



**Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning**

# **Cultural Stress: An Unexplored Component of Combat Operational Stress**

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**14 Aug 2008**

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# Introduction



- “The last thing they want to do is be friendly to an Iraqi because they are pretty sick and tired of them. . . of the mentality of ‘Oh well they’re all insurgents, you know *F* them all.’”
  - Marine from 4<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Group
- This is about questions, not answers.



# Agenda



- Culture Shock v. Cultural Stress
- Propositions
- Relationship to Combat Operational Stress
- Effects
- Culture and Language Training
- Leader Actions
- Recommendations for Research



## Culture Shock v. Cultural Stress



- Large body of research into Culture Shock
  - Exchange students, missionaries, business
- Applied to the military as is
- Hasn't been rigorous analysis



# 2 DIVERGING PATHS



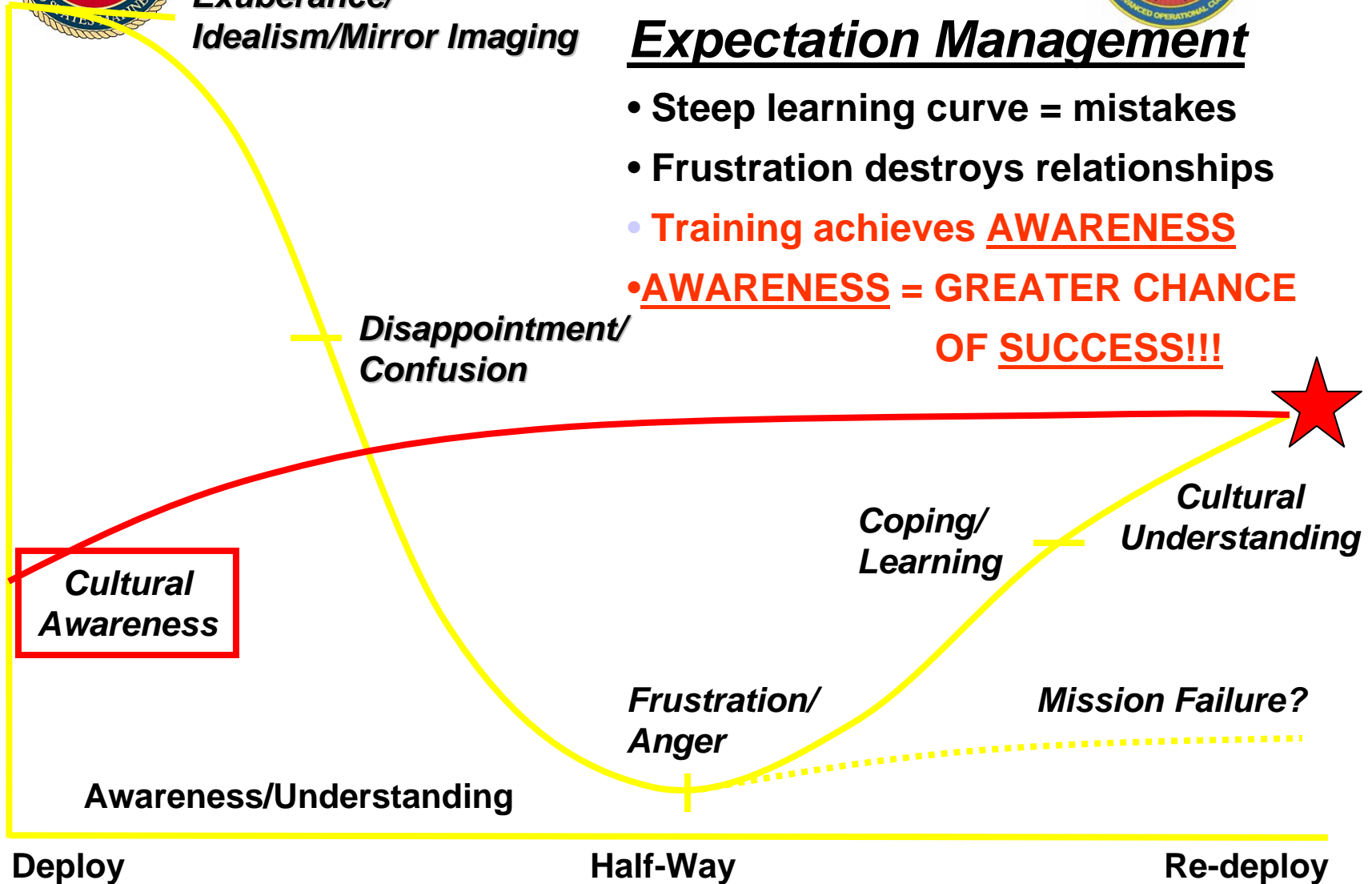
No Cultural Training

*Exuberance/  
Idealism/Mirror Imaging*

## Expectation Management

- Steep learning curve = mistakes
- Frustration destroys relationships
- Training achieves AWARENESS
- AWARENESS = GREATER CHANCE OF SUCCESS!!!

Expectations





## Culture Shock v. Cultural Stress



- **Culture Shock** - trauma or disorientation after being exposed to a foreign culture
  - Confusion
  - Impatience
  - Frustration
  - Anxiety
  - Withdrawal
  - Aggression
- Sounds a lot like **stress**
- More than semantic
- Psychological and physiological effects
- “Shell shock”



# Propositions



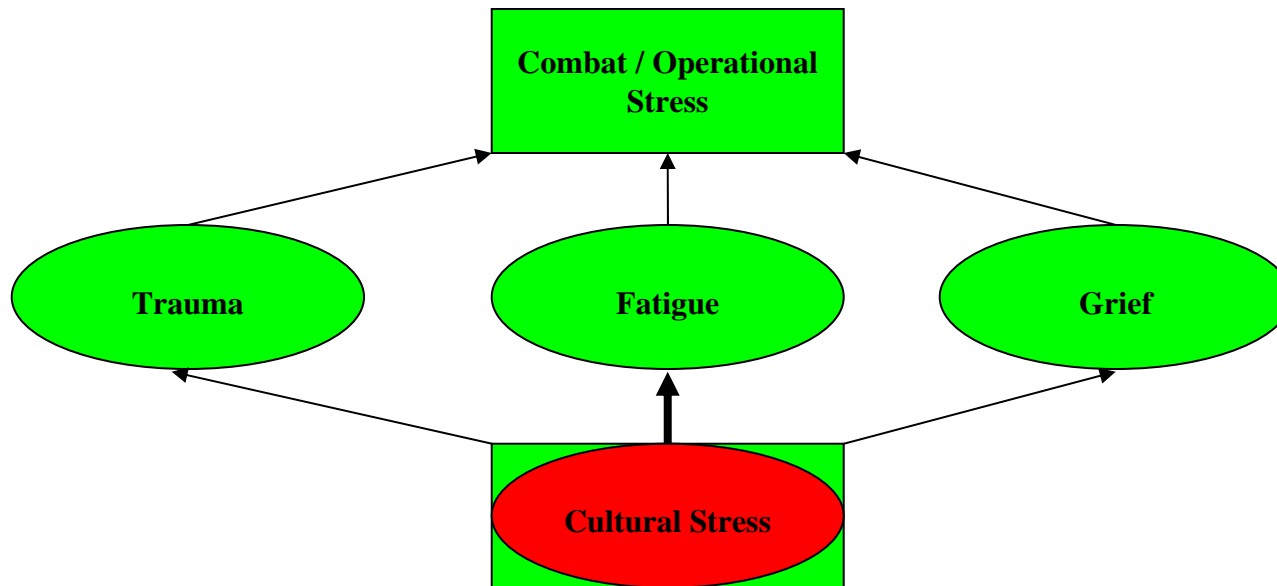
1. Cultural Stress is a component of Combat Operational Stress.
2. Cultural Stress has effects on Marine missions.
3. Culture and language training can serve as a preventative for Cultural Stress.
4. Leader actions can mitigate Cultural Stress.



# Relationship to Combat Operational Stress

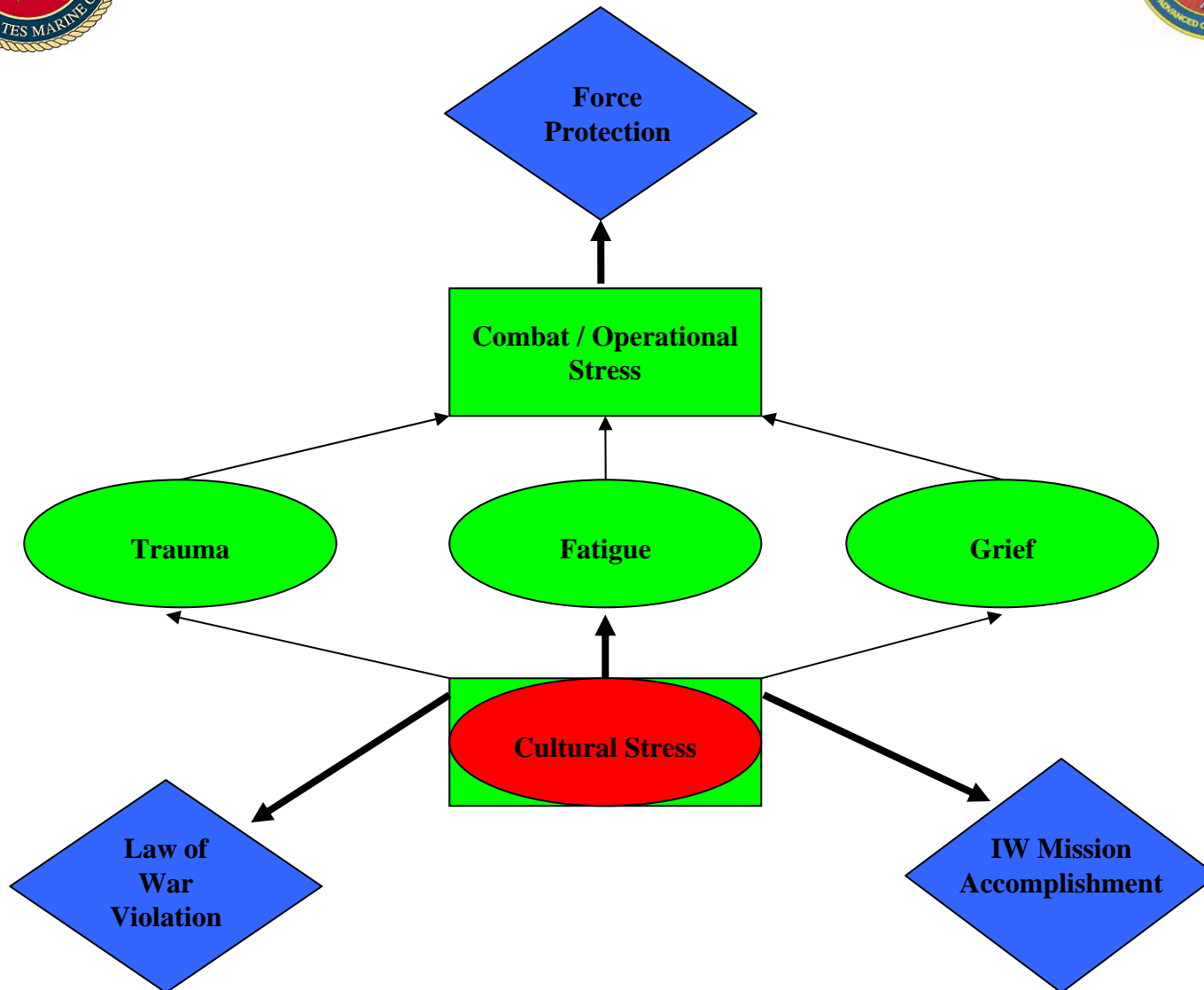


Proposition 1: Cultural stress is a component of combat operational stress.





# Proposition 2: Effects





# Causes



- Communication Barrier
- Environmental Differences
  - Just isn't home - dislocation
- People think and act differently



# Causes



- Cultural stress unique to military operations?
- Military personnel trained to behave in certain ways
  - Kinetic focus
- IW Environment
  - Interact positively with population



# Delta?



- How does cultural stress interact with combat operational stress?
  - Does it matter?
- What is the value in identifying cultural stress as a component of combat operational stress?
- Specific causes, symptoms, mitigation techniques?



## Proposition 3: Training



- Culture and Language training
- Communication Barrier
- Expectation management
- Strategies to deal with cultural differences in behavior
- “Operational Culture” training



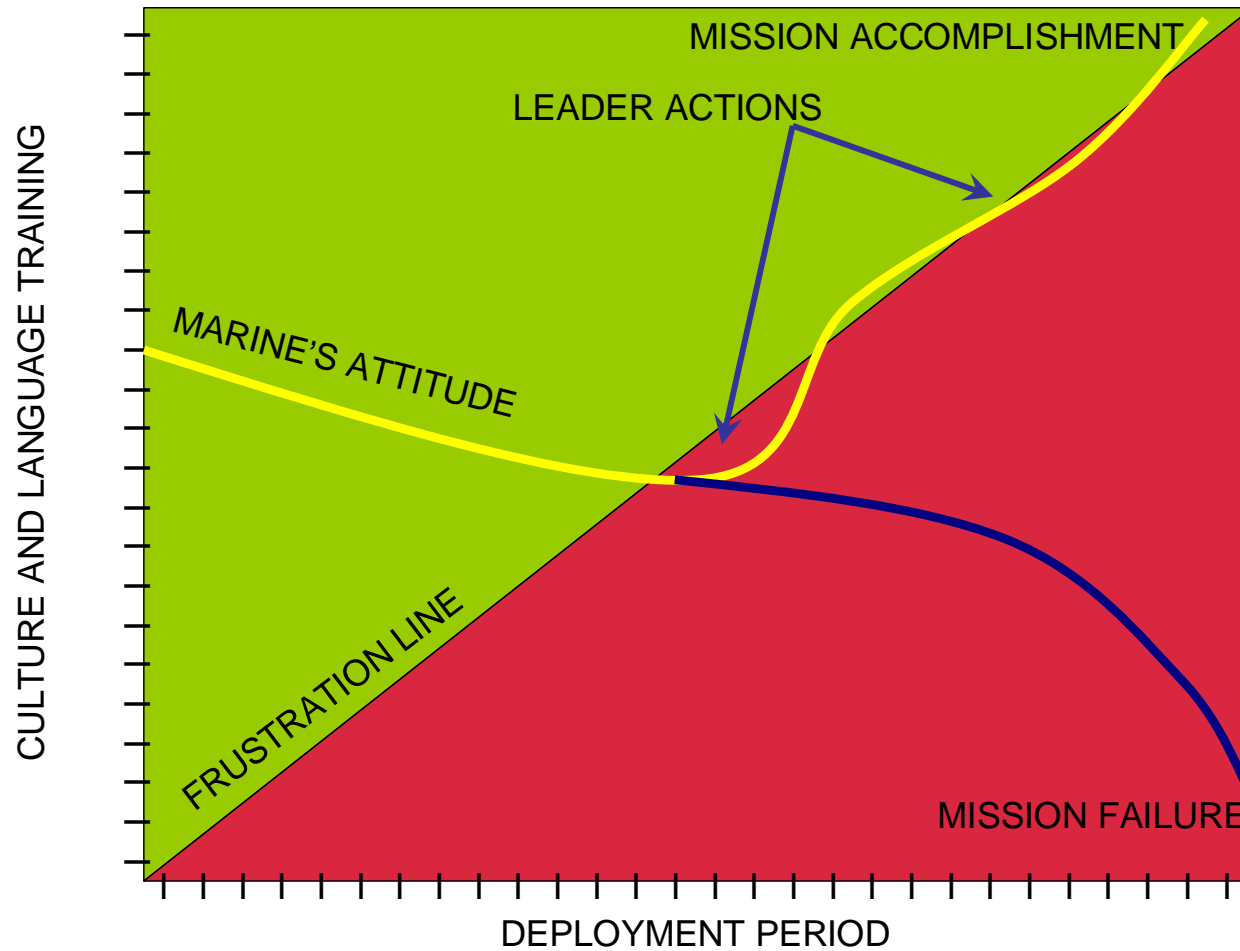
## Proposition 4: Leader Actions



- Leader / Mental Health Professional Actions
  - Incorporating into existing strategies
- Identification
- Mitigation
- Treatment



## Effect of Training and Leader Actions



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# Current Implementation



- Culture Shock is already discussed in training
  - SF Advisor Reference Book
  - MARSOC
  - TBS
  - CAOCL => Training and Readiness Manual
  - SCETC => Training and Readiness Manual
- Relies on culture shock theories
  - No specific research into military operations



## Recommendations for Research



- King's College Study
  - First of its kind
- CAOCL is a training organization
  - Lack resources and expertise
- So many variables
  - Individual Characteristics
  - Training
  - Permissive => Hostile Environment
  - Level of immersion



# Summary



- More questions than answers
- IW-type operations will be the trend
- Clear need for thorough exploration



# References



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