

“Soft OR” in Military Experimentation

Brian McCue
U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Lab

Why use “Soft OR”?

- “No battleplan survives contact with the enemy.” --Moltke
- “No experiment plan survives the onset of experimentation.”--McCue

Why is “Soft OR” OK?

- Experimenters are looking for big effects.

Some “Soft OR” Methods

- “Did it work?” analysis.
- Questionnaires, interviews, and debriefs.
- Just standing and watching.

“Did it work”? Analysis

- “Did it do its job?” not “Did it power up?”
- “Were they really using it?”
- “Did it work well enough to be worth it?”
- “Did it work strikingly better than what we have today?”

Questionnaires

- Ask:
 - “What worked for you?”
 - “What didn’t work for you?”
 - “Who are you?”--rank *and billet*.
- *Don’t* ask:
 - “Did you like it?”
 - “What worked well for the other side”?
- Leave the back of the form blank.

Interviews and Debriefs

- See do's and don'ts of questionnaires
- Save and use direct quotes
- Separate discussion of findings from discussion of experimentation itself.

Just Standing and Watching

- You don't have to be an O-6 to use this.
- Maybe it helps not to be.
- As a non-player, you have a *much* better view.
- Don't forget to *listen*, too.

How to Succeed While Soft

- Iterate everything.
- Do a “hard” reconstruction.
- “Aim for the stars; you might hit the moon.”
- Be honest, but not a smart-aleck.