Cultural Priming
Adopting the other’s mindset to improve analysis

Objective
To examine the impact of priming analysts with a non-Western, collectivist cultural mindset to better understand and predict the behavior of others in East Asia and South Asia.

Definition
Priming refers to constructing psychological conditions or stimuli to change an organism’s response to a later stimulus.

In a collectivist culture, group needs take precedence over individual needs; whereas, in an individualist culture, individual needs take precedence over group needs.

Findings
Scientific literature clearly indicates that the existing distinction between individualist and collectivist cultures does not adequately describe the spectrum of Asian cultures. CASL researchers have developed a framework that not only accounts for East Asian cultures, but also South Asian cultures; this framework could improve the efficacy of cultural priming.

CASL researchers plan to:
- Develop client-relevant, scenario-based surveys to assess cultural self-concept orientation and cultural knowledge.
- Validate the surveys through neuroimaging and psychometric methods.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of cultural priming when applied to a structured analytic task involving competing social influences.

Relevance
Analysts attempt to understand another’s behavior to successfully predict his or her future behavior and increase mission success. Thus, adopting the perspective of another is a vital skill for effective intelligence analysis. However, not every analyst is familiar with others’ cultures, and even knowledgeable analysts may have difficulty adopting a foreign mindset. With cultural priming, analysts may better predict the effect of social influences on decision-making and, therefore, better predict others’ behaviors.

Reports & Products
- Cultural Priming: A Research Program (February 2011)
- Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research (February 2011)

For More Information
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