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MARCH 9, 2009  
CS 260

# FRAMES AND ACTION



## Agenda

- Background
- Introduction to Context
- Why Context is Important
- Situation
- Action Chains
- Covert Culture

## Background – ET Hall

- Anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher
- Lifelong research on cultural perceptions motivated by his service in the army during WWII
- His works have been well received and become integral parts of intercultural communication
  - Contextual model – most commonly used cultural model in intercultural communication courses

## Introduction to Context

## Culture

- Highly selective screen between man and outside world
- Designates what we pay attention to
- Prevents system from “information overload”

## Context

- A way to program memory of system to require less info to activate

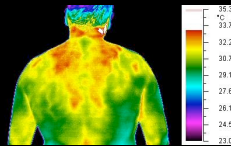
## Culture and Contexting

- If culture is selective screen,
  - Degree to which you are aware of that screen determines how much contexting is done
- If you're very aware of the selective screen, more contexting is done.

## High Context vs. Low Context

- HC or Restricted
  - Info conveyed through physical context or internalized by person
  - Not much info stored in the explicit message
  - Rooted in the past, hard to change
- LC or Elaborated
  - Most of the info contained in explicit message
  - No additional info needed to understand
  - Can be changed quickly and easily

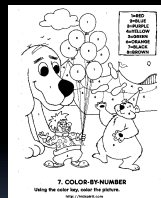
## Examples: LC and HC



Thermal Scan



Constitution



Color by Number

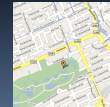
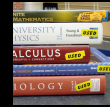


Painting



## HC or LC

- Machine Code?
  - Person-Person: high context
  - Programmer-Compiler: low context
- Textbooks?
- Roadmaps?
  - Low context



## Contexting

- Internal Contexting
    - Based on past experience
    - Innate
    - Ex: proxemic needs
  - External Contexting
    - Situation and/or Environment
- A person's behavior largely influenced by external contexting

## Why is Context Important?

## Internal Contexting

- Gives man ability to:
  - infer information and correct for distortions
  - detect and understand patterns → allows complex life to develop
    - Lack of ability to pattern detect leads to being fooled by mimicry
    - Ex. Frog, fly fishing

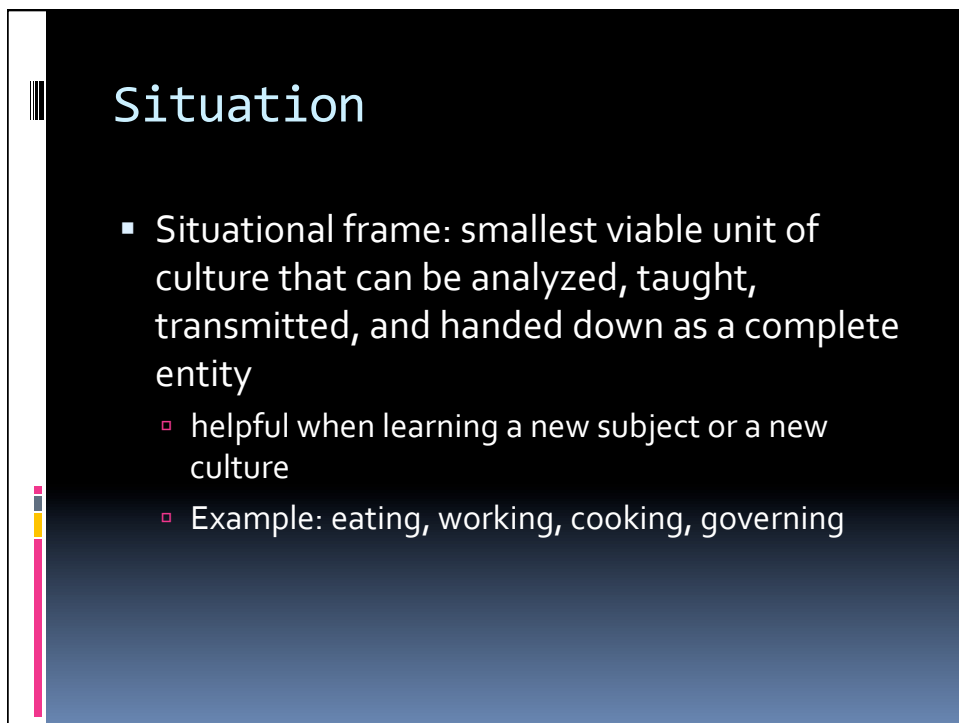
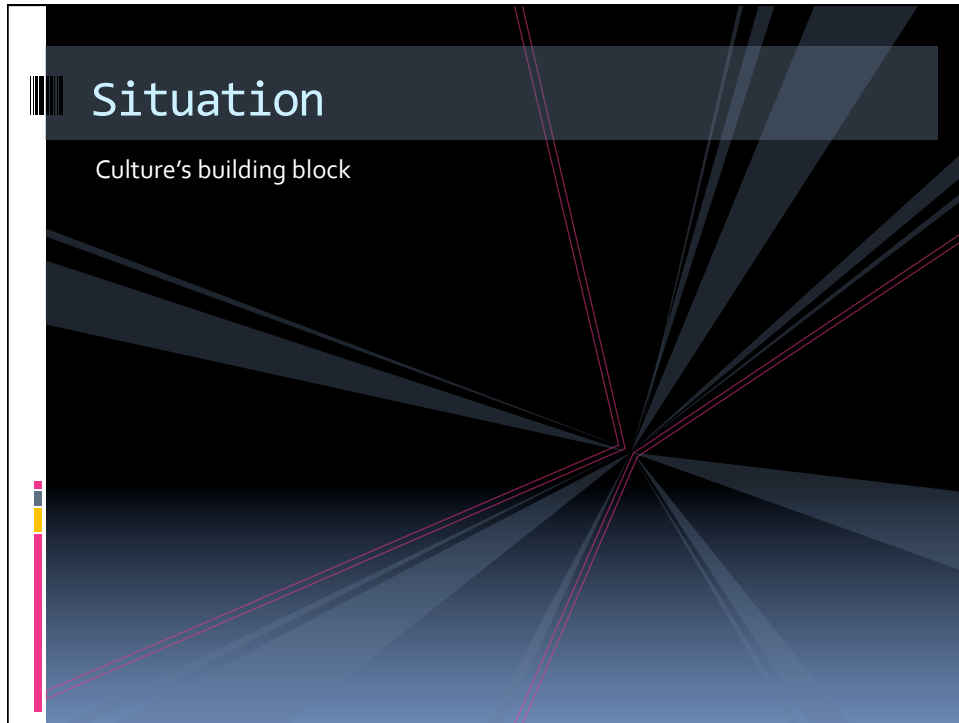


## Contexting in Research Practices

- Western peoples' thought process
  - Too concerned with specifics at cost of missing everything else
  - Traditional taxonomy (LC) vs. folk taxonomy (HC)

## Two Ways of Thinking

- Apollonian: develop established lines to perfection (LC)
  - Used because they aim for replicability and rigor in their methods, eliminating context
- Dionysian: open new lines of research (HC)





## Situational Dialects

- Languages used in specific situational frames
  - Relatively high-context
  - Can determine if person is an insider or not
  - New situations require new SDs
  - Complexity of situational inventory is a function of evolution
  - Examples: rap, military commands

## Using Situational Dialects

- Speak to people
  - using their language to put them at ease
  - In situations they are familiar with
- When a person becomes uncomfortable in a conversation, could be caused by an incorrect SD by the speaker

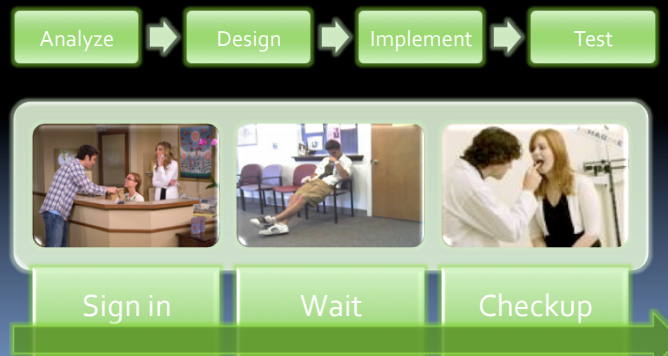
## Suppression of Situational Needs

- Situational inventories can suppress man's situational needs
  - Can result in distortions of the way we live, our personalities and the way we perceive meaning
  - Example: mentally ill
- Most cultures lack a good balance of man's situational needs
  - Man domesticated himself before understanding his basic nature

## Action Chains

## Action Chains

- Set of events in which usually 2 or more individuals participate
- Can be very simple or incredibly complex



## 3 Types of Transactions

- With inanimate objects
  - Cooking dinner
- With living things
  - Handshake
- Intrapsychic transactions
  - Between id, ego and superego
- Note: 3 types are according to Western European thinking, different for others

## Commitment to complete chain

- Determined by 2 factors
  - Internal state of the organism (personality)
  - Culture/Situation
- Uncertain which is a stronger factor
- Example: Father-son argument

## Culture and Action Chains

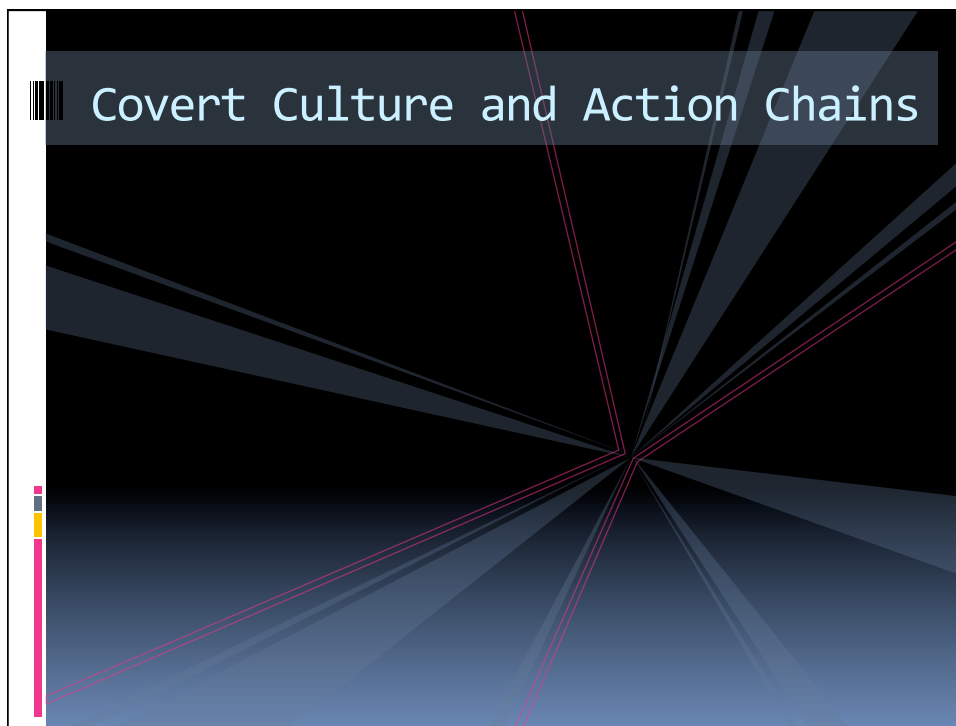
- Cultures are shaped by level of commitment to AC
- HC Cultures
  - Highly committed to completing an AC
  - Polychronic
  - More important to be kind, social than complete AC
- LC Cultures
  - Take commitments very lightly
  - Monochronic

## Broken Chains

- Lacking detailed data causes chains to break
  - Ex. A space that is inadequate for its functions
- What happens if too many broken chains?
  - Theory 1: people compensate but the compensations will eventually change his behavior → teenage crimes, psychosis (Spitz)
  - Theory 2: It will result in 4 types of apathy in serial (May)
    - Final stage: *State of numbness and "unfeelingness"*
    - *Can last in this phase → destructive actions*

## Action Chains in Society

- Many action chains in society
  - Interviews
  - Courtship
- Most people



Covert Culture

- Basic modes of interaction are not verbalized
  - Not controlled by speech
  - On the emotional level rather than verbal level
- People see AC as threatening
  - AC reveals that people are intimately bound up in the behaviors of others
- Why study AC?
  - People stuck in AC's can't be free until they understand these AC's.

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## Action Chains

- AC's all require words at some point.
  - No words → AC is short-circuited → violence
- In northern European tradition, stages of AC for a dispute:
  - Nonverbal cues
  - Indirection
  - Verbal hints
  - Verbal confrontation
  - Legal action
  - Force or physical action

## Problem with Covert Culture

- When people are from 2 different cultures
  - Steps might be skipped and lead to serious psychosis
  - All cultures have built-in safeguards to prevent disputes from going too far – doesn't work well with outsiders
  - Example: Japanese and Europeans

## Recognition of Culture Consciousness

- Man must transcend his own culture, especially the more important unconscious culture
  - Ignore what is happening on the conscious, explicit level
- Avoid cultural projections

## Folklore of Culture

- What people say about their culture
- People in a system can't say much about how it works
- Little relationship between expression and organization of a system
- Need better notation systems for the understanding of culture to develop