

The Necessity of Cross-Cultural Competence for Building and Leading Inclusive and Diverse Armed Forces

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*These are my own thoughts. I do not speak for the US Military Academy or the US Army.

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-I appreciate the invitation to join. Thanks to Dr. Irina Goldenberg and the orchestrators of this event.

-I look forward to sharing some ideas with you, and I also would enjoy hearing your thoughts, questions, and ideas during the Q&A/conversation. I would also appreciate feedback on the developing paper.

What is Cross-Cultural Competence?

- **Cross-cultural competence (3C)** means the knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral repertoire and skill sets that military members require to accomplish all given tasks and missions marked by significant cultural diversity (Hajjar, *Armed Forces & Society*, 2010)
 - **Cross-Cultural Competence has two major subcomponents:**
 - (1) ***Culture-general factors*** form the foundation of cross-cultural competence for the military, consisting of the core attitudes, skill-sets, and knowledge basis that *facilitate adaptation to multiple culturally diverse contexts over time*. (Entry point: “Cultural Self”)
 - (2) ***Culture-specific factors*** of cross-cultural competence consist of the necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skill sets that enable effective mission performance in a *given task or operation* characterized by significant cultural diversity (e.g., helps soldiers to succeed while immersed in specific foreign cultures).
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Afghanistan: International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - 2008



Afghanistan: our Intelligence Section included Canadian, French, British, German & U.S. Teammates from all Branches (Army, Navy, Marines, & Air Force)



Iraq: Military Advisor to a Director of an Iraqi Military Intelligence Academy (2009-2010)



Iraq: on this mission we traveled into a community in Baghdad to inspect buildings



Poland Summer 2019 – Operation Atlantic Resolve



3C Strengthens the Diverse Organization of the US Military Academy at West Point



- 3C is critical for internal integration/building in-ranks cohesion.
- Example: the US Military Academy (USMA) at West Point possesses a diverse and cohesive organization.
- The Academy's Sociology Program is especially diverse (i.e., the picture on the right shows a former class of seniors or "Firsties").
- 3C helps USMA, the US Army, and all armed forces to build inclusive teams.

Recommendations to Build 3C, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Military

- Ensure each PME school for new members through senior leaders educates military and civilian teammates about cross-cultural competence and leadership
 - Starting point: understanding of self in cultural context
 - Build skills: communication; persuasion; conflict resolution...
 - Create a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with Goals
 - Make 3C a key consideration for recruitment, selection, development, and promotion in the armed forces
 - Feedback as part of development; linked to promotion
 - Create initiatives to address problems (i.e., task force teamwork at USMA—recruit more minority officers; also academic majors)
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Other Ideas to Expand this Project

(Slide One of Two)

- Mentors: seek at least one diverse mentor/mentee for a standing relationship so *both* people learn and grow
 - Integrate more reflections from Army career experiences
 - Directed the Diversity Committee of the Faculty Council (Five years)
 - Helped the Dean's Directorate create a Diversity Strategy
 - Director of the Sociology Program since 2014. Probably USMA's most diverse academic major based on women and race/ethnicity
 - Director of US Army Culture Center from 2007 to 2008
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Other Ideas to Expand this Project

(Slide Two of Two)

- 3C should remain a permanent, consistent focus of education and training programs as armed forces navigate different diversity tensions (crises) & priorities
 - Prevention of sexual harassment/assault struck me as USMA's top focus in 2018 – 2019/2020
 - African-American concerns seem like a current top focus at USMA
 - What if:
 - Tensions linked to political perspectives create problems during this volatile election period—extending into 2021 & beyond?
 - USMA experiences heightened civilian-military faculty and staff tensions during the pandemic? Potential for Ageism?
 - Religious outgrouping occurs?
 - Sexual minority outgrouping occurs?
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Final Thoughts

(Slide One of Two)

- Cross-cultural competence can help armed forces worldwide to build internal integration (i.e., diverse militaries) and external adaptation (foreign cultures).
 - 3C empowers leaders to build inclusive, cohesive, and diverse militaries.
 - 3C helps to accomplish the mission in garrison and around the world.
 - Leading successfully in a complex world requires 3C, both in the armed forces and in other organizations. 3C keeps all organizations vibrant and relevant.
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Final Thoughts

(Slide Two of Two)

- Thanks again for the opportunity to share some thoughts.
- I look forward to our conversation.
- Stay safe and well during this unprecedented time.
- If you have any feedback on my project, please share.

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Extra Slides if Needed



Origins of my interest in Cross-Cultural Competence (3C)

- Cultural and Military Sociology (my main focal areas)
 - Served in an Army Culture Center
 - Partnered with military and civilian faculty from across the US military
 - Helped to crystallize my thinking about 3C, and to build very helpful networks across many disciplines (e.g., cultural anthropology; psychology; others)
 - 3C helps me to understand and maintain strong relationships with my diverse family and base of friends. 3C also helps me tremendously in the Sociology Program and Diversity Committee, and as an Academy leader, teacher, teammate, researcher, etc.
 - I think 3C is incredibly relevant to Global Leaders in the US Army and in all organizations worldwide! **3C will grow in importance!**
 - Reflecting on my Army journey: 3C applies to successfully serving in a diverse Army, and also for building relationships & teams with foreign allies and people
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