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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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The Marine Corps' Challenges in Creating a Diverse Force

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Major Morina D. Foster

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## Executive Summary

Title: The Marine Corps' Challenges in Creating a Diverse Force

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Thesis: Over the past ten years the Marine Corps has not achieved appreciable gains in producing a steady stream of minority Senior and General Officers. The total percentage of minority officers in the Marine Corps today is 19%, which is slightly higher than 18% of the minorities in the U.S. population, eligible for officer programs. However, the majority of this percentage represents the ranks of O-1 through O-4.<sup>1</sup> Campaign Plans, policies, and procedures of the past are inconsistent, lack accountability in leadership to implement the policies, and do not produce lasting results. Additionally, mentoring is important in the process of being promoted at the Senior officer ranks between O-6 to O-10 and minority officers between the ranks of O-1 to O-4 are rarely mentored during their career

Discussion: In 2009, Congress requested a report from each of the military services, on the number of minority personnel, both enlisted and officers. Congress recognized there were a disproportionate number of Caucasian personnel, in comparison to the number of minorities, in the Officer ranks. At which time, Congress mandated the services report more frequently their minority statistics, along with an implementation plan which would correct the deficiencies and close the gap. The inconsistencies in the Marine Corps' were more prevalent in the ranks from O-6 to O-10, and the Corps was ranked the lowest when compared to the other services. As of 2009, the Army was the most diverse service, with minorities making up roughly 10 percent of its generals. In the other services, the minority O-6 to O-10 officer population was 9 percent in the Marine Corps, 6 percent in the Navy and 5 percent in the Air Force. Ten years prior, (fiscal year, FY 98) the Marine Corps' Active Component reported to Congress that minority officers, (African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Other) accounted for 13.1% of their total force, while the Army reported 19.8%, the Navy reported 14.4%, and the Air Force reported 13.8%.<sup>2</sup> These percentages have decreased significantly today. While, although slightly higher over the past ten years as depicted above, the Marine Corps however, still lags behind the other services in its efforts to sustain a diverse force and the Air Force and the Navy have since improved. This issue has recently received attention from senior leadership and General Officers the in the Marine Corp specifically, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General Amos. He has directed the Marine Corps to execute an extensive review of policies and procedures with emphasis on recruiting, retention, and promotions. The CMC has taken a personal interest in diversity, which includes race and ethnicity; however, will the efforts will of leadership be able to unshackle the underlying factors that contribute to and hold stagnant, the Marine Corps' inability to create a diverse force.

Conclusion: The Marine Corps' General Officer leadership created the Marine Corps Diversity Plan for 2012. It cannot be overemphasized that training, education, and mentoring are the force multipliers that will assist in achieving long term success. However, if the Marine Corps' leadership does not articulate the importance of diversity by holding leaders at every level accountable, the Corps will continue to fail in their mission to meet the intended diversity goals.

## DISCLAIMER

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/Acknowledgements*

The genesis of this research paper comes from my sincere passion on the topic of diversity within the officer ranks of the military, specifically the Marine Corps. There are several essays, studies, articles, and commentaries that address the issues individually, but few that provide a comprehensive view, package all of the tangible concerns, and identify the historical causes and effects that are potentially responsible for the issue at large.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and thanks to Dr. Rebecca Johnson for mentoring me through this endeavor. Dr. Johnson's patience, clarity, and understanding provided me with the tools necessary to formulate a vision, in order to get started and stay motivated. I would also like to acknowledge the extensive assistance, guidance, and leadership that I received from the United States Marine Corps Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management Branch, Major Erik Hovey and Master Gunnery Sergeant Raines, as well as, mentoring, opinions, and interviews received from various Marine Corps Senior Officers. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my husband, Gunner Stanley L. Foster (USMC, Retired), and my lovely daughter Dove, who in June will graduate with honors from Kings Fork High School and attend Old Dominion University in the fall; thank you for your love, support, and understanding during this very challenging time.

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## Introduction/Background

### **African-American Soldiers in WWII**

*“African-American soldiers were welcomed into certain branches of the armed forces in this war, but, like other wars, there was discrimination and segregation. Soldiers still fought in segregated units throughout the war, but there were advances in the number of commissioned officers. Other forms of racism included barring African-Americans from the Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Army Air Corps, and the Navy only allowed African-Americans as mess men. These conditions were not promising, and these policies have been called Jim Crow military”<sup>3</sup>*

*The University of Akron, Historical Archive on Racial Inequalities...*

This examination will review recruiting, retention and promotion trends collected from 1998 to the present, as they relate to the overall problem the Marine Corps faces in sustaining diversity at the senior and General Officer ranks. The connection between path dependence and organizational culture will support why the Marine Corps’ initial efforts in producing a steady stream of Senior and General Officers have fallen short of the Marine Corps’ objectives. In analyzing and exploiting path dependence it can be seen how the decision of prior leadership play a significant role in the institutional design and the evolution of culture.<sup>4</sup> While the outcome of this research is not to provide the Marine Corps with a solution to fix the problem, but rather inform Marine Corps leadership of fundamental roadblocks that can be mitigated , through rational and reasonable approaches which foster expectation management.

All military organizations have organizational cultures internal to specific units and as an institution as a whole. Organizational culture is fostered, nurtured, and instilled by leadership in its members. Often, an organizations culture is so strong that it becomes the fiber that holds the institution together, and it is firmly indoctrinated based on fundamental beliefs. Organizational culture in connection with inclusiveness refers to an organization’s collective values, beliefs, and behaviors in relation to racial and ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup> The mandate of After African Americans into the Marine Corps in the late 1940’s was not accepted, embraced, or enforced. The senior leaders

in the Marine Corps did not want to change their culture for inclusiveness. Senior Leadership for years after the mandate resisted this change which can be argued created path dependence. Leadership's behavior was openly accepted and supported by from the top down. In 1948 President Harry S. Truman issued "Executive Order 9981, that called for equal treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Forces,"<sup>6</sup> and put an end to segregation and discrimination. The leadership in the armed forces was not eager to embrace the Executive Order; nonetheless the Army, Navy and Air Force implemented the order, as directed. However, the Marine Corps resisted integration for at least one year after the order was signed. The Marine Corps compared to the other services was slow to accept the new principles of integration and institutionally did not believe in equality for African Americans. This was evident because, during WWII racism was a widespread problem in the Marine Corps which existed long after the war. In 1950 there were two African American Marines officers on active and nineteen in January 1955. The rate of promotion among black marines in general was slow. The Marine Corps justified its figures on the grounds that competition in so small a service was extremely fierce, and, as the commandant explained to Walter White in 1951, a man had to be good to compete and outstanding to be promoted.<sup>7</sup> In 1955 the Director of Personnel, Maj. Gen. Robert O. Bare, pointed to the unusually severe hardships imposed on Negroes in some communities where the attitude toward black marines sometimes interfered with their performance of duty.<sup>8</sup> Since civilian pressures could not be recognized officially, General Bare reasoned, they had to be dealt with informally on a person-to-person basis. By this statement he meant the Marine Corps would informally exclude Negroes from certain assignments.<sup>9</sup> The Marine Corps reluctance to accept African Americans into its' Officer Corps only exacerbated

the problem of racism within officer leadership, becoming a permanent part of the Marine Corps organizational culture for years to come.

The racial barriers in the Marine Corps after WWII were considered a way of life for the African American Marine. During this time, it was unpopular to be a Marine Officer or enlisted and also it was dangerous. The first African American officer was commissioned November 10, 1945. First Lieutenant Frederick C. Branch was enlisted first into the Marine Corps and attended boot camp at the segregated Training Facility, Montford Point. Lieutenant Branch applied for the Officer program, but his application for Officers Candidate School (OCS) was rejected. After re-submitting his package, Lieutenant Branch was given the opportunity to train with the United States Navy V-12 officer's program at Purdue University. Lieutenant Branch was one of 20,000 African American Marines who would serve in WWII. Trending on the same path was the Marine Corps' first African American General Officer, Frank E. Petersen (Retired). General Petersen initially entered the United States Navy as an enlisted man in 1950. He would be selected in 1951 to attend the Naval Aviation Cadet Program, and after completion in 1952, be selected as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. According to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel/Equal Opportunity, "in 1962, a mere 1.6% of all commissioned officers in the military were African-American,"<sup>10</sup> and this figure is a representation of all four services. For the Navy, Army, and Air Force the numbers would soon improve, however the Marine Corps would continue to be aggrieved with the problem of overcoming racial challenges. The Marine Corps organizational culture in 1962 still barred the resemblance of the leadership's in the late 1940's and their resistance to accept inclusion and organizational change.

By the late 1970s and 1980s racial inequalities appeared to be gradually improving in the military. The Navy, Army, and Air Force were more committed in achieving racial equality and creating diversity. After the Vietnam War, improving military standards, the expectations of the serviceman, and the quality of life for the military members, while increasing minority representation, had drastically improved and was becoming more widely accepted. Nevertheless, the Marine Corps' continued resistance in the 70's was a direct result of their inability to improve early diversity efforts in their service. The Marine Corps initial recruitment push for diversity displayed minimal results compared to the other services.<sup>11</sup> The Marine Corps' initial reaction to integration and desegregation is considered the foundation that set the conditions for path dependence and is partially responsible for the Marine Corps' lack of achieving appreciable gains in diversity, but it is not the only reason for the problems the Corps faces today.

It is often debated that senior leadership in the Navy, Army, and Air Force are more willing to accept cultural changes in its organization in comparison to the senior leadership in the Marine Corps, and this unwillingness to change is often perceived by minority Marines, as the *lynch pin* of the problems we face today with diversity, equal opportunity, etc. Today's problems in diversity are systematic of an array of contributing factors. The big three which will be examined are recruiting, retention, and promotion. Most Marines are more concerned with promotions than they are with recruiting and retention, nevertheless let's submit that they are interdependent and each play a significant role in the Marine Corps efforts to create diversity. The promotion system being equally important is considered the driving force of diversity efforts because it is relative to sustainment and the Marine Corps ability to meet diversity goals.

The Marine Corps Fitness Report (FitRep) system is the main determinant of an officer's career designation, promotion, and opportunities for command and resident schooling. The current process utilized was implemented in 1999. The system was redesigned due to perceived inflation and disparity in an individual Marine's marking among reporting seniors (RS) and reviewing officers (RO's). The current Performance Evaluation System (PES) was re-designed to ensure the Marine Corps maintained its best, brightest, and most qualified officers regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity. The FitRep form contains administrative data, descriptions of duties/accomplishments in the present billet, 14 dimensions of performance evaluated by the reporting senior (RS), an overall assessment by the reviewing officer (RO), and subjective comments from both the RS and RO. The PES is probably the most important factor in retention because it allows leadership to evaluate a Marine's performance and exemplify his or her merits. This system dictates a Marine's potential for advancement and future service. The system is designed to provide a fair evaluation of every individual regardless of race, gender, or ethnic background, based on their professional and personal performance on and off duty as a Marine. Though this process is supposed to be fair in evaluating a Marine based on merit and performance, there are several areas of concern which indicate partiality and subjectivity when evaluating minority officers. Table 1 one is a current snapshot of the Marine Corps racial and ethnic distribution in its officer Corps.<sup>12</sup>

**ACTIVE DUTY OFFICER RACIAL AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION**

Rank	Black Female	Black Male	Hispanic Female	Hispanic Male	White Female	White Male	Other Female	Other Male	Total
WO/CWO	21	239	22	199	64	1,345	2	114	2,006
2ndLt	9	102	14	141	167	2,174	57	399	3,063
1stLt	16	120	21	163	227	2,809	25	238	3,619
Capt	27	283	38	345	302	4,790	35	347	6,167
Maj	23	300	12	212	112	2,917	13	211	3,800
LtCol	2	90	2	53	27	1,632	5	64	1,875
Col	2	20	0	8	18	620	1	17	686
Gen	0	5	1	2	1	81	0	1	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,159</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1,123</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>16,368</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>21,307</b>

### Recruitment

*“We have a connectedness to the American people that no other service has....Those young enlisted Marines that come from a diverse background deserve to look up and see an officer corps that is reasonably representative of them...a diverse Marine Corps is the end state. That’s what success looks like. As we look to the diversity challenge, my intent for you is to absolutely not lower standards, it will not happen on my watch as 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant.”<sup>13</sup>*

General John Amos, 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps

The inequalities of recruiting Marines in the 1970s were very different from those of today. The focus in advertising to support Marine Corps recruitment post WWII to present, has shifted tremendously from the stereo-typical Caucasian Marine in dress blues on poster boards, magazine ads, and newspapers, to today’s popular television commercial of the Marine Corps Silent drill team performing across the world, displaying a distinct representation of a diverse force. It can be argued that the fundamental basis of sustaining diversity today has shifted away from the Marine Corps historical organizational culture of the past. While the Marine Corps does not support racism today, its past organizational culture and path dependence has set the conditions for the leadership to deal with harsh realities created and do more than treat the

symptoms, the Corps must now solve the problem. In an effort to break the cycle, in 1970 the Commandant of the Marine Corps (unlike the commandants and senior leadership in the past) established and published recruitment and accessions goals for Marine Corps recruiters for a five year period vice the standard annual requirement.<sup>14</sup> This was the first time the Marine Corps took the initiative to display equality and displayed to the public and the Corps a shift in organizational culture and an attempted to break the cycle of path dependence. By 1977, Hispanics were included in these efforts to recruit minorities, with five year goals. Defining these terms will provide a clear understanding of how organizational culture and path dependence are related to the Marine Corps and diversity. The best definition of organizational culture is an organization's values, practices, procedures, shared thoughts, feelings, language, emotions, and countless other characteristics. A term that has been coined by several military and civilian organizations alike which describes organizational culture is as "the way things are done around here." The Marine Corps' concept of a shared institutional culture is as much a part of their legacy, as their history, and is considered by most Marines the center of gravity, which is addressed regularly by top leaders and continuously written about in the organization's literature.<sup>15</sup> Path dependence explains how a set of decisions one faces for any given circumstance is limited by the decisions one has made in the past, even though past circumstances may no longer be relevant.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, organizational culture and path dependence are characteristics that may predict an organizations future action and form a basis from which situational decisions are derived.

In the mid to late 1970s' and 1980s', Marine Corps recruiting efforts relied heavily on advertising in newspapers, flyers, and billboards to attract young males into its service. Although, the Corps was reluctant to change, it was mandated by Congress to exert an effort to

recruit minorities.<sup>17</sup> The Marine Corps minority recruiting efforts targeted poor, impoverished communities. The outcome was futile and the challenges in finding qualified candidates who met the physical and educational standards were marginal, at best. Meaning, minority candidates in the mid 70's struggled with the ability to read and write, which made finding qualified minority candidates difficult for Marine Corps recruiters.<sup>18</sup> Though, large budgets were set aside to advertise the Marine Corps to minority communities through radio and television, the Marine Corps efforts to throw money at the problem fell short because, most African American households did not own a radio or television.<sup>19</sup> Pamphlets were provided and could be seen in the two African American magazines available to the public (*Jet* and *Ebony*), but the billboards that appeared in the minority neighborhoods advertised Caucasian male Marines, of which most African American males in uneducated communities could not identify with this representation as their role model. Minorities in society also perceived the Marine Corps to be a racist organization.

The overall findings in the late 1970s recruiting effort is, although there was an initial effort exerted by the CMC of the Marine Corps to produce minorities, there was little information reaching the minority communities and finding qualified candidates who met both the educational and physical requirements was a significant challenge.<sup>20</sup> In society, the potential and availability of skilled and unskilled labor as a means of employment was more appealing to the average minority. There were no physical and mental standards to meet and high school diplomas were not required. The Marine Corps' initial attempts in recruiting minorities proved fruitless. The Marine Corps leadership did acknowledge and report all findings to Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) however; the Corps organizational culture was still resistant to make large scale changes to correct minority recruiting efforts.<sup>21</sup> Failure to produce numbers in recruiting efforts



was due to a lack of understanding the minority environment and the continuing resistance to change.

An interesting fact or subset of organizational culture and path dependence is time. In order to sustain diversity in the senior and General officer ranks from O-6 to O-10, time cannot be overlooked. It takes more than two decades to groom and grow Colonels in the Marine Corps and longer for General Officer leadership (General Petersen, 1951 – 1979 28 years for promotion to Brigadier General). Therefore, leadership's initial inability to address the issues of accepting minorities into the Corps and the failure to recruit minority's early-on, have long term consequences. These consequences adversely affected potential Senior Officer's we could have seen in the Corps today, and this issue can only be corrected with time. Because the Marine Corps' initial recruiting efforts were not aimed at diversity, the expectation of leadership to make a drastic shift is unrealistic.

Over the next decade, Marine Corps leadership transitioned, but the issues on diversity did not significantly improve, Congress continued to impose regulations on the services to improve diversity.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the all the services shifted their approach and focused on new advertising methods and competed for air time to introduce all types of slogans such as; "army of one" and "be all you can be," to further their recruiting efforts. The efforts of slogans although catchy in phrase, produced no solid evidence their efforts had bearing on the improvements in minority recruitment in the Marine Corps or any other services.

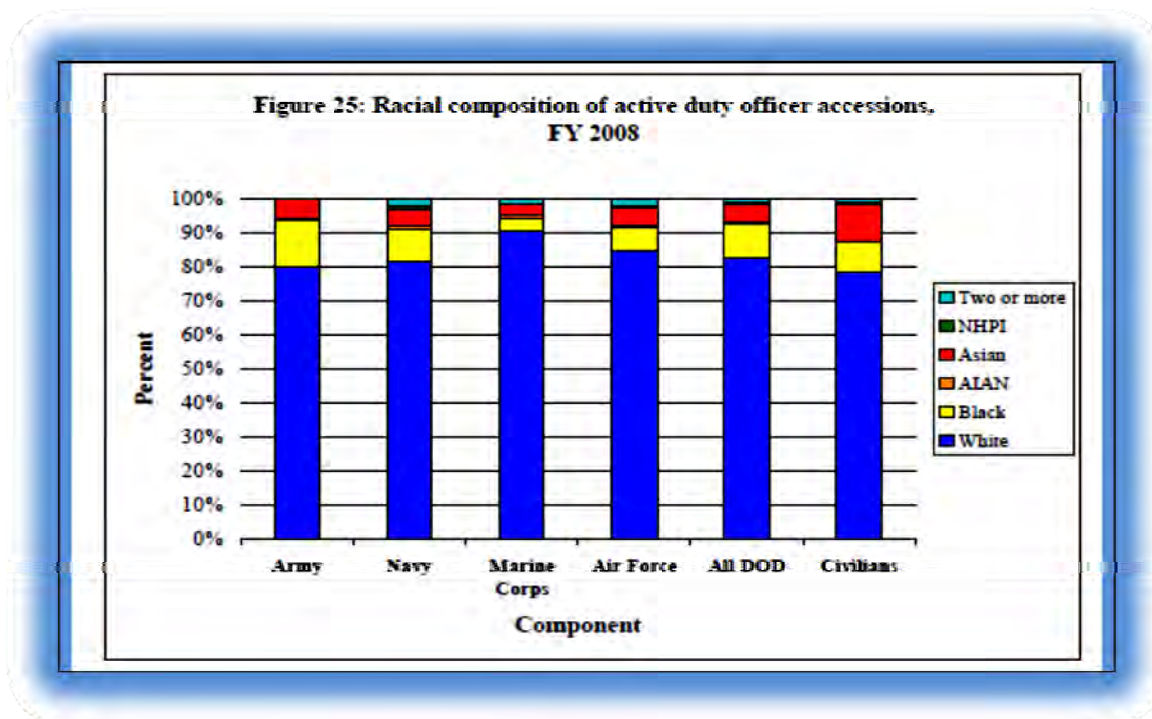
Table 2, below shows the lack of improvement in African American accessions from 2000 – 2006b, depicts how all of the services declined overtime.

Table .2<sup>23</sup> Army and Marine Corps represent the largest percentage of decline in officer accession and contributes to the majority of 7.1% decrease in officer accession.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006 <sup>b</sup>
Army	23.0%	22.4%	17.1%	15.9%	14.2%	12.0%	12.4%
Navy	20.8%	20.9%	17.8%	19.0%	19.7%	18.8%	17.2%
Marine Corps	12.8%	12.2%	10.0%	9.0%	8.3%	7.7%	7.6%
Air Force	19.3%	18.2%	15.5%	13.8%	14.6%	14.4%	14.7%
DOD total	20.0%	19.9%	15.7%	15.0%	14.5%	13.1%	12.9%

a. Data from OSD, Accession Policy. Service and DOD totals include prior service accessions, which account for less than 1/2 of 1 percent of recruits.  
 b. Data for 2006 are preliminary.

Table 3<sup>24</sup> below represents the racial composition of officer accessions for the various active duty components (FY 2008),



When we compare tables 2 and 3, (keeping in mind that African Americans make up the largest proportion of minorities and additional minorities are not reflected in table 2), both tables depict

from 2000 – 2008 a downward trend in officer accessions as a whole, across all the services. The Marine Corps inability to reenergize minority recruiting efforts despite slogans and additional advertising methods proved futile before, during, and after major conflicts. This would lend to the possibility of a disconnection of the military with society. It also seems that Americans would rally support for the military during difficult times, but according to the Marine Corps statistics on accessions, it appears that maybe the Corps has lost touch with the American public. Several other factors may also play a role in the decline in officer accessions, such as budgetary limitations, the drawdown after Desert Shield/Storm, and natural attrition, however it should not be an excuse for leadership not focus their efforts to improve on the problems in minority recruiting. Since 1998 the Marine Corps has fallen short in meeting its objectives achieving diversity. Senior leaders often lose sight of this issue because they are not held accountable or responsible. Ultimately the responsibility is placed a department in the Marine Corps who tries to provide centralized information to the Service Chiefs used for reporting statistics to Congress. Diversity should be the responsibility leadership, but all Marines should take actions to ensure diversity remains relevant and a priority. If the Marine Corps intend to make greater strides in reversing its organizational culture and path dependence to support its diversity efforts, they must educate leadership on the mission and importance of creating diverse force and push the information down to the lowest level, with a top down, bottom up approach.

The CMC recently attended the Annual 2011 National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) conference in San Diego, California and briefed over 450 of his officers on how, as a service, he planned on “Improving Diversity in our Corps.” The following points were quoted from his briefing slides (Gen. Amos):

- USMC is committed to attracting, mentoring, and retaining the most talented men and women who bring a diversity of background culture and skills in service to the Nation (as stated in the) “Commandants Planning Guidance”;
- Diversity efforts are structured with the understanding that the objective is not merely to strive for representation parity with the “Face of the Nation” but to leverage capability of our Corps and to ensure a connectedness with the American people; and
- The Marine Corps has established minority officer recruiting as a top priority in our recruiting efforts.<sup>25</sup>

According to the CMC and his senior leaders, the Marine Corps will capitalize on existing opportunities in recruitment, but will not lower the standards. The Commandant outlined what he refers to as officer qualification realities. These realities were identified as the foundation of the CMC argument was that 25% of Americans age 17–24 are eligible for the military, and this includes all races and ethnicities.<sup>26</sup> In 2010, 61.4% of African-American males were high school graduates who enrolled in college, and of that population, only 46% of them graduated from college.<sup>27</sup> In 2010, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) achieved a rate of 3.5% in African American male officer accessions (a total of 60 African American male officer candidates out of a total of 1703). These statistics directly relate to improvements necessary in attracting minority’s to join the Marine Corps, and simultaneously portrays the Marine Corps’ disconnection from society.

The CMC briefed finally briefed that the Marine Corps’ officer accession were improving at just over 4%.<sup>28</sup> However, this standard is a far cry from the 12.8% in accessions in 2000. It appears that diversity in the Marine Corps for the past decade has only received lip service until now. At this rate and according to previous statistics, it will take at least another ten years of improvements in officer accessions in order to produce appreciable gains in recruiting minorities

Table 5 below depicts the general officer ranks. In the Navy, the level of military diversity diminishes considerably. As of 2009, the Army was the most diverse service, with minorities making up roughly 10 percent of its generals. In the other services, the minority general or flag-officer population was 9 percent in the Marine Corps, 6 percent in the Navy, and 5 percent in the Air Force<sup>29</sup>

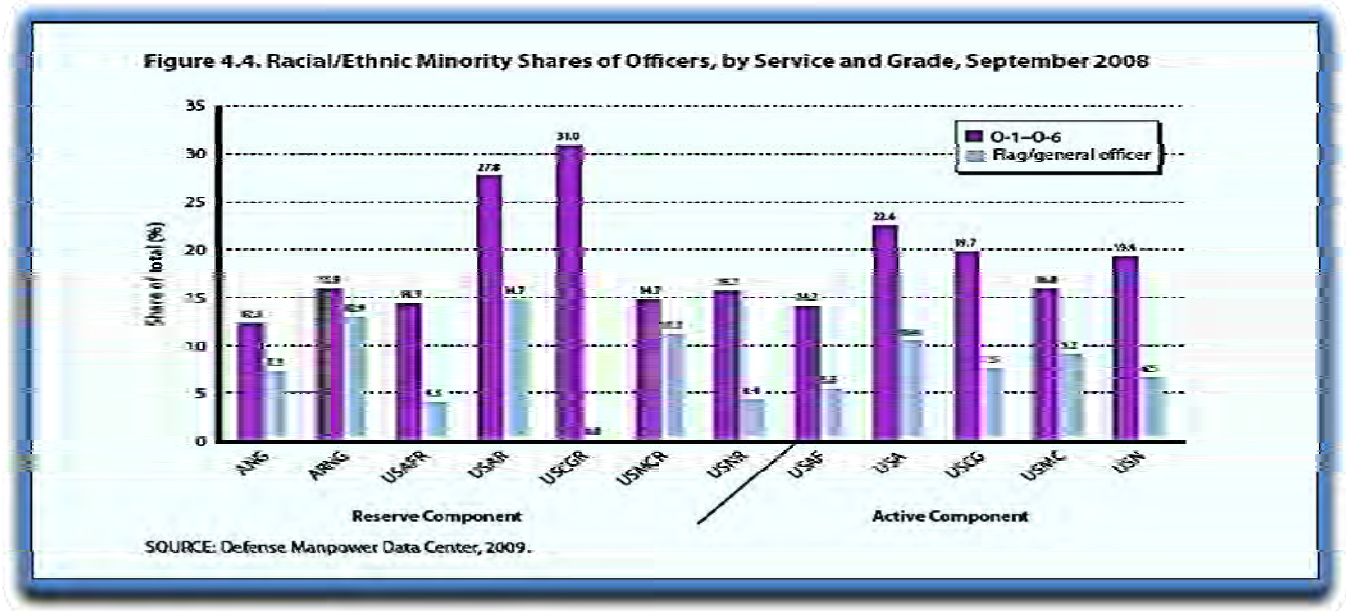


Table 5 is a snapshot of the Marine Corps FY 2008 O-1 to O-6 and General officer statistics. This table indicates the Corps has fared well among the other services, thus far. However, previous tables recommend that the percentages numbers in this table, if they have not already, will decline due to a lack in recruiting minorities during the accessions process. The results may not be seen until a decade later when officers at the O-3 and O-4 ranks would essentially be promoted to the rank of O-6. It is worth stating that Table 5 is probably a product of minority officer accessions prior to FY 2000 when the Marine Corps were at its peak. This is an example of path dependence coupled with time.

The Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is the organization assigned by the CMC to lead the charge in analyzing recruiting methods and strategies. If the Marine Corps expect to improve diversity, it must not rely on slogans and recruiting efforts alone, an

organization culture shift must occur. The organizational culture of this is “the way things are done around here” must change to reflect a comprehensive understanding of how things are done “out there,” and out there, refers to, the American public. Having an understanding of what motivates the youth of today is critical in attracting qualified applicants. Aggressive strides in strengthening partnerships outside the organization must to be capitalized. Utilizing outreach programs that provide access to quality applicants should be explored. The point of departure for improving these efforts can be found in the Marine Corps’ Campaign Plan 2012. The initiatives are outlined as follows:

- Form relationships with service organizations, such as Veterans Service Organization (VSO), Association of Naval Service Officers (ANSO), and National Naval Officers Association NNOA. These groups are made of active duty personnel from the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard and have access to High Schools, Colleges, and University and often meet with qualified young men and women who are physically and mentally prepared for military service. While, these organizations cannot recruit, the Service Chiefs can influence their access to the public to gain a greater understanding of the population, demographics, young adult’s perception of the Marines, etc.
- The majority of Marine Corps Officer Selection Offices (OSO) has a majority of Caucasian officers in senior the billets at the OSO. This makes potential candidates view of the Marine Corps unappealing because they feel as if leadership cannot identify with their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. MCRC is providing more minority Officers to fill OSO’s key leadership billets in an effort to attract potential minority candidates (7 additional African American, 7

additional Hispanic, and 1 Native American are being added to the OSO's throughout the United States). However, if leveraging existing Marine Corps units in the area is an option, utilize minority officers in the area, for outreach opportunities where minority officers do not exist. Leadership believes there's a better opportunity to effect minorities who are from the same ethnic background.

- Marine Week—an event which take place in large diversely populated cities— (e.g., New York, Chicago) which serve to exploit the Marine Corps; multi-cultural aspects and public awareness. This event is meant to give the public a “Birdseye” view of the missions and roles of the Marine Corps. It is also an additional opportunity to connect to the public, through leadership engagements.
- Meet with Key Leadership Outreach Programs within the local community and influential leaders in to address community needs and concerns and heighten the community's military awareness. This will provide the Marine Corps the opportunity to gain an understanding of the demographics essential to success.
- Weekend USMC Leadership Course is a course designed to educate college students on the opportunities which exist in the Marine Corps.<sup>30</sup>

Recognizing recruiting efforts are misaligned in achieving institutional goals is critical to mission success in today's ethnic and demographically changing society. The organizational culture may have negative and positive aspects of how it views the problem and a cultural shift in the organizations way of performing its recruiting mission is often necessary. Changing the mentality of an organization is challenging. However, if the Corps is to become innovative in the way it produces positive results, a cultural shift is a necessary adaptation in order to change the cycle of path dependence, exploit the time necessary to achieve the goals, and better manage

leadership expectations. While the recruitment efforts and accessions process improvements seen from the organizational change will capitalize on attracting potential minority candidates, the question then becomes, once we get them how do we keep them? Based on a decrease in opportunities for promotion, competition at the top of the pyramid is extremely competitive and the Marine Corps capacity to promote after the rank of Colonel becomes increasingly narrow. Without deviating from the Marine Corps ability to promote based on meritocracy, senior leadership must reconcile how to achieve appreciable gains in sustaining a diverse force at the O-6 through O-10 ranks.

### **Retention**

*Eligibility for promotion is directly related to an officer's tenure in the military; as a result, changes in representation among all groups at the highest ranks occur relatively slowly. For example, in 1973 at the inception of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), African Americans comprised 2.8 percent of military officers. Those African American officers commissioned in 1973 would only now (1999) be ascending to general and flag officer ranks. At the same time, those commissioned in 1997 when African American representation had risen to 7.5 percent would likely see the first of their peers promoted to O-7 around the year 2023.<sup>31</sup>*

*CNA Analysis & Solutions July 2012*

Although the Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System (PES) has been revamped, many Marines believe the system is flawed, which can be attributed to a lack of competitive minorities in senior leadership positions. A preponderance of the information in this section of this examination can be attributed to a recent study performed in July of 2012; "An Evaluation of the Fitness Report System for Marine Corps Officers" authored by CNA members Adam Clemens, Lauren Malone, Shannon Phillips, Gary Lee, Cathy Hiatt, and Theresa Kimble. These analysts surmised that the current Fitness Report (FitRep) system is not overly inflated<sup>32</sup> however, there are several areas of concern that were identified and require additional monitoring. For the purpose of this examination, we will not attempt to discount their findings,



but make a correlation between the significant factors found in the report that contribute to the problems the Marine Corps faces in producing minority leadership. The areas of concern which are most prevalent to this examination are; 1. The relationship between the Reporting Senior (RS), Reviewing Officer (RO), and Marine Reported on (MRO) and how it affects Fitness Report Averages (FRA's); 2. The interaction between the MRO and RS in understanding the difference in military demographic and Military Occupational Field (occfields) characteristics, as effects how the RS views a Marines performance and the overall relative value (RV) of the FitRep; and 3. The disparities in the Military Occupational Field selection process.<sup>33</sup>

First we will explore, African Americans and Hispanic Fitness Report Averages (FRA's) Minority officers on an average receive lower FRAs and RO marks, than Caucasian officers in the same pay grade and year.<sup>34</sup> The gap although small, becomes a driving factor in retention and promotion as the Marine reaches the rank of O-4 and the pyramid for opportunities to get promoted and command, narrows. For example, any Marine who is marked consistently lower than their peers in two of the fourteen areas on the FitRep (i.e. leadership and judgment) are not normally considered for promotion or retention.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, because the FRA gaps are so small this concern is usually not seen until a Marine reaches between 18 – 21 years of services, at which time they are eligible for retirement and usually retire. This factor is nested directly into the Marine Corps inability to retain officers at the Senior level, because although the minor disparity may be due to FRA's, most Marines are not willing after twenty years of service to wager the possibility that their ability to be marketable in society diminishes every year they remain in the military, in hopes to make General Officer, in their mind “the juice is not worth the squeeze.”

Next, the analysis shows that minority FitReps' are based on the subjectivity and biases of the RS, if the MRO is not from the same military demographic community and/or occfields. Put in simpler terms, if the RS is an Aviator and the MRO is an aviator, the RS is less likely to be bias and would provide a less subjective FitRep based on knowledge and experience. However, if the RS is an Aviator and the MRO is a Ground Combat Service Support Officer, the RS will be more likely to be biased and more subjective when grading the MRO's performance. The analysis also points out, that sometimes this works in the MRO's favor. When the RS and MRO are from different occfields the RS is more likely to mark the MRO higher, while if the RS and MRO are from the same occfields the RS may assign lower marks. In other words the findings of this analysis are contradictory and should require additional research. A better example of this can be seen specifically in higher marks for intelligence officers and judge advocates, because the MRO will report to officers outside their occfields. However, logistics officers and communications officers appear to suffer a disadvantage in their relative value (RV) marks, even while enjoying a similar advantage in RO marks.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, there is evidence that some officers benefit from being evaluated by RSs who are less informed about their occupations, but the majority do not.<sup>37</sup> While this information is confusing it begs to be presented because it shows evidence of biases and subjectivity in the RSs' ability to produce fair evaluations across the board. The effect of the RSs knowledge on FitRep marks offers that these marks may provide a less effective signal of an officer's true ability. It must be mentioned that this specific area in the analysis was not focused on only minority officers; however when this information is influence by the occfields that minorities receive, the relationship will become more apparent (found in the final area of concern).

Finally, the last area of concern will discuss the disparities in the occfield selection process. This analysis establishes whether differences in quality, level of responsibility, potential career pitfalls, or biases, that some occfields are assessed more favorably than others.<sup>38</sup> Upon completion of TBS and based on academic performance and class standing, Marines are assigned their occfields specialty. However, about two-thirds of African Americans and Hispanics receive Combat Service Support related military occupational specialty (MOS) as oppose to Caucasian officers, who make up the majority of officers in the class and who receive Aviation and Infantry MOSs' (Aviation and Infantry Officers career paths are consistent with Senior and General Officer billets). Because a Marines performance at TBS affects MOS choice; the racial/ethnic gap at TBS has implications for a lack of diversity throughout the Corps.<sup>39</sup> The distribution of occfields is disproportionate among minority officers, and FitRep marks differ by occfield. This can directly result in a Marine not being selected for promotion once they reach the rank of O-4 and O-5, as discussed earlier. Furthermore, when these issues are approached from a holistic view, the relationship is strong between the RS/MRO relationship, occfields bias, and MOS selection process, and questions if minority officers are genuinely at a disadvantage with their Caucasian counterparts once they receive their MOS and before they reach the fleet.

Traditional quality measures, such as TBS class standing, occfields, RS and RO markings, and overall FRA's all play an important role in the Marine Corps ability to retain minority officers. It is not expected that the Marine Corps strays from promoting and retaining the best and brightest but, because of these variables, minority officers will often experience a gap in their career performance around the rank of O-5. At this point, the Marine usually has enough time in service to retire, and normally does, as previously stated. It is the responsibility

of Senior Leadership to address these concerns in order to better leverage the Marine Corps ability to meet diversity goals.

### **Conclusion**

Creating diversity in the Senior and General Officer ranks continues to be a problem Marine Corps. Junior Marines, both enlisted and officer alike need to see a face, in the Senior and General Officer ranks they can identify with. Statistics show the Marine Corps has failed to produce a steady stream of minority Senior and General Officers; however initiatives are in place to rectify past problems. The Marine Corps cannot ignore the role their past organizational culture and path dependence has played in sabotaging their efforts to gain traction on the problem. To ignore these factors at this point, will hinder results, causing a longer wait to see appreciable gains in diversity, which will lead to the long term solution. The lack of accountability in Marines at all levels must be addressed. Education and training opportunities need to be implemented so leadership can shift command climates to understand the role they play in maintaining diversity. The Marine Corps challenges to create, maintain, and sustain diversity is not black and white, the issues are grey and the solutions should offer a realistic approach with the expectation that results may not be seen immediately. There are a myriad of challenges, issues, and concerns which are directly linked to recruitment, retention, and promotion, therefore a holistic approach to solving these issues and concerns must be addressed. The Marine Corps Diversity Plan for 2012 is only a guide for which leadership can follow however; if the Marine Corps leadership wants to be successful, they must be willing to assert tangible investments and a concerted effort in keeping diversity as a top priority.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup>The United States Marine Corps, Diversity Plan 2012. “2012 Diversity Campaign Plan,” Library of the Marine Corps, Washington DC, Jul 2012

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/03/military-report.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://learn.uakron.edu/beyond/ww2\\_civilRights.htm](http://learn.uakron.edu/beyond/ww2_civilRights.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Pierson, Paul. “Path dependence, increasing returns, and the study of politics.” *American Political Science Review*. 94(2): 251-267 (2000).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/files/Module%2012.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=11390>

<sup>7</sup> MacGregor, Morris J., “Integration of the Armed Forces” 1940-1965

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 467

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.history.army.mil/books/integration/IAF-18.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Aldeman, Janice T., Larkin, Carleton D., and Olympia, Pedro L., “Equitable Minority Recruitment and Distribution in the Marine Corps,” Contract No. M00027-77C-0062. LTS Vienna, Virginia, Nov 1978 (Final Report I and II).

<sup>11</sup> United States. Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel/Equal Opportunity, “African Americans in the Defense of our Nation,” Washington, D.C., U.S. G.P.O., [1991]

<sup>12</sup> Concepts and Issues Manual, 2011 Chpt 4 pg.

<sup>13</sup> United States. Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel/Equal Opportunity, “African Americans in the Defense of our Nation,” Washington, D.C., U.S. G.P.O., [1991]

<sup>14</sup> Davis, Alphonse G. 2000. “Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps’ Effort to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995).” Washington, DC: Headquarters, Marine Corps, History and Museums Division.

<sup>15</sup> Department of the Navy, HQMC, FMFM 1-0 Leading Marines. January 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Praeger, Dave., Definition from *Our Love of Sewers: A lesson in Path Dependence*, June 15, 2008

<sup>17</sup> Aldeman, Janice T., Larkin, Carleton D., and Olympia, Pedro L., “Equitable Minority Recruitment and Distribution in the Marine Corps,” Contract No. M00027-77C-0062. LTS Vienna, Virginia, Nov 1978 (Final Report I and II).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 126

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 138

<sup>20</sup> Author. “Report to the Senior Executive Council, Department of Defense, Task Group On Increasing Diversity In DOD's Lag And Senior Executive Rank” Report FY03-9, Department’s Senior Military and Civilian Ranks. March 1, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Aldeman, Janice T., Larkin, Carleton D., and Olympia, Pedro L., “Equitable Minority Recruitment and Distribution in the Marine Corps,” Contract No. M00027-77C-0062. LTS Vienna, Virginia, Nov 1978 (Final Report I and II).

<sup>22</sup> [http://democrats.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File\\_id=d4748d4a-b358-49d7-8c9a-aa0ba6f581a6](http://democrats.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=d4748d4a-b358-49d7-8c9a-aa0ba6f581a6)

<sup>23</sup> Aline Quester • Anita Hattiangadi • Gary Lee Cathy Hiatt • Robert Shuford Black and Hispanic Marines: Their Accession, Representation, Success, and Retention in the Corps CRM D0016910.A1 / Final September 2007

<sup>24</sup> [http://ebookbrowse.com/cmc-nnoa-slides-v4-cmc-vers-pdf-d436769326#.UTIfGH\\_JL2c.email](http://ebookbrowse.com/cmc-nnoa-slides-v4-cmc-vers-pdf-d436769326#.UTIfGH_JL2c.email)

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, slide 6

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, slide 7

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, slide 9

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, slide 8

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.dhra.mil/webfiles/docs/2011\\_ops\\_mobis/Sample\\_Tab\\_Volume\\_and\\_Briefings/DMDC%202009-034\\_TabVolume.pdf](http://www.dhra.mil/webfiles/docs/2011_ops_mobis/Sample_Tab_Volume_and_Briefings/DMDC%202009-034_TabVolume.pdf)

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<sup>30</sup> The United States Marine Corps, Diversity Plan 2012. “2012 Diversity Campaign Plan,” Library of the Marine Corps, Washington DC, Jul 2012

<sup>31</sup> Clemens, A., Malone, L., Phillips, S., Lee, G., Hiatt, C., Kimble, T. “An Evaluation of the Fitness Report System for Marine Officers.” CNA Analysis & Solutions July 2012

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pg. 11-16

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pg. 10

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pg. 69

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pg. 29-31

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pg. 45

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pg. 46-51

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pg. 42

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pg. 44

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