

Cross-Cultural Psychology: Language of the Mind

Issue: Most cross-cultural preparation programs focus on general awareness, and specific concerns to consider during interaction. For the most part, the individual in the equation is not addressed. What does the individual bring to a counter-culture? How will his own motivational characteristics, strivings, and needs impact, not only the new environment, but his counterpart as well? And, how will the cultural milieu influence his own behavior? In order to develop cross-cultural expertise, the advisor must understand himself, and himself in relation to his counterparts. A better understanding of this interpersonal relationship will reduce the time to build rapport, establish trust and confidence, and gain the insight necessary to promote adaptability.

Background: Insight is the first, and perhaps the most important, requisite in preparation for assignment as an advisor. Every decision has a cognitive as well as emotional component. A firm awareness of one's own psychological biases allows the Advisor to enhance the decision-making process, especially in a unique environment.

The method was first used for U.S. Marine and civilian advisors in 1971-73 during the Vietnam War. A South Vietnamese military group's profile served as a comparison standard. Since 2004, over 1,800 Marines preparing for advisory duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, the Republic of Georgia, Kazakhstan, and other theaters have been treated with the *Language of the Mind* course. Appropriate counter-culture norms served as comparison groups.

Discussion: *Language of the Mind* is a self-assessment and training course that prepares advisors to function more effectively in a cross-cultural environment. Participants learn *what* they bring to a situation in terms of their own needs and strivings, and *why* they may interpret any situation from a personal frame of reference. The wisdom gained from this approach allows participants to become *culture-wise*.

Advisors compare personal motivational profiles with the profile of a counterpart group, as well as a sample of contemporary advisors. Insight is gained through acknowledgement of differences, similarities, and unique pressure points that may interfere while interacting with an opposite culture.

Conclusion: *Language of the Mind* is a method of training that prepares advisors to function more effectively in a cross-cultural environment. Insight gained allows the advisor to communicate on a deeper level than language alone. Motivational profile comparison with another culture develops psychological sensitivity and promotes emotional development. Moreover, the method can be applied to enhance team dynamics and promote cohesion among advisors, as well as to support family readiness programs.

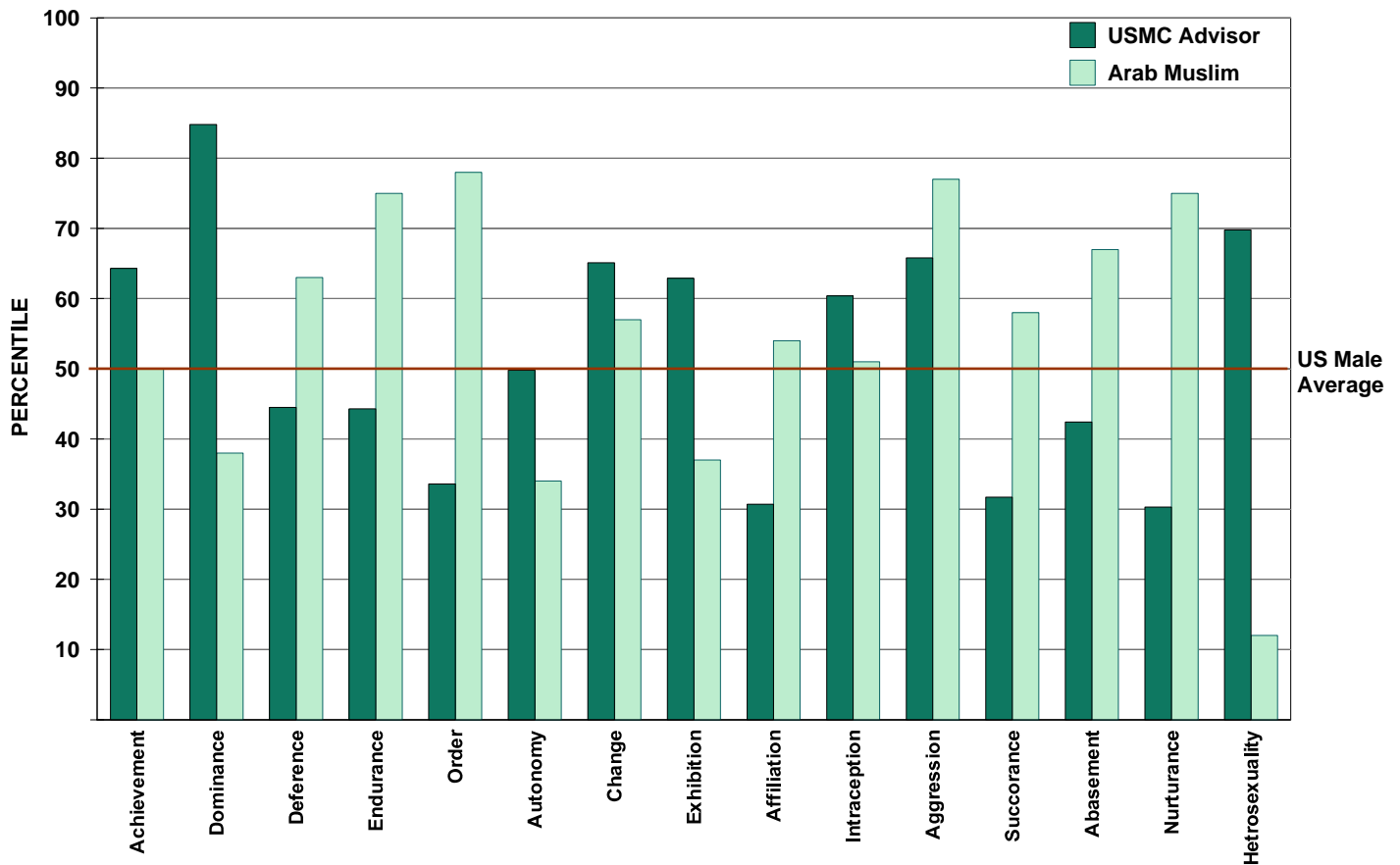
Recommendation: *Language of the Mind* is a method that produces effective interaction with any cultural group through development of standards based on host nation populations.

Cross-Cultural Psychology™

Language of the Mind

Purpose

- Prepare advisors through psychological adaptation to a counter-culture
- Participants learn what they bring to a cross-cultural situation
- Understand *why* they may interpret any situation from a personal frame of reference
- Learn *how* a counterpart culture may judge their behavior
- *Insight* gained produces a better understanding of interpersonal relationships within the team and between counterpart groups
- Promote more effective cross-cultural communication



“The psychological profile and stress reaction classes both have been valuable. I thought your package was very worthwhile and relevant. Things have been going very well here; very busy, but moving forward. The team is doing good work and I feel we were well trained for this.”

Colonel Robert Castellvi, USMC
Commanding Officer
1st Iraqi Army Division
Military Transition Team (2008)

“Attendees agreed that the majority of the cultural awareness training they received prior to deployment was rudimentary and of little value. It was either too simplistic or “flat out” wrong. Cultural training should accurately reflect aspects of culture that influence behavior so transition team members can understand the reasons and motivations underlying personal interaction before performing as an advisor.”

Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned.
Transition Team Conferences. *Lessons Learned from OEF & OIF; I, II & III MEF.* 9 April 2008

Method

Session One: Administer individual psychological profile

Session Two:

- Interpretation of characteristics for team members
- Compare to counterpart group. Identify stress points

Session Three (optional):

- Individual / small group feedback, as requested
- Team Leaders: Team profile, group dynamics, culture shock/combat stress