

A BRIEF NOTE ON THE MULTI-LAYERED NATURE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

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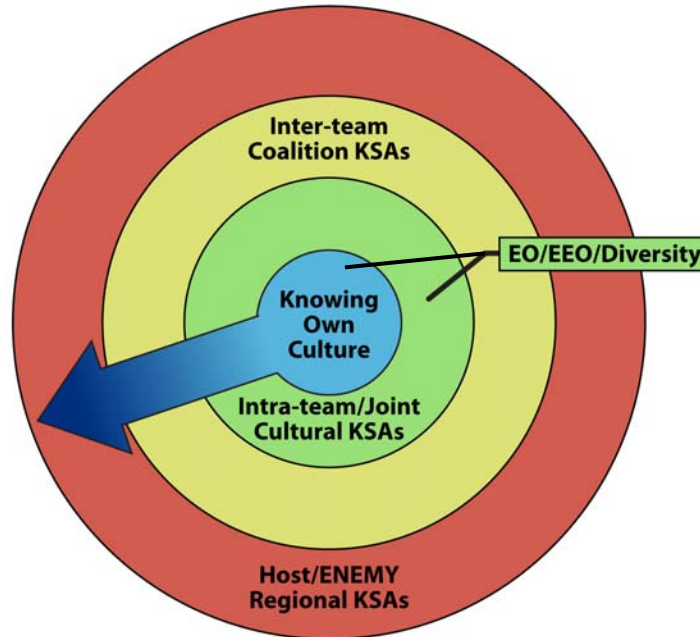
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The figure above represents a simplified illustration of the complexity of the DoD's operational environment with respect to cross-cultural interactions. Warfighters and civilians are faced with multiple layers of cultural influence. This figure shows how an individual (located at the center of the circle) is first influenced by his or her own culture. Experts agree that in order to effectively negotiate cross-culturally, one must first understand the broad concept of culture as well as the nature of their own culture and biases.

Next, each warfighter or civilian typically works on a team of other Americans, who come from many parts of the United States. The U.S., in and of itself, represents a complex amalgamation of many separate ethnicities and cultures. In order to communicate, cooperate, or lead such teams, one must have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work with and lead individuals who are different from themselves. Subsequently, the team also takes on a culture of its own.

The two interior rings of interaction are where DEOMI has traditionally focused its attention. Awareness of diversity and equal opportunity issues, in addition to associated skills such as cross-cultural communication within this institutional context are highly transferable to the international context. Transfer of these knowledge skills and attitudes will only create a more

adaptive force regardless of deployment location. This will also reduce the amount of pre-deployment training needed to prepare individuals and units.

Next, folks are put into a military context and asked to assimilate into a military culture. Understanding this culture is important to operating effectively, but the complexity of this is also increased when asked to operate across Services within a Joint environment. Military cultures within the Armed Services are very different, and coordinating between Services or agencies can present challenges, both operationally and doctrinally. Understanding these differences will improve Service members' ability to operate in a Service or Joint environment. Baseline research shows that Commanders agree that understanding the military culture(s) is very important to Joint mission goals. Furthermore, civilians are increasingly being deployed with troops. Understanding military culture is also a critical component of their success.

In addition to these intra-military aspects of culture, our increasingly frequent work with international partners and coalitions such as NATO presents unique challenges in language and cross-cultural interaction. Accepted practices, behaviors, tactics, and mission goals may differ across international forces, and effective coordination and integration of these commands depends upon understanding and addressing differences effectively to create a truly integrated team. Furthermore, during periods of stress, the performance of highly effective multi-cultural international teams can be unduly degraded due to the tendency to revert back to familiar behaviors under stress. One solution may be to educate forces on how to regulate their stress and emotions effectively in a multi-cultural environment.

Finally, the current global environment requires our forces to not only engage foreign nations with weapons, but to engage in reconstruction, humanitarian, security, training and other missions not directly related to war-fighting. Our lower ranking personnel are increasingly involved in tactical decision-making, acting as diplomats, and interacting with populations of other countries. Possessing cross-cultural competence is a MUST for our forces to be prepared for such a role in 'winning the hearts and minds', to transfer authority and power back to host nations, and to avoid international incidents. Lastly, to understand the values, motives, and behaviors of our enemies allows for our forces to better interpret intelligence, as well as cues for danger, which will save the lives of our Service members and civilians.