DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education (AETC)
Maxwell AFB, AL 36118

1 May 16
Certified Current
1 March 17

AIRMAN LEADERSHIP SCHOOL
STUDENT GUIDE

PART I
COVER SHEET

LESSON TITLE: EA01, INTRODUCTION TO CULTURE

TIME: 3 Hours

METHOD: Guided Discussion and Experiential

REFERENCES:

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STUDENT PREPARATION: Complete the *Introduction to Culture Awareness* reading, activity 1, activity 2, and the matching homework exercise (Attachment 1.) prior to class. (7, 474 words, 62 minutes of reading)

PART IA

GENERAL LEARNING OUTCOME: Students who graduate from Airman Leadership School are prepared to perform first-level supervisory responsibilities, effectively lead individuals and work teams as evidenced by their comprehension of Intro to Culture.

SUPPORTED COMPETENCIES/DIRECTIVES:

The *Introduction to Culture* lesson supports the following AF Institutional Competencies:

- Enterprise Perspective (Global, Regional, and Cultural Awareness)

TERMINAL COGNITIVE OBJECTIVE: Comprehend Introduction to Culture and Cross-Cultural Communication concepts and their impact on subordinate, NCO, unit, and mission effectiveness.

TERMINAL COGNITIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS:

1. Explain Introduction to Culture and Cross-Cultural Communication concepts and their impact on subordinate, NCO, unit, and mission effectiveness.
2. Give examples of Introduction to Culture and Cross-Cultural Communication concepts and their impact on subordinate, NCO, unit, and mission effectiveness.
3. Predict the impact of Introduction to Culture and Cross Cultural Communication concepts on subordinate, NCO, unit, and mission effectiveness.

AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVE: Value Introduction to Culture and Cross Cultural Communication concepts and their impact on subordinate, NCO, and mission effectiveness.

PART IB

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN: Topical

ASSOCIATED LESSONS: SA04, *Diversity*; SA06, *Introduction to Negotiating*

PART IC

LESSON OUTLINE:

Content
INTRODUCTION: Attention, Motivation, and Overview
MP 1. Culture: Behavior, Beliefs, and Values
MP 2. Cross-Culture Competence and the 3C Model
MP 3. Building Cultural Perspective Taking
MP 4. Cross-Cultural Communication
MP 5. Cross-Cultural Competence Activity (in-class)
CONCLUSION: Summary, Re-motivation, and Closure

PART II

STUDENT READING

MP 1. CULTURE: BEHAVIOR, BELIEFS, AND VALUES

Culture is a shared set of traditions, belief systems, and behaviors and is shaped by many factors, including history, religion, politics, and resources (financial, informational, technological, material, energy, warfare, and human).

Essentially, culture is the mechanism people use to adapt to the world around them and interact with others. It is holistic, meaning it is integrated into all aspects of human nature and daily life, including work, play, political systems, economic exchanges, religious beliefs, etc. Typically, we tend to associate a culture with a country (American culture, Iraqi culture, Italian culture) or with ethnic groups (Hispanic culture, Kurdish culture, Sicilian culture). However, we often overlook the tremendous diversity that exists in other countries as well as our own. Therefore, the concepts of macro-culture and micro-culture help in understanding overlapping beliefs and values, and are useful in building our Cross-Cultural Competencies (3C) skills.

> ***Macro-cultures*** are the most powerful or the most widely practiced cultures in a particular society, whether the society is a region or an entire country. For instance, in the United States the "American" macro-culture would be described as predominantly Euro-American, Christian, since those are both the most prevalent groups in the American society. The "New York culture" can be called a micro-culture of the American culture, and is a macro-culture itself, comprised of various micro-cultures. When people outside the city talk about New Yorkers, they mean all the people of the city (the macro-culture), but when people inside the city refer to each other, they usually use people's micro-cultural affiliations, such as being from Brooklyn or the Bronx, or an ethnic affiliation (Puerto Rican, Dominican, Haitian, etc.) Another example of a macro-culture would be Japan, where the majority value family, institutional affiliation, and homogeneity (being similar/alike).
>
> ***Micro-cultures*** are also called "subcultures." They are described as a group of people living within a larger society who share values, beliefs, behaviors, status, or interests that are different from the macro-culture or the rest of society. As a member of your ethnic group and work unit, you are part of two micro-cultures. If you are a sports fan, you are part of a micro-culture, and if you are a fan of a specific team, you are part of yet another micro-culture. Do you like horror movies? Welcome to another micro-culture! Most Americans share affiliations with numerous micro-cultures and the same can be said of many cultures around the world. Recall the macro-culture of Japan explained above; a micro-culture in Japan today includes younger generations identifying with a "Hip-Hop" culture to rebel against their cultural norms.

Holism means that all the parts of a culture are interconnected and integrated. Therefore, things such as change in one area (women's rights, for example) will affect change in another area (family structure, distribution of income). When observing other cultures or part of another culture, the idea of holism addresses how the different parts fit or interrelate, and how an action you take in one area might provoke a reaction in something else you might never expect.

Schema A schema is a cognitive "shortcut" that helps us organize and interpret the vast amount of information that exists in our environment. It is a complex mental diagram or framework for any concept that expands and "builds" whenever we encounter a new aspect of that concept. We build schemas about everything we know and understand about our world. For example, how do you know a dog when you see one? What makes a dog different from other beings on earth? One simple schema for a dog may look something like Figure 1.

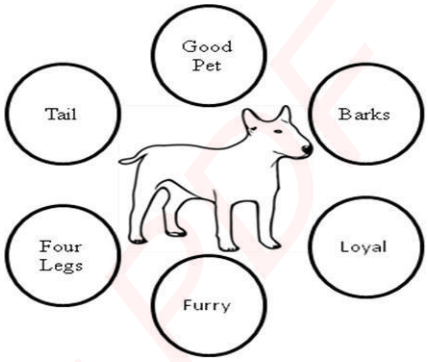

Figure 1. Simple Schema of a Dog

We associate the idea of "dog" with its general characteristics (four-legged, tail, furry) and also with concepts like loyalty and companionship. However, simply reading this statement can also generate schemas pertaining to other animals that have four legs, a tail, and make great pets.

Figure 2. Schemas of Other Pets

In your culture, the above animals (Figure 3.) may make good pets; however, other cultures may view animals in a different way based upon what their culture has taught them about these animals. In some cultures, dogs are not regarded as pets or even good pet "material." In fact, some cultures view dogs as pests, food, or a resource for work and transportation. As we study the concept of culture, we begin to realize that schemas we create of other *cultures* are influenced by our own culture. Think back to the schema you may have about a dog, (fluffy, loyal, pet, etc.) How would you adapt to a culture who views a dog as a food source?

Consider another example: what do you think causes illness? In your cultural schema for illness, you may say that germs, viruses, or unsanitary behaviors cause illness. If you considered these things, then you are not alone. You share this part of your cultural schema for illness with most Americans and even other countries like Japan. You learned these facts about illness from school, parents, peers, and even the media.

Did you know that cultures such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa and even Indonesia believe that illnesses are caused by witches and witchcraft? For these particular cultures, witchcraft is as much a fact for them as germs and viruses are for us. Witchcraft is believed to cause everything from the common cold to birth defects.

It is sometimes difficult to retain or accept new information that does not conform to our established ideas and beliefs. For example, during the initial operations in Afghanistan, U.S. Army truck drivers would drive over small piles of stones on the sides of roads to make way for other vehicles. What the drivers did not know was that those small piles of stones served as burial shrines for local people's loved ones. Because U.S. schemas for burial do not usually include piles of rocks, the Soldiers misunderstood complaints referring to "desecration of graves" as referring only to burial markers/graves in cemeteries. This of course, hindered the soldiers' ability to adapt their behavior in a manner that would improve their relationships and mission effectiveness in Afghanistan.

ACTIVITY 1: What are some examples of your schemas for other concepts? For example, how would you describe "hard work," "good food," "toys," and "friendship"? Choose one of these, or come up with one of your own, and on a separate piece of paper record your responses and be prepared to discuss them in class.

Schema: _____

Description: _____

_____

_____

Symbols – Parts of our schemas for particular concepts also serve as *symbols*. A dog symbolizes loyalty in U.S. culture, for example, while a rat usually does not. A culture's values and beliefs are often manifested as symbols, which can be visible or invisible. Symbols can be words, objects, and stories that are meaningful to our culture. Symbols are also revealed through logos, hairstyles, sports jerseys, or the cars we drive.

Another example would be symbolism in stories told by a particular culture. Listening to stories told by a culture can give important insight into their values. For instance, think about the story of the Three Little Pigs. What does this story reflect about American Culture? The story reflects things like hard work, not wasting time, and taking care of business. The pig in the straw house has come to symbolize a person who wastes time or doesn't work very hard, while the pig in the brick house is viewed as industrious and protective of his family.

We carry symbols internally and these may never be seen in real life. Think about how people carry a symbolic ideal of the perfect family (e.g. Mom, Dad, two kids, one dog) and then cannot find that perfect symbol in real life. It doesn't matter if the symbol is attainable, what matters is that people use those symbols to describe a way of thinking and a way of being what they value. This is true all across the globe. Think about how you've seen culture symbolized across the United States (Northern States, Southern states, East Coast, Midwest, West Coast).

ACTIVITY 2: Using the same paper from Activity 1. Answer the following: What are some examples of symbols - visible and invisible - of Air Force culture? Name at least seven examples, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

1. _____ **2.** _____

3. _____ **4.** _____

5. _____ **6.** _____

7. _____

Next you will read about how culture operates to influence our behaviors, beliefs, and values.

How does culture "operate" to influence our behaviors, beliefs, and values?

In his book, *Beyond Culture*, renowned American Anthropologist Edward T. Hall answered the above question with his iceberg theory of culture.

When we first enter a new culture, we see only those behaviors and symbols that are apparent or above the water. Things like a culture's style of dress, music, games, dance, food, toys, etc. are easily seen when entering a new culture.

However, as we spend more time with the culture, we start to learn "why" the culture behaves the way they do. Meaning, we begin to learn underlying beliefs, values, and thought patterns of that particular culture.

Some examples of behaviors, core beliefs, and values that are often "hidden" under the surface include: Ideals of governing, child raising, concept of justice, incentives to work, theory of disease, nature of friendship, patterns of group decision making, definitions of sin, courtship practices, and approaches to problem solving just to name a few.

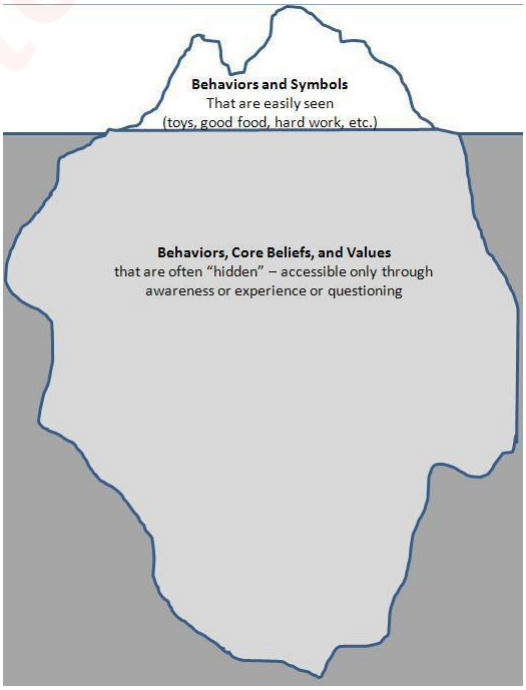

Figure 3. Culture As An Iceberg

The iceberg is a metaphor for the aspects of culture that we don't often understand without further exploration. The mental, behavioral, and material aspects of culture, when combined, show us how culture affects all aspects of people's lives, including their view of the world and how they interact with others.

The particular way in which people view the world is referred to as their "worldview."

Worldview: "The sum of beliefs and values that people use to define and interpret the world, and their place within it."

It includes things such as:

- Sources of authority/nature of "truth" –how do we know something is true or not?
- Nature of beauty, good, and evil--what makes a neighborhood "good" or "bad" and how do we act on this information? Why do most Americans like to create beautiful lawns in front of their houses but hold parties in back of their houses?
- Meaning and value of human life—do you highly value visiting someone before they pass away, or would you rather think of them in the prime of life?
- People's relations to their Creator and the cosmos—can anyone talk to the Christian God? Has it always been this way?
- Power, prestige, and legitimacy – whom has the right to lead in this culture? How are they selected?
- Degree of human agency and potential – how much control do we have over our own lives?
- Role of individual versus collective – which is more important, the individual's choice, or the decisions of the larger group?
- Relative importance of rules and relationships – are rules flexible? Are rules bent to guarantee good relationships between people, or does the structure of rules help shape the relationships?
- Experience with systems and structures such as schools, banks, local and central government, transportation systems, employment, etc.—can we question the authority of these institutions? Do we believe we can change them?

Simply stated, worldview is how we see and operate in the world based on our beliefs and values and lies at the deepest level of culture. Our core beliefs – the lower part of the iceberg – are so fundamental to our thinking that we rarely question them. Instead, we think of them as "common sense."

Now that you know more about how things like culture and worldview, let's examine the cross-cultural competence and the 3C Model.

MP 2. CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND THE 3C MODEL

Culture can be a very complicated subject. Developing expertise in any one culture takes years of experience and education. Air Force leaders want Airmen at the SrA and SSgt rank to know about culture concepts ranging from the 3C model to cultural perspective taking. This reading will provide you the knowledge you need to develop your cross-cultural competence.

Having cultural awareness is part of attaining cross-cultural competence. We can never eliminate all conflict between cultures; however, we can improve working relations with other cultures/nations by cultivating cross-cultural cooperation and respect. Mission success depends on our ability to understand our allies *(coalition partners)* and adversaries in today's dynamic world.

Speaking in 2006, General David H. Petraeus highlighted the purposes of cultural competence:

"Working in another culture is enormously difficult if one doesn't understand the ethnic groups, tribes, religious elements, political parties, and other social groupings—and their respective viewpoints; the relationships among the various groups; governmental structures and processes; local and regional history; and, of course, local and national leaders. Understanding of such cultural aspects is essential if one is to help the people build stable political, social, and economic institutions. Indeed, this is as much a matter of common sense as operational necessity. Beyond the intellectual need for the specific knowledge about the environment in which one is working, it is also clear that people, in general, are more likely to cooperate if those who have power over them respect the

Air Force Cross-Cultural Competence (3C) Model

Air University has defined **Cross-Cultural Competence (3C)** as "The ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, and then appropriately and effectively act in a culturally complex environment to achieve the desired effect. Within the 3C Model there are key aspects that can be broken down into:

Culture-general knowledge: Understanding basic concepts like culture, relativism, ethnocentrism, and holism.

Culture-specific education: An approach that emphasizes specific aspects of particular cultures, affording individuals much of the knowledge and/or skills necessary to interact more competently with individuals of other cultural backgrounds.

The purpose of culture-general learning in the Air Force is to develop Airmen who can operate effectively in culturally complex environments by exerting positive influence on themselves, their teams, partners, local inhabitants, and adversaries. Airmen must be able to do this (at their particular development level), with no particular expertise in a *specific* culture, region or language.

This lesson's focus and discussion on the 3C model (Figure 4.) is in the context of culture-general. The 3C model was developed by Air University faculty and there are three inter-related enabling factors: knowledge, motivation (positive attitude), and learning approaches.

Figure 4. Cross-Cultural Competence (3C) Model

Cultural General

Culture-general knowledge is the basis for all cross-cultural learning, including culture-specific, and begins with an understanding of basic concepts of a culture (kinship, gender roles, types of exchanges or communication norms, etc.). When we understand what culture is, specifically different ways of seeing (relativistic versus ethnocentric) and how culture works (holistically), we establish a solid baseline for further learning which we can apply to any culture. Education is the foundation of culture-general knowledge; however, training and experiences are important in developing the cross-cultural competency of today's Airmen.

Learning 3C skills does not negate the need to learn as much about a culture as you can before interacting with it. In order to respect another culture and communicate, negotiate, and relate to the people of that culture, we must possess a general understanding of that culture. Culture-general knowledge gives military personnel the ability, with increasing degrees of sophistication to:

- comprehend how cultural factors and background are influencing their interactions and
- determine how to adapt their behavior and expectations to achieve desired effects despite any emotional and/or professional reactions to the situation or possible solutions.

Culturally competent Airmen have a clear understanding of their own biases. They also have the ability to:

1. suspend personal biases/judgments
2. recognize their own and others' patterns that point to values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations
3. see 'reality' through the eyes of members of other cultures and to adjust their behavior to achieve positive influence and results.

In other words, culturally competent Airmen work to overcome behaviors such as ethnocentric behavior or *ethnocentrism.*

Ethnocentrism: The human tendency to negatively judge others (cultures, behaviors, values) against our own values and beliefs.

Ethnocentrism is a form of cultural bias that can cause serious obstacles to cross-cultural interactions. Throughout history and even today, there are conflicts where humans failed to suspend judgment. One only has to look through the history books to see examples of when ethnocentric behavior(s) caused societal problems and even war. The Holocaust during WWII, Rwandan Genocide in the 1990s, and conflicts in Libya, Syria, and the Middle East…are a few such examples. To be successful in cross-cultural interactions, one must work to eliminate ethnocentric behaviors while maintaining motivation or a positive attitude to become cross-culturally competent.

Motivation (Positive Attitudes)

Perhaps the most essential component of cross-cultural competence is having a positive attitude toward understanding and appreciating cultural differences. Attitude, in this sense, is not just simply having an open mind but includes a thought process that doesn't always come naturally and requires practice. The Air Force is focused on developing attitudes that positively impact the missions we perform in countries around the globe.

Key to the thought process mentioned above is *relativism*, which is essentially the opposite of ethnocentrism.

Relativism (*as an attitude*): The conviction that the beliefs and practices of others are best understood in light of the particular cultures where they are found.

Relativism *(as a behavior*): Temporarily suspending one's own culturally informed opinion and thinking about how others might interpret or value a situation.

Relativism as an attitude or a behavior does not mean you have to accept, adopt, or promote others' beliefs and practices. Sometimes we have to accept the fact that we will not know everything there is to know about a culture.

Important Note: Practicing relativism strongly correlates with success in culturally complex environments.

3C In Action *(example)*

MSgt Dorian Chapman of the Spaatz Public Affairs Center of Excellence at Air University talked in a recent interview about how he and his co-workers prepared for a deployment to Afghanistan during the sacred month of Ramazan[1].

Unfamiliar with Ramazan, MSgt Chapman conducted his own research into local practices by asking local people how they observe the month and what it means to them. Then, he took steps to encourage the unit not to eat or drink in front of their Muslim co-workers. The actions to understand the cultural norms of their Muslim co-workers are prime examples of relativism. He states, "In my personal opinion and experiences, it was the act of trying...even if we weren't perfect in our execution of trying to respect what they were observing, [that] they appreciated." MSgt Chapman's motivation to understand an important part of Afghans' lives earned him the respect of his Afghan colleagues.

Learning Approaches (Tools and Application)

The greatest strength of the culture-general approach lies in the ability to take the foundational concepts and apply them to specific cultural scenarios not previously encountered. Doing so requires individuals to "learn how they learn," and to analyze and draw conclusions from cultural data. Later in this lesson, we will discuss perspective taking, and how culture influences behavior. We will also briefly introduce using the OODA Loop as a means of applying your knowledge to achieve successful outcomes in cross-cultural situations.

Achieving 3C requires you understand the source of your own beliefs and values, while

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1 For Muslims, Ramazan (also known as Ramadan in other countries) is observed by refraining from eating, drinking, smoking, and many other activities during daylight hours. Ramazan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam that all Muslims are encouraged to observe.

respecting the validity of very different beliefs, values, and behaviors you will encounter in other cultures. This will be what guides you as you learn to adjust your own actions to inspire cooperation and be more effective in accomplishing your USAF mission.

Communicate, Negotiate, and Relate: 3C Skills

Airmen operationalize their knowledge, tools, and motivation in order to positively influence culturally complex situations. Three specific skills that emerge as key to successful cross-cultural interactions are:

- ***Communicate*** to avoid misunderstandings;
- ***Negotiate*** to overcome differences and resolve conflicts; and
- ***Relate*** with individuals from other cultures to work effectively

The 3C Model (Figure 4.) shows how you can *influence* your surroundings that include where you work and live. Through active *learning approaches* (tools and applications), you gain the *knowledge and skills* needed to successfully operate in a cross-cultural environment.

Developing cross-cultural competence does not require a thorough understanding of all the cultures you may be exposed to. Rather, 3C requires you understand that cultural differences do exist and greatly influence the thoughts, beliefs, and behavior of individuals. Competence is also not an "end state"—you continuously build skills through experiences and exposure to cultures that are new to you. Let's examine what cultural perspective taking is and how you can develop your cultural perspective taking ability.

MP 3. BUILDING CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Cultural perspective taking is a cognitive process by which an individual is able to identify the thoughts and/or feelings of another culture.

Leaders develop their cultural perspective taking through exposure to cultures that are different from their own. Think back to Basic Military Training when you were lining up with your flight for the very first time. Was the military a new culture for you? How did you react?

Leaders at every level can develop cultural perspective taking by recognizing:

- Needs and values of individuals/groups from another culture
- Local norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors
- How people from another culture will respond to one's own actions/comments
- The importance of norms for interaction
- How violating cultural norms can negatively impact interactions
- The impact of positive cross cultural relations

Earlier you read about motivation (positive attitudes). Did you have a positive attitude toward the military as a culture when you attended BMT? What was your attitude like when you went to your first assignment? You will recognize the next six concepts from

both this lesson and SA04, *Diversity*. The first two concepts help to maintain motivation (positive attitudes) when exposed to new cultures.

1. Relativism – (*As an attitude)*
2. Relativism – (*As a behavior)*

The four concepts below can lead toward negative behavior(s) if individuals do not suspend them before entering into a new culture. If we fail to suspend these types of behavior before working with another culture, we create barriers that are not easily overcome. Furthermore, the below types of behavior can cause the United States to lose support from host nations, allies, or the public which could ultimately cause our missions to fail. Think of examples in history where cultures acted negatively towards another culture because of things such as ethnocentrism, stereotypes, etc.

1. Ethnocentrism – judging others' cultures against one's own (i.e. superior/inferior)
2. Stereotypes – a fixed or distorted generalization about ***all*** members of a particular group that share a particular diversity.
3. Prejudice – is the creation of an adverse or unreasonable opinion about a person or group without gathering all the facts and is usually based on deeply held beliefs.
4. Discrimination – is the visible act or consideration to act in favor of or against a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person/thing belongs, rather than on individual merit.

Take a few moments to think about a time when you may have judged another culture in terms of ethnocentrism or perhaps stereotyped something. While humans have the natural tendency to judge people, situations, or things that are different, it is not appropriate to behave negatively towards another culture. (i.e. discriminating against, acting on prejudices, or treating another culture as inferior to ours.)

The concepts mentioned in the previous page, are also present in the culture you are exposed to (another base, country, region, etc.). A culturally aware leader recognizes these concepts exist and he/she is able to suspend personal prejudices, stereotypes, etc. when encountering a culture that is different from his/her own.

Cultural perspective taking, takes practice, and we all must seek opportunities to further develop cultural perspective taking in ourselves. One way is to use the OODA loop as a strategy to develop cultural perspective taking.

The OODA Loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act)

By *observing* other cultures, *orienting* yourself to these cultures, *deciding* on appropriate courses of action, and then *acting* accordingly, you can improve your cultural knowledge.

Observe

The Observation step involves *<u>focused</u>* attention on your environment and gathering information through all five senses. When placed in an unfamiliar setting, you immediately begin collecting data such as the type of landscape, the sort of people around you, how they are dressed, activities going on around you, the time of day, smells, sounds; and you begin reviewing any consequences you experienced from previous actions in a similar environment.

Figure 5. The OODA Loop

Sometimes our perceptions of information we gather depends on our own culture and experiences (remember schemas and worldview?). We observe and *perceive the world* through our own cultural schema and worldviews. Because of this, we often miss important cultural cues. When observing, we try to take in all information as objectively as possible…with as little bias as possible.

Orient

We begin this step by first attempting to *make sense of* what we are observing by categorizing (organizing) the data in a practical way that is useful to us. This is where your schemas take over, since we do this by comparing what we see to our worldview and what is familiar to us in our own culture, past experiences, traditions, values, and beliefs. This natural action helps us interpret the current situation and surroundings and is fundamental as we develop courses of action. Also, remember to minimize ethnocentrism, practice relativism, and think of holism when orienting to the cultural environment. This means you will be looking at the information from both your own *and* others' perspectives, to try to understand what the data means to everyone involved.

Decide

In the Decide step, we consider all the courses of action developed and choose one to move forward with based on our options and understanding of the situation. This decision is the product of the data we gathered (Observe) and the understanding we have of the information (Orient). You may decide to act or react a certain way based on the situation and the behaviors that are considered appropriate in that region. On the other hand, you may decide to do nothing. Before deciding on a course of action, we must always question our own assumptions.

Consider these questions:

- *Have I made the best judgment?*
- *Am I relying on my observations or my opinions?*

- *Do I have enough information?*
- *What other information might help me make this decision?*
- *How is culture affecting my decision, or how might culture affect others' reception of my actions?*

You may decide to go back through the first two steps of the OODA Loop process to gather more information (Observe) in order to better interpret it (Orient). Reorganizing the data in a way that makes more sense to you may result in different alternatives (Decide) from which to choose. These three steps (Observe, Orient, and Decide) overlap and occur very quickly. Therefore, it is important to understand each one individually and how one step affects the next.

Act

The success of the OODA Loop depends on the action(s) selected and taken. In this step, you review what you have decided to do, take action, and then reflect on how you executed your decision. You also reflect on the outcome and the response your actions triggered in others (did you upset or anger anyone? Is the situation better or worse?). Always remember that your actions influence future observations and orientations. If you recall from the Observe step, we review consequences of previous actions

We cycle through the four steps of the OODA Loop everyday as we fulfill the different roles we have in society, such as parent, NCO, co-worker, or neighbor. As a parent do you speak to your children the same way you speak to your co-workers? Probably not, because you observe and orient to the situation differently, then make decisions and act appropriately for your role as a parent. Regular interactions with groups of people, institutions, and individuals in different situations influence the roles you choose to play. Mindfully cycling through the OODA Loop from a cultural perspective enables you to gather better information, develop more appropriate and effective options, and improve your decisions and actions.

MP 4. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Cross-cultural communication is defined as the "Knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures."

Culture influences every aspect of life; this includes communication patterns and norms in our own culture as well as the culture of others. Cross-cultural communication is more than just talking with members of another culture; it is about knowing how to interact appropriately with another culture. Unfamiliarity with cultural communication differences can lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and unintentional insult.

When communicating across cultures, we must remember that our intentions do not always align with interpretation. For example, in Saudi Arabia, the common response to the greeting "How's your health?" is "Praise to God." While in America, we would typically respond with something like "Fine." Although "Fine" indicates understanding of the question asked, it is not a culturally expected response in the Saudi culture.

As professional Airmen, we MUST possess cultural awareness and strong communication

skills to ensure that any message we communicate to another culture is interpreted correctly. Leaders must always be aware of how culture affects communication when it comes to mission completion and success. The Air Force as an institution depends on leaders at all levels (Airman Basic to General) to be competent in cross-culture communication.

It is important to remember that the 3C model is centered on achieving decisive influence through communicating, relating, and negotiating. Please remember that we do not build positive relationships or conduct effective negotiations and then start to communicate; rather we have positive/negative relationships or effective/ ineffective negotiations because of how we communicate with people from another culture.

To help you understand how to develop positive and effective relationships and negotiations, we will now focus on three overarching concepts: linguistic and communication competence, impression management, and differences between high and low context communication patterns. The following is a sample story (drawn from Hall, 2005) which illustrates the way in which our culture is displayed in our communication.

THE SINKING BOAT

An intercultural specialist was conducting some training for a multi-national group and was discussing differing values. To do this, he introduced a value exercise. This exercise involved pretending that you were on a sinking ship and there was only one life raft left. You had to go on it and you could only take one other person or you would all die. The other person would either have to be your mother or your wife. Two of the participants, a man from England and a man from Saudi Arabia, both quickly remarked that it was an easy choice. The trainer asked the Saudi whom he would choose, and he said that he would pick his mother, of course. The British man immediately complained that the wife should be the choice because, as much as you love your mother, she has lived a full life, but your wife is your chosen companion throughout your future life. The Saudi disagreed, stating, "You can always get a new wife, but you only have one mother."

This story communicates different worldviews between two cultures:

- respect for elders versus youth,
- individual choice versus family obligation,
- and the concept of wife versus mother.

Knowing how culture impacts our communication, leads us to our first cross-cultural communication concept of differentiating between linguistic and communication competence.

Linguistic and Communication Competence

Linguistic competence is a speaker's implicit, internalized knowledge of the rules of their native language.

Communication competence is understanding how to properly communicate in another language or culture.

The following story drives home the difference between linguistic and communication competence.

> *Several decades ago, the Swedish vacuum company "Electrolux" was trying to come up with a slogan to get American consumers to purchase their vacuums. Therefore, they got their professional translators who were fluent ("linguistically competent") in English and Swedish together and this is what they came up with: "Nothing sucks like Electrolux."*

Semantically, this is correct – vacuums do suck up dirt. However, anyone who actually uses language (*and is a competent communicator*) knows that this slogan is neither effective nor appropriate. This reinforces the difference between linguistic and communication competence.

What are some linguistic rules of your language? How do you demonstrate communication competence in your own language or culture? You can probably answer these questions very easily. How easy would it be for you to answer these questions for another culture? Presently, you are not expected to master languages of the countries you deploy or PCS to; however, learning even a little bit of the other country's language will set you up for success.

"Communication skills" are the most important factor for determining what makes a person effective in a foreign culture. Just think about how important "communication skills" are in your own culture. Part of communicating with another culture is something known as impression management. In a report by Michelle Zbylut, titled *The human dimension of advising*: *An analysis of interpersonal, linguistic, cultural, and advisory aspects of the advisor role,* the author surveyed 565 advisors from the Army and Marines returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the advisors interviewed, the communication skill of impression management rated as the most important overall.

Impression Management

Impression management is defined as "Deliberate and motivated self-presentation."

Impression management is a two-part process that includes:

> ***Projection:*** the image we want others to have of us; and
>
> ***Attribution:*** how others actually view us. Attribution involves the sub-skills of emotion regulation, self-monitoring, and perceptual acuity.
>
> > ***Emotion regulation*** is the ability to manage, modify, and use our emotions toward constructive outcomes. Nonverbal communication scholars describe it as *the most important predictor of cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation.*
> >
> > ***Self-monitoring*** is our ability to detect appropriateness of our social behaviors and self-presentation in response to situational constraints and to adjust our behaviors to fit the situation.
> >
> > ***Perceptual acuity*** is the ability to perceive a communication situation accurately. It involves attentiveness to ***both*** verbal and nonverbal elements

of a conversation and takes into consideration the importance of context.

Let's say you normally use a casual style while communicating. You often use words like "hey," "yeah," what's up?" etc. One day you get an invitation to a formal dinner with a high-ranking leader. If you adjust your behavior to a more formal style of communication, instead of acting casually you are a considered a high self-monitor.

Individuals who are **high self-monitors** tend to be more effective in foreign cultures because a high self-monitor tends to read the social situation first and then present an appropriate response, as opposed to simply presenting a consistent image of self in every situation.

A high self-monitor is a critical thinker who asks questions such as "Who does this situation want me to be? How can I be that person?" Whereas the low self-monitor asks, "Who am I and how can I be me in this situation?"

Can you recall a time when the impression you wanted others to have of you was not accurately perceived? Think back to this situation and, knowing what you know now; brainstorm what you could have done differently to successfully employ impression management.

Now that we have reviewed how you might adapt your own behavior to become more cross-culturally competent, let's address some specific communication styles as they vary across cultures.

High and Low Context Communication Styles

In their book "Communication Highwire: Leveraging the Power of Diverse Communication Styles", Saphiere et al (2005) define ***communication style*** as:

> "The way in which we communicate, a pattern of *verbal and nonverbal* behaviors that comprises our preferred ways of giving and receiving information in a specific situation. If the message content is the what, and the communicators are the who, then communication style is the how."

Communication style includes, how we accomplish the following tasks:

Extend an apology

Make a request

Give a compliment

Tell a joke

Edward Hall's high and low context concepts deal with where the meaning is found in our communications.

> *"High context communication is one in which most of the information is already in the person, whereas a low context communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall, 1976, p.91).*

For example, the English and German language systems use low-context communication

(more direct, explicit expression of verbal message). Whereas, the Arabic and Spanish language system uses a more high-context communication style (focused on status, context of social roles/positions, and nonverbal communications such as pauses, silence, tone of voice, etc.) In high context communication, the message is not necessarily conveyed in words and this can frustrate those who use low context communication.

High and low context communication is used in all cultures – one form, however, tends to dominate. Often low-context communicators (who depend on the actual words) presume that high-context communication is ineffective. Many Airmen who go to overseas environments have found it frustrating to communicate or negotiate with local nationals.

In some cultures, where relationships and status are paramount, people can be very reluctant to give a "yes" or "no" answer to an American (high-context communicator). Many of these cultures have more of a collectivist culture, meaning, "the group is more important than the individual, and hierarchy reigns." Competence in these types of communication experiences comes from the listener knowing how to interpret speakers' indirect messages in specific contexts. This connects directly back to 3C and "knowing how to interpret and understand what ***is*** appropriate.

> *A key distinction between high and low context communication understands* **WHO** *assumes responsibility for the message.*

According to Ting-Toomey, low-context communicators (i.e.; many U.S. Americans) assume that the SPEAKER will take the responsibility for communicating clearly. However, for high-context communicators (i.e. Asians or Middle Easterners) the receiver or interpreter of the message assumes the responsibility to infer the hidden or contextual meanings of the message.

Low-Context Communication (LCC) Patterns

(Found in such countries as Germany, U.S., Sweden):

1. Individualistic values
2. Linear logic
3. Direct verbal style
4. Matter-of-fact tone
5. Informal verbal style
6. Function of communication is to convey information

SPEAKER is responsible for the communicating meaning of a message!

High-Context Communication (HCC) Patterns

(Found in such countries as Japan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Nigeria, Mexico)

1. Collectivistic values (hierarchy and priority of the group)
2. Communication functions as a social lubricant

3. Indirect/allusive verbal style
4. Relationship is more important than the message

LISTENER is responsible for appropriate interpretation of a message!

The point of listing these patterns is not for you to memorize them – instead, it is to give you an idea of different ways and styles of communicating that others consider as "normal" and "natural" as you consider your style to be. This relates back to culture general knowledge and the term "cultural perspective taking." To reiterate, communication styles frame how a message should be interpreted or understood.

What follows is an example of differences in high and low-context communication patterns. The example is an extract of an article by the psychologist, Dr. Helen Klein, who studied the impact of intercultural interactions on civil aviation. Determining which group is primarily high-context and which is low-context should be easy.

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

CONCLUSION

This reading began by exploring the fundamentals of culture such as schemas, symbols, holism among other concepts. Next, you read about the Iceberg Theory of Culture created by Anthropologist Edward T. Hall, which explained behaviors, and symbols, which are apparent to us in a new culture versus those behaviors, beliefs, and values that are "hidden" below the surface. Then you learned about cross-cultural competence and the Air Force Culture Center's 3C Model. From there, you read about cultural perspective taking and the OODA Loop. Finally, you read about cross-cultural communication, linguistic and communication competence, impression management, high self-monitors and high and low context communication styles. This reading covered a lot of information to give you a solid knowledge base about introduction to culture concepts. Remember this reading because it is important for the in-class discussion and activity.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT **Attachment 1.**

Instructions: Match the concepts with their respective definitions. Write the letter of the corresponding definition in the blanks provided for each concept. Be prepared to review in class.

CONCEPTS	DEFINITIONS
1. Culture	**A.** Most powerful or most widely practiced culture of a particular society (often associated with countries)
2. Cultural Schema	**B.** Shared set of traditions, belief systems, and behaviors; shaped by many factors, including history, religion, politics, resources, and economic environment
3. Culture-specific	**C.** A group of people living within a society who share cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors.
4. Observe Step	**D.** Review the decisions made, actions taken, and results achieved.
5. Orient Step	**E.** Gather information about the landscape, the people, and the activities and reviewing any consequences you experienced from previous actions taken.
6. Decide Step y	**F.** Tendency to view one's own culture as superior to other cultures.
7. Act Step	**G.** Includes emotion regulation, self- monitoring, and perception
8. Macro-culture	**H.** An approach that emphasizes specific aspects of particular cultures, affording individuals much of the knowledge and/or skills necessary to interact more competently with individuals of other cultural backgrounds.
9. Micro-culture	**I.** Attempt to make sense of what we see by organizing it in a practical way we find useful.
10. Ethnocentrism	**J.** A complex mental framework used to categorize the perceptions we associate to a particular culture.

CONCEPTS	DEFINITIONS
11. Stereotypes	**K.** Adverse or unreasonable opinion about a person or group without all the facts and usually based on deeply held beliefs.
12. Low-context communication style	**L.** Treatment or consideration of, making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category.
13. Prejudices	**M.** Places burden of understanding the message on the receiver.
14. Discrimination	**N.** Understanding basic concepts like culture, relativism, ethnocentrism, and holism.
15. Cross-Cultural Competence	**O.** Ability to effectively comprehend and act in a culturally complex environment to achieve desired results.
16. Culture-General Knowledge	**P.** A cognitive process by which an individual is able to identify the thoughts and/or feelings of another culture.
17. Motivation	**Q.** These are the cultural skills an Airman must have to "operationalize" and influence their environment.
18. Holism	**R.** Depends on the sender and their words to properly convey the message.
19. Communicate, Negotiate, Relate	**S.** Predetermined generalization about all members of a particular group.
20. High-context communication style	**T.** Perhaps the most essential element of cross-cultural competence. Having a positive attitude toward cultural differences.
21. Relativism	**U.** Being fluent in a language.
22. Communication competence	**V.** Understanding how to properly communicate in another language or culture.
23. Linguistic competence	**W.** Viewing a situation through the local cultural schema.
24. Cultural perspective taking	**X.** The idea that all aspects of a culture are related to each other.
25. Impression management G	**Y.** Consider courses of action, options, and interpretations; select one to use