Cultural Priming
Adopting another’s mindset to improve analysis

Objective
Intelligence professionals must adopt culturally different perspectives when analyzing mission-relevant materials and to provide alternative explanations for intelligence. With cultural priming, intelligence professionals may be better able to identify the culturally-influenced, social relational preferences that guide judgments and decisions, and, therefore, provide alternative explanations that incrementally help forecast behaviors of others. CASL’s goal is to improve the perspective-taking ability of intelligence professionals to yield increased understanding and accurate analysis of human factors situations.

Definitions
Relational Models Theory: A theory describing four fundamental approaches to social interactions, including Market Pricing (utility-based), Authority Ranking (hierarchically-organized), Communal Sharing (similarity-based), and Equality Matching (egalitarian-based) (Fiske, 1992).

Relational Orientation: An individual’s preference for relating with others in different situations.

Priming: The process of making an idea or a mindset more easily accessible by associating an item such as a word or picture with a culturally relevant concept.

Findings
In 2012, CASL researchers demonstrated the uniqueness of relational models across three studies, the results of which supported the relevance of applying relational models for interpreting cultural influences:

- Self-report survey results yielded conceptual distinctions between relational models and other cultural factors (e.g., values).
- Brain activation patterns in CASL’s neuroimaging study suggested that people use different areas of the brain to process relational orientations.
- Scenario study responses demonstrated cultural differences between heritage speakers of European, Afghan, Chinese, and Iranian languages in relational orientations, as well as personal values.

Relevance
In 2013, researchers plan to evaluate the effectiveness of a cultural prime when applied to a structured analytic judgment task. This research will underpin training materials for increasing intelligence professionals’ ability to adopt alternative cultural perspectives.

For More Information
U.S. Government Point of Contact
John Walker
Government Technical Director for Analysis at CASL
University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language
(301) 226-8912 | jwalker@casl.umd.edu | www.casl.umd.edu

CASL Principal Investigator
Sharon Glazer, PhD, Research Professor
Lelyn Saner, PhD, Assistant Research Scientist
University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language
(301) 226-8835 | sglazer@casl.umd.edu | www.casl.umd.edu

Although value preferences take on a similar order, the magnitude of importance placed on them differs across cultures.