In today's full spectrum operations, Warfighters must often interact with persons from cultures whose values and social protocols are very different. In order to conduct missions successfully, these Warfighters must learn to recognize, respect, and reconcile these differences. This experience is best gained through interaction with the populations of interest, but there are not enough resources to provide sufficient training. Furthermore, new conflicts or needs for assistance are not predictable and most cultural training is provided for specific regional requirements.

For this project, we are developing authoring tools and exemplar training scenarios for developing cross-cultural competency (3C). In an example training simulation, a learner is a small unit leader responsible for delivering supplies to a remote Caribbean village as part of a Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operation. Eager to help, local villagers take over and begin their own system of distribution, which conflicts with the mission’s objectives and methods. In order to avoid a potentially lethal situation, while meeting mission objectives, the learner must recognize the nature of the dilemma and respond accordingly.

Objectives:

- Develop a globally appropriate, theoretical conceptualization of cross-cultural competence (3C) that can be used in operation.
- Conceptualize 3C as performance that can be measured in behavioral terms.
- Train and assess 3C using Socio-Cultural Encounters (SCEs) and cultural dilemmas based on universal value dimensions.
- Build an assessment and training program using simulation technology.
Consider the context:

- Cultural context is a critical component of cross-cultural interactions, but has received little inquiry in terms of 3C training and evaluation programs.
- Due to the complexity of cross-cultural encounters, it is important to determine which knowledge, skills, and abilities are most relevant for specific interactions.
- Understanding of the role that context plays regarding cross-cultural competence can help make our models more accurate and our interpretation of results more robust.

What we are doing:

- We are building a performance-based training and assessment tool for cross-cultural competence, leveraging a unique approach that combines simulation technology and cutting-edge 3C research.
- We are creating engaging simulations that can be applied to any cultural context (i.e., different countries/backgrounds), and can teach lessons leveraging different stakeholder perspectives (i.e., military versus local culture).
- We are using commercial gaming technology to provide rich and nuanced animation that emphasizes the nonverbal and environmental cues needed to recognize cultural context.
- We are developing user-friendly authoring tools, along with libraries of behaviors, that make authoring cross-cultural “serious games” affordable and accessible to a wider audience.