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14. ABSTRACT
The United States Marine Corps in conjunction with the Department of Defense, has placed continued emphasis on the importance of culture awareness in accomplishing missions across the spectrum of conflict. Corporals are often the "first line of defense" when working with our allies and partners but these Marines receive only a limited, introductory piece of culture education prior to assignment to these missions. Concepts provided through culture education can help the young leaders anticipate the kind of friction that often arises from a clash of worldviews. The United States Marine Corps will be better prepared to fight future wars if culture education is provided to the "strategic" corporal. Marine Corps leaders must implement culture education for corporals at the earliest opportunity. The education should apply a multifaceted leader to led approach with elements from Professional Military Education, the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program, the Commandants Professional Reading Program, and vignettes provided by the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning.

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Bridging the Gap: Culture Education and the Strategic Corporal in the Information Environment

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Executive Summary

Title: Bridging the Gap: Culture Education and the Strategic Corporal in the Information Environment

Author: Major Maria L. Harley, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The United States Marine Corps (USMC) will be better prepared to fight future wars if culture education is provided to the "strategic" corporal.

Discussion: The USMC, in conjunction with the Department of Defense, has placed continued emphasis on the importance of culture awareness in accomplishing missions across the spectrum of conflict. Corporals are often the "first line of defense" when working with our allies and partners but these Marines receive only a limited, introductory piece of culture education prior to assignment to these missions. Concepts provided through culture education can help the young leaders anticipate the kind of friction that often arises from a clash of worldviews.

Conclusion: Marine Corps leaders must implement culture education for corporals at the earliest opportunity. The education should apply a multifaceted leader to led approach with elements from Professional Military Education, the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program, the Commandants Professional Reading Program, and vignettes provided by the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning.

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Table of Contents

Disclaimer	2
Preface	4
The Strategic Corporal, Information Environment Operations, and Cross-Cultural Competence	7
Historical Overview of Culture Education Efforts	10
Available Culture Education	14
Delivery Mechanism	16
Balancing Act	20
Recommendations	21
Conclusion	24
Bibliography	25

Preface

For the initial part of this paper, I will discuss personal experiences to form a basis as to why the culture education of corporals is important. At my previous duty station, I served with 7th Communications Battalion as a Company Commander for two years and subsequently as the Battalion Operations Officer for almost one year. As part of III Marine Expeditionary Force, 7th Communication Battalion participates in a variety of exercises throughout the United States Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility.¹ During my time as a Company Commander, the company provided communications support to a number of these exercises each year. The juggling act of finding the right Marines with the appropriate rank, experience, and military occupational specialty knowledge level to comprise each of these detachments was a difficult task. Being in the Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility added the concern of maturity and cultural experience to the equation. Most of these young Marines have limited experiences with other cultures outside of their upbringing, specifically when it comes to working with the United States' allies and partners from around the globe. Outside of the required training for sergeants and above, the culture education provided to 7th Communication Battalion's Marines consisted of a short lecture, given by a Marine who had been in the region for several years. Often, these lectures focused on specifics for Japanese culture and avoided any topics to support cross-culture competence in the Marines. Prior to the execution of exercises, the leadership within my company discussed the importance of the mission and the negative impact on mission accomplishment that could result should the wrong decision be made when working with other nations. The company leadership relied on our personal experiences when providing advice,

¹ 7th Communication Battalion. *Battalion TEEP FY 18-19* (Okinawa, Japan, December 27, 2018), Excel document. 7th Communication Battalion is participating in 6 MEF-level or MEB-level exercises. In addition, 7th Communication Battalion provides communications support to at least 15 planning conferences or smaller exercises.

little of which, I realize now, is nested with cross-culture competence. I consider my company lucky that my Marines, corporals specifically, were able to navigate these interactions without controversy which easily could have had impacts at the strategic level.

On any given day, the Marine Corps is conducting actions in a myriad of regions around the globe. The potential for these actions to expand across the full spectrum of military operations has thrust leadership responsibilities and decision-making down upon those who typically hold a subordinate billet is high. Thomas Ricks made this observation while embedded with Marine Corps units operating in Mogadishu, Somalia, “In these operations, the kid whom we wouldn’t trust to run the copier is the squad or platoon leader addressing questions that could alter national policy.”² For the Marine Corps, this environment has pushed the leadership role down to the rank of corporal, and forced these young Marines to attempt to resolve not just simple tactical problems, but also to make decisions that require a greater understanding and awareness of a myriad of cultural issues.

The United States Marine Corps (USMC), in conjunction with the Department of Defense, has placed increased emphasis on the importance of cultural awareness in accomplishing missions across the spectrum of conflict. Despite this importance, the Marine Corps has failed to offer culture education opportunities to an influential population in its ranks – corporals. Corporals comprise more than 19 percent of the Marine Corps force, and are often at the “tip of the spear” due to their frequent interactions in dealing with local foreign populations. However, in spite of corporals often being the “first line of defense” when working with our allies and partners, these Marines receive only a limited, introductory exposure to culture education prior to being assigned such missions. At the time of this writing, culture education in the Marine Corps is offered only to sergeants and above. The USMC will be better prepared to fight future wars if culture education is provided to the "strategic" corporal.

² Thomas E. Ricks, *Making the Corps*, 1st Touchstone ed, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 24-25.

This paper will first discuss the need for culture education for Marine Corps' corporals. It will then provide the historical background on previous culture education efforts. Subsequently, it will discuss the delivery mechanism available to fulfill such an educational requirement while ensuring other training and education requirements are not negatively impacted. Finally, it will conclude with implementation recommendations for leadership.

The Strategic Corporal, Information Environment Operations, and Cross-Cultural Competence

The USMC is comprised of more than 186,000 Marines with one-third of that of that population being non-commissioned officers (NCOs).³ Of those NCOs, more than half hold the rank of corporal and on average have been in the Marine Corps for just shy of three years, averaging close to 20 years of age.⁴ The Marine Corps effectiveness relies on maximizing results from all its leaders, placing young leaders with limited experience at the forefront of decision making.

In 1999, General Charles Krulak published an article in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in which he coined the term “strategic corporal.”⁵ General Krulak explains the possibility of Marines having to execute missions across the range of military operations in the matter of a few city blocks - from combat operations to peacekeeping mission to providing humanitarian aid⁶ and the immense responsibilities these young leaders will face on these missions. With each block, corporals are likely to be at the “tip of the spear” and often will be seen as the “face” of the USMC, forced to make split-second decisions for their team which could enhance or hinder

³ Marine Corps Total Force Data Warehouse, *USMC Cpls and Sgts 20181226* (Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Quantico, VA, December 26, 2018), Excel document. The total number of USMC NCO population is 62,049.

⁴ Ibid. The number of Sergeants is 26,095 and Corporals is 35,954.

⁵ Charles C Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War." *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 1 (1999): 18-22, <https://search-proquest-com.lomc.idm.oclc.org/docview/221479440?accountid=14746>.

⁶ Ibid, pg. 20-21.

the operations at hand and future operations. To reiterate Ricks' statement above, ultimately these decisions could have impacts on overall national strategy. As General Krulak alluded, the increasingly complex operating environment results in unpredictable missions; missions these Marines cannot simply train to but must be prepared to execute. Corporals will rarely be the single source for action determination in interactions with the local population, however they may be the first contact and thus are a key aspect of a greater network that providing valuable information to leadership which could ultimately influence decisions made at the highest level.

In addition to the being a strategic asset operating in the three-block war General Krulak described, corporals must also be cognizant of the newly established Marine Corps seventh warfighting function, information.⁷ The abilities and insight the “tip of the spear” brings to the Marine Air Ground Task Force information environment (IE) is substantial, specifically providing the IE battlespace awareness function.⁸ The interactions these Marines have provide friendly force information to contribute to the overall IE operations running estimate enabling the commander to “rapidly determine options for changing course, or engaging in new actions to achieve objectives in and through the IE.”⁹ As the first line of defense, corporals are a critical aspect of IE operations.

The personnel strength of the USMC changes based on a variety of factors, including the operating environment. The Marine Corps is comprised of nearly 36,000 corporals:¹⁰ this fact, combined with the current state of affairs and an unpredictable future makes the possibility that

⁷ Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Establishment of Information as the Seventh Marine Corps Warfighting Function*, MCBul 5400, January 17, 2019, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCBUL%205400.pdf?ver=2019-02-06-082807-103>.

⁸ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Air Ground Task Force Information Environment Operations Concept of Employment* (Quantico, VA, 2017), 2.

⁹ *Ibid*, 18.

¹⁰ Marine Corps Total Force Data Warehouse, *USMC Cpls and Sgts 20181226* (Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Quantico, VA, December 26, 2018), Excel document. The total number of USMC Corporals is 35,954.

corporals, despite their relatively junior rank, will be required to step into greater positions of leadership as their rank is increased. Lower rank does not mean the responsibilities will be reduced however, and the expectation will remain that corporals perform these duties as well as sergeants – which likely increases the number of interactions these Marines will have with the civilian population of foreign countries. In the absence of experience, education is the best way to prepare young leaders for complex operational environments.¹¹

There is a clear distinction between training and education. Education is intended to provide an individual with information to make a decision whereas training is designed to “to make prepared for a test of skill.”¹² In other words, training is preparing a person for the known and making it muscle memory, while education prepares one for the unknown. Although regionally specific culture training is often provided prior to deployment, it does not necessarily incorporate the full spectrum of cross-cultural competence. Cross-cultural competence is the ultimate learning object of the Marine Corps Regional, Culture and Language Familiarization program, and is defined as “the ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, then appropriately and effectively act, to achieve the desired effect in a culturally complex environment – without necessarily having prior exposure to a particular group, region or language.”¹³ Cross-cultural competence is critical to the molding of all individuals in leadership positions, corporals in this case. Of the learning domains listed above, a corporal’s cross-cultural competence must begin with the aspects that best establish a foundation for culture understanding, or culture general

¹¹ Scott Hamm, “Educating an Enlisted Force That Can Win in the Future,” *MCU Journal* 9, no. 1 (2018): 13-16. Marine Corp University’s College of Enlisted Military Education has revamped curriculum to address the new environment.

¹² *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. “train,” accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trained>; *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. “educate,” accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/educating>.

¹³ Robert Greene Sands and Allison Greene-Sands, *Cross-Cultural Competence for a Twenty-First-Century Military*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 33.

concepts. These concepts are the “underlying thinking processes, ideas, and knowledge areas that help you identify, understand, and use region- and culture-specific knowledge more effectively.”¹⁴ Specifically, culture general skills include the ability to suspend judgment, self-regulate personal assumptions, maintain an open perspective, and to engage in effective and appropriate intercultural communication.¹⁵ It is important that these culture general concepts not be taught at the eleventh hour, just prior to deployment, as they take time to resonate in Marines for complete understanding. Dedicated time and resources will emphasize the importance of these skills and therefore are more likely to be implemented by Marines.

A corporal’s actions in the area of operations can have significant impacts on the success of a mission being judged by strategic commands. Applying culture general concepts to a multitude of scenarios has the ability to influence local leadership, social structures, economics, and power distribution in an area of operation. Culture general concepts introduced in culture education can help the young leader anticipate the kind of friction that often arises from a clash of worldviews.

Historical Overview of Culture Education Efforts

Culture education at every rank is not a new topic throughout the Department of Defense. The efforts to implement culture and language education and training gained traction after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. The launching of the War on Terror made the Department of Defense quickly realize the need for “boots on the ground” to be able to navigate the muddy waters of dealing with a non-western nation. Marine Corps scholars, the United States

¹⁴ Kerry Fosher, et al., *Culture General Guidebook for Military Professionals*, (Quantico, VA: Center for Advanced Operational Culture Leader, 2017), 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 71-93.

House of Representatives, the Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration, and the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Learning (CAOCL) have all identified the need for culture education for all levels in the Marine Corps; however, the ability to implement culture education became the challenge.

Implementation of new methodologies within governmental organizations has and will continue to be a problem that is affected by the contributing factors of limited personnel, finite financial resources, and insufficient time to execute. In 1976, Seymour J. Deitch authored the book *The Best-Laid Schemes: A Tale of Social Research and Bureaucracy* which discusses social science research in the 1960s and was reprinted by Marine Corps University Press in 2014, with the foreword and introduction offered by Kerry Fosher and Jeff Bearor respectively, two Marine Corps civilians essential in the development and sustainment of the Marine Corps CAOCL.¹⁶ The key points Fosher and Bearor identify are similar - what the Marine Corps wants and what social scientists can provide are disconnected. Taking notes from Deitch's work, the Marine Corps wants a simple solution to a complex problem, but needs to focus efforts on long-term educational solutions, which can stand the test of time regardless of the operating environment. To be most beneficial culture education must begin early in a Marine's career.

In 2008, the United States House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations released a report on the Department of Defense's challenges in building language skills and cultural competencies in the military. The Subcommittee examined the efforts throughout the Department of Defense after noting "an area with profound implications for the nation's success at adapting to the realities of irregular

¹⁶ Seymour J. Deitchman, *The Best-Laid Schemes: A Tale of Social Research and Bureaucracy*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2014).

warfare.”¹⁷ Recommendations provided in the report were limited to service level impacts for language and cultural training, significantly lacking was any tangible guidance for the general force implementation. As a follow up to the report, the Subcommittee released the *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: Bridging the Gap* report in 2010. The follow up report’s number one finding was that “services should recognize foreign language, regional expertise, and cultural awareness as critical or core competencies essential to DOD missions.”¹⁸ The appreciation for the importance of culture understanding for troops on the ground was at the highest level.

Subsequently, the Marine Corps took this guidance and implemented its own strategy to fulfill the requirement, and the Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration generated the Marine Corps Language, Regional Expertise and Cultural (LREC) Strategy: 2016-2020. In conjunction with joint doctrine, the Deputy Commandant’s guidance clearly states “Building partner capacity is a key capability of our forward-deployed units, and requires a force adept at interacting with foreign populations, partner and coalition militaries, and adversaries from across the globe.”¹⁹ Marines with the Basic proficiency level are critical to enabling the Marine Air-Ground Task Force through their understanding of social science concepts and cognitive processes practiced early and often in their career.²⁰ The Basic proficiency level in the

¹⁷ House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD’s Challenge in Today’s Educational Environment*, 110th Cong., 2008, Committee Print 110-12, 13, <https://armedservices.house.gov/cache/files/3/7/3737c7c1-efeb-4672-bc99-74b340faf0ba/540DE3C82A9F532C584E402C683E8439.language-and-culture-report-11-08-vf.pdf>

¹⁸ House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: Bridging the Gap*, 111th Cong., 2010, 40, <https://armedservices.house.gov/cache/files/5/f/5f9d55f9-7b8a-4461-8c5a-4b5fb08e9a7f/A0E1CB3A82B21837137E41DD0560D5DD.lc-full-report-vf.pdf>.

¹⁹ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Language, Regional Expertise & Culture (LREC) Strategy: 2016-2020*, (Quantico, VA, 2015), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

foundation and the LREC capabilities are designed to be continuously developed throughout an individual Marine's career. Exposing young Marines to LREC proficiencies and competencies early has the potential to motivate these future careerists to pursue more advanced culture specific assignments in the future, like Marine Security Guard duty.²¹ The LREC strategy puts the emphasis on effort for the Basic proficiency level effort on CAOCL.

CAOCL is the agency responsible for "ensuring the Marine Corps is globally prepared, regionally focused, and effective at navigating and influencing the culturally complex 21st Century operating environments in support of USMC missions and requirement."²² Since its establishment, CAOCL has had the lead for developing and implementing culture education, amongst other things, for the Marine Corps. In an effort to provide and assess these capabilities to the given population, CAOCL has conducted a series of surveys. The survey conducted in February 2010, *Culture and Language Survey: Importance of Culture vs. Language*, was designed to determine the benefits gained from the Marine Corps culture and language learning programs in conjunction with a larger Department of Defense evaluation.²³ Based on the more than 2000 responses CAOCL received, Marines consistently responded with the perspective that "culture and language capabilities were important to operational effectiveness."²⁴ Overwhelmingly, CAOCL's survey results showed that culture education is essential to mission

²¹ Ibid, 14.

²² Marine Corps University, "Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning," accessed December 26, 2018, <https://www.usmcu.edu/CAOCL/>.

²³ United States Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, *Culture and Language Survey: Importance of Culture vs. Language*, (Quantico, VA, 2010).

²⁴ United States Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, *Culture and Language Survey: Importance of Culture vs. Language*, (Quantico, VA, 2010); Paula Holmes-Eber, Erika Tarzi, & Basema Maki, "U.S. Marines' Attitudes Regarding Cross-cultural Capabilities in Military Operations: A Research Note." *Armed Forces and Society* 42 no. 4 (2016): 741-751.

success, or as one respondent pointedly stated “understanding the culture is what makes us money on the ground.”²⁵

Since the Vietnam War, the topic of culture education has been discussed by all levels of leadership from Congress down to service established centers, and researchers have captured several best practices and lessons learned.²⁶ The USMC has taken steps in the right direction for execution of culture education at all levels but has fallen short by not including the influential population of corporals.

Available Culture Education

Currently, the courses available to establish and develop a corporal’s cultural education are significantly limited. These limited opportunities include the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization (RCLF) program to include its “open” library, Professional Military Education (PME) courses, and the Commandant’s Professional Reading List, none of which are not mandatory and only provide a minimal exposure culture education.

Implemented in 2012, the mission of RCLF²⁷ is to “ensure that Marine units are globally prepared so that they are effective at navigating and influencing the culturally complex 21st-century operating environment.”²⁸ RCLF is not intended to produce language, regional, and cultural experts but provide a foundation for individual Marines to operate in the current

²⁵ United States Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, *Culture and Language Survey: Ground Combat Arms Responses*. (Quantico, VA, 2010).

²⁶ Allison Abbe & Melissa Gouge, “Cultural training for military personnel: Revisiting the Vietnam era,” *Military Review*, 92 no. 4 (2012): 9-17.

²⁷ An overview of the RCLF program can be found on the CAOCL website: <https://www.usmcu.edu/CAOCL/Education/RCLF>.

²⁸ Commanding General, Education Command, President, Marine Corps University, *Implementation of the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program*, MARADMIN 619/12, October 24, 2012, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/895108/implementation-of-the-regional-culture-and-language-familiarization-program/>.

environment.²⁹ However, as currently constructed the RCLF program is only formally available to sergeants and above.³⁰ The RCLF program differs from officers to enlisted with the enlisted program being broken down into six blocks; privates and privates first class fall into Block 1 whereas lance corporals and corporals are within Block 2. RCLF Block 2 requirements are fulfilled through the completion of the web-based Leading Marines Distance Education Program training where there is an introductory class on operational culture.³¹ Furthermore, RCLF Block 2 for enlisted personnel references the additional education provided to corporals through the command sponsored Corporals' Course. The Corporals' Course is the rank specific requirement part of the Marine Corps PME program. Within the Corporals' Course curriculum, the Marines are instructed on Operational Culture for only one-and-a-half hours. Therefore, like the Leading Marines Distance Education Program, Corporals' Course simply provides another introduction to operational culture. The RCLF program, in association with the Marine Corps PME program, is designed to broaden the awareness of Marines at all levels but misses the mark in establishing the foundational culture general concepts necessary for success at the lower ranks. Furthermore, the command sponsored Corporals' Course is taught by novices who may lack true expertise on the subject. Culture education conducted at both the Leading Marines Distance Education Program and the command sponsored Corporals' Course barely scratches the surface of the required learning objectives as there is "no culture-specific requirement associated with enlisted Block 2."³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ CAOCL's rationale is based on the sheer scale of the investment in RCLF, therefore it is reserved for career Marines, typically those holding the rank of Sergeant and above.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Commanding General, Education Command, President, Marine Corps University, *Implementation of the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program*, MARADMIN 619/12, October 24, 2012, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/895108/implementation-of-the-regional-culture-and-language-familiarization-program/>.

Outside of CAOCL-sponsored culture education, the Marine Corps Commandant's Professional Reading List was designed to enrich the PME program through self-paced reading, specifically focused on professional development and critical thinking.³³ Additionally, studies have shown that empathy, a crucial element when working with other cultures, can be increased when readers are immersed in books that offer perspectives different than our own.³⁴ At the non-commissioned officer level, corporals fall under the Career Level Enlisted portion of the reading list. In addition to this list, all Marines are recommended to read books from the Commandant's Choice list. Despite the myriad of books with diverse themes for professional development, culture education is not a theme amongst them. A book on the reading list that stands out as having at least some with narrow culture aspects is Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers: The Story of Success* where he discusses factors that contribute an individual's success.³⁵ One of Gladwell's claims is that an individual's culture and socio-economic background are key factors. In this limited aspect, this book provides a reference for corporals to recognize that different human beings perceive things in alternative ways and should become required reading.

Despite the limited culture education currently available to corporals, there is a solid framework of resources and delivery mechanisms in place from which to build upon.

Delivery Mechanism

The number of service members from diverse backgrounds has caused the Marine Corps to conformed to guidance from the Department of Navy and Department of Defense and

³³ Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Revisions of the Commandants Professional Reading List*, ALMAR 015/17, May 16, 2017, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/1184470/revision-of-the-commandants-professional-reading-list/>.

³⁴ P. Matthijs Bal & Martijn Veltkamp, *How Does Fiction Reading Influence Empathy? An Experimental Investigation on the Role of Emotional Transportation*, PLoS ONE 8(1), 2013: e55341, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0055341>.

³⁵ Ibid.

to provide culture education to all of its Marines. The abundance of technologies now available allows the Marine Corps to utilize an assortment of delivery mechanisms to transmit a multitude of messages to a progressive institution. These delivery mechanisms include Unit Training, web-based courses, leader-to-led seminars, mandatory readings, or formal PME courses, all of which can be utilized to enhance culture education.

Unit training is conducted by a parent unit or support unit subject matter expert. Unit training requires proficient instructors who use approved training methods, however, there is not a standard for determining the proficiency of the instructors, rather qualifications are determined at the local commander's discretion. Because there is not a certification of the instructor's qualifications, it is possible that the instructor could fall back on their upbringing, their own stereotypes, or to using anecdotal evidence that is not consistent with the educational goals at hand. On a positive note, unit training does provide an environment that is conducive to the training of a large audience in a single session. Nevertheless, in large audiences the ability to ensure the audience has a true understanding of the subject can be lost, resulting in the instructors making assumptions that the information was received and understood in sufficient detail that the Marines are able to use the information. With culture education, the requirement of each member to have a significant understanding of the concepts cannot be assumed, it must be known.

As shown with CAOCL's RCLF program, as the world has become more comfortable with the emergence of technology, web-based training has become an increasingly popular method to complete educational requirements. Web-based training provides the capability for individuals to use a distance learning system with computer-based courses. The benefit of web-based training is the Marine Corps already has a system, MarineNet, implemented and regularly

used. MarineNet has a negative connotation associated with it due to the sheer number of courses Marines are required to take through this web-based platform and there is an inability to validate a member's comprehension of the course material completed. Moreover, web-based training requires significant resources to make it successful – amongst them the physical computer assets available for Marines to use to conduct training, course developers and maintainers, proctors, and the availability of a reliable internet connection. MarineNet has the capability of requiring an end of course examination to evaluate knowledge an individual gained by taking the course. However, as culture education is a continuous learning process, a one-time end of course evaluation does not suffice when ensuring understanding of the concepts. Similar to unit training, web-based training is ineffective in its ability to assure culture education material presented is understood by the Marine.

Leader-to-led training is a common practice in the Marine Corps as a mechanism for individual leaders to provide critical material to subordinates, like culture education. Similar to unit training, proficiency in the subject matter is required of the leaders. Often referred to as “hip-pocket” classes due to the ability to be conducted spur-of-the-moment, leader-to-led training can be accomplished at the small unit leader level while Marines are out in the field, in garrison when there is down-time, or can be formally scheduled within unit training plans. Facilitating these training or educational opportunities has the benefit of small groups where leaders can have direct contact with each individual and ensure understanding. Disadvantages for leader-led training are similar to those posed by unit training as it relates to instructor proficiency. Additional disadvantages include a potential lack of preparation and insufficient details of the courses due to their complex nature. Regardless, leader-to-led training gives leaders the venue to provide tailored culture education to an audience, like corporals.

The Commandant's Professional Reading Program provides another opportunity to facilitate the necessary culture general concepts for corporals. As previously mentioned, the Commandant's Professional Reading List provides Marines the ability to supplement PME through self-study. Per ALMAR 015/17, the Marine's commander has the discretion to determine a Marines completion of the required readings and as a result the level of understanding from the Program's books can vary greatly based on command.³⁶

Professional Military Education provided to corporals is the command-sponsored Corporals' Course designed to prepare Marines to transition into leadership roles. The course covers more than 25 subjects in a 14 academic day period which amounts to roughly one and a half hours per subject.³⁷ As a result, most subjects receive simple cursory overviews which do not delve into detailed information required to provide sufficient depth for the Marines on the subject. Furthermore, corporals are only required to attend the course once during the period they hold the rank, which means some corporals can attend as soon as they are promoted, while others may wait longer and attend just prior to getting promoted to sergeant, which leads to gaps in knowledge amongst Marines of the same rank. While Corporals' Course provides a suitable opportunity to introduce culture general concepts, it should not be the primary source of culture education.

The collection of delivery mechanisms available provide the necessary structure to implement culture education for corporals without interfering with other requirements levied.

³⁶ Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Revisions of the Commandants Professional Reading List*, ALMAR 015/17, May 16, 2017, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/1184470/revision-of-the-commandants-professional-reading-list/>.

³⁷ United States Marine Corps Enlisted Professional Military Education Corporals Course, *Cpls Cours Academic Schedule 3-16*, (1st Law Enforcement Battalion, Camp Pendleton, CA, February 1, 2015), Excel document.

Balancing Act

Corporals are on the cusp of establishing their role as leaders in the Marine Corps and are having to adjust to the exponential number of requirements placed upon them. Currently, the requirements leveraged on corporals include annual training, PME, and the overall high operational tempo.

Annual training requirements for all Marines are designed to ensure overall force readiness through a variety of requirements.³⁸ Depicted in Marine Corps Bulletin 1500, these training requirements amount to 18 courses divided between the Fiscal Year and Calendar Year.³⁹ As the necessity for the variety of subject matters covered are mandated by one of four authorities - law, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, or the Commandant of the Marine Corps - they must be promptly completed as they hinder mission readiness.

In addition to annual training requirements levied, corporals must complete Professional Military Education. Conducted at all levels across the force, the PME program is designed to create “ethical, professional leaders who make sound decisions in complex operational situations.”⁴⁰ The three-week long course takes a corporal out of their parent command to instruct them on a multitude of topics to form the foundation of their new leadership role.

The overwhelming operational tempo of the Marine Corps is another critical aspect that must be considered when developing culture education for Corporals. In addition to the above-

³⁸ Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Annual Training and Education Requirements*, MCBul 1500 w/ Admin Change, February 23, 2018, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCBUL%201500%20W%20ADMN%20CH%20DTD%203FEB18.pdf?ver=2018-03-30-131354-563>.

³⁹ Ibid. Exceptions to FY and CY requirements included Marine Corps Water Survival Training, Chemical, Biological Radiological, and Nuclear Defense Training, and Marine Corps Combat Marksmanship - Pistol. Reference MCBul 1500 for specific requirement timetable.

⁴⁰ Marine Corps University, “College of Enlisted Military Education,” accessed December 27, 2018, <https://www.usmcu.edu/CEME/>.

mentioned obligations, corporals must complete sufficient training to remain qualified in their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) in order to be capable of succeeding in their primary duties associated with this high operational tempo. The development of proficiency in specific MOSs varies in the amount of time needed; technical MOSs are likely to need more time than non-technical MOSs. In spite of the Marines Corps roles in Afghanistan and Iraq transitioning to different and less impactful to the total force’s mission, the operational tempo for the Marine Corps does not appear to be diminishing in the near future. The Marine Corps must be ready for anything.

Although considered manageable, additional requirements like culture education should not be leveraged against corporals without reflecting on current requirements, the new must not inhibit the old.

Recommendations

Marine Corps leaders must implement culture education for Marines at the earliest opportunity. CAOCL’s survey on *Marines’ Views on How to Improve Marine Corps Cultural and Language Training and Education Programs* provides the most preferred learning method; more than fifty percent of the respondents recommended a leader-led type instruction (Table 1). With that, culture education for corporals should apply a multifaceted leader-led approach with elements from PME, the RCLF program, the Commandants Professional Reading Program, and vignettes provided by CAOCL.

<u>Preferred Career Long Learning Method</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Small group discussion with a SME	27.0
Lecture from a live instructor	20.4
Immersion experience	15.2

Computer based training	13.8
Scenario based seminar	9.5
Virtual learning environment	4.7
Reading materials	3.4
Gaming materials	3.3
Video instruction	2.6

Table 1. CAOCL Survey Results – Preferred Career Long Learning Method.⁴¹

The foundation for culture education should continue to be provided by the operational culture overview at Corporals’ Course. This introductory course provides corporals with the basic ability to understand the role culture plays in how people see the world and make decisions – as well as how societies and people operate through the application of the operational culture dimensions.⁴² CAOCL can assist with instructor development to ensure appropriate knowledge on the topic prior to delivery. Ultimately, Corporals’ Course instruction is the necessary foundation for new leaders which provides the same general understanding for all corporals at relatively the same point in their career.

The Marine Corps has invested a tremendous amount of time, money, and other resources in order to develop and implement the RCLF program. As previously noted, sergeants through lieutenant colonels are provided a building block approach of RCLF instruction throughout their careers. These Marines all currently serve as leaders to a different number of Marines under their charge. The Marine Corps should capitalize on the skills of these leaders who currently serve in positions as Squad Leaders, Platoon Sergeants, Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge, Platoon Command or Staff Section leader. These individuals can in turn

⁴¹ United States Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, *Marines’ Views on How to Improve Marine Corps Cultural and Language Training and Education Programs*, (Quantico, VA, 2010), 23.

⁴² United States Marine Corps Enlisted Professional Military Education Corporals Course, *CPL-LDR-2401F*, (1st Law Enforcement Battalion, Camp Pendleton, CA, February 1, 2015).

utilize the education they receive from completing RCLF requirements to conduct culture education through leader-led training at the small unit level. The facilitators of this culture education should conduct these small unit discussion at regular intervals, not in a formalized manner. Facilitators can use a variety of mediums to conduct this culture education with the goal of instilling knowledge to assist in the ultimate objective of achieving cross-cultural competence.

To supplement the education provided by Corporal's Course and leader-led instruction with RCLF, modifications should be made to the Commandant's Professional Reading List and the proposed culture vignettes created by CAOCL. The Commandant's Professional Reading List provides another avenue to expand a corporal's professional development, critical thinking, and increase overall empathy and should include titles and identification of how they are woven into the theme of culture education. As General Hagee points out in ALMAR 007/05, reading "serves as a bridge between an understanding of the strategic landscape and the unique-decision making requirements for each combat situation."⁴³ Furthermore, CAOCL should develop a bank of culture vignettes as a resource for leader-to-led instruction. Posted to CAOCL's website, the vignettes can be another means for leaders during the small unit level discussions.

It is not necessary to recreate the wheel when it comes to providing corporals with culture education, as the Marine Corps already has a myriad of training and educational options that could be tailored to fit the continuous education requirements of the strategic corporal. To ensure the critical thinking skills are developed along with appropriate general culture skills, the Marine Corps must effectively combine various teaching platforms and delivery mechanisms. Furthermore, since all Marines do not retain information in a like manner, the use of a

⁴³ Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Professional Reading Program*, ALMAR 007/05, May 12, 2008, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/886632/marine-corps-professional-reading-program/>.

collaborative, multi-disciplined approach to culture education will increase the likelihood of success.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps places a great deal of responsibility on a corporal's young shoulders and must equip them with the education needed for success. Marine Corps leadership must implement culture education for corporals through a multilayered leader-led based approach which include aspects from the RCLF program, PME, the Commandants Professional Reading Program, and CAOCL vignettes.

Culture education is critical to the success of the future Marine Corps, especially for the corporals being thrown into leadership roles. Corporals must be adaptable to situations regardless of the region of the world in which they are operating. Apart from deployments to foreign countries, culture education will also provide a greater understanding of Marines from different background as the Marine Corps is a melting pot of society's many cultures. The same culture general concepts can provide the framework for Marines to thrive when interacting with seniors, peers, and subordinates in a garrison environment. The transferable skills for thinking and interacting learned through culture education is an important step towards advancing a corporal's career in the Marine Corps. Culture education bridges the gap between corporals as the first line of defense and operations in today's information heavy environment where split second decisions based on a corporals training, education, and experience can make strategic level impacts.

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