

Objective: To simulate the interaction of four contrasting groups discussing problems caused by outsiders who attempt to find common ground without sacrificing their integrity.

TIME REQUIRED	A half day
RISK LEVEL	Moderate
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED	Any number of participants and a facilitator acquainted with the Synthetic Culture Lab or Hofstede's (2001) research
PROCEDURE	Please take the following steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Distribute the time schedule in Exhibit 4.6.2. Announce the objective of this experience as this: to role-play four contrasting synthetic cultures in a simulation demonstrating the importance of identifying cultural similarities and differences.3. Introduce the four synthetic cultures. Guidelines are presented in Exhibit 4.7.4. Have students select a synthetic culture identity for themselves either because it fits with or contrasts with their own viewpoint or for any other reason they choose.5. Have students assemble in a small group with their synthetic culture co-members to socialize one another into the new synthetic culture identity.6. As students discuss the written rules for their synthetic culture, they should incorporate those very same rules into their communication with other group members.

Note. From *Culture-Centered Counseling and Interviewing Skills* (pp. 67–75), by P. B. Pedersen and A. E. Ivey, 1993, Westport, CT: Greenwood/Praeger. Copyright 1993 by Greenwood/Praeger. Adapted with permission.

Exhibit 4.6 *Schedule for a Synthetic Culture Training Laboratory*

1:30 p.m.	<p>Introduction to four synthetic cultures: Alpha (high power distance), Beta (strong uncertainty avoidance), Gamma (strong individualism), and Delta (high masculine). Participants will be divided into four corresponding groups to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ learn the assumptions and rules of their synthetic culture;▪ discuss the problems created by the "outsiders" in each synthetic culture; and▪ select a team of two consultants from each synthetic culture who will visit the other three host cultures to help them deal with the problem of outsiders.
2:30 p.m.	<p>By this time, the four small groups should have completed the above three tasks and be ready to do the following:</p> <p>The first rotation will require sending teams of consultants from each synthetic home culture to each synthetic host culture for a 10-minute consultation in role, followed by a 10-minute debriefing out of role and 10 minutes to report back to their home synthetic culture on what they learned.</p>
3:00 p.m.	<p>The second rotation will follow the same pattern as the first with the next synthetic host culture.</p>
3:30 p.m.	<p>The third rotation will follow the same pattern as the first two with the final synthetic host culture.</p>
4:00 p.m.	<p>Each synthetic culture group will report back to the assembled participants on how to find common ground and agreement between their own culture and persons from different cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>The instructor will lead a synthesis of learning for the day and completion of evaluation forms.</p>
4:30 p.m.	<p>End of day.</p>

7. Direct students to take on their new synthetic culture identity in everything they say and do.
8. Have the synthetic culture groups review the list of problems created in their synthetic culture because of "outsiders." Each synthetic culture community has a problem with outsiders from the other three synthetic culture communities who move into other communities as refugees, visitors, tourists, students, and immigrants. These outsiders have caused serious problems in the schools, institutions, and community because they disregard that culture's way of doing things. They do not believe the same things as people from that culture. Ask students to write a list of two or three specific problems that have resulted from interacting with outsiders.
9. Direct each group to select a team of two consultants who will be sent to another synthetic culture to help them work on the problems caused by outsiders. Have groups send the team to the next synthetic host culture and receive a team from a different synthetic culture.
10. Instruct the groups to complete the three rotations so that each home culture has sent a team to each of the three other host cultures in turn.

Alpha Culture: High Power Distance

Power distance indicates the extent to which a culture accepts that power is unequally distributed in institutions and organizations. Alpha culture accepts a large degree of unequal distribution of power.

Alpha Behaviors

Language

Alphas will use the following words with a positive meaning: *respect, father (as a title), master, servant, older brother, younger brother, wisdom, favor, protect, obey, orders, and pleasing.*

Alphas will use the following words with a negative meaning: *rights, complain, negotiate, fairness, task, necessity, co-determination, objectives, question, and criticize.*

Behaviors and Their Meanings

The following behaviors by Alphas will express the corresponding meanings:

Behavior	Meaning
Is soft-spoken and polite and listens	Friendliness
Is quiet and polite but does not listen	Unfriendliness
Asks for help and direction	Trust
Does not ask for help and direction	Distrust
Is positive and animated, but makes no eye contact	Interest
Is expressionless and unanimated, but makes eye contact	Boredom

Barriers to Communication

- *Language differences:* Alphas are very verbal but usually soft-spoken and polite.
- *Use of nonverbal communication:* Alphas are usually restrained and formal.
- *Stereotypes:* Alphas are hierarchical and seek to please.
- *Evaluation:* Alphas tend to blame themselves for any problems that come up.
- *Stress:* Alphas internalize stress and express stress indirectly.

Gender Roles

Role of Gender

Leadership roles may be held by either men or women. If the society is matriarchal, the visible power of women in decision making is likely to be more obvious than in patriarchal societies, where the visible power of men would be more obvious.

Role of Women

In home and family affairs, women are likely to be very powerful, even though that power might be less visible than the more visible male roles. Although women may seem subservient, they may not in fact be so.

Role of Men

Men in leadership roles are often held accountable for the consequences of their decisions. If they lose the support of the women, new leaders will emerge. Although men may be the visible traditional leaders, the men may be much more subservient in less visible and more private social roles in a balance of power.

Beta Culture: Strong Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance indicates a lack of tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity. Beta culture members seek to avoid such uncertainty.

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Beta Behaviors

Language

Betas will use the following words with a positive meaning: *structure, duty, truth, law, order, certain, clear, clean, secure, safe, predictable, and right.*

Betas will use the following words with a negative meaning: *maybe, creative conflict, tolerant, experiment, spontaneous, relativity, insight, unstructured, loose, and flexible.*

Behaviors and Their Meanings

The following behaviors by Betas will indicate the corresponding meanings:

Behavior	Meaning
Gives detailed responses; is formal, specific and unambiguous	Friendliness
Gives generalized, ambiguous responses; is anxious to end the interview	Unfriendliness
Separates right from wrong unambiguously	Trust
Is openly critical; challenges the credentials of others	Distrust
Is verbal and task oriented; questions with direct eye contact	Interest
Is passive and quiet; makes no direct eye contact	Boredom

Barriers to Communication

- *Language:* Betas are very verbal and well organized and are somewhat loud.
- *Use of nonverbal communication:* Betas are animated in using hands but make little or no physical contact.
- *Stereotypes:* Betas have rigid beliefs that don't change easily.
- *Evaluation:* Betas quickly evaluate a situation to establish right and wrong, sometimes prematurely.
- *Stress:* Betas externalize stress and usually make the other person feel the stress rather than themselves.

Gender Roles

Role of Gender

The right and appropriate roles of men and women are rigidly defined without ambiguity. The dress, behavior, and functions of men and women are defined by rules, traditions, and carefully guarded boundaries.

Role of Women

Women tend to be in charge of home, family, children, and religious or traditional spiritual rituals as guardians of society through a romantic and idealized role of who the woman should be. Society can be very unforgiving to women who rebel or violate those rules, although elderly women may take on traditional power roles otherwise reserved for men.

Role of Men

Men are expected to take care of the women and to protect the home and family by providing for material needs and demonstrating strength in their public posture. Men are expected to be more visible in their public roles than women, and women—especially younger women—might have difficulty sharing power with men in public or work roles.

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Gamma Culture: High Individualism

Individualism indicates the extent to which a culture believes that people are supposed to take care of themselves and remain emotionally independent from groups, organizations, and other collectivities. Gamma culture places a high value on individualism.

Gamma Behaviors

Language

Gammas will use the following words with a positive meaning: *self, friendship, do your own thing, contract, litigation, self-respect, self-interest, self-actualizing, individual, dignity, I and me, pleasure, adventurous, and guilt.*

Gammas will use the following words with a negative meaning: *harmony, face, we, obligation, sacrifice, family, tradition, decency, honor, duty, loyalty, and shame.*

Behaviors and Their Meanings

The following behaviors by Gammas reflect the corresponding meanings:

Behavior	Meaning
Is verbal and self-disclosing	Friendliness
Is critical and likely to subvert or sabotage	Unfriendliness
Aggressively debates issues and controls the interview	Trust
Is noncommittal, passive, ambiguous, and defensive	Distrust
Is loudly verbal and questioning; engages in touching and physical contact	Interest
Maintains physical distance, asks no questions, and makes no eye contact	Boredom

Barriers to Communication

- *Language differences:* Gammas are verbal and self-centered, using *I* and *me* a lot.
- *Use of nonverbal behaviors:* Gammas touch a lot and are somewhat seductive.
- *Stereotypes:* Gammas are defensive and tend to be loners who see others as potential enemies.
- *Evaluation:* Gammas use other people and measure the importance of others in terms of how useful they are.
- *Stress:* Gammas like to take risks and like the challenge of danger to continually test their own ability.

Gender Roles

Role of Gender

Power might as easily be held by men as by women, especially in urban and modernized areas. Gender roles are less rigidly defined, with each gender taking on the roles of the other—to serve his or her self-interests—in public or private activities.

Role of Women

Women are free as long as they have the power to protect themselves. Attractive women can gain power by being manipulative and taking advantage of their beauty. Less assertive and particularly older women are likely to become victims of exploitation by both younger men and women.

Role of Men

Men excel in areas requiring physical strength. Younger, taller, and physically attractive men can be expected to be aggressive in asserting their power over others. Men who are uncomfortable being competitive, especially older men, are likely to be ridiculed as weak and losers.

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Delta Culture: High Masculinity

Masculinity indicates the extent to which traditional masculine values of assertiveness, money, and things prevail in a culture, as contrasted to traditional feminine values of nurturance, quality of life, and people.

Delta Behaviors

Language

Deltas will use the following words with a positive meaning: *career, competition, fight, aggressive, assertive, success, winner, deserve, merit, balls, excel, force, big, hard, fast, and quantity.*

Deltas will use the following words with a negative meaning: *quality, caring, solidarity, modesty, compromise, help, love, grow, small, soft, slow, and tender.*

Behaviors and Their Meanings

The following behaviors by Deltas will indicate the corresponding meanings:

Behavior	Meaning
Engages in physical contact; is seductive and loud	Friendliness
Maintains physical distance; is sarcastic and sadistic	Unfriendliness
Is competitive, challenging, and dominating	Trust
Is openly critical and disparaging and is eager to end the interview	Distrust
Is sports oriented, eager to debate, and engaging	Interest
Engages in no eye contact; is discourteous and drowsy	Boredom

Barriers to Communication

- *Language differences:* Deltas are loud and verbal, with a tendency to criticize and argue with others.
- *Use of nonverbal communication:* Deltas like physical contact, direct eye contact, and animated gestures.
- *Stereotypes:* Deltas are macho, are hero and status oriented, and like winners.
- *Evaluation:* Deltas are hard to please, tend to be overachievers and defensive, and blame others for their mistakes.
- *Stress:* Deltas are type A personalities, generating stress through fast-paced lifestyles.

Gender Roles

Role of Gender

Men and more masculine women are typically more powerful and are highly favored in leadership roles. Passive and facilitating behaviors are tolerated in women but not in men. Men are stereotyped as strong and women as weak.

Role of Women

Women tend to be either masculine in their personal style as "one of the guys" or completely subservient and docile, with few women in between. Young and attractive women can use their beauty to win, but without romantic illusions. Older or less attractive women are at a great disadvantage.

Role of Men

Young, strong, tall, and attractive men are idealized as heroes and are admired or envied by others. Men see life as a game played by men, with women as cheerleaders.

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Exhibit 4.7 *Guidelines for the Four Synthetic Cultures (Continued)*

Brief Comparison of the Behaviors of the Four Synthetic Cultures

Meaning	Behavior			
	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
Friendliness	Polite and listening	Formal and specific	Verbal and disclosing	Physical and loud
Unfriendliness	Polite and not listening	General and ambiguous	Critical and attacking	Sarcastic and distant
Trust	Asks for help	Actively listens	Debates all topics	Challenges and competes
Distrust	Does not ask for help	Attacks and challenges	Is noncommittal and passive	Is critical and insulting
Interest	Positive, no eye contact	Active, eye contact	Loud and physical	Playful
Boredom	Passive and direct	Passive, no eye contact	Distant, eye contact	Detached, quiet, and distant

Barriers to Communication and the Behaviors of Synthetic Cultures

Barrier	Synthetic Cultures			
	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
Language differences	Verbal and soft-spoken	Loud and verbal	Verbal and self-centered	Critical and arguing
Use of nonverbal communication	Restrained and formal	Animated and nonphysical	Seductive and physical	Physical and direct
Stereotypes	Hierarchical and pleasing	Promoting of rigid beliefs	Defensive and paranoid	Macho and hero oriented
Evaluation	Self-blaming in evaluations	Premature and selfish	Utilitarian	Overachieving
Stress	Internalizes stress	Externalizes stress	Takes risks	Generates stress
Organizational constraint	Follows formal rules	Is highly structured	Is disorganized and chaotic	Competes to win

Mediating Conflict Between Synthetic Cultures

The following sections examine examples of conflict between synthetic cultures and identify examples of similarities and differences in positive expectations and values that persons from both synthetic cultures share.

Conflict Between an Alpha and a Beta

Alphas emphasize a hierarchy of power where each person has his or her place, showing respect to those above and expecting obedience from those below their own level. Betas dislike uncertainty and do not tolerate ambiguity, so there is a structure of laws that must be obeyed that go beyond the needs of individuals or society. A possible conflict between Alpha and Beta might occur when a high-power-level group of Alphas do whatever they like and disregard the rules, in spite of the objections by Betas in that society.

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Conflict Between an Alpha and a Gamma

Alphas emphasize a hierarchy of power where each person has his or her place, showing respect to those above and expecting obedience from those below their own level. Gammas are individualistic and believe that everyone should take care of himself or herself and remain emotionally independent from groups, organizations, and society. A possible conflict between Alphas and Gammas might be a group of Gammas who fail to show proper respect for the Alpha leaders.

Conflict Between an Alpha and a Delta

Alphas emphasize a hierarchy of power where each person has his or her place, showing respect to those above and expecting obedience from those below their own level. Deltas are assertive, materialistic, and success oriented, seeking rapid progress and ultimate domination in their relationships with others. A possible conflict would be a group of Deltas who attack the Alpha hierarchy as uneconomic and inefficient and attempt to remove the Alphas from power.

Conflict Between a Beta and a Gamma

Betas avoid uncertainty whenever possible and prefer a structure of clear, unambiguous rules to define truth and duty in their relationships. Gammas are individualistic and believe that everyone should take care of himself or herself and remain emotionally independent from groups, organizations, and society. A possible conflict between Betas and Gammas might be the increased power of Gammas, who promote individual freedom where anybody can do whatever they want and where nobody has a right to control their behavior.

Conflict Between a Beta and a Delta

Betas avoid uncertainty whenever possible and prefer a structure of clear, unambiguous rules to define truth and duty in their relationships. Deltas are assertive, materialistic, and success oriented, seeking rapid progress and ultimate domination in their relationships with others. A possible conflict between Betas and Deltas might be the increased power of a small clique of Deltas who interpret the rules to their own advantage or find ways around the rules to increase their own power in society.

Conflict Between a Gamma and a Delta

Gammas are individualistic and believe that everyone should take care of himself or herself and remain emotionally independent from groups, organizations, and society. Deltas are assertive, materialistic, and success oriented, seeking rapid progress and ultimate domination in their relationships with others. A possible conflict between Gammas and Deltas might be a power struggle where the Deltas use teamwork in their organization to destroy individualistic Gammas and take over power in society.

Outsider Problems

Outsiders cause problems in Alpha culture by emphasizing the equality of all persons, demanding accountability to the community of powerful people, encouraging shared responsibility in the family, promoting shared authority in classrooms, and advocating the decentralization of power.

Outsiders cause problems in Beta culture by emphasizing the importance of uncertainty, the dangers of stress and assertiveness, leniency of rules, interest in things that are different, open-ended learning situations, taking time off, flexibility in use of time, moderation, and the value of human rights.

Outsiders cause problems in Gamma culture by emphasizing the importance of the group, welfare guarantees, the dominant role of government, harmony and consensus, avoidance of confrontations, diplomas as measures of credibility, and relationships prevailing over task goals.

Outsiders cause problems in Delta culture by emphasizing caring for others, warm relationships, modesty, equal rights for men and women, tenderness in relationships, sympathy for the weak, androgyny of gender roles, compromise, negotiation, permissiveness, preservation of the environment, and helping the less fortunate.

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DEBRIEFING

The Synthetic Cultures are based on four dimensions of Geert Hofstede's 55-country database. Each culture represents tendencies of those cultures but each synthetic culture is an abstraction. In this experience, it is useful to have each group discuss and present a report to the larger group on their advice to people coming to their culture and their feedback to the other three synthetic cultures. Some discussion questions are as follows:

1. Were you able to discover elements of all four synthetic cultures in your own culture?
2. Were you able to find common ground without sacrificing integrity?
3. Which synthetic cultures did you work with most constructively?
4. Which synthetic cultures were most difficult to work with?
5. How will you use what you learned from this experience?

INSIGHT

If the training context is safe and if you take some risks, you can learn to find common ground across cultures without sacrificing integrity.