Translational Research Group
Marine Corps University
U.S. Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research Project
(MCOCR Project)

Notice of Data Availability in Qualitative Data Repository
June 2020

Project Location in Repository: https://doi.org/10.5064/F6K4IVEP

Translational Research Group Background:
The Translational Research Group (TRG) was a multidisciplinary group of social scientists within the U.S. Marine Corps' culture center that focused on providing cultural, regional, and language education and training. TRG operated from 2010 through June 2020. Its work was balanced between two core functions. Its primary function was to conduct social science research on Marines and Marine Corps organizations and provide scientific advising to Marine Corps leaders. It also supported the culture center by providing conceptual guidance for education and training and by running the center's assessment program to evaluate the effectiveness of the center's activities. The group's director was the cultural anthropologist, Kerry Fosher (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9421-9243). Additional information about the group can be found in two articles:

- Fosher, K. 2018. Field Report: Implementing a Social Science Capability in a Marine Corps Organization. Journal of Business Anthropology. Spring. 7(1):133-152. https://doi.org/10.22439/jba.v7i1.5495.
- Fosher, K. et al. 2020. Translational Research in a Military Organization: The Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research Project. Annals of Anthropological Practice. May. 44(1):14-32. https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12130.

Qualitative Data Repository (QDR) Information:
The QDR is an archive for storing and sharing data and associated materials from qualitative and mixed methods projects. It is hosted by the Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry, a unit of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. Users do not have to have an institutional membership agreement to access materials on the QDR, but do need to sign up for a free account.

Project Background:
The Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research (MCOCR) Project was an exploratory research effort requested by Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) in July 2017 to gather information on Marine Corps culture. The project arose in part from concerns related to the Marines United social media misconduct[1] and also from longer-term leadership questions regarding shifts in Marine Corps culture. The research was conducted by the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's CAOCL) Translational Research Group (TRG) at Marine Corps University (MCU) under Marine Corps Human Subjects Protection Protocol #USMC.2017.0005. The intent of the project was to develop a broad base of data and analyses to provide context, considerations, and insights that could be used to inform problem-framing and decision-making on a range of issues. A more detailed project overview is provided as an appendix to this document.

This project was controversial when the initial reports were released. An example of media coverage and an example of congressional attention to the report are provided below.

Principal Investigator/Government Supervisor: Kerry Fosher. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9421-9243

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[1] In March of 2017, a news report provided detailed coverage of social media misconduct on a Facebook group called "Marines United." In this group, former Marines, active duty and reserve Marines, and others posted derogatory comments about female Marines and images of female Marines with little or no clothing. Although this was not the first instance of gender-related social media misconduct discovered by military organizations, the Marines United incident garnered significantly more public and congressional scrutiny. Additional information can be found in the publication from this project, below.

Data and Supplementary Material Overview:
This data set comprises 177 transcripts from interviews and focus groups and 2 sets of notes from interviews where the participants asked not to be recorded. The research was conducted in 2017 at 6 locations (see below). Interviews and focus groups were scheduled to last 60 minutes, but the actual times varied according to participant interest. Also included in the archive are a project overview, an example of a recruiting poster used in the research, the original human subjects protection documentation, and examples of public domain applied research outcomes from the project. Access to transcripts requires a human subjects protocol approved by an Institutional Review Board. Additional details on access requirements are available in the Access Requirements documentation in the QDR at https://doi.org/10.5064/F6K4IVEP/MDUTT6. All other materials are publicly available on the QDR.

Associated publication:
Fosher, Kerry et al. 2020. Translational Research in a Military Organization: The Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research Project. Annals of Anthropological Practice. May. 44(1):14-32. https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12130.

Additional publications are in review.

Examples of associated coverage:
Szoldra, Paul. 2019. "An internal investigation spurred by a nude photo scandal shows just how deep sexism runs in the Marine Corps." Task and Purpose. Dec 4. (https://taskandpurpose.com/news/marines-united-study/)

U.S. House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Military Personnel Hearing: "Diversity in Recruiting and Retention: Increasing Diversity in the Military – What the Military Services are Doing." Dec 10, 2019. Project is mentioned at 1:16:40, 1:18:21, and 1:31:08.
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibAhkmHjiPM&feature=youtu.be&t=4579&ab_channel=U.S.HouseArmedServicesCommittee)

Methods:
TRG researchers conducted semi-structured interviews and semi-structured focus groups. Interviews were conducted with one researcher and one interviewee (with one exception, which was an interview with two interviewees). Focus groups were conducted with one researcher as a moderator and one researcher as a note taker. The number of Marines in each focus group varied. Participant characteristics are indicated in the front matter of each transcript. Note: sample questions can be found at the end of the original human subjects protection protocol. However, in practice, each researcher used his or her judgement as to how best to ensure an interview or focus group covered the topics chosen for special emphasis (leadership, gender bias, and cohesion) in the project.

Recruitment and Sample:
Volunteers for the project were recruited in a variety of ways. A MARADMIN (widely broadcast message to Marines) was issued, the research team worked with public affairs officers at the various locations to push information about the research through physical and electronic means appropriate to the location, and the research teams arrived at data gathering sites early enough to recruit at tables in high-traffic areas, such as food courts. Additionally, various senior Marine Corps leaders sent messages through their networks to ensure leaders were encouraged to allow their Marines time to participate.

All participants were active duty Marines. Reservists could not be included in the research due to local interpretation of Department of Defense guidance on information collection. Sample characteristics (sex, rank, military occupational specialty, race, etc.) are too complex to be easily represented here. The *Report to PSO*, included in project documentation, contains an appendix with basic statistical analyses of the sample according to various characteristics. Of note, the sample was not designed to be representative. For example, the sample contains more females than would be expected in a representative sample of the Marine Corps. Also, with regard to race, participants were allowed to write their own interpretation of race rather than being forced to select from a limited range of options, a research choice which produced interesting results, but limits comparability of the sample to available Marine Corps demographics.

Interview Locations and Length:
See Table 1. Research interactions were conducted in six locations in the U.S. and in Okinawa, Japan. Each interaction was scheduled to last 60 minutes, but varied somewhat based on participant preferences.

Dataset:
See Table 1. TRG's final dataset comprised 180 transcripts and 2 sets of notes from interviews where the participants asked not to be recorded. Of this dataset, the project's Principal Investigator assessed that 3 transcripts contained material too personally or operationally sensitive or that posed an unacceptably high risk of participant identification. These three transcripts have not been included. The dataset included in this deposit therefore includes a total of 179 records of interviews and focus groups:

- 32 focus group transcripts
- 145 interview transcripts
- 2 sets of notes from interviews in which the participant declined to be recorded.

Table 1: Locations and Dates of Interviews and Focus Groups

Location and Date	Date(s)	Interviews	Focus Groups
Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico – VA	August 15-October 3, 2017	19	4
MCB Camp Lejeune – NC	August 22, 23, 2017	22	5
Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point - NC	August 24, 2017	9	3
The Pentagon - VA	September 6, 7, 2017	19	1
MCB Camp Pendleton- CA	September 12-14, 2017	19	5
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) Twentynine Palms – CA	September 18-20, 2017	22	3
MCAS Yuma - AZ	September 25-27, 2017	18	4
MCB Camp Butler - Okinawa, Japan	October 17-19, 2017	19	7
Total Transcripts: 179 (2 are notes only)		**147**	**32**

Data Processing:
Audio files were transcribed by commercial services. TRG researchers then conducted a three-stage review process to correct transcription errors, remove protected information, and address questions regarding highly sensitive material. Each transcript was reviewed by at least two individuals, with the Principal Investigator reviewing any questions of sensitivity. Additional detail regarding this process is included in the project documentation.

Names of interviewees and others were removed from transcripts with the exception of public figures and general officers. In some cases where the risk of mosaic identification/data triangulation was especially high, additional information, such as location, was removed. Areas where information has been removed are marked with brackets in the transcripts.

Each transcript contains extensive front matter providing information about the project and data processing, as well as the original informed consent language used in the project. Some transcripts have additional information at the end of the front matter regarding the potential sensitivity of material in the transcript or how to mitigate heightened risks to the participant(s).

All raw data, code keys, and participant contact information have been destroyed.

Topics:
Although some aspects of data gathering focused on leadership, gender bias, and cohesion, the project was specifically designed to ensure Marines could raise other topics they felt were important. Consequently, Marines spoke on an

incredibly wide range of issues, only some of which are captured in the reports included in the project documentation. The richness of this dataset and our inability to fully mine it was a primary reason for depositing it in the QDR.

Additional Materials:
The documentation associated with this project includes human subjects protection documentation, an example of recruiting imagery, a public domain project overview, and numerous public domain reports from the project.

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Appendix 1

MCOCR Project Overview

Note: The Project Overview is a public domain document.

Translational Research Group - CAOCL
Marine Corps University

June 2020

Project Overview
The Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research (MCOCR) Project was an exploratory research effort requested by Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) in July 2017 to gather information on Marine Corps culture. The project arose in part from concerns related to the Marines United social media misconduct and also from longer-term leadership questions regarding shifts in Marine Corps culture. The research was conducted by the Center for Advanced Operational Culture's (CAOCL) Translational Research Group (TRG) at Marine Corps University (MCU). The project was governed by Marine Corps Human Subjects Protection Protocol #USMC.2017.0005 and the provisions of academic freedom in MCU's *Academic Regulations* (2016).

The intent of the project was to develop a broad base of data and analyses to provide context, considerations, and insights that could be used to inform problem-framing and decision-making on a range of issues. The project was not intended to be representative of the entire Marine Corps or to support statistical analyses. As with most exploratory research, results were intended to inform discussion rather than make claims or advance particular positions regarding any Marine Corps program or policy. Additional information is provided in the Frequently Asked Questions on page 3 of this overview.

The **first phase** of MCOCR involved research design, data gathering, initial analysis, and production of two expedited reports. The research team collected data from Aug-Oct 2017 at installations in the United States and Japan, conducting 182 interviews and focus groups that were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Initial analysis focused on issues related to leadership, cohesion, and gender bias, captured in reports to the Personnel Studies and Oversight (PSO) Office, now the Talent Management Oversight Directorate (TMOD).

A *Quick Look Report* on issues specifically related to the Marines United misconduct was delivered to PSO in February 2018. A broader initial *Report to PSO* was expedited and delivered on 30 March 2018. This report organized preliminary analysis into the following themes:
1. Marines United and the Prevalence of Online Misconduct
2. Challenges with and for Leadership
3. The Procedural and Social Uses of PFT/CFT Scores
4. Experiences of Female Marines
5. Hostile Environments
6. Remaining a Marine: How Enlisted and Officers Deliberate and Decide
7. Cohesion, Leadership, and Difference through the Lens of Humor

With the delivery of the initial report and associated materials to PSO, the first phase of MCOCR was complete.

The **second phase** of MCOCR was intended to have three parts:
- Cleaning the transcripts to correct errors and removing protected information to develop them into a dataset that TRG could mine on a broad range of issues of interest to the Marine Corps
- Conducting deeper and more structured analyses on topics of interest to the Marine Corps and those of scholarly value
- Continuing to advise Marine Corps organizations based on MCOCR and other datasets as requested.

The Marine Corps' decision to close CAOCL in June 2020 altered the plans and timelines for the second phase. Original analysis plans for this phase also were disrupted by TRG's inability to procure necessary analytic software and questions regarding the applicability of MCU's academic freedom policy to MCOCR outcomes. Questions regarding academic freedom were resolved in late 2019. These factors significantly reduced the scope of analysis planned for Phase 2. **See additional information below.**

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<u>Advising</u>
The TRG team continued to provide advice for problem framing and the development of more structured data gathering efforts to various Marine Corps organizations, including M&RA and TMOD.

<u>Dataset Development</u>
Work to clean the transcripts to correct errors and remove protected information was completed in January 2020. This work ensured the transcripts could be analyzed accurately. Transcripts also may be able to be released to other researchers with an appropriate human subjects protection protocol. (See Long-Term Data Management Plan below.)

<u>Completed Analyses</u>
Due to the limitations imposed by lack of software and CAOCL's closure, TRG focused on completing several "quick look" reports on different topics rather than the in-depth analyses originally planned. The following additional reports were completed:

- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Implicit and Explicit Perceptions of Fairness
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Pregnancy Loss
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Alcohol
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Rethinking Mentorship
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Trust in the Marine Corps – the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Sexual Assault and Harassment
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Empathy in Leadership
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Generational Differences in the Marine Corps – Exploring Issues and Frictions Between Older and Younger Marines.
- Insights from the MCOCR Project: Elements and Antidotes for Disillusionment

All reports from the project were submitted to the Defense Technical Information Center for posting on the public portal. See also data management plan for additional locations.

<u>Scholarly Works</u>
TRG team members presented on aspects of the MCOCR project at numerous academic conferences and in Marine Corps meetings. One scholarly article was published and another is under review as of this date:

- Translational Research in a Military Organization: The Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research Project. May 2020 in *Annals of Anthropological Practice* 44(1).
- Post-Heroic Leadership in a Heroic Organization: The Secret and Gendered Life of Empathy in the United States Marine Corps. Submitted to the journal *Human Relations* for review.

Long-Term Data Management Plans
Protection of the Marines who volunteered for the project and the data they provided was a priority for TRG. However, TRG also felt a responsibility to ensure that the data provided by Marines is used to the maximum extent possible. The principal investigator worked with the Marine Corps' Human Research Protection Program to identify a data repository that balanced internal and external discoverability with necessary security. After reviewing several options, the Qualitative Data Repository (QDR), hosted by Syracuse University was selected. Versions of transcripts that have been scrubbed of protected information, along with project documentation and reports, were deposited in the QDR when CAOCL closed. They can be accessed at https://qdr.syr.edu/ by searching on the principal investigator's last name (Fosher). Reports and other documentation are available to the public. Access to data requires an approved human subjects protection protocol meeting criteria specified in the project documentation.

Some materials from the project, but not the data, also were included in the CAOCL collection provided to the Archives Branch of the Marine Corps History Division at MCU. The original audio recordings, raw transcripts, and any materials that could link participants with the data were destroyed when CAOCL closed.

For more information, contact
Dr. Kerry Fosher, Director of Research
703-432-1504 / kerry.fosher@usmcu.edu

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What is MCOCR?

The MCOCR Project was a small, exploratory, qualitative research effort intended to gather Marine perspectives on a range of issues related to Marine Corps culture. The project resulted in 150 semi-structured interviews and 32 semi-structured focus groups with 267 unique participants (nine Marines participated in both an interview and a focus group). All participants were volunteers, and the project was conducted under a protocol approved by the Marine Corps Human Research Protection Program. The project was conducted by CAOCL's Translational Research Group under Marine Corps University's (MCU) academic freedom policy.

How should the information in MCOCR reports be used?

Because of the non-representative sample, data and analysis from MCOCR are intended to inform discussions in conjunction with other information sources. They should not be used to make broad claims about Marines or Marine Corps programs and policies.

Were Marine statements fact-checked?

No. The intent of the project was to gather Marine perspectives without regard to whether the perspectives were based on full knowledge of current Marine Corps policies and programs. In some cases, it was important to capture misperceptions, as they have implications for internal Marine Corps messaging.

What are the project's limitations?

1. The MCOCR sample was not designed to be representative of the Marine Corps population in terms of sex, race/ethnicity, MOS, or other characteristics. Therefore, the data cannot be used in statistical analysis designed to make claims about all Marines. Sample demographics are included in the March 2018 report from the project, available at https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1079774.
2. The project did not include reservists or recently retired/separated Marines due to Marine Corps interpretation of DoD guidance on information collections at the time the research was designed.
3. We did not actively seek volunteers above E-8s and O-5s; therefore, the senior voice is not strong in the sample.

Who funded and sponsored the project?

The project fell within the normal scope of work of CAOCL's Translational Research Group (TRG), and the majority of the project was funded out of CAOCL's existing budget. Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) requested that the research be done, but the research design, conduct, and analysis were controlled by TRG. M&RA provided assistance with logistics, travel for research team members who were not part of CAOCL, and funding to accelerate transcription of audio recordings.

When and where were data gathered?

Between August and October 2017, the research team gathered data at the following locations: Pentagon, MCB Quantico, MCB Camp Lejeune, MCAS Cherry Point, MCB Camp Pendleton, MCAGCC 29 Palms, MCAS Yuma, and MCB Camp Butler (Okinawa).

Can Marines who participated be identified?

Identification is unlikely. Marines who volunteered for the research went through a process that informed them of the risks and the steps the research team would take to mitigate them. (A copy of the informed consent information is available in the project documentation through the Archives Branch of the Marine Corps History Division at MCU or the Qualitative Data Repository at Syracuse University.) Names were removed from the dataset and other measures were taken to mask identities, but Marines were cautioned prior to agreeing to participate in an interview or focus group that it might still be possible for some readers to identify them through their habits of speech and/or combinations of characteristics, such as MOS and location.

What were the qualifications and characteristics of the research team?

The principal investigator is a cultural anthropologist with more than 20 years of experience working with and doing research on national security organizations, including 10 years leading research teams on projects focused on the Marine Corps. The composition of the MCOCR research team has changed between 2017 and 2020, but team members have possessed PhDs or MAs in the following disciplines: cultural anthropology, sociology, cultural geography, international relations, education, communication, and evaluation science. Data gathering teams included male and female researchers. To the maximum extent possible, participants were allowed to choose the sex of the researcher with whom they interacted. All team members were caucasian. The data gathering team included two members with Marine backgrounds. One was a recently retired field-grade Marine officer, and the other was an active duty company-grade Marine officer. The research team also consulted with other social scientists and Marines during design and analysis.