn itself into problem-solving.

The key to success, in all of these situations, is rapid learning: the ability to identify, process, and work with salient cues in the environment of the situation itself, as rapidly as possible. Four skills are involved in being able to manage and learn from encounters: communicating effectively; asking appropriate questions; negotiating; and influencing. Each of these skills is outlined in Table 3 below and explained more fully in the sections that follow.

Table 3. *Key skills for managing encounters*

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Questions to Consider</i>
Communication	Transmitting ideas, feelings and other information to other people effectively, and being able to understand or “decode” received messages.	- What broad communication styles and strategies are preferred? - How do people talk with one another? - How and why do these modes of communication change with circumstances? - What rituals, behaviors or settings encourage good communication?
Asking Questions	Using communication to uncover and analyze new information. Framing queries appropriately and fitting responses into an appropriate framework.	- What kinds of information are people most willing to divulge, and what will they tend to keep private? - How are effective questions framed in this culture? - What are appropriate and inappropriate domains for questioning? - How does setting and context influence questions and answers? - How can vague or inconclusive answers be interpreted?
Negotiating	Uncovering and analyzing differences between two or more parties, and creating mutually acceptable and sustainable joint understandings.	- What negotiation styles work best in this culture? - How can underlying interests be uncovered and understood? - What are the main rituals, behaviors and “rules” governing negotiations here?
Influencing	Persuading others to accept one’s own preferred view or version, and to act accordingly.	- How are trust and confidence established and shown? - What things are axiomatic and taken for granted in this culture? - What are the main strategies for successful influence or persuasion, and how are these used in different situations?

Communicating. Good communication is the first and most important facilitator of successful cultural learning. When communication breaks down or is incomplete, misunderstandings arise quickly. Being an effective communicator means being able to frame one’s own messages clearly and appropriately, and being able to understand what someone else is attempting to communicate, in turn.

Assuming that Soldiers share a language at some level with the people around them, a great deal can be learned – and relationships built – by communicating effectively. Soldiers should keep in mind, however, that no one talks to strangers for just any reason. People need reasons to tell other people things, and so some element of exchange or reciprocation is almost always involved when people talk together. Sometimes, the return is little more than entertainment, but usually more is expected; time and information are generally not free in any culture. If there is nothing to be gained by talking to Soldiers, or if there is a risk of negative consequences, then information may no longer be forthcoming. Consequently, Soldiers –

individually and as a group -- will need to consider what they have to trade, so to speak, for the information they are getting or for the relationships they are trying to build. They may have to show some form of commitment to the group or community before its members will agree to talk freely. Soldiers should find out, therefore, just what constitutes acceptable reciprocity in this particular culture.

If Soldiers do not share a common language, then they will most likely have to rely on an interpreter. Interpreters can do far more than just translate what others say: they can teach Soldiers key facts and information about people, places, and situations. They can advise Soldiers on ways to behave, who to talk to and who to avoid, and, perhaps most importantly, why people do what they do. If possible, the interpreter should both come from the local area and be respected there, since this person may have to vouch for Soldiers at key times. It is very important not to inadvertently put the interpreter in risky or no-win situations, as they will have lives in the local community after the Soldiers are gone.

Asking Questions. While Soldiers may or may not rely on an interpreter, their understanding of the local situation will come through asking good questions. Anthropologists will say “there’s no such thing as a bad answer; there are only bad questions.” In other words, it is by learning to ask better questions that one gets useful answers. Paying some attention to what one asks about, and how one asks, can often facilitate learning.

Showing one’s ignorance, particularly at the outset, -- what Lofland & Lofland (1984) call playing the part of the “socially acceptable incompetent”-- can be a very effective approach to cultural learning. Most cultures will make allowances for a newcomer, particularly if he or she appears to need guidance or advice from the locals. At some point, of course, they will expect the outsider to know better, but in the initial stages of an encounter, it is quite acceptable to seem (and indeed, to be) uninformed.

Generating questions starts with identifying what one needs to know. At first, Soldiers will not necessarily know what they need to know, but they will have mission-specific concerns, goals, and questions, all of which are good places to start. Some of these needs will be highly specific, and some will be more vague or general. As Soldiers gain understanding, their general, open-ended questions will and should become considerably more focused. As questions are answered, the outlines of the situation begin to take shape.

Stories, metaphors, proverbs, and examples from the host culture are often ways to approach sensitive subjects. It is usually better to use examples that are familiar to people in the local culture, not American culture. Americans, for example, are fond of using sports metaphors, which usually have little or no meaning for people elsewhere in the world.

In addition to asking questions, it is necessary that one listens to answers. Here, it is helpful to distinguish between speaker-responsible or listener-responsible communication styles. Americans communicate mainly in a speaker-responsible way: the person who is speaking is expected to structure the message and convey the meaning. In many other cultures, however, communication is much more indirect and it is the job of the listener to construct the meaning. It is hard for listeners to do this if they do not share much of the culture with the speaker, since this

is quite a context-dependent skill. In these cultures, the topic and the intended “message” may actually be indicated by what is *not* being said.

Negotiators have outlined core “active listening skills” that are important during encounters. These include mirroring, paraphrasing, and re-stating or summarizing statements that others make (Vecchi et al., 2005). This both acknowledges the other person’s efforts and encourages them to keep talking. Other effective ways of promoting trust and communication include the use of “minimal encouragers” – nods, grunts, or gestures -- to keep people talking, the use of open-ended neutral questions to probe new or potentially sensitive areas, and the disclosure of personal information as a way to build the relationship.

One of the most effective conversational strategies, of course, is the strategic use of silence and pauses. As the saying goes, the person who talks least often learns the most, and this seems true across most cultures. Silence allows participants time to think. It may also elicit fuller responses from them. By not immediately replying to something the counterpart says, Soldiers may encourage their counterparts to keep talking. Many Americans know the value of silence in our own personal negotiations (e.g., with employers, car dealers, etc). Pauses also can serve as a form of approval or encouragement in exchanges. Finally, pausing during exchanges is a time-honored way of “counting to ten”, and ensuring that Soldiers’ reactions are not too hasty, emotional, or extreme. Even if Soldiers are not sure about what is being communicated, they should remain proactive throughout the encounter, managing their own attention and that of others in constructive and positive ways. Their questions should be framed in several different ways, and they should check their understanding frequently, by mirroring, re-stating, summarizing and paraphrasing, and asking for further clarification.

In addition to asking questions of the moment, Soldiers should consider using a more structured form of inquiry – what anthropologists call *domain analysis* – to investigate a particular aspect of cultural life (see Spradley, 1979, 1980 for a detailed discussion of this technique). For instance, once Soldiers have identified a topic that they need to know more about, focused and specific questions can uncover the scope and breadth of a particular cultural practice, break it down into its constituent parts, and establish some of the cultural rules or logic underlying the arrangement of these parts. Broad initial questions can give them general overall information about a particular place, event, or cultural practice. Follow-up questions can focus on specific examples, specific experiences, or how events or occurrences are described in the local language. Once they have learned enough to get a sense of things, they can begin to ask contrast questions (e.g., “how is this thing different from that?”) or verification questions (e.g., “is this thing an example of that?”) to check their understanding. Open-ended questions, which allow the respondent to answer in his or her own way, are often better than yes/no questions. Asking participants to provide examples or instances of something is usually a good approach. Asking what something “means” often produces confusion and irrelevant responses. “Why” questions may appear aggressive, judgmental or accusatory, and “leading” questions (where the answer is implied in the form of the question) are generally not useful (Westby, Burda, & Mehta, 2003).

Asking questions is an art form and improves with practice. As Soldiers learn new information, they become more knowledgeable in the eyes of their counterparts, and this often

works to their advantage. Soldiers' questions become more interesting to them, and, as Soldiers demonstrate the ability to understand increasingly complex and nuanced answers, others will be more encouraged to disclose.

Negotiation. All of the encounters we are considering are, at a fundamental level, a type of negotiation. In other words, they represent a situation in which each party can, to a large extent, prevent the other party from getting what it wants. In these situations, coercion or heavy-handedness can sometimes produce quick results, however, such results are not likely to be long-lasting or particularly stable.

Regardless of the type of encounter, it is helpful to keep some basic negotiation principles in mind. Flexibility and open-mindedness are essential (Kellin & McMurtry, 2007), since no two encounters are exactly alike. Negotiators should not make assumptions about their counterparts' agendas nor what the encounter is going to be like before they have the facts (Cambria, DeFilippo, Loudon, & McGowan, 2002).

Negotiators should do more listening than talking, especially at first. When they do talk, they should try to avoid strong statements of principle using words like "always" or "never." These statements serve only to constrain participants and limit future options. If possible, negotiators should use communicative skills to bring down strong emotions, keeping in mind that sloppy communication may very well make things worse (Ting-Toomey, 1994).

Time is an ally in most negotiations. It takes time to communicate well, and time to recognize patterns and clues. The side that controls time also controls an important part of the agenda. If in doubt, negotiators will often try to buy time and stretch things out. They will also avoid reacting too quickly to statements or demands, and will use time to resolve areas of ambiguity or uncertainty. Some statements from counterparts in a negotiation are rhetorical and intended for effect.

Negotiators should attempt to create and sustain a workable relationship with the other side. Soldiers do not necessarily have to like the people with whom they are negotiating, but even a modicum of trust and respect will help further an agreement.

Interactions, whether they are formal negotiations or not, can be approached quite effectively with a simple model developed by Roger Fisher and David Ury of the Harvard Negotiation Project (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Essentially, this approach involves looking behind verbal statements (what they call "positions") to the underlying interests, which are more basic and have given rise to the statements. Successful negotiation depends not solely on knowing what people want (i.e., their interests), but also on knowing what they must maintain or hold on to, societally speaking, in order to reach an agreement with the other side. Negotiators thus spend quite a bit of time talking with their counterparts to uncover these basic interests – and the contexts from which they arise – before responding to stated positions, claims, or demands. In this way, seemingly irreconcilable positions may be brought together. This approach has proven to be very effective in a range of situations. It is particularly interesting when used across cultures, because, in many of those situations, the parties in a negotiation value different things differently, and are therefore prepared to sacrifice one set of interests (less important to them) for

another (of high importance to them, but of less importance to the other party). Negotiations conducted in this way appear to be more sustainable, as they are built on the essential interests of both parties (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Cambria et al., 2002).

Negotiations have a set of common elements. In addition to the *players* and the background *situation* that has led to the negotiation, there are the *goals* of each side, the *process* or processes that will frame negotiations, and the *conditions* under which the negotiation itself will take place (Fisher, 1980; Sawyer & Guetzkow, 1965).

Good negotiators are extremely well-prepared. This means they not only learn as much as possible about the other side, but – and perhaps more importantly – they determine what their own “bottom line” is going to be before negotiations begin. A “bottom line” will usually involve prior decisions about how much or how little can be ultimately conceded. It is also necessary to have a scenario in place for what will happen in case negotiations fail altogether. As discussions proceed, negotiators should learn as much as they can about their counterpart’s background and situation. This is not only to aid in developing a better relationship, but also to eventually identify and work with what negotiators call “value creation through trades” (Harvard Business Essentials, 2003). This involves trading things of lower value to your side (but of higher value to the other) for something of theirs that is of lower value to them but of higher value to your side. Cultural differences actually make it more rather than less likely that such trades can occur, since what is seen as important to one group of people may not be considered as important by another group.

Negotiations are influenced in numerous ways by the cultural orientations that were outlined earlier. We have already summarized what these cultural orientations are; in the paragraphs below, we look at how some of them, in combination, play out in a negotiation encounter.

People from cultures that place a great deal of emphasis on relationships, for example, may be reluctant to “get straight down to business” without a fairly lengthy period spent getting to know the other side. People from cultures that value face, respect, and formality in interactions may pay particular attention to how these are conveyed by Soldiers, while paying less attention to what Soldiers may consider substantive issues. They may also be reluctant or unwilling to deal with individuals on your team who they consider to be socially unequal to them. Finally, they may be reluctant to move to closure in a negotiation without extensive consultation with others in their network who are not physically present.

People from different cultures vary enormously in the degree to which they are direct and clear in their communication patterns. Getting a simple “yes” or “no” may be very difficult, and to insist on this level of directness may jeopardize the encounter. Often, what is significant is what is *not* being said.

Because cultures conceive of and manage time differently, negotiations may not go smoothly or quickly. Proceedings may not begin “on time” and may take much longer than expected. Time, and the management of time, is often manipulated during a negotiation to put one party at a disadvantage.

Attitudes toward confrontation and contestation vary, as well. Cultures that emphasize conflict-free relationships, friendly talk, and the avoidance of public disagreement may be unwilling to engage in discussions that they perceive as too adversarial. In these situations, they may agree outwardly, while disagreeing privately. Other cultures, however, see spirited discussion and argument as the way to surface and resolve differences. Indeed, some cultures view negotiation as a source of entertainment and a test of character. In all of these situations, it is important not to overstep cultural bounds, since this will have the effect of turning a problem-solving discussion into a critical incident and effectively shut down the proceedings (see Lustig & Koester, 2010 for more discussion of these points).

Influence and Persuasion. Influence is used to get listeners to accept our ideas, agree with us, and do and see things from our point of view. People from different cultures use influence and persuasion in different ways. To persuade someone involves presenting evidence in support of one's own perspective, establishing in someone's mind what the evidence actually means, and doing this in a way that is in keeping with culturally acknowledged and accepted norms. What is considered to be acceptable evidence in one culture is not necessarily acceptable in another. "Facts" may be interpreted quite differently in different cultures. Indeed, the same statements coming from different people may be seen very differently. Some of the things that may be considered influential include myths, legends, proverbs, and cautionary tales. Critical incidents from the past that involve real people may also have considerable influence. Cultural reference points such as the Bible or the Koran may provide examples offered as evidence for a point of view.

Not everyone in an encounter has equal authority or "weight." In many cultures, age and/or rank are the determining factors. Personal experience or background, personal character, technical expertise, or rhetorical style may also be important in establishing someone's authority. Once evidence is presented, there may also be the additional task of establishing its specific meaning in this situation. Cultures use a variety of different ways to imbue evidence with meaning. For example, they will refer to laws, or aspects of the law (keeping in mind that "laws" vary considerably from one culture to another), core values, locally-accepted norms, or axioms, which are beliefs that go largely unquestioned by most people in that culture.

In attempting to persuade people, it is sometimes helpful to frame statements in ways that are familiar and accepted within the culture. Two frameworks are illuminating in this regard. The first, from social psychology, is that of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and its corresponding contrast between "central" and "peripheral" routes of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The second, from anthropology, is sometimes termed "ethnoscience," and seeks to understand the models that human beings carry in their heads, laying particular emphasis on symbols and their importance (see Tyler 1969 and Geertz 1973, for example).

Some cultures find that a clear, logical, fact-filled and "objective" presentation (i.e., a central route to persuasion, per the ELM) carries the most weight. In our culture, for example, courtroom presentations are often expected to be of this type (although they sometimes fall short). In other cultures, presentations may place much more emphasis on personality and emotion (i.e., a peripheral route to persuasion). For instance, some cultures find that making

connections to other situations – myths, legends, stories, or past incidents – is effective in persuasion. Most attempts to persuade involve combinations of these approaches, of course, but for maximum effectiveness, persuasion should fit into the frameworks operating in that culture (see Lustig & Koester, 2010).

Table 4. *Determining cultural differences in influence and persuasion*

What is acceptable evidence?	Are people primarily persuaded by facts (central) or by emotions (peripheral)? Are there generally-accepted “authorities” for evidence, such as holy books, laws, or critical incidents from the past? How much of this “body of evidence” does your culture share, know about, or understand?
Who is an acceptable authority?	Do some people in the culture have more influence than others? What is their influence based on? Who does this culture consider an acceptable authority in your own culture? Whose opinions or statements are likely to be dismissed out of hand?
What concepts or ideas validate evidence?	Are there precedents, principles, or rules which are applied to new information to render them acceptable in a negotiation?
How are arguments presented?	Do people use logic, emotion, or storytelling to get their arguments across? How are arguments presented, sequentially or in some other way? What in this culture is considered a “strong” presentation?

IV. Managing the Encounter

Situational Awareness

Situational awareness is defined by Endsley as “the perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future” (1988: 792; see also Endsley, 1995; Thomas et al., 2001; Wellens, 1993). Using a situational awareness framework for encounters helps direct Soldiers’ attention to the information that matters, while also facilitating the extraction and integration of that information so that its value and utility may be assessed. From a training standpoint, then, there are three principal components to developing situational awareness:

1. Understanding what to look at
2. Understanding what it means
3. Understanding what to do with it

Situational awareness training is already used by a wide variety of professionals, including Soldiers (Finney, 2008), pilots and air traffic controllers (Flin, Pender, Wujec, & Grant 2007), emergency medical technicians, firemen, and police officers (ESRI, 2008), as well as others who routinely confront unfamiliar situations where rapid response is necessary. The SOAP framework (Situation, Observation, Analysis, Performance) has been developed for emergency medical responders; the OODA loop (Observation, Orientation, Decision, Action) for fighter pilots (Osinga, 2007). Other situations involving highly technical systems (e.g., refineries and nuclear power facilities) also require personnel to act quickly and employ situational awareness techniques (Endsley, 1995).

Situational awareness by itself does not solve problems, nor does it necessarily guarantee successful performance (Wickens, 2008). However, if one looks at situational awareness as a process, rather than a goal or outcome (see Salas, Prince, Baker & Shrestha, 1995), its value in non-routine situations that are ambiguous, uncertain, contested, or changing is apparent. Situational awareness frameworks draw attention to salient cues, reduce uncertainty and incomprehension, and aid in understanding patterns and models (Durso, Rawson, & Ciroto, 2007).

The goal of a good situation analysis schema should be to give people good information “without undue cognitive effort” (Endsley, Bolté, & Jones, 2003, p. 81). The framework presented here is designed to enhance the situational awareness of Soldiers in typical cross-cultural encounters by helping them identify common, but important, cultural value orientations that may differ significantly from their own, to understand how these orientations affect the behavior of those with whom Soldiers interact, and to respond appropriately to these behaviors in ways that will help Soldiers with the accomplishment of their mission.

A Framework for Managing Encounters

Although each encounter is, in some sense, unique, all of them share common characteristics. Every encounter has a roughly similar structure: (1) *preparation*, involving activities carried out in advance; (2) *entry*, where people meet and begin the exchange; (3) *rapport-building*, where the preliminaries are observed and discussion begins; (4) *problem-solving*, where the issue at hand is dealt with; and (5) *closure*, where things are wrapped up and people disperse. Of particular importance for some encounters is the *preparation* phase, which gives Soldiers time to plan and organize themselves for aspects of the encounter to come. Most encounters should also involve a final, *sensemaking* phase as part of closure, where Soldiers exchange and process what they have learned from the encounter as preparation for future encounters. For any encounter, Soldiers face two sets of fundamental questions. The first concerns who and what matters in the present situation. As the encounter proceeds, the second question becomes that of which elements in the situation are “normal” and which are unusual or unexpected (Lofland, 1971).

Though no framework will cover all aspects of an encounter, we believe that the outline presented below will be helpful across a range of different situations. The cultural orientations we listed and briefly described in the previous section all play a major role here in terms of how Soldiers and their behavior are going to be seen and assessed by their counterparts, and how, in turn, these counterparts behave themselves. Both Soldiers and the people with whom they interact are influenced by these basic cultural orientations, and, to the extent that Soldiers are aware of their own values and orientations, they will be in a better position to learn about and understand the values and orientations of others, as well as to respond appropriately.

Presented here are the major phases of an encounter, beginning with preparation, and moving through entry, rapport-building, problem-solving, and closure. For each stage, we have listed the major tasks to be accomplished and the questions that seem most pertinent at each stage. The questions are not random, but rather reflect the implications of the various cultural orientations that were outlined earlier. Although it is impossible to predict which of these orientations will characterize a given group, or influence a specific encounter, the questions will help uncover these orientations, and, in so doing, help Soldiers respond in more appropriate ways.

Prior to any encounter, it is a good idea for Soldiers to do some preliminary preparation. Preparation focuses mainly on what individuals may already know about the people with whom they will be dealing, the kind of encounter they are about to have, and what they need to walk away with in terms of results. These things, in turn, will help determine who should form part of the team for this encounter, and how they should be briefed beforehand.

Table 5. *Phases of an encounter – Phase 1 (Preparation)*

Preparation	Information collection and analysis	▪ <i>What type of an encounter is this, and what cultural norms and expectations apply?</i> ▪ <i>What problems have arisen before in encounters of this type?</i> ▪ <i>What will our counterparts expect us to know or understand at the outset?</i>
	Establishing expectations and goals	▪ <i>What do we need in the way of outcomes from this encounter?</i> ▪ <i>What outcomes are we trying to avoid?</i> ▪ <i>Are there built-in requirements for this type of encounter (e.g., tea, a meal, exchange of gifts) we need to be aware of?</i>
	Developing an action plan	▪ <i>Who are the best people from our side to represent us here?</i> ▪ <i>What sort of briefings do they require?</i> ▪ <i>What strategies or tactics have worked well before?</i>

Once the encounter begins, there is a period of “warming-up” during which important activities take place on each side. These include making an appropriate entry, understanding who the team is dealing with and why, assessing the implications of the meeting place and arrangements within it, and beginning to develop the agenda for the encounter.

Table 6. *Phases of an encounter – Phase 2 (Entry)*

Entry	Meeting and introductions	▪ <i>Who is in charge on their side and why?</i> ▪ <i>Who is present, who is not present, and why?</i> ▪ <i>Who do we need to pay attention to any why?</i> ▪ <i>What are the expected opening greetings/ gestures/ behaviors?</i>
	Establishing the space	▪ <i>Why this particular location?</i> ▪ <i>What are the constraints and opportunities of this space?</i> ▪ <i>How is this space similar to or different from others in the culture and how will this influence its use now?</i>
	Laying out the boundaries/ requirements for the encounter	▪ <i>What is your expected role here, and what is your desired role?</i> ▪ <i>What are the goals of this encounter (yours and theirs)</i> ▪ <i>What topics or issues must be covered?</i> ▪ <i>What topics or issues are off-limits?</i>

As the encounter unfolds, so, too, does the relationship between the participants. The team will need to understand as much as they can about the relationships their counterparts have with one another and their expectations for the encounter. The team will also need to establish the basis for their own authority to act in this situation, while, at the same time, demonstrating respect for the other side. Finally, of course, the team will need to attempt to assess the other side's underlying motivations and interests, as a prelude to negotiation and problem-solving.

Table 7. *Phases of an encounter – Phase 3 (Establishing Rapport)*

Establishing Rapport	Establishing the players	▪ <i>Who holds influence here, over whom, and why?</i> ▪ <i>How can you tell?</i> ▪ <i>What is your relationship to each of the key individuals?</i>
	Understanding expectations	▪ <i>How have previous interactions (with you or others like you) shaped their expectations for today?</i> ▪ <i>What is desired from you (short- and long-term)?</i> ▪ <i>How should you demonstrate your willingness/hesitation to meet these expectations?</i>
	Demonstrating respect and authority	▪ <i>How is respect and authority demonstrated in this society? How is it jeopardized?</i> ▪ <i>Are there specific behaviors that have high significance for demonstrating trust, honesty, and approval?</i> ▪ <i>How many interactions or what length of time will it take to establish respect and authority?</i>
	Establishing and discussing interests	▪ <i>Do their stated interests differ from your perception of their interests?</i> ▪ <i>How do people in this culture show emotion? Satisfaction? Anger or disagreement?</i> ▪ <i>How do your interests align? How do they differ?</i> ▪ <i>What is their perception of your interests/intent?</i>

As the encounter moves into discussion, negotiation, and problem-solving, the emphasis shifts away from relationship-building to the development of specific points for discussion and strategies for reaching agreement on these points. The choice of culturally appropriate and effective negotiation styles is important here, as is the way in which people are influenced or persuaded to agree.

Table 8. *Phases of an encounter – Phase 4 (Problem-Solving)*

Problem-Solving	Laying out positions	▪ <i>What are the concrete desirables (theirs/yours)?</i> ▪ <i>How do these relate to interests?</i> ▪ <i>What is perceived to be at stake?</i> ▪ <i>Why are certain issues magnified or minimized?</i> ▪ <i>How do your interests align or differ?</i>
	Formulating an agenda	▪ <i>What issues are to be settled upon?</i> ▪ <i>How are agenda items prioritized and grouped?</i> ▪ <i>Must this be a comprehensive agreement or can issues be left outstanding?</i> ▪ <i>What outside laws, norms, or procedures will be used?</i>
	Management, mitigation, or resolution	▪ <i>Are you addressing symptoms or underlying issues?</i> ▪ <i>What must be taken into account from previous interactions?</i> ▪ <i>What are their other options and what are yours?</i>
	Using effective negotiating styles	▪ <i>What types of communication styles are being used here, and why?</i> ▪ <i>How is influence exercised in this culture? How do people convince and persuade one another?</i> ▪ <i>Can we separate issues from interests?</i> ▪ <i>What sorts of people, evidence, or indicators are seen as reliable, trustworthy and objective?</i> ▪ <i>Are you working toward a distributive (compromise) or integrative (win-win) agreement?</i>

Finally, once agreement has been reached, the encounter needs to be wrapped up in an appropriate manner. This involves everyone being clear about what has been decided, what the next steps will be, and who will do what. The encounter needs to be terminated in a culturally appropriate and satisfying manner. Once the encounter is over, the team will need to meet by itself for debriefing and analysis.

Table 9. *Phases of an encounter – Phase 5 (Closure)*

Closure	Ensuring goals/agenda are met	▪ <i>What agreements were reached?</i> ▪ <i>How is agreement signified?</i> ▪ <i>How much of the agenda was accomplished?</i> ▪ <i>How many of your expectations were met versus how many of theirs? Is there a perception of imbalance?</i>
	Making expectations clear	▪ <i>What are their expectations from this point forward?</i> ▪ <i>When will the next gathering or discussion occur?</i> ▪ <i>How do you ensure agreed upon activities, arrangements, good will, etc., are carried out upon your exit?</i>
	Making an appropriate exit	▪ <i>How can you tell that the event or discussion is over?</i> ▪ <i>How can you tell this is the appropriate time to exit?</i> ▪ <i>What are the cultural dictates for exiting this type of situation? What are others of your position doing?</i>
	Knowledge management for next time	▪ <i>What type of debriefing should take place and with whom?</i> ▪ <i>How can you ensure lessons and experiences from this situation are carried forward into those that follow?</i> ▪ <i>What information or insight gained here might be useful to those outside of your unit?</i>

V. Sensemaking

In the types of situations discussed in this report, each Soldier will initially come away with his or her own understanding of the encounter. Each person may see or hear something others did not; each person may perceive the outcome in a slightly different way. But Soldiers take part in a shared enterprise, with mutual engagement in the same activities that require frequent, informal problem solving. It is therefore crucial to process what the group has learned after the encounter and to decide what to do with this information. Sharing information means sharing perspectives and developing the kind of group understanding that makes everyone wiser, more capable, and better prepared for next time. This is the basic goal behind sensemaking.

It is important at this point to distinguish between knowledge and information. Information includes facts, hearsay, external stimuli, charts, or orders. Much of this is simply raw data. Knowledge, on the other hand, connects bits of information together into meaningful patterns. It can be understood as “a justified personal belief that increases an individual’s capacity to take effective action” (Alavi & Leidner, 1999). Information can be turned into knowledge, but only after it has been processed by an individual and “contextualized” – that is, made relevant to place, time, and circumstance. Access to information alone does not equal insight, utility, or value, and more information certainly does not equate to more knowledge (Fahey & Prusak, 1998). Turning information into knowledge is about making sense of the shared environment, scenario, encounter, or problem, enabling one to act intentionally in response to different types of external input—the available ‘information’ (Lambe, 2007).

Sensemaking oftentimes takes place on its own without a concerted effort. In some cases, it may simply be viewed as ‘common sense’. For example, in our interviews with first responders, they stressed the value and importance of informal debriefings. As one police officer remarked, “there is only so much you can learn in a training session. Most of the really important lessons”, he continued, “you learn out on patrol, with your partner, and afterwards, when you are sitting around drinking coffee, telling stories and discussing what happened.”

Going beyond this, regular daily briefings and debriefings where the day’s ‘cultural learning’ is explicitly discussed is an effective way in which to promote sensemaking. Cultural learning, in this sense, does not mean simply passing on information about what members of a culture did, but also developing your own understanding about *why* they did those things.

The US Army has made extensive use of sensemaking as a way of supporting command and control (C2) through management of complex, uncertain, and dynamic conditions (Riley, Endsley, Bolstad & Cuevas, 2006; Gorman, Cooke, & Winner 2006). When the focus is on controlling the battlespace at large, sensemaking is purposed to fit hierarchies that involve multiple task force units, chains of command, and distributed collaboration. This is a useful type of sensemaking, but fundamentally different from that required by a small team or squad of Soldiers in everyday use. At this smaller scale, sensemaking is about supporting team members to carry out their work by looking at knowledge as a lens through which to assess new situations (Sparrow, 2001). This will lead to a body of shared knowledge over time, as well as a shared repertoire of resources that include rules, roles, techniques, experiences, and understandings to accomplish objectives (Sole & Edmondson, 2002).

Effective sensemaking requires the ability to not only process information as a group or team, but to learn as one, as well. In team contexts, members learn not only from their own experiences, but also those of others. Small teams are therefore excellent configurations through which individuals can achieve fast and effective situational awareness. It is important to acknowledge that this type of learning will not occur without contention and disagreement between team members, or what is termed ‘constructive controversy’ (Ellis, Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Porter, West, & Moon, 2003). It is only through the discussion of opposing perspectives that effective learning and problem-solving can take place.

Group discussions and debriefings are a key component of sensemaking since they serve both to increase *commonality*—the number of team members that have access to a piece of information—and to assist in collective sense-making processes about that information. As Fahey and Prusak (1998) note, “the value of data and information is often anything but obvious. Sometimes it is only after considerable discussion and dialogue that the decision relevance and usefulness of data and information becomes evident” (pp. 269-270). Intra-team dialogue in debriefings is one of the fundamental procedures required to make tacit knowledge explicit and accessible (Lee & Choi, 2003).

One useful way to promote group learning during debriefing is to focus on those episodes that are memorable and dramatic in an encounter – what Agar (2006) refers to as the “rich points.” Each encounter is a learning experience and should be treated as such. If these rich points are negative, they are often referred to as “critical incidents”, but one can learn just as much from positive episodes. The negative ones, of course, are the ones that bring cultural differences into sharp relief and usually require a response.

Since everything in a cross-cultural encounter happens for a reason, it is worth analyzing such incidents to uncover their rationale. Cross-cultural trainers often use a simple four step method for processing critical incidents:

1. Describe what happened as fully and objectively as possible;
2. Describe your feelings about or reactions to what happened;
3. Discuss possible reasons why events unfolded as they did (at this point, you may want to involve key informants or other people in the discussion); and
4. Discuss what might be changed in the way the team works, so that such an event does not happen again.

Over time, discussing incidents or episodes – positive and negative – that occur during encounters, and uncovering the meanings behind them, will add enormously to a unit’s store of cultural understanding and capability, and better prepare them for future encounters. To the extent possible, such understandings should be documented. It must be kept in mind that sensemaking is not about creating flawless predictions of the future, but about creating a collective knowledge bank that can be drawn from, used, and adapted to fit new problems and situations as they arise (Sarvary, 1999).

VI. Conclusion

Defining cross-cultural competence is a difficult task, both conceptually and methodologically. It is also difficult to determine which elements of cultural competence should be training priorities. Even when this is possible, it can be difficult to find the appropriate ways by which to carry out such training.

In this report, we approached these topics in a somewhat different way. We have not defined nor examined the concept of cultural competence itself, but rather asked the question “what do Soldiers engaged in stabilization operations actually have to do, and how can we help them do those things?” In these stabilization operations, culture and cultural differences play a major role in determining mission success. In consequence, the goal of this report was to focus on how to identify, understand, and deal with the cultural differences that will inevitably be part of any encounter.

Because culture is highly context-specific, mere lists of “dos” and “don’ts” will be insufficient. Instead, we chose to look at culture as something that appears when people of different backgrounds interact and arises from the differing core value orientations held by those who are doing the interacting. Rather than each culture manifesting itself according to a rigid program, template, or formula, differences and similarities are generated, so to speak, by the interaction itself. Accordingly, we looked first at the nature of culture and at sets of core cultural value orientations – ways of thinking about people and things in the world. We then looked at the types of encounters that Soldiers typically have in the field with culturally-different populations, in terms of the salient characteristics of these encounters, and their choreography. In interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds – what we have termed *encounters* – different core cultural values come into play, not in a preordained way, but in response to the needs and perceptions of the moment. The cultural encounter, in other words, is an unfolding play that never happens quite the same way twice.

In doing this, we drew on a fairly extensive literature from other professionals in non-combat situations, mainly first responders such as police, fire, and emergency medical personnel, all of whom are trained in “situational awareness” as a way to approach ambiguous or uncertain situations under time pressure. Finally, we presented a framework for managing field encounters, which took account of how these situations typically unfold, and the sorts of cultural orientations that might be important for managing them satisfactorily.

In this report, we have attempted to present a relatively straightforward framework for preparing Soldiers for these cross-cultural encounters by focusing first on some of the typical core cultural values that they (and their counterparts) bring to the encounter, and then on some of the key elements of these encounters. We then enumerated some of the more salient points at which differing core cultural values may become significant, and tried to outline some of the main questions Soldiers should be asking (and answering) in order to understand and manage what is happening.

We structured this framework as sets of basic questions that Soldiers might want to ask before, during, and after these encounters. We chose this approach because it is fairly clear that

no set of cultural descriptions or caveats, however comprehensive, will cover all of the situations encountered by Soldiers in the field. The only real way for Soldiers to deal positively and proactively with the cultural differences they may encounter is for them to “learn their way out”- in other words, to develop skill in uncovering meanings as interaction proceeds. The framework presented here is offered as a relatively quick and effective way of beginning that process.

The key to this approach is to focus on getting the questions right, rather than going in with a pre-determined set of answers. In this way, Soldiers can approach and manage a wide variety of different cross-cultural encounters, in different regions of the world, and under different sets of conditions.

We are hopeful that this framework can be a useful addition to the methods and approaches being considered for military training across various ranks, branches, and MOSs. How could Soldiers best be trained to understand and use this framework? While there is no one answer to this, there exist several different options that would be amenable to military educational and training contexts:

Classroom training: The framework can be outlined and explained quite briefly, and integrated into other training elements or modules if necessary. We have, for example, outlined the framework in a one-hour presentation to Purdue’s Army ROTC class shortly after completing the draft of this report. Depending on the time available during training, the basic framework can be expanded to cover more detail. It can also be expanded and modified to more fully cover (a) specific cultural regions, and/or (b) specific types of encounters.

Interactive exercises: The framework lends itself quite well to a variety of role-playing scenarios, an exercise familiar to most cross-cultural trainers. If Soldiers are interacting with members of another culture, the role-plays become more real and more detailed. These resemble orienteering problems, where basic skills in map and compass work enable one to successfully negotiate unfamiliar terrain.

During deployment: The essentials of the framework can be summarized on cards or short pamphlets for Soldiers to carry with them. The U.S. Army Research Institute is currently investigating avenues by which to convert this framework into such informational tools so that Soldiers may use them for self-development purposes post-training, as well as while operating in the field. Unit leaders may also use the framework to organize pre-encounter planning sessions and post-encounter debriefings to enhance a team’s ability to uncover and respond to cultural elements in any specific encounter.

The framework presented here is not intended as a stand-alone tool, but as something that can be easily incorporated into existing training to enhance and extend various approaches. It is highly unlikely that we will be able to identify – and adequately prepare Soldiers for – the specific cultural differences they will encounter in future deployments. We can, however, prepare them to understand what culture is and how cultural differences manifest themselves in day-to-day situations. In other words, we can help Soldiers learn, on the ground and on the spot, what they need to know in order to work effectively with other cultural populations.

Culture and cultural differences will influence much of what Soldiers encounter, perform, and achieve in the field. Helping Soldiers to identify key cultural elements in their interactions, and to deal with them in mutually satisfactory ways, will contribute to making their work safer, more effective, and ultimately more successful.

VII. References

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