



# Observations on Marine Culture

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An Essay by Dr. Tom Lifvendahl

O'Connell, A. (2009). *Underdogs: A cultural history of the United States Marine Corps, 1941-1945*. Retrieved from : ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis.

## Introduction

For the last thirty years, as a teacher, businessperson, and family man I have been interested in the interplay between personal beliefs, professional practices, and educational experience. Grounding all these has been a abiding belief that “culture”, the narratives that guide our lives, have lasting impact. Who we are and what we do throughout our life cycle evolves. But that evolution is “tracked”, guided by tacit and unexamined experiences that accumulate over time.

For me, the most impactful, long-term experience of my life came, as with many, in my youth. I come from a family with cousins who served during both wartime and peace in the United States Marine Corps. Impressions of seeing my cousins in uniform and in conversation as a child sensitized me to service but that service would be best served as a Marine. After graduation from high school in 1963 I enlisted. My intent was to serve and then complete my education. I did both but experienced a Corps in transition. Korean war and even some WWII veterans trained and led me. However, Viet Nam and its attendant chaos swept me up. I considered myself existing in both the “old Corps” (post-WWII) and the “new Corps” (draftees re-entering the volunteer Marine Corps for the first time since WII). I am a combat veteran in a society that sometimes cares little about the effects of that service on individuals or society as a whole.

What the Marine Corps taught me was a range of behaviors and thought patterns that run through my life. A love of country; tempered by the experience of participation in a needless war. Learned discipline; countered by diminished patience with stupidity and bureaucratic ineptness. Mental testing; that revealed that I had a good mind and good values but self-burdened

by the need to take orders when continued loyalty to organizations was no longer in my self-interest. In essence, I am no different from most other humans; I am flawed but whole, a reflection of my society and my culture.

What stimulated this essay was a book review in Leatherneck Magazine, the journal of Marines. Highlighted was a notation that the aforementioned book was derived from a doctoral dissertation by a former Marine officer done while matriculating through an American Studies program at Yale University. Having access to an appropriate database at Cardinal Stritch University where I teach I pulled the dissertation and decided that in reviewing its findings I could reflect on both my Marine experiences and use the author's research as a foil for reflection. This essay is the result.

The reader should note that I am using a mixed process of condensing the dissertation (over 400 pages) and providing opinions based on my own experiences. In essence, one part acts as an interpretive mirror for the other. Both are subjective in nature and wholly my interpretation. The following section on culture and its effect is outlined tightly and highly reductive. I encourage the reader to look beyond it with their own questions as to the effect of culture on them. I do so at the end of each section in this essay with a "Reflection Summary".

## Cultural Operations

O'Connell begins his dissertation by providing the reader with a Chapter reviewing American Studies, a subset of the social sciences that has been impacted by interpretive turmoil and misunderstanding. Conflicting narratives (Marxist derived and politically tinged) have dogged both military history and social history for the last 50 years wherein each side tended to view the other as an "enemy" unworthy of consideration. Cultural studies reflected this conflict. O'Connell clarifies some of these issues by noting that:

1. Culture operates primarily by marking out differences:
  - a. The stories we tell others and ourselves about ourselves. It consists of the beliefs and practices we commit to memory and intentionally use to identify others and ourselves like us from the greater society.
  - b. It is demonstrated by the fashion, gestures, and unique dress that mark a given culture. It is the range of ways, both verbal and nonverbal by which we "differentiate ourselves from other individuals and groups" (p. 25).
2. Culture is primarily concerned with preserving or sustaining function – a way to pass the shared narrative of identity from one generation to the next.

- a. Cultural stories create “intimate links” between itself and the greater community.
  - b. People, “acting in concert, must agree on and sustain the community’s commitments, priorities, and traditions” (p. 26).
3. Culture captures beliefs we don’t even know we hold, the assumptions that operate in the background of consciousness as common sense.
- a. It is the “range of habitual practices, default programs, hidden assumptions and unreflected cognitive frames with shape our understanding of ourselves and affect the choices we make” (p. 26)
  - b. Culture acts like a covert computer program, present at re-boot to renew the society but unchallenged in its assumptions and un-examined in the value of its content.
4. Culture acts to police boundaries both inside and between groups.
- a. It provides signs and portents that signify accepted behaviors...both inside and outside the group.
  - b. It equates acceptance or rejection in/of the group thus reinforcing the value of the culture to itself and the greater society.
  - c. It defines the “spectrum of force” used by the culture to compel others to “obey, acquiesce to, or endorse specific ideas, values and beliefs” (pp. 26-27)

### Characteristics of Marine Culture

Once completing his review of culture and its norms O’Connell ties his observations to the subject of his study, the United States Marine Corps. He notes that Marines have benefited from symbolic/tangible narratives and experiences which:

- Inculcated them into a unique military tradition in boot camp focused on “cultural transformation...complete with its own language, myths, heroes and rituals” (p. 57)
- Was selective in recruitment and acceptance in new members

- Trained them to mentally surrender leading to the acquisition of a “deep feeling of [quasi-religious] community” ([Guardian](#)), Army training...indoctrination to “pragmatic and rational organization” ([Commercial](#))

Note: the terms Guardian and Commercial refer to a values based evaluation system that I have used in my teaching for years. If you follow the links you will be directed to my web site and can read why I like it how I utilize it in organizational evaluation.

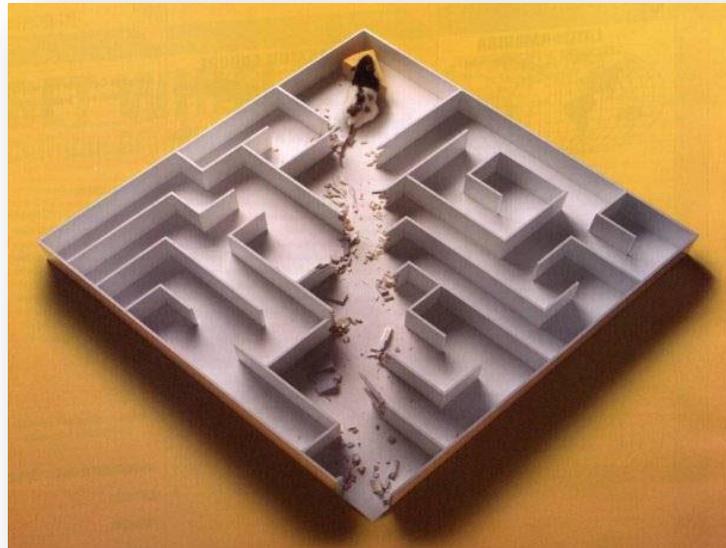
- Help them establish a strong and intimate network of support (both internal and external) and extended affiliation
- Allowed them to participate in ritual...“venerate tradition, to sacrifice comfort, safety, and even life all in the name of Marine Corps discipline”...that enabled the recruit to become part of a transforming “collective” (pp. 61-63)
- Led them to believe that their Corps transcends both time and space...duty lies to both the living and the dead “Well Done Marine” (p. 67)
- Is marked by collective suffering and sacrifice (empowering esprit de corps) (p. 80)
- Are branded by a transcendental fear of breaking faith with those who have gone before [the dead]...remaining “always faithful” to the Corps (p.87)

## Reflective Summary

O’Connell does an exemplary job of defining the cultural traits of the Corps. He provides the reader with an interpretation of inculcation experienced by every Marine recruit and service member.

Marines revel in their history and self-perceived narratives of collective suffering. This culture of institutional persecution binds them together in “mystic ties” that reverberate through time. Think, as sung in the Marine Hymn, “heaven is guarded by United States Marines”. Connecting the Marines with God by having their sacred dead guarding His sanctity in Heaven is an ultimate Mission Statement. I hold beliefs that resonate with that history. I am also affected by an education that makes me question the value of those beliefs over my life. Mythic belief and perceptive reality sometimes make for an interesting mix.

Finally, Marines also adhere to an organizational philosophy that emphasizes “getting the job done...complete the mission” no matter what. That is why I like the following picture. Like the little mouse eating the walls of the maze and refusing to accept in imposed route, Marines are direct. They like to believe that similar to Alexander the Great; they cut the Gordian knot, eat through the bureaucratic maze, and solve the problem.



## Communication of Marine Culture

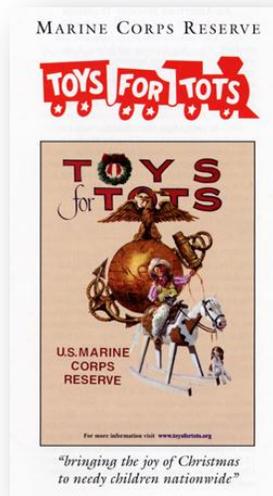
I was a Marine communicator. A radio operator who functioned well in the three major divisional responsibilities of the Corps; the Third Marine Air Wing, The Third Marine Division's 3<sup>rd</sup> Anti-tank Battalion, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines Artillery Battalion. Nevertheless, until I became an educated adult I never fully understood the service I joined. I was too young.

O'Connell points out that as the smallest, most vulnerable service the Marine Corps early on recruited youngsters like me because they are malleable. Old soldiers tend to not want to die...they ask too many questions. Young Marines (and soldiers, sailors, airmen, and guardsmen) tend to unquestionably obey. Providing the nation with a cultural narrative of family values and heroic service supported the Marines place in the nation. Marines have leveraged their traditions and values by:

- Creating a connection with the American public far greater in substance and content than any other service
- Recruiting and employing the skills of professional journalists and artists “Denig’s Demons” (p. 107)
- Building a formidable public relations network in WWII that sustained the Corps in one form or another to the present day
- Making the average Marine into an icon; whereas other services tend to uplift the process of war, not the heroism of the private
- Using publicity to embed itself into the meaning of family by encouraging families of deceased Marines to equate Corps membership (earned and assumed) as of equal value (their loved one’s death earned family status by “extending out the cultural network” p. 126)
- Realizing the re-integration into society after WWII would difficult...see Rockwell image below ( they were burdened by the violence of the war in the Pacific...far more violent and racially tinged than the European Theater)



- Utilizing public relations ploys like Toys for Tots (designed to help war orphaned children) and other family oriented activities to re-bond the Corps and “family” into an integrated concept embodied in the motto *Semper Fidelis*



- Movies have worked to allow the concept of “tender violence” to aid in the re-positioning the Corps for the transition from WWII to the Cold War (p. 143)



## Reflective Summary

The Marine Corps is accused of being a publicity machine. Presidents and Generals have marveled at the Corps' ability to mold public opinion and national defense policy in its favor.

My own experience with the cultural power of the Marine Corps is as simple as my walking my dog in my neighborhood, meeting a cop working his case and him saying Semper Fi because he sees the Globe and Anchor on my beret. We are instantly bonded. Marines are always Marines. The value of that “brand” was paid for by blood, courage, tenacity supported by years of Corps publicity and real, honest to goodness commitment from Marines to Marines.

## Marines and Political Influence 1946-1958

Like any organization the Marine Corps seeks to exist, expand, and control its environment. When its existence has been challenged by institutional and governmental “enemies”; the Corps approached defending itself by attacking... using the same tactics of alliance building, obfuscation, and deception it used to defeat its enemies in war.

After the end of WWII, the Department of War became the Department of Defense. Defending the nation against the Soviets and Communism in general provided an excuse for attacking the Marine Corps. The Army and Air Force in particular waged institutional war on the Corps. They wanted to destroy it and both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower were sympathetic with this outcome.

O’Connell outlines how the Corps defended itself. The Marines survived post war governmental restructuring by:

- Building lasting support networks in government and Congress (the Marine coalition of elected officials and staffers who were Marine veterans)
- Passing legislation that specified Corps mission and prohibitions against diminishing that mission through budgeting and/or legislative action
- Treating political action as a form of warfare...with its deceptions, tactical considerations and alliance building
- Equating Corps survival as crucial to cultural continuity (family, tradition, domesticity, etc.) during a time of radical defense re-configuration
- Leveraging its anti-bureaucratic and nimble philosophy to defend itself against its “lumbering and bureaucratic” foes (p. 156)
- Creating the “Chowder Society”; a group of well-connected, middle ranked Marine officers bent of maintaining and enhancing the Congressional coalition (p.162) through non-traditional tactics (high adaptivity, flexibility, decentralized, non-hierarchical and dogged in maintaining the networks capacities), in order to counter the Defense Department’s post war desire to unify all services and disband the Corps
- Arguing that the Corps, its family connections and traditions were synonymous with American (Guardian) ...the other services were bureaucracies (Commercial), not American cultural icons in the same sense as the Marines

- Portraying themselves as abused and threatened by “out-of-control state power” they survived repeated attempts to do away with them by adroit use of appeals to emotion, propaganda and institutional subterfuge
- Leveraging their institutional fears and national cultural insecurity to the Corps advantage

## Reflective Summary

Organizations are like living entities. They seek to survive, replicate themselves, and ultimately evolve into a better form. During the last three months I was in the Marine Corps, I saw the effects of how the Viet Nam Wars insatiable need for manpower was negatively played out. While stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, I was tasked to help integrate drafted Marines into their duties as communicators. They did not want to be there. I saw my volunteer Corps in the beginning throes of discontent that would dog all the services throughout the war. Viet Nam was gearing up and people were vehemently protesting the wars increasingly precipitous count of dead.

The Corps I was leaving in 1966 was institutionally and mentally unprepared for the consequences of that war. While in Viet Nam (Chu Lai) I lived in WWII tents, ate WWII C Rations (1943 issue), used weapons and radio equipment issued during the Korean War and marveled at the fact that the soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam had better communications equipment than I did. The war not only tore the country apart it tore the services apart too.

When I reported to my reserve outfit (a communications company in Chicago, Illinois), I was recruited aggressively to serve. At the time, it seemed a good idea. I missed my friends but given my active experiences, I wanted to see the equipment they had. The warehouse I was taken too had trucks and radios of Korean War vintage. Older than any I had ever seen. Given the range of malcontent the Corps was experiencing (later confirmed by friends in the Reserves) I declined the invitation. Part of me regrets not taking up the invitation but in reflection both my parents had gone through a mental hell with my Viet Nam tour and I was not about to reintroduce any hint of that instability back into their lives. In the end, it was the right decision for my family and me.

Subsequently, throughout the war (1966-1975) while an undergraduate student and later a graduate student, I was aware of the difficulties the Corps had in coping with Viet Nam. I met plenty of returning vets and we all were concerned how the negativity of the war affected the Corps I still had loyalty too. We may have been angry with our “green machine” but it was ours!

O'Connell's dissertation did a wonderful job of chronicling the Corps re-structuring and re-missioning after that war. It filled gaps in my understanding.

In business as well as the military organizations survive when they are perceived as relevant by their stakeholder base. The Marine Corps tactically implemented the classic behavioral imperatives of an institutional survivor; remain open and flexible to change...adapt and overcome adversity. The Corps did this at a level of effectiveness the bureaucratized, technocratic Army, Navy, and Air Force was unable to replicate. The experience of Viet Nam and its aftermath was painful for all concerned but the Corps remained better able to creatively respond to evolving national needs than any other service.

## Dealing with the Korean War 1953-1963

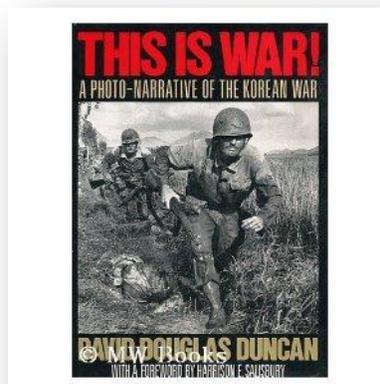
The period after WWII has been dominated by “police actions”...non-wars. Nevertheless, the consequences of those actions continue to reverberate through contemporary American history. Korea was truly a national anomaly, forcibly relegated to obscurity by most military historians and society as a whole.

However, Korea has also been elevated by the Corps because it could be “contextualized alongside earlier experience: it was compatible with and strengthened [the Corps] existing narrative of tenacity, courage, and Marine exceptionalism...it was a victory” (p. 211). The Marines in Korea were instrumental with saving the peninsula from take over by North Korea and its partners in China and to a smaller extent the Soviet Union.

Korea was also a war that pitted the American services against each other while generating national recrimination that unjustly accused the American soldier of apathy, physical and mental weakness, and even collaboration with the enemy. Korea was also an unpleasant war, fought for ambiguous reasons by a UN force and missioned vaguely. General MacArthur (think, at the time the embodiment of “God” by many American citizens); was cashiered by President Truman. No one seemed to know why the “forgotten war”; this ill-advised “police action”, was fought. For the Army, Navy, and Air Force none of their vaunted nuclear strategic weapons and institutional imperatives were of use. Korea was a grunts’ war; devoid of influence on “long range programs for development” (p. 231), but reduced to perceptions of needless attrition and inflicted human suffering.

The Marines conversely did know the value of Korea:

- They battled with a tenacity that elevated the Korean conflict to the exalted pantheon that emerged from WWII. The Chosin Reservoir narrative and Iwo Jima became cultural equivalents deserving of honor by the nation.



- Korea underscored the strategic relevance of a flexible, rapidly deployable fighting force...the Marine Corps. Korea sold many strategic planners on the need for a strike force like the Marines.

Korea (and Viet Nam) also caused psychic harm. Deployed as individuals, returned home as individuals, serviced by a veterans system used to WWII combatants, and returning to a country oblivious to the war and its consequences many Korean Marines (and Viet Nam Marines) had great difficulty adjusting to post-war life (think PTSD but undiagnosed or properly treated in today's terms).

I would also suggest that the forgetting behavior of American society and ours society's related ahistorical penchant will also be evident once Iraq/Afghanistan conflicts are finished. Americans like "just wars" and the only one of the modern era has been WWII. The healing from the mistakes made in reaction to the Twin Towers...9/11...will plague our vets and us for years to come.

### Reflective Summary

Khe San, Hue City, and the varied operations and activities of Marines at war in Viet Nam have been fully integrated into the Marine cultural narrative. Today's Marines (and by implication me) measured up to the challenges of war. We are all worthy of our honored dead of WWI and II. Unfortunately, veterans carry the scars of those modern non-wars throughout their lives, just like those who died in the "great wars" of the past.

It is important to remember that veterans are not victims; they are survivors. They represent the best of our society and the Nation needs more than ever to support them as we increasingly defend ourselves against ambiguous enemies possessing ill-defined political/religious agendas. War is no longer "just" it just "is". Both our political leadership and the armed services that serve them still must determine what that means for the nation.

## Culture of Abuse in the 1950s

There is a great similarity between the heavily populated with combat veterans of the post Korean War and the present 10-12 year era of warfare derived from the Iraq/Afghanistan operations. The tendency of stressed Marines to condone alcohol and physical abuse has been endemic in the Corps throughout its history. In the spring of 1956, six recruits at Parris Island (the east coast recruit depot) died when a drill instructor marched them in a swollen creek (known as the Ribbon Creek Incident) after drinking too much.

As a 19 year old Marine in the 1963 I witnessed a similar level of needless abuse (a drill instructor beating a kid with a small garbage can in front of my recruit platoon during morning roll call coupled with excessive drill field punishment and related violent behaviors) during boot camp at the west coast recruit depot at San Diego. At the time, we recruits thought it was excessive but “normal”. Luckily for us, so did the Corps. The drill instructor directly associated with the misconduct was pulled from the training and shipped off to Okinawa. Cashiered, no...punished, yes. The O’Connell dissertation explains this behavior within two cultural contexts. They are:

1. The national security cultural field (hardening men to fight the nation’s wars...Warrior)
2. The civilian cultural field (providing guidance and toughness as a father would to young men...Family)

However, the dominant behavior of Marines that emerged at this time was to attack when challenged. Marine culture after WWII was dominated by combat; its veterans had seen much, the stress of service life and strict obedience to orders created a need to suppress emotions. In essence, constant hyper-vigilance to external stimuli that triggers past combat memory has plagued the Corps (then and now).

In addition, the Marine Corps, composed of veterans having experienced a disproportionate amount of combat violence in the last 60 years compared to other services; has been institutionally prone to using non-administrative procedures to solve internal problems (putting the gloves on...fighting). When challenged by insubordination, the Corps discharged service members for undesirable conduct to a greater degree than its sister services but it also condoned violent behavior at levels the other services would not tolerate. Marines are “tough” and need to be allowed to manifest that toughness in ways others might find abhorrent.

Out of this environment the Corps as dealt with alcohol and substance abuse sporadically. Because drinking in particular is a “manly” activity, it was and still is tacitly condoned. Again, it

is important to note that combat training teaches one to hyper vigilant and aggressive. The problem is that not all problems can be rectified with a punch in the face.

## Reflective Summary

Alcohol acts as a medication to dull behavior and diminishes the need to talk about ones problems. For a Marine, staying silent and internalizing fear and uncertainty has traditionally been the desired, default “normal” behavior. It lasted for me over 20 years. I was lucky enough to have learned the consequences of drinking to much from a father who was a reformed alcoholic. I do not drink in excess. However, my Marine training did reinforce a natural tendency (I am a reticent Swede after all) to not talk. Like other Marines before me, that behavior cost me my first marriage and made relationships needlessly strained. Today, I have been in relationship for over 15 years with a wonderful, understanding woman who aids me in continuing recovery. Exhibiting sensitivity to others and openly expressing my feelings is no longer the problem it once was.

As noted earlier, drinking is still a problem for the Corps. Marine publicists historically used varied means to diminish bad publicity about drinking or inappropriate Marine behavior by coupling the Corps to patriotic events. Today, Marines in dress blues are present at football games and national events. The images of Marines guarding the nation serve also to reinforce the image of the Corps representing quintessential “family affection and community cohesion” (p. 282) O’Connell repeated mentions this in his dissertation. Marine programs for youth (Devil Pups...still in existence today) and affiliations with school-based learning have further equated Marine culture with desired national attributes.

Ribbon Creek and the resulting investigations about cruelty effectually changed training. However, the modern Corps still must deal with the residual affects violent combat has on young men and women. Habituated behaviors like medicating oneself with alcohol or drugs to alleviate mental suffering; being needlessly brutal with people because this behavior supports one’s manliness, and never admitting weakness, even committing suicide all reflect the effects of “cultural indoctrination that serves [one] well on the battlefield and inside the Corps” but reduces one’s ability to function well once released from service.

## The Rise of the Modern Corps, 1945-1965

The Corps of this period was in a state of transition. These were transformative years for the Marine Corps, as it set about structuring its mission in a nuclear age. Configuring itself around a mission of being a flexible “force-in-readiness”, the Corps portrayed itself as the proverbial David fighting “against Goliath-like enemies” (p. 316).

From the end of WWII to the late 50’s American strategic planning was European centered and assumptive that any great war would be nuclear. With only the Marine Corps in exception, all American military services geared themselves around total war. They “developed weapons they could not use [nuclear]” and inflexible delivery systems. War planning worked to insure annihilation of the enemy (MAD-mutually assured destruction). Unfortunately, by planning to destroy most of the world in the process the major military services marginalized themselves in reacting to evolving third world needs.

Historically contrarian, the Corps re-imagined its role in modern war around its penchant for small actions/small wars. The ability of the Corps to deploy quickly and land amphibiously with a mixed force of air/artillery/infantry meant that it became the Swiss army knife for American war planners. From the Suez Crises to the Dominican Republic, from Iraq to wherever trouble emerges the Marine Corps will continue to provide flexible responses to evolving circumstances. They continue to do so around the world. *Semper Fi*, Marines continue the faith tradition that has historically grounded them in war and peace.

### Reflective Summary

My Marine Corps is this Corps. As noted earlier, as an enlisted Marine I served from 1963-1966. I saw a wide range of Marine professional behavior (and misbehavior) in both barracks (state side and on Okinawa) and in combat (Viet Nam). This varied experience and my training as a historian and ethnographer led me to become interested in analyzing this dissertation.



I have been for the last 16 years a college teacher and researcher. My professional life of over 30 years was and still is focused on business and family. However, the formative years of military service in my youth permeated throughout my life in both positive and negative ways. I am a Marine no matter what else I am.

Finally, I have added an addendum of Marine Corps Leadership Traits. I teach leadership and my experience in the Corps is crucial to understanding my approach to learning and leading. Enjoy.

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*Absence of Evidence is not Evidence of Absence (Carl Sagan)*

*What can be asserted without Evidence can also be dismissed without Evidence (Christopher Hitchens)*

*Do not do unto others that which is repugnant to you. All else is commentary. (Rabbi Hillel)*



# Marine Corps Leadership Traits

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From [http://www.6mcd.usmc.mil/ftl\\_site/Handbook/marine\\_corps\\_leadership\\_traits.htm](http://www.6mcd.usmc.mil/ftl_site/Handbook/marine_corps_leadership_traits.htm)



The 14 leadership traits are qualities of thought and action which, if demonstrated in daily activities, help Marines earn the respect, confidence, and loyal cooperation of other Marines. It is extremely important that you understand the meaning of each leadership trait and how to develop it, so you know what goals to set as you work to become a good leader and a good follower.

## JUSTICE

**Definition:** Justice is defined as the practice of being fair and consistent. A just person gives consideration to each side of a situation and bases rewards or punishments on merit.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Be honest with yourself about why you make a particular decision. Avoid favoritism. Try to be fair at all times and treat all things and people in an equal manner.

## JUDGMENT

**Definition:** Judgment is your ability to think about things clearly, calmly, and in an orderly fashion so that you can make good decisions.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** You can improve your judgment if you avoid making rash decisions. Approach problems with a common sense attitude.

## DEPENDABILITY

**Definition:** Dependability means that you can be relied upon to perform your duties properly. It means that you can be trusted to complete a job. It is the willing and voluntary support of the policies and orders of the chain of command. Dependability also means consistently putting forth your best effort in an attempt to achieve the highest standards of performance.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** You can increase your dependability by forming the habit of being where you're supposed to be on time, by not making excuses and by carrying out every task to the best of your ability regardless of whether you like it or agree with it.

## INITIATIVE

**Definition:** Initiative is taking action even though you haven't been given orders. It means meeting new and unexpected situations with prompt action. It includes using resourcefulness to get something done without the normal material or methods being available to you.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** To improve your initiative, work on staying mentally and physically alert. Be aware of things that need to be done and then to do them without having to be told.

## DECISIVENESS

**Definition:** Decisiveness means that you are able to make good decisions without delay. Get all the facts and weight them against each other. By acting calmly and quickly, you should arrive at a sound decision. You announce your decisions in a clear, firm, professional manner.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Practice being positive in your actions instead of acting half-heartedly or changing your mind on an issue.

## TACT

**Definition:** Tact means that you can deal with people in a manner that will maintain good relations and avoid problems. It means that you are polite, calm, and firm.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Begin to develop your tact by trying to be courteous and cheerful at all times. Treat others as you would like to be treated.

## INTEGRITY

**Definition:** Integrity means that you are honest and truthful in what you say or do. You put honesty, sense of duty, and sound moral principles above all else.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Be absolutely honest and truthful at all times. Stand up for what you believe to be right.

## ENTHUSIASM

**Definition:** Enthusiasm is defined as a sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of your duties. If you are enthusiastic, you are optimistic, cheerful, and willing to accept the challenges.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Understanding and belief in your mission will add to your enthusiasm for your job. Try to understand why even uninteresting jobs must be done.

## BEARING

**Definition:** Bearing is the way you conduct and carry yourself. Your manner should reflect alertness, competence, confidence, and control.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** To develop bearing, you should hold yourself to the highest standards of personal conduct. Never be content with meeting only the minimum requirements.

## UNSELFISHNESS

**Definition:** Unselfishness means that you avoid making yourself comfortable at the expense of others. Be considerate of others. Give credit to those who deserve it.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Avoid using your position or rank for personal gain, safety, or pleasure at the expense of others. Be considerate of others.

## COURAGE

**Definition:** Courage is what allows you to remain calm while recognizing fear. Moral courage means having the inner strength to stand up for what is right and to accept blame when something is your fault. Physical courage means that you can continue to function effectively when there is physical danger present.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** You can begin to control fear by practicing self-discipline and calmness. If you fear doing certain things required in your daily life, force yourself to do them until you can control your reaction.

## KNOWLEDGE

**Definition:** Knowledge is the understanding of a science or art. Knowledge means that you have acquired information and that you understand people. Your knowledge should be broad, and in addition to knowing your job, you should know your unit's policies and keep up with current events.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Increase your knowledge by remaining alert. Listen, observe, and find out about things you don't understand. Study field manuals and other military literature.

## LOYALTY

**Definition:** Loyalty means that you are devoted to your country, the Corps, and to your seniors, peers, and subordinates. The motto of our Corps is Semper Fidelis!, (Always Faithful). You owe unwavering loyalty up and down the chain of command, to seniors, subordinates, and peers.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** To improve your loyalty you should show your loyalty by never discussing the problems of the Marine Corps or your unit with outsiders. Never talk about seniors unfavorably in front of your subordinates. Once a decision is made and the order is given to execute it, carry out that order willingly as if it were your own.

## ENDURANCE

**Definition:** Endurance is the mental and physical stamina that is measured by your ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship. For example, enduring pain during a conditioning march in order to improve stamina is crucial in the development of leadership.

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Develop your endurance by engaging in physical training that will strengthen your body. Finish every task to the best of your ability by forcing yourself to continue when you are physically tired and your mind is sluggish.

Because it is important to always be able to remember the basic leadership traits, the acronym "J.J. DID TIE BUCKLE" is used. Each letter in the acronym corresponds to the first letter of one of the traits. By remembering the acronym, you will be better able to recall the traits.