



THE IMI FACILITATION
GUIDE SERIES

Module 1: Handbook on Intercultural Simulations & Training

The Theory, Process, and Ethics

The Contrast-American Simulation

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SECTION 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

A) Why is experiential learning essential to intercultural training?

For over thirty-five years the prevalent type of training was completely non-experiential, this didactic learning was a cookbook of do's and don'ts.

This form of learning is not conducive to intercultural understanding. This can be explained simply this way:

Learning the information on Mexico is important to reduce introductory stress, but if it were the only information given it wouldn't be useful.

It would most likely be:

- Stereotypical
- Counterproductive

Information that can be applied to any situation in a foreign country is the goal of good intercultural training.

“Good cross cultural training somehow combines the didactic (knowledge and information) with the experiential component.” – Dr. Gary Weaver

The old method of training, which emphasized checklists of do's and don'ts, did not adequately prepare participants for every situation abroad. If, while abroad, the participant cannot find a solution to a problem within his mental checklist of do's and don'ts panic would occur, making the situation worse.

It's much more useful to have a broad framework which can be applied to any situation, rather than a specific lesson that cannot possibly cover all situations.

This framework ought to be based on how people of other cultures think (what are their values). This training provides a system to analyze and interpret behavior based on this framework.

One of the challenges to trainers is the broad expectation among clients for a cookbook.

Effective training balances the cookbook with the experiential learning. A good training should provide clients with the following elements:

- The general cultural framework to understand any situation they might find themselves in.
- The basic facts on the customs and norms of a culture to give clients the tools they need to hit the ground running once they enter into a culture.

Uncertainty Reduction should be the result of good cross-cultural training. The participant will have the facts, allowing them to navigate the new culture; as well as have the ability to understand better any situation, which might occur during their stay in a foreign country.

Training should be focused on a culture-general focus to avoid the cookie-cutter approach to training, which leaves people ill equipped to deal with situations that are not explicitly covered

B) What is the purpose of simulations in Intercultural Training

The primary purpose of any intercultural simulation is to give people the skills they need to communicate across cultures. These skills can only be learned through experience.

The underlying goal of a simulation is to provide this experiential learning. The lessons learned from this type of education can be characterized as skills. These skills include:

- What is it like to communicate with someone from a different culture?
- Can you determine why another person said what he/she said based purely on your understanding of their culture?
- Why are you reacting the way you are when interacting with a person of a different culture?

This type of instruction does not just teach skills, but raises awareness of your own culture and that of others.

In order to properly understand the culture of another human being you must first understand your own culture. This self-awareness is one of the most important goals of intercultural training.

Along with acquiring this self-awareness, there are two very important points that must be covered in some form during training:

1. What is the process of entering another culture?
2. What happens when two cultures clash?

Culture general training acts as an inoculation effect for the client

The client experiences a dose of what they might experience overseas in a safe laboratory setting. It allows the client to gain the experience they would from a regular assignment without the risks associated with real cultural immersion.

“Intercultural communication competencies have been found to be strong predictors of culture shock, psychological adjustment, overall intercultural effectiveness, [and job performance]” - Mitchell Hammer

This inoculation is meant to decrease the effects of culture shock in terms of its intensiveness and duration.

- Minimization of the duration and intensity is important, but culture shock should not be completely eliminated, as it is an important part of cultural awareness.

In this capacity, cross cultural acts as a catalyst of the reversal of needs in the high information/low training survival -> low information/high survival paradigm.

C) What are the skills learned through experiential simulations?

Cultural skills are developed through simulations and exercises. Once a client has experienced situations multiple times, they receive the psychological skills needed to address issues that might arise while abroad.

Skills are perfected in a simulation setting by the feedback provided by the trainer. This feedback allows the person in training to better understand the issues arising from the simulations and to perfect the skills needed to address these issues.

The central skill developed by cultural-general training is **realistic cultural empathy**:

- Empathy is the ability to put oneself into someone else's psychological shoes; understand the world the way they do, and understand how they perceive reality.

Realistic Cultural Empathy takes the-above mentioned notion of empathy and applies it to a cultural context

- This allows the client to understand the underlying reasons for actions of an individual of another culture. With this understanding a client can anticipate the reactions and actions of the individual from another culture.

Realistic Cultural Empathy DOES NOT mean agreement with, but understanding the reason for actions done by the other party.

Realistic Cultural Empathy is a skill, which is developed through experiential exercises.

- Specific skills that are tied to realistic cultural empathy include:
 - ❖ The ability to effectively communicate with individuals of a different culture.
 - ❖ The capacity to adapt and understand any situation, using the knowledge gained from training to navigate problems.

"The ability to effectively communicate with another human being is a skill" - Dr. Gary Weaver

D) How are these skills applied to the real world?

If successful a participant should be able to:

- Anticipate any situation based on their understanding of the underlying culture.
- Be aware of the process of adapting and dealing with another culture.
- Analyze the reasons behind a situation, and what they can do to adapt.
- Think on their feet.

Where the training becomes helpful is when an individual overseas in a situation can rely on his/her training:

- The person can say, “I’ve gone through this before.” It is not a new experience to them because they had already experienced the situation, or a similar one, in a laboratory setting.

“Intercultural training sessions often are designed as living laboratories in which participants are asked to use the information learned, in a safe environment, in the presence of coaches who have “been there”

- Sheila Ramsey

SECTION 2: GAMES & SIMULATIONS IN INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

A) What are some examples of intercultural training games/simulations in use?

There are many variations to the experiential model expressed in the previous section. General intercultural experiential training can be broken down into two main categories:

Cultural Awareness: The purpose of these training exercises are to allow the participant to become aware of his/her own culture in the process of becoming aware of cultural differences.

Examples include:

- Get To Know Your Orange
- BaFa' BaFa
- Bhangra
- Encounter
- Contrast-American Simulation

Negotiation/Arbitration: The purpose of these games is to develop in the participant skills for dealing with intercultural negotiations.

Examples include:

- Red/Blue
- Ridge High

Although definitions vary between trainers, broadly speaking experiential training methodologies can be distinguished as either a game or simulation.

Games: The goal of intercultural games are to reinforce, provide practice, or motivate participants. By using card games, simple exercises, or structured activities, intercultural games present and provide hands-on learning of specific concepts. Games generally have the following characteristics:

- Predetermined goals
- A set of required activities for the participants to perform
- Certain constraints on what can and cannot be done
- Standard outcomes that can be used by the facilitator to reinforce an intercultural concept

Although there are a multitude of games used by intercultural trainers, a small sample of games include:

- ***Get To Know Your Orange***: This game is meant to illustrate the fact that we regard people of other cultures as being all the same. We generalize our understanding of a different culture and assume that all individuals in the culture act in a similar fashion. This game forces participants to find a distinguishing characteristic of an orange and to then be able to find their orange in a large pile of oranges. Finding unique characteristics of an orange, which seem to be all the same, can be used as a lesson, which can be applied to culture in general. It is an excellent tool to illustrate to participants the importance of the individual differences among peoples of a culture, and to not assume that all people of different cultures are the same.
- ***Bhangra***: This game is meant to make participants aware of the very real sensation of disorientation and confusion associated with entering another culture that operates with different customs and expectations. In the game, a group of participants must go to different tables; each table has a participant who is told how to play their game at their table. The goal is for the wandering participants to try and play cards at each table without receiving instructions. This game simulates the initial shock of entering another culture, which operates with different customs and values (rules and instructions). In the real world it is not possible to be told all of these rules. This game allows participants to learn how to anticipate this feeling and to gain skills to help mediate the immediate issues that are raised.
- ***Red/Blue***: This game is a variation of the classic “Prisoner’s Dilemma” scenario. Two teams are formed and put in separate rooms where they are told to choose either red or blue; their color choice in combination with the other team corresponds to an increase or decrease of money. Just like the Prisoner’s Dilemma, the teams can either work with or against each other; at the same time they have no direct communication. If both teams choose the same color they both gain a small amount, but if they choose different colors one team wins more and the other time losses more. This process is done for a couple rounds, at a certain point the amounts are increased and additional rounds are done. The goal of the game, as described to the participants, is to make the most money. The way that the participants interpret this goal is very interesting, and provides kindle for the debrief. The reactions that participants display after each round and the issue of trust and strategy are all interesting occurrences, which can have fascinating applications to cross-cultural interaction. All of these applications should be explored in the debrief.

Simulations: Simulations take selected parts of foreign cultural and social situations and reduces them to its essential elements. These allows a participant to experience a particular intercultural situation in the safety of the laboratory and learn from what they experienced. Simulations provide an inoculating effect, leaving participants more psychologically prepared to deal with the effects of culture shock and adjustment than they otherwise would be. Below are several examples from the plethora of simulations used in intercultural training to provide a sampling of what simulations accomplish:

- ***BaFa’ BaFa***: This simulation is a wonderful tool to simulate the effects of entering a new culture. After an initial briefing, two groups are created. Each group is given a unique culture along the contextual paradigm. The Alpha culture is usually the high-context

culture, while the Beta culture is the low-context culture. After the participants learn the rules of their culture they begin living it. After this has been established visitors from each group are exchanged. The resulting stereotyping, misperception, and misunderstanding from the interaction provides the experience for the subsequent de-brief. This simulation is a good tool because it, in theory, allows participants to become personally aware of the alienation and confusion, which comes from entering a foreign culture. This feeling, along with the necessary de-brief, provides the participants with the inoculation effect needed to prepare them for their real encounters overseas.

- **Encounter:** This simulation is meant to expose participants to the perceptions and stereotypes that they will undoubtedly create about a culture with which they are unfamiliar. It uses extremely simple rules to simulate a very common and complex occurrence. The resulting experience is debriefed and used to better prepare participants for their international experience. The way this simulation is conducted, groups of no more than twelve are formed. One male and one female are separated from the group and called “experts.” The cultural are given three cultural traits which they must follow:
 1. Men can only talk to men, and women only to women
 2. Answers are only “yes” or “no”
 3. If the expert is smiling then the answer is always “Yes”, if they are NOT smiling the answer is always “No”

The group assumes this culture and must enact it perfectly. The experts enter the room and are told to determine three things: What are the values of this culture? Do they have any problems? What can be done about them? The exercise should be no less than 7 minutes and no more than 20 minutes. At the end of the exercise, the experts share what they have learned and the group reveals the rules. This leads to a lot of material for the debrief where the cultural implications are explored. The lessons learned from this exercise have real world applications, namely the tendency for American’s to misunderstand foreign cultures and create stereotypes to aid in adapting. This exercise teaching participants the tools to avoid that outcome.

- **Ridge High:** This simulation is one of the best examples of how intercultural training simulations can train participants for intercultural negotiation. The following scenario is created to start the simulation: There is a high school where two minority groups, the Clays and Trents, are clashing. There is also the majority culture, Woodsian. The parents of the students call a meeting to discuss the issues behind the violence. The principal (a Woodsian) would also like recommendations from the parents regarding ways to discipline the children. The principal would like to find a solution that is agreeable to all three groups. Both of these groups are present at the meeting, and the Woodsians act as arbitrators. The simulation is conducted by splitting the participants into the three groups. The simulation is split into two phases. The objective of the first phase is threefold: have the participants familiarize themselves to their assigned groups attitudes, values, and behavior system; begin acting out those values and behaviors; and finally create a strategy for the meeting. The second phase is the meeting itself, where the actors act

according to their groups assigned values. This exercise should last for at least one hour, in order to gain the most from the simulation. The debrief for this simulation is crucial, without it the participants can not gain knowledge from what they just experienced. With the debrief, participants gain experience that can be applied to intercultural negotiating and arbitration concepts, which were outlined before the simulation began. This simulation is the perfect micro-environment to realize the issues surrounding intercultural negotiating in conflict situations.

- ***The Contrast-American Simulation:*** This simulation is designed to increase cultural self-awareness in participants. It is meant to highlight certain assumptions and cultural tenancies, which would otherwise be hard to realize. It uses role-playing as a technique to engage participants in a realistic setting. A participant is chosen to act in a scenario, often times developed to be meaningful for that particular group. This participant volunteer is known as Mr. Smith/Mrs. Smith. They are to act normally as they would for a real engagement with a foreign counterpart. The scenario usually takes place in a generic non-American and non-European culture, and Mr. Khan is always culture-general. He represents no particular culture, but is instead a perfect contrast to the mainstream American culture. This perfect contrast allows Mr. Smith as well as the audience to see how they react and behave in the situation. This simulation thus highlights the culture of the Americans, since Khan is cultural-general; the simulation merely exposes the reactions of the Americans. The feelings and assumptions that are created by Mr. Smith and the group is the kindle used in the debrief. The facilitator's first job is to de-role the individual, and ask them what they felt during the experience. The same is then done to the audience. The important learning comes from the reflections people do at the end, why did I say that? Why did I think this? With the proper training, participants can take those questions and connect them to the concepts of cross-cultural interaction. With this connection between the conceptual and experiential aspects of training, participants become more aware of their own culture, and in turn more able to anticipate cultural issues while abroad. This is the goal of the Mr. Khan exercise, to develop in participants a sense of their own culture and how it interacts with foreign cultures.

SECTION 3: THE ETHICS OF INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

A) What are the primary ethical concerns for a facilitator?

A trainer must have the knowledge and capacity to handle any situation that might arise during a game or simulation .

The purpose of the simulation must be ethical, unethical behavior includes:

- The use of simulations as a selection tool for overseas assignments.
- If the only purpose of the simulation is to get people upset
- If the simulation is used to take advantage of someone's ignorance about culture to make the trainer look good or smart.

Culture training deals with sensitive emotions, since people are taking risks. It is the job of the facilitator to not humiliate clients.

It is unethical to select people just because the sponsor requests it.

B) What constitutes an ethical simulation?

Preparation: Proper pre-simulation preparation is essential to a successful simulation. The elements needed in preparations include:

- A needs assessment to understand the needs of the client, this is done for the obvious reason that exercises must be relevant to the needs of clients in order for them to be effective.
- A non-threatening environment must be established, where the exercise is seen as a learning tool, this is especially true in small groups.
- Participants need to be prepped with models and context before the actual simulation is attempted. This prep provides participants with the conceptual framework to interpret and analyze what goes on with the simulation.
 - ❖ This context provides the facilitator with the framework in order to discuss the simulation effectively during the debrief
- This context and conceptual framework is critical, otherwise people will formulate their own perspectives based on their previous experience. This only perpetrates stereotypes, resulting in the simulation doing more harm than good
 - ❖ Once a negative perspective is formed it is nearly impossible to change

Simulation: During the simulation it is extremely important and ethically necessary that the facilitator is fully engaged to protect the participant and audience.

- At the commencement of the simulation it is important that the facilitator never forces people to participate, volunteers are always a must!
- A facilitator must be vigilant through the simulation, ready to step in and end the simulation if it gets out of hand, but at the same time allow the simulation go where it must for learning to be achieved.

Debriefing: The summary and wrap-up at the end of the simulation is in many ways more important than the simulation itself.

- It is absolutely critical that a trainer de-role the participants and debrief the whole group, participants and audience included
 - ❖ Using the intellectual framework established before the simulation the facilitator must analyze the simulation that just concluded.
 - ❖ This analyzes allows the group to understand what they just experienced, permitting them to see the conceptual theories in a real world sense, which is essential if it is to be used effectively when overseas
- This debrief is necessary to avoid psychological damage to the participants and misinformed cultural notions.
- Finally, it is the job of the facilitator to ensure that the group does not hound the participant for any mistakes, it is important to make the distinction between the participant and the group member. Always thank the group member and ask her or him the first questions.

C) What should a trainer be aware of during simulation?

- It is unethical for a trainer to do a simulation if they are not looking out for the triggers or if they haven't thought about what they would do as a trainer in certain situations.
- The simulation is a “simulated reality,” so the trainer must be prepared to deal with emotions, because people become invested in the simulations.
 - ❖ It is the obligation of the trainer to de-role the participants and look at the exercise critically as a learning tool and not as an assessment of the individual.

D) What are specific ethical concerns with the Mr. Khan exercise?

Along with all of the general ethical concerns that have been outlined, there are very specific concerns that must be considered when implementing the Khan exercise.

- Sexism and Racism are two very important areas of concern when using the contrast-American simulation. Mr. Khan cannot cross certain boundaries, even during a simulation.
 - ❖ This is a contentious issue, because despite the sexism that a client might experience overseas, Mr. Khan cannot cross certain boundaries.

- An example of this issue can be seen with the very purpose of the Khan exercise. It is to show that Mr. Khan (as another culture) has a certain view on women or race, which the client will, most likely, experience while abroad. This is not, however, how Mr. Khan is outside of the simulation. This is an extremely thin line that the facilitator must be aware of and monitor.

The Mr. Khan exercise with a large group and no prep is completely unethical, must provide the context for the exercise to be administered and effective.