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Cross-Cultural Competency in the General Purpose Force:
Training Strategies and Implications for Future Operations

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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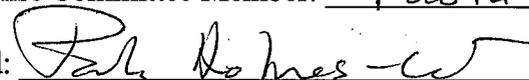
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Executive Summary

Title: Cross-Cultural Competency in the General Purpose Force: Training Strategies and Implications for Future Operations

Author: Major Duane E. Synoground, Jr., U.S. Army

Thesis: An abundance of research in Cross-Cultural Competency (C3) is conclusive in recognizing the value it has for General Purpose Forces (GPF), but the majority of the services have been slow to incorporate it into their education and training with the exception of the Marine Corps. It is time to transform the collective ideas of this research into an enduring services-wide recruitment and training curriculum that advocates the right balance between language and culture. Virtually all studies of C3 demonstrate that cultural learning is more valuable than language learning. Nevertheless, C3, conceptually and contextually, remains relatively unknown to the majority of the services. In addition to discussing a frame-work for C3 implementation, this study establishes a foundation for why there needs to be increased emphasis on C3 education beyond Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, investigates the current status of C3 programs across the force, and, despite its promising value to the GPF, examines why it might currently be in jeopardy.

Discussion: Before 2001, only Special Operations and a small number of Irregular Warfare forces recognized value in culture and language skills. The requirements of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) have since forced the GPF to also develop culture and language skills on a scale not seen since Vietnam. Not making C3 and some language skill a permanent part of the GPF beyond OIF/OEF will undermine these forces' overall effectiveness in not only steady-state operations, but for Peace Operations ranging from Observation and Monitoring to Supervision and Assistance, and Theater Security Cooperation Missions. However, the problem is much more complicated than simply increasing the customary dose of culture training received during Initial Entry or Pre-Deployment Training presently offered. The solution will require designing and implementing improved recruiting and talent recognition practices to complement an enhanced education and training system that will integrate these critical skills into the overall warrior culture of the GPF. The Marine Corps has taken nascent steps to implement such a program. The other services should endeavor to implement programs on par with the Marine Corps plan, or work directly with the Marine Corps in a joint effort.

Conclusion: Cultural blunders committed during OIF and OEF, some yielding deadly consequences, are evidence enough to support this endeavor. Experiences and expertise developed both inside and outside of the U.S. military are invaluable resources to help create and sustain an enduring C3 recruiting and education strategy. Appropriately framing and presenting this concept is critical to its withstanding the coming inter-war period and era of shrinking resources.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

This thesis, above all, is a call to action. The General Purpose Forces (GPF) in the U.S. military must develop more cultural awareness and language familiarity. I was chosen to be the Civil Military Operations Officer (CMO) for Joint Task Force-East in Romania from July to November 2009. Once there, I interacted almost daily with community leaders from area villages. The dilemma I had with this experience was that I had been given only a handful of days to prepare on top of being just a few months removed from an abridged version of Army Civil Affairs Officer Training. Had I been afforded to be part of an ongoing, career-centric effort to develop Cross-Cultural Competency skills, I would have had much more success than I did in executing my duties. I firmly believe that nearly seven years of living overseas in Germany (both in and out of the U.S. Army) within a foreign culture, formed the foundational knowledge I was able to draw from that guided my day to day interactions with Romanian Soldiers and Civilians during this assignment. Without it, I would have certainly foundered.

Experiences like mine are evocative of the immediate future. U.S. forces have left Iraq, and the mission in Afghanistan is quickly ending. The GPF must turn to preparing for non-kinetic operations in addition to maintaining warfighting skills. No matter the contingency, the GPF will benefit from an expanded culture and language program.

Incidents from OIF/OEF – like the Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal in 2003/04 or Marines urinating on bodies of dead Taliban in 2012 – demonstrate the criticality of the need for increased cultural training and awareness. The Marine Corps has developed the most robust and impressive program thus far. Now is the time for the rest of the services to join the effort on the same scale so that this plan can be improved and eventually solidified as part of our collective warrior culture. We can ill afford to let this important development in our training paradigm slip into obscurity and become fodder for budget cuts, as it once did during the aftermath of Vietnam.

If you wish to see my formula for a way-ahead, focus your reading on the Introduction, the section on page 12, and the conclusion. If you desire the more thorough understanding of this topic, how we arrived at where we are, and the real-world consequences of ignoring this issue, please read the entire document.

The author would like to thank his classmates and military and civilian faculty and MMS advisors. Thanks also to Dr. Allison Green-Sands of DLNSEO, Dr. Allison Abbe formerly of ARI, and the Civilian and Military staff at CAOCL for their dedication and entrepreneurship.

Introduction

“Americans must be educated about the realities of the global economy and the commitments of global leadership. Our education policies should emphasize foreign languages, culture, and history, and create more incentives and programs for study abroad.”

- Senator Chuck Hagel, 2004¹

“The future operating environment will be one of constant and accelerating change.”

- Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats, Joint Operating Concept²

Before 2001, only Special Operations and a small number of Irregular Warfare forces (SOF/IW) recognized value in culture and language skills on a scale not seen since Vietnam. The requirements of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) have also forced the General Purpose Force (GPF) to develop culture and language skills to a degree. Not making these skills a permanent part of the GPF, beyond OIF/OEF, will undermine these forces' overall effectiveness in not only steady-state operations, but also for Peace Operations, ranging from Observation and Monitoring to Supervision and Assistance, and Theater Security Cooperation.³ However, the problem is much more complicated than simply increasing the customary dose of culture training received during Initial Entry or Pre-Deployment Training. The solution will require designing and implementing improved recruiting and talent recognition practices to complement an enhanced education and training system that will integrate these critical skills into the overall warrior culture of the GPF. The Marine Corps has taken nascent steps to implement such a program. The other services should endeavor to implement programs on par with what the Marine Corps has proposed, or work with the Marine Corps in a joint effort.

Research demonstrates that improved readiness for culture and language will enhance the effectiveness of the GPF. Using the same body of research, this paper will delineate the key

reasons why training and preparation for cross-cultural environments versus language memorization is identified by subject matter-experts as a more critical skill, and translates well for GPF requirements. Cross-Cultural Competency (C3) has surfaced as the term to describe cultural ability and adaptability in personnel. Cultural Agility, a term coined by Dr. Paula Caligirui, is used here to describe a degree of talent that surpasses C3. Using these concepts as a framework, the analysis herein will make suggestions designed to improve cross-cultural talent recognition and recruiting practices and introduce a potential training paradigm to fit the traditional GPF and SOF/IW framework of the services. This analysis proposes a setting for keeping culturally agile personnel employed in their traditional SOF/IW roles while retaining similar talent in the GPF as a pool of expert training cadre for C3 enhancement.

As case studies and realities of the international business world attest, C3 is inherently rare and difficult to develop. International companies have invested many resources into developing cultural awareness in their organizations. Where they come out ahead of their military counterparts is in implementation of culturally focused programs and methods. This has been in no small part due to a cottage industry of consultancy firms that has made the development of cross-cultural knowledge, communications, and leadership their exclusive area of expertise (e.g. Richard Lewis Communications⁴, The Hofstede Center⁵, or Caligiuri & Associates, Incorporated⁶). To begin this research are some recent examples from both the international business sector and the U.S. government that demonstrate the importance of C3.

The last, and maybe most important, topic is the danger posed by the looming inter-war period to the GPF's current and future C3 programs. Without an alignment of priorities and budgets, any plans to improve C3 recruiting and education could amount to, 'too little too late'. Such a scenario would reflect the unfortunate case immediately following the Vietnam Conflict,

the other major post-counterinsurgency era in contemporary American history. Cost benefit analysis experts from outside of the military, divorced from understanding the true value of culture and language abilities in action, should not be allowed to prevent its proliferation.

Understanding Concepts: Competency vs. Agility

“...today nearly all academics purport to be “scholars of culture”, including: anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, sociologists, linguists, organizational behaviouralists, and others.

- Brian R. Selmeski, Centre for Security, Armed Forces & Society: Royal Military College of Canada⁷

C3, for the purposes of this paper, will be referred to as “...the knowledge, skills, and affect/motivation that enable individuals to adapt effectively in cross-cultural environments.”⁸

C3 then, using this definition, is closely related to, but is not as meticulous a skill as what Industrial Organizational Psychologist Dr. Paula Caligiuri, of the consultancy firm Caligiuri Associates, Inc. (and having written a book by the same name⁹), calls Cultural Agility. Caligiuri described Cultural Agility as “...knowing what to do with cultural knowledge [developed through C3] in specific situations where more subtle, interpersonal, tasks are needed and there are a range of behavioral options available.”¹⁰ Caligiuri, to be fair, defines Cultural Agility as a subpart of C3 in her overall explanation of concepts in an Army study.¹¹ However, the argument herein concludes, using a side-by-side comparison of definitions, that being agile within a cultural setting is more cognitively demanding than developing C3 skills. C3 then, is more universally applicable, and as will be discussed, is also more readily adaptable to the GPF by way of improving overall skill-sets in the cross- cultural domain. The C3 versus Cultural Agility partition is a model used to frame concepts throughout the rest of this paper. Both concepts are

later broken down further to delineate between what anthropologists refer to as *Surface Culture* and *Deep Culture*.

Dr. Jessica Glicken Turnley's Joint Special Operations University March 2011 Report 11-1, "Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are", points out that SOF forces require "diplomatic" skills as a means to "persuade" an indigenous population.¹² Skills on par with being *diplomatic* and *persuasive* (indicating a need to negotiate and mediate in difficult situations) may be a stretch for the GPF in most cases. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, the most obvious being the role of GPF Advisors in OEF/OIF, which is also discussed later. Nonetheless, merely arming Soldiers and Marines with good intentions, akin to what was done at the beginning of OIF/OEF, is simply not enough to successfully prepare them to execute good cross-cultural interactions. This concept is especially important in preparation to deal with animus or antagonistic situations.

Perhaps the most extreme example of an animus or antagonistic situation was the 2003/2004 Abu Ghraib Prison Abuse Scandal during OIF.¹³ Providing the Reservist Military Police Soldiers guilty of these atrocities more advanced, C3-focused cultural training may have influenced them not to succumb to the psychological pressures that led them to perpetrate brutality. Pre-deployment preparation that is focused less on individual cultural nuances and hazards, and more on understanding what it takes to be C3 capable, may have better prepared these Soldiers to subsist among and respect people of a differing worldly view, in this case Iraqis. The ability of these Soldiers, as is requisite by the definition of C3 above "...to adapt effectively in cross-cultural environments," to remain personally and collectively cognizant of the pressures of environmental circumstance in a psychologically intense inter-cultural situation must also be considered as a teaching point of C3. Specifically, this will call for harnessing the

influence of C3 as a means to strengthen individual morality that will in turn improve inter-cultural interactions that avoid falling prey to harmful psychological pressures.¹⁴ Not discounting contributing factors such as racist-motivated outlooks that may or may not have influenced the individual behavior of the Soldiers, defeating what Psychologist Dr. Phillip Zimbardo calls the “Mardi Gras Effect” where, “...emotion rules reason...” can be accomplished through the development and propagation of C3-centric attitudes in service members.¹⁵

In the case of the Abu Ghraib Scandal, basic linguistic skills may or may not have helped. However, today’s research indicates that a C3-centric focus would lend a more humanistic-based perspective that far outweighs the insubstantial cultural awareness training from a decade ago. The argument for cultural over language training is explored later. First, it needs to be demonstrated through relevant examples why C3 is an important phenomenon in an increasingly inter-connected world.

The Impact of Cultural Misunderstandings

"When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right, from the Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iraq, and more -- we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged."

Secretary Of Defense Robert M. Gates, 2011¹⁶

“In order to maximize the prospect of success, the joint force must understand the population and operating environment, including the complex historical, political, socio-cultural, religious, economic, and other causes of violent conflict”

- Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats, Joint Operating Concept¹⁷

For military endeavors, it is not just simply money and notoriety, but rather lives and livelihoods that can hang in the balance of a properly or improperly interpreted cultural exchange.¹⁸ Some examples of failed cultural exchanges in the military are the Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal in 2003 and 2004 described in the previous section. More recently were Marines urinating on the corpses of Taliban Fighters, and the accidental burning of Qurans by U.S. service members, both in early 2012. The Quran burning is unique among these examples because it was the only incident that was entirely unpremeditated.¹⁹ Regrettably, four U.S. service members lost their lives because of the reactionary violence in the immediate aftermath, which did not subside for several weeks. Increased C3 might have led the service members involved with the Quran burning incident to be more culturally cognizant and not incarnate their own version of (weather individually or as a group) Dr. Zimbardo's "Mardi Gras Effect." Through increased consideration of their own cognizance, as a result of C3-centric attitudes, their consideration of Afghan peers may have prevented the incident altogether as, "The investigation found that warnings from Afghans, including a Afghan soldier, had been ignored and attributed the incident in part to distrust between Americans and Afghans."²⁰

The realm of international business has long recognized the importance of similar capabilities. Parallel to that development has been the emergence of consular expertise to train and educate cross-cultural interaction and leadership in an increasingly globalized economy. International business failures contributed to the catalyst that drove this development. Among these, the following example describes the various cultural blunders that forced Wal-Mart to cease operations in Germany in 2006 after less than a decade, losing what has been estimated to be "...hundreds of millions of dollars a year."²¹

From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, Wal-Mart opened retail store locations around Germany. The first and most unflattering problem for Wal-Mart in Deutschland was the result of translating its standard ethics manual from English directly into German and expecting the German employees to follow it lock-step.²² The translation resulted in several misunderstandings, for example, “German labor law prevented the easy-come, easy-go hiring and firing common in the U.S., and the unions and the public alike were outraged by what Germans saw as an absurd ban on flirting in the workplace.”²³ Wal-Mart may not have intended for its approach to be interpreted in such a way; nevertheless, the situation managed to go from bad to worse:

...the ethics-code fiasco shows that Wal-Mart is still prone to do things the Wal-Mart way without enough consideration to local customs. [German] Rivals continue to chuckle about the customer reaction when, initially, Wal-Mart offered services such as grocery bagging. It turned out that Germans didn't want strangers handling their groceries. And when clerks followed orders to smile at shoppers, male customers took it as a come-on.²⁴

This example exists in the business world, where, again, the most that is at stake is reputation and profit. Also noteworthy is that these discrepancies developed between two western hemispheric cultures. There is a high contrast between this and other situations involving two cultures from much farther apart, both in terms of distance and cultural likeness. The next example illustrates the difficulties faced by the U.S. Government in the early years of military operations in Southwest Asia post-9/11.

Popularized by the media after 9/11, the term “Jihadist”²⁵ became a catch phrase for the enemies of the U.S. The meaning of Jihadist in Arabic is ““striving in the path of God.””²⁶ Use of the term, probably meant to be reminiscent of the forlorn *Jerry*, *Jap*, or *Gook* from past U.S. conflicts, had an unintended effect not only on our enemy, but on the people whose support the

U.S. was (and are) attempting to win over. Had the U.S. had more C3 strategic planners from the beginning of operations (instead of merely language proficient ones) this particular cultural blunder might have been prevented. Instead, “Our government’s use of language transformed murderers into martyrs”.²⁷

Soldiers and Marines using C3 skills to communicate is an operational or tactical task. Strategic communication and planning for it, however, resides at the strategic level. The former Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Mike Mullin adequately called such a strategic mishap the “‘Say-Do’ Gap”.²⁸ In other words, we say one thing in strategy, while doing another in operations and tactics. The above cultural blunder may have been perpetrated at the strategic level, but the repercussions were experienced at the operational, and where cultural contact was (and is) almost always made, at the tactical level.

Paradigm Shift: Culture vs. Language Learning

“...Marines who had deployed to a Named Operation in the past four years, stated that they used cultural knowledge more than language skills in their Area of Operations...”

- Summary for CAOCL Culture and Language Survey: Importance of Culture vs. Language²⁹

A lack of language ability is not considered to be as much a hazard as simply being culturally ignorant. Spearheading research to support this assertion, Anthropologist Dr. Paula Holmes-Eber of the Marine Corps University and CAOCL, in reaction to a House Armed Services Committee Report that proffered concern over the newfound focus on culture, writes “...the Marine Corps viewed linguistic skills as an enormous time commitment with very little operational benefit.”³⁰ Backing up Holmes-Eber’s assertion, a study by the *U.S. Marine Corps*

Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) in Quantico, Virginia, surveyed Marines to accurately gauge the perceived necessity for ‘on the job’ culture and language skills.³¹ The results overwhelmingly indicated that the Marines believed their cultural training was of great benefit to them and should even be expanded. Of note was that, “...both groups rated culture skills as significantly more important than language skills to accomplish the goal of their mission.”³²

International Studies specialist Dr. Allison Greene-Sands, the Associate Director of Culture for the Defense Language and National Security Education Office, indicates that language mistakes are often easily forgiven as they are expected by foreigners. Conversely, mistakes made in regards to cultural sensitivities, especially those with religious or deep cultural overtones, can have drastic, even deadly consequences.³³

Culture vs. Language: Awareness and Flexibility over Memorization

The cognitive ability to master a language is commendable, but it is not an assurance against fall-out caused by a cultural gaffe – or outright cultural ignorance bridging the gap to a total lack of respect for human rights – as was the case in the Abu Ghraib Prison Abuse Scandal. Despite the Defense Language Aptitude Battery’s (commonly known as the “D-LAB”) ability to recognize language talent, it does not provide for recognizing latent talent at life-long learning potential at either C3 or Cultural Agility.³⁴ According to Dr. Greene-Sands, it is more appropriate for identifying skills among those who require the strict ability to *listen*, for example, a Crypto-Linguist.³⁵

Most scholars agree that knowing the language of a specific region or people is not a substitute for developing the aptitude to understand, adapt, and successfully negotiate within a

foreign culture. Dr. Caligiuri and her colleagues, writing for the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI), affirm that “Cross-cultural competence is not the knowledge of or recitation of cultural ‘facts’ about other people or nations. It is not having the language skills of a given region.”³⁶

In a 2009 ARI Study Report, behavioral scientist Dr. Allison Abbe (now of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s High-Value Detainee interrogation Group), identifies, “Though language is beneficial for communicating in a particular region or country, its contribution is outweighed by other factors, like attitudes and interpersonal skills.”³⁷ Dr. Abbe distinctly points to the “*depth*” of knowledge for successful interaction within a foreign setting as being tied to language ability, while the “*breadth*” is more attributable to C3.³⁸ She further points out that “Language proficiency is of little use if the interpersonal skills and cultural knowledge needed to apply it in interaction are lacking”.³⁹ As discussed, international business firms and their consultants have also put a premium on cultural awareness versus language ability.

Culture vs. Language: Empathy as a Resource

“...[we must] do a better job understanding the attitudes, opinions, grievances, and concerns of the peoples - not just elites - around the world.”

- White House National Framework for Strategic Communication, March 2010⁴⁰

Richard D. Lewis’ book *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures* uses the metaphor of a “Language Straightjacket”.⁴¹ These are the core dogmatic characteristics of a culture influencing the development of its own language. Lewis characterizes this idea well: “The restricted liberties of thought that any particular tongue allows will have a pervasive influence on considerations of vision, charisma, emotion, poetic feeling, discipline and

hierarchy.”⁴² As a primary example, he describes how Japanese people deal with the barriers manifested in trying to translate their native tongue to other languages:

The Japanese have the most difficult task of all in making the transition from their internal monologues to actual verbal utterances. In their thoughts they agonize over striking a balance between gaining advantage and correctness of behavior. Their internalized speech has to be polite in the extreme in view of the fact that they are to address others. But the speech mechanisms involved in such politeness often lead to incredible vagueness of expression, so that whatever message they seek to convey may well get lost in a fog of impeccable behavior. On top of that, their formidable battery of honorific expressions – so useful in communications between Japanese – are rendered useless in the face of the impossibility of translation, so that their conversation with their foreign counterpart emerges as terribly platitudinous, even if grammatically correct.⁴³

When the direct translation of words or attempts to identify with a culture through the exclusive use of language skill fails, intercultural communicators must resort to a deeper, less surface-oriented understanding of the other party. An approach of this type will reduce (or idealistically eliminate) contriteness in order to more accurately convey intentions. In doing so, C3 communicators should be considerate enough to understand the difficulties confronting their cross-cultural partners (in this example, Japanese). In other words, being ultimately cognizant of the cultural underpinnings that help motivate a cross-cultural partner is a critical component of C3 (Figure 1 in the next section illustrates this point).

Certainly, language and cultural is reciprocal. As Lewis writes, “Just as different cultures don’t use speech the same way, neither do they listen the same way.”⁴⁴ When strictly relying on the use of language skills, both sending and receiving, the risk is run that time spent mastering a language is potentially time wasted, not learning about and tuning into a culture overall. This scenario is akin to essentially ‘Missing the Forest for the Trees.’ Language then, as recognized within the business world, just as has been identified by researchers like Dr. Abbe, is indeed not a final solution to being an effective cross-cultural communicator.

Lewis approaches cultural issues from the perspective of an International Business Consultant. It is careful to point out that there are views that go slightly beyond and perhaps compete with his. Raymond Cohen, for example, in *Negotiating Across Cultures* professes “...cultural factors hinder relations in general, and on occasion complicate, prolong, and even frustrate particular negotiations where there otherwise exists an identifiable basis for cooperation.”⁴⁵ Lewis, nevertheless, explains well the geo-dialectic understanding that is an essential skill for good cross-cultural communicators. Cohen’s thesis is also relevant to developing the argument here and is addressed contextually in the following section.

A Prospective Frame-Work for C3 and Cultural Agility Proficiency in the GPF

“...force planners must be smart about future decisions regarding force design and lean towards agile, rigorously trained, multi-purpose forces capable of being adaptive in approach to the unique conditions each conflict poses.”

- Frank G. Hoffman, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University⁴⁶

In an April 2011 report by ARI entitled *Training, Developing, and Assessing Cross-Cultural Competence in Military Personnel*, several scholars, led by Dr. Caligiuri, agree that “Future military activities – whether for peacekeeping or warfighting – will require our Soldiers to be able to form relationships, build trust, communicate, and collaborate with people of greatly different backgrounds.”⁴⁷ ARI also identifies here that the GPF is increasingly in need of C3 oriented skills. As a result, “The need to become cross-culturally competent thus becomes both a life-saving skill and an enabler of mission success.”⁴⁸

Important to note is that the argument above is not new, though the lexis has evolved.⁴⁹ Fortunately, since the beginning of OIF/OEF, however, it is once again being re-conceptualized

as an integral part of the GPF skill set.⁵⁰ Beyond OIF/OEF, operations forecasted for the GPF demand an even more robust program for identifying talent and educating proficiency at intercultural capabilities. Such a program has two distinct corollaries.

First, it will help identify individuals within the GPF possessing a natural aptitude for, or possessing the ability to develop C3. Second, it will engage service members, regardless of their natural proclivity for C3, to internalize the need to develop some level of proficiency at it. Much like that of the ever-changing world of international business, future operating environments will be reliant on, to name just a few traits: “Quick thinking, shifting strategies, taking risks, using intuition, collecting information, scrapping plans and starting afresh, innovating constantly...”⁵¹ Before discussing an education paradigm to match the needs of the GPF, a clear meaning of culture must be established in terms of its relationship and influence over both C3 and Cultural Agility as they are used in this analysis.

Long-established definitions of culture are outmoded. Traditional Social Psychologists like Geert Hofstede labeled culture as “[T]he collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.”⁵² However, more recently, experts like Turnley have presented culture as more subjective than objective in nature.⁵³ As a result, the idea of culture has evolved into a living medium, possessing an ever-changing set of complex paradigms that are controlled from within an indigenous population, yet influenced by outside forces at the same time.⁵⁴ Incidentally, Turnley’s paradigm fits better into Cohen’s thesis concerning too much basic cultural sympathy getting in the way of quality cross-cultural engagement introduced in the previous section.

Turnley presents a very succinct model called the “Iceberg Metaphor” (See Figure 1) to describe her ideas.⁵⁵ This metaphor is relevant to a training model that separates C3 and Cultural

Agility in that it shows a clear delineation between each of these levels of interaction. Turnley states, “Just as 90 percent of an iceberg is invisible below the waterline, and just as that 90 percent is critical for the stability and longevity of the iceberg, so is 90 percent of culture invisible to us directly, yet critical to understanding and engaging with that part we do see.”⁵⁶ In other words, dealing with cultural engagements on a C3-type level requires skills that are a mile-wide and an inch deep, while more intense engagements, on par with Cultural Agility, require the inverse. Using Turnley’s metaphor as a foundation to describe this idea further, the above water portion of the iceberg represents C3, while the remainder is relevant for Cultural Agility. However, a good C3 practitioner remains keenly aware and understands the significance of all that exists below the water-line, and how it constantly influences their cultural interactions. Using the iceberg metaphor’s inherent insight into a model for C3 training and education, it is relevant to place the above and below the water-line portions into easily identifiable groups.

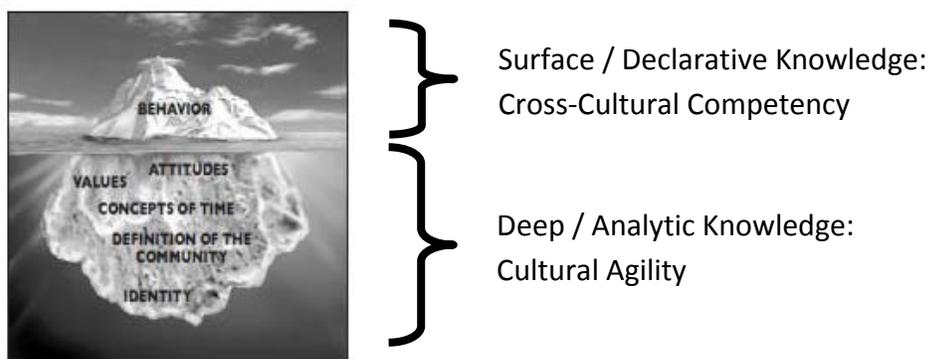


Figure 1: Iceberg Metaphor & Adaptability to C3/Cultural Agility Frame-work

Source/Adapted From: Jessica Glicker Turnley, “Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are,” March 2011, *Joint Special Operations University Report 11-1*, p. 9-12.

From the perspective of anthropologists, those who study living culture, there is a distinction made between *Surface* culture and *Deep* culture.⁵⁷ Dr. Turnley authoritatively cites

“*Declarative* knowledge”⁵⁸ as akin to the 10 percent of the iceberg on the surface, while “The bottom 90 percent...the implicit or hidden parts of culture, is what we might call *analytic* knowledge”.⁵⁹ A training model to follow Turnley’s metaphor and verbiage might pair the GPF with a focus on understanding *Surface*, or *Declarative*, culture and free SOF/IW to focus on the *Deep*, or *Analytical*, culture (See Figure 1). However, such a model is not without its faults, nor is it explained quite so easily.

Understanding the importance of this model and the implications for its corresponding audiences must be clarified further. The suggested model is not meant to imply that the GPF should simply forget about attempting to reach an ever-increasing level of proficiency at C3, and always strive to reach the acumen of Cultural Agility. It must be remembered that these are two different constructs, and extremes of each translate into different capabilities, each relevant in its own right. If a particular service member has aspiration of joining the SOF/IW community, then that individual should strive to become Cultural Agile. Otherwise, as part of the GPF, they should endeavor to master the C3 sphere.

What exactly is meant then by ‘mastering the C3 sphere?’ In a broad sense, C3 contributes more to what Lewis explains as “...facilitating relationships and reducing misunderstandings.”⁶⁰ This is especially true when understanding that the GPF role is not to seek out interaction with foreigners, but will nevertheless have to prepare for it to occur with relative consistency. On the *surface*, after all, is where the most fundamental and common types of cross-cultural engagements take place. *Surface (C3)* interaction requires the communicator to be cognizant of the influence that *deep* culture has over the interaction at hand. Listening to and then actually taking heed of Afghani Soldiers’ warnings not to dispose of Qurans by burning would be an example of competently communicating in this manner. Conversely, the SOF/IW

community can focus on developing a keener understanding of *deep* cultural influencers in order to apply their relevance in situations requiring diplomacy and persuasion.

Peace-Time and Peace Operations: Reliable and Valuable C3 Learning Environments

“Cross-cultural competency [C3] is a force multiplier, allowing members of the total force who have not received in-depth training to operate in a multi-cultural environment...enables all members of the Total Force to adapt to a multi-cultural force, to multi-cultural coalitions, and to multi-cultural operating environments.”

- Gail McGinn, Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense (Plans), 2009 ⁶¹

To complete and complement this C3-Cultural Agility framework, relevant and realistic training environments need to be included for their intrinsic learning value. Working in a peace-time C3 environment is the best way for service members to adapt C3 skills into their personal readiness. This goes both for experience gained while serving at locations of permanent or semi-permanent overseas basing, or during Peace Operations and Theater Security Cooperation type Missions. C3 skills essential for these types of missions cannot be strictly learned from within a classroom, and have minimal effect even in the most realistic training scenario.⁶² Students of C3 must be allowed to experience intercultural relations in a casual, natural, and realistic learning environment.

Evidence to support this idea can also be drawn from modern anthropology.

Anthropologists who are engaged in fieldwork do not typically pose a threat to the indigenous population they are studying, although the potential for misunderstandings and committing an unintentional cultural faux pas is greatly increased at the beginning of their interaction.⁶³

Because of the potential for such a development, a more gradual, passive introduction is desired over being thrust into a cross-cultural situation. With this approach in mind, allowing exposure

to low-stress cross-cultural environments can be categorized as a realistic (and low-cost) way to help facilitate the ability of service members to properly react in high-stress, culturally sensitive environments.

To best describe how such a phenomenon has already been hard at work, one particular task that has befallen the GPF in both Iraq and Afghanistan is that of a military advisor to or trainer of Iraqi or Afghani forces. An ARI study (in collaboration with the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance – JCISFA) addresses the experiences of GPF military advisors. Specifically, 565 post-deployment advisors surveyed from both the Army and Marine Corps determined that a “...variety of interpersonal, influence, advising, cross-cultural, and communication behaviors were critical to advisor performance.”⁶⁴ In addition, this survey of Advisors also supports the language versus culture argument in that it does not specifically mention language ability as key to advisor success. Instead, it advocates effective use of an interpreter as the preferred method of breaching the language barrier.⁶⁵

Advisor roles are perhaps the best example of a once exclusive SOF/IW mission creeping onto the GPF’s résumé during OIF/OEF. For example, the reports referred to some advisor requirements as “...not just ‘telling and training’ – it is also ‘persuading.’”⁶⁶ Persuading, as was mentioned earlier, is normally a term reserved for SOF/IW undertakings.

Service Programmatic Efforts

The DOD’s most recent “Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities 2011-2016” (descendent from the initial 2005 document⁶⁷), states that the Department will develop “*the required combination of language skills, regional expertise and cultural capabilities to meet current and projected needs.*”⁶⁸ Each of the programs launched by

the individual services represents an attempt to satisfy that goal. Covered here are the Army, Air Force, Navy, and DOD programs. The following section is reserved for the Marine Corps' program, as it is the most entrepreneurial in terms of an actionable training strategy.

Specifically, the Marine Corps' program has adopted a C3 strategy that emphasizes culture over language, and C3 learning overall as a component of Marine Professional Military Education (PME).

The U.S. Army has published a C3-based strategy through the Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) Culture Center.⁶⁹ The 2009 "Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy"⁷⁰ is contextually similar to the 2012 Marine Corps plan. Like the Marine Corps' strategy, the Army's strategy provides relevant guidelines for both culture and language training through recognizing the need for a relevant mixture of both by military occupation, affirming that the "Development of culture capability is the main effort (big C) and development of language capability is the supporting effort (little L)." ⁷¹ Despite its conceptual precision, the TRADOC Culture Center has not yet bridged this document from a strategic framework into the PME-based training that it postulates. Training entrenched in existing PME cycles, in the Army's vernacular, is defined as a "career development path."^{72 73} The Army's strategy needs to be developed programmatically, or adapted to the Marine Corps strategy in order to merge into an actionable, joint training venture.

The Air Force's program was developed by the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC).⁷⁴ It offers cultural training through the "*Introduction to Culture (ITC)*"⁷⁵ and "*Cross-Cultural Communications (CCC)*" courses⁷⁶; however, these one-time training events are not followed up with continuing education options throughout an Airman's career. A continuing education format is currently unique to the Army and Marine Corps programs (with the Marine

Corps in the lead), and will best benefit the GPF in developing sustainable C3 capabilities throughout a service member's career. Fortunately, the Air Force is showing signs of adopting such a program by advertising a voluntary "Cultural Studies Project", which states the goal "...to develop cross-cultural PME materials for Airmen of all ranks."⁷⁷

Next, the U.S. Navy has created the "Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC) Program."⁷⁸ The LREC is not as robust as any of the other service programs, but it has dedicated a web page to language learning resources with links to, interestingly enough, the Marine Corps and Air Force Cultural program pages.⁷⁹ Additional resources are located on a 'Navy Knowledge Online – NKO' web-site that is inaccessible to non-Navy Common Access Card holders.⁸⁰ This site is predominantly focused on language preparedness with links to DLI's Headstart2 and the Navy's own Integrated System for Language Integration and Training (ISLET) program that is intended to improve Navy language training through "... online social networking, interactive role-play, competitive gaming and speech recognition to create an immersive environment for collaborative learning."⁸¹ Very few cultural classes are offered with limited reference to the C3 concept.

Linked to the LREC web-page, however, is the DOD's Cross-Cultural Competence Portal, which, echoing the overall DOD strategy, states:

It is imperative that we build a Total Force which is not only globally aware, but also adept at interacting with people from a variety of cultures. C3 is about acquiring this knowledge and honing the skills necessary to relate, negotiate, influence, motivate, manage, adapt, plan and execute effectively across cultural lines both domestic and abroad.⁸²

The resources on this web page are abundant, offering a broad range of individualized internet-based courses with names like *Group Development*, *Socialization*, *Perceptions*, *Communication Skills*, *Listening and Feedback Skills*, and *Communicating Across Differences*.⁸³ Of note are the

links to ‘Emerging Research’ documents from around the DOD.⁸⁴ There are a few links to external online training resources, most of which are sponsored by outside Academic Institutions like the University of Notre Dame.⁸⁵ Not designed to match the rigidity of the programs implemented by the individual services, the DOD’s site is essentially all static information and internet-based training, most of which takes no more than an hour to accomplish. Overall, it lacks the programmatic insights being lead by the Marine Corps plan and that are slowly emerging among some of the other services plans and strategies. The following is a break-down of the Marine Corps’ unique program.

The Marine Corps Plan: Forging a Way Ahead in the Face of Uncertainty

“Whereas language and regional skills may be limited by geographical boundaries, cross-cultural competence focuses on developing capabilities that are applicable regardless of where military personnel may be deployed”

- Marine Corps Language, Regional and Culture Strategy: 2010-2015⁸⁶

The Commandant of the Marine Corps directed that his force “...enhance language, regional, and cultural (LRC) skills in the General Purpose Force.”⁸⁷ The directing document to accomplish this order, a product of CAOCL, is called “The Marine Corps Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program” or RCLF.⁸⁸ The RCLF recognizes that Marines cannot always realistically be 100 percent prepared for deployment when it comes to LRC skills, but they can be generally educated to deal with the mental rigors of a C3 environment. This concept is foundational to the Culture-*General* approach:⁸⁹

Culture general is a conceptual approach that guides Marines in framing the problem and then seeking the appropriate culturally specific information to solve the issue. Cultural

general concepts can be applied to any culture around the world and are therefore applicable to any operational environment, thus facilitating their effectiveness beyond their assigned region.⁹⁰

The Cultural-*General* approach is founded on the principles that define C3.

Adjacent is the Cultural -*Specific*⁹¹ platform, in which specific culturally inclined individuals are to become the de-facto experts of a particular region. Cultural-*Specific* more closely embodies Dr. Caligiuri's concept of Cultural Agility, but is probably more analogous within the framework of the RCLF to a sharply focused C3 capable Marine (see pages 14 & 15 above). Such competent individuals are ipso facto prepared to train and educate their peers and subordinates on an assigned world region, country, or individual culture. The Marine Corps has plans to implement language training from an existing web-based program called Headstart2 already provided by the Defense Language Institute through 'Joint Knowledge Online'.⁹² The primary goal is to relegate language ability to focusing on "...tactical phrases, as opposed to a professional level linguistic ability."⁹³ The underlying premise is to enhance cultural learning over language learning, which, again, research and survey study results have proven to be an effective schema.

As Figure 2 depicts, the three program components, Culture Specific, Culture General, and Language Familiarization skills complement one another. The ultimate goal is to produce well-rounded Marines, prepared to engage in or quickly become prepared to engage in C3 anywhere on the map. With the help of dedicated leaders, this plan is meant to evolve into a self-sustaining model. The implementation strategy divides the globe up into seventeen regions and sixteen languages (both with the potential for expansion).⁹⁴ Advancement will consist of a series of accomplishments required to reach the follow-on "Block" that is parallel and part of both Enlisted and Officer PME.⁹⁵

There is a lot still to be learned from the Marine Corps' nascent program. At present, it is the only program that has been accepted at the service chief level for implementation across the Marine Corps GPF, having been approved by the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Marine Education Command in October of 2012.⁹⁶ The other services, particularly the Army and Marine Corps, would be wise to study its outcomes closely and develop it into a training model for sustainable C3 in the GPF. Such a project will require a continuation of the type of survey studies already engaged by both CAOCL and ARI. Understanding the effects of the

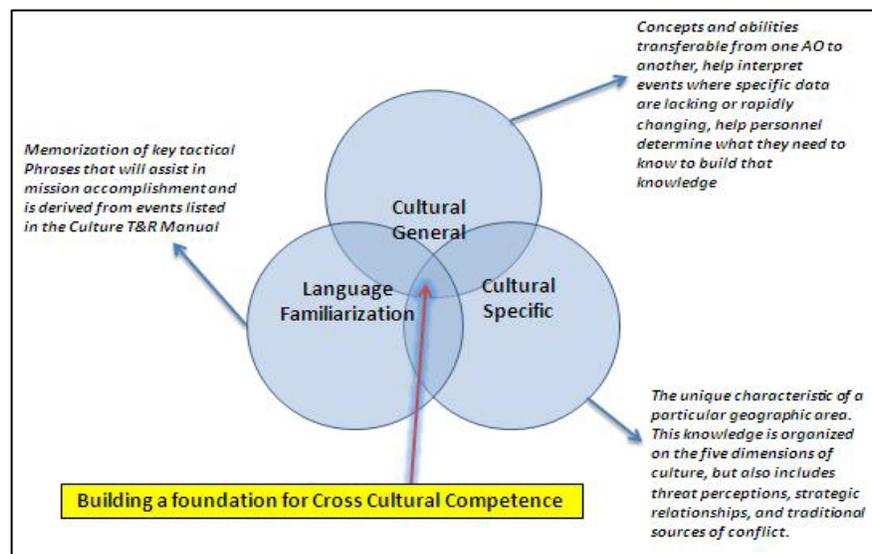


Figure 2: CAOCL Foundations for C3

Source/Adapted from: *The Marine Corps Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program*, August, 2011

program before and after implementation is critical to its development and survival.

Unfortunately, implementation will likely be both time and budget sensitive.

Conclusion: Setting Conditions for C3 Survival

“By incorporating culture into doctrine and into strategic guidance, the Department of Defense has greatly improved the odds that the cultural training programs implemented in recent years will survive beyond the conflicts that prompted them”

- Dr. Allison Abbe, Ph.D., and Melissa Gouge⁹⁷

Any program designed to improve the GPF cross-cultural awareness and capacity to avoid such damaging situations as those outlined in this study will need to be implemented in a resource constrained environment moving into the impending inter-war period. A considerably smaller DOD budget is foreseen as OEF comes to a conclusion (OIF, after phasing into Operation New Dawn, ended in 2011). Vietnam-era language and culture programs were also designed to assist the GPF (some of which were considered rather successful); however, inter-war periods have been synonymous with their being, as Dr. Greene-Sands describes, "...put back on the shelf."⁹⁸ In the face of uncertainty as to the next U.S. military endeavor, whether it is a return to a 20th century concept of Limited War, another protracted counter-insurgency operation, or even conventional theater-level warfare, military leaders and planners must establish and retain C3 within the GPF as a tool for long-term success.⁹⁹ Regrettably, there are early signs that it will be an uphill battle.

In May of 2011, the United States Government Accounting Office (GAO) prepared a *Report to Congressional Committees* entitled: "Military Training: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Coordination of Army and Marine Corps Language and Culture Training." This GAO report, in pragmatic terms, was fundamentally designed to address two questions: First, is the existing language and culture training being employed in the Army and Marine Corps (and their trending versions) worth the money being spent on them, and second, should it continue? The most obvious problem with the GAO report is that language and culture training are knowingly lumped together into one category. As has been established, these concepts are better

quantified and understood as a benefit to Soldiers and Marines if they are scrutinized through separate lenses.

Most remarks in the report are critical of the two respective services and the DOD, noting in the very beginning that, “DOD has not yet set up internal mechanisms, such as procedures and milestones, by which it can reach consensus with the military services on priorities and investments.”¹⁰⁰ What this specific comment ignores is that despite the quick implementation, the Army and Marine Corps, with respect to culture and language training, were acting with the same prudence afforded to other battlefield innovations implemented since OIF and OEF began, regardless of achieved effectiveness. Addressing the related GAO recommendation to collate performance metrics, the official DOD response was to “Partially Concur”, stating that, “There is significant data to suggest this is far from an exact science, and may not be able to provide an accurate assessment tied to operational effectiveness.”¹⁰¹

The evaluative methods used by the GAO in this report are poorly considered. It is easier to gauge success by counting the number of IEDs defeated or Key Leader Engagements completed than it is to deduce criterion from the slow grinding success and failures encountered in the process of influencing hearts and changing minds through tactical C3 interactions. This is representative of a recent controversial backlash against Effects Based Operations (i.e. Approach) or Systems of Systems Analysis methods used by the U.S. military to measure effectiveness. These methods have recently been criticized for their comprehensive validity in measuring inherently complex matters. Complex matters in this case are counterinsurgency operations like OIF and OEF.¹⁰² Helping bridge these concepts, Dr. Abbe states, “The learning system to develop cross-cultural competence is different from other traditional training programs

in the Army [and Marine Corps] given that the focus is on the role context (working internationally) rather than role content (e.g., firing a weapon, mastering a technology).”¹⁰³

In order then for the GAO to make a well-informed recommendation to Congress, the time and energy must be spent to deduce relevant, subjectively-based evaluation criteria. The only immediately available method to gathering meaningful measures of effectiveness then is to query the modern end-user to record and rate experiences. The CAOCL survey of Marines and the ARI – JCISFA Survey of Military Advisors cited above are both promising starts to what will be an overall complex and challenging process. The CAOCL survey was implemented in direct reaction to the above GAO report identifying this requirement.¹⁰⁴ Fortunately, the intellectual expertise to accomplish such a daunting task already resides within the U.S. military’s academic community. All that is required is adequate access to resources, time, and funding to implement a survey system and reporting strategy that will acquire invaluable subjective analysis from which to build justification for DOD-wide C3 implementation. Furthermore, the Marine Corps’ current plan must be afforded enough time in execution to contribute to any justification process.

Building a more culturally proficient GPF has entered the DOD lexicon and training strategies with more dexterity than at any time since Vietnam.¹⁰⁵ Dr. Abbe argues, auspiciously, that some of the cultural training programs from the 1960s and 1970s may still be of practical use.¹⁰⁶ Any future program should identify markers that will recognize candidates with either innate cultural ability or who have the potential to develop them with experience. A program that identifies this type of talent will also eliminate candidates who do not demonstrate the right cognitive approach. Education methods conceptualized and built on a dual C3 – Cultural Agility foundation will also inculcate a focus on developing a healthy (or healthier) respect for differing cultures among the GPF and ultimately help curb incidents of cultural blunders and atrocities by

U.S. forces that have consistently resulted in consequences measured by ruined credibility and lost lives.

The international business community and its most successful consultancy firms should be leveraged for their theories, methods, and practices at implementing successful intercultural strategies. This same population must also become a source for successful and unsuccessful examples of failed foreign ventures, adding another layer of realism to future C3 training and education programs. Again, the DOD and its supporting agencies already have the necessary expertise and institutional knowledge to make C3 a lasting part of the American Military Experience.

This analysis and research also advocates that any plan to address the future of culture and language training across the DOD can be accomplished while recognizing and helping the recruiting needs of SOF/IW. Cultural Agility, or a similar concept, should be recognized as a more rigorous form of cultural learning both academically and practically. The U.S. Marine Corps' existing C3 program should be both applauded and recognized as foundational and entrepreneurial, while looked at as a nascent DOD-wide or inter-service training program to build upon. Appropriately framing and presenting this concept is critical to its withstanding the coming inter-war period and era of shrinking resources.

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