

**COMPARISON OF VARIOUS APPROACHES TO
TRAINING FOR CULTURE-CONTACT**

HERBERT T. EACHUS, FIRST LIEUTENANT, USAF

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This study was initiated as part of the inservice research program of the Personnel and Training Requirements Branch, Training Research Division, Behavioral Sciences Laboratory. The research was conducted under Project 1710, "Training, Personnel, and Psychological Stress Aspects of Bioastronautics," and Task 171008, "Training for Culture-Contact and Interaction Skills in Counterinsurgency." Dr. Gordon A. Eckstrand was the Project Scientist. First Lieutenant Herbert T. Eachus, the Task Scientist, performed this analysis. The study was conducted from July 1965 to December 1965.

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This technical report has been reviewed and is approved.

WALTER F. GREYER, PhD
Technical Director
Behavioral Sciences Laboratory
Aerospace Medical Research Laboratories

A comparative analysis of several approaches to training interaction skills for culture-contact was conducted. In addition, the range of American overseas work by the Air Force and other Government agencies was delineated with discussions of the type of training most required in different areas of involvement. Two major opposing scientific conceptualizations of training for culture-contact are discussed. The objectives of cross-cultural interaction skill training are presented with consideration of self-confrontation as a training technique.

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TYPES OF MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS OVERSEAS

Americans performing jobs in other countries are deprived of much environmental information which allows them to interact and behave in a social setting without constant planning. In another culture, much pressure exists for the American, or anyone moving from a "home culture," to display caution in responding to day-to-day events and situations; the unfamiliar cue array of the environment reduces the certainty with which one reacts to verbal and nonverbal stimuli. Unfamiliar manners, customs, and habits encountered by an overseas American reduce the stability of his behavior. This situation is particularly true when the American is a military instructor or advisor working for short duration in another country. The military advisor is under pressure to accomplish explicit objectives in a given number of days. It is particularly difficult to apply a time schedule to such things when much of the ability of an individual to conduct training, etc., is based on a stable, given set of interpersonal interaction standards and rules.

An American's lack of ability to respond to problems and stresses in other societies has been amply documented (Oberg, 1958; Spector and Preston, 1961; Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams, 1960; Lederer and Burdick, 1958 and 1965; Haines, 1964). The general problem of cultural adaptation has been treated by Hall (1959). The American under stress in an unfamiliar and strange culture typically refuses to accept or display any concept of cultural relativity. This usually results in an American not suspending judgment and action until more thoroughly understanding unusual behavior on the part of foreigners. He instead assumes the position that his way of doing things and his behavior are normal, natural, and right. He also is prone to regard the pattern of action typical of another country as strange, undesirable, unnatural, immoral, or incompetent. This is the process labeled "culture shock."

In attempting to analyze applicable training procedures for the overseas American military man, it is necessary to thoroughly understand the type of assignment and mission of the individual involved. The Counter-American technique discussed below was developed in its preliminary form for use with personnel assigned at relatively high levels with a reasonably large portion of their activities devoted to diplomacy and administrative functions in embassies and Military Assistance Advisory Groups. This type of assignment is a continuing requirement in United States overseas involvement and is quite different in objectives and practices from the instructor/technical advisor type of overseas assignment. The instructor/technical advisor is involved in virtually continuous contact with a counterpart in another country for a specified length of time and has explicit ends to accomplish during this period. A third type of assignment for American military personnel is that in Vietnam. This type of assignment is quite similar to that of the Korean conflict and certain aspects of World War II. The type of training and preparation of Americans for the first kind of assignment is conducted by such agencies as the Foreign Service Institute and for the third kind through normal combat readiness military procedures. The second type of assignment is one of vital importance and requires the greatest scrutiny; for upon the personnel acting as instructors and advisors falls the heavy responsibility of establishing strong, productive bonds of friendship and communication, while at the same time increasing the technical skill of people from the so-called emerging countries. This is the battlefield upon which the values of liberty, tolerance, and self-improvement are practiced. They must be practiced well.

The American instructor/technical advisor overseas is faced with the job of training people in certain specialized skills across many obstacles, not the least of which is the cultural difference. Language "barriers" may be overcome through the use of interpreters or, more desirably, by thorough language training. The technological barrier which tends to limit the basic understanding of certain foreign nationals of what Americans consider trivial details acts as a barrier too. This problem can be readily overcome by providing American instructors with skills for conducting simplified instructional programs to instill basic knowledge in given technical areas. This discussion of instructor/advisor missions will be continued below. The primary barrier to cross-cultural communication and understanding is the vast difference which often exists in the fundamental expectations for human behavior that are the largest part of what we call culture. The beliefs, habits, manners, customs, values, taboos, expressions, rituals, mores, etc., which are part of a society provide the basis for an overwhelming proportion of social perception. This portion of culture is nonmaterial and exists in the verbal and nonverbal behavior of people living in it.

SECTION II

A NATIVIST APPROACH TO CULTURAL ANALYSIS

One way of treating this problem is that taken by Stewart (1965^b): the induction of attitudes of cultural relativity through knowledge of American culture. Stewart presumes that an individual will perceive his values and beliefs as relative and not absolute following a thorough-going analysis of those cognitions. Stewart has derived five components of "American Assumptions and Values" which circumscribe the totality of social perceptions and activity: Perception of the Self and the Individual, Perception of the World, Motivation, Form of Relations to Others, and Form of Activity. These components provide an analytical framework within which an examination may be made of the social aspects of American behavior and meaning systems.

Stewart proposes to facilitate effective cross-cultural interaction by increasing an American's understanding of the five components as they apply to his culture and training him to analyze another culture's components on the basis of introductory interaction with indigenous persons. The individual is then supposed to make a comparative analysis of the two sets of assumptions and values and act accordingly. To this end Stewart and others have devised what is termed the "Counter-American" technique wherein an American is confronted with a role-playing situation with a counterpart trained to behave in a fashion which violates most behavioral expectations of the American. The preliminary trials of this technique as a training vehicle have not been designed to provide experimental evaluation, but have been studied for conceptual purposes only. The impression presented by current work on this technique is that an American after lengthy exposure to various role-playing problems does display some improved verbal ability in a generalized "other culture" environment. However, the generation of an operational training program using the Counter-American technique seems remote in view of the virtually undefinable training content and astonishingly high cost per student hour and the time required for preparation.

Stewart (1965^a) discusses cultural differences and incongruities which readily lead to misunderstanding and a lack of communication in a cross-cultural interaction situation. He proposes a means for overcoming such difficulty this way:

The need for the US advisor to understand his own cultural pattern, as well as that of the host country, does not mean that his insight must be explicit and articulate. His cultural understanding may often be implicit, as when an advisor gears his actions to existing cultural differences, even though he is not necessarily able to describe the relevant aspects of either his own or the foreign culture. In this circumstance, the advisor perceives the cultural disparities at some intuitive level and acts accordingly. (Stewart, 1965^A, p 4) (Italics inserted.)

It is difficult to see why any attempt should be made to investigate the nature of cultural differences if an advisor can merely function on some "intuitive" level of understanding that is implicit. Apparently, Stewart feels that a sort of general unverb-
alized comprehension of American values will suffice an advisor in another society and that he will function adequately, in whatever his position, on a virtually accidental basis. Accidental understanding and ability to cope with cultural differences as an advisor is a rather unsatisfactory state of affairs.* Rather, a position which views culturally determined interaction "rules" as observable, manipulatable events seems more satisfactory and can lead to the practicable, empirical development of training techniques and programs which will provide an American advisor with the skills necessary to accomplish his job of training foreign nationals more effectively. Hall (1959) delineates an area of interpersonal behavior which prescribes sources of cross-cultural differences in an empirically satisfactory manner.

SECTION III

AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO CULTURAL RELATIVISM

Hall (1959, 1963, 1964^A, 1964^B) has concerned himself with an analytical system for human communication based on a linguistic model. Several vital points are made by Hall (1959) which characterize his approach to cross-cultural interpersonal communication:

Culture is concerned more with messages than it is with networks and control systems. The message has three components: sets, isolates, and patterns. Sets are perceived and constitute the point of entry into any cultural study. They are limited in number only by the patterned combination of isolates that go to make them up. Isolates are abstracted from sets by a process of comparing sets on the level of differential meaning Isolates are limited in number. Patterns emerge and are understood as a result of the mastery of sets and isolates in a meaningful context. Patterns are also limited in number. . . .

*High-ranking diplomatic officials may well profit from such comprehension, however.

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There is also a principle of relativity in culture, just as there is in physics and mathematics. Experience is something man projects on the outside world as he gains it in its culturally determined form. Man alters experience by living. There is no experience independent of culture against which culture can be measured . . . cultural relativity . . . mean(s) more than what is good by one set of standards may be bad by some other. (It means) . . . that in every instance (of cultural analysis) the formulae must be worked out that will enable scientists to equate event A^2 in culture A^1 with B^2 in culture B^1 . (Hall, 1959, pp 217-218) (Italics inserted.)

The most productive and refreshing portion of Hall's excellent approach to the analysis of interpersonal interaction is stated in the italicized sentence above. There is no dichotomization of human behavior, perception, or experience into culturally determined and global. This point is a clarification and amplification of the premises outlined by Whorf (1936, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941) regarding linguistic relativity. Many social scientists have extensively treated their notion of relativity and its possibilities for extending the theory and method for understanding human beings (Kluckhohn and Leighton, 1946; Thompson, 1950; Hoijer, 1953; and Kluckhohn, 1954). Criticism of the relativity concept has been offered by others, notably Feuer (1953). Carroll (1956) summarizes the argument as follows:

Feuer, a social philosopher, believes that on a priori grounds one would not expect cultures speaking different languages to have different ways of perceiving space, time, causation, and other fundamental elements of the physical world, because a correct perception of these elements is necessary to survival. (Carroll, 1956, p 28)

It is conceivable that "fundamental elements" such as space, time, and causation need not necessarily be "correctly" perceived if Feuer means perceived as he perceives them. Certainly the perception and conceptualization of causality is an abstraction not shared by many peoples of the world with Western Man. If Feuer bases his survival argument on man's being able to physiologically avoid danger such as fire, the only necessity would seem to be that a human organism come equipped with heat and pain receptors and the neural circuits required to withdraw from it and not that the organism be able to abstract the conception of if fire then burn. Abstraction of events to general percepts may certainly vary in form and content and logic without having to be any more correct than the requisite reflex action. This argument for "correct" perception is specious in that it is tantamount to saying that if an individual holds a different conception of god, then he is less than I or is poorly equipped to deal with reality. Being a social philosopher, Feuer deals largely in metaphysics and ethics as systems for social conduct. Such systems more than any other area of human intercourse are bound to specific clusters of humanity rather than being universally applicable to all of mankind.

Hall's point that experience does not exist apart from the culturally bound developmental history of individuals is well taken. An issue of interest to experimental psychologists is color perception (Allport, 1955). The theoretical and empirical analysis of perception has occupied the interest of a considerable number of brilliant theorists and experimenters historically. Virtually no consideration in the decades of theory and experimentation has been given to parameters of between-culture analysis. For example, the differential subjective viewing of primary colors has been the basis for the major theories of color perception. Hall (1959) illustrates the problems of assuming viridity in color perception across cultures in the following way:

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Americans treat colors informally as a whole—that is, situationally. We may use a spot of yellow or of red, or yellow and red to accent a gray wall. We would be unlikely to put the yellow and the red next to each other. The colors in themselves have little or no value. If they do the criterion is taste. To the Navajo the situation is quite different: Colors are ranked just as we rank gold and silver—only more intensely. Not realizing this caused considerable embarrassment to a number of Indian Service employees years ago. In their attempt to bring "democracy" to the Indians these well meaning souls tried to introduce a system of voting among the Navajo. Unfortunately a great many Navajo were illiterate, so someone conceived of the idea of assigning the various candidates for the tribal council different colors so that the Navajo could go into the booth and check the color that he wanted. Since blue is a good color and red bad, the result was to load the dice for some candidates and against the others. (Hall, 1959, p 133)

In this example, as in others involving time, space, life, death, the meaning of communication across a cultural boundary is lost and drastically changed. This alteration is due to differences in the perceptual framework of individuals from various cultures. To provide an empirical basis for analyzing these anecdotal and theoretical perceptual differences which change the meaning of events, Hall (1963, 1964^A) has developed a systematic approach for the analysis of proxemic interpersonal behavior to be used in various cultures. A large portion of the perception of meaning in human interaction stems from the nonverbal rather than the verbal portion of such behavior. Hall (1964^A) defines proxemics as:

...the study of ways in which man gains knowledge of the content of other men's minds through judgements of behavior patterns associated with varying degrees of proximity to them. These behavior patterns are learned, and thus they are not genetically determined. But because they are learned (and taught) largely outside awareness, they are often treated as though they were innate. I have found this type of behavior to be highly stereotyped, less subject to distortion than consciously controlled behavior and important to individuals in the judgements they form as to what is taking place around them at any given moment in time. (Hall, 1964^A, p 41)

This area of interest in nonverbal culturally determined interpersonal communication has been labeled paracommunication or paralanguage by Joos (1962) and Trager (1958).

The first endeavor by Hall to develop an analytical system for proxemics resulted in the specification of eight dimensions of such behavior (1963). These are: 1. postural—sex identifiers, 2. sociofugal-sociopetal orientation, 3. kinesthetic factors, 4. touch code, 5. retinal combinations, 6. thermal code, 7. olfaction code, and 8. voice loudness scale. These dimensions have been split into eight categories each. The specification of these dimensions has enabled the nonverbal aspects of the interaction process to be directly recorded and analyzed. Hall (1965) has tested his analytical system with culturally homogeneous and heterogeneous dyads and has found high reliability in the system. In certain heterogeneous dyads involving an Arab and an American the score distribution on virtually all of the eight dimensions contains no overlap between the cultures. In other within-dyad comparisons Hall found score dispersion to be more similar as the a priori cultural similarity increased. In observing

homogeneous dyads of Americans from various subcultures the between-dyad comparisons indicate high stability in regional differences on many dimensions. Argyle (1965) has generated a similar analytical system for use within a culture which treats proxemic behavior as motor skills.

SECTION IV

THE OBJECTIVES OF CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

SKILL TRAINING

The requirements for American personnel overseas are manifold and range from ambassadors to technicians to military and economic advisors to technical instructors. Several types of preliminary training have been and are being used with these personnel by the several agencies involved. These training techniques have been extensively reviewed elsewhere (Haines, 1964) and range from the cursory "Area Studies Lecture" provided to embassy secretaries by the State Department to the extensive, intense academic and practical training of the Peace Corps.

In all training techniques presently in use for overseas assignment preparation, there exists no thorough-going objective criteria for assessing the effectiveness of performance in cross-cultural settings. The nature of such positions as high-level diplomatic staff, etc., make such identification of training requirements or criteria difficult at best, and at worst, nearly impossible. However, much of the work undertaken by Americans overseas has an identifiable end and time span. This is particularly true of a certain type of military mission, Mobile Training Teams (MTT).

MTT are sent on request to other countries for short duration, temporary assignments to accomplish certain types of technical training. The personnel who form such teams are military specialists in various technical areas ranging from instructor pilots for special air warfare to enlisted personnel qualified as aircraft mechanics, air traffic controllers, cargo loadmasters, etc. All personnel serving on MTT are trained instructors in their individual technical speciality. The type of mission undertaken by these small teams is particularly complex since the length of time spent in a given country is short, ranging from 6 weeks to 6 months. In the time allotted the team is expected to bring the foreign national military personnel to a level of technical competence which will enable them to function in an autonomous manner without continuing assistance from American advisors. Some of the complexities of this work are relieved by the fact that the trainees have a workable degree of fluency in English in some cases and by the availability of competent interpreters. To assure adequate verbal communication during technical training, most MTT receive comprehensive programs of training in conversational Swahili, Amharic, Thai, Cambodian, Spanish, Greek, or any other language as required. The MTT have available to them the requisite equipment and facilities to conduct the type of training required.

The obvious general requirement in training the individuals who form MTT is that they be able to form effective working relationships with their trainees as rapidly as possible. The use of effective in this context means that the interactions between team members and host foreign nationals are to result in the transmission of technical skills and information from one to the other such that performance changes occur in the trainees according to given technical skill criteria.

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Subsumed under this principle requirement are such considerations as culture shock, use of distance and time in interaction, and content knowledge and skill in the customs and manners relevant to the specific job to be done.

Of major interest in training Americans for interaction with individuals with different cultural backgrounds is the phenomenon of "culture shock" (Oberg, 1958; Haines, 1964; Yamashita, 1965). There are many sources of this shock, such as climatic, geographic, dietary, clothing, and architectural differences. Not very much training can be accomplished to accustom Americans to these sorts of changes upon entering another country, other than beginning a process of adaptation as early in their preparation for departure as possible. One source of culture shock, the "social interaction environment," is certainly open for training. The social interaction environment peculiar to each culture and subculture is stable and part of what Hall (1959) has categorized as a formal system of culture. That is, the history of interaction patterns within a culture is typically long and its nature is typically beyond the awareness of the individuals within the culture. Because of the nature of formal systems of interaction, people do not perceive manners, time systems, customs, etc., as objective events subject to change or control. The way people behave with others is viewed as natural or taken as inherent. The critical aspects of a system for interaction are proxemics, social perception, categorization of status and power, and behavioral expectations for others.

Considering the necessity for bridging what may be a considerable gulf in the interaction systems between two cultures, the initial requirement is a comparative analysis of each system. The result of such an analysis would provide the substantive content with which to begin training individuals from one to function in the other. The analysis could be categorized first into cognitive and behavioral components. The cognitive component could be split into attitudes, beliefs, values, etc. This division would be such that a comparison of the conceptual frameworks for perceiving various functional activities could be accomplished.

The behavioral component obviously would be categorized by verbal and nonverbal aspects. The verbal behavior relevant to cross-cultural communication is an aspect of training most easily handled in the newer foreign language teaching systems. The nonverbal behaviors are of particular interest in treating the problems of culture shock and interaction at a cultural interface. It is of little value to simply inform an individual of what is and is not appropriate behavior in another culture. The practice of listing "do's and don'ts" while in a particular country in a pocket-sized manual does not do anything to train an individual or prepare him for the shock of entering another culture (Yamashita, 1965).

Within the limits of MTT activities, cross-cultural interaction skill training must result in the members being able to behave verbally and nonverbally in ways which will enable the technical information being taught to host foreign nationals to be received in as complete a manner as possible with little or no changes in meaning. Assuming that an objective analysis of the system for interaction in a culture is possible and that it will provide the information necessary to identify specific training objectives for Americans in that country, the next problem is to find the means for transmitting this information in the form of practiced skills to the Americans.

USE OF SELF-CONFRONTATION AS A TRAINING TECHNIQUE

A series of reports on studies of the development of a new training technique which provides for the acquisition of such practiced skills include: Eachus, 1965; Haines and Eachus, 1965; Eachus and King, 1966. This new technique uses the phenomenon of self-confrontation as a training vehicle for social interaction skills. A review of the literature (Eachus, 1965) has shown that self-confrontation acts to provide virtually total feedback of verbal and nonverbal cues to a subject in a learning situation. Experimental work with self-confrontation through videotape as a training technique has shown its utility in modifying interaction behaviors to facilitate communication between representatives of different cultures.

The experimental evidence (Haines and Eachus, 1965; Eachus and King, 1966) related to self-confrontation as a training technique demonstrated that interaction skills in a cross-cultural setting are trainable. Results indicated that self-confrontation produces rapid acquisition of such skills and that they are retained at a high level for considerable periods of time. The procedure developed in these experiments for using self-confrontation as a training procedure is fairly simple. A subject is provided with background information relevant to his playing a role in a partial simulation of another culture. In this role-playing sequence the subject is to solve a problem in dealing with someone from the other culture. His behavior during the sequence is recorded on videotape and played back to the subject immediately following the end of the role-play. The subject's performance is verbally analyzed simultaneously with the playback. The subject is then returned to try the role-playing sequence again. Additional trials and confrontation periods are used when necessary. The rate of performance change throughout this procedure is high and positive. The retention of skills following acquisition does not fall below 93% of terminal acquisition performance over a 2-week interval.

The point of view toward cross-cultural relations represented by Hall leads directly to applying self-confrontation training in work with individuals crossing cultural boundaries. By specifying the parameters of a culture's interaction systems using proxemic analysis, a body of substantive content can be generated which will enable fruitful use of self-confrontation and related training techniques. That is, once an analysis has been made of the similarities and differences between two cultures regarding interpersonal conduct, a series of role-playing sequences can be developed which will represent the situations an individual will face upon entering the new culture. These sequences will require an individual to behave in ways corresponding to the systems of meaning typical of the new culture. The learning which takes place will enable the trainee to avoid a considerable amount of culture shock and to perform his duties and functions with a higher degree of effectiveness than he would with the typical training manual preparation.

Self-confrontation can certainly be adapted for use with the "Counter-American" technique discussed earlier. This technique and the approach behind it indicate that it may be most fruitfully applied to officials in diplomatic posts in the higher levels. Here, self-confrontation would be useful as a straightforward feedback mechanism. The Counter-American procedure does not entail the training of specific verbal or non-verbal behaviors and would therefore require detailed examination of the most productive procedure for using the phenomenon of self-confrontation.

The future of training for culture-contact will see the generation of reliable information collection procedures which will provide the data necessary for establishing meaningful training programs for individuals assigned to tasks in other countries. Present indications are that training techniques, such as self-confrontation, which involve the individual directly with himself in a learning situation will undoubtedly generate progressively more efficient and effective personnel for overseas work.

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