



**A Model of Culture-General Competence for Education and  
Training:  
Validation Across Services and Key Specialties**

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**Prepared by:**

**Louise J. Rasmussen, Ph.D.  
Winston R. Sieck, Ph.D.  
Jasmine L. Duran, M.S.**

*Global Cognition*  
1771 Southview Dr.  
Yellow Springs, OH 45387

**Prepared for:**

**Marc Hill**  
Associate Director for Culture Education and Training  
Defense Language and National Security Education Office

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## Executive Summary

How do we ensure that U. S. personnel are ready to work with people from any culture?

Global partnerships play a critical role in national military strategy. Personnel on the front end make or break such partnerships. They must be able to develop professional relationships with people who have a different culture than they do.

Preparing people for the cultural aspect of their jobs is a challenge for leaders. A key difficulty is that their people may ultimately go anywhere. U. S. personnel have to be ready to engage and work with people from countless cultures. And to get up to speed quickly in new areas of operation. They need a set of cultural skills that apply no matter where they hit the ground. We refer to this set of skills as *culture-general competence*.

The aim of the current study was to further test a model of culture-general competence. We call the model *Adaptive Readiness for Culture* (ARC). It is general in that it applies across all regions of interest. The skills that comprise ARC were identified in an earlier study of 20 Marine Corps and Army service members who had worked in multiple cultures. This unique aspect of the study was essential to tease out general skills from specific area knowledge.

The current study extended the sample to determine how well the model applies across the DoD and Total Force. We conducted a field study of 95 members of the DoD who have successfully engaged across cultures as part of their jobs. They served overseas in high contact roles in at least two different regions. 75% had worked in four or more regions. On average they spent 8.2 years overseas in 6.6 unique countries.

The sample included Officers and enlisted members of the four services. Foreign Area Officers, intelligence professionals, Special Operations Forces, and DoD civilians were also included. The sample ensures the relevance of the model to the work demands and language of DoD.

The study focused on relevant job experience rather than opinions about culture. We used critical incident interviews to uncover knowledge and skills in the context of lived situations. The SMEs reported 182 incidents from all over the world. We analyzed the set of incidents to elaborate and test ARC.

ARC includes twelve competencies that are organized in four broad domains. It is fully described in Appendix 1. A brief summary follows.

### **Diplomatic Mindset**

The ability to put the mission first. To build relationships with people from other cultures to help the mission. To understand how the U.S. and one's self are viewed by members of other cultures. To manage one's own attitudes towards the culture to accomplish mission-relevant tasks.

**Cultural Learning**

The ability to direct one's own cultural learning. To learn about cultures as an ongoing activity. To seek out relationships that build cultural knowledge while deployed. To judge the reliability of sources. To reflect on and learn from intercultural experiences after they occur.

**Cultural Reasoning**

The ability to make sense of situations across cultures. To cope with cultural surprises. To consider the point of view of people who are raised in a different culture.

**Intercultural Interaction**

The ability to engage with others. To cope with one's uncertainty about the culture. To communicate with a plan. To present oneself in a way to achieve intended effects.

The study provided empirical validation of ARC, as well as insights into the ways culture-general competence is applied by experienced professionals in the DoD. The results yielded evidence that ARC generalizes across the services, ranks and across a broad range of communities.

The ARC competencies were pervasive across this diverse sample of seasoned professionals. All of the competencies were found in the majority of cases. Eight of the 12 were identified in over 90% of the interviews. In addition, each of the groups represented in the sample applied all 12 of the competencies. Yet, they did not all apply them in the same way. For example, language proficiency affected how cultural skills were used. Section 4.2 illustrates these differences with specific examples from the interviews.

ARC defines the core skills, knowledge, and behaviors that contribute to mission success in a wide range of DoD jobs that require cross-cultural interaction. ARC informs policy, education, training, and assessment across the DoD.

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- Army TRADOC Culture Center
- Navy Center for Language Regional Expertise and Culture
- Foreign Area Officer Association
- John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
- Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management
- National Defense University
- Marine Corps Intelligence Schools
- Marine Corps University
- Senior Enlisted Academy at Naval War College
- Naval Expeditionary Combat Command

**CONTENTS**

1. Introduction.....	6
1.1. Personnel Must be Ready to Work With People From Any Culture.....	6
1.2. Leaders Need Guidance to Prepare Their People for Cultural Challenges.....	8
1.3. There is an Overwhelming Amount of Cultural Content That Could be Taught .....	8
1.4. An Actionable Model Describes Ways Personnel are Effective Across Cultures.....	9
1.5. Develop and Validate a Model Based on Interviews With DoD Personnel About Their Experiences Engaging Across Cultures .....	10
2. Method .....	14
2.1. Participants.....	14
2.1.1. Recruiting.....	14
2.1.2. Characteristics of the sample. ....	15
2.2. Interview Method.....	16
2.3. Interview Procedure .....	17
3. Analysis.....	18
3.1. Data Preparation.....	18
3.2. Coding to Support Quantitative Analysis .....	18
3.2.1. Coding scheme.....	18
3.2.2. Coding process.....	19
3.3. Thematic Analysis to Explore New Aspects of Competence and Group Differences .....	19
4. RESULTS .....	20
4.1. Quantitative Results.....	20
4.1.1. Are all 12 competencies used in critical cultural interactions?.....	21
4.1.2. Does each of the major communities apply the competencies? .....	21
4.1.3. Do some communities exhibit different competency profiles than others?.....	24
4.1.4. Do some competencies support others?.....	25
4.2. Qualitative Results.....	26
4.2.1. Do personnel in some DoD roles enact competencies differently than others? .....	27
4.2.2. Are there new competencies, knowledge, or skill elements? .....	48
5. Discussion.....	58
5.1. Implications for Future Research.....	60
5.2. Implications for Education and Training.....	61
6. References.....	64
Appendix 1.....	66

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**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Adaptive Readiness for Culture competency model.....	13
Table 2. Proportion of personnel for which competency identified.....	23
Table 3. Co-occurrence relations between competencies.....	27
Table 4. Mapping between observed themes and model revisions.....	49

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. Number of mentions for 20 most frequently visited countries.....	16
Figure 2. Frequency of each competency per interview.....	21
Figure 3. Competency profiles for major groups.....	25

## 1. Introduction

Whether you're doing humanitarian assistance in the wake of a natural disaster, doing counterinsurgency, or a non-combatant evacuation, or you're training with a foreign military, you're building partnered capacity. I can envision only very few scenarios in the military overseas or even in the U.S. where you're not dealing with people from different cultures. Whether you're trying to teach them to fly a fighter jet, or providing disaster relief, trying to find out the hardest hit area, you're dealing with people from other cultures. If you don't understand that people may look at things differently and don't understand that you can be more effective if you develop at least some form of relationship with them, you will have a harder time accomplishing your mission.

(USMC General, November 2014)

### 1.1. Personnel Must be Ready to Work With People From Any Culture

Attaining global stability requires personnel<sup>1</sup> at all levels to build relationships with diverse people. The U.S. national military strategy describes the close relationship between achieving long term national security objectives and building and sustaining international partnerships (White House, 2015; Secretary of Defense, 2014). As part of this strategy the U.S. is making a significant investment in building relationships with foreign nations through joint exercises and through contributions of resources, training, and security assistance (Joint Report to Congress, 2014). The desired outcome of these activities is that the nations the U.S. engages will in the future be allies and partners in a global effort to promote security and stability.

To realize this objective, the personnel engaged in building and sustaining international partnerships must be able to make positive impressions and form meaningful professional relationships across cultures. Currently personnel are deployed to a wide range of international locations, with assignments of varying durations. Many of these assignments also entail participation in multinational efforts and simultaneous coordination or collaboration among partners from many nations. In short, personnel are charged with interacting and working with people from many different cultures both across and within assignments.

One approach to attaining cultural readiness would be to ensure that all personnel receive extensive, assignment-appropriate language and regional preparation. Even if it were possible to resource such an endeavor, it is untenable to expect personnel to learn everything about a culture prior to coming into contact with it (Early & Peterson, 2004).

For many, attaining deep proficiency even in a single foreign language and region is not feasible given the commitment required to develop and sustain technical expertise in their primary job specialty. For example, would it make sense for an F-16 pilot to spend months, or more likely years, becoming fluent in Japanese? On one hand, it might help them communicate and interact more effectively with Japanese counterparts during training exercises. On the other

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<sup>1</sup> The broad term 'personnel' is used throughout this report to refer to military and civilian government personnel who are employed or contracted by the DoD or other government organizations such as the State Department, and Department of Homeland Security, as well as individuals who complete study abroad as preparation for foreign service positions.

hand, the time spent learning a foreign language comes at the expense of potentially letting their air combat skills decline.

It is feasible for some personnel to learn a foreign language and acquire regional expertise without compromising the development of technical competence. However, even then, language proficiency and regional expertise by themselves do not necessarily ensure global readiness to understand and interact effectively with anyone, anywhere.

I had studied German and Spanish in high school and college; I was an International Studies major. I lived in the Netherlands for a year and a half to go to graduate school before I came into the military. [...] I was asked to do a two year job as a junior level military attaché in Saudi Arabia. And that position was outside my area of expertise; didn't have any language or culture background on it. I had to apply what I did in Germany and the Netherlands to the Saudi Arabia and the Middle Eastern environment. [37-Air Force-FAO-O6]

There will always be a need for specialists who speak foreign languages and who have deep expertise in foreign regions. Such capabilities are needed to accomplish complex transactions with specific foreign populations. However, it is becoming a growing imperative that all personnel have a basic level of competence to quickly develop understanding of and interact effectively with members of other cultures (Selmeski, 2007).

The Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO) refers to the set of capabilities that ensure global readiness to work and form relationships with foreign populations and partners from any region or culture as Cross-Cultural Competence (3C). DLNSEO's definition of 3C is:

A set of culture-general knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes (KSAAs) developed through education, training, and experience that provide the ability to operate effectively within a culturally complex environment. 3C is further augmented through the acquisition of cultural, linguistic, and regional proficiency, and by their application in cross-cultural contexts. (DLNSEO, 2012)

Many labels have been used to describe the general ability to work with individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds (see Fantini, 2006 for an overview of terms). In line with DLNSEO's definition, the term culture-general competence will be used in this report in an effort to clearly distinguish general competencies that allow adaptation and interaction in any culture from regional proficiencies that enable adaptation and interaction in a specific culture.

A recent survey of more than 4,000 Army personnel found that a majority of soldiers engage in tasks that require cultural competence and that they see these tasks as linked to the success of overseas missions (Wisecarver, Foldes, Addis, Gallus, & Klafehn, 2014). Perhaps as a result of the wide appreciation for their importance, some personnel take initiative to build needed cultural skills and knowledge on their own. However, it is up to leadership to enhance the training and development of junior staff in a way that fosters cultural-general competence across the DoD (Rasmussen & Sieck, 2012).



## **1.2. Leaders Need Guidance to Prepare Their People for Cultural Challenges**

U.S. government leaders need support to figure out how to best prepare their people to interact effectively with foreign populations and partners.<sup>2</sup> In making decisions about what to teach, leaders want to have some level of assurance that what is taught is going to help their people deal with the challenges they encounter on their jobs.

However, the number and diversity of efforts to develop cultural training and education means that there is currently no common vocabulary for talking about or standard guiding how the government prepares personnel to enter new cultures or to interact with foreign populations and partners (Alrich, 2007). Without a common vocabulary and standards it is not possible to make meaningful progress in finding the best ways to achieve the desired learning objectives. It also makes it impossible to find systematic ways to determine whether personnel have in fact learned anything that helps them accomplish their missions.

For some leaders, standards or formalized requirements may represent a double edged sword. While they remove some of the guesswork, there is a perceived possibility standards could also impose unwanted shifts in resource allocations. Once official guidance is in place, leaders might fear that they will be forced to direct time and resources away from activities that promote the development of technical skills that directly support combat power.

Paradoxically however, it will not be possible to curb cost growth without agreement on the most essential knowledge and skills that will be taught. It is impossible to do sustained, systematic experimentation that can inform evidence-based decisions about ways to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of culture-general training and education efforts, without guidance. Agreement is also required in order to determine which competencies are already taught within programs that are currently in place. Such information would help leaders avoid duplication of effort.

Guidance on the core cultural skills and knowledge that support mission effectiveness will provide the foundation for developing readiness plans that balance sustainment of conventional capabilities with development of global response capacity. Knowing the minimal requirements for enhancing cultural capability will allow leaders to promote programs that develop, advance, and sustain essential cultural skills and knowledge in a targeted fashion. In addition, leaders will be able to conserve resources by steering clear of programs that may not improve personnel cultural readiness.

## **1.3. There is an Overwhelming Amount of Cultural Content That Could be Taught**

There is an enormous amount of cultural content that could be taught to personnel who are required to work with people from all over the world. An abundance of research studies exist that point to different frameworks for thinking about similarities and differences between cultures. Many country-specific studies exist that provide information about the demographics and political and economic systems in particular regions. There are also numerous resources that compare and contrast effective interaction strategies, describe customs, provide do's and taboos. There are many different perspectives on cross-culturally effective communication styles, negotiation strategies, and collaboration approaches.

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<sup>2</sup> To simplify the complex space of decision makers in the DoD we use the broad term 'leaders' to refer both to individuals in positions of leadership at various levels within the services' command structures and to leadership within DoD agencies, field activities, and centers.

The vast availability of information makes it very easy for cross-cultural instruction to overburden training and education programs. The evidence base regarding which content most effectively improves the cultural readiness of personnel on the job is thin. Important work has been done in an effort to determine the most essential cultural competencies. For example, Abbe, Gulich, and Herman (2007) conducted a comprehensive review of the existing literature on cross-cultural competence. This review consolidated and thus provided a solid foundation of information about 3C. The competencies it distilled from the literature serve as hypotheses about competencies that might be important to personnel. Other literature reviews and focus groups that have been carried out rely primarily on input from academia (see for example McDonald, McGuire, Johnston, Selmeski, & Abbe, 2008; Caligiuri, Noe, Nolan, Ryan, & Drasgow, 2011).

One caveat is that the academic literature describes studies of non-military populations. These studies therefore have not taken the job context or demands that military personnel contend with into consideration. Another caveat is that the language used to define competencies includes academic jargon. This means that even if the competencies are useful they are not presented in a format that is actionable for military operators. A last limitation of the academic literature that makes it an imperfect basis for making recommendations for military personnel is that academic research is rarely conducted with an eye towards instruction. This means that a number of the concepts identified in the literature likely cannot be developed through training and education.

Literature reviews were a reasonable place to start in 2007 as a way to generate a wide variety of hypotheses. Since that time, what has been needed since is a systematic study of seasoned military personnel, who have experience working in a wide variety of cultures in order to select and refine trainable cultural knowledge and skills for an actionable model of culture-general competence. A model of culture-general competence for the DoD must be grounded in study of what personnel actually do when they apply cultural skills and knowledge on the job. In order to be actionable, that is, be able to guide future practice, a model of culture-general competence must reflect current best practices.

#### **1.4. An Actionable Model Describes Ways Personnel are Effective Across Cultures**

A fundamental principle underlying the development and use of competency models as human resource management tools is that competency models are descriptions of actual behaviors that lead to desirable performance on a job. The idea is that in order to effectively guide practice, competency models must describe the behaviors that job holders can meaningfully engage in to meet or exceed their organization's objectives. This means that the goal of analysis aimed at developing competency models is to identify what superior performers do, not what someone thinks they should be doing (McClelland, 1973, pp. 7-8).

A highly effective method for developing competency models in any work domain involves interviewing current skilled and experienced job holders about how they handled challenging incidents they encountered on their jobs. These are also sometimes referred to as behavioral event interviews (see Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Campion, Fink, Ruggeberg, Carr, Phillips, & Odman, 2011). Following this method researchers collect and analyze the thoughts and actions of people who are successful in their jobs as they cope with challenging situations. This enables researchers to more objectively examine the tacit characteristics that influence behavior and that result in excellent performance. As a competency modeling approach, this method makes it possible to base the formulation of requirements on an examination of job

experience instead of relying on hypothesized or idealized attributes, characteristics, or activities that may or may not be effective.

There are two primary benefits for an organization to use a competency model that is based on an analysis of the best practices of experienced job holders. First, it ensures that the model identifies specific behaviors and strategies that make sense within the job domain. This provides a basis for the organization to be sure that it is providing a blueprint for practice that can feasibly be carried out within the constraints of the job. Secondly, it creates a useful foundation for developing or identifying content that can be used to train and educate novice personnel. The outcomes of the competency model can be easily incorporated into instruction and demonstrations of the ways competencies are practiced within the context of the job. This, in turn, ensures that instruction clearly communicates the relevance of the competencies to job objectives.

Basing a competency model on analysis of what job-holders already do also makes it possible to express competencies in the language of the job holder, as opposed to in the language of the analyst (Alliger, Beard, Bennett, Colegrove, & Garrity, 2007). This has several implications for the ways the competency model can be used. First, this means that personnel who are already engaging in desirable and productive behaviors will be able to recognize they are doing the right things. This in turn will serve as motivation for them to continue to engage in these behaviors. It can also serve as an external reference that can help them influence others to engage in them too as it provides a ready-to-use vocabulary for communicating their expectations for behavior. Finally, a competency model that is grounded in practice and expressed in the language of job holders allows leaders to more easily determine members of their staff who are doing well, and ones who need training or refreshers.

An actionable culture-general competency model should describe actual behaviors that lead to desirable performance on relevant jobs and be based on analysis of the ways current skilled and experienced job holders handled challenging incidents they encountered on their jobs. This ensures that the model describes practices that can feasibly be carried out within the constraints of U.S. government jobs and that personnel can recognize when they themselves and others are doing the right things.

### **1.5. Develop and Validate a Model Based on Interviews With DoD Personnel About Their Experiences Engaging Across Cultures**

Rasmussen, Sieck, Crandall, Simpkins, and Smith (2011) developed a model of culture-general competence based on a field study of the ways personnel apply culture on the job. As part of the study the researchers interviewed personnel who had significant experiences working with, and engaging foreign populations or military partners across cultures. By eliciting narratives from these practitioners about their experiences engaging with others across cultures they were able to identify mission critical, culture-general competencies.

The data collection and analysis approaches used for the study were informed both by the existing research literature as well as standard practices in applied cognitive research and competency modeling. The study used an incident-based interview guide that focused on challenging situations that presented opportunities for the application of cultural skills and knowledge. As the focus for this study was General Purpose Force personnel with extensive experience on the ground 20 Soldiers and Marines with experience in mentoring, advising, provincial reconstruction, embedded training, and civil affairs (non-career) billets participated.

In selecting personnel for the study, researchers relied on a set of sampling criteria designed to ensure that participants had opportunities to apply cultural skills and knowledge in the accomplishments of missions in a variety of regions. To this end only personnel who had been deployed or assigned recently in at least two different regions were included. Also, personnel must have served in roles that required interaction with foreign populations or partners. All had been referred by either their peers or superiors and had worked overseas in at least two different regions. 75% had worked in three or more regions.

Before conducting the interviews researchers culled a list of competency areas that possibly supported performance in U.S. government jobs. These were competencies that had been suggested by research in other domains (McDonald, et al., 2008; Rasmussen & Sieck, in press). In the interviews participants were asked about occasions when they had encountered human challenges when they operated in a foreign environment. Although the goal of the study was to capture interactions in which cultural differences posed a challenge to interacting, the word *culture* was not used in the opening question. This was a deliberate methodological decision. People have different conceptions of culture. Triggering those conceptions could bias the types of experiences participants remembered and shared. This distinguishes the study from other research in this area.

As participants shared their experiences, interviewers listened for the hypothesized competency areas. If interviewees' thoughts or behaviors during the encounters reflected the possible use of these competencies, then interviewers asked questions designed to explore them further. Importantly, the information obtained in the interviews reflected the participants' experiences on the job, rather than their opinions of their own competencies. Using this approach researchers were able to evaluate the hypothesized competencies identified in past studies against what skilled personnel actually think and do when they engage across cultures. Because the interviews used open-ended responses, the data collected also allowed exploration of the presence of new competencies.

Key features of the study included:

- A sample of highly experienced professionals ensuring the relevance of collected data to the work demands and language of personnel.
- Sampling criteria to include personnel with experience working in multiple cultures allowing examination of culture-general competence, rather than culture-specific proficiency.
- Incident-based interviews that elicited job-relevant experiences rather than opinion.
- A questioning strategy that avoided the term 'culture' and instead focused on the application of cultural skills and knowledge thus reducing potential bias.
- Identification of precise behavioral statements of knowledge and skills needed to develop an actionable model of culture-general competence.

To our knowledge, no other studies of culture-general competence in the military to date satisfy this set of criteria.

Dr. Rasmussen and her team developed a model based on quantitative and qualitative analyses that uncovered the most commonly used competencies across the participant sample. Some of these were consistent with the competency areas the researchers had hypothesized; others were new and possibly unique to this work domain. The model is comprised of twelve competencies that connect to four broad challenges personnel encounter each time they adapt to working in a new culture. These challenges include adopting a constructive mindset for working

in a new culture, learning about the new culture, making sense of people and events in the new culture, and interacting with members of the culture. The model reflects knowledge and skills personnel use when they apply cultural skills and knowledge to manage these challenges in the context of their jobs.

The sample used for the study was limited to Soldiers and Marines, only a few of the participants were enlisted personnel, and none worked in specialized jobs such as those that are occupied by Foreign Area Officers, Special Operations Forces, and Intelligence professionals. Therefore, it is possible that the findings based on the sample used for the initial study may not generalize to other services, across ranks and across a broader range of jobs.

To mitigate against this issue Rasmussen and her team conducted a larger study using a cross-sectional sample that was representative of service, rank, and major job categories that require specialized applications of cultural skills and knowledge. The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which the competency model applied across the DoD. Specifically, researchers wanted to determine whether the competencies based on the smaller sample of personnel were indeed used and support performance across services, ranks, and job categories. On one hand, it is possible that some competencies are not important for certain communities; on the other, it was possible that certain populations within the DoD require unique additional competencies.

The study confirmed that each competency in the model was used by a majority of participants within all of the sampled communities. This means that the model generalizes to the four services, across ranks and across a broad range of jobs within the DoD. The study did not reveal new core competencies. But, personnel did show variability in the way they enacted competencies. The model was revised to more clearly describe the knowledge and skills that make up each competency as well as include behavioral examples (see Appendix 1). The final competency model is referred to as Adaptive Readiness for Culture (ARC) (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Adaptive Readiness for Culture Competency Model.*

<b>Diplomatic Mindset</b>	
1	Maintains a Mission Orientation
2	Understands Self in Cultural Context
3	Manages Attitudes Towards Culture
<b>Cultural Learning</b>	
4	Self-Directs Own Cultural Learning
5	Develops Reliable Information Sources
6	Reflects and Seeks Feedback on Intercultural Encounters
<b>Cultural Reasoning</b>	
7	Copes With Cultural Surprises
8	Develops Cultural Explanations of Behavior
9	Takes Perspective of Others in Intercultural Situations
<b>Intercultural Interaction</b>	
10	Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty
11	Plans Intercultural Communication
12	Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

One-hundred and one (101) personnel who had considerable experience working with members of other cultures participated in the study. Six participants were excluded resulting in a final sample of 95. In the following sections we first describe our approach for recruiting participants. Then we provide an overview of the overall characteristics of the sample.

#### 2.1.1. Recruiting.

The study had the following recruiting goals. The sample should include 10 GPF personnel (60% enlisted/40% officer) from each service, 10 DoD Civilians, and 15 personnel from each of the listed specialty communities: SOF, FAO, and Intelligence Professionals. The criteria for inclusion in the study were at least two tours of duty overseas, extensive interaction with local populaces, civilians and/or partnered forces, and peer-nomination. Additionally, participants must have served overseas no more than 15 years ago.

As is always the case for field studies, finding recently active, experienced professionals who not only met the inclusion criteria but were willing to volunteer their time presented a challenge. As such we relied on a hybrid recruiting procedure that involved reaching prospective participants both through the research team's personal social networks and through formal DoD organizational structures.

As a first step in recruiting, we initially reached out to a small set of personal contacts within our team's existing social networks. These were well-respected individuals within each of the DoD communities we were sampling from. If we already knew that these contacts themselves met our sampling criteria we asked them if they would be interested in participating. If we knew they did not, we asked them instead if they knew others who met the criteria, and who might be willing to participate.

We also reached out to and discussed the study with a number of individuals within supervisory positions or with special connections within their respective military organizations. These contacts, when agreeable, passed instructions for participating to qualified individuals within their organizations.

After we completed an interview with a participant, we asked them if they knew others who met the study criteria and who would likely be willing to participate.

In all cases, when a contact identified other contacts in the community and was willing to reach out to those individuals, we provided them with a standard email script to share. As participation was voluntary, the instruction in this email script specified that interested parties should contact the research team.

This recruiting approach ensured the potential inclusion of a wide set of agencies, organizations, commands, units, etc. that exist within the DoD. As only a few participants were identified within each organization, the final sample is a diverse segment of the DoD population who met the criteria. Using a sampling approach in which each contact nominated only one or a couple of candidates further ensured that all participants had been identified by peers or supervisors who had direct experience with them as competent within their jobs and that they were motivated to participate.

### 2.1.2. Characteristics of the sample.

The final sample included 95 DoD professionals who met the criteria for inclusion. Six participants of the 101 participants in the full sample were excluded for the following reasons. Three provided personal reflections and opinions about culture and cultural competence instead of specific examples from their own experience. One provided specific examples from their own experience but did not answer follow up questions about these experiences. One opted to withdraw from the study after providing an interview. One had not worked overseas within the last 15 years.

Many personnel wear more than one hat over their careers and thus belong to multiple DoD communities. For example, we found that it was common both for FAOs and SOFs to work in Intelligence fields. We also came across several personnel who had transitioned from active duty military careers to civilian careers in which they continued to work overseas for the DoD and other U.S. government organizations. A great example was a Middle East FAO who was also a special operator and an intelligence professional who was currently working for the DoD in a civilian capacity. For purposes of analysis, we tabulated all of the communities that each participant belonged to.

Eighteen participants belonged to the FAO community (19%), 22 to the intelligence community (23%), and 17 to the SOF community (18%). Fifteen (16%) had worked overseas in civilian capacities either as defense contractors, other government service, in support of non-DoD organizations such as the State Department, Department of Homeland Security, and the United Nations, or had completed study abroad as preparation for foreign service positions. Eleven of the civilian participants had prior military service experience (73%). All civilians with prior military experience were officers.

Overall, 58 participants were officers (61%) and 34 were enlisted (36%). Three had no military background (3%). The lowest enlisted rank was E4 and highest E9; the median enlisted rank was E7. The lowest officer rank was O4 and the highest O8; the median officer rank was O5. Thirty-three percent of the participants served in the Army (N=31), 20% in the Navy (N=19), 29% in the Marine Corps (N=28), and 17% in the Air Force (N=16).

With respect to background, 16 participants reported having a bicultural upbringing, meaning they had spent at least a decade of their childhood outside the U.S. or had grown up in the U.S. with first-generation immigrant parents. Fifty participants (53%) had spent at least nine months in a foreign language program after High School. Five participants were female.

All participants had recent overseas assignments that required daily interactions either with members of the local populations, foreign partners, or both. Their responsibilities within their jobs included among others: mentoring, advising, planning for and managing reconstruction, providing training, intelligence gathering, and facilitating civil-military interaction.

All participants had experience in at least two different regions in the world with the most recent experience being no more than 15 years ago. On average, the most recent assignment was 4.5 years ago. Participants had completed between 1 and 10 overseas assignments greater than six months in duration, with an average of five such assignments. On the average they had spent 8.2 years overseas, ranging between less than a year to 30 years. Four participants had only completed one longer assignment (greater than 6 months) and two had only spent a year or less overseas in a professional work capacity. However, these participants had all either completed a number of additional shorter assignments, completed longer sojourns for study or non-



government related work, interacted extensively with foreign military partners as part of joint training programs in the U.S, or combinations of these.

Most participants had worked in Iraq, Afghanistan, or both at some point in their careers. However, the final sample represented intercultural experiences all over the world including Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America. Participants provided an overview of their overseas experiences at the beginning of each interview. Many participants who had worked overseas most of their careers, and particularly those whose work involved frequent, shorter trips, chose to provide only the highlights. As a result, estimates of the breadth and duration of participants' overseas experience are in general conservative. They mentioned a total of 742 trips and 136 unique countries. The total number of professional overseas trips participants reported, regardless of duration, ranged from two to 42, with an average of 9.2 countries. Participants had visited between two and 29 unique countries or 6.6 unique countries on average. Figure 1 shows the 20 countries participants mentioned most frequently as places they had had worked.

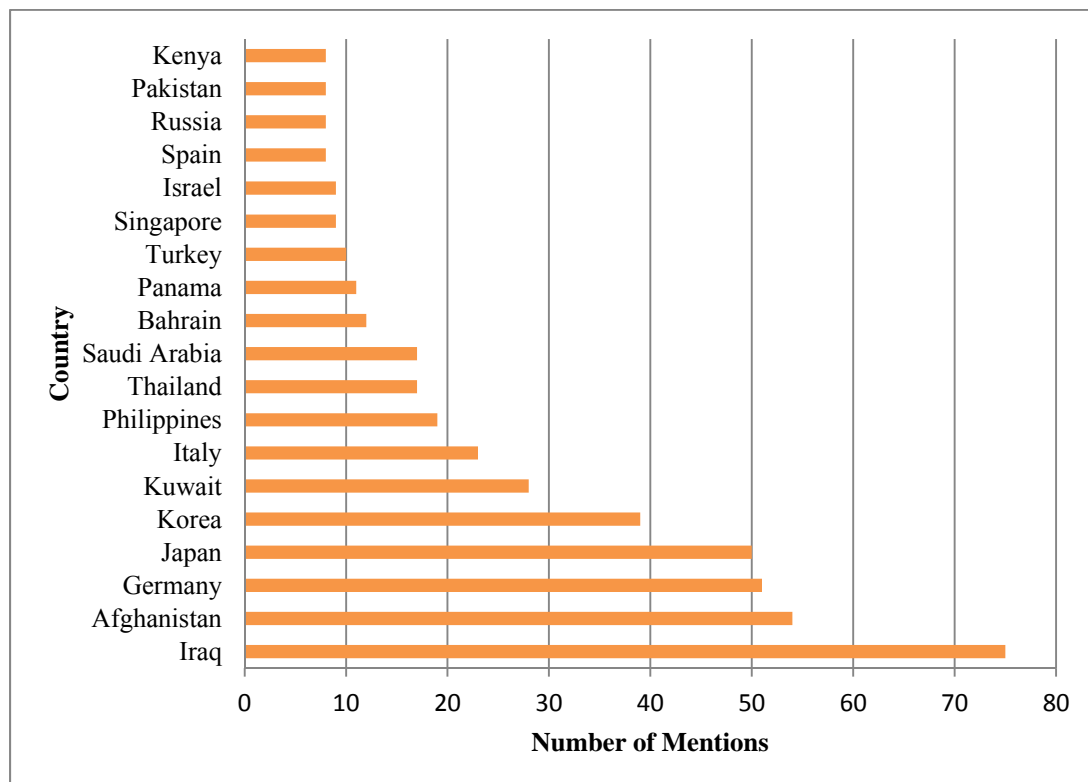


Figure 1. Number of mentions for 20 most frequently visited countries.

## 2.2. Interview Method

The interviews used an incident-based elicitation method that relied on recollection of challenging events (cf. Flanagan, 1954; Hoffman, & Lintern, 2006). The focus of the interviews was on critical incidents in which the participants personally experienced challenges during their most recent overseas assignment. The participants' own examples of recent interactions overseas were used as a point of departure for asking more focused questions designed to elicit

information about ways specific competencies allowed participants to cope with intercultural challenges.

We elicited the participants' personal experiences during overseas assignments in which cultural differences played a critical role or presented an obstacle. The lead question used to elicit such experiences was: "Please tell me about a time, during your most recent overseas assignment, when you interacted with members of the local populace (civilians, tribal leaders, local officials, partnered forces, etc.), coalition partners, or third country nationals and found the interaction particularly challenging?" If participants indicated they could recall more than one such experience, the interviewer would ask them to provide high level descriptions of two or three experiences and then the interviewer picked one for further examination.

The interview guide contained a set of open-ended questions that were designed to obtain detailed information about specific competency areas. These questions addressed a set of specific behaviors that represented each of the hypothesized competency areas. The follow-up questions were only asked when the associated behaviors were mentioned by participants in the context of their reported incidents.

For example, if the participant made references to confusions or surprises in the context of an intercultural interaction, explicitly saying things like "I was puzzled," or "I didn't get it," the interviewer would come back to that specific part of the critical incident and ask detailed questions designed to elicit more information about the nature of the surprise and the participant's response to it.

The interviews were semi-structured, so not all of the follow-up questions were asked in every interview. Follow-up questions were only asked if they made sense in the context of the participant's experience and if the participant had not already provided the information as part of a response to a previous question.

Detailed descriptions of the interview guide and associated methodological considerations can be found in Rasmussen, et al. (2011) and in Rasmussen, and Sieck (in press).

### **2.3. Interview Procedure**

Interviews were conducted individually, and each lasted about 2 hours. Twenty-four interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the rest were completed over the telephone or Skype. Eight participants were working overseas at the time the interviews were conducted. Two researchers were present for each interview. One led the interview and the other took notes and listened for additional opportunities to ask follow-up questions. Each interview began with a short description of the purpose of the interview and participant consent information.

The interviewers first obtained a description of the participant's background and professional history, focusing on their overseas assignments. Interviewers then asked the lead question to elicit an initial account of a critical incident. Subsequently they made additional passes through the account to elicit more detailed descriptions of the event, including the cultural others' behaviors, and the participant's thoughts and reactions during the event. Interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. Two participants declined permission. Interviewers collaborated to construct detailed records based on their notes for the interviews that were not recorded.

### 3. Analysis

A quantitative analysis approach was used in which behavioral indicators of competencies were identified and coded to support frequency analyses (Chi, 1997). Qualitative thematic analysis was used to look for previously unidentified competencies. These analyses are described in the following sections.

#### 3.1. Data Preparation

The interviews were transcribed by human transcriptionists. The resulting interview transcripts were between 14 and 54 pages long (single-spaced), with an average length of 26 pages. Each transcript contained between 8,393 and 25,650 words, with an average of approximately 14,553 words. Each transcript was scrubbed of any information that could be used to identify the participant, or individuals with whom the participant interacted with during the course of their experiences.

The interview transcripts were divided among three analysts who had significant experience analyzing and coding interview data. From the interview transcripts, analysts extracted all propositions that appeared to contain at least one application of cultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, or an explanation for why participants handled situations a certain way. We refer to these as excerpts. For each excerpt enough information was included to make subsequent coding of specific competencies possible. This resulted in excerpts that varied in length and that at times included application of a number of competencies concurrently.

#### 3.2. Coding to Support Quantitative Analysis

We used standard approaches to developing quantitative measures of the verbal data (Chi, 1997; Saldaña, 2012). Measures of each of the culture-general competencies were derived by coding the interview transcripts, and aggregating results for each participant. The coding process for generating the quantitative measures is described in the following section.

##### 3.2.1. Coding scheme.

We refined the coding scheme developed by Rasmussen et al. (2011) to specify verbal indicators and coding rules for the 12 hypothesized competencies. In the process we refined the model to resolve two conceptual inconsistencies. First, we determined that the Learns New Cultures Efficiently competency could be confused with the Self Directs Cultural Learning competency. The essence of the Learns New Cultures Efficiently competency was the ability to act in the face of cultural uncertainty. That is, being able to use initial, potentially limited cultural knowledge to accomplish mission related objectives. We therefore changed the title of the Learns New Cultures Efficiently competency to Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty. In addition, this competency addresses an aspect of Intercultural Interaction, therefore we associated it with the Intercultural Interaction competency domain. We associated the Reflects and Seeks Feedback on Intercultural Encounters competency with the Cultural Learning domain instead of conceptualizing it as part of the Intercultural Interaction domain. Although reflecting and seeking feedback often occurs in the context of specific interactions or experiences it functionally supports learning.

The final coding scheme explicitly framed the 12 competency areas in terms of references to specific activities or behaviors that coders could use as cues to discern competencies within the participants' descriptions of their experiences. For example, in the case

of Taking Perspective of Others in Intercultural Interactions, references to the internal thoughts or feelings of a cultural other, such as “*for him, having four children was more than having \$1M in the bank*” counted as verbal evidence for that competency.

### **3.2.2. Coding process.**

Analysts reviewed the entire set of codes, one by one, after reading an excerpt so as to make an independent presence or absence decision for each competency. Analysts made their determination based on the content of each excerpt individually. More than one code could be applied to the same excerpt.

After coding for competencies, analysts made a special note of any strategies or activities that the participants were engaging in that appeared related to culture-general competence, but were not captured by the current coding scheme, as well as possible differences between the communities. These notes formed the basis for thematic analyses (see section 4.2).

In an initial stage of coding, three analysts participated in coding training sessions by independently applying the coding protocol to a subset of the same interviews and subsequently meeting to reach consensus on code application. The outcome of this process was a refined coding protocol and the development of reliable coding practices. Analysts compared their coding results and identified points of confusion or disagreement in order to refine the definitions of existing categories. The analysts discussed their individual rationales for code choices for excerpts where they were uncertain or where there was disagreement and came to a consensus. The lead researcher checked rules and codes lacking analyst consensus and then refined the rules. This process was repeated four times for small sets of excerpts. Once the training sessions were completed, pairs of analysts independently coded additional excerpts to determine inter-rater reliability. In total, 669 excerpts (10%) were independently coded by two analysts. The overall percent agreement was 90%.

The analysts divided the remaining excerpts and independently coded them independently. Each excerpt was assigned an indicator variable (*1* or *0*) to denote presence or absence of each competency element. These codes formed the basis for the quantitative analyses.

### **3.3. Thematic Analysis to Explore New Aspects of Competence and Group Differences**

In addition to coding excerpts to support quantitative analyses, we conducted a thematic analysis of the interview data to determine whether additional core competencies were used that were not accounted for in the 12 previously identified competencies. The analysis explored whether additional skill and knowledge elements were used that were not captured in the descriptions of the 12 competencies and provided support for characterizing possible community differences.

Analysts went through a progressive series of phases to determine whether emerging patterns within the data were recurrent and significant (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As part of collecting, excerpting, and coding the data the analysts conducted several passes through the interviews. Throughout these multiple passes, each analyst independently noted skills, knowledge, strategies, behaviors, attitudes or motivations that appeared novel. That is, they noted anything that was possibly related to culture-general competence, but was not reflected within the 12 hypothesized competencies. Analysts also noted possible trends within the participant communities or emergent characteristics of the communities’ culture-general competence. Finally, they kept an eye out for possible unique strategies employed by certain communities.

Analysts collated their notes and organized them into a table of observations along with a number of specific examples from the interview transcripts. Working from this table, analysts first consolidated observations that were of a similar nature, thus removing overlaps and redundancies. The next steps in the analysis were aimed at determining whether the remaining observations addressed new aspects of culture-general competence and whether they merited inclusion in the model.

To determine if observations were unique, analysts first collaboratively sorted the observations into the existing themes (competencies) captured in the model. That is, they examined the relationship between each new observation and the elements of culture-general competence that were already captured by the model. As analysts evaluated the fit between an observation and the model they considered whether it represented one of the following:

- A new competency
- A behavioral example of a competency already included in the model
- A new knowledge or skill element of a competency already included in the model
- An advanced level of an already identified knowledge or skill element

If analysts agreed that an observation did not appear to have overlap with aspects of competencies already described in the model they categorized it as a new observation.

As analysts reviewed and organized the observations into the model they also determined whether an observation could indeed qualify as a recurring aspect of competence that merited inclusion. Analysts took two high level features into consideration when making decisions about whether or not an observation merited inclusion. First, they determined whether the specific examples pulled from the data did indeed have related elements. This was the case if the analysts upon reviewing and discussing the examples could agree that they pointed to the same phenomenon. Second, they established whether there appeared to be enough specific examples in the data to support a new item.

If an observation was deemed to represent a unique, recurring aspect of competence, analysts then considered the representativeness of the observation across the full sample. To do this they examined the sources of the examples. If a predominant proportion of the examples originated from a certain community the observation was supposed to characterize an aspect of competence unique to that community. For observations that were deemed unique, analysts collaboratively refined a description that precisely and succinctly identified the core nature of the competency element and identified examples that illustrated its essential attributes. Findings from the thematic analysis are described in the qualitative results section.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Quantitative Results

Quantitative analyses were conducted to address the following questions:

1. Are all 12 competencies used in critical cultural interactions?
2. Does each of the major communities apply the competencies?
3. Do some communities exhibit different competency profiles than others?

#### 4. Do some competencies support others?

##### 4.1.1. Are all 12 competencies used in critical cultural interactions?

The full set of competencies were positively indicated in the critical incidents of the sample as a whole. Also, some competencies appeared more often than others, suggesting they may play a more central role in culture-general competence.

Figure 2 shows the mean number of times each competency appeared per interview. Takes Perspective of Others was indicated most often, occurring 13 times per interview on average. Acts under Cultural Uncertainty and Plans Intercultural Communications appeared least often, occurring 1.73 and 1.86 times per interview, respectively. The 95% confidence intervals in Figure 2 show that each of the competencies appeared a statistically significant number of times. This provides confirmation that the set of competencies are relevant to the cultural interactions of the broad population addressed in this study.

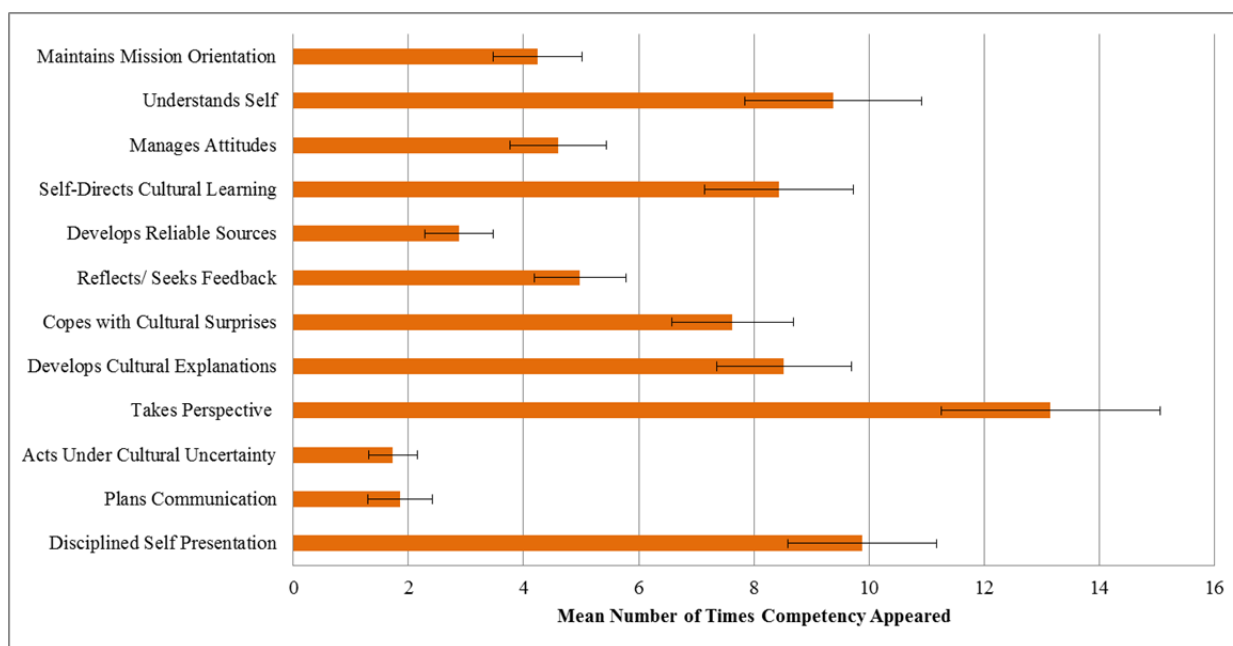


Figure 2. Frequency of each competency per interview. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

##### 4.1.2. Does each of the major communities apply the competencies?

Although the set of competencies were found in the incidents of the sample as a whole, it could be that a particular competency is substantially less present in some of the DoD communities than in others. Nevertheless, each of the 12 competencies are substantially present in each of the communities investigated. However, we did find some differences in the presence of competencies between communities.

Table 2 shows the extent to which the competencies are present for different communities represented in the sample. The top row provides the proportions of personnel for which the competency was identified. As can be seen, the competencies are pervasive across this diverse sample of seasoned professionals. Many of the competencies were identified in over 90% of the interviews. The competency appearing least was Plans Intercultural Communications, which was nonetheless identified in the majority (59%) of interviews.

The remaining rows of Table 2 show the competency proportions for key communities, illustrating potential demographic differences in competency presence. We used logistic regression to analyze differences between communities of participants, while controlling for background experience variables, including the number of countries visited, time spent overseas, extended language training, and whether participants were bicultural. For the most part, the competency proportions did not differ significantly from one another between communities. However, a few differences were found, as indicated by the asterisks in Table 2.

First, a group difference was found for the Manages Attitudes competency. Note that Manages Attitudes Towards Culture was revealed for the majority of participants in each community. However, it was indicated relatively less often among SOFs,  $\beta = -2.27$ ,  $z = -2.42$ ,  $p = .0155$ . Second, FAOs were most likely to exhibit the Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty competency,  $\beta = 3.15$ ,  $z = 2.67$ ,  $p = .0077$ , though it also was revealed for a substantial number of participants in each community. Finally, Plans Intercultural Communications was indicated more often among civilians and officers  $\beta = 2.76$ ,  $z = 2.11$ ,  $p = .0353$  and  $\beta = 1.19$ ,  $z = 2.01$ ,  $p = .0442$ , respectively. In contrast, enlisted personnel planned their communications least often, though the competency was still indicated for 38% of enlisted participants.

The group differences found could suggest that the types of intercultural encounters of some communities are less likely to demand a competency than those of other communities. Alternatively, they may suggest strategy differences between communities in competency application. We explore these possibilities further in a subsequent analysis. In any case, the group differences are overshadowed by the magnitude of competency expression for all communities. It seems clear overall that each of the major communities represented does apply all 12 of the competencies.

With respect to the background experience variables examined, Manages Attitudes Towards Culture was more often found among those who had visited a greater number of countries,  $\beta = 1.48$ ,  $z = 1.48$ ,  $p = .0372$ . In addition, participants with at least nine months of language training were more likely to express the Develops Reliable Information Sources competency,  $\beta = 1.56$ ,  $z = 2.11$ ,  $p = .0350$ . No other differences were found.

Table 2. *Proportion of Personnel for Which Competency Identified.*

<u>Sample</u>	<b>Diplomatic Mindset</b>			<b>Cultural Learning</b>		
	<u>Maintains Mission Orientation</u>	<u>Understands Self</u>	<u>Manages Attitude</u>	<u>Self-Directs Cultural Learning</u>	<u>Develops Reliable Sources</u>	<u>Reflects/ Seeks Feedback</u>
All Participants	0.91	0.97	0.85	0.99	0.73	0.93
Specialties						
FAO	0.89	1.00	0.83	1.00	0.72	0.94
INTEL	0.95	1.00	0.77	1.00	0.68	0.91
SOF	0.88	1.00	0.71*	1.00	0.76	1.00
Civilians	0.87	1.00	0.80	1.00	0.60	0.93
Services						
Army	0.94	0.94	0.77	1.00	0.81	0.97
Navy	0.84	1.00	0.84	0.95	0.79	0.84
Marine Corps	0.96	1.00	0.89	1.00	0.71	0.96
Air Force	0.94	0.94	0.94	1.00	0.56	0.88
Rank						
Officers	0.95	0.97	0.86	1.00	0.76	0.95
Enlisted	0.88	0.97	0.81	0.97	0.66	0.88
<u>Sample</u>	<b>Cultural Reasoning</b>			<b>Intercultural Interaction</b>		
	<u>Copes with Cultural Surprises</u>	<u>Develops Cultural Explanations</u>	<u>Takes Perspective</u>	<u>Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty</u>	<u>Plans Communication</u>	<u>Disciplined Self Presentation</u>
All Participants	0.95	0.96	0.98	0.63	0.59	0.99
Specialties						
FAO	0.89	1.00	1.00	0.94*	0.83	1.00
INTEL	0.86	0.95	1.00	0.77	0.68	1.00
SOF	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.59	0.47	1.00
Civilians	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.80	0.87*	1.00
Services						
Army	0.97	1.00	0.97	0.58	0.65	1.00
Navy	0.95	0.89	0.95	0.68	0.63	0.95
Marine Corps	0.93	0.93	1.00	0.61	0.57	1.00
Air Force	0.94	1.00	1.00	0.69	0.50	1.00
Rank						
Officers	0.95	0.98	1.00	0.69	0.69*	1.00
Enlisted	0.94	0.91	0.94	0.50	0.38	0.97

Note: Proportions are represented as fraction values between 0 and 1. \* Indicates a statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ).



#### 4.1.3. Do some communities exhibit different competency profiles than others?

As shown in the previous section, each of the competencies was indicated in most of the interviews. However, within interviews, particular competencies may appear more frequently relative to others. For example, the Takes Perspective of Others competency may recur more often in one of the specialist interviews than Manages Attitudes Towards Culture. The pattern could be reversed in a GPF interview. That is, specialists may have a somewhat different profile of competency expression than GPFs. And we found that they do.

We examined the prevalence of the competencies within each interview to address this question. Competency prevalence was analyzed using binomial regression. Binomial regression belongs to the class of generalized linear models, and is similar to logistic regression (McCullagh & Nelder, 1989). The primary difference is that logistic regression takes only two values as input, present or absent. Binomial regression takes as input the number of times the competency was indicated within the interview, as well as the total number of excerpts.

We used binomial regression to model potential differences in the distributions of competencies across two key population characteristics (a) Specialists vs. GPFs, and (b) Officer vs. Enlisted. For the purpose of this analysis, participants with FAO, Intelligence, and SOF status were considered specialists. Background experience variables, including number of countries visited, time overseas, extensive language training, and bicultural upbringing were included as covariates.

Among specialist communities, Takes Perspective of Others and Plans Intercultural Communications occurred relatively more frequently than in GPF interviews,  $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $z = 3.81$ ,  $p = .0001$  and  $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $z = 2.12$ ,  $p = .0341$ , while Manages Attitudes and Copes with Surprises were found less often,  $\beta = -0.31$ ,  $z = -2.89$ ,  $p = .0038$  and  $\beta = -0.27$ ,  $z = -3.14$ ,  $p = .0017$ . The remaining competencies were indicated at similar rates for these two communities. An additional finding was that Officers exhibited Maintains a Mission Orientation relatively more often, and indicated Develops Cultural Explanations of Behavior less often, as compared with Enlisted personnel,  $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $z = 3.81$ ,  $p = .0001$  and  $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $z = 2.12$ ,  $p = .0341$ ) (see Figure 3).

One interpretation of these results is that specialists tend to do a bit more upfront planning of their communications and engage in relatively greater levels of perspective taking. These processes result in greater avoidance of surprises and less need to explain surprising behavior or manage their attitudes. Officers may have the mission somewhat more at the front of their minds in these intercultural situations, given that a part of their job is keeping their people informed and oriented towards the mission.

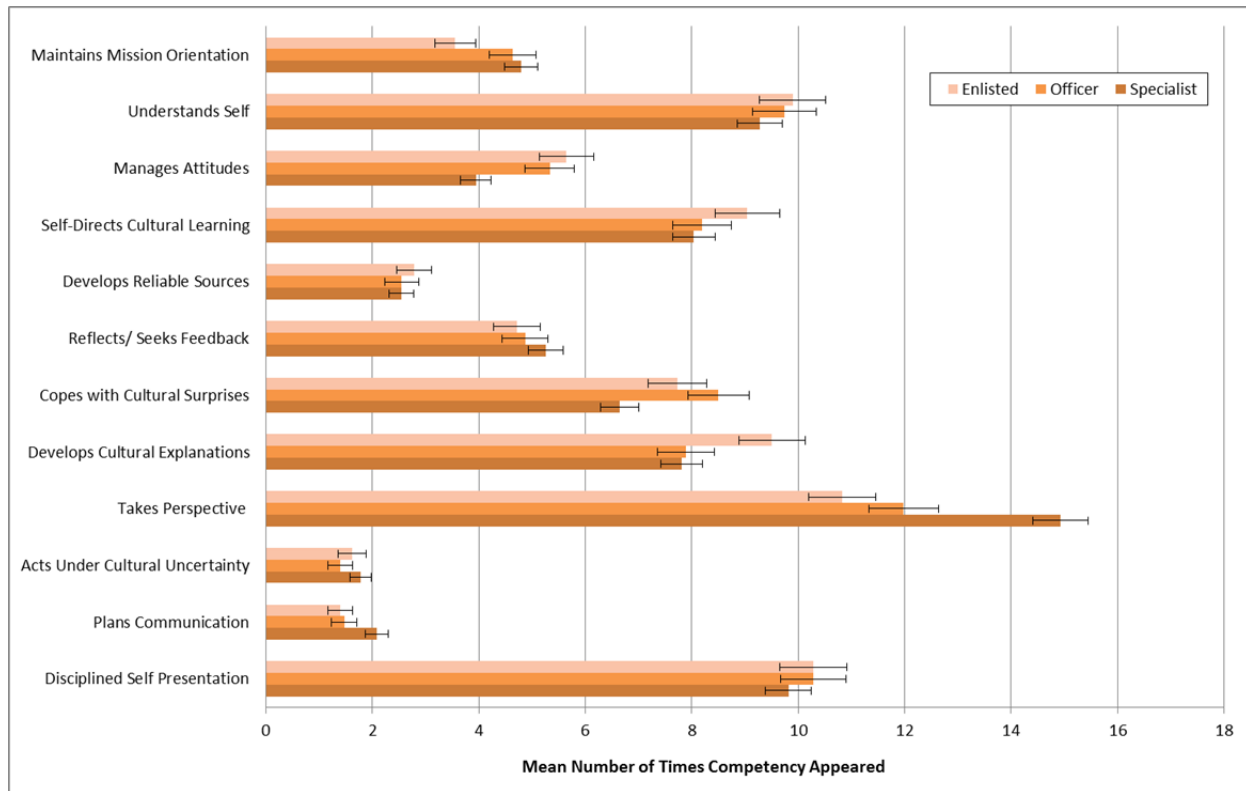


Figure 3. Competency profiles for major groups.

#### 4.1.4. Do some competencies support others?

How do competencies link together? The quantitative data suggest possible supporting relationships between some of the competencies.

Competency relationships were investigated by examining patterns of co-occurrence among excerpts. The key assumption of this approach is that competencies occurring near each other in an interview potentially indicate that there is a supporting relationship between the underlying cognitive processes.

Across the set of interviews, there were 3713 excerpts for which at least one competency was indicated. Of these, 1548 (42%) were single competency excerpts, whereas 58% of the excerpts contained multiple competencies.

The high percentage of excerpts with one competency indicates there is little overlap between the competencies assigned to individual excerpts. However, competencies in neighboring excerpts might also indicate direct support, such as Takes Perspective of Others in one excerpt of an interview followed by Plans Intercultural Communication in the next. We thus expanded the scope of competencies considered as *nearby*, using a sliding window of 3 excerpts as the basis for measuring competency presence.

We used likelihood ratios based on binomial distributions of competency presence to identify competencies that co-occurred within the data set beyond what would be expected by chance (cf. Dunning, 1993). Pairs of competencies with statistically significant relationships are present in Table 3, reverse sorted by the standard statistic for likelihood ratios: negative two times the log of the likelihood ratio ( $-2 \log \lambda$ ). Table 3 also shows the actual number of co-occurrences for each pair, along with the number of co-occurrences expected by chance under

the assumption that the two competencies are independent. Finally, odds ratios are presented as measures of effect size. The odds ratio is the ratio of the odds of one competency in the pair occurring when the other competency is present to the odds when the other is absent. An odds ratio of one means equal odds, 1.5 means the odds are 1.5 times greater when the other competency is present.

Table 3 shows 16 competency pairs that co-occurred significantly more than expected by chance. Potential relationships between these competencies are further discussed in the qualitative section.

Table 3. *Co-occurrence Relations Between Competencies.*

Competency Pair		Expected Co- occurrence	Observed Co- occurrence	-2 log $\lambda$	Odds Ratio
Copes with Surprises	Develops Explanations	731.4	930	184.32	2.55
Develops Explanations	Takes Perspective	1089.6	1264	152.74	2.43
Self-Directs Learning	Develops Sources	248.9	381	138.50	2.86
Self-Directs Learning	Acts under Uncertainty	154.7	249	104.81	3.06
Plans Communication	Disciplined Presentation	227.0	281	31.94	1.82
Understands Self	Takes Perspective	1144.9	1214	23.65	1.41
Takes Perspective	Disciplined Presentation	1207.3	1273	21.44	1.39
Acts under Uncertainty	Disciplined Presentation	207.3	245	16.76	1.57
Takes Perspective	Plans Communication	274.0	307	13.09	1.50
Understands Self	Acts under Uncertainty	196.5	223	8.12	1.36
Understands Self	Manages Attitudes	491.6	526	6.72	1.22
Self-Directs Learning	Reflects on Encounters	440.2	474	6.25	1.20
Maintains Mission Focus	Disciplined Presentation	483.2	513	5.30	1.20
Manages Attitudes	Reflects on Encounters	305.7	334	5.21	1.20
Reflects on Encounters	Acts under Uncertainty	122.2	141	4.62	1.28
Manages Attitudes	Takes Perspective	625.8	652	4.26	1.18

## 4.2. Qualitative Results

We conducted a qualitative analysis to address the following questions:

- Do personnel in some DoD roles enact competencies differently than others?
- Are there new core competencies that have not previously been identified?
- Are there new skill and knowledge elements within already identified competencies?

Analysts reviewed the data to identify potentially unique patterns of behavior, strategies for interacting, and ways of thinking that were not captured by ARC. We will first address observations about possible differences between participants. Next, we will address observations that related to general trends across the sample that informed changes to the model.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> We regret not being able to include in this report all the great insights and stories that personnel shared with us. The stories and quotes that are included were chosen because they most clearly illustrate various points related to culture-general competence.

#### **4.2.1. Do personnel in some DoD roles enact competencies differently than others?**

All the different types of participants we sampled applied the competencies in ARC. This indicates that the competencies in the model generalize to personnel with different backgrounds, types and extent of training, and job demands.

But, the participants did not all apply the competencies in the same ways. In addition to examining possible new competencies, a second objective for the qualitative analysis was to address possible differences in the ways competencies were expressed or applied by personnel serving in different roles.

Each analyst observed a number of differences among the participants in terms of the way they applied the competencies. We put all these observations together looking for themes, paying specific attention to their sources, that is, the roles, jobs, and backgrounds of the participants that motivated the observations. While doing so, we discovered that it was not possible to straightforwardly attribute patterns of differences to certain roles. For example, it was not possible to say that FAOs applied competencies in one way, and Intelligence professionals applied them in another.

Instead, we did observe that there was noteworthy variability in the way participants expressed competencies. One factor that seemed to stand out was the influence of language proficiency on competency enactment.

In the following section, we provide examples to illustrate some of the various ways participants enacted the competencies. We will first address general differences and then discuss specific differences in the ways competencies were applied by participants with and without foreign language proficiency. Additional research (outside the scope of this report) is needed to more definitely uncover the relationship between differences in competency enactment and participant factors such as training, experience, and task demands.

##### ***4.2.1.1. Different ways of enacting culture-general competence.***

In the following sections we will provide examples of ways each of the 12 competencies were enacted differently amongst our participants. These examples illustrate the breadth and depth of competency enactment demonstrated by participants across various roles and situations.

*4.2.1.1.1. Maintains a mission orientation.* When participants expressed the Mission Orientation competency, some demonstrated that they developed relationships with member of other cultures and that they recognized that these relationships could be helpful to the mission. See for example this experience from an Air Force Master Sergeant:

We talked about football – soccer versus Americanized football. You know, just some topics, just some friendly topics to discuss. But what I noticed is through that conversation and the rest of the mission those particular guys always came up to me, you know, trying to talk or, you know, very cooperative, very helpful. [5-Air Force-E8]

Participants sometimes made it clear that they understood how a relationship could support more specific aspects of mission accomplishment. In the following example, a Navy Intelligence Specialist demonstrates this. In this case, developing relationships with all the team's interpreters ensures that he can work more effectively with any one of them, should his own interpreter be unavailable.

We would always drink tea every night. The whole group; all the interpreters would meet in the interpreter shack and I would go in there with them all the time. Which is good, because I also had relationships with other interpreters in case I needed something when [my interpreter] was out; I could go in and grab somebody else and we would go to work. [52-Navy-Intel-E8]

Other participants further demonstrated that they understood that the purpose of building intercultural relationships was to achieve mission objectives, rather than to just make friends or do good. In the following example, a USMC FAO/Intelligence Specialist explicitly ties placing a well in a village to relationship building efforts. This participant goes further by sharing his mission orientation perspective with subordinate personnel.

The reason we did the project was not that I'm a humanitarian but because their village is at the end of the runway where we had a lot of US planes coming in and out. The reason we did this so they felt ok about seeing all these American planes coming in and out, and so they wouldn't want to bomb us. That's why they got a well. Not every village did—many didn't. This is a point that some of my officers had a hard time with—we are not doing good for the sake of doing good. There are charitable things that are in our interest. [31-USMC-FAO-Intel-O8]

Some participants used specific information they had picked up about the culture they were working in to assess risk as they were planning or executing their missions. For example, an NCIS agent recognized when a local protest had gotten out of hand because he knew that the protesters were behaving in a way that was highly uncommon among Japanese.

Japanese citizens, by in large, have respect for authority. And Japanese cops aren't pushovers. They train every day in either Judo or Kendo. So they are not averse to getting out and putting a thump on anybody. But this particular protestor, once he hit a guy that identified himself as a cop and hit him again? That is just really; and at that point, the crowd was at an emotional fever pitch. So that is just something that you don't see. The crime rates in Japan are way, way below that of the United States or Great Britain or most of Western Europe. And the reason that is, is that people don't care to commit crimes. Being an outlaw in Japan is not nearly as romanticized as it is here in the United States, culturally. The reason Japanese crime rates are so low is because the Japanese don't care to commit crimes. And they look down on those who do. So to find somebody, in this particular riot that would do something like that was really quite out of the ordinary. And the fact that the cops, for the most part, Ishigaki cops refused to uphold the law; refused to go in and remove the protestors was also quite out of the ordinary. [25-Civilian]

In this case, the interviewee recognized that the riot was about to escalate when the Japanese man hit a policeman on the head because he knew how Japanese in general view crime, display aggression, and behave within protests.

4.2.1.1.2. *Understands self if a cultural context.* When participants applied the Understands Self in a Cultural Context competency they often times demonstrated that they had

a basic understanding of elements of their own culture and used that as a baseline for understanding a new culture.

For example, a USMC Lieutenant Colonel used this strategy to make sense of the prostitution he saw in the Philippines.

In America, we associate prostitution with an outlaw lifestyle, usually driven by drug abuse, etc. But these girls were just trying to get along; they literally had no way to support themselves. [28-USMC-Intel-O5]

In other cases, participants took understanding self in a cultural context a step further by demonstrating that they were deliberately seeking information about how members of another culture saw them or how they viewed Americans. A USMC FAO demonstrated this in an incident where he was having trouble getting buy-in from local Panamanian military leadership for an assessment he was conducting. He sought out information about how the U.S. was viewed by the Panamanians and used this knowledge to guide mission related decisions regarding who to work with to increase the chances of mission success.

On my team, I had a guy that was literally there during the Panama invasion. So for him, it was like a trip down memory lane, but at the same time, he is telling me, yah, these are the Burroughs to use, this is what they used, this is where they stood off. I mean, he gave me a lot of perspective and background that I came to, in my report, that hey, this is still recent for some of them. You know, reality is, some of the guys who were maybe junior fighting the US invasion of Panama, are now their leadership. So when you recount what they know of the U.S., these guys came on and took over. And now they are in charge. So they are not jumping up and down to really, kind of work with the embassy. And so that is why I try to work or focus on guys outside of that era. [6-USMC-FAO-O4]

*4.2.1.1.3. Manages attitudes towards culture.* Participants provided a number of examples of instances where they managed their attitudes toward other cultures. These examples demonstrated the general understanding that personal attitudes, values, and preferences can get in the way of establishing critical intercultural relationships. They also demonstrated participants' attempts to maintain positive or neutral attitude towards specific members of a culture or cultural norms or values. For example:

I don't know how many houses I would be clearing and see pedophilia going on, out in the open. It's pretty rampant. My XO that I talked about, he had his own dancing boys. He called them his security detachment. You kind of have to turn off; I don't want to say turn off your moral compass, but you have to understand that you are not going to change that. That is something in their culture that they do. You don't have to sit there and watch it, but if you start lambasting or try to preach to them how wrong this is, you totally lose rapport and you are not going to get anything done. [57-Army-SOF-O4]

They would have forks and knives for the U.S. guys but I remember one time when I had an empty plate and that's a big mistake in the Arab culture. And one of the General's aides said would you like some more food, I said yes please some lamb. And just as I said that [I thought] 'Aw man I screwed up.' Because he

reached over with his hand and just grabbed a big chunk of lamb and rice and put it on my plate. Just one of the things, one of my quirks, I hated hands all in my food. [...] I tried it because they were making an effort for me. [93-Army-SOF-Civilian-O3]

In [Kyrgyzstan] when you have a big celebration they took a goat; and the most prized possession on the goat is the face. And since you were the dignitaries that were there, you would always get served the goat face; especially in the villages. [...] It just happened to be the two times during the celebrations that we had [goat face] I did not go to those two. But I did eat horse intestine stuffed with...I don't even know. Something very ungodly. It was very horrible. It was some kind of a fat congealed mish. [I had to suppress] the gag reflex. It was hard [but] I tried it. [44-Air Force-E8]

In other cases participants applied region-specific knowledge when confronted with behaviors or events that could be construed as offensive, disgusting, or upsetting. In these cases applying cultural knowledge appeared to help participants manage their attitudes. In the following example an Army Master Sergeant used his understanding of Pashtunwali to prevent himself from taking offense to what he might otherwise consider deception, or being lied to.

Yeah, it's one of the tenets, they have basically this code, the Pashtunwali code and within that it talks about how they're supposed to deal with the outsiders such as myself. You know their code of conduct when they do it. It's unique to Afghans and if you read it and look at it and then kind of use that as a gauge for some of their actions, for me it made me have a deeper appreciation. For some people, they did not, you know they just felt like their take might have been biased towards the Afghans who were just trying to do all they could do and, you know they didn't always keep their word. But, I found that when I couched it within that word and how they abided by that, I didn't find it as offensive like to me personally, like I don't like it. I found that that's their code, that's what they abide by and that's how they do that. And so, it was easier for me to accept it in that particular context. [85-Army-SOF-E8]

A number of participants described their realization that it is possible to intellectually understand aspects of another culture without agreeing with or supporting them. Having realized this appeared to help these participants keep their own attitudes in check allowing them to engage members of the culture. In the example below, a USMC Major General describes cultural practices that he does not necessarily agree with and makes a distinction between agreeing with practices versus understanding them in order to get the job done.

[In the Horn of Africa], much like there are wine snobs in other parts of the world, there will be 'Khat snobs.' People would offer me Khat. I'd say, no thanks, I'm not allowed to do that. Hope you have a good time. [But] being able to talk about all the different kinds of Khat, what makes some good or better than other Khat, etc. Asking them about it. People like to talk about themselves and their interests. So, I learned what I could about Khat, so I could talk about it with them. [...] There are a lot of times that I worked with people who supported things I didn't believe in, like female genital mutilation. You won't like a lot of these

things that you will see, but you have to stay focused on your mission. [31-USMC-FAO-Intel-O8]

*4.2.1.1.4. Self-directs own learning about cultures.* Across the sample, participants sought out opportunities to learn about the new cultures they found themselves in. These often involved using social events as opportunities to glean information about the culture.

So after I got there, I started to get immersed in it. You go out to the pub with them, and you learn about their cultural background, their history. And the structure of the exchange is also to get you to understand their culture, too. [53-Navy-O6]

Some participants were targeted in the things they wanted to learn. For example, a FAO who had a deep background in Indonesian culture and language described his structured approach to learning Italian.

I set up a butcher block or a white board, and I said, ok, this is my ‘Italian word of the day board’ and every day I would ask my friends across the hall to give me a new Italian expression or an Italian verb or something, and then I would write it down, and they would conjugate it for me, and like I said, they were all tickled pink that I was taking it seriously. But one of them went home for vacation and came back and gave me an Italian book as a gift. So I did have an English to Italian dictionary to look up a bunch of stuff, but I used all my peers and counterparts as impromptu teachers. They jumped on it with gusto. They absolutely looked forward to coming over and teaching me some new expression or new word. [3-FAO-USMC-O4]

In addition, some participants honed in on specific topics they knew were useful to learn about and scoped their learning of those topics. This means they decided what they did and did not need to learn which allowed them to be very efficient in their learning. For example, a USMC Intelligence Specialist learned the Iraqi phrase “what’s up? where are the terrorists?” as a way to lightheartedly interact with the population on foot patrols. This also served as a way to take the temperature of the local street population and gather information on potential threats.

For the serious conversations I used an interpreter. But when I was out on my own, a kind of fun thing you say is slang. It’s like ‘What’s up?’ It’s called Shaku Maku. So a white guy walking down the street with a whole bunch of Iraqis and this white guy is going ‘Shaku Maku?’ And everybody would be laughing. But at the same point, everybody is like, oh, that guy is looking for bad guys, hmm. ‘Shaku Maku, Wahid Irhabi?’ They would all giggle, but every once in a while, somebody would look left, look right and say, “Um, come with me.” And they would tell me little secrets about where the bad guys were. [...] You could also be able to identify those that wouldn’t smile at you or wouldn’t laugh. And then you could be like, ‘Huh, what is his issue?’ Did someone, did we do something to his family or whatever. So I would ask the patrol leader, ‘Who is the guy over there with the serious face? What is his story?’ And then I would figure out who I needed to work on. [10-USMC-Intel-O5]



In another example, a USMC FAO and Intelligence Specialist short on preparation time deliberately directed his studies towards reading just one book that could help him understand how Somalis think. This example also illustrates how targeted cultural learning can support solving specific problems. In this case, understanding the Somali world view helped the participant address the problem of generating policy for compensating wrongful deaths.

In Mogadishu, I was discussing an issue with a lawyer. His problem was how to come up with US policy for wrongful death of a Somali, such as if a local gets hit by a military truck, what we do. The lawyer was proposing to offer about \$100k for wrongful death, based on his thinking from US. My reaction, you can get people killed here for a couple of packs of cigarettes. Given where these folks were and the amount of money that would mean in that area, I could see people jumping in front of trucks in order to collect that kind of sum for their families. I said I thought it was over the top. He said, what should we do? From the book I had read, I learned that there had been a tradition of offering about 100 camels as “blood price,” to handle wrongful death between tribes. That was for a male. 50 camels for a female. Now, the US military was not going to get in the business of handling a bunch of camels. But, we could use that as a guide. We went out to several camel dealers in the city – these are just like car dealers back in the states. From that, we were able to price out 100 camels as going for about \$10,000 for a male. \$5,000 or a female. So, we considered policy for the US to pay \$10k for a man and \$5k for a woman in the event of wrongful death. We checked that with the locals, and explained the rationale every time we handed it out, this is about the cost of 100 camels. It was a culturally appropriate solution that satisfied the Somalis. [31-USMC-FAO-Intel-O8]

Some participants who worked in high-risk environments expressed the idea that it was necessary to manage a trade-off between learning about the culture and keeping themselves and others safe. As one USMC Intelligence Specialist with extensive combat deployments under his belt told us “you can learn about culture when you’re not getting shot at.”

For many, this meant having to get creative. A Navy SOF Commander described how he ensured that both he and his subordinates studied up on the local culture in their limited downtime. One of his ploys was to have copies of Ethiopian fables placed in the bathrooms. This apparently made for such compelling reading material that encouraging discussion about the stories was not even necessary.

[They were] awesome. The guys loved them. And it was, I mean it is like seventy pages, very small, very small book. And I told them to put them in the bathroom. You can read one in the morning, one in the evening and you’re done. And they did. And then they would talk about them. Because it was written, and they were fun. It was like ‘oh my god did you read the one about the little girl?’ and like ‘Yeah that was great!’ ‘No, I haven’t read that one. Don’t, don’t, don’t talk about it yet.’ [66-Navy-SOF-O5]

Participants demonstrated a variety of different sources of motivation for learning about culture. For many of the regionally-focused participants genuine, personal interest in specific regions and in finding out about new regions appeared to drive their continuing cultural learning.

This genuine interest was often expressed in their careful, detailed analyses of people, places, and human dynamics as in this example from an Army SOF Major and Olmsted Scholar.

The commander was Chinese, educated at Sandhurst in the UK. And the Malaysian Army is very much—it emulated the British Army. Or at least the British Army of seven years ago. So, the traditions and the kind of habits and the kind of nuances about them are very British. The interesting thing about him is that he’s a Chinese-Malaysian. I’ll tell you a little bit about what that means at the right time I suppose but, that was important we found out later, because the Chinese can only command up to a certain level and they’re only going to get mixed—all of his staff were Malay, which is a different race and so there’s a very interesting dynamic there. [75-Army-SOF-O4]

Some viewed working abroad as an opportunity to broaden their horizons. They saw learning about a new culture and language as a necessary step to ensure that they got the most out of their experiences.

If I didn’t humble myself and learn parts of the language, the minimum, then there was a great part I was going to miss out on. [4-USMC-E9]

For many others, motivation for learning about culture came from gaining the ability to ‘do something.’ For some, motivation to learn came from a general personal desire to make a difference.

I think at the heart of the motivation it was bad things were happening to good people. [10-USMC-Intel-O5]

For others, it was the more specific realization that understanding the culture can help meet mission objectives.

When I was interacting with the people, I got to see how the people can change the environment, and how that benefitted us. That was where I thought, it is probably time for us to take a step back and look at their culture, and identify their problems and needs, and help them with it. [24-USMC-Intel-E6]

Many expressed the notion that meeting mission objectives hinged on their ability to develop rapport and relationships with people from other cultures. Their motivation for learning about culture was therefore grounded in a desire to have a place to start when they were meeting new people. They appeared to think of their cultural knowledge as a basis for developing rapport and relationships.

Learn colloquial things, like in Iraqi, there is something completely unique to Iraq. They say ‘How is your color?’ And it’s completely Iraqi, and so if you learn that, it proves to them that you have done at least something to make yourself, to endear you to them. Maybe endear is too hard. It gleans a little bit of respect, because you have done at least that little piece of homework, you know? [11-Army-Intel-E7]

Interestingly participants appeared to be more motivated to learn about some new cultures than others. FAOs and participants in other regionally-focused roles seemed to have more intrinsic interest in cultures that fell within their focus areas, or are at least ones that allowed them to use their language skills. Others had personal ties to and therefore natural interests in some cultures and less interest in others. Importantly, all personnel at some point or another worked in cultures they had never thought they would be learning about before being sent there. The FAO we quoted in the introduction is an example of someone who has been trained for one region and ends up working for a long time in a number of other regions. In other communities, like Special Operations Forces, personnel worked all over the world as a matter of course. See for example this reply from a Navy Special Operations Captain when we asked him for an overview of his overseas experiences.

Out of my 30 years I probably have about 15 years of deployments overseas. In fact, I counted and I've been to about 50 countries. I spent three years in Germany. My next experience overseas, I went to Korea for the first time, and have about a year there. After that I did a number of deployments. I went to Guam, but from there we deployed to Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Korea again, and Indonesia. In [year] I was stationed in Guam for two years. From Guam I travelled to Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore, Japan. Then I came back and deployed again to Greece, Djibouti, and a bunch of times in Kuwait. Then we moved to Italy [and lived there for 10 years]. Then from there I was stationed in Spain [for three years]. When I was in Italy and Spain I travelled throughout Europe to France and Germany, Czech Republic, Greece again, Malta, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Albania, and the UK. After that I went to another command and spent [three or four years] in the Middle East. Predominantly in Qatar, a little bit of time in Afghanistan, a lot of time in Iraq, and Pakistan. Also went to Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait again. After that I lived in Bahrain for a year. From there I spent a lot of time in Iraq, and some time in Pakistan. There was a time in that 39 month stretch where I was [in Pakistan] 20 times a month. [Most recently] I spent a little time in Afghanistan and Europe. [74-Navy-SOF-O6]

*4.2.1.1.5. Develops reliable information sources.* Participants provided many examples of instances where they sought out people or other sources that could provide them with information about a new culture. For example, one participant was given a gift by his Japanese neighbors. He was not certain what the appropriate response was, so he asked his Japanese landlord for advice.

I asked my landlord. I went down and said, "Hey, our neighbors across the street gave us a gift. I didn't respond right away." He said, "Yeah, that was good, they were just welcoming you." I said "OK, because in the Philippines, you respond back. How is it here?" So he said, "It's up to you." So [my wife and I] thought, well, we'll give them something American. [15-Navy-E8]

In other cases, participants questioned the accuracy of the information they were getting. And, they understood that general information would not necessarily apply to a specific area or region they were going to.

I actually got onto the CIA website and they said they speak this much of one language and 65% Kyrgyz, 19% Russian. And I was like huh, not where I was. So I was like, where are you getting this information? Now I have to speculate the next time I look somewhere up and they say they speak whatever, 80% Spanish when I go down to South America, and that could turn out not to be true. I am going to have to second guess. Well, that is true in the country, but not necessarily in the area you are going. [44-Air Force-E8]

When participants evaluated the quality of information they were getting, they sometimes took what they knew about the source into account. The example below from an Army SOF Lieutenant Colonel illustrates how he took what he knew about his source's personal background and familiarity with the local environment into account as he was determining how much to trust the information the source provided.

There was that one guy I mentioned to you at the embassy, who was US born and raised in Greece, spoke the language, was a local, you know. He was critical in bridging the gap at times. [...] Well, he would tell me how things are perceived there, you know, this relationship with the police in charge. It's their backyard, they have to know everything that is going on, and the nuances of how those guys operate, how they thought, and how they reacted to the stress that was on them. So he was key. [...] Throughout the year he provided a lot of valuable advice and expertise. [7-SOF-Army-O5]

*4.2.1.1.6. Reflects and seeks feedback on intercultural encounters.* All the participants demonstrated the ability to seek feedback about and learn from their experiences. Even in situations where they had little prior experience or knowledge about a culture. An Army Officer recounted the following experience from one of his first assignments in the Middle East:

I remember seeing, particularly on [Iraqi General] kind of a look of shock that I would even talk about that. And I would ask my interpreter. The look of 'man, I can't believe you are talking about that.' So I would ask my interpreter on the way back 'did I do something wrong?' And he said 'no, you are doing everything right. And you need to continue. It's just that Arabs don't like to hear bad news.' [93-Army-SOF-Civilian-O3]

Some participants compared different cultural experiences and identified generalities and differences between groups. The Army Staff Sergeant who provided the example below had spent close to a decade in Korea and Japan, and was married to a Korean.

I found differences between the Koreans and Okinawans. [...] The main difference that I see at least here in Okinawa, I haven't spent a whole lot of time on mainland Japan, they never ever, ever are in a rush for anything. And that doesn't mean they are lazy or they drag their feet, [...] they are just not always in a rush to get to where they are going, they take their time. I can almost equate it to – because I was in Hawaii for three years, and it kind of is the blanket generic term that they say over there is you know the, what do they say? The Aloha spirit, you know, it's just a laid back type atmosphere. Whereas in Korea everybody's always in a hurry, you know trying to get places quickly as they can get there you

know. Kind of the impatient type attitude to your daily commutes or travels. But that doesn't exist [in Okinawa] at all. [87-Army-E6]

In some cases participants used specific information they had about a culture to help them reflect on and learn from experiences. For example, after a meeting with Japanese counterparts, a group of American NCIS agents rehashed the interaction amongst themselves. They understood the Japanese to be detail oriented people. They became nervous when they noticed a lack of a planning on the part of the Japanese for how they were going to handle protests in the area. But, they did not challenge the Japanese on the issue in the meeting. In this case they used understanding of the culture to analyze the event and their own actions afterwards.

We all discussed it once the meeting was over. I said I was real concerned because it didn't sound like they had a real plan at all here. And we discussed that amongst ourselves, and we came to the agreement that it was not a good sign. But [also agreed that] if we had called them to task on that right then and there in the meeting, it would have caused them to lose a lot of face, and we probably would have lost even more support than we already did. [25-Civilian]

*4.2.1.1.7. Copes with cultural surprises.* All participants noticed something about the new cultures they worked in that was unexpected or surprising. Sometimes they followed up to try to understand the situation better, other times they merely noted that something was different.

In the example below an Air Force Master Sergeant noticed that the color red appeared to have special significance in Korea and noted it as special.

We couldn't say Code Red over the loud speaker because red in Korean is special; it is of significance to them. So it was code blue. Red is like a sacred color to them; I don't know. I know that from the sporting events; all they wear is red. 'Be the red' is their motto when the Korean team plays world cup and stuff. They were all about red and red is everywhere, and it is very predominant and all their flags have red. [49-Air Force-E8]

In other cases, participants noticed behavior or events that violated expectations, and started to make sense of these experiences by generating hypotheses about what might be going on in the situation. In another example, a Navy Intelligence Specialist thought of possible interpretations of what Italians were doing in a local post office. Were they waiting in line, or were they taking care of other business? However, he did not try to figure out what was really going on.

I remember one incident where [my wife and I] had to go— it was something we had to do with the Italian post. Their post office is, I mean it looks somewhat like ours. You go in and there is like three postal workers up there you wait in what looks like a line and we thought was a line. So I'm standing there and I'm filling out something else. She is just standing there waiting to walk up to the postal worker and all of a sudden two Italians walk in and they walk right in front of her up to the person at the front, and she just starts yelling at them. I mean not screaming, but she raised her voice like there is a line you need to go to the back of the line. The two Italians looked at her like she just stepped off of a trip from Mars or something and they just went ahead and walked up there and the postal

worker helped them. Oh yeah and she was livid. [...] There might have been another reason why they were standing there or maybe we could have just walked up to the postal worker, I don't know. It was kind of like a line and as soon as we got up to where we would have been if we were standing behind them they went up to the person to help them. [...] We just stood there because we saw the person standing there and in hindsight you know what it might not even have been a line. Maybe the person was just standing there because they had to fill something out or whatever. [97-Navy-Intel-E6]

In other cases participants also asked questions or otherwise sought information that could help improve their understanding when faced with a surprise. The following example is from a USMC Lieutenant Colonel who described his first day in Iraq. The team his unit was replacing introduced him to his Iraqi counterparts.

I recall this first staff meeting distinctly, because although they were friendly faces on that Iraqi staff. Except the deputy, Colonel [Iraqi Colonel] who sat the entire time with his arms crossed a frown on his face and would not give me eye contact at all. It was quite clear by body language and attitude that he despised the fact that we were there. And I recall telling my counterpart predecessor, the Marine Lieutenant Colonel I was replacing; 'ok what is the problem with [Iraqi Colonel]?' And he said, 'He just hates Americans.' And he left it at that.

Over the course of the next few days, my deputy, a Marine Corps Major and I, realized what exactly had happened, and why [Iraqi Colonel] was not happy. What happened was we had the brigade at that point. The brigade was going through basic training, having formed and given their soldiers for a training package before they were set to be used in their counterinsurgency fight.

[Iraqi Colonel] served in the Iraqi Army before this time. He had served five years in the Iranian-Iraq war, on the front lines as a Lieutenant. He had parachuted into Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. He had been shot twice there with US Army 5.56 mm rifle, and he had fought in Operation Iraqi Freedom. So the man had extensive and complete infantry experience to include parachute operations.

As I mentioned, the brigade was going through their basic training; that meant most of the Iraqis were being given classes on operation and maintenance of the AK-47 rifle. [Iraqi Colonel] had said, 'I have got to do other work; I don't need to sit in this class for the AK-47.' My predecessor essentially told him, and I am going to use coarse language here; please excuse me. Was told to sit down and shut the F up and go to class. Well, I think the man with 5 years of experience in the Iran-Iraq war, combat operations in Kuwait and in OIF; he knows a little bit something about the AK-47. And if I was sitting in his seat, and I had some punk from another nation, who didn't have even have close to the combat experience had told me to sit down and shut the F up; I would have probably despised anyone wearing that uniform as well. We finally realized what happened. It took the better part of about three weeks to show [Iraqi Colonel] that we were there to

assist him, and be part of the solution, not there to disparage and insult him. [41-USMC-SOF-O5]

In some cases participants had specific knowledge about the culture they were working in and therefore noticed behaviors or events that were surprising because of the context in which they were occurring. One example came from a retired USMC Colonel who had a great deal of experience working with Albanians and was still working in that part of the world at the time of the interview. The Colonel recalled an experience when he was working with the Albanian government and military leadership to work out a vision for the country's future air defense systems. Part of this vision included a significant downsizing of systems that had been in place since WWII and the dismissal of personnel whom it would not be feasible to retrain. The Colonel had met a number of times with a General who was very proud of the existing Albanian Air Force and was having a hard time accepting the Colonel's arguments for changes. However, the Colonel knew that the General recognized the need for change when he detected an atypical tone in his voice.

Albanians, when they are having a discussion, have a tendency to increase in volume. [...] It's a cultural thing; they talk over each other. They do raise their voices, and they articulate with both gestures and verbally like Italians do; there is a lot of gesturing and a lot of drama. And we were having a very, very quiet person to person, friend to friend discussion. And he never raised his voice. And if you are trying to convince somebody here, you have to raise your voice. And he never did that; not the entire time we were talking. And that was a clear indication of the fact that he didn't really know how to counter my arguments. There was no counter. [32-USMC-Civilian-O6]

*4.2.1.1.8. Develops cultural explanations of behavior.* Participants constructed explanations that attributed cultural behavior they observed to a cultural fact or dimension they were aware of. Explanations of this kind generally would take the following general form *members of the culture do X because of cultural attribute Y*, as in this example from an Air Force Master Sergeant in Korea.

When he is in front of people that matter, he is a very different person, and he behaves differently. I don't know if that is a cultural thing, again, where in the Asian culture the male elderly people are more, they demand respect. Like 'you respect your elders' kind of thing. [49-Air Force-E8]

Some participants generated explanations that contained a number of cultural concepts as well as information about a region's history. These explanations tended to be 'deeper' in the sense that they identified the relationships between aspects of the culture, history, and pointed to multiple causal reasons for the ways people behaved and the ways they viewed the world. The example below illustrates all the above attributes of deep explanations. The example comes from a USMC Lieutenant Colonel and Intelligence Specialist who was only a few days into his first assignment in Liberia. He was visiting a rebel compound deep into rebel held territory in order to gather intelligence about the leadership and he and a fellow Marine found themselves surrounded by armed child soldiers.

Someone had gone upstairs to get the ‘General’ when we arrived. We stood back to back and we were literally surrounded in this compound. There must have been 300 of them. And this kid, he was probably 13 or 14 with an AK47 bayonet strapped to his bandoleers. He walked up to me and looked me right in the face. His eyes were glazed over and yellow. He looked at me and looked at all my gear and said ‘superpower.’ He said it twice. Then he pulled out his bayonet and said, ‘I am going to cut out your heart and eat it, so I can absorb all of your abilities.’

The Marine explained the child soldier’s actions in the following way:

I think that he was trying to; you have to remember, a lot of these child soldiers had fought battles against the government of Liberia. It had been ongoing for weeks and weeks and weeks. A lot of these kids had seen more combat than many Marines that I served with in my career. So they were battle hardened in a lot of ways. And in a lot of ways, too, they didn’t; you have to understand, especially in West Africa, life is so cheap. It really is; it’s just cheap. There is no real commodity in life; it is only about what you can get from another person a lot of times. So for these kids, I think whether they lived or died; I mean, they didn’t want to die, but they accepted. They all had a fatalistic attitude that even if they lived through this, they aren’t going to make it very much longer; so what can I get in this time that I am here.

And I think this one kid was trying to project amongst his peers that he was tough. Here is the baddest guy in the room, here is an American, I am going to go cut this guy’s heart out and then everyone will respect me. There is a lot of stock placed in that thing there. You know, who is the toughest, who is the meanest, who is the most sadistic. [...] They believe in animism which explained his belief that by eating my heart would transfer those abilities. [...] One of the rebel ‘Generals’ used to dissect a heart from a live infant before a big battle and share it with his commanders. They believed eating the heart of an infant would transfer innocence for the heinous acts they were about to commit. [20-USMC-Intel-O5]

The Marine handled the situation by raising his weapon only slightly demonstrating to the rebel that he had power. Using a subtle motion decreased the likelihood that it was visible to the surrounding rebels. This gave the rebel the opportunity to back off, which he did, while still projecting that he was in control, thus saving face.

*4.2.1.1.9. Takes perspective of others in intercultural interactions.* All the participants considered the thoughts, desires, motivations, feelings, and personal histories of cultural others they were interacting with. In some cases participants would express that they were aware of or took into account a cultural other’s point of view or what they wanted in a situation.

For example, a Navy Hospital Corpsman who was working with an Afghan medical unit, advising them on the supply processes. He had worked with an Afghan Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) to create an inventory of the contents of a supply warehouse. When he suggested creating a computer database to make it easier to keep track of supplies to the NCO’s superior, he ran into opposition.



[We] explained that it would make things a lot easier. But he didn't see it that way. He thought it was needless work, was what he thought it was. [And it] involved a lot of man hours and would take people away from filling their daily order for the different Battalions that they have there. It was like the central supply for the whole Corps. [98-Navy-E6]

A Marine Corps Corporal recalled a very different experience in Afghanistan in which he considered the motivations of the Afghan he was interacting with. The Afghan had driven by a U.S. military installation and had fired shots at the Marines standing guard. The Corporal and his team pursued the Afghan to a local village where they finally located him after an intensive search.

We ended up finding the guy in the closet inside of the school. [...] Our adrenaline [was so high] and we thought you know, 'We're going to get into a gun fight with this guy.' I was angry because I understood he was trying to shoot one of our guys. But, it was funny because once we pulled him out of the closet, just the look on his face you could tell that he never had any intention of trying to hurt us. He wasn't crying, but he looked like he was getting ready to cry. It's like when your kid knows he did something wrong and he thinks he's in big trouble. It was kind of like that look. It was weird. Initially I had no idea. Once I kind of got a grasp on the situation I thought that, you know, there are a lot of situations where a child can get seriously hurt or killed in the midst of a gun fight or something like that. I'm a parent myself and I don't know how I would be. I didn't know if he had somebody that he lost or that an American took from him and he was just not in his mind, and he was just vengeful. It was as though he was terrified, you know. [88-USMC-E4]

The Corporal later learned that the Afghan had done the shooting because his family had been threatened by insurgents. Another example comes from an Army Colonel who considered the perspective of her Korean counterparts in a negotiation about how logistical supplies were going to be transported throughout the Korean Peninsula for an upcoming joint training exercise.

Americans [would] get frustrated then say, 'Well, it doesn't matter anyway. We're just going to bring our trucks in and we're just going to put them on the road and drive the stuff around.' And you look at them and you have to very diplomatically remind them that this is not America, that they're in Korea, it is their country, and we just don't have free will to come in and, you know take over their road network. [I explained] that the way it works is a little bit different and the Koreans will give us our convoy numbers and our selected time to be on the road, because they've got their own Korean convoys that are going to need to be on the road. [...] The Koreans, you know, from their view is, 'Well, this is our country, we just don't want you on the road.' [54-Army-O6]

In some cases, when participants had insight into the other culture or the specific background of the person they were interacting with they used this knowledge to inform or elaborate their interpretation of the other person's perspective. As an example, an Army Major General was leading a project in Afghanistan to convert all the private security companies to a state run enterprise called the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF). He quickly discovered

that the Afghan companies who would be contracting with the APPF were not keen on the contracting system that was initially proposed. He struggled to understand their perspective until he remembered how contracting in general often worked in Afghanistan. Surgery.col@medvetforpets.com

We had developed a model to try to facilitate it by saying, if I am a company that needs some type of security force, I won't hire my own security force, per se. What I will do is hire an advisor. He has worked security all his life; he can come in and be a principal advisor on security. Then I will ask him to go to the APPF and deal with the government and draw up the contract.

They would not accept that model. They said, 'No, what you are going to do is take advantage of us. We need the principal owner of the company, or the company itself to come in and do all the negotiations and draw up the contracts. We can't let any third parties do the negotiations.' I just couldn't fathom it. I tried to place myself in their position, but I couldn't figure it out. How do you tell?

I think it was the way in which the staff had put together visual PowerPoint presentations, to try to explain what the concept was. It began to dawn on me that the way in which we put relational diagrams, like a triangle and a circle representing the security advisor and a company, and a square being for the APPF or state owned enterprise. [...] They had begun to see the concept sketch; if it showed three entities, then those were all three separate and distinct. They were not inclusive. They began to see those as not a part of the company. I think they thought they were separate entities that could at some point to something that they couldn't control. [...]

It dawned on me; they [were thinking of them as subcontractors] and they don't like subcontractors. [...] there had been so much flipping of contracts in Afghanistan. Someone would come in with money, they hire a contract. That person would skim money off the top, and sell that contract to someone else. And so by the time it got down to the person that was left with the contract, they didn't have enough money to fulfill the job to standard. And then kind of the light went on. And so I kind of said okay, we will work something else out. [92-Army-O8]

*4.2.1.1.10. Acts under cultural uncertainty.* The Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty competency is fundamentally about the ability to use the cultural information one has, even if it is limited, as a basis for acting and interacting. Participants demonstrated this competency when they indicated that they understood that that any attempts to address cultural norms, to learn or speak the language, etc., would generally be seen as positive. They also demonstrated this competency when they were able to take action, or interact with cultural others and make connections with them, even if they knew very little about them.

For example, a South America trained Navy FAO who had just arrived in Angola started to make connections with the head of the Angolan Army by talking about soccer.

I had only been in country for about 3 weeks at that point. So not knowing, not having any background in what he would be interested in or anything like that. Trying to come up with something common that I could talk about. Luckily, the

world cup was going on, because I wouldn't have had anything else to talk about if it wasn't for that. [55-Navy-FAO-O4]

Some participants identified a set of specific cultural facts that they would use again and again to make connections. In those cases they were using these relatively limited pieces of information about aspects of a region's culture or history to help them interact. For example, the USMC Major General in the example below used the same historically significant greetings every time he met Danes and Turks respectively.

Every time I get a Dane that came to my international fellows program, or a met a Dane when were in group and we were working together, the first thing that I always said [Norwegian greeting] because that is what King Haakon would always address the Norwegians when he came from Denmark and became the King of Norway. And you get a laugh and a chuckle out of that. [...] And then in Turkey, I would do the same thing, come to attention and say [Turkish greeting] or teach them things about Atatürk they didn't know. Everywhere, that is the social cultural hook that I always look for to help any foreigner that I am dealing with. When they are with me automatically goes, this isn't your typical American. And to me, that is absolutely important. [43-Army-FAO-O6]

Another example comes from a civilian participant who worked extensively in the Asia Pacific region. He had a memorable experience early in his career through which he discovered the power of participating in a local custom—eating fish heads. When he discovered the extensive goodwill and respect participating in this custom helped him earn, he made it a point to demonstrate not only his willingness to eat fish heads, but that he actually enjoyed it.

We were at a dinner one night for this Aikido society. And one of the policemen there sat down and I was having a beer with the guy, and we are talking, and he understood that I was new to Japan. His English wasn't that good, but my Japanese wasn't that good either, so we communicated with a little bit of help from our friends. He sat me down, and they had these wonderful fried fish, where they would fry the entire thing; head, eyeballs, tail and everything. And he sat me down, and he gave me an instruction on how to field strip a fish head with a pair of chopsticks, and get every little bit of meat out of that fish head that was possible. [...]

About a year or two later, I am in Thailand and me and some colleagues of mine in the Army and the Marines were given a feast by the Thais, where they had fried fish. And there was a pile of fish heads. So I asked for those fish heads to be passed down, and I started field stripping those fish heads. (laughter) And funny thing, I got a lot of respect instantly from the Thai military officers that were hosting us; 'Hah, that guy knows how to eat a fish!' But at any of the meals that we were ever hosted by our host national colleagues, I made a point to indulge myself with the fish heads, if they were available. And it was always a good ice breaker. It was always a good sign of respect to them. [25-Civilian]

*4.2.1.1.11. Plans intercultural communications.* Participants demonstrated that they were thinking about upcoming intercultural communications in advance. Sometimes thinking ahead

was merely expressed as awareness that communication consists of many dimensions including words, body language, posture, dress, social context, and actions. Other times participants demonstrated that they were thinking about the general impressions they wanted to make on others.

I figured out the first week or two. If I am going to have any effectiveness here, I am going to have to figure out how to be humble enough and ingratiating enough to be heard, but not so much to be a complete doormat, and to be just disregarded as a toady of what their vision of Americans were. So I am going to have to figure out how to deflect their criticism, and their cultural expectations of an Arrogant Yank, and also try to bring enough goodness to the table, and enough strategic connectivity that I did possess from my submarine network. [53-Navy-O6]

In some instances participants also used information about the culture to plan and adjust upcoming critical communications. For example, a Navy Intelligence Specialist used his understanding of how important daily prayer time was for a Taliban commander to adjust his approach for developing rapport with him.

We had a Taliban commander who was in charge of logistics for the whole eastern side of Afghanistan. It went on for like two weeks that he is still sticking with his cover story, sticking with the name he originally came in with; even though we knew exactly who he was. He was sticking with it; he was not budging. But through watching him during the off time, you know that he is a very, very religious guy. Praying continuously, all the time. So during a session, right before the session I told the primary interrogator I am going to walk in and give the commander a prayer rug. He said 'what the hell, we'll try it.' I walked in, knocked on the door, and I just handed it to him. And the look on this guy's face was amazing. Just absolute joy that he had a prayer rug. And after that, it was a total flip. Boom. This guy gave everything but the kitchen sink. Absolutely astounding. [52-Navy-Intel-E8]

Another example came from a female Army FAO who was teaching English to Jordanian military officers and was herself taking Arab language classes as part of a defense attaché exchange program. She used her understanding of views of women in the Middle East to decide how she was going to dress and to figure out how she was going to interact with and earn the respect of her students and fellow instructors.

Ok, so I am going to be in a room with all men. They are all Muslims, and they are from different areas, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and some other countries. My instructors are Arab men. I am on a base with all Arab men. How am I going to survive? How am I going to present myself? Am I going to wear short sleeve t-shirts? No. Can I show my hair? Probably not. So I need them to respect me as a person. But how do I do that, because first, I am a woman. So I had to de-womanize myself, I guess. By covering up, so I don't look different than what they are accustomed to see. They are accustomed to seeing a woman covered up, so I will look like a woman that is covered up for them. So already, I have knocked down one obstacle. Then what is next? I make sure I don't flirt or be

super friendly to one person. That if I am friendly I address you all as one entity, so there is no question, because you know, they will see. [17-Army-FAO-O4]

*4.2.1.1.12. Engages in disciplined self-presentation.* Participants demonstrated that they understood the general notion that the way they presented themselves could influence the outcomes of intercultural interactions. They also at times demonstrated that they could be deliberate about how they presented themselves in order to make a certain impression.

You know, if an American and Afghans were having a meeting only the Americans were taking notes. So I kind of decided that, you know, I will take my notes the moment I walk out of that door because I don't want him to think that I'm not paying complete attention to him. [51-Army-SOF-O6]

In other cases participants used specific information about the culture to figure out effective ways to achieve intended effects on their audiences. In one such example, an Army FAO had come upon a scene in Burma where Burmese authorities were shooting at local protesters. The FAO soon realized that there was a U.S. diplomat caught in the crossfire. He then took it upon himself to attempt to get the authorities to stop shooting so the diplomat could get to safety.

My Burmese, you know, I didn't know exactly how to say what I wanted to say in Burmese. That this, you know, you're shooting an American. I didn't remember how that vocabulary went. And I didn't remember that dialogue from class. [...] I just immediately, I basically, using an authoritative figure and body language by leaning against the front of my car with my arms crossed, which is a no-no. That's considered if not threatening, it's considered rude. I don't remember exactly when I learned it, but it's common throughout Asia. It's a gesture of authority and arrogance. [...] I deliberately did it and I wanted him to understand right away that I was his senior officer and that I was being arrogant and telling him to stop. Authoritative and telling him to stop. [...] They stopped shooting. [34-Army-FAO-O6]

In another example, a USMC Intelligence Specialist in Iraq came upon a village leader who was making his family dig through a volatile weapons cache in order to retrieve the crates the weapons were stored in. He used his understanding of the relationship between men and women in Iraq to come up with a way to make an impression that would convince the man to stop endangering his family.

[This village leader] and his family and his village members were; gosh, I found them with a large amount of ammunition. It was ammunition that the Iraqi military had hidden, and these people were basically just scavenging the boxes out of there. They were putting themselves in a very dangerous situation, and I had to convince the village leaders to leave that area. [...] I tried to get him to understand that he was in grave danger; that his family was in danger. And my Arabic was pretty poor at the time; just tourist words, and a few things like that. But using the phrasebook essentially I was able to convince him that it was dangerous; and he responded basically by saying it was ok. Insha'Allah. God

willing; whatever God wants to happen will happen. He did finally agree to take his sons out, but not his wife or daughters.

That wasn't good enough for me, and I really emphasized to him that he needed to leave. He refused to leave. He would say, 'it's ok, that's fine. And Insha'Allah,' God willing. It was up to God whether this pit exploded or not. [...] So I took it upon myself; one of the Marines who was with me was a female Lieutenant. I called her over, and I explained to the village leader that if he didn't get his family out of the pit and move on, that she was going to shoot him. Of course, we were never going to go there; we weren't going to make that happen. But he took that seriously, finally. I guess the idea of being killed by a woman with an assault rifle didn't thrill him much at all. And so he rounded up his family and proceeded to leave. [28-USMC-Intel-O5]

Some participants applied the self-presentation competency in unique ways. For example, participants who worked in jobs where it was their objective to uncover information others did not necessarily want to share, were sometimes rather creative with the way they presented themselves. At times they fabricated information about their background or presented themselves as having beliefs or values they did not in fact have.

At the end of the day, a good collector knows that is not true. It's sanitized. If you have 5 kids, I am going to tell you I have 4 kids. If you are single, so am I. That is the job. So you have to be very removed, very kind of clinical as much as possible to be effective at it. That is the guys that go in and tell their life story, and it really is their life story, and at some point, the guy sitting across from you, he is in control; because you have invested all that in him. Now he can use that against you. [20-USMC-Intel-O5]

#### ***4.2.1.2. Enacting culture-general competence with and without foreign language proficiency.***

ARC describes general patterns of thought and behavior that can be enacted in a number of specific ways. As demonstrated in the previous section all the competencies can be enacted by personnel with varying backgrounds, experiences, and formal training.

Another qualitative finding concerned the relationship between cross-cultural competencies and language proficiency. We noticed that participants who had reported proficiency in at least one foreign language applied a number of the competencies differently. In a number of cases language proficiency appeared to enhance the application of culture-general competence. In other cases interviewees were successfully applying competencies without it. In those cases culture-general competence appeared to compensate for lack of language proficiency. Those cases included instances where interviewees did not have any foreign language proficiency as well as cases where the foreign languages interviewees spoke did not help them in the areas where they were working.

In the following we will describe some our observations about ways language proficiency and culture-general competence support one another.

***4.2.1.2.1. Cultural reasoning.*** For many of the participants who had foreign language skills, language provided a window into culture. These participants provided a number of

examples of situations where they used their understanding of language to make sense of how members of the culture think and behave.

Many of the participants with foreign language proficiency applied the insight that one can use linguistic cues to understand a culture even when one does not speak the language. In the following example, an Air Force FAO who already spoke fluent French, Arabic, and English found himself preparing to go to West Africa where the local language is Dyula. His appreciation for language motivated him to ask his language tutor about the meaning of a specific word. This in turn helped him better understand the perspective of a local man he was working with.

I said ‘well what’s the word in Dyula for a loan?’ And he said ‘the word in Dyula for a loan translates to a cord that’s attached between two people.’ [So that] puts things in a different perspective. See for us a loan is like yeah I’ll pay it off in, and in a Dyula culture now there’s a bond, a cord between us and in order to sever that cord or make that cord go away, I have to really focus on that loan that was given to me and repay it in some capacity. For us, you know most of us have six, seven credit cards and some people have debt up the wazoo. We take loans left and right with no consideration, because that’s the culture that we have over here. Over there they take it very seriously. In learning the language I learned the culture. And learning the culture, I learned to associate with them differently. So if I gave them something, I knew it was, I always [emphasized] that this was not a loan, this was a gift. This is from me to you. Part of me is going to you. And this is now yours and they go ‘oh, thank you so much.’ And there was always an amicable exchange to where it opened up greater dialogue. [95-Air Force-FAO-Intel-SOF-Civillian-O5]

*4.2.1.2.2. Intercultural interaction.* Unsurprisingly, participants whose language proficiency matched the language spoken in the regions they worked capitalized on their language abilities to build relationships in order to meet mission objectives. In the example below, an Army FAO demonstrated how language proficiency can open doors to developing relationships.

So I called up [the Ambassador], he picked up, he answered. Before I called him, I picked up every bit of information I could about him, and I saw that he spoke French. So, when I called him, I spoke English, I introduced myself, and I went right into French. And that impressed him. And that was how, and then he agreed to come speak with the group. [17-Army-FAO-O4-Bicultural]

Many of the participants who were fluent in a foreign language also seemed to have heightened awareness of their communication even when they did not speak the language of the area they were currently working in.

Most of my engagement has been [...] in the language. Which is a very different perspective than if you were not speaking the language. [...] So it gave me an appreciation of how much language plays part in communicating or engaging with other cultures. Most people tend to view you differently if you do not speak the language than if you are coming from a different culture attempting to speak the language with them. ...there is a different dynamic when you are trying to engage, and your language is limited on both ends. There is a sense of, you know

exactly what this guy is trying to say, you are doing in whatever fashion. Either hand gesturing, or making sounds, or things like that. [12-Air Force-Intel-O6]

4.2.1.2.3. *Cultural learning.* For participants who had foreign language proficiency, language was a recurring focal point for their self-directed learning. For example, participants who had experience learning one foreign language appeared more likely to engage in deliberate strategies for learning a third. And their objectives were more ambitious than participants who had not already mastered a foreign language. That is, rather than learning a few words and phrases to use for recurring social interactions, these participants wanted to get to a point where they could converse. An Air Force Master Sergeant who was already fluent in Spanish described how he went about learning Italian while he was on assignment in Italy.

Sometimes I would. I would just say ‘piano, piano’, like slow down, slow down. Or at first, the only word I knew was ‘non capisto,’ I don’t understand. And you know, they would slow down, and they would start talking to me, and sometimes I would be like, ok; I think I know what they want. And then little by little, I just started learning. And then the guy that emailed me yesterday, he started, after a while it got to a point where he was actually correcting me. So he knew ok, this is how you say it. No, it’s plural. He would correct me every now and then. Which I liked that; now it was showing me that he is teaching me, not just talking to me. But now he is correcting me in how to properly say it. Where before they wouldn’t do it; they would just let me talk however I wanted to talk. [50-Air Force-E8]

Interestingly, a number of participants who were fluent in a foreign language tended to subscribe to the belief that one cannot understand another culture, or work effectively within a culture if one does not speak the language.

[You can] teach people about other cultures, but if you expect people to work in the environment, then you have to take that and engage. And for you to engage, you need to communicate. And to communicate you need to know at least the language. [12-Air Force-Intel-O6]

Most Americans will jump in and try to study the country’s political system, they try to study the country’s history and that’s nice to know. However, it doesn’t make a difference. The difference that you will make is one, learn the language, and then once you learn the language in learning the language, learn the culture. That’s money all the time, anywhere you go, any culture on the planet earth. [95-Air Force-FAO-Intel-SOF-Civillian-O5]

Participants trained in language also tended to demonstrate more discomfort when they traveled to places where they did not speak the language.

I didn’t enjoy the Afghans. I didn’t know the language. [1-FAO-Army-O6]

That was a 13-month assignment and at the end of that I vowed that I would try never to go overseas again without language skills. And that pretty much held for the rest of my career. I think my first assignment showed me how important it was



to be able to communicate and you cannot depend on the host country people you dealt with to speak English. [34-FAO-Army-O6]

Although the previous examples illustrate the ways culture-general competencies can be enhanced by language proficiency; most of our participants were successfully applying the competencies without it. We saw numerous examples of personnel without foreign language proficiency using their culture-general competencies to engage with others, and even to accomplish highly complex technical work.

One example came from a Sergeant First Class who was working a three-week construction project in the Philippines. He found himself challenged by the task of communicating with the Filipino soldiers and local vendors he was working with. Communicating about technical aspects of construction such as materials was particularly difficult. However, he leveraged the limited English skills of his drivers and then thought carefully about what he was trying to get across, how he was going to explain himself, monitored how well his messages were coming across, and adapted his communication until he was sure everyone was on the same page.

Sometimes, either because the drivers weren't engineers and maybe their English wasn't that good, when I tried to say something they – I'd say 'I need a piece of pipe' and they bring me one and I'm like no, that's a pipe, but not exactly what I meant. So we'd have to try to figure out a good way to break it down so it was more understandable to both of us what they had or what I was actually looking for. [...] You try to figure out what the common ground is and then figure out okay how can I explain this?

So we would – I'd ask them for the pipe and maybe they'd have the pipe, but then how to explain that I mean the connector, you connect two pieces and then they are like no idea what you're talking about because they don't use them or use different stuff. So I'd have to you know they'd explain it to me or I'd come back to the Filipino Army guys and talk to them and say, hey look this is what I found out with this store, and they'd be like, yeah well we do this and they'd show me or draw it up and I'd say okay that makes more sense. This is what I should be asking for and it would make more sense to them. [83-Army-E7]

#### **4.2.2. Are there new competencies, knowledge, or skill elements?**

Analysts made a total of 113 observations relating to potentially unique patterns of behavior, strategies for interacting, and ways of thinking. We compared these against the coding scheme and found that 53 related to skills and knowledge included in the existing model, such as complex simultaneous demonstrations of one or more competencies.

Sixty observations could not be mapped to existing skills and knowledge elements. We examined these observations further in order to determine whether these observations pointed to new skill and knowledge elements, or possibly to entirely new culture-general competencies. In all cases, the observations were found to fit within the existing competency framework. These observations were organized into eight themes. Once observations had been organized into themes, we determined that all pointed to new or revised knowledge and skills within existing competencies. See Table 4 for mapping between observed themes and model revisions.

Therefore, the qualitative analysis did not uncover new core competencies.

Table 4. Mapping Between Observed Themes and Model Revisions.

Theme	Model Revision
<u>Added skills</u>	
1. Assesses rapport and relationship progress	Maintains a Mission Orientation: "Assesses progress of developing rapport and professional relationships."
2. Manages cultural expectations and mission objectives	Maintains a Mission Orientation: "Recognizes when mission objectives conflict with cultural norms and manages that conflict."
3. Manages own expectations within intercultural interactions	Manages Attitudes about Culture: "Manages expectations about what and how much can be accomplished within intercultural interactions and on assignments in general."
<u>Revised existing skills*</u>	
4. Assesses own cultural skills and understanding	Self-directs Cultural Learning: "Continually assesses <u>own cultural skills and accuracy</u> of current understanding of a culture."
5. Reads body language	Copes with Cultural Surprises: "Notices and attends to cross-cultural behavior ( <u>e.g. messages, body language, or actions</u> ) or events that are surprising or violate expectations."
6. Considers the impressions interpreters make in intercultural interactions	Plans Intercultural Communications: "Plans <u>own and others (e.g. subordinates or interpreters)</u> communication content and means of expression in advance of critical interactions."
7. Maintains awareness of own appearance	Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation: "Understands that <u>own appearance and</u> how one presents oneself can influence the outcome of intercultural interactions."
<u>Included description of the link between competencies</u>	
8. Recognizes effects of own and U.S. actions on the mission	Understands Self in a Cultural Context and Maintains a Mission Orientation: Recognizes the effects of own and other's appearance, actions, and communications on the mission and makes adjustments to ensure a successful outcome.

Note: Revised language is underlined.

In the following section we describe each of the new competency elements that were uncovered and how they informed the final model.

**4.2.2.1. Assesses rapport and relationship progress.** The Maintains Mission Orientation competency includes the following skill: *Develops relationships with members of the culture as a way to meet mission objectives.*

In the current data we observed that participants gauged how much progress they had made on developing rapport and professional relationships (that could enable mission success). They demonstrated this in a number of ways. First, they set expectations for the types of relationships they were able to develop in the time they had available. Secondly, they were often

aware of when they were in the initial stages of the rapport and relationship building process and would identify strategies for *getting started* on making a connection.

I think really the more time you spend with these guys, the more you find something in common that you can talk about and start building rapport with each other. With him, it was tattoos. And that is how we started talking. I started showing him my tattoos, he was showing me his. We started talking about them, and that is how we started to form a bond. [52-Navy-SOF-E8]

They would also take stock of the connections they had made with other people and maintain a sense of where they were in the rapport and relationship building process. To do this they would try to figure out whether or not and how far the other person or people had been moved in the direction of trusting and respecting them.

The first month, like I said, we just sat around and bullshitted. There was an Iraqi Colonel that every time I saw him, he had to tell me a joke and then if I saw him next, I had to tell him a joke. We would exchange jokes back and forth and I swear to God, he's the most vulgar man I've met in my life. But, he was also one of the smartest. [...] But yeah, once he opened that door to me, again, it really formed a relationship between him and I that went a lot of places and helped us do a lot of things and he trusted me. [67-USMC-E5]

We added the new skill *Assesses progress of developing rapport and professional relationships* under the Maintains a Mission Orientation competency.

**4.2.2.2. *Manages cultural expectations and mission objectives.*** The current model is responsive to our recurring finding that cross-cultural adaptation does not involve always accommodating local customs, communication styles, or norms for behavior. Instead it means intentionally tailoring one's behavior to achieve an outcome. The following skill: *Presents oneself in a way to achieve an intended effect on the other person's perception* in the Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation competency clarifies that achieving an intended effect on another person's perception requires sometimes intentionally maintaining one's own style and other times adapting the way one presents oneself.

However, in the current data we see examples that indicate that this theme may apply more broadly than self-presentation. It extends to the overall approaches personnel take to solving problems and getting their jobs done within a culture. In general, participants also recognized when their mission objectives conflicted with cultural norms and when they needed to manage that conflict. To manage such conflicts, participants evaluated when it was most advantageous to either accommodate or break with cultural expectations to achieve long-term mission objectives or immediate interaction outcomes.

For example, one interviewee was a Major in the Air Force and a combat pilot. Over the years he had developed the type of personality and work style needed to function in the high-paced, miniscule margin for error environment that is combat flying. As he himself described it, "in the US Air Force that means being part of an 'eat your own' culture." To him, being part of this organizational culture meant routinely and publicly calling out his own and other's mistakes both during flights and in lengthy debriefs. This, the Major said, is an essential part of the learning process.

“If I am doing something dumb, dangerous, or different, I want you to speak up right away,” he said, clarifying that “If you can’t admit your mistake you will never get better. Plus, it can be dangerous.”

He found that the Korean and Japanese cultures were difficult to work with because his Korean and Japanese partners were very hesitant to speak up. The Air Force pilot was part of a number of joint exercises with the Koreans and Japanese, planning and flying joint missions. His role in the exercises was to help the Koreans and Japanese shape their Air Forces by helping to develop their planning process. He understood that within these two cultures people have a great deal of respect for their elders, and are very rank conscious. He also understood the concept of preserving face and what this meant. However, he saw these regional cultural values as going directly against the organizational culture of learning from errors that the U.S. Air Force has fostered. He recounted a particularly challenging experience where he had to choose between working within the organizational culture or encourage the style of interaction that in his experience leads to mission success.

We were running a big training exercise and doing back-to-back air-to-ground and air-to-air debriefs. So it’s in an auditorium and we are watching the exercise play out on the big screen. During one of the debriefs we were doing shot validation—an air-to-air replay where people talk through the shots they took and determine the outcome of each shot. This Japanese F15 pilot had a frat [fratricide] and they were talking through the shot. He called out the target, verified the target a second time and shot. As he was talking through the verification part, right before the shot part his higher level officer tapped him on the shoulder, cutting him off telling him to pretend it didn’t happen. It was all up on the screen though. I waited until the guy running the debrief finished. He asked me ‘you got anything’ and I said ‘oh yeah.’ I got him to fess up. I called it out right there in front of everybody. I said ‘you took the shot, you had a frat, just fess up to it and now you have to go out and buy a keg and make it up to everyone here.’ I wasn’t going to let them cover it up. [81-Air Force-O4]

In this example the Air Force Major deliberately contradicts elements of the regional culture because he is there to introduce organizational cultural change. The objective this Major had been given was to help shape Korean and Japanese combat flight operations. In this case that meant proposing that mistakes be publically discussed in this job concept.

In another example a USMC Intelligence specialist deliberately causes an interpreter to lose face to make a point.

One of my interpreters was a Jordanian. And he was talking down to [an Iraqi]; I spoke enough of the language to know what was going on. So I lit him up about it. I told him, ‘You don’t talk like that. We are all here together; we are all in the same situation trying to make this country a better place. He is fighting for his country, so you are not going to talk to him like that while he is fighting for his country and you are over here to get paid.’ I kind of yelled at him in front of everybody. I made him lose a little face. So that the Iraqi could save some face. It was good. Because they didn’t like the Jordanian, either. So they loved the fact that I lit him up. They were all grinning from ear to ear. [10-USMC-Intel-O5]

In this case, causing the interpreter to lose face helped the Lieutenant Colonel to strengthen his relationship with his Iraqi counterparts.

Based on these and a number of similar observations we have added the following new skill: *Recognizes when mission objectives conflict with cultural norms and manages that conflict*, under the Maintains a Mission Orientation competency.

**4.2.2.3. *Manages own expectations when working in a new culture.*** The Manages Attitudes Towards Culture competency includes the following skill: *Recognizes and sets aside negative attitudes and reactions to accomplish tasks.*

Participants also managed their expectations about what and how much they could accomplish within intercultural interactions and on their assignments in general. Managing expectations within specific interactions seemed to help them keep attitudes in check towards specific people and towards the culture in general.

Managing their expectations with respect to their overall assignments also appeared to help personnel feel more confident about their accomplishments at the end of the day.

You got to have measured expectations and an appreciation for any progress is still progress, because there are just so many variables that they can go into affecting change in a foreign environment. [...] I think that can be a little dissatisfying if you're not prepared for that. If you have lofty expectations going in by how much of an impact you're going to make, you're likely to wind up disappointed with that. You've got to be satisfied with whatever your agenda is, if you accomplish any of it that was stuff that wasn't accomplished before you got there. [79-USMC-E8]

A number of participants talked about the importance of tempering expectations for cultural change in general. Others illustrated the added value of honing in on the specific progress one could realistically expect within a single or a series of interactions.

Managing expectations appeared to be important, not only in intercultural interactions, but also when personnel were working within systems that functioned differently than what they were used to.

So now I brief my team, we know what our objectives are, we have already come up with a construct that we think will be viable, and our charge is to meet with the officials, present our position, and get them to accept; that is my commander's intent. Now as you negotiate with the Japanese, recognizing the culture, we need also to remind ourselves that the Japanese don't want to give offense; so consequently, they would never say directly a 'yes' or a 'no.' They don't want to say no, because that could be offensive. They don't want to say yes, because they have not been empowered to say yes. [...] They operate under a very strict, centralized command and control; so the negotiators I was working with, again two sides, prefecture and national government. I had to work both channels, recognizing that they had to go to their boss, and often times, the boss's boss, for feedback. [30-USMC-O6]

Based on these observations we include the following skill: *Manages expectations about what and how much can be accomplished within intercultural interactions and on assignments in general*, in the Manages Attitudes towards Culture competency.

**4.2.2.4. Assesses own cultural skills and understanding.** Being self-directed in learning about cultures includes the following skill: *Continually assesses accuracy of current understanding of a culture.*

In the current data we observed that participants evaluated not only their cultural understanding but also their skills. This helped them figure out where they need to improve.

But one thing I did realize is that my Spanish was not very strong. I thought I spoke Spanish very well; I spoke it all my life. Until when I went to that academy, and you go up there and you are required to teach in a different language, and know the terminology and characters. And these guys used huge words, very formal words, very polite. And I realized then that my Spanish is pretty weak. I started learning; I started reading magazines, newspapers and getting on the internet to educate myself more in Spanish and how to speak it better. So it kind of forced me to learn and get even better. So I started watching a lot of TV and reading; when you read, you see them use big words. ‘What does that mean?’ You have to go back. So I started doing that. [50-Air Force-E8]

It also appeared to help them figure out where they need support, i.e., translators for language support or colleagues who might lead intercultural interactions more effectively.

If you see, if you’re reading the body language with the people that you’re dealing with and you see that they’re not willing to, or responding to you very well or they’re losing interest, or you’re not having the desired outcome, I think that a higher level of trait when you can recognize that within yourself. [...] If you realize that there’s somebody else better suited within your organization or within your circle, align them to it in order to have the best desired outcome possible. [79-USMC-E8]

The existing skill, *continually assesses accuracy of current understanding of a culture* under the Self-Directs Own Learning About Cultures Competency was revised. It now reads as follows: *Continually assesses own cultural skills and accuracy of current understanding of a culture.*

**4.2.2.5. Reads body language.** Taking body language into consideration when planning and communicating across cultures is already included as a component of communication planning: *Knows that communication consists of many dimensions including words, body language, posture, dress, social context, and actions.* However, in the current data we also saw recurring evidence that participants used body language as a source of information when they were making sense of cultural behaviors. Participants paid attention to and deciphered the body language of cultural others. This appeared particularly important when they were trying to make sense of other people’s behaviors and responses within interactions.

An Army Master Sergeant described a puzzling meeting with a village elder in Afghanistan. The loyalties of the local leadership was uncertain, and the U.S. team was on guard going into the meeting; especially the Master Sergeant who was in charge of risk assessment. The Master Sergeant was immediately surprised that the elder had brought his son and paid keen attention to the unspoken dynamic between the pair.

It was probably for the first four minutes of the meet when you see that the body language of the son. He was the one that maintained the weapons in his possession, and I can see, you know enough to where his hand movements, disengaging when a question was asked, the rolling of the eyes and doing different things, versus us you know we're used to dealing with people and looking them in the eyes and communicating with them it was kind of like, kind of 'this is a waste of time' kind of attitude. He would kind scan the area. The dad was fine; he was pretty much looking at people who are speaking directly to us. Where the son was kind of looking around and kind of concerned.

[We discussed it in the After Action Review afterwards], the son seemed to us that he may have been working with enemy forces in some capacity in that area. So, right away we understood that. You know, it's an immediate reaction of being, or that town being a threat, versus an ally. [...] 30 hours later we had resistance in that area while we were taking small arms fire. [67-Army-E7]

In some cases when participants had resolved their surprises, they were then able to find ways to respond that resolved potential conflicts. For example, an Army Staff Sergeant who was taking over as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of a communication unit in Japan paid attention to the body language of the Japanese staff members as the NCOIC he was replacing took him on a tour of the office.

When I first got here, because I was taking over his job, he would walk me around the different offices and introduce me to people and I could just tell by body language that number one they weren't happy that he was there, but then number two when they realized that he was leaving shortly they were happy. Just kind of – I wouldn't call it a blank stare, but just kind of like – I would picture like a cartoon face with a straight line for a mouth instead of a smile or a frown. You know they had a little bit of a smile, when he walked in it would kind of drop down and be like a straight-line for the mouth on a smiley face. So that was part of what I keyed in on – was okay you know I'm going to need these people on a daily basis. [87-Army-E6]

The Staff Sergeant realized that there was some fence mending that he had to do. As he explained, "I felt that I had some relationships that I had to build back up. I mean we need them, all these people we need them on a daily basis. So I felt kind of obliged to work on building the relationships back up."

Based on this information we augmented an existing skill supporting Cultural Sensemaking: *Notices and attends to cross-cultural behavior or events that are surprising or violate expectations*. It now reads: *Notices and attends to cross-cultural behavior (e.g. messages, body language, or actions) or events that are surprising or violate expectations*.

**4.2.2.6. Considers the impressions interpreters make in intercultural interactions.** The Plans Intercultural Communications competency includes the following skill: *Plans communication content and means of expression in advance of critical interactions*.

In our past studies, participants predominantly discussed and demonstrated the value of interpreters as sources of cultural information. That is, personnel often use their interpreters as mentors which helps them learn about new cultures. In the current data we see further evidence

that interpreters can play an important role in the impression personnel make within intercultural interactions. Personnel think about their interpreters as ‘part of the package,’ so to speak, when they plan the impressions they want to make.

One example came from an Air Force Master Sergeant who thought about the type of interrogator he needed to bring to conduct a polygraph test.

Picking the right interpreter was very important. Do I go with a man or do I go with a woman, based on his background? But a man or woman. I went with a man because it was just; I could have gone with a female, but it was a little risky in this because of wife and kids and mom. In this scenario, it just made sense for a male. I thought that because he had a very large family; he had a wife, he had daughters, he had a mom, he had sisters. So having a female would be too emotional in the room; he would be less likely to admit it. He may feel like having the woman there may look like his mom, remind him of his mom; I wanted to avoid the emotional connection he had there to make sure I am taking out factors that could affect my test. [47-Air Force-Intel-E8]

A Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer described how he would take time up front to discuss what he did and did not know about the culture. This allowed his interpreter to help him ‘look good’ during interactions.

You do have some limits when it comes to their culture; you don’t know what the Afghan culture or Iraq culture, or most importantly, the Qur’an. Now we talked about that, and they know what I am not familiar with that so they [Interpreters] will be able to make it look like I know what I am talking about to the detainee. So they [Interpreters] cover for my lack of knowledge in some areas, and make it look like I actually know what I am talking about. [52-Navy-SOF-Intel-E8]

Even specialists with foreign language training used interpreters—when they were working in regions where their own language skills did not apply, and in some cases when the dialect they had learned did not match the dialect spoken in the areas they ended up working.

I spent 16 months learning Arabic [at DLI]. Graduated there and went and lived in Cairo, Egypt for a year. When I was in Egypt I studied Formal Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian dialect Arabic. And so my Arabic was pretty good for a non-native speaker. And then I went to Iraq, and I discovered that I could not communicate with Iraqis in Arabic because I did not really have any Iraqi dialect context or capability. [8-USMC-FAO-Intel-O4]

We therefore augmented the existing skill under the Plans Intercultural Communications competency to read: *Plans own and others (e.g. subordinates or interpreters) communication content and means of expression in advance of critical interactions.*

**4.2.2.7. Maintains awareness of own appearance.** The Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation competency already describes the following skill: *Presents oneself in a way to achieve an intended effect on the other person’s perception.* This means being aware of and deliberate about one’s words, body language, posture, dress, social context, and actions.

However, it appeared that participants were also aware of the more or less stable aspects of their own appearance. Participants thought about what they themselves looked like and the



effect that had on the impressions they were making. This awareness appeared to drive decisions about how they presented themselves. Sometimes awareness of their own appearance allowed them to keep track of the general impression they were making on people in a new culture.

I didn't have clout at the time. I was a Captain, I wasn't a Weapons Officer like I am now, so I couldn't really command that kind of respect. Plus, you know I had a babyish face. The Israelis respect rank and performance. [81-Air Force-O4]

I'm a large person. I'm 6 foot 2, and in those days I weighed about 210 pounds, so I'm a big person, especially compared to Indonesians. [34-Army-FAO-O6]

Other times awareness of their own appearance helped participants calibrate their perceptions of how their actions and messages were received.

I met [the mayor] and I lowered myself, didn't look directly in the eye, didn't have a firm handshake, because I was aware that an Indonesian wouldn't do all those things. That was just showing respect. But also, a lot of foreigners, I am about a foot taller than the average Indonesian, I am bald, I am African American, I don't look anything like an Indonesian, so they don't expect me to. That is one of the great things, when nobody, when the bar is set so low, it is so easy to clear it. So when they don't expect you to take into any of their cultural norms, to perform them, and you turn around and do, it really makes you stand out in a positive way. [3-USMC-FAO-O4]

Based on this information we augmented an existing knowledge element supporting the Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation competency: *Understands that how one presents oneself can influence the outcome of intercultural interactions.* It now reads: *Understands that own appearance and how one presents oneself can influence the outcome of intercultural interactions.*

**4.2.2.8. Recognizes effects of U.S. actions on mission.** The Understands Self in a Cultural Context competency includes the following skill: *Applies understanding or seeks to understand how own self and the U.S. in general is viewed by members of other cultures.* The Maintains a Mission Orientation competency describes the ability to stay focused on mission objectives and apply cultural skills and knowledge to achieve same.

We also saw a number of examples of participants evaluating the effects of their own and other's appearance, actions, and communications on the mission and making adjustments.

An Army SOF Major's experience at Command General Staff College (CGSC) illustrated this well. This Army officer had spent a great deal of time in Malaysia as part of his training under the Olmsted program. Because of this background he was assigned to help a Malay officer integrate while both were attending CGSC. The Major noticed that the Malay officer was getting increasingly frustrated after class discussions and interactions with a particularly blunt American classmate. The Major realized the long-term effects the Malay officer's frustrations might have and took steps to ensure that he did not leave with ill feelings towards the U.S.

A couple of days later, or maybe later the next day [Malay Major] came to me and told me 'I'm sorry, I have to leave.' I said, 'What do you mean you have to

leave?’ And he said, ‘Well, I’m changing classes.’ [...] A new class wasn’t going to go well, because a new class takes a while to get to know everybody and they were going to know you came over there because something was wrong and I didn’t think his problem was going to get any better. If he went somewhere new, it could have even been worse. My thoughts were that this was not going to be a good thing because he was going to take this bad taste in his mouth back to Malaysia with him, and we’d be paying for it for however long his career lasts. [...] The whole reason for investing in these foreign officers to come is they eventually become positive points of contact for the United States Government. And, in a lot of cases it’s a very successful program. For example, the president of Indonesia today is a graduate of CGSC.

The way I finally convinced [Malay Major] and it took every ounce of knowledge that I had; I had to dip into the history of the Malaysian Army, his regiment, I had to appeal to his religion and I said you know in Islam they want you to respond to these types of things. I said the Malaysian Government is counting on you. That the Malaysian Army, your regiment, the whole tradition. And so, I told him the religion, history, culture on many levels from Army regiment to society and I had to dip into all of that. And it took me all afternoon to make him feel strong enough to go and face the class again and to just deal with it. [75-Army-SOF-O4)

Another example comes from an Army Colonel who described an experience where he had to step in and take over a meeting with a group of Iraqis from a subordinate. The Iraqis were visiting the U.S. to finalize a sales contract.

I went to see how [my LTC] was doing with this group and he was terrible. He had no – I think he was just too blunt an instrument. He never deferred or used patience with these guys. He was just very frustrated and as an American soldier you get that way after about the first day you’re dealing with the Iraqis and after ten months you really ought to go because you are impatient. [...] So he was on his 11<sup>th</sup> month and the meeting was going south in a hurry because he was arguing with the Iraqis and so I had to pat him on the back, I was in the meeting, passed him a note and said, ‘shut up for a minute’ and then I took the meeting over and reintroduced myself to everybody, got it back on track so the US and Iraqi sides were able to communicate again. [94-Army-O6]

These examples illustrate the ability to recognize the effects of own and other’s appearance, actions, and communications on the mission and making adjustments to ensure a successful outcome.

As this ability is at the intersection of the Understands Self in a Cultural Context and Maintains a Mission Orientation competencies we include the following description of the relationship between these competencies: *Recognizes the effects of own and other’s appearance, actions, and communications on the mission and makes adjustments to ensure a successful outcome.*

## 5. Discussion

ARC is a model of the competencies that enable personnel to effectively engage people across cultures. ARC is a culture-general competence model in that it applies across regions of interest. The competencies that comprise ARC were originally identified in a study of Marine Corps and Army GPFs (Rasmussen, et al., 2011; Rasmussen & Sieck, in press). The current study provides empirical validation of ARC as well as insights into the ways culture-general competence is applied within the DoD. The results provide encouraging evidence that ARC generalizes across the services, ranks and across a broad range of communities within the DoD, including GPFs, SOFs, Intelligence professionals, FAOs, and civilians. This finding was supported by analysis of the experiences of 95 personnel who have lived and worked in multiple regions for significant periods. Generalizability was demonstrated via quantitative measures of frequency of use and proportions of personnel for whom competencies were identified, as well as qualitative analysis of competency applications. The competencies were pervasive across this diverse sample of seasoned professionals. All of the competencies were found in the majority of cases, and eight of the 12 were identified in over 90% of the interviews.

The 12 ARC competencies were found in all of the communities. But, it was possible that certain communities relied more on some competencies than others. Examining potential differences between the major communities revealed little disparity. One difference found was that the Manages Attitudes competency was indicated relatively less often among SOFs. Also, FAOs were most likely to exhibit the Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty competency, even though this competency was revealed for a substantial number of participants in each community. Finally, Plans Intercultural Communications was indicated more often among civilians and officers. These findings could suggest that the types of intercultural encounters personnel in some communities experience are less likely to demand certain competencies than those experienced by personnel in other communities. Despite these minor differences in competency profiles, however, it was clear that each of the major communities represented in the sample applied all 12 of the competencies.

To further explore potential differences, we used binomial regression to analyze potentially subtle dissimilarities in the distributions of competencies between three key segments: Specialist Officers, GPF Officers, and Enlisted GPF personnel. We found differences in relative frequency of competency use between these segments. Specifically, we found that the competencies Takes Perspective of Others and Plans Intercultural Communications occurred relatively more frequently in Specialist interviews than in GPF interviews. Manages Attitudes and Copes with Cultural Surprises were found less often in Specialist interviews. GPF Officers exhibited Maintains a Mission Orientation relatively more often, and Develops Cultural Explanations of Behavior less often, as compared with enlisted personnel. A possible interpretation of these findings is that because Specialists engage in more upfront planning of their communications and more perspective taking they are able to reduce the number of surprises they experience and have less need to explain surprising behavior or manage their attitudinal reactions. Further, officers may have the mission somewhat more at the front of their minds in intercultural situations because keeping their people oriented towards the mission is an important aspect of their job. These slight distinctions in relative frequency of competency use do not detract from the fact that the ARC competencies were employed in the critical cultural interactions in each of these segments.

Even though all 12 competencies were applied by personnel in all the sampled communities this does not mean that they apply them in the same way. It was possible that

differences existed between communities in terms of how they applied competencies. The qualitative analysis revealed that there was variability in the way participants enacted competencies. One factor that appeared to consistently influence competency enactment was language proficiency. Participants who were fluent in a foreign language appeared more likely to use linguistic cues to make sense of surprising situations, have heightened awareness of their communication strategies, and set more ambitious objectives for themselves when engaging in self-directed learning of foreign languages for which they had not received formal instruction. The majority of participants however did not speak a foreign language. And, in most of the critical incidents, participants did not have matched language proficiency. In those instances participants' culture-general abilities appeared to compensate for not speaking the local language. These findings demonstrate that ARC describes general patterns of thought and behavior that can be enacted in a number of specific ways by personnel with varying backgrounds, experiences, and formal training.

The study that originally identified the 12 competencies only included GPF soldiers and Marines. Including a wider sample of DoD communities in the current study introduced the possibility of uncovering new competencies. However, the qualitative analysis did not reveal new competencies that were systematically used across the sampled communities. Rather than entirely new competencies, the analysis revealed three new skills that serve as components of existing competencies. These skills were used across communities. They included *assessing progress of building rapport and relationships, recognizing and managing conflicts between mission objectives and local cultural norms, and managing expectations about what and how much can be accomplished within intercultural interactions and on assignments in general*. We revised the existing competencies Maintains a Mission Orientation and the Manages Attitudes about Culture to include these skills. Overall we revised the model to more clearly describe the knowledge and skills that make up each competency as well as behavioral examples. Taken as a whole, the findings indicate that the 12 ARC competencies represent an inclusive, essential set of competencies for all sampled communities.

In addition to examining competencies across communities, we also explored possible ways that competencies might support one another. When competencies are used in close combination within the same incident, this suggests that a supporting relationship exists between them. For example, personnel may develop explanations of behavior following cultural surprises. Or, they might consider the point of view of people they interact with as they think through what to say and how to present themselves. We found that 16 competency pairs co-occurred significantly more than would be expected by chance. Takes the Perspective of Cultural Others occurred most frequently with other competencies. Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation and Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty also frequently co-occurred with other competencies. Hence, these competencies may play a central role in culture-general competence. Overall, these results suggest that in practice, when personnel handle real-world cultural challenges, competencies are used in combination. Supporting relationships between competencies may have implications for optimal methods for instruction, that is, determining which competencies should be taught together. See Appendix 1 for details on the relationships between competencies and for examples of specific behaviors that reveal the combined use of competencies.

Overall, the current study suggests that ARC provides an inclusive description of essential culture-general competencies for a broad range of communities within the DoD.

## 5.1. Implications for Future Research

The current study revealed that in practice, DoD personnel apply a number of culture-general thinking and learning skills as they get ready to deploy to a new culture, when they adapt to and interact in new cultures, when they predict or make sense of the behaviors of individual members of other cultures, and even after they return home and reflect on their experiences. A valuable avenue for future research would be to investigate the individual, team-based, and organizational processes that allow individuals to grow and improve their abilities at the different stages when cultural learning takes place; that is, before, during, and after overseas assignments. Having a better understanding of the most effective methods for and times to provide support to self-directed culture learning could form the basis for improving organizations' ability to maximize the benefits of activities personnel already engage in. Such research is of greater immediate applied value than investigations of individual characteristics associated with culture-general ability that cannot be developed through training and education.

The current study also provided evidence to suggest that personnel employ the same competencies in different ways. As one example, in our study we saw that taking the perspective of cultural others could take a variety of different forms. On one hand, there was an Army General who realized that Afghan counterparts in a meeting were interpreting the components of a diagram of the relations between different entities within a proposed organizational structure not as part of the same organization. On the other, there was a Marine Corps Corporal who considered that an Afghan he had just captured after he had done a drive-by shooting of a U.S. military installation might have been motivated to shoot because his family had been harmed by Americans. These are both examples of personnel considering the thoughts and motivations of cultural others. The situations and job contexts are very different, however.

The finding that personnel employ the same competencies in different ways has implications both for training and for future research in this area. First, it suggests that providing job and rank relevant behavioral examples may be necessary to help personnel recognize when they themselves and others are applying competencies. For example, it is possible that the Corporal is less likely to recognize how the General's experience relates to him. In terms of future research, if recognition of relevance depends on the use of specific examples then studies using survey or vignette-based data collection approaches should be mindful of the possibility that interpretation of questions may depend on the examples used.

There are also a few limitations of the current study that suggest avenues of future investigation. The study sample was restricted to highly experienced DoD personnel with multiple overseas deployments. It did not include novices. The objective of the current study was to specify how culture-general competence should be practiced within the DoD. For this purpose, the researchers aimed to compare the competence of experienced, proficient DoD personnel across diverse communities. Although the results reveal essential knowledge and skills for interacting across cultures, it is as yet unclear as to how these map on to different levels of mastery.

Defined levels of mastery will provide instructors and instructional designers a basis for determining the most important knowledge and skills to cover for specific learner audiences in the time they have available. Hence, future research should seek to empirically define levels of mastery for culture-general competence. Such research should include multiple criterion samples, including novices with no overseas experience, as well as somewhat different data collection methods. The semi-structured, incident-based interview method used in the current study is well-suited for exploration and discovery. A prerequisite for using this method, however,

is that the study population has experiences to draw from. A different data collection methodology would be needed to investigate novice cross-cultural performance (see for example Sieck, Smith, & Rasmussen, 2013).

The sample size of 95 subject matter experts for the current study was considerably larger than is typical for cognitive field-research that aims to investigate highly-experienced professionals. Yet, the sample is smaller than typical closed-form questionnaire surveys. This is largely due to the significant challenges involved in identifying and recruiting participants who meet stringent criteria for inclusion, as well as the effort it takes to analyze extensive, open-ended descriptions of their experiences. Future research could seek to further validate the results with larger samples of participants. Such research should use structured tasks that allow for more efficient collection and processing, yet still yield performance-based data. In order to achieve meaningful results from studies conducted along these lines, it is necessary to first have established levels of mastery and associated assessments.

## **5.2. Implications for Education and Training**

It is critical that the DoD provides effective training and education programs that prepare personnel for the actual challenges they face abroad. ARC provides a basis for developing competency-based instruction of culture-general abilities. It outlines the thinking, learning, and interaction skills personnel need to adapt, develop relationships, and work effectively with partners and members of foreign populations. As such, it has a number of implications for DoD organizations that send personnel overseas and for those who teach culture.

The current study suggests that experienced personnel develop and apply a number of different learning strategies to improve their own skills and knowledge in order to be prepared to handle specific cultural aspects of their jobs. Organizations should do their utmost to identify, encourage, and reward such practices. Deliberate cultivation of self-directed cultural learning, however, imposes an important, high level requirement for culture instruction. The pedagogical starting point for instructional systems at all levels must be grounded in recognition of and respect for the ability of personnel to learn and develop culture-general competence in a self-directed way. This first requires that organizations and instructors acknowledge that the majority of cultural learning will take place outside of the instructional context. Second, providing students with a mindset and set of practical strategies that allows them to take advantage of the cultural learning opportunities they realistically encounter must be made an explicit instructional objective

Institutionalizing competency-based instruction of culture-general abilities may require rethinking and restructuring the way existing culture curricula incorporate culture-general learning objectives. Culture-general instruction often involves reviewing and examining theoretical frameworks that describe cognitive differences between cultures (see for example Hofstede, 1991; Schwartz, 1994) or cultural dimensions, such as kinship, religion, and heritage (see for example Salmoni & Holmes-Eber, 2008). Such theoretical frameworks provide a systematic starting point for analyzing and understanding national cultures. However, because these frameworks were developed for the purpose of comparing cultures at the national level, and not for the purpose of predicting or making sense of specific behaviors of members of other cultures it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to use them for that purpose (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Analyzing national cultures may be a valuable activity for certain communities within the DoD. However, the starting point for competency-based culture-general instruction should not be culture-general research frameworks, but rather the behaviors and strategies that

enable personnel to think, learn, and interact effectively in new cultures such as those described in ARC.

We suggest that the culture-general competencies identified in ARC are foundational to regional expertise and language proficiency because they enable personnel to adaptively acquire information about, as well as develop skills and understanding required to work in new cultures.<sup>4</sup> Because they are foundational we recommend that explicit learning objectives related to culture-general competence should be included early in the DoD training and education pipeline. Specifically, we recommend that they are included in:

- Curricula targeted explicitly at developing culture-general competence
- Curricula targeted at developing regional expertise and language proficiency
- Pre-deployment cultural awareness training and materials
- Training and education programs that have a focus on teaching the tasks or procedures within which cultural skills are applied<sup>5</sup>

Developing high levels of culture-general competence takes time. Each exposure to foreign populations and partners, whether it occurs in the context of an overseas deployment or on U.S. soil, presents an opportunity to learn about new cultures. The sooner personnel start practicing the thinking and learning strategies identified in ARC, the sooner they can get started practicing and developing culture-general competence.

Encouraging the development of cross-cultural skills and knowledge early and often throughout the training and education pipeline will also serve as inoculations against habits of thinking that may become obstacles to developing culture-general competence. These can include feeling overwhelmed by one's own initially negative reactions to new cultures and new ways of doing things, stereotyping, explaining away cultural surprises, and believing that one's own ability to interact across cultures is something that cannot be changed.

The model defines the skills and knowledge that should be targeted by culture-general instruction. This means that it will enable instructors to include specific culture-general learning objectives in their course plans. Importantly, instructors will be able to make these learning objectives explicit to their students. Adult learners want to know why they need to learn something before they engage in learning (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005). Clarification of what it is personnel are learning and why is key to motivating personnel to learn and engage. This means that instruction must make it a priority to identify the connection between course content and job and mission relevance. The behavioral examples provided in ARC will help instructors recognize how culture-general competence not only relates to, but enhances the primary job or task personnel are accomplishing overseas and will thus enable them to help their students appreciate this relationship.

ARC will also enable instructors to identify culture-general learning objectives they may already be covering in their courses. It will allow them to distinguish culture-general learning objectives from region or culture specific learning objectives within courses that have dual objectives.

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<sup>4</sup> Information and skills in this case includes foreign language vocabulary and fluency. Self-directed learning strategies are often used to enhance the ability to communicate.

<sup>5</sup> In cases where instruction has a regional or job-specific focus it is possible to merge primary course learning objectives with objectives relevant to culture-general competence (See Rasmussen, & Sieck, 2014). These may include but are not limited to leader development programs, security cooperation, mentoring and advising, as well as any instruction that focuses on military decision-making, critical thinking, systems thinking, and planning.

This can sometimes present a challenge since most instruction of general skills uses specific examples. That is, in teaching general skills, scenarios from and information about specific foreign cultures will be used. It is therefore particularly important that educators are able to distinguish the learning objectives that relate to the underlying skills and knowledge that enable the application and development of culture-general competence. This will allow them to remain clear that for instruction focused on cultivating culture-general competence, any culture specific information used as part of the instruction is not the primary learning objective.

This latter point is also relevant to assessment. The goal of culture-general instruction should not be that students are able to generate the *right answers* to questions about culture-specific facts, customs, or patterns of behavior. It also should not be that students can describe, or check a box next to a description of what they are supposed to be doing. Instead, they should have acquired a way of thinking about and responding to the world that is consistent with the competencies outlined in ARC.



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## Appendix 1

### Culture-General Competence Model: Definitions and behavioral examples.

The model includes four broad competency domains. Each general competency domain has three associated competencies:

#### **Diplomatic Mindset**

The ability to: be aware of one's own world view and mission in a cultural context; recognize that the purpose of building intercultural relationships is to achieve mission objectives, and manage own attitudes towards the culture to accomplish mission-relevant tasks; understand how own self and the U.S. in general are viewed by members of other cultures.

#### **Cultural Learning**

The ability to: learn cultural concepts and knowledge to prepare for cultural interactions prior to deployment at own direction and deliberately seek out experiences and relationships to advance cultural understanding while deployed; develop reliable sources of cultural information; continue to reflect on and learn from intercultural interactions and experiences after they occur.

#### **Cultural Reasoning**

The ability to: make sense of situations or environments and manage unexpected cultural behavior; use one's existing cultural knowledge to develop nuanced explanations of events; understand and apply perspective-taking skills to detect, analyze, and consider the point of view of people who are raised in a different culture as well as demonstrate an understanding of others' needs and expectations.

#### **Intercultural Interaction**

The ability to: engage with others even when own cultural knowledge is rudimentary and culturally appropriate actions are uncertain; consider desired effects to achieve with communication in advance; use alternative strategies for achieving communication objectives and present oneself in a way to achieve intended effects.

<b>1. Maintains a Mission Orientation</b>	
Definition: Builds rapport and intercultural relationships to achieve mission objectives, using cultural knowledge and skills to develop, monitor, and maintain them.	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that the purpose of building intercultural relationships is to achieve mission objectives, rather than to just make friends or do good	<p>Selecting a village to receive a well to promote local good will because it's strategically located near an airport with high U.S. air traffic.</p> <p>Taking meals and spending a lot of time with counterparts in order to make progress with the mission.</p>
Knows specific ways cultural information aids in meeting mission objectives	<p>Recognizing that vodka acts as a social grease in Russia, and that drinking vodka with counterparts builds trust and acceptance.</p> <p>Determining compensation for wrongful death of a Somali by calibrating amount with a local tradition of offering about 100 camels as <i>blood price</i>.</p>
Understands limits of the mission, including that it is not about making other cultures exactly like U.S. culture or enforcing U.S. laws/customs on locals	<p>Working to make Iraqi forces good enough to deal with their own challenges, but not trying to convert them to the exact U.S. military ways ("Iraqi good enough").</p> <p>Working with people who support things like female genital mutilation that run counter to U.S. culture and law, and not worrying about trying to change it in order to focus on accomplishing the mission.</p>
Defines mission-relevant social objectives	Setting an objective to talk to the young Afghan soldiers who are still on guard on a religious day, so they will be more willing to help when needed.
Develops rapport and relationships with members of the culture as a way to meet mission objectives	<p>Meeting with a businessman who might have ties to Al Qaida in order to get introduced to the right people and have a quiet word in service of the mission.</p> <p>Hanging out and building relationships with other interpreters so can grab one and go to work when main interpreter is out of pocket.</p>

Assesses progress of developing rapport and professional relationships	<p>Determining that discussions with counterpart about tattoos are the beginning stages of developing rapport.</p> <p>Evaluating how much a counterpart knows about one's family, hobbies, interests, and vice versa as a way to figure out how personal the relationship has become.</p>
Uses cultural knowledge to assess risk within social and operational environment	<p>On patrol in Iraq, using fun slang for "what's up" (shaku maku) and making little jokes about where are the terrorists that make people laugh. Identifying the serious ones as potential problems.</p> <p>Seeing a Japanese protestor hit a cop. Judging that the demonstration could turn very ugly by using knowledge that Japanese are normally obsessively orderly and law abiding, and that their cops are formidable.</p>
Uses cultural behavior to assess progress towards meeting mission objectives	<p>After hosting soccer games to improve relations between groups, interpreting decreased conflict between neighboring villages as progress.</p> <p>Taking reduced security precautions among locals to indicate the area is increasingly safe and secure.</p>
Recognizes when mission objectives conflict with cultural norms and manages that conflict	<p>Urging Japanese pilot to admit fratricide during training exercise debrief knowing he will lose face within own team so the entire coalition team can learn from the error and to encourage a culture of learning from mistakes.</p> <p>Chastising a Jordanian interpreter for demeaning an Iraqi counterpart in front of group of Iraqis to discourage the behavior and to gain favor with Iraqi partners.</p>
<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
Manages Attitudes towards Culture - Keeping mission goals in mind as way to let go of negative reactions.	<p>Recognizing that it is within the scope of the mission to go and develop relationships with people one finds unsavory or distasteful.</p> <p>Adapting to uncomfortably close touching between Iraqi males, such as hand holding and greeting with kisses on the cheek, in order to contribute to the outcome and goal.</p>

<b>2. Understands Self in Cultural Context</b>	
<p>Definition: Recognizes roots and limits of own point of view; seeks to understand how own self and the U.S. in general are viewed by members of other cultures; establishes baselines.</p>	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
<p>Understands that own way of viewing the world is biased as a result of individual background, personal history, and culture</p>	<p>Recognizing that one's view of a town-wide call to prayer is based on coming from highly independent culture of the U.S.</p> <p>Realizing that own view of personal modesty in dress based on U.S. custom is that people should be partly though not completely covered.</p> <p>Stating that the perception that if you do a bad thing once then that makes you a bad person is a common American view, and perhaps one of our flaws.</p>
<p>Applies understanding or seeks to understand how own self and the U.S. in general are viewed by members of other cultures</p>	<p>Determining that one's hosts accept that Americans have different customs, and do not expect their visitors to know all of the Arab ways.</p> <p>Noticing that Liberian locals are saying "superpower" as they size up one's dress and gear.</p> <p>Anticipating that an Iraqi may respond better to an older looking American, due to increased credibility with age.</p>
<p>Uses knowledge of own cultural background as a baseline for comparison with new cultures</p>	<p>Comparing U.S. guidelines on how to handle prisoners with an Arab hosts' stated view that the strong enjoy respect, and you have to be tough with people.</p> <p>Comparing authority and willingness to make decisions at different levels of the Afghan military hierarchy with those of the U.S.</p> <p>Determining that drivers in Cambodia use their horns to let people know they are passing, whereas Americans tend to use horns when angry at someone.</p>

<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
<p>Manages Attitudes Towards Culture - Understanding own cultural biases gives baseline for forming attitudes.</p>	<p>Acknowledging that in America, we associate prostitution with an outlaw lifestyle, usually driven by drug abuse, etc. But that the Filipino girls soliciting literally had no other way to support themselves. And may have been sold into that lifestyle by their families.</p> <p>Talking with an Iraqi counterpart about how life works with his two wives, and acknowledging that one's own reactions are based on the custom of monogamous relationships in the U.S.</p>
<p>Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty - Using an understanding of one's own capability in the culture to determine how to best act within those constraints.</p>	<p>Understands that one's language proficiency is to the level of a 2nd grader at best, and embracing that bit of knowledge by using a few phrases in a funny way.</p> <p>Recognizing that showing signs of respect for elders in South-East Asia comes naturally to oneself even without full knowledge of the nuances, due to having grown up in a culture where kids respect their elders.</p>
<p>Mission Orientation - Recognizing the effects of own <i>and</i> other's appearance, actions, and communications on the mission and makes adjustments to ensure a successful outcome.</p>	<p>Recognizing that a fellow student and international officer from Malaysia who is threatening to switch classes will leave the U.S. with bad feelings and using knowledge of Malaysian pride to convince him to stay.</p> <p>Recognizing that a subordinate is losing patience in a meeting with Afghan partners and taking over so as to not jeopardize an already negotiated sales contract.</p>

<b>3. Manages Attitudes Towards Culture</b>	
<p>Definition: Manages negative attitudes and reactions in order to accomplish collaborative tasks, and establish and maintain mission critical relationships.</p>	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
<p>Understands that personal attitudes, values, preferences can get in the way of establishing critical intercultural relationships</p>	<p>Bracing oneself to eat goat face being served as a delicacy to special guests at a celebration in Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>Being offered Khat in Africa, and wishing your hosts a good time, while explaining that you're not allowed to do that.</p>
<p>Understands that it is natural for personal attitude about a culture to fluctuate over time according to circumstances</p>	<p>Explaining that one will be okay for the first nine to ten months, but after that one will become fed up with the whole thing and will have to remember that the objective is not to make them American.</p>
<p>Recognizes and sets aside negative attitudes and reactions to accomplish tasks</p>	<p>Finding out that a partnered Afghan officer has his own dancing boys, and ignoring it to maintain rapport and get tasks related to the mission done.</p> <p>Finding the level of cross talk in Albanian meetings very annoying at the beginning and then getting used to it and finding ways to work around it with time.</p> <p>Initially being annoyed at the lack of progress of Afghan students learning to use mine detection equipment, and then breaking it down to very basic elements like how on-off switches and batteries working to move forward.</p>
<p>Attempts to maintain positive or neutral attitude towards culture</p>	<p>Noting unfamiliar features of Yemen, including its environment, poverty level, gender segregation, and embracing being in a foreign land as an amazing experience.</p> <p>Stating that because some guy in Afghanistan doesn't read and write doesn't mean that he's dumb, it just means that he didn't have the opportunity to learn those things.</p>
<p>Manages expectations about what and how much can be accomplished within intercultural interactions and on assignments in general</p>	<p>Recognizing that a resolution may not be reached within a first meeting with Japanese counterparts because the representatives in the meeting likely don't have the power to make a decision.</p>



<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation – Regulating attitudes and emotion in the moment in order to control self-presentation.	Attempting to keep a level head on a construction site after being informed by an interpreter that one’s work plans are not being translated to the crew by the Cambodian counterpart, and to coolly address the issue.

#### 4. Self-Directs Own Cultural Learning

Definition: Seeks to advance understanding of own and other cultures; takes ownership of learning by framing questions, setting objectives, and gathering pertinent information.

Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that cultural learning is an ongoing process which takes place prior to, during and post deployment	<p>Remembering class lessons about Iraqi customs, such as never shake with the left hand, and checking with reality on the ground.</p> <p>Balancing reading and experience. Reading about a culture before going over to have something to start with, while appreciating some of it is going to prove wrong.</p> <p>Using the internet to find out the little things about the music, the literature and who the great people were in addition to military capability. And expecting to find out a whole bunch of things that are not on the internet when there.</p>
Identifies key topics for study that enhance ability to operate in host country	<p>Watching a popular soap opera in Syria to see how culture is represented in a TV show, and have something to talk and ask about with locals.</p> <p>Looking into the history of an area for significant events to see how a plan for engaging locals could go wrong.</p> <p>Determining the ethnic and religious breakdown of people in an area, and focusing on the groups that will most likely be encountered.</p>
Seeks out opportunities to improve cultural understanding, beyond provided training	<p>Teaching English to young people in Tirana as a way to talk with and learn about the local culture from them.</p> <p>Asking questions of other people who have recently returned, such as, "What do you wish you would have known before you arrived?"</p> <p>Reading books on Arabic culture, practicing with language flash cards, and asking questions of every interpreter to find out about what they care about and how they do things.</p>
Generates own principles for organizing cultural facts and theories	Explaining that useful Iraqi phrases are like social lubrication; sayings like, "see you again tomorrow,"

	<p>or “this is frustrating and useless” help reduce tension in difficult social situations.</p> <p>Explaining that some nuggets of cultural facts are call-your-bluff-type of information; Like if one knows who Massoud was then one can ask Afghans “what do you think of Massoud?” and then see what happens, look for any reason to doubt their loyalty.</p>
Continually assesses own cultural skills and accuracy of current understanding of a culture	Realizing that even though one is a native Spanish speaker one is not able to conduct professional conversations and deliberately finding magazines, newspapers to increase one’s vocabulary.
<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
Maintains a Mission Orientation – Understands that learning about local culture helps one better contribute to the mission.	<p>Stating that it’s nice to share something personal you’ve learned; it makes the job a little easier by getting people to like you (whether they like your country or not).</p> <p>Speaking to people using a few words from their language and demonstrating a bit of knowledge about their past to move them in your direction and makes it more likely they will be helpful.</p>
Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty – Self-direction in learning helps to identify most useful learning objectives to support action.	Asking language instructors to focus on some basic words in Bulgarian like “I work with the military,” or “Hi, I’m a retired Colonel,” to help establish a background and to show interest in learning their culture and being a friend of theirs.

<b>5. Develops Reliable Information Sources</b>	
Definition: Identifies multiple sources for obtaining information about new cultures; establishes credibility of individuals who can provide insight into a culture and other sources.	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Knows that any one source of cultural information has some bias	Considering that a native Russian living and teaching in the U.S. will have somewhat different views than Russians in their homeland.
Understands that general information about a culture will not necessarily be true in all contexts and circumstances	Recognizing that language, religion, and other demographic statistics from CIA and other credible websites may be true for the country as a whole, but not necessarily in the area you are going.
Identifies and uses a variety of sources (e.g., books, web sites, local informants, etc.) for obtaining information about cultures	Reading fables by Nasreddin Hodja in Turkey as a common reference to everyday dilemmas and one way to relate to people.  Asking one's landlord about the best way to respond to a gift given by the neighbors, after recent relocation to Japan from the Philippines.
Assesses credibility and bias in cultural information and sources (e.g., by checking multiple sources)	Checking a report of weapons stashing with a third party, and finding that it resulted from personal friction between two neighbors who hate each other.  Considering that some travel books, such as Frommer's, cater to people who are a little more affluent and removed, whereas books written for backpackers may have better street wise information.
<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
Self-Directs Own Cultural Learning - Reliable information sources support efficient culture learning.	Determining that one's driver in Cambodia is a reliable source, and then listening to him explain lots of things, such as a bit about the government and their infrastructure, life of the common people, some of the jobs, their pay scale, and social norms, comparing and contrasting Cambodia versus the United States.  Using local friends to gain deeper insights on how things could be done, how they are viewed, and underlying biases.

### 6. Reflects and Seeks Feedback on Intercultural Encounters

Definition: Reflects on prior intercultural interactions and experiences; seeks feedback about own actions to continually improve cultural skills and knowledge.

Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that reflection and feedback help improve future intercultural interactions	Being frustrated with a Pakistani collaboration due to slow progress and refusal to just go along with the U.S. plan. Thinking back later that it ended well, with both parties having more buy in. Adopting the process for future collaborations.
Reflects on intercultural interactions and experiences after they have happened (during and post-deployment)	After leaving a village, holding a team meeting about a conversation with one interesting Iraqi to discuss his intentions and possible value to the mission.  Answering a foreign partner's question about a mission very openly, and noticing that he mostly clams up after. Later reflecting that one overestimated the current level of rapport.
Seeks feedback about own actions after intercultural interactions	Seeking feedback from a confidant about an interaction with Nicaraguans who had suddenly erupted in laughter.
Compares different cultural experiences to identify commonalities and differences between groups	Comparing Japanese and Arab concepts of shame and reflecting on the differences.  Being more prepared for observing the roles and treatment of women in Djibouti after witnessing men hitting their wives in public in rural Korea.
Attempts to generalize knowledge and skills that may be useful across different cultural contexts	Generalizing from ways of dealing with groups of kids selling and begging in South America to similar situations in Africa.  First, observing distinctive mannerisms and characteristics to adopt to help blend into a community in Columbia, and then applying the same skill in Bulgaria.  Looking for analogies to define "normal" in a new area, such as whether Paris a good analogy for what one might find in St. Petersburg.

## 7. Copes with Cultural Surprises

Definition: Notices behaviors or events within other cultures that violate own expectations and manages surprises by analyzing their causes.

Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that cultural surprises happen regardless of how much one knows about the culture	Explaining that just because one knows that Germans are very detail-oriented doesn't mean one is prepared for the number of times they want to go over a plan.
Knows that puzzling cross-cultural behaviors present opportunities to deepen understanding of the culture	Explaining that it can be useful to use the Socratic method – asking questions, especially open-ended questions... [such as,] “What’s the background on it?” “Why is it that way?”  Approaches investigation of why one’s counterpart was not translating orders properly with the objective of not only rectifying the situation, but also learning from it.
Notices and attends to cross-cultural behavior (e.g. messages, body language, or actions) or events that are surprising or violate expectations	Taking notice when a Bangladesh Airman with the same rank comes up out of the blue and asks, “Who made you?”  Observing a British Sgt. Major publicly chew out a 2nd Lt in the British Army for walking across a parade deck, and taking note of the anomaly.
Considers <i>culture</i> as a possible general source of the unexpected behavior	Labeling as a possible cultural thing the observed tendency for Albanians to talk over each other, raise their voices, and use a lot of gesturing.
Asks questions or otherwise seeks information about puzzling interactions or anomalous behavior	Given milk very fresh from a camel in Africa at a social gathering, asks, “Why is camel’s milk special for this event?”  Conducting experiments with dress, such as wearing a veil and observing differences in how one is treated when walking down the street, on a bus, and in other contexts.

**Other Competencies Supported**

Develops Cultural Explanations of Behavior – Cultural surprises give an opportunity to refine, elaborate on an explanation, or to build a new one.

Shifting from explaining Afghan preferential treatment as corruption to showing priority for helping first family, tribe, ethnicity and then the country after working through a nepotism incident involving a close Afghan colleague.

### 8. Develops Cultural Explanations of Behavior

Definition: Develops functional explanations for the behaviors of members of other cultures that incorporate local concepts, beliefs, and values.

Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that cultural explanations of behavior are incomplete and uncertain simplifications	Explaining that the idea Iraqis hate Americans because we invaded their country, is a broad generalization.
Understands that some explanations of human behavior are less wrong and more useful than others	Explaining that the fact that Italians don't stand in line seems rude, but they probably have a different approach and knowing what that was one could get around allotting more time to run errands.
Uses local cultural concepts when constructing explanations of native behavior	Explaining that Columbians were reluctant to support an assessment because Latin Americans have a notion of cultural "machismo" which means they're coming from the view of "we don't need any help, we can figure it out ourselves."  Burmese troops are ordered in to shoot civilians who have started a riot. Explaining that Burmese troops have <i>iron discipline</i> , and that is the reason they didn't shoot you, as an American official caught in the middle of it.
Generates multiple, alternative explanations of behavior	Listing several reasons that a Panamanian Major appears especially dictatorial with his staff, such as insecurity, leadership style, top heavy military culture, newly promoted and making a transition in front of his peers.
Develops integrated (deep causal) explanations of cultural behavior	Explaining that the asking of very personal questions (by American standards) when meeting someone new in Indonesia is not only common, but also important for determining relative status of the parties, knowing how to behave towards one another, and the formality of language to use in the interaction.



<b>9. Takes Perspective of Others in Intercultural Interactions</b>	
<p>Definition: Considers the point of view of culturally different others during intercultural interactions to help meet objectives.</p>	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
<p>Understands that people with different backgrounds view events differently</p>	<p>Stating that part of understanding culture is recognizing that people from another country might see things very differently than we do in the U.S.</p> <p>Stating that just because others don't see and do things the exact way we do doesn't mean they are crazy or incompetent. They have a different perspective.</p>
<p>Understands that the way another person views the world will contribute to the way they behave and approach a situation</p>	<p>Realizing that learning and speaking foreign languages is important to Israeli's so meeting an American that speaks something other than English makes a positive impression.</p>
<p>Understands that taking perspective of others helps to anticipate and influence their decisions</p>	<p>Talking to the owner of a restaurant known to be a gathering place for Somali warlord type "bad" guys. Judging him a reasonable source based on his neutral stance as a business man trying to get along, who provides services to the warlords, but doesn't really approve of what they are doing.</p> <p>When conducting a country assessment, Panamanian military doesn't want to show the U.S team their weapons. Explaining that the team isn't trying to evaluate their offensive capabilities, but only to determine best training, ammunition, etc. for the exercise.</p>
<p>Routinely attempts to consider the point of view of others during intercultural interactions, making reference to their expected knowledge, desires, and attitudes</p>	<p>Appreciating why a massively combat experienced Iraqi Colonel partner seems unfriendly to Americans, after learning he wanted to opt out of a basic AK-47 class, and was told by your predecessor, a more junior American officer, to sit down and shut up.</p>
<p>Uses cultural knowledge to adjust expected way people from that culture view events</p>	<p>Realizing that Iraqi trainees demand to know exactly where the booby traps were and what to expect at each stage of an exercise not because they are lazy but because their leaders where going to be present and they did not want to look like they failed and therefore lose face.</p>

<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
<p>Manages Attitudes Towards Culture - Seeing from other's view helps manage own attitudes (reappraisal).</p>	<p>Discussing that one might well have joined a Filipino rebel group if “they had been in the Filipinos shoes” and had been born and raised in the same circumstances.</p> <p>Drawing on that point to sideline one’s pre-conceived American notions of what is right and wrong.</p>
<p>Develops Cultural Explanations of Behavior – Taking others’ perspectives in intercultural situations helps develop explanations of behavior that support taking action or managing attitudes.</p>	<p>Allowing an Iraqi Colonel to skip a class on using the AK-47 realizing that he is a seasoned combat veteran and already knows how to use this weapon and that making him take the class would be insulting.</p> <p>Feeling better after realizing that Filipinos are Catholics and that bribery therefore has a bad taste which means they wouldn’t say they were being bribed; They would say “I’m helping things along and this extra money will make the project go better.”</p>
<p>Plans Intercultural Communications - Taking others perspective helps to frame the message.</p>	<p>Having a private discussion with an Iraqi officer after finding that he needs help with his family, and anticipating he won’t want to show any weakness in front of others.</p>

<b>10. Acts Under Cultural Uncertainty</b>	
Definition: Uses cultural knowledge, albeit limited and uncertain, to take action and develop relationships.	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that outsider knowledge of a culture is limited	<p>Stating that one isn't going to be in any position to readily quote or debate the Koran with locals. Better to stay focused on the important things needed to be successful.</p> <p>Stating that you don't have to be an expert, and it's not really possible. Yet you can know enough to make a better inference about what to do.</p>
Knows that trying to address cultural norms, language, etc., is generally seen as positive, regardless of current performance level	<p>Trying to do some things as prescribed in the culture. Doing them wrong, looking foolish, and realizing that in the eyes of the locals, you are trying and that goes a long way.</p> <p>Gaining some respect by attempting to try and speak Vietnamese, though in a stumbling and halting manner.</p> <p>Achieving local acceptance by starting to follow Turkish football and learn very elementary football phrases in Turkish.</p>
Avoids paralysis due to having less than complete cultural understanding or mastery of cultural behavior	<p>Stating that you really do have to be fearless when getting up to speed in new culture – and just do it. Don't worry at all if it's not perfect or good. If you know one word, use that word until you get another. Then use those two until you get more new words.</p> <p>Buying a gift for one's Japanese hosts even though feeling uncertain about Japanese tastes and preferences.</p>
Uses the cultural knowledge that one does have when taking action	<p>Using an uncommon, classic historical greeting when meeting with Danes for the first time as a cultural hook to help them realize this is not a typical American.</p> <p>Using a few things one knows about the MIG-19 to build rapport with an Albanian General who flew a MIG-19.</p>

<b>11. Plans Intercultural Communications</b>	
Definition: Plans communication content and means of expression in advance of mission critical interactions.	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Knows that communication consists of many dimensions including words, body language, posture, dress, social context, and actions	<p>Considering whether to grow a beard or mustache to match the local fashions.</p> <p>Noticing that an Afghan customs official who has been friendly in the past is sitting a little differently, and doesn't appear as warm and open as in previous meetings. Anticipating that you may need to do some damage control.</p>
Understands that objectives can be realized through a variety of self-expression techniques	<p>Intentionally leaning against the front of one's car with arms crossed as an authoritative and rude posture in South-East Asia, to get a Burmese police officer's attention.</p> <p>Finding a middleman who has good rapport trust with the locals, and relying on him as an initial conduit.</p>
Plans own and others (e.g., subordinates or interpreters) communication content and means of expression in advance of critical interactions	<p>Studying and practicing a formal Japanese apology before setting a meeting to deliver it.</p> <p>Discussing with Columbian counterparts how to change a superior's mind in a way that would maintain his face and still achieve one's objectives.</p>
Employs personal or cultural information about people, surroundings and situation to plan and adjust upcoming critical communications	<p>When trying to get a confession from an Iraqi prisoner, planning to bring a male rather than female interpreter due to expectation that he might close up if reminded of female family members.</p> <p>Preparing counterarguments in advance of a key meeting after learning that a local politician has been making assertions that the reason for U.S. presence in Curaçao was to arrange an invasion of Venezuela.</p>

<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation - Communication planning and preparation supports execution.	<p>Finding that a contact speaks French, and then preparing some statements in French for the next encounter to get some buy in.</p> <p>Finding that a very quiet classmate from Azerbaijan misses his family and his English is not so good, so using very simple English, short questions about his wife and kids to build rapport over time.</p>

<b>12. Engages in Disciplined Self-Presentation</b>	
Definition: Presents self to achieve intended effects with the audience; adapts style of presentation to fit the target culture and situation as needed.	
Component Knowledge and Skills	Behavioral Examples
Understands that own appearance and how one presents oneself can influence the outcome of intercultural interactions	Stating that you have to adapt how you are speaking to the local culture or organizational culture in order to be successful.
Presents oneself in a way to achieve an intended effect on the other person's perception (includes sometimes maintaining own style and other times adapting self-presentation)	Gaining respect as a foreign officer in Turkey by following a tradition of coming to rigid attention and saying (in Turkish) "Good Morning Sir" with a slight head nod, when walking into a senior Turkish officer's office.  Lowering oneself when meeting a local Indonesian mayor to make up for being several inches taller than him to show respect.  Putting a female officer in charge to throw an uncooperative Iraqi off his game.
Monitors effects of one's presentation on others in intercultural interactions, and adjusts accordingly	During a conversation, noticing that a Guyanese village chief is shifting away from addressing an interpreter towards directly speaking to oneself. Adjusting to address the chief directly in response.  In a meeting with Afghans and Americans, noticing that only the Americans are taking notes. Deciding to wait to write up one's own notes until after the meeting to pay complete attention to the Afghans.
<b>Other Competencies Supported</b>	
Maintains a Mission Orientation – Maintaining discipline in presenting oneself in order to accomplish mission objectives.	Eating Iraqi food, such as rice, beans, a piece of chicken with one's Iraqi counterparts rather than MREs to show them that you are not better than them and build stronger relationships.  Maintaining composure while trying to engage an Israeli counterpart who seems cold for a little while before opening up.