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COMMAND CLIMATE AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE  
COMMANDANT'S OF THE MARINE CORPS

by

Brian David Kerl

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2018

Dissertation Committee

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# COMMAND CLIMATE AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE COMMANDANT'S OF THE MARINE CORPS

## Abstract

Marine Corps commanding officers today face challenges aggravated by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, strategic uncertainty, and societal changes that carry over to the military such as women serving in infantry roles and the use of social media. These challenges are exacerbated by the stressors unique to the military such as lengthy separations from loved ones and multiple relocation moves, which underscore the significance of command climate and its influence on ethical behavior. Importantly, the consequences of a command climate *not* focused on ethics may negatively affect combat readiness and warfighting effectiveness. To date, however, little scholarly work, if any, has been done that examines the role that command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior of Marines.

To begin to fill this void in the literature, this qualitative study employed a case study/cross-case design using a two-phased research approach. The first phase included a document analysis of the command climate curriculum taught at the Marine Corps' formal schools, and personal interviews with four key individuals relative to the topic. The second phase involved face-to-face interviews with eight Marine Corps commandants using a semi-structured interview guide designed to provide their perspectives on command climate and how it influences the ethical behavior of Marines. These data were examined using an analysis of the eight narratives, and the analysis produced four common categories: setting the example; open communications; core

values; and accountability and responsibility. When these four common categories were then used during the cross-case comparison, the following three themes emerged: command climate is significant with respect to the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization; climate must be focused on the routine maintenance of core values, and the character development of the individual Marine; and the ethical behavior of the individual Marine is the best way to continue to win the hearts and souls of the American people. This study hopes to modestly contribute to the Marine Corps' leadership development program by providing recommendations to assist with the training and education of commanding officers who establish ethical climates designed to enhance combat effectiveness and character development within their organizations.

Keywords: ethical Leadership, ethics education, ethical decision-making, and ethical climate

## DEDICATION

Since my youth, my parents have always emphasized the importance of my education. Further, my father was an avid reader of military history and always discussed the Greatest Generation and what they did for the country. Many of these veterans who served in WWII lived in the neighborhood where I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. My mother would show me the ration books from her childhood growing up in Covington, Kentucky, and how families had to sacrifice while the men were fighting the war. My folks instilled in me the concept of service, patriotism, and education. So, at a very early age, my parents had a big influence on my joining the military.

When I was a kid, I was always outside playing sports, army, or guns. All the kids had toy guns and after watching movies like *None but the Brave*, and *the Sands of Iwo Jima*, we would disappear into the woods fighting the “Japanese” in the jungle for hours until it was time to hike back to our homes for supper. These movies, my dad’s love of military history, and the influence of the veterans who lived in the neighborhood were the primary drivers that paved the way for me to join the Marines. My dad taught me the importance of a good education and a sound work ethic; my mother taught me the value of compassion, and the importance of being honest. All these ideas and values enabled me to successfully lead Marines for 28 years. I owe much of my success in the Marines, and in life, to my parents.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people I wish to thank who made this project possible. First, I would like to thank the eight commandants who graciously gave their time to be interviewed, and the time to review what I captured in their respective sections of the dissertation. Further, I would like to thank the people at the Marine Corps University and the Lejeune Leadership Institute who provided me access to certain interviews on the base in Quantico, and who offered their support throughout the research process. I would not have been able to have accomplished the goals of this study without the training, education, and mentorship from the members of my committee.

First, I would like to thank the four members of my dissertation committee. Dr. Fred Galloway, who was my academic advisor for all five years of my doctoral education at USD, and who served as my dissertation committee chair. Fred was always available, and he always provided great advice on how to approach the project. I'll never forget our conversations while listening to classic rock in his office. Dr. Lea Hubbard was my professor for the advanced qualitative analysis course, which prepared me for the research project. Lea offered sage advice on how to tackle the transcripts, analytical memos, and the jot notes necessary for the data collection phase of the study. Dr. Bob Donmoyer taught me how to write. It was his basic qualitative analysis course where I really started to appreciate and learn the art and science of good writing. Bob also taught me the fine points of how to conduct personal interviews, which came in handy for the interviews with the Commandants of the United States Marine Corps. I would also like to thank Dr. Paolo Tripodi for providing a Marine Corps perspective to the dissertation committee, and for believing in the project. He was a great friend throughout the process. I would also like to thank my fellow students Elissa Haddad, Bharat Mohan, John Hinck, Robert Ehnou, and Beth Garofalo for their assistance and friendship.



Finally, I want to thank my entire family. I could not have finished the program or conducted the research without the support from the love of my life, Sally Cohenour, and my son, Brian. They both made sacrifices while I spent countless hours at the library, or at SOLES in one of the classrooms. I would also like to thank my parents, Dave and Lucy Kerl for their love and support, as well as my siblings, Lisa Ray and Brad Kerl, who all had to put up with my stories about school and my research project.

## PREFACE

Throughout my service in the Marine Corps, both enlisted and officer role models emphasized the importance of integrity and one's character. In fact, most of these Marines suggested that integrity was the most important attribute for a Marine to possess. As a former commanding officer, I made every attempt to focus on the character development of my Marines and to emphasize the Marine Corps' values.

I take great pride in my military service of over 28 years in the Marines. I have had the opportunity to witness good command climates, and I have had to endure poor command climates. The good command climates promoted a positive environment where people were happy and there was solid unit cohesion. The poor climates forced people out of the Marine Corps, and these units experienced numerous disciplinary problems, which degraded unit readiness and mission accomplishment.

Recently, the military has experienced numerous policy changes commensurate with the changes in the society such as women serving in combat arms occupations (e.g., the infantry) and the use of social media. These changes have underscored the importance of a good command climate. A command climate focused on the Marine Corps' Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, and character development. These climates will produce better people who typically make better Marines. Further, the expectations of the American people are extremely high, and it is the responsibility of all Marines, especially the commanders to make every effort to meet the high expectations that Americans have for their Marines.

The impetus for this study was the result of the numerous articles and headlines in the news where Marines had tarnished the image of the Marine Corps due to incidents of misconduct. It was difficult to watch the Commandant of the Marine Corps testify before Congress in response to the social media scandal, “Marines United.” Therefore, based on the number of these incidents in the news coupled with my own personal convictions, I decided to initiate this research project. Also, I decided to leverage the wisdom, experience, and passion for the subject from our former living commandants and the current commandant, as the individuals to study.

Based on the instruction provided to all Marines, and the emphasis on the Marine Corps’ Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, I was curious as to why the Marine Corps continues to have a select few who choose to take the wrong path. A few who can’t comply with the Marine Corps’ high standards. As a former commander, I wondered how the command climate established by the commanding officer influenced the ethical behavior of the Marines. What does the right command climate look like? How does a commander establish the right command climate? These are some of the personal questions that have led me to initiate a study on command climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of the organization.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

For 242 years the United States Marine Corps has succeeded based on its ability to adapt to the changes in the strategic environment, build on its rich heritage, and win on the modern battlefield (Department of the Navy (DON), Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC), 2000, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*). But more than anything else during its history, the Marine Corps has developed leaders who possess the ability to make Marines, trained them to fight and win our nation's battles, and returned quality citizens back to society.

Not surprisingly, the Marine Corps invests heavily in leadership instruction for all its leaders. In doing so, the Marine Corps educates and socializes its commanding officers on the importance of ethical behavior as part of its ethos (DON, HQMC, 2014, *MCWP 6-11, Leading Marines*). For example, the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) teaches multiple courses of ethics instruction and includes ethics material into other aspects of the curriculum (Behn, 2016). Further, the director of the program conducts strategic-level ethical discussions (often with national implications) that regularly include general officers as guest participants.

As a test of the Marine Corps' leadership development process, today's commanding officers are faced with complex problems that have been aggravated by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, strategic uncertainty, societal changes that carry over to the military such as women serving in infantry roles, and the use of social media.

Additionally, perennial problems of human frailty, problems that inevitably are exacerbated by the stressors unique to the military like separation from loved ones and relocation moves must be addressed (DON, HQMC, 2000, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*). The challenges Marine commanding officers face represent both problems that have relatively easy-to-figure-out technical solutions as well as more complex problems for which there are no standardized solutions. Heifetz (1994) calls these complex problems adaptive challenges. Marine commander's deal with a range of adaptive challenges both at home, and abroad highlighting the importance of a command climate focused on ethics.

Ethical climate theory (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988) describes a type of organizational climate that guides employees' ethical decision-making and behavior (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Schminke, Arnaud & Kuenzi, 2007). An ethical climate is defined as "shared perceptions regarding organizational policies, practices, and procedures that emphasize ethical content" (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988, pp. 101-125). Key indicators of an organization with an ethical climate include humility, no tolerance for destructive behaviors (e.g., incivility, aggression, discrimination, or sexual harassment), justice, integrity, trust, a focus on process (how organizations achieve their goals), structural reinforcement (rewards, employee evaluations, and worker decision-making rights), and social responsibility (Johnson, 2015).

An organization with an ethical climate will foster greater creativity, benevolence, and commitment to the organization (Sinah & Cullen, 2012). Further, leaders who establish ethical climates will have organizations with higher morale, lower employee turnover, and positive outcomes based on trust and ethical principles (Sinah & Cullen,



2012). Also, leaders with ethical climates will be more predisposed to ethical decision-making and have a greater awareness of ethical blind spots (careerism, corruption, etc.) that can have a negative impact on organizational climates (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011).

The Marine Corps commonly refers to organizational climate as *command climate* and will be used throughout the dissertation. Both ethics and command climate are important to the Marine Corps Values Program which directs commanders to “Integrate Marine Corps values training into organizational training plans” (DON, HQMC, 1996, *Marine Corps Values Program*, p. 4). Further, an ethical climate supports continuity of the Marine Corps’ core values (honor, courage, and commitment) training and reinforces trust between the leaders and subordinates critical to leading Marines (Katolin, 2016a; McAleer, 2017). In addition, an ethical climate might reduce or mitigate the commanding officer’s number of incidents and problems such as, domestic violence, DUIs, suicides, the inappropriate use of social media, etc., that must be resolved even though resolving such ancillary problems might distract from the work at hand (Katolin, 2016a; Doty & Gelineau, 2008; Weber & Gerde, 2010).

By establishing a command climate that is focused on ethical behavior, the commander empowers Marines to act ethically on their own, thus reducing the number of incidents associated with bad conduct, enabling the commander and his staff to focus on training and combat readiness (Katolin, 2016a; Olsthoorn, 2011). Freedman, (2000) cited retired General Krulak (1995) who said, “The leader, therefore, must clearly demonstrate the true underpinning of his moral authority—his unquestionable character” (p.xii). A

critical component of a climate focused on ethical behavior is the leader, or in this case, the commanding officer (Katolin, 2016b; Johnson, 2013).

The commanding officer, as the senior person leading the organization, is responsible for establishing the right command climate based on non-negotiable values that guide the organization in everything it does (Doty & Gelineau, 2008). The command climate refers to the environment of the organization and is more short-term in nature based on the network of personalities within the organization (Department of Defense (DoD), FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, 1999). One possible explanation for the climate's short-term nature in the Marines is the command rotation policy of the Marine Corps, which has commanding officers changing positions every two years. Further, the command climate can be described as the "feel" of the organization and involves internal aspects of the organization such as attitudes, loyalties, motivations, and perceptions of the members of the organization (Bullis & Reed, 2003). Another critical aspect of an ethical climate as it applies to the military is the ethical leadership demonstrated by the commanding officer.

An ethical climate relies heavily on the ethical influence from the commander (Miller & Poole, 2011; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Katolin, 2016b). Here, the commander's influence centers on integrity, values, and ethics to interact with the stakeholders in the environment (Pfeffer, Salanick & Leblebici, 1976; Heifetz, 1994). Ethical challenges in the military are not a new issue and the Marine Corps has conducted various studies to examine ethical problems.

In 2007, for instance, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) in Quantico, Virginia, convened a Values and Ethics Working Group tasked to

examine new ways to instill the Marine Corps' core values in Marines (Flynn, 2009). Experts in leadership, ethics, mental health, and behavioral science were part of the Marine Corp's process to examine ethical issues. The working group developed and administered two surveys: the first was on the Law of War (LOW) and the second on leadership and ethics.

The LOW survey was developed by Marine Corps lawyers and was administered to 1,600 Marines throughout the Marine Corps with 12 basic questions on LOW and 13 questions rank specific, i.e., corporal, sergeant, captain, etc. (Marine Corps University, Russell Leadership Conference After Action Report, 2008). As a recommendation from the 2007 working group, the survey on leadership and ethics was administered to over 200 Marine Corps enlisted leaders attending the 2008 Russell Leadership Conference in Quantico, Virginia.

In 2008, the leadership and ethics survey was administered to 220 Marine Corps non-commissioned officers (NCOs-corporals and sergeants) convened to discuss the internalization of core values, receive tools and knowledge to reinforce ethics in their units, and to seek lessons learned for training and educating young Marines (Marine Corps University, Russell Leadership Conference After Action Report, 2008). The conference did not focus on commanding officers or on ethical climate.

As a result of the NCO feedback from the conference, the Marine Corps did the following: increased values training from 14 hours to over 40 hours in entry level training for both enlisted members and officers; included values training as part of the 54 hour crucible (grueling culmination of boot camp field skills); added 11 hours of values training to Marine Combat Training (one month of infantry specific training for all

enlisted Marines after boot camp); added parallel training at the Officer Candidate School (OCS- a 10 week screening process for Marine officer candidates), and the Basic School (TBS-six months of OCS follow-on infantry specific training for all officers) emphasizing the role of the officer as a values-based leader and a reinforcer of Marine Corps values (Marine Corps University, Russell Leadership Conference After Action Report, 2008). The after-action report revealed no information that discussed ethical climates in the Marine Corps. It also suggested that commanding officer input was minimal, and the focus was not specifically on ethics education.

In 2009, the LeJeune Leadership Institute (LLI) administered an ethics and leadership survey to Marines that focused on junior enlisted Marines, but not commanding officers, or ethical climate (Flynn, 2009). However, as a result of the previous conferences, the Marine Corps directed commanding officers to reinforce values-based training (VBT) in their units through the Marine Corps' core values sustainment training (case studies, etc.), the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP), and by sending their Marines to Marine Corps professional military education institutions such as the Corporals Course, the Sergeants Course, and the Staff NCO and Advanced Staff NCO Academies, where VBT training is part of the curriculum (Marine Corps University, Russell Leadership Conference After Action, 2008).

In 2013, a joint research project between the LLI and the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Translational Research Group (CAOCL-TRG) conducted a study "Ethics and Marines" (Dr. Tripodi, personal communication, 2016). This study examined leaders' perspectives on ethical failures in the Marine Corps. The study had limited commanding officer participation; did not focus on command climate and how it

influences ethical behavior within Marine Corps units; and was temporarily put on hold (Dr. Tripodi, personal communication, 2016).

Despite all the conferences and positive changes made by the Marine Corps, ethical problems continue to plague Marine commanders as evidenced by the recent social media scandal “Marines United” where nude photographs along with lewd captions of female Marines were posted on social media (McAleer, 2017). Another recent example of poor ethical conduct in the Marine Corps is the incident at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, where a Marine recruit, who committed suicide, was hazed by being placed in a dryer because of his Muslim faith (Harkins & Schogol, 2016). Finally, the Glenn Defense Marine Asia, or “Fat Leonard” scandal has implicated both Navy and Marine leaders for unethical conduct dealing with civilian commercial contracts (San Diego Union Tribune, 2017b). The above examples along with others discussed (and many others not discussed) in the literature review highlight breeches of ethical conduct that could destroy unit cohesion, ruin morale, and degrade the trust of the American people in its Marines (McAleer, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a lack of empirical studies by both researchers and the Marine Corps that have examined the role that command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior of Marines in a Marine Corps command. A search of Lexus Nexus, Ebsco, Google Scholar, and other sources, revealed no studies specifically linking command climate and ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command.

The literature suggests that a gap in knowledge exists largely due to a lack of focus on ethics education relative to ethical climate within military research and the limited range of commanding officers surveyed in the few studies that were conducted. Further, other studies have not looked at the impact or influence of a commanding officer's command climate on ethical behavior from the perspective of the commandants of the Marine Corps. Therefore, a gap in knowledge exists within the Marines' leadership and education development process as it relates to command climate and leadership development.

Along with the gap in the literature and the plethora of recent ethical issues surfacing in the Marine Corps, research suggests that the Marine Corps' ethics instruction may be inadequate in providing commanding officers with the necessary training and education to establish a command climate focused on ethical behavior (Katolin, 2016b; Immel, 2016). According to this literature, the Marine Corps has two different approaches to teaching ethics: one approach is taught to the enlisted members and focused on rules-based ethics and the consequences associated with breaking the rules, while the other approach is taught to the officers and is values-based ethics focused on an individual's character (Rowell IV, 2013).

Rules-based ethics instruction is focused on correct behavior and how to professionally carry out assigned duties and tasks according to the laws and regulations of the organization (Rowell IV, 2013). On the other hand, values-based training (VBT) is focused on character development so that an individual is better equipped to deal with ethical situations (Rowell IV, 2013). Further, values are a key component of ethics defined as "important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture

about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable” (Business Dictionary Online, 2012). The Marine Corps’ core values of honor, courage, and commitment provide the ethical framework for all Marines (Department of the Navy, HQMC, 2014, *MCWP 6-11, Leading Marines*).

However, following the 2008 Russell Leadership Conference, the Marine Corps has introduced more VBT to its enlisted personnel to include a discussion on character with ethical scenarios taught to recruits in boot camp (Core Beliefs Lesson Plan, 2015; Joint Guided Discussion Playbook, 2016). Interestingly, the student handout for the officers suggests that at TBS the focus is on virtues-based ethics training (Ethics I, II, & Combat Ethics Discussion Handout, 2015) providing a different ethics orientation from the ethics instruction received by the troops at boot camp.

Olsthoorn (2011) argues that virtues and values are not the same thing but are treated by the military as if they were. Olsthoorn (2011) argues that virtues are “desirable characteristics of individuals, such as courage,” while values, on the other hand, correspond to the “ideals that the community cherishes, such as freedom (p.6). The literature shows that the Marine Corps does teach ethics to its recruits at boot camp with heavy emphasis on its core values (Introduction to Ethics Lesson Plan, 2016, Joint Guided Discussion Playbook). However, the lesson plans associated with boot camp ethics instruction appear to emphasize rules of conduct, right versus wrong, and the military code of ethics (Introduction to Ethics Lesson Plan, 2016, Joint Guided Discussion Playbook) which appears to have less of a focus on character development. This area will be part of the document review portion conducted during the dissertation field work. However, the focus for this area will be on values-based instruction provided

to the commanding officers at the Lejeune Leadership Institutes' Cornerstone Course, who are preparing to take command of Marine Corps organizations.

Taken together, there is a pressing need for studies that examine the relationship between command climate and its role in influencing ethical behavior within Marine Corps commands as commanders prepare the nation's young men and women to behave ethically on the battlefield and at home (Amos, 2013). As Marine Corps Lieutenant General George Flynn said, "The American public holds high expectations of its Marines, both in combat and at home" (Flynn, 2009, p. 19).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study addressed the gap that currently exists in the literature about the relationship between the role of command climate and its influence on ethical behavior within in a Marine Corps command. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to learn about the relationship of command climate and its role relative to a Marine Corps commanding officer's ability to influence ethical behavior. This study provided an opportunity to examine perspectives from seven of the former living commandants of the Marine Corps, including the current commandant, and other key personnel such as, former commanding officers, and ethics instructors.

Specifically, the study examined key components of the Marine Corps' officer development programs for example, the Senior Service College (SSC, or Marine Corps War College) and the Cornerstone Course taught at the Lejeune Leadership Institute (LLI) for Marine Corps commanding officers. This examination helped to inform the interviews with the commandants to further the understanding on the influence of



command climate relative to ethical behavior within a Marine Corps organization. This study hopes to provide data that will inform the Marine Corps' leadership development program and contribute to further Marine Corps studies in command climate and leadership by building on the work initiated by the Marine Corps' LLI and other Marine Corps training and education initiatives.

### **Research Questions**

The primary research question that guided this study was: What role does command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command? Two other supporting questions helped guide the study:

- How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines?
- How does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE LITERATURE

The goal of this literature review was to examine the existing knowledge on ethics education of senior Marine Corps commanding officer's relative to command climate and its relationship to the ethical behavior of the Marines within the command. The Marine Corps invests heavily in ethics education and teaches command climate and ethics to its commanders, but still has ethical related issues as evidenced by the numerous journal articles coming from Marine Corps leaders writing about military ethics (Katolin, 2016a; 2016b; Keenan, 2017; Horn, 2016; Lenhardt, 2016; Major, 2014; Lieutenants, 6<sup>th</sup> Platoon, Delta Company, 2016). Is this a result of Marine commanders not focusing on ethics within their organizations? Or, is this due to a gap in Marine Corps' ethics pedagogy, or both?

The literature review help to guide the investigation into the connection between a Marine Corps commanding officer's command climate and its ability to influence ethical behavior. The review examined the environment where our commanders operate and where our senior commanders are taught ethics. This review also examined the relevant literature associated with ethical climate and ethical leadership. Although, a limited review of the Marine Corps' ethics pedagogy and the curriculum taught to its senior commanding officers was conducted as part of the document analysis portion of the study.

A commanding officer is "a military officer in charge of a unit, post, camp, base, or station" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2013). The study is important because as commanding officers, men and women in command of Marines have the "unmitigated

personal responsibility and accountability” of the people under their care and might ultimately, give orders that send their Marines into combat (Couch, 2016). As such, the difficult decisions facing commanders in today’s environment require high degrees of maturity, discernment, and prudence to include leading in traditional combat operations, humanitarian assistance, or peacekeeping missions (Freedman, 2000). Often, young Marines will be tasked with making sound moral decisions underscoring the importance of a command climate focused on ethical behavior (Freedman, 2000). Further, the recent wave of military scandals and unethical conduct by senior leaders has brought renewed attention to the role of ethics in military organizations (San Diego Union Tribune, 2017a, 2017b; McAleer, 2017). These issues highlight the advantageous effects of a command climate focused on ethics whose absence may be a contributing factor to breakdowns in behavior and discipline (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Myer, Thoroughgood & Mohammed, 2016; Katolin, 2016a; Rowell IV, 2013; Mayer, 2014).

Three major areas of literature will be discussed-the environment and ethics education, ethical leadership, and ethical climate. Taken together, the literature suggests a gap in knowledge about the role command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines within the command. The review will focus on ethical climate and not culture or ethics associated with combat operations, (e.g., The Law of Armed Conflict).

This review will emphasize the impact of the environment on command climate drawing heavily from the Marine Corps Strategy 21, (2000); Major, (2014); Bullis & Reed, (2013); Weber & Gerde, (2011); and Whiffen, (2007). The review will take an initial look at the status of ethics education for senior military leaders using the literature

from Behn (2016); Rowell IV (2013); Katolin (2016); and Major (2014). Theoretical concepts associated with ethical leadership such as, bounded ethicality, and ethical fading will come primarily from Coleman (2013); Katolin (2016a, 2016b); and Bazerman & Tenbrunsel (2011). This review will also discuss within ethical leadership, various practical applications using current ethical decision-making models such as, Horn's (2016) HERENS model, Kidder's 12 Checkpoints, and Day's SAD model drawing heavily from (Johnson, 2015). A discussion on how these models might integrate into the Marine Corps' ethics education curriculum, and critiques on the models will be included in the review. For the theoretical framework of ethical climate, the review will draw from Erhart, Schneider & Macey, (2014); Victor & Cullen, (1987, 1988); and Martin & Cullen (2006).

This review will begin with a discussion on the complex environment where commanding officers operate, and an initial review of ethics education and how we are preparing senior military commanders to ethically lead in this environment. Next, an overview of the theoretical framework of ethical climate and the definitions of ethical climate focusing on those most relevant to the study will be covered. Then, the literature on ethical leadership to establish its importance relative to a command climate focused on ethical behavior providing the foundation within the organization will be addressed. In this section, the review will cover antecedents of ethical theories leading up to values-based or virtues-based ethics and current literature indicating a potential gap in ethics education in the Marine Corps. Finally, the literature review will cover ethical climate theory, the role of the commander, and the ethical blind spots that may hinder a commander's ability to maintain a command climate focused on ethical behavior. The

various ethical decision-making models designed to assist commanders in avoiding blind spots that contribute to ethical failures will also be discussed.

### **The Environment and Ethics Education**

As cited in Miller & Poole (2011), Ciulla (2003) argues that ethical leadership is critical in dealing with issues involved in winning the trust of the various stakeholders associated with complex challenges. Today's commanding officers are faced with complex problems that have been aggravated by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, force reductions, and strategic uncertainty; societal changes such as the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," and perennial problems of human frailty exacerbated by the stressors unique to the military such as, separation from loved ones and multiple relocation moves (DON, HQMC, 2000, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*; Department of Defense (DoD), United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), 2010, *Joint Operating Environment* (JOE); Rowell IV, 2013; Major, 2014). Recent examples of two ethical scandals are the unethical use of social media in the Marine Corps (San Diego Union Tribune, 2017a; McAleer, 2017) and the Navy scandal associated with Glen Defense Marine Asia business (San Diego Union Tribune, 2017b).

Marine commanders deal with a range of challenges both at home and abroad, highlighting the importance of an ethical climate (Marine Corps Strategy 21, 2000; Major, 2014; Bullis & Reed, 2013; Weber & Gerde, 2011; Cullen, Victor, & Stephens, 2001). Keenan (2017) suggests this environment includes domestic problems at home like suicides, sexual assaults, and substance abuse-underlining the value of an ethical

organizational climate and potential issues associated with the absence of an ethical climate.

Whiffen (2007) argues that the army needs leaders who have “the ability to modify individual and collective actions based on circumstances” (p.93). This correlates with Heifetz and Linsky’s (2002) description of adaptive challenges whereby “Without learning new ways-changing attitudes, values, and behaviors-people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment” (p. 13). These perspectives are relevant today based on how young people use social media and the recent ethical challenges facing military commanders as technology continues to become more sophisticated. The Marine Corps’ current social media scandal exemplifies the commander’s operating environment and underscores the need for commanders to understand how young troops communicate (Katolin, 2016a). These ethical challenges also continue to plague military commanders overseas.

Wong (2004) uses Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as a case study demonstrating the need to develop leaders who can deal with complex challenges. In his work, he acknowledges the need for training that is challenging to develop adaptive leaders who can operate in chaotic, complex, and uncertain environments. Clearly, the above-mentioned scholars’ discussions on the environment suggest the importance of ethical behavior by leaders, and their ability to instill ethical behavior in their subordinates who must operate in extremely challenging environments like Afghanistan.

Miller & Poole (2011) stress the importance of leaders being able to operate outside of their normal habitat, in unfamiliar environments, with unfamiliar stakeholders, which enhance the complexity of the problem. These rapid, dynamic changes associated

with the shifts in societal attitudes coupled with the dynamics of the modern, complex battlefield point to the importance of sound ethical decisions (Wong, 2004; Whiffen, 2007; Miller & Poole, 2011; Heifetz, 1994).

General Martin E. Dempsey, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argues that senior military leaders need strong ethical fiber to assist them in dealing with the complex challenges associated with today's strategic environment (Major, DeRemer & Bolgiano, 2012). Specifically, General Dempsey relates military competence to personal ethics and the importance of dealing with ethical gray zones associated with the challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century security environment (Major, DeRemer & Bolgiano, 2012; Major, 2014; Doty & Doty, 2012).

Kahneman (2011) argues that "intuition cannot be trusted in the absence of stable regularities in the environment" (p.241). Of course, military leaders will experience tough problems in unstable environments (DoD, US JFCOM, 2010, *JOE*), as evidenced by the direction the United States Army provides its leaders on problem framing: identify complex issues, rely on their experience, expertise, and judgment; and apply it to the context of the current situation (Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, *Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership*, 1999). To accomplish what the military requires of its senior leaders and commanding officers; ethics education is valuable for all services' senior leaders and is an integral component of a leader's ability to command military organizations as directed under Title 10 (Major, 2012; Freedman, 2000; U.S. Code, Title 10, 1947).

## **Ethics Education and Development**

In 2012, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, directed a Corps-wide ethical stand-down to address ethical issues in the Marine Corps such as sexual assault, suicide, and ethical related failures in combat (Rowell IV, 2013). Further, in his 2013 White Letter 3-13, General Amos remarked “I have a duty to not only ensure our warfighting readiness is maintained, but to keep the moral and ethical health of our institution front and center” (Amos, 2013, p.1). Numerous authors have suggested one possible way to do what the general advocates is to continue to strengthen ethics education and development programs for our commanding officers and senior leaders (Katolin, 2016a; Behn, 2016; Rowell IV, 2013; Major, 2014). Robinson and colleagues (2008) cited Montor (2001), who said “The aim of ethics education, therefore, is being what many refer to as “character development”, in other words the creation of morally upright persons through the installation of certain key qualities or dispositions of character commonly known as “virtues” (p.1). For senior military leaders and commanders, this is accomplished at the senior service colleges.

The senior service colleges (SSCs or war colleges) teach ethics to military leaders, so they have a predisposition to ethical decision making (Behn, 2016; Rowell IV, 2013; Major, 2014; Major et al., 2012). Currently, the Naval War College (NWC), Air War College (AWC), and the Army War College (USAWC) have an “ethics across the curriculum” approach where ethics instruction is included in a variety of disciplines sending a message to students that ethics plays a role in every aspect of their profession (Behn, 2016).



The Marine Corps War College (MCWAR), teaches a stand-alone block of instruction (16 hours) and ethics is also included in other MCWAR curriculum (Behn, 2016). Unlike some of the other colleges, the Marine Corps and the Navy have a resident “ethics team” for teaching, curriculum, and staff development (Behn, 2016). Further, the MCWAR program conducts “Director Calls” where the director of the college meets with students to discuss strategic-level ethical issues, including discussions with general officers on ethics at the strategic level of war (Behn, 2016). Relative to all the war colleges; scholars and military authors argue that by providing ethics as a stand-alone course in the war college programs, students receive a clear message on the importance of ethics and its significance to commanders (Rowell IV, 2013; Major, 2014; Major, DeRemer, & Bolgiano, 2012; Wortel & Bosch, 2011). However, as previously discussed in the introduction to this review, the military continues to experience ethical failures that must be addressed.

In 2012, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey addressed the faculty and student body at The National Defense University where he said, “For the first time, our competence and character are being evaluated by experts and pundits while we fight...There will be an ever-increasing expectation of servicewomen and men to achieve that intricate balance of high moral character and high competence” (Major, 2014, p.58). In 2014, former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directed the military to increase its “urgency to their drive to ensure moral character and moral courage in a force emerging from a decade of war” (Immel, 2016, p.3). Relative to assessing one’s ethics education, interestingly, Immel (2016) argues the military does not have a “published set of clearly delineated standards against which the ethical behavior of

an individual can be assessed (p.4). However, Immel's (2016) argument fails to account for the military judicial system in place that can punish individuals for poor ethical conduct (e.g., U.S. Code, Title 10, 1947).

The military is governed by the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) which parallels, but does not replace, the laws in the U.S. Constitution (U.S. Code, Title 10, 1947). In addition, commanders are educated on the use of the UCMJ and possess non-judicial punishment (NJP) authority over their personnel enabling them to sanction individuals for minor infractions of the UCMJ (U.S. Code, Title 10, 1947). Further, the Marines have a code of ethics-honor, courage, and commitment, which governs the ethical conduct of all Marines (Krulak, 1996b).

The core values are taught to all Marine Corps personnel as part of ethics instruction however, there appears to be some issues associated with the current approach to ethics instruction in the Marine Corps. For example, Rowell IV (2013), argues that the Marines teach two types of ethics to their personnel: one is rules-based (don't break the rules or else) taught to the troops; the other is values or virtues-based (focused on character development), taught to the officers. Although, the Marine Corps appears to be more focused today on values-based training, which will be covered in greater detail later in the dissertation.

A consensus of scholars argues for a values or virtues-based approach as the baseline for all ethics education in the military (Robinson et al., 2008; Wortel & Bosch, 2011; Katolin, 2016a). One could argue that if the leaders are taught ethics differently than the followers it may cause confusion reinforcing ethical behavior (Katolin, 2016a; Major, DeRemer & Bolgiano, 2012). One critique of ethical theories comes from

Robinson (2007) who argues that some scholars debate the utility of educating the rank-and-file on ethical philosophies that seem impractical or irrelevant to the military commander. He adds that some military leaders debate the value of the philosophical underpinnings associated with the concepts while other scholars argue the legitimate need for some ethical philosophy to be taught to the officers. The lack of standardization between the leaders and the subordinates could impact the leaders' ability to get the troops to think ethically and act autonomously (Robinson, 2007). This idea is important as Behn (2016) wrote, "War college graduates play an essential role in establishing an ethical climate across the joint force and in maintaining trust between the military and the American public" (p.18).

### **Summary of the Section**

Today's military commanders are facing a dynamic and complex environment. Commanders must be able to adapt to the changing environment to effectively lead others. This environment consists of challenges both at home and abroad. These complex challenges highlight the importance of ethical leadership and command climate. The literature suggests that military training and education organizations may need to consider putting a greater emphasis on ethics and the importance of ethical command climates as part of our senior leader education and development programs.

In 2012, the Marines conducted a Corps-wide ethical stand down due to a rash of misconduct incidents. The former commandant, General James Amos remarked that "the moral and ethical health of the Corps must be front and center" (Amos, 2013a, p.1). The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Martin Dempsey also

recognized the criticality of ethics education for the services' senior leaders. A perfect location to refine ethics education for senior leaders is the senior service colleges. Each of the services teach ethics to senior leaders. There are however, differences in the Marine Corps' pedagogy taught to the leaders (values or virtues-based) and the pedagogy taught to the troops (rules-based). An ethical climate may help the commander to address this issue. Before covering ethical leadership and ethical climate, the theoretical framework and relative definitions of ethical climate must first be established.

### **Theoretical Framework and Ethical Climate Definitions**

Electronic databases like Ebsco, Google Scholar, Lexus Nexus, ProQuest, and the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions for example, yielded numerous citations from the literature. After a two-stage application of inclusion and exclusion criteria using key words like ethical leadership, ethical decision making, and ethical climate, 42 full-text articles were found to be germane and included in the review. Interestingly, no specific studies were found correlating the command climate established by a Marine Corps commanding officer and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines within the command.

The two types of ethical climate research that help define and frame the concept of ethical climate are the generic or molar approach, and the focused or strategic approach (Ehrhart et al., 2014). While the molar field is concerned with capturing the overall sense of employee's experiences at work, the focused approach concentrates on a specific issue or outcome (Ehrhart et al., 2014). Research in molar climate examines and accounts for the total meaning of the organization to the employees (Ehrhart et al., 2014).

The focused climate research field is concerned with the alignment of policies, practices, and procedures that focus on a specific organizational issue (e.g., ethics) or outcome (e.g. safety) (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). Kuenzi & Schminke, (2009) categorize focused climates into four categories: behavioral guidance, (e.g., justice, and ethics); involvement, (e.g., participation, and support); development, (e.g., innovation and creativity); and core operations, (e.g., safety and service) (Ehrhart et al., 2014). An ethical climate is a focused climate but is also linked to employee perceptions about “the alignment of various aspects of an organization’s policies, procedures, and rewards that sends a consistent message to the employees about what is valued in the organization” (Ehrhart et al., 2014, pp.85-90; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Focused climates can be further divided into strategic climates and process climates (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2011a, 2011b; Ehrhart et al., 2014).

A climate is considered strategic when environmental influences drive a specific strategic outcome that can be tested by external standards, (e.g., a service, or safety climate) (Ehrhart et al., 2014). In contrast, a process climate focuses on “internal processes that occur in organizations as part of daily organizational functioning such as, a procedural justice climate, or an ethical climate” (Ehrhart et al., 2014, p.87). Although scholars appear to treat each of the two types of climates, molar and focused, as separate (Ehrhart et al., 2014); process climates act as mediators in producing strategic outcomes. For example, process climates can provide a receptive foundation whereby employees feel the environment is ethical and fair making them more receptive to management’s strategic goals for employee effort and behavior (Ehrhart et al., 2014).

## Definitions

Scholars agree that process climates such as ethics, have a significant impact on the workers' viewpoints on the overall well-being of the generic or molar climate (Ehrhart et al., 2014). This helps lay the groundwork for more strategic climates that become specific predictors of organizational outcomes, (i.e., ethical behavior) (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2011a; Keunzi & Schminke, 2009). In the mid part of the last century, ethical work climate (EWC) was seen in two lights; foremost, EWC was defined as what is ethically correct in relation to moral obligations in organizations (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988). A second definition gained greater relevance in both organizational and military settings (Weber & Gerde, 2010). In their work, Victor & Cullen, (1987, 1988) defined ethical climate as “shared perceptions regarding organizational policies, practices, and procedures that emphasize ethical content” (pp.101-125). This definition includes the individual, the organization, and the policies, practices, and procedures that commanding officers are sworn to carry out (DON, HQMC, 1982, *The Marine Corps Manual*).

Ethical climates set conditions for appropriate ethical behavior, and positive outcomes are created from ethical practices such as integrity, trust, justice, and social responsibility (Barnes & Doty, 2010; Scminke, Arnaud, & Kuenzi, 2007; Johnson, 2015). Schminke et al., (2007) suggest that ethical characteristics of the internal environment affect “how things are done around here” (p.175). Johnson (2015) would agree with Schminke et al. (2007) with his definition: “Ethical climate, in turn, determines what members believe is right or wrong and shapes their ethical decision making and behavior” (p.321).

Weber & Gerde (2010) explored EWC in the military and defined it as: “a component of an organization’s culture that influences a member’s ability to recognize a problem, make a decision, and determine how to act appropriately” (p.595). Two decades earlier, Victor & Cullen (1987, 1988) as cited in Weber & Gerde (2010), defined EWC as: “the perceived prescriptions, proscriptions, and permissions regarding moral obligations in organizations” (p. 595). This added to their earlier definition that focused on “the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled” (Victor & Cullen, 1987, p.52).

Martin & Cullen (2006) defined ethical climate as “the perception of what constitutes right behavior, and thus becomes a psychological mechanism through which ethical issues are managed” (p.177). This definition is similar to Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith (2004), who wrote, “the values of the organization, its leaders, and its members play important roles in shaping the organization’s climate regarding ethics” (p.226). In his White Letter 3-13, former Marine Corps Commandant, General Amos (2013a) wrote, “leaders at every level are responsible to create an environment and command climate in which every Marine is treated with dignity and respect; one which enables Marines to trust their command to...take appropriate action” (p.2).

### **Summary of Section**

Ethical climates involve employee shared meaning, experiences, and expectations of behavior; the environment; the role of leadership; and desired organizational outcomes. Further, ethical climates are focused, process-oriented climates that can have a significant impact on the overall well-being of the organization. An ethical climate can

establish the foundation for other strategic climates while facilitating leadership goals, employee objectives and organizational outcomes. The ethical climate within an organization shapes employee behavior, influences ethical decision making, and provides employees with a perception of what “right” behavior is supposed to look like in the organization. The leader’s values and the values of the organization, and its members are instrumental to the leader’s ability to develop an ethical climate. As Montor (2001) suggests, military personnel depend on competent leaders who will exercise sound judgment when leading them; these men and women deserve to be led by officers who are ethical.

### **Ethical Leadership**

Johnson (2015) cites Brown and Trevino (2006) who defined ethical leadership as: “a two-part process involving personal moral behavior and moral influence” (p.xxi). Johnson (2015) argues that various philosophers make the distinction between *ethics* as the study between right and wrong, and *morals*, which are described as standards of right and wrong. Both components are critical to ethical leadership, as the leader must make good choices and exhibit certain character traits like integrity, compassion, and justice to influence subordinates to act ethically (Johnson, 2015). Military ethical leaders are professionals and as such, they place the greatest value on their service to society and adherence to professional ethics above compensation (Lucas, 2015). The professional ethic (laws, values, beliefs) provides a set of standards that individual members must uphold to maintain the trust of the society they serve (Lucas, 2015). Ethical leadership is



critical if commanding officers are to establish and maintain a command climate focused on ethical behavior.

Brown, Harrison, and Trevino (2005) as cited in Schaubroeck, Hannah, Avolio, Kozlowski, Lord, Trevino, Dimotakis, and Peng (2012), defined ethical leadership as: “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal action and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making” (p. 1057). An ethical climate relies heavily on the influence from the commander. The two-way communication between the commander and the followers is critical in what is perceived as ethically correct by the followers. Schaubroeck et al., (2012) argue that ethical leaders at the highest levels have an ethical influence on the cognitions and behavior of lower-level leaders. Schaubroeck et al., (2012) illustrate this point with their study results.

Schaubroeck, et al., (2012) were hired by the U.S. Army to conduct a study of soldiers deployed to Iraq in 2009, evaluating ethical conduct among other areas. Surveys were administered through army chaplains and the Inspector General’s office to more than 2,500 randomly selected soldiers. Survey results revealed that the effects of ethical conduct and shared ethical understandings at the highest levels influenced the leadership and shared ethical understandings at the lower-leadership levels (Schaubroeck, et al., 2012). Their study also examined various “embedding mechanisms” discussed by Schein (2010) such as, paying attention to measuring, and controlling followers’ behavior, and the mechanisms of coaching and role modeling designed to instill ethical behavior in the followers (Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) suggests other

embedding mechanisms such as the allocation of rewards and status, resource allocation, and promotions as aspects of ethical leadership.

Haslam, Reicher, & Platow (2011) emphasize the moral aspect of ethical leadership and include in their definition of ethical leadership the importance of effectiveness and the value of orienting groups toward goals that are morally and socially responsible. In addition to these embedding mechanisms and emphasis on morals, ethical leadership requires integrity (Montor, 2001).

Ciulla, and Forsyth (2011) wrote, “A successful leader is someone who not only does the right thing but also does so in the right way and for the right reasons” (p.239). Further, Ciulla and Forsyth (2011) emphasized integrity, character, and ethical behavior as critical aspects of a leader’s responsibility. These traits and characteristics are important if leaders are to establish and maintain an ethical climate.

Relative to leadership and ethical climate, Kirkpatrick & Lock (1991) studied key leadership traits or factors that leaders require to be effective, including honesty and integrity. On a global scale, researchers such as Miller & Poole, (2011); Pfeffer, Salanick, & Leblebici, (1976); and Heifetz, (1994), discuss the importance of integrity, values, and ethics to deal with stakeholders in an uncertain environment. Additionally, many theoretical perspectives have been used to examine leadership ethics but not all of them compliment military leadership such as: consequentialism, which suggests the only ethically important consideration is that each person should act to ensure the best consequences for everyone (Hinman, 2013; Vaughn, 2013; Johnson, 2015); utilitarianism, which believes that maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain is the ultimate end state for the best possible consequence (Coleman, 2013; Hinman, 2013;

Vaughn, 2013; Johnson, 2015); and deontology, as professed by Kant and his “Categorical Imperative,” who argued that people should always do what is right regardless of the circumstances (Coleman, 2013; Hinman, 2013; Vaughn, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Marino, 2010; Ficarrotta, 2010). Critiques on these three theories suggest that neither of these three works well with the military.

For example, Vaughn (2013) criticizes consequentialism as an impractical theory that contradicts human nature. In his critique, he argues that a person could always do more to do the most good for the greatest amount of people; an example might be more community service instead of playing video games. Regarding utilitarianism, Coleman (2013) suggests that it seems to contradict human nature when a person for example, prioritizes the needs of strangers over the needs of one’s family. Finally, Coleman (2013), Johnson (2015), and Vaughn (2013) criticize Kant’s theory as impractical for every possible scenario such as, lying to protect a friend, or killing an enemy soldier in war. These examples seem to contradict Kant’s universal, categorically binding moral norms, where duty-based ethics guide individuals to follow moral rules against their natural inclinations (Olsthoorn, 2011). These theories have led to the development of another theory, values, or virtue-based ethics, where character is the central part of the theory and is more applicable to military leadership (Hipple & Olsen, 2010).

### **Values, or Virtues-Based Ethics**

Virtues-based ethics has wide-appeal based on its flexibility and adaptability to many different situations conducive to military operations (Coleman, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Hinman, 2013; Vaughn, 2013). The theory can be generalized through a moral

agent such as Aristotle, Jesus, or George Washington (i.e., when a person is in a moral dilemma, they can ask themselves “what would Washington do in this situation?”) (Coleman, 2011, p. 25).

The virtue theory works well for military leaders based on its simple applicability when leaders are faced with complex ethical dilemmas; for example, a Marine in Vietnam who refrains from harming an innocent civilian who lives in a village where enemy guerrilla fighters (Vietcong) just killed his best friend (Coleman, 2011). Although the theory of virtue ethics suggests many benefits, it has been criticized for its complexity with duty-bound decisions.

One of the shortcomings of virtues-based ethics is that it rarely includes the clear principle of duty, like deontology, and it does not provide clear guidelines for practitioners (Vaughn, 2013). Further, Vaughn (2013) argues that a person may be able to possess all the proper virtues, but he may not be able to determine right from wrong actions. Lucas (2015) would agree as he argues that the problem is how virtuous people sometimes behave. For example, a physician who is virtuous but is unsure if stem cell research should continue or be stopped, or the physician who considers assisting a terminally-ill patient to end their life.

Robinson, De Lee, & Carrick (2008) argue that a values-based approach to ethics is one that consists of virtues representing good characteristics in people like integrity, and values representing the community such as liberty. Marino (2010) argues that virtue ethics theories show an action to be right if, and only if, it is what a moral agent with a virtuous character would do under the circumstances. Cameron (2011) argues that responsible leadership is when leadership is oriented toward being good and doing well.

Virtuousness can act as a possible universal standard for what is right, correct, or good (Maak & Pless, 2007).

Both Eastern and Western scholars believe that values or virtues-based ethics will become even more important in the future for leaders who must deal with ethical challenges and ethical decision-making (Miller & Poole, 2011; Bryman, et al., 2011; Johnson, 2015).

Rowell IV (2013) argues that there are problems associated with how ethics is taught in the Marine Corps in that the Marine Corps is teaching its officers differently than its enlisted personnel due to a virtues-based focus for the officers and a rules-based approach for the enlisted Marines (not officers-privates, corporals, sergeants, etc.). The difference is that the latter approach focuses on avoiding breaking the rules, and the former approach is focused on developing one's character (Rowell IV, 2013). Schminke et al., (2007) argue that rules-based ethics programs are not as effective as values or virtues-based programs since the virtues-based programs empower individuals to recognize ethical issues and to care about ethics and shared values through consistent actions. Values or virtues-based ethics continue to be the preferred pedagogical approach to ethics education according to many scholars (Schminke et al., 2007; Robinson, DeLee, & Carrick, 2008; Wortel & Bosch, 2011).

Wortel & Bosch (2011) conducted a study on ethics education at the Netherlands Defense Academy using Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) from each service over the course of nine days of instruction. During this "train the trainer course" the NCOs received instruction and practical application on strengthening moral competence and the underlying principles of virtue ethics (Wortel & Bosch, 2011). The study focused on the

NCOs as key personnel in the moral development of the soldiers. The training was structured to focus on virtue ethics, the Socratic Method, and the process of “living learning” (i.e., thinking, feeling, and acting relative to moral competence). The study revealed positive evaluations from the participants after examining six courses where character development and moral competence was the focus of the training (Wortel & Bosch, 2011).

Relative to the differences associated with a values or virtues-based approach over a rules-based approach, Katolin (2016a) wrote, “Since there is no institutional approach for teaching ethics, many people avoid the subject with their Marines because they have not been formally educated on the subject or empowered with techniques on how to develop others to be more ethical” (p.53). Conversely, Robinson (2007) suggests that ethics education should not be “top-down driven” which contradicts Katolin’s (2016a) view emphasizing heavy guidance from the commander. Although various scholars have different views on the approach to values or virtues-based ethics, many agree with the general concept (Robinson, 2007; Katolin, 2016b; Wortel & Bosch, 2011).

In contrast to Katolin (2016a, 2016b), Behn (2016) discusses the Marine Corp’s approach to teaching ethics at the war college in Quantico, Virginia where the Marine Corps educates and socializes commanding officers on the importance of ethical behavior as part of its leadership curriculum (MCWP 6-11, *Leading Marines*, 2014; Behn, 2016). The Marine Corps Manual states that Marine Corps leadership qualities include “personal adherence to high standards of conduct and the guidance of subordinates toward wholesomeness of mind and body” (*Marine Corps Manual*, 1982, pp. 1-21). Clearly, the

Marine Corps is concerned about ethical development of not only its commanders, but of all Marines as evidenced by studies conducted by the Marine Corps on ethics.

An example of this concern was evidenced in 2007 and 2008 when, the Marine Corps' LeJeune Leadership Institute (LLI) administered an ethics and leadership survey that focused on junior Marines (Flynn, 2009) and over 200 Marine Corps NCOs (Marine Corps University, Russell Leadership Conference After Action Report, 2008). Another example was in 2013 when, a joint research project between the LLI and the Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's Translational Research Group (CAOCL-TRG) examined leaders' perspectives on ethical failures in the Marine Corps; however, results were not disclosed pending completion of the project (P. Tripodi, personal communication, 2016). Of the Marines interviewed, three quarters were officers however, not all were commanding officers. Additionally, no commanding officers were surveyed in the 2007 and 2008 studies, and as a result, provided limited insight into the connection between ethics education and the commanding officer's approach to an ethical climate highlighting a potential gap in the literature.

Marine commanders should consider an ethical command climate to better accomplish their mission and to meet the expectations of the American people (Flynn, 2009). Although Katolin (2016a) argues that the Marine Corps has work to do in ethics education, most would agree with him that it is the responsibility of the leader to ensure the subordinates are behaving in an ethical manner (Major, DeRemer, & Bolgiano, 2012). Katolin (2016b) also argues that leaders must train and educate Marines on the value of ethics in all aspects of their profession. Lenhardt (2016) adds that good leaders mentor their Marines continuously by reinforcing ethical and moral essentials. Also, military

scholars suggest that reinforcing ethics education is critical to maintaining an ethical climate (Katolin, 2016a; Lenhardt, 2016; Hipple & Olson, 2010).

Recently, the Marine Corps conducted a survey of 82 Marine Corps junior officers in the Washington, D.C. area who ranked ethical skills as the second most important skill set behind (interpersonal skills) as most pertinent to their ability to lead others (Bailey, 2016). Further, integral to ethical leadership is trust and as a group of Marine Corps lieutenants wrote, “The American people deserve to know that they can always trust the Marines” (6<sup>th</sup> Platoon, Delta Company, The Basic School, 2016). Therefore, it is logical to assume that ethical leaders must establish trust if they want to build unit cohesion (Katolin, 2016b).

Katolin (2016b) wrote “Ethics is the foundation of facilitating trust” (p.44). Miller & Poole (2011) noted a leader must have integrity; they cited Ciulla (2011) who wrote, “The consensus of modern scholarship on leadership ethics is that integrity, character, and ethics are not just important, but they constitute the core of leadership responsibility” (p.209).

An integral part of ethics, Montor (2001) highlights the importance of trust and argues “the foundation for trust is being honest and telling the truth” (p.7). Johnson (2015) wrote “Leaders are key to the development of organizational trust” (p.337). Kirkpatrick & Lock’s (1991) work illustrates key leadership traits or factors that leaders require to be effective with one of these traits being honesty and integrity. Other scholars discuss the importance of integrity, values, and ethics to deal with stakeholders and an uncertain environment (Pfeffer et al., 1976; Heifetz, 1994; Cameron, 2011; Montor, 2001). Relative to trust, General Charles Krulak, former commandant of the Marine



Corps said, “leadership is fundamentally a reflection of an individual’s values, education, training, and experience...It is above all else a product of character” (Freedman, 2000, p.xiii).

Montor (2001), argues the relevance of ethics to the military officer by stating that “When an officer acts unethically, it may cast doubt on the integrity of the officer corps and the military in general, raising doubts, perhaps serious doubts, about the quality of the U.S. military in the eyes of citizens, voters, and taxpayers who support it” (p.3).

### **Summary of Section**

Ethical leadership involves personal moral behavior and moral influence. Leaders are responsible for demonstrating appropriate conduct through their actions, and behavior. Ethical leaders demonstrate the highest standards of integrity, morality, and justice, and expect the same from subordinates. Higher level leaders influence lower level leaders through various embedding mechanisms including coaching, mentoring, and role modeling to instill ethical behavior in junior leaders. The notions of integrity, character, and ethics constitute the core of ethical leadership.

Utilitarianism as an ethical theory that purports the maximum good for the most people has been criticized for its lack of flexibility and practicality. Values or virtues-based ethics, however, as a theory focused on doing what is right, correct, and good is more flexible for the practitioner. Values or virtues-based ethics accommodates many different ethical dilemmas facing the military leader, but, does not offer a clear principle of duty or specific guidelines for ethical leaders.

The literature suggests the Marine Corps teaches two different types of ethics: rules-based and values-based ethics. Additionally, there has been literature written in the Marine Corps' professional journal, the *Marine Corps Gazette*, suggesting the need for more values-based ethics training and education. However, the Marine Corps recognizes the importance of ethical leadership and good character to uphold the expectations of the American people. Marine Corps Lieutenant General George Flynn (2009), wrote, "The American public holds high expectations of its Marines, both in combat and at home" (pp.16-19) thus, underscoring the importance of an ethical climate.

### **Ethical Climate**

Ethical climate theory (ECT) was developed by Victor & Cullen (1987, 1988) as cited in Martin and Cullen (2006) and Sinha and Cullen (2012). ECT is a type of climate that deals with organizational policies, practices, and procedures with moral consequences (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2010; Schminke, Arnaud, & Kuenzi, 2007). Ethical climate is a subset of organizational climate and can be defined as "the perception of what constitutes right behavior, and thus becomes a psychological mechanism through which ethical issues are managed" (Martin & Cullen, 2006, p.177; Sinha & Cullen, 2012, p.21; Mayer et al., 2011, pp.8-10). Ethical climate guides employees' ethical decision- making and behavior (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Schminke et al., 2007). ECT has both a sociological and ethical philosophical underpinning (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988).

Victor & Cullen (1987, 1988) included three dimensions of ethical philosophy in their theoretical strata: egoism, benevolence, and principle as cited in Sinha and Cullen

(2012) and Weber and Gerde (2010). Egoism points to self-interest; benevolence like utilitarianism, tries to produce the “greatest good for the greatest number of people”, and principle like deontology, guides decisions based on rules, codes, procedures, and laws (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). These three areas constitute the ethical philosophy of the ECT framework. The sociological dimension of the theory consists of three loci: individual, local, and cosmopolitan, which focus on the consequences to the self (egoism), on the consequences to others (benevolence), and to the application of standards (principle) (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2011).

“The sociological component of the theory guides the individuals’ decision-making based on their own personal beliefs and values, the values of the organization, and the values of the society external to the organization” (Sinha & Cullen, 2012, p.21; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). The sociological component of the theory “parallels Lawrence Kohlberg’s three sociomoral perspectives—preconventional (individual), conventional (organization or work-group), and postconventional (beyond society)” (Weber & Gerde, 2010, p.596). The intersection of these theoretical dimensions (ethical philosophical and sociological) produces nine different ethical climate types (self-interest; company profit; efficiency; friendship; team interest; social responsibility; personal morality; company rules and procedures; and laws and professional codes) (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). However, empirically, there are five types of ethical climates that occur most often: instrumental, caring, independence, law and code, and rules (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). The data discussed in chapter four

of this study will assist leaders on how to promote benevolent and principled climates while discouraging egoistic and other negative climates.

The five ethical climate types are derived from the nine theoretical climate types overlapping multiple loci; for example, an instrumental climate is associated with both the ethical theory of egoism and the individual and local locus of analysis (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). The ethical climate of caring overlaps with benevolence, individual, and local loci of analysis, where employee perceptions drive them to make decisions based on concern for others (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). Independent ethical climates are associated with the ethical theory of principle, and its relationship to the individual locus of analysis. This analysis is where workers believe they can act on personal beliefs and convictions to guide them in ethical decision-making (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010). The rules ethical climate (company rules and procedures) falls within the intersection of principle and local areas of analysis, and guides employees' ethical decisions based on a strong set of local rules or regulations such as a code of conduct. Finally, the law and code ethical climate correlate to principle, and the cosmopolitan loci of analysis with principled decisions based on codes, laws, and other external professional codes of conduct, (e.g., the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)-the military judicial system) (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010).

To examine the effects of these types of ethical climates, Martin & Cullen (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of the ECT theoretical strata with findings for researchers interested in the field. Using the ethical climate questionnaire (ECQ) developed by

Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) to measure perceptions of ethical climates, Martin & Cullen (2006) compiled a meta-analysis of 42 studies containing 44 independent samples. The results of their study concluded that: caring climates had a positive effect on employees, and instrumental climates had a negative impact on outcomes. Further, externally based rules and codes were positively associated with ethical climate, but internally imposed rules had a negative impact on outcomes (Martin & Cullen, 2006). When rules climates are perceived, they act as effective control mechanisms but do not produce attachment to the organization; however, when employees feel valued they become more loyal and trustworthy to the organization (Martin & Cullen, 2006).

One critique of the literature comes from Sinha & Cullen (2012), who reviewed over 35 studies by numerous scholars examining the effects of an ethical climate on job satisfaction; organizational commitment and turnover; ethical behavior; and dysfunctional behavior. They offer extensive critiques of the ECT literature based on the instrument used to survey participants the ECQ, and the fact that the studies were focused primarily on traditional organizational outcomes (Sinha & Cullen, 2012).

One of the first inconsistencies in the literature according to Sinha & Cullen (2012) is the way that ethical climate has been measured. Some scholars have used the 26-item ECQ as developed by Victor & Cullen (1987, 1988). Cullen, Victor, & Bronson (1993); Deshpande, (1996a, 1996b); Deshpande et al., (2000, 2011); Joseph & Deshpande (1997) as cited in Sinha & Cullen (2012), argue that other scholars have altered the length of the ECQ, or they have changed the scale of the ECQ to measure ethical climate types. Sinha & Cullen (2012) argue that the inconsistencies in measuring ethical climates has created difficulties comparing the results of the various studies. In

addition to the issues associated with measuring ethical climate, Sinha & Cullen (2012) discovered that most of the literature on ECT has not established consistent criteria to establish ethical climates.

The preponderance of the evidence from studies examining traditional organizational outcomes (e.g., commitment to the organization, and turnover intentions) has revealed that egoistic climates have negative outcomes, while benevolent and principled climates have positive outcomes (Sinha & Cullen, 2012). Other examples include rules climate, which could result in creativity constraints for employees, and benevolent climates that prevent leaders from making hard choices (Sinha & Cullen, 2012).

Weber & Gerde (2010) examined over a one-year period, ten military workgroups with 218 participants from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force using the ECQ, as developed by Victor & Cullen (1987, 1988). The study explored the extent to which a military member's organizational environment influences the member's ethical decision making. Weber & Gerde (2010) discovered that workgroups with a higher percentage of risk of mission failure were more prone to instrumental and caring climates. Weber & Gerde (2010) also found the greater the perceived threat to the small group the more egoistical reasoning was employed and that the greater the level of perceived environmental uncertainty, the more likely the group had an instrumental or caring climate. Their research also mentioned that in a 2006-2007 survey administered to military personnel serving in a combat zone, forty percent stated they would not report a colleague for committing a war crime. Further, forty percent were reluctant to report someone for a war crime, and that unethical behavior is a significant concern of military

leaders (Weber & Gerde, 2012). One finding remained constant from researchers on ethical climate, the importance of the leader in establishing the ethical climate (Sinha & Cullen, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Weber & Gerde, 2010; Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbuam, 2011).

### **The Role of the Commander**

The commanding officer is responsible for establishing the right command climate based on non-negotiable values that guide the organization in everything it does (Doty & Gelineau, 2008). Title 10, of the U.S. Code, section 5947 directs commanding officers to possess exemplary conduct, and charges them to instill the same in their subordinates (U.S. Code, Title 10, 1947). Scholars argue that the leader is responsible for developing subordinates mentally and physically, but also establishing policies and practices that create an ethical climate (Lenhardt, 2016; Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004; Allen, 2015). Katolin (2016b) wrote, “Leaders must strive to train and educate Marines on the value of ethics in maneuver warfare and the importance of being an ethical warrior” (p.46). A commanding officers’ ability to establish climate is traced back to his or her character, abilities, and actions, which include ethical behavior (Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, *Field Manual Army Leadership*, 1999). In summary, the commanding officer sets the tone for the ethical climate of the organization.

The climate refers to the environment of the organization, and it is more short term in nature based on the network of personalities within the organization (Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, *Field Manual Army Leadership*, 1999).

One example is the rotation policy of military commanding officers, who typically change position (command) every two years. This policy could potentially have negative implications for units trying to establish and maintain ethical climates based on the personalities and the priorities of the commanding officers (B. Kerl personal interviews, Dec 2016). Marine commanders are responsible for training their personnel, establishing an ethical climate, and developing ethical subordinates (Katolin, 2016a).

Ethics and command climate are important to the Marine Corps Values Program, which directs commanders to “integrate Marine Corps Values training into organizational training plans” (Krulak, 1996b, p. 4). Doty & Gelineau (2008) wrote, “The commander can set a climate that fosters open and honest communication-both up and down the chain of command” (p. 24). It is open communication that plays a significant role in trust among subordinates, and in the perceptions of the members on what is perceived as good ethical behavior (B. Kerl personal interviews, Dec 2016).

### **Ethical Blind Spots**

Even when commanders attempt to establish ethical climates and make the best decisions possible, ethical blind spots can interfere with ethical choices (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Bazerman & Tenbrunsel (2011) argue that leaders have ethical blind spots and the need to overcome unconscious distortions that cause people to participate in or sanction behaviors they would normally condemn. Commanders must be aware of ethical blind spots which can be thought of as-the gap between who we want to be and who we are (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Johnson (2015) argues that blind spots are due to our “own inherent goodness that may blind us to potential conflicts of interests



that can undermine our objectivity and tempt us to make selfish choices” (p.196). Allen (2015) argues that blind spots can occur based on the following: pressure to meet objectives and deadlines; careerism; protection of livelihood; organizations with low morale; and ignoring unethical acts (p.74).

Bazerman & Tenbrunsel (2011) argue the concept of “bounded ethicality” where good people participate in unethical activity that contradicts their own personal beliefs (p.5). Bounded ethicality occurs when individuals make poor ethical decisions that harm other people and are inconsistent with their beliefs and preferences (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). At times, military personnel depart from their core values and make poor ethical decisions. This theory is called ethical fading (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011).

Ethical fading is a process that removes ethical dimensions from the decision-making process (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011; Johnson, 2015; Schminke, Arnaud, & Kuenzi, 2007). Research in behavioral ethics reveals that people behave differently when confronted with an ethical dilemma and the “want self” dominates over the “should self” (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Here, the person’s behavior is driven by desires, and emotions, while ethical motivations and principles begin to fade, (i.e., ethical fading), and are in conflict at the point of decision (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011, pp.66-70). This theory involves three perspectives: prediction (forecasting errors), decision time (ethical fading, visceral responses), and recollection (memory revisionism, shifting standards) (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Commanders may realize greater chances for successfully establishing an ethical climate when they are knowledgeable of this phenomenon.

Ethical fading may be a key factor behind the reason people act differently than what they predicted. Ethical scholars believe that moral awareness prompts moral behavior, however for some people at the time of decision, ethical fading occurs, and the ethical dimension of the decision fades away from the person's view (Bazerman & Tunbrunsel, 2011). One example of this is the space shuttle Challenger, where business concerns for a delayed or postponed launch dominated the ethical consideration of crew safety (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). For commanders to account for ethical blind spots, scholars argue that ethics must be included in the decision- making process (Horn, 2016; Johnson, 2015).

### **Ethical Decision Models**

Horn (2016) wrote, "Leaders must learn and implement a tool to consider ethics in every decision they make, no matter how quickly it must be made" (p.39). Horn (2016) argues that the Marine Corps needs to incorporate ethics directly into its planning process by adding another step to the Marine Corps planning process designed to check the ethicality of the decision. Horn (2016) developed a planning acronym called "HERENS" which stands for: Higher's mission, Emotion, Readiness, Ethicality, Necessity, and Stress (p.38). The connection to the education process is the Marine Corps' curriculum on core values (ethics) and the planning process curriculum (DON, HQMC, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) Marine Corps Planning Process*, 2017).

As cited in Johnson (2015), one approach to moral reasoning is provided by ethicist Rushworth Kidder who developed nine steps to resolve ethical issues. Kidder's

model provides nine steps designed to help the leader solve ethical issues as follows: recognize the problem; determine the actor; gather the facts; test for right-versus-wrong; test for right-versus-right, (e.g., truth versus loyalty); apply ethical standards and perspectives to the decision; look for a third way; decide; and revisit and reflect on the decision (Johnson, 2015, pp.203-204). Two steps in this model can be linked to Marine Corps ethics curriculum through the concept of right-versus-wrong, and ethical decision making, which includes moral courage as taught within the Marine Corps' core values curriculum, which dictates that Marines never lie, cheat, or steel (Krulak, 1996b). One criticism of Kidder's model is that it is getting more difficult in an interdependent world to determine who is ultimately responsible for the problem, and that leaders may not have time to gather the facts (Johnson, 2015).

As cited in Johnson (2015), Day's SAD model builds critical thinking into moral reasoning. In Day's SAD model, he argues critical thinking is a rational approach to decision making (Johnson, 2015), and suggests the process begins with careful analysis and evaluation of the subject being evaluated (situation definition). The process then identifies the issues and assumptions (analysis of the situation), followed by the identification of possible (ethical) alternatives to the solution (decision) (Johnson, 2015, p.205). Day's moral reasoning process recommends decision makers define the situation by describing the facts, identifying the principles and values, and framing the ethical issue or question (Johnson, 2015). Another part of this analysis process is a consideration for other moral theories such as Kant's categorical imperative, where the decision should be applicable to everyone or no one (Johnson, 2015).

One critique of Day's theory is that consensus may be difficult to reach. For example, mandatory flu shot vaccinations may be morally justified, but others may place a higher value on personal freedom than on not receiving the vaccine (Johnson, 2015). This theory correlates with Marine Corps' ethics education and aspects of the Marine Corps' core values and deliberate planning instruction such as, the process for analyzing the situation and decision making. The ethical component would need to be added to the Marine Corps planning process (Horn, 2016).

### **Summary of Section**

Ethical climate theory (ECT) was developed by Victor & Cullen (1987) and is a sub-set of organizational climates focused on employee perceptions of what constitutes correct ethical behavior. An ethical climate acts as the mechanism for the leader that manages ethical issues. The ECT includes both ethical philosophy (egoism, benevolence, and principle) and sociological dimensions consisting of three loci (individual, local, and cosmopolitan). When the three aspects of each area of the strata intersect, they form nine different ethical climate types with five that are the most common (instrumental, caring, independence, law and code, and rules). The leader establishes the ethical climate which influences subordinate behavior.

When leaders establish ethical climates based on a values-based ethical program they have positive outcomes. Values-based programs assist the commander in avoiding ethical blind spots which can impede the commander's ability to have an ethical organization. Bounded ethicality can occur whereby individuals make unethical decisions that harm others and are contrary to the person's beliefs. Ethical fading can

occur at the point of decision when ethics is removed or fades away from the decision-making process. Afterwards, the individual tries to rationalize the unethical decision. Commanders must be aware of these theories to avoid ethical blind spots when establishing their ethical climates. The literature provides various ethical decision-making models for leaders to employ to assist them in making good decisions. The application of ethical behavior as a core responsibility of the commanding officer will be examined through the lens of ethical challenges and problems that military leaders will confront in today's complex environment (Bryman, et al, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this literature review was to establish the theoretical foundation on ethical leadership, ethical climate, and ethical decision-making relative to the nature of the types of challenges facing U.S. military commanders today. Further, this review was designed to establish the importance of an ethical climate and its relevance to a commanding officers' ability to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines in their command. Also, this review provided an initial look at ethics education and its connection to an ethical climate. This connection will be explored in more detail during the qualitative study along with an in-depth review of the ethics and command climate curriculum taught to commanding officers at the LLI's Cornerstone Course and the command climate instruction offered at the Marine Corps War College in Quantico, Virginia.

The three areas of the literature that were reviewed explored whether a potential gap exists in the knowledge regarding the role that command climate plays in influencing

the ethical behavior of a Marine in a Marine Corps command. The literature reviewed demonstrated a gap in the literature based on the limited number of studies or literature that was discovered linking a Marine Corps commander's climate to the ethical behavior of the Marines within the command.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

As described in the first chapter, this study examined the role command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command. Two supporting research questions were also examined that helped to guide the study:

- How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines?
- How does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the research design, and the two-phased operational approach that was employed in the study. The next section will cover the research sites and participants followed by a discussion of the data collection methods used for the study. After the data collection process is discussed, the discussion turns to the analysis and the coding strategy used for the study.

#### **Research Design**

##### **A Case Study/Cross Case Analysis Design**

To answer the primary research question, this study employed a case study/cross case analysis design. A case study can stand on its own and provide the researcher with a detailed story from a participant, organization, or an event (Patton, 2015; Yin, 1984). In this case, the focus of the study and unit of analysis will be the interviewees and their perceptions on command climate, and how command climate influences ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command. Further, the results of the analysis (patterns) across

interview questions were analyzed using the data collected from the open-ended interviews. Two other data sources consisting of documents and observations were analyzed to best “illuminate the inquiry” (Patton, 2015, p.263).

Merriam & Tisdell (2015) discuss the value of triangulating emerging findings using interviews, document analysis, and observations to substantiate the findings. Patton (2015) also argues that “triangulation, in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (p.674). Interviews, document reviews (Marine Corps ethics curriculum) and observations were analyzed to answer the research questions.

There were both advantages and disadvantages to this study design. Since the study design allowed for data collection at only one point in time rather than data gathering longitudinally, there were at least three benefits to this approach: a similar national context for all interviews, an easier basis for comparison among interviews, and a more realistic timeframe for study completion (Patton, 2015). Disadvantages associated with this design were that the data that was captured was from a retrospective perspective, and I was not able to assess change over time (Patton, 2015).

### **Research Overview-A Two Phased Approach**

This research project was conducted in two phases using a case study/cross case analysis design. The first phase consisted of a visit to the Marine Corps War College in Quantico, Virginia, to conduct a document review of Marine Corps doctrine and training manuals relative to command climate, interviews with key ethics training and education



personnel, and to conduct observations of ethics discussions. The second phase of the research process consisted of personal interviews with seven former commandants of the Marine Corps (CMC, retired four-star general officers formerly in charge of the United States Marine Corps) including the current commandant of the Marine Corps. I was grateful that each of these distinguished gentlemen allowed me to interview them.

**Phase one.** The first phase of this study was designed to accomplish three things: 1) To enhance the investigator's understanding of command climate relative to the Marine Corps with an emphasis on current ethics and command climate pedagogy taught within its formal schools, 2) To interview two former commanders who could help to provide context on command climate from the practitioner's perspective, and 3) To inform the development of the final interview guide that was used when interviewing the commandants. The commandants were the unit of analysis for this study.

Phase one began by conducting a review of current and past ethics and command climate curriculum as taught within the Marine Corps' officer development programs. To accomplish this task, documents were reviewed, and discussions were conducted with key personnel at the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR), the Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS), and the Lejeune Leadership Institutes' (LLI) Cornerstone Course for commanding officers. A review of these documents laid the foundation for the development of the interview guide and to assist with the preparatory work required prior to the interviews in Quantico.

The phase one work included personal interviews with two senior officers-two retired Marine Corps colonels. Each of these distinguished officers have commanded Marines and currently hold well-respected, influential positions within the Marine Corps.

Their perspectives on command climate and its influence on ethical behavior was invaluable. Taken together, the review of the curriculum coupled with these personal interviews with former commanders helped to establish the necessary context to use in phase two with the commandant interviews. Finally, the phase one work assisted with the development of an effective interview guide that was used when discussing command climate and ethical behavior with the commandants, which better addressed the research questions.

The phase one interviews began by interviewing the Director of Operations of the Marine Corps Association & Foundation who is also a member of the Marine Corps' recently established "Command Climate Study Group" based in Quantico, Virginia. Next, the publisher and editor of the Marine Corps' professional journal, *The Marine Corps Gazette*, was also interviewed to shed light on the current ethical issues that Marines are writing about in their professional journal.

These personal interviews were conducted to establish context that was used to describe the historical disposition of the Marine Corps relative to ethical issues and ethics education during the period when each commandant served. This phase also provided details on the current state of the Marine Corps' curriculum relative to command climate. Overall, these interviews provided insight into how the Marine Corps University (MCU) is preparing Marine Corps commanding officers to deal with ethical issues through command climate and how education on command climate has evolved over time. Phase one information produced sufficient background information that informed the interview data collected from the commandant interviews. All three interviews were conducted

during a round table discussion at the Lejeune Leadership Institute and lasted approximately ninety minutes.

The first participant that contributed to the phase one collection effort was Dr. Paolo Tripodi, one of the professors at the Lejeune Leadership Institute. Dr. Tripodi teaches ethics and Leadership to numerous Marines throughout the Marine Corps. He provided insight on what is currently being taught to the students and future commanders assigned as students to the Marine Corps War College. He also provided historical context on the command climate education that has been covered in the past, which supported the interviews and data collection efforts with the commandants. Dr. Tripodi was also assisted by Lieutenant Colonel Derek Snell, who offered insight into the current Marine Corps commander's course called Cornerstone that is designed to prepare board-selected officers to take command.

The second participant who was interviewed was the Director of Foundation Operations at the Marine Corps Association & Foundation, Colonel Tim Mundy, United States Marine Corps (Retired). This retired officer is a member of the Marine Corps University's recently formed ethics and leadership working group. As a former commanding officer and recently retired colonel with 30 years of experience, he was able to provide perspective on the subject matter and insight on the interview guide questions that were used to interview the commandants.

The last participant interviewed in Quantico was the Editor and Publisher of the Marines' professional journal, the Marine Corps Gazette, Colonel Chris Woodbridge, United States Marine Corps (Retired). This retired colonel and former commanding officer was able to provide unique insight on the ethical issues that Marines are currently

writing about in their professional journal relative to command climate and ethical behavior.

Prior to the start of phase one, preliminary interviews were conducted as part of a pilot study during the 2016-17 timeframe and were used to inform the interview protocol for the larger study. The preliminary interviews were conducted with seven commanding officers at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego (two colonels, one lieutenant colonel, two majors, and two captains). The pilot study was designed to accomplish the following: to confirm the potential significance of the proposed study; to inform the study's draft interview protocol; to gather insights and perspectives from active duty commanding officers responding to the interview guide questions; and to conduct observations that could contribute to the study.

The key findings from this study indicated that commanders relied heavily on their background and experiences more than their ethics education to make ethical decisions; ethical programs must be regular (weekly) to establish and maintain an ethical climate; training must be improved for future commanding officers on how to establish a command climate; and that ethical development and trust at the lowest level is required for a command climate to work. These preliminary efforts coupled with the phase one data were used to inform and support phase two of the research project and contributed to answering the primary research question and the two supporting research questions. Specifically, these findings were used to help construct the interview guide for Phase Two of the study.

**Phase two.** Phase two was conducted to answer the research questions: "What role does command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine

Corps command?” “How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines?” and “How does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?” The second phase consisted of one-on-one interviews with seven former commandants of the Marine Corps and the current commandant of the Marine Corps. The commandants were the unit of analysis for the study.

Seven former living commandants of the Marine Corps were interviewed including the current commandant: General Alfred Gray (29<sup>th</sup> Commandant, 1987-1991); General Charles Krulak (31<sup>st</sup> Commandant, 1995-1999); General James Jones (32<sup>d</sup> Commandant, 1999-2003); General Michael Hagee (33<sup>d</sup> Commandant, 2003-2006); and General James Conway (34<sup>th</sup> Commandant, 2006-2010); General James Amos (35<sup>th</sup> Commandant, 2010-2014); and General Joseph Dunford (36<sup>th</sup> Commandant, 2014-2015). In addition, the current commandant, General Robert Neller (37<sup>th</sup> Commandant, 2015-present) was interviewed. Patton (2015) said “The logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling derives from the emphasis on in-depth understanding of specific cases: *information-rich cases*. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research; thus, *purposeful sampling*” (p.53).

Each interview was treated as an individual case. After the case descriptions were constructed and analyzed, the cases were compared with each other. Once the two supporting research questions were answered, the data informed and answered the overarching research question of “What role does command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command?”

A case study/cross-case comparison design was chosen for two reasons. First, a case study was used because it provided an in-depth description and analysis of a “contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) within its real-life context...” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.37). The case study provided a unit of study to gain a deeper insight into a specific issue (command climate) and to better understand the context and other factors that influence the issue.

This study included interviews with eight senior leaders that facilitated thick descriptions of command climate and how it influences ethical behavior. Further, the interviewees provided a unique perspective on the Marine Corps’ approach to command climate and the Marine Corps’ approach to ethics and command climate over the past 30 years. Many of these ethical issues have risen to the attention of the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS, currently General Joe Dunford, a former Marine Corps commandant who was interviewed), the other Service Chiefs (senior leaders of the other Services), the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), the U.S. Congress, the President of the United States, and the American people.

The objective of interviewing these eight senior leaders was to facilitate thick descriptions of the concept of command climate, and to gather their insights on what factors or elements of command climate influence ethical behavior.

The case study/cross-case comparison design was feasible due to the already-approved-access to the former commandants. Further, this design supported access to commanding generals at MCRD, Camp Pendleton, and Miramar who would have been willing to be interviewed as back-ups to the commandants, if one or more of the senior leaders became unavailable.

The study design revealed individual respondent priorities, experiences, and approaches while also providing a means for comparison between respondents. Further, the design generated insight from senior leaders who have served as commandant during different presidential administrations, and during very different social/political eras; for example, the era before 9/11, or prior to the advent of social media.

The mix of eight different former commandants along with the current CMC provided rich data from senior leaders with different and unique experiences over the course of 30 years who discussed how to create command climates that influence ethical behavior based on their experiences, education, and training. This data was then compared to each of the other commandants. A case study/cross-case comparison design accommodated the diversity within the commanding general population and the different political and social eras of their time better than most other research designs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Research Sites and Participants**

The participants were recruited through an email invitation that included a note that summarized the research project and what their participation would entail (Appendix A). Further, a similar note was sent to the participant's in Quantico along with their respective chains of command (MCU, MCWAR, and MCA&F) as a courtesy to ensure they were aware of the request for participation (Glesne, 2016). The commandants were interviewed at their place of business, or in some cases, at their personal residence. Interview locations included the Potomac Institute for Policy and Strategy in Alexandria, Virginia; a personal residence in Birmingham, Alabama; Jones Group International in

Vienna, Virginia; The Nimitz Foundation in Fredericksburg, Texas; a personal residence in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania; and at the Pentagon in Northern Virginia.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected from three sources. First, one-on-one personal interviews with the former and current commandants of the Marine Corps. Second, interviews and group discussions with key personnel in Quantico with participants responding to questions from an open-ended, semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B). Second, document reviews of various Marine Corps orders, letters, instructions, doctrinal publications, handouts, and curriculum taught at formal schools for both officer and enlisted personnel. Finally, observations were not conducted during the study, but the observation from the pilot study was used to inform the analysis.

### **Interviews**

Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection procedure used in this study. This approach was selected because as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue, semi-structured, open-ended interviews are well suited for addressing key topics while allowing for unplanned questions and topics to emerge during fieldwork.

The interview guide approach was used in this study to provide structure to the interview based on the time boundaries normally associated with general officers in such high positions with a multitude of other commitments. Patton (2015) suggests that the interview guide provides a comprehensive methodology that works well when there are time boundaries or other constraints associated with the interview. Interviews lasted



approximately 60-90 minutes on average with the longest interview lasting three hours. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

During the interviews, jot notes were taken, and an analytical memo was produced immediately following each interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The same process was used for the discussions with the key personnel in Quantico prior to the interviews with the commandants. Follow-up interviews were not necessary after the initial interviews were completed, however, one commandant was emailed to seek his guidance on the definition of command climate and the command climate survey.

Drafts were produced on each of the commandants' sections and emailed back to each general for a member check. Minor corrections were provided from most of the commandants or they responded stating the section accurately reflected their thoughts that they provided during the interview. All corrections and suggestions from the commandants were made to the dissertation. There were no significant changes required during the member check phase of the dissertation.

### **Document Analysis**

A document analysis was conducted not only to understand what the Marine Corps has been teaching regarding ethics instruction, but also to review what is being taught on command climate with an emphasis on *content analysis* relative to an ethical climate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The document review provided some historical context that informed the interviews with the commandants.

A review of Marine Corps doctrine and training publications was conducted prior to this study as part of the literature review. As such, the literature review provided an

overview of ethics education at the Marine Corps Senior Service College (Marine Corps War College, or MCWAR). Also, various doctrinal manuals were reviewed such as MCWP 6-11, *Leading Marines*, 2014; MCRP 6-11, *Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders*, 2014; and MCWP 5-1, *Marine Corps Planning Process*, 2010. These manuals did not prove conclusive in answering the primary research question but did foster a greater understanding of the Marine Corp's position on ethics and its core values.

During the study, all command climate instruction offered at the Cornerstone Course for commanders was the primary focus of the document review. Although not the focus of this study; other ethics instruction provided to the junior officers at the Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) and the senior officers who attend the MCWAR were reviewed for context. These additional areas of ethics curriculum were reviewed to look specifically for curriculum that addressed command climate, and how it influences the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command.

## **Observations**

One observation was made during the pilot study prior to the research project. A group of approximately 30 Marines who participated in an ethics discussion that was directed by their commanding officer were observed for approximately one hour. This event was part of the commanding officer's climate. The observation occurred at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California and was led by junior non-commissioned officers (corporals and sergeants). The observation informed the study by underscoring the importance of reinforcing ethical training within a Marine Corps

command. The observation did help to triangulate some of the findings that emerged from the interviews with the commandants (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

The discussion focused on ethics and the chain of command (who Marines should go to when they have questions or issues). The group covered four ethical scenarios. The observation confirmed the commanding officers' policy of conducting weekly ethical discussions as part of his approach to establishing an ethical climate. The colonel believed this process has worked with small, unit-led ethical discussions, causing a reduction in ethical-related problems in his command. This was insightful as to what was suggested by the commandants during their interviews and will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

### **Data Analysis and Coding Strategy**

The theoretical premise underpinning the data analysis and coding strategy for this study was grounded theory (Glesne, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Codes were applied to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles which developed categories and themes. "A theme can be an *outcome* of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection..." (Saldana, 2016, p. 15). These codes are discussed in greater detail later in this section.

This study used both narrative and document analysis to gather the stories from the interviewees and the information contained in the documents; the goal was to create "translucent windows into cultural and social meanings when understood and analyzed as narratives" (Patton, 2015, p.128). The narrative aspect of the qualitative inquiry is the story. The analysis is when the story is recorded through interviews, transcribed, and

analyzed for patterns that assist the researcher in learning more about the individual and the society and culture in a general sense (Patton, 2015). This research effort treated each commandant story as data and then analyzed the narratives which required interpreting the stories from the interviews, putting the stories into context, and comparing them with one another.

Glesne (2016) argues that narrative analysis can foster understanding of how interviewees construct meaning based on their experiences. Stories told from participants may include narratives linked to the cultural and political context of the participants. Further, the interviewer can examine how the participant correlates his or her experiences and circumstances together to make meaning. This study gathered narratives from participant responses to questions from the interview guide to develop codes, categories, and themes.

Interestingly, the narratives from the interviewees coupled with their responses to interview guide questions were used to examine and deepen the collective understanding of a commanding officer's approach to establishing a climate that influences the ethical behavior of the Marines in the command. This process combined two qualitative methodologies—narratives and grounded theory (Glesne, 2016). Further, Merriam & Tisdell (2016) said, "In addition, one could build grounded theory within a case study, or present a person's "story," hence combining narrative with case study (p.39).

The data collected from individual stories and responses to the interview guide questions was used in the study and coded to facilitate the analysis. The individual case studies were constructed using a narrative analysis to facilitate a greater understanding of events from the participant's past and the factors or elements of an organizational climate

that influence ethical behavior. Polkinghorne (1995), used the phrase *narrative configuration* to describe the process whereby, events are drawn together and integrated into a temporary whole.

The first three interviews with the key personnel in Quantico were used to help inform the analysis and to establish context on command climate from a recent practitioner's view. These officers also assisted in the development of the interview guide prior to the commandant interviews. Once all eight cases were developed (seven former CMCs, and the current CMC) the participants' responses to the interview questions were compared to look for differences and similarities (Glesne, 2016). Coding was required to organize the data into four general categories of setting the example, open communications, core values, and accountability and responsibility (Appendix C). The coding method was divided into two main sections, first cycle and second cycle coding methods (Saldana, 2016).

The first cycle of coding relied on In Vivo coding, as the coding method used throughout the process. This style of coding was derived from the language used by the participants (Saldana, 2016). Axial coding was used as the second cycle coding method to develop subcategories through the disaggregation of core themes (categories and concepts) via a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning (Saldana, 2016). The manual method of coding was used during this process to organize and manage the data. In addition to the coding process, analytical memo writing was used during the process to capture reflections from the interviews, document reviews, and the observation to make connections between categories to formulate themes (Saldana, 2016).

The qualitative procedures discussed above were helpful in addressing the research questions. The open-ended, semi-structured interviews were designed to provide rich data that was transformed into three themes that depict or shape how each commandant views command climate, and the factors or elements that influence ethical behavior within the command (Patton, 2015). The first theme was that the command climate set by the commanding officer is significant with respect to influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization. The second theme stated that the commanding officer's climate must be focused on the Marine Corps' Core Values, and the character development of the individual Marine post entry-level training (sustaining the transformation). Finally, the third theme recommended that the best way for the United States Marine Corps to continue winning the hearts and souls of the American people is through the ethical behavior of the individual Marine both on and off the battlefield, which is directly related to the Marine Corps' survival as an institution.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CASE STUDIES

The research for this study was gathered primarily from personal interviews with all eight of the former living commandants of the Marine Corps (CMC), including the current CMC. These general officers were the unit of analysis for this study and provided the data that answered the primary research question: What role does command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command? And, the two supporting research questions: How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines? How does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?

Prior to conducting the CMC interviews, a round table discussion was initiated with two retired colonels with extensive command experience, one active duty lieutenant colonel involved in the curriculum for new-commanding officers, and a civilian leadership professor at the Marine Corps' Lejeune Leadership Institute (LLI) in Quantico, Virginia, who instructs ethics, and command climate. The purpose of the round table discussion was to validate the semi-structured interview guide questions prior to interviewing the commandants. Participants were asked the same questions from the interview guide that were to be used for each of the commandants. Once the round table discussion was concluded, the participants agreed that the interview guide questions were important and the right questions to ask the commandants to answer the primary and supporting research questions.

This chapter will attempt to address the primary research question and the two supporting research questions by analyzing the information collected from the CMC interviews. Part I of this chapter will cover each CMC's commentary in the form of individual case studies. Part II presents the results of a cross-case analysis that compared the responses reported in Part I with each other.

In the Phase I cases, the narratives will be followed by a summary of the key themes that were revealed in the case. Likewise, a similar summary of main themes will be provided following the cross-case comparison part of the chapter. The cases presented in Phase I will be presented chronologically, i.e., in the order of when each general was commandant. Importantly, each interview differed in length, which will have an impact on the volume of information provided for that case study. Each case study will contain its own unique themes based on that commandant's input. The cross-case comparison will examine four common themes generated from the analysis of the individual case studies.

This dissertation covers over 30 years of senior Marine Corps leadership experience. Each CMC section will begin with background information covering various events that occurred during that commandant's tenure to provide historical context. This will be followed by a detailed discussion covering the research data collected and analyzed from the personal interviews.



## **Part I: The Commandants**

### **General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., 29<sup>th</sup> Commandant (1987-1991)**

#### **Background**

In late June 1987, General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., received the official battle colors of the Marine Corps and became the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps at the Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C. (Appendix D). At the time, there were approximately, 198,555 Marines (Department of the Navy, HQMC, Marine Corps Command Chronology, 1987-1991).

Commensurate with the commandant's emphasis on education and training, early in his tenure, the Marine Corps established the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) at Quantico, Virginia, standardizing all training and doctrine throughout the Corps. Transitioning from the Vietnam era, and as part of General Gray's philosophy that every Marine is a rifleman, the Marines also developed the concept of basic warrior training (BWT) for all Marines, to be implemented at the Marine Corps Recruit Depots (San Diego and Parris Island). The goal was to increase the combat effectiveness of all Marines, enabling them to serve effectively as infantry in defensive or offensive combat operations (Command Chronology, 1987-1991).

In 1989, the Marine Corps established a new professional military education (PME) program for officers, staff non-commissioned officers (SNCOs), and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) designed to provide both resident and non-resident career-enhancing instruction. Included in this program was a Professional Reading Program, designed to instill Marine Corps values and traits, analytical and reasoning skills, and further a Marine's knowledge of culture and the principles established by

America's Founding Fathers. Also, the Marine Corps University (MCU) was established under MCCDC, to oversee both resident and non-resident PME policies and programs (DON, HQMC, Command Chronology, 1987-1991).

In addition to the above innovations in training and education, Marines continued to participate in a variety of operations such as, assisting with the Exxon oil spill in Alaska; protecting U. S. bases in Panama; providing humanitarian assistance in support of Hurricane Hugo in Charleston, South Carolina; and disaster relief in support of the San Francisco Bay area earthquake (Command Chronology, 1987-1991).

In 1990, Marines participated in operations such as, the evacuation of U.S. embassy employees and American citizens in Monrovia, Liberia where 2,438 persons from 30 countries were evacuated; the Persian Gulf crisis in Kuwait following Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's invasion of neighboring Kuwait (Operation Desert Shield), and in 1991, Operation Desert Storm, where U.S. and allied forces defeated the Iraqi Army (Command Chronology, 1987-1991).

While Marines were in Kuwait, other Marines were conducting other operations around the globe such as, providing disaster relief after the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines, where approximately 6,000 Marines and Sailors provided support during Operation Fiery Vigil; and Operation Provide Comfort, where Kurdish refugees in Turkey and Iraq received aid from Marines who established refugee camps and provided food and security to thousands of Kurds (Command Chronology, 1987-1991).

Prior to General Gray's change of command, the Marine Corps began construction on the \$14.2 million Marine Corps Research Center (Gray Research Center)

in Quantico, VA, designed to provide the Corps with a modern library, research, and conference facility to support professional military education. On 28 June, General Gray presented the battle colors of the Marine Corps to General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., during a ceremony at the Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C.

### **The Interview**

General Gray was interviewed at his office in Arlington, Virginia for approximately, three hours at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies (PIPS). He emphasized that commanding officers should be leading Marines and not managing Marines by using a maneuver warfare philosophy in officers' approach to their command climate. He also stressed the importance of the commander setting the right example. In other words, "A leadership (not an academic) philosophy defined as a system of ideas and a sum of ideals (personal convictions). A leadership philosophy is best conveyed through intent and example" (Otte & Gray, 2006).

This section will discuss the commander's philosophy of command, which, according to the commandant—must be built on trust and confidence, promote taking initiative and responsibility, and include open and implicit communications. Next, the section will address the importance of setting the example, where the commander must take care of the people, demonstrate selflessness, be transparent, and ensure the Marines are having fun.

### **Philosophy of Command (A Maneuver Warfare Approach)**

The commander's philosophy of command is instrumental in the role that command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines. The commander's philosophy of command includes "broad guidance in the form of concepts and values...a philosophy for action...a way of thinking in general" (Gray & Otte, 2006, p.116). General Gray discussed the maneuver warfare way of thinking and how it can be applied to command climate.<sup>1</sup> Under this philosophy, the commander decentralizes decision making to subordinate commanders down to the smallest level possible, which generates a tempo of operations that Marines desire "to best cope with the uncertainty, disorder, and fluidity of combat..." (Department of Defense, United States Marine Corps, *Warfighting*, 1989, p.79). He also discussed the value of explaining to subordinates the rationale behind an ethical standard. Gray said, "People need to know why they are doing what they're doing." The philosophy of maneuver can be followed both in combat and in peacetime. For this philosophy to have an impact on the ethical behavior of the Marines, it must be built on trust and confidence, individual initiative and responsibility, and implicit communications (Gray & Otte, 2006).

**Trust and confidence.** Trust and confidence is built by establishing long-term relationships with people. General Gray quoted the 13<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, General John A. Lejeune's message when he said, "You owe it to the young people to make them stronger physically, mentally, and morally." To establish trust with

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophy of command using a maneuver warfare approach entails: boldness and initiative, competent leadership at every level, decentralized decision-making while exercising sound judgement, implicit communications, and confidence among seniors and subordinates (*Warfighting*, 1994).

the Marines, the commander must create an environment that facilitates creative thinking and does not punish individuals for taking initiative or making mistakes. Even though the commander is still responsible for the Marines, and the accomplishment of the mission, however, by creating a learning environment, the commander enables people to think through problems and develop solutions on their own. As General Gray said, “Everyone kicks one in the grandstands once in a while” (Otte, 2015, p.92). Through a climate with a learning environment of critical thinking, the commander builds the trust of the individuals in the command and builds their confidence by allowing them to make mistakes, as they attempt to follow the commander’s intent. Another key aspect of establishing trust and confidence within the command that influences ethical behavior, is to reduce the number of rules and regulations and to keep the rules simple.

General Gray suggested that there is risk associated with too many complicated rules governing ethical behavior, that tend to become a “recipe climate” rather than a climate based on shared values, beliefs, and principles. He used the Army as an example of a large organization that relies on too many rules and procedures for everything, and that this detracts from individual initiative which is required for sound judgment associated with good ethical decision making. As part of creative thinking and developing the confidence of your Marines, the commander’s philosophy must facilitate individual initiative and emphasize personal responsibility and accountability through good discipline.

**Initiative and responsibility.** Marines must have discipline to take initiative and to act responsibly. General Gray defined discipline by using an example from 1979,

when he heard General Robert Barrow (27<sup>th</sup> Commandant) ask a Marine recruit in San Diego what discipline meant to him and the recruit said, “discipline means doing what must be done.” This simple concept must be part of the command philosophy according to Gray and reinforced by the commander on a regular basis when Gray said, “You do what has to be done, and you do it the right way for the right reasons.” General Gray went on to discuss the importance of Marines having discipline and taking the initiative to do the right thing such as, how Marines treat each other.

He mentioned that America expects its Marines to be special and that the reason America has a Marine Corps is because America wants a Marine Corps, because Marines are good for the country. Another example he used was the recent social media issue, “Marines United.” He discussed how Marines have an obligation to be responsible and to behave as Marines 24/7, 365 days a year. In other words, “There’s no such thing as off-duty.” Social media, emails, text messages, etc., should be considered as signals security and if anything conveyed on social media will jeopardize the mission, or cheat someone out of their dignity, then it is contradictory to good order and discipline and people who violate orders will be held accountable. General Gray said, “Treat people the way you would like to be treated” and that the “Golden Rule” is a good one to live by (Otte, 2015, p.93). He mentioned that one of the things that makes Marines special is “the discipline, particularly the self-discipline of the Marine that makes us different.” An example of this was the issue of how male Marines were treating female Marines shortly after Gray became commandant.

General Gray published a letter to all commanders and he said, “Any Marine who doesn’t treat my women Marines with dignity is out of step with their commandant.”

General Gray spoke to roughly 9,000 of his 10,000 female Marines in 1987, and the consensus was that they just wanted to be treated with dignity. Another aspect of the commander’s command philosophy is implicit communications.

**Implicit and open communications.** Maneuver philosophy includes implicit communications where the leader can communicate through mutual understandings and a shared philosophy (Gray & Otte, 2006). This concept can be applied to command climate and included in the philosophy of command. General Gray discussed the importance of good communications as a critical aspect of the commander’s climate. He gave the example of his first day as commandant at Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) where the work spaces looked like a morgue with doors and windows closed. So, one of the first things he did was direct all personnel to open their doors and he started walking around talking to people to get to know them and allow them to understand his perspective as commandant.

General Gray emphasized the importance of open communications and that Marines must be free to speak their minds, relying on the leadership of the command to listen to their thoughts, ideas, and recommendations. Gray said, “There are times when you want to leave your rank behind, particularly at critiques and after exercises.” In other words, critiques should be conducted by small unit leaders and not driven by senior commanders who do all the talking. As part of implicit and open communications, the commander must be a good listener and be able to sense what is going on within the

command. This is part of the commander's ability to constantly evaluate his or her climate and determine if Marines are making good ethical decisions.

### **Setting the Example (Living it)**

General Gray discussed the importance of setting the example when he said, "The commander should not only set it, but must live it." In other words, as a commanding officer you must "walk your talk" (Gray & Otte, 2006, p.46). Gray covered four critical areas instrumental in setting the example and establishing the right climate that influences the ethical behavior of the Marines: taking care of your people, being selfless, being transparent, and having fun in your profession.

**Take care of your people.** One of the most important things a commander does is to take care of the followers through training and education. He referenced the 13<sup>th</sup> Commandant, General John A. Lejeune's message regarding an officer's responsibility to the troops when Gray said, "Make them better morally, ethically, and physically, when they leave you than when you joined them" (Lejeune, 1930). An example of this is when Gray was a commander in Okinawa at Camp Hansen in the seventies.

During this period there were a lot of racial problems, and approximately 55 percent of Gray's Marines did not have their high school diplomas. So, he organized a group of officer's wives who had teaching credentials and formed a night school for his Marines to earn their high school diplomas. This fostered teamwork and reduced the racial tension within his organization. This example also showed the Marines that Gray believed in education and that he cared about them enough to help them further their



education. As General Gray said in the interview, “You’ve got to take care of people, and that’s part of your command environment.”

As part of setting the example, General Gray stressed the importance of walking around and asking people how they were doing. In Okinawa, he would walk into the town of Kinville which he knew was dangerous due to the racial tensions and the amount of alcohol Marines consumed while on liberty (off-duty). Gray spoke with the owners of the bars and to the Marines about how he could help to reduce the amount of disorderly conduct incidents happening out in town. Eventually, he established a curfew and courtesy patrols to ensure Marines were behaving and returning safely to the barracks.

Another example was that Gray did not like the fact that many of the officers were living in town and showing up late for work and setting a bad example, so he ordered the officers to move onto Camp Hansen and live on the base like their troops who lived in the barracks. Again, this gesture demonstrated how much Gray believed that leaders must set the example, and that you must be focused on your troops and the organization, not yourself.

**Selflessness.** Another aspect of setting the example is the concept of selflessness. Gray said, “You can get anything done you want if you don’t care who gets the credit for it.” General Gray inherited this principle from his father and it has always been included as part of his command climate. Gray believed that when people know the leader is more concerned about them than himself, the followers will have a greater tendency to exhibit better behavior in that type of environment, or climate. He mentioned that his “greatest legacy” and source of happiness was the people he developed throughout his career that

became great leaders such as, General Jack Sheehan and General Anthony Zinni.

General Gray said, “Your greatest success is when the young people that you’re privileged to teach get to be better than you are.... So, I think that’s all part of your climate.” He went on to say that “unless you care more about others than yourself, you will fall prey to careerism” (Otte, 2015, p.52).

In addition to the above, Gray would talk to the families of the Marines to ensure they were doing OK while their husbands were away. As General Gray once remarked to General Anthony Zinni “Tony, we now have more dependents in the Marine Corps than we have Marines...So your challenge then has expanded.” Gray emphasized that commanders must take care of their Marines including their families to set the right climate that influences good ethical behavior.

**Transparency.** Gray also suggested that leaders must be transparent when setting the right example while leading others. For example, when Gray became CMC, he had a meeting with his Public Affairs Officer (PAO). The PAO told General Gray that the mission of Public Affairs was to ensure the Marine Corps looked good. Gray told the PAO the mission of PAO has just changed when he said, “The mission of public affairs is to get the facts before the American people.” In other words, the commander must be transparent whenever a mistake is made and that must be part of the commander’s climate and the right example to set as commander.

**Have fun.** Finally, Gray discussed the importance of the commander creating an environment where the Marines have fun and can enjoy their profession. When Gray was at Camp Lejeune after a major exercise in the field, he received a phone call from then

Secretary of the Navy, James Webb, who told him President Reagan had appointed him to be the next CMC. Gray said, “Mr. Secretary, we’re going to have some fun.”

General Gray highlighted the significance of intramural sports for building camaraderie and teamwork, as the kind of fun that is healthy for a command climate that builds teamwork and promotes unit cohesion. He suggested that commanders should focus on the kind of fun that “makes people appreciate one another” as members of an elite team of professionals who enjoyed going to work and being United States Marines.

### **Summary**

General Gray discussed the commander’s philosophy of command to communicate the commander’s thoughts on what he or she is trying to do with the organization and the expectations for the Marines. Gray suggested that the philosophy of command replicate the Marines’ doctrine of maneuver warfare, which is built on trust and confidence of subordinates, initiative, and an implicit understanding of what the commander wants to accomplish based on the close personal relationship between the commander and the subordinates. Further, Gray emphasized the importance of setting the example by taking care of the people, being more concerned about the organization and the people than yourself and making sure the commander is completely transparent in his or her actions, and that the people have fun being United States Marines.

## **General Charles C. Krulak, 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant (1995-1999)**

### **Background**

On 30 June 1995, General Charles C. Krulak became the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps in a change of command ceremony at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. (Appendix E). There were approximately, 175,000 Marines in the Corps.

As General Krulak became commandant, Marines were involved in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-directed air strikes against Bosnian Serb military targets as part of Operation Deliberate Force. In addition, the Marines participated in numerous exercises throughout the world such as, exercises in Kuwait, and in Egypt, where 33,000 Egyptian, British, French and Arab Emirates troops participated in the largest joint military exercise held in Egypt. To support exercises like these, the commandant established the Commandant's Warfighting Laboratory (CWL), to serve as the test bed for the development of new concepts, tactics, techniques, procedures, and doctrine (Department of the Navy, HQMC, Marine Corps Command Chronology, 1995-1999).

In 1995, the CMC directed the relocation of Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) to the Pentagon adjacent to the office of the Secretary of the Navy (SecNav). Further, he published the Commandant's Planning Guidance, which focused on the concept of "Transformation." Transformation was General Krulak's concept of the process that takes a citizen, transforms the person into a United States Marine for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, then returns them back to society better than before they came into the Corps (Department of the Navy, HQMC, *31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance*, 1995).

Other significant operations during this period included the conclusion of the Marine Corps' involvement in Haiti as part of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission and Marine participation in providing security assistance to the U.S. Embassy compound in Monrovia, Liberia (Command Chronology, 1995-1999).

Over the next two years, the CMC made other changes such as, a new approach in training Marines for warfighting with the introduction of the "Crucible," a 54-hour event at boot camp where the recruit's mental, moral, and physical training experience culminated and transformed the civilian into a Marine. Further, as part of this new warfighting spirit, all Marines were issued a plastic card with the Marine Corps' Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment, which they were required to sign signifying their commitment to these core values (Command Chronology, 1995-1999).

In 1997, the CMC implemented several other initiatives including the Commandant's Warfighting Laboratory (CWL) experiment, Hunter Warrior, involving 7,000 Marines and Sailors in southern California testing future concepts and tactics; the introduction of female Marines shooting live ammunition from heavy weapons (i.e., machine guns) in combat training at Camp Lejeune; and the relocation of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) to Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar (Command Chronology, 1995-1999).

Marines continued to provide a show of force in the Persian Gulf, while others were sent to Mombasa, Kenya to provide humanitarian assistance due to flooding in the northeastern part of the country. Concurrently, Marines supported NATO operations in

Bosnia as a ready reserve force, and conducted training in areas such as Thailand, and near the southern coast of the Turkish Republic.

Many other global exercises and operations would occur until General Krulak relinquished his duties; these included Marines providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in response to Hurricane Mitch in Central America; Marine Corps air strikes against Iraq; assisting with the evacuation operation of approximately, 90 American citizens from the U.S. embassy in Kuwait; and Marines conducting security and humanitarian assistance missions in Albania, while supporting the air campaign against the Serb-led Yugoslavian government. On 30 Jun, General James Jones replaced General Krulak becoming the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps during a ceremony at Marine Barracks, 8th and I Streets, Washington, D.C. (Command Chronology, 1995-1999).

### **The Interview**

General Krulak was interviewed at his home in Birmingham, Alabama for approximately three hours. The general began the interview when he said, “Let me start by saying that, one, your overarching question is a critical one...probably the most critical question facing the Corps today...” General Krulak’s entire interview centered on the importance of commander’s continuing to develop the character of their Marines (sustaining the transformation) and holding Marines to high, almost spiritual standards of conduct (Krulak, 1996a).

He suggested that the primary purpose of a command climate is to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines in the unit. Further, he went on to state that the climate of

the Marine Corps begins with the CMC and transcends down to every commanding officer in the Corps. To highlight the importance of maintaining high, almost spiritual standards of character, he read a quote from his late father,

Lieutenant General Victor Krulak (1984), USMC (Ret) who said,

We exist today, we flourish today, not because of what we know we are, or what we know we can do, but because of what the grassroots of our country believes we are and believes we can do... The American people believe that Marines are downright good for the country; that Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant, stable citizens; citizens whose hands the nation's affairs may safely be entrusted...And, likewise, should the people ever lose that conviction as a result of our failure to meet their high, almost spiritual standards, the Marine Corps will then quickly disappear (p. xv).

This section will address two areas Krulak focused on relative to command climate, the Transformation, and the Marine Corps Values Program. First, Krulak's Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) will be covered as the primary instrument he used to establish his command climate for the Marine Corps. This will be followed by a discussion on the concept of the "Transformation" as Krulak's approach to building ethical Marines for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Next, the Marine Corps' Values Program will be discussed as the primary tool for commanders to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines in their organizations.

### **The 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG)**

According to Krulak, the two most important things the Marine Corps does for the nation are to win battles and make Marines. To continue to achieve these two things, the CPG was developed by Krulak to outline the Corps' strategic approach on "where the Marine Corps is going and why, what the Marine Corps will do, and in some instances, how and when prescribed actions are to be implemented" (DON, HQMC, *The 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance*, 1995, p. A-1). The CPG addressed Krulak's most strongly held beliefs through five pillars: warfighting, people, core values, education and training, and the Marine Corps' naval character (*31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance*, 1995). Two of these five pillars will be addressed because they relate directly to this study: education and training, and the core values.

**Education and training.** Krulak suggested that we need to get back to educating our Marines on what it means to be a Marine. Commanders must read and understand Title 10 of the U.S. Code and what the 82nd Congress signed into law. This was the result of a small group of Marines and politicians who worked to prepare a speech (the bended knee speech) for General Vandegrift, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, to convince the 82d Congress and President Truman why the Marines should not be subsumed by the Army and the Air Force. This group of Marines and others were nicknamed the "Chowder Society" and, after Vandegrift's speech, Congress was so impressed that they wrote into the law, how Marines were to be organized, and employed through the passage of the 1947 National Security Act (U.S. Code, Title 10, National Security Act, 1947).



Krulak discussed how commanders must constantly reinforce what it means to be a Marine. The general believed that if Marines can commit to making good choices a daily habit based on their training and education, then when they are confronted with ethical dilemmas in their daily lives, they will have a greater tendency to draw from this habit when performing their duties in combat while under extreme stress. In other words, Marines must be ready to discharge the other duties as the president may direct, but most of all, be prepared to fight and win. However, as Krulak said, “It is about the beliefs shared by all Marines, past, and present, that there’s no higher calling than that of a Marine, and that being a Marine is more than excellence in combat. It is also excellence in character.” As we shall see later, Krulak holds the commanders responsible for developing their Marines’ character based on the Marine Corps’ Core Values, and for the sustainment of those values.

**Core values.** As one example of the five pillars, Krulak’s guidance on core values was discussed throughout the CPG. In the section on the future direction of the Marine Corps, he mentioned core values when he said, “Our Marines’ moral character, courage, and ethical values will dominate any location or operational area with the unconditional certainty that the Marine Corps is a force for good” (*31<sup>st</sup> Commandant’s Planning Guidance*, 1995, p. A-3). Further, Krulak said, “I do not intend for “honor, courage, and commitment” to be just words; I expect them to frame the way we live and act as Marines” (*31<sup>st</sup> Commandant’s Planning Guidance*, 1995, p. A-17). Under Krulak’s direction, every facet of Marine Corps operations emphasized the Marine Corps’ Core Values. This included how Marines are recruited, trained, employed, and

prepared to return to society after successfully completing their military service. This process is called the “Transformation.”

### **The Transformation**

The transformation was designed to take a person from the civilian sector, recruit them, train them, develop them into Marines, and eventually, return them back to society as people of sound character who abide by the core values of honor, courage, and commitment (DON, HQMC, MCRP 6-11D, *Sustaining the Transformation*, 2014). The transformation was developed based on the view of the world in 1995 that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century would find Marines fighting non-state actors (e.g., Al-Qaeda) using information technology (e.g., the CNN effect) coupled with terrorist tactics, or asymmetric (non-traditional style) warfare. Marines would be involved in conflicts that may require them to conduct humanitarian assistance operations in the morning, peacekeeping missions in the afternoon, and combat operations in the middle of the night. These missions could take place within three city blocks over a 24-hour period (i.e., the three-block war).

Therefore, America needed a force with people who had the right values, and who possessed the moral strength of character to make good ethical decisions. Poor ethical decisions (e.g., Abu Ghraib) would potentially, contribute to the CNN effect, by portraying negative images to the world that contradict American values (i.e., the strategic corporal whose actions have a significant impact on how Marines and the nation are perceived). The transformation involves recruiting, recruit training, cohesion, and sustainment.

**Recruiting.** Krulak called upon psychologists and psychiatrists to learn more about the young people coming into the Marines (i.e., Generation X). He reoriented the Corps' recruiting efforts to accommodate the customers-America's youth. These young people wanted to know the boundaries of acceptable behavior and would be good followers if they had the opportunity to become leaders. They also wanted to belong to something with value.

Therefore, the Marine Corps changed its recruiting tactics by raising its entrance standards to get more high school graduates who were thinking young men and women, who wanted to become part of something greater than themselves. These were people who wanted to be easily recognizable (not gangs or fraternities) and believed in doing what's right as people who believed in a higher calling.

**Recruit training.** Recruit training was also changed as part of the transformation by becoming more rigorous and challenging. General Krulak directed an increase in the total hours of recruit training, he changed the physical fitness test (PFT), so that it was the same for both men and women, he gave more time back to the DI's to mentor recruits on core values, and he added the Crucible to recruit training (Krulak, White Letter, No. 3-98).

The Crucible was a 54 hour, mentally and physically grueling, culmination of 11 weeks of recruit training that reinforced instruction on teamwork, leadership, and the Marine Corps' Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment. Based on the changing world of technology coupled with asymmetric combat in an urban environment, General Krulak added the Crucible to recruit training and said, "Marines must be good decision

makers. They must be trained to the highest standard...” In order for Marines to meet the challenges and demands of the current threats, Marine units needed to coalesce for them to realize their maximum potential as a warfighting organization.

**Unit cohesion.** Krulak ordered his staff to promote more unit cohesion by “forming Marines into military occupational specialty (MOS) teams, sending those teams to their occupational school and then on to their first until the end of their initial enlistment” (Krulak, White Letter, No. 3-98). Another example of how Krulak promoted better unit cohesion within the Corps was with the female drill instructors (DI’s).

Before Krulak became CMC, female DI’s wore a different hat when working with recruits and were not authorized to wear the prized DI campaign cover (i.e., Smoky the Bear hat) that is worn by the male DI’s. Krulak directed that ALL drill instructors wear the campaign hat. He did this at the same time he directed that all Marines regardless of gender, would go through the Crucible during entry level training which was another move to foster greater cohesion in the Marine Corps. Commensurate with Krulak’s guidance from the CPG, the responsibility of maintaining unit cohesion and sustaining the transformation fell on the shoulders of the commanding officers.

**Sustainment.** Krulak said, “As commanders and leaders we are responsible for the character development of the Marines we lead...This phase in the transformation process is where you, the leaders of our Corps, take over” (Krulak, 1996c). Krulak referenced Marine Corps history when he said, “As commanders and leaders, we all share responsibility for ensuring that Marines embody those values we have cherished for more than two centuries” (Krulak, 1996c). He emphasized how the Marines must uphold the

legacy and the definition of being a Marine when he quoted the 13<sup>th</sup> CMC, General John A. Lejeune who said, "...the descendant of a line of heroes, the bearer of a name hailed as foremost in the annals of his country, the custodian of a long-cherished reputation for honor, valor, and integrity" (Krulak, 1996c).

When Krulak referred to my central research question he said, "I really never strayed from your central premise which was: what role the command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior of the Marine Corps... What a critical discussion of what's going to keep the Marine Corps alive." Krulak's quote underscores the significance of the command climate and the commander's role in reinforcing the core values on a routine basis.

Krulak believed that this process started with the commandant and his commanding officers, who he charged directly responsible for sustaining the transformation and maintaining character development programs within their units when he said, "...it's got to come from the top." In other words, the commanders set the climate that influences the ethical behavior of the Marines in their organizations. Clearly, Krulak felt strongly that in addition to fighting and winning the nation's battles, the most important thing we can do as an institution is to take young men and women from society and make them Marines of good character. And, that the Marine Corps will eventually return these Marines back to their families, states, cities, and towns, as better people than before they joined the Corps (Krulak, 1996d). It is the responsibility of the commanding officer to ensure that the Marine Corps values are implemented and reinforced. The

Marine Corps' Values Program was designed by General Krulak to assist commanders with accomplishing that task.

### **Marine Corps Values Program**

In the seventies, the Marines worked on the post-Vietnam image of the Marine Corps and the issue of drug abuse. During the eighties and nineties, the Corps emphasized professional military education with its professional reading program and the establishment of the Marine Corps University. General Krulak (1996d) emphasized “improving and enhancing every Marine’s devotion to the values of honor, courage and commitment that have been the hallmark of Marines since the founding of our nation” (p.2).

**Commitment to values theme.** In addition, prior to publishing his planning guidance, he directed all Marines to read *Rifleman Dodd* (Forester, 1989), which is a book about the British Army fighting the French in the Peninsular Wars. He believed this book would help to further a Marines understanding of commitment to the core values (Krulak, ALMAR 157/95). In the book, for example, after months of combat and little to eat, a private (Dodd) in the Ninety-Fifth Foot, a British infantry company, who was near starvation after months of combat, survived the ordeal and was happy to have done his duty in support of his fellow soldiers. Dodd cherished the fact that he was a member of the Ninety-Fifth “Whose boast was that they were always first into action and last out” (Forester, 1989, insert). Krulak made commitment to the core values the theme for the Marine Corps in 1995 (Krulak, ALMAR 157/95).

**Values tools for commanders.** In December of 1996, General Krulak directed all commanding officers to use the tools that HQMC provided to assist them in sustaining the Marine Corps values of honor, courage, and commitment (Krulak, 1996c). Krulak (1996c) said, “Using the foundation set in entry level training, take these tools, your creativity, and knowledge of your unit to craft a program that addresses the unique issues you face” (p.1). The CMC’s intent was for all commanders to ensure their command climates emphasized enduring values that were reinforced on a regular basis.

Further, Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1500.56 directed that commanding officers “Integrate Marine Corps Values training into organizational training plans” (Krulak, 1996b, p.3). The tools mentioned in both the White Letter 16-96 and the MCO 1500.96 included a discussion guide for leaders, a Marine Corps Values pocket card to be issued and signed by all Marines, and a CMC video about the program (Krulak, 1996b).

General Krulak (1996d) said in his message that he sent to all Marines, “Our core values remain the very soul of our institution, underlying all that is best in Marines, and must continue to frame the way we live and act as Marines” (p.1). One issue discussed during the interview with Krulak was the competing demands faced by commanders, which could potentially, have a negative impact on the implementation of the values program. Areas such as, maintenance of equipment, mission essential task list training, and other required training all compete for “white space” on a commander’s annual training plan. Krulak said, “You cannot excuse this away because of operational tempo or because we are at war, or any other number of things...It’s got to be constantly at the forefront.”

Relative to the other tasks levied upon a commander, and highlighting the importance of the values program, Krulak said, “This begets warfighting. This begets excellence. I worry when we talk about balanced excellence. It’s only balanced when the ethical part of the equation is first...It better be the first number in the equation.” Krulak discussed the importance of getting it right when it comes to the commander’s climate and its influence on ethical behavior when he said, “If we get this right, the rest of it will come along. And you’ll get more money from Congress, you’ll get more people to come into the Marine Corps. Their parents, instead of saying oh shit, I’m not going to get my kid killed at Parris Island or put in the laundry, they’re saying, well, my gosh, they teach values.”

**ALMARS on character.** Prior to, and following the implementation of the Marine Corps Values Program, General Krulak published a series of messages to all Marines (ALMARs) that discussed traits associated with a Marines character (e.g., integrity, justice, fidelity, courage, etc.). These ALMARs were designed to help guide Marines in their ethical behavior, but also, to assist commanders in establishing the right climate that influences the ethical behavior of the Marines in the unit. During his first two years of being commandant, Krulak routinely emphasized the core values and made numerous changes to embed these values into everything the Marine Corps touched.

In July of 1997, Krulak published an update on the progress of the Marine Corps Values Program. This update offered insight as to how the program influenced the ethical behavior of Marines within the various units (Krulak, ALMAR 238/97). Krulak discussed the progress made using examples such as the staff at the Basic School for



Marine lieutenants, where they visited the Vietnam Memorial and the Iwo Jima Memorial to reflect on what those Marines did during those battles. After the discussion and reflection period, Marines were awarded their values cards in the shadow of the Marines raising the American flag at the top of Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima (Krulak, ALMAR 238/97).

General Krulak's guidance was carried out and his efforts as CMC focused on commitment to the Marine Corps' Core Values. As Krulak (1997) said to his commanders, "This phase is the most difficult and I purposely kept it non-prescriptive. I want you, the leaders of our Corps, to be aware of, and use the tools available to you in these efforts. Use your initiative, intelligence, and imagination to ensure the success of this program" (p.2). Finally, before the interview concluded, General Krulak read the quote from his father again, to put added emphasis on the importance of what Marine stands for in the eyes of the American public, and why it is so important to the Corps' existence for all Marines to live up to those high "almost spiritual" standards.

### **Summary**

General Krulak published his 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance that laid out his command philosophy and his commander's intent to the Marine Corps. This document contained his guidance that emphasized education and training, and a re-focus on the Marine Corps' Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment. General Krulak implemented changes that would promote greater unit cohesion within the Marine Corps such as, the Crucible at recruit training, and a focus on sustaining a Marines

transformation after the completion of entry-level training through the Marine Corps Values Program.

Krulak held commanding officers directly responsible for sustaining the transformation of Marines through the continual development of their character as the focal point of what it means to be a Marine. To assist the commanders in their duties, Krulak published a series of messages to all Marines that contained various aspects of character such as, integrity and courage. Krulak's thesis was that for the Corps to remain in existence it is critical for all Marines to abide by the core values and to ensure the Corps never loses the trust of the American people, which is built on their sentimental ideas of what a Marine can do and what a Marine represents. Arguably, Marines may not necessarily be needed for the survival of the nation, but Americans want Marines because they are good for the country.

## **General James L. Jones, 32<sup>nd</sup> Commandant (1999-2003)**

### **Background**

In June 1999, General James L. Jones became the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps during a ceremony at Marine Barracks, 8th and I Streets, Washington, D.C. replacing General Charles C. Krulak (Appendix F). At this time, there were approximately 172,000 Marines in the Corps. Throughout this period, Marines were involved in operations at home and abroad such as the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) El Toro and MCAS Tustin to Miramar, California; the redeployment of Marines after operations in Kosovo; and Marine participation in Istanbul, Turkey, with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the aftermath of an earthquake (DON, HQMC, *Marine Corps Command Chronology*, 1999-2003).

During the remainder of 2000, Marines continued to conduct operations and training such as their operations in East Timor in support of Australian-led International Forces to provide heavy-lift assets in response to the crisis associated with political unrest, and exercises in Greece and in Odessa, Ukraine, that simulated combined peacekeeping missions with soldiers from other NATO countries (e.g., France, United Kingdom, Turkey). Further, Marines from Camp Pendleton, California, battled the wildfires in Salmon-Challis National Forest, Idaho for four weeks (*Command Chronology*, 1999-2003).

In 2001, General Jones published "Marine Corps Strategy 21," providing the Marine Corps with an overarching operational concept that would influence doctrine, force structure, training and education, and acquisition (DON, HQMC, Marine Corps

Strategy 21, 2001). In addition, during this period the Marine Corps developed a new uniform that was a wash-and-wear, computer generated, pixel camouflage design.

On 11 September 2001 at 9:38a.m., terrorists using commercial aircraft attacked, among other sites, the Pentagon. Marines played a large role in the rescue and recovery effort by responding immediately with combat air patrols over the homeland. Marines also deployed to Pakistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in support of combat operations against Taliban and al-Qaida forces operating in southern Afghanistan (*Command Chronology*, 1999-2003).

While continuing to conduct combat operations in Afghanistan, the Marine Corps conducted the largest urban-warfare exercise in its history as part of the larger exercise called Millennium Challenge 2002. This exercise included over 1,200 Marines and other forces that focused on warfare in urban terrain. As training exercises such as Millennium Challenge were ongoing, President Bush formalized his warning to Saddam Hussein calling for the leader to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction or face military action from the United States, through a joint congressional resolution authorizing the president to use military force (*Command Chronology*, 1999-2003).

In the fall of 2000, Marines continued to support various operations on a global scale such as, the 2nd Marine Division led task force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) against terrorism, by disrupting terrorist's cells that operated in the region. Further, Marines of I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), under the leadership of Lieutenant General James T. Conway, deployed to the Middle East, and established the I MEF

headquarters prior to the start of combat operations against Iraq. There were approximately 174,000 Marines serving the nation.

In early 2003, large groups of Marines began to deploy to the Persian Gulf as the Department of Defense (DoD) started to build combat power in the region for operations against the forces of Saddam Hussein. The DoD continued to send more troops to the Middle East with the total of U.S. forces in the region reaching nearly 150,000 troops (*Command Chronology*, 1999-2003). On 13 January 2003, General Jones turned over his command responsibilities as the commandant to General Michael W. Hagee, during a ceremony at the U.S. Naval Academy. In addition to serving as commandant, General Jones would become the first Marine to lead the U.S. European Command and serve as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

### **The Interview**

General Jones was interviewed for 45 minutes at his place of business, Jones Group International, in Vienna, Virginia. When asked how the command climate influences the ethical behavior of the Marines, he said, “Totally. I mean, if you don’t have a good command climate you don’t do anything well...let alone ethical behavior.” The general emphasized three areas during the interview: setting the example, discipline, and understanding the environment. First, the section will discuss setting the example, and the importance of guidance from the commander. This will be followed by a discussion on discipline, and how the commander can influence ethical behavior and reinforce core values through martial arts training. Finally, this section will address the

significance of the environment relative to the visibility of commanders and its influence on ethical behavior.

### **Setting the Example**

One of the most important steps a commander can take to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines is to lead by example. As Jones said, “Well, I think the first thing that you have to do is obviously lead by example...by how you handle yourself ethically...” General Jones discussed the importance of the troops seeing the commander leading and behaving by example.

Jones, himself, was influenced by the behavior of others, especially his father, a World War II Marine, and his uncle who retired as a Lieutenant General from the Marine Corps in 1973. Jones highlighted the importance of setting the example when he quoted his late father who always reminded him of the maxim: “Officers eat last.” In other words, it was the responsibility of the officers to take care of the troops and to always put the needs of the troops before their own needs were met. While growing up, General Jones had good role models and examples to follow; those who lived the core values of honor, courage, and commitment, and who stressed the ideas of selflessness, consistency in behavior, and values. Jones also discussed the importance of open communications and consensus building, as part of the command climate which helps to promote ethical behavior.

**Open communications.** The commander must set the tone for the climate to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines. This must be established up front, as Jones said: “I think that kind of guidance comes from the top...you have got to make that part

of what you expect your subordinates to deal with.” For the climate to influence ethical behavior, the commander must create an environment where subordinates feel they can voice their opinions.

This invitation from the commanding officer must be aimed at every level within the command as Jones said, “You have to provide the command climate that generates those (ethical) discussions, not from the top down, but really from the bottom up.” In other words, the non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and the junior officers should conduct ethical discussions on a regular basis reinforcing the Marine Corps’ Core Values.

If the core values are reinforced on a routine basis at the lowest possible level, the likelihood of reducing misconduct incidents increases. Jones said, “You must keep reminding people, because new people are coming in all the time. If they don’t hear that then suddenly, the first thing that happens is you will have a major training, or a major hazing incident.” In addition to open communications, Jones suggested that the commander should attempt to get buy-in from the subordinates relative to the decision-making process within the command.

**Consensus building.** As part of the command climate and open communications, the general discussed the value of consensus building. As the commander becomes more senior (e.g., a colonel or general officer), consensus building takes on an even greater level of importance in establishing the right command climate. For example, the normal tenure for any commander in the Marine Corps is two years. Therefore, to have a climate that is enduring, the commander must build a consensus among his staff, subordinate commanders, and senior enlisted leaders to ensure they “agree that what you’re asking

them to do is worth doing.” When commanders build a consensus, they receive buy-in from the subordinate leaders tasked to carry out the commander’s guidance. This makes people feel that they are part of the decision-making process and they have a greater feeling of ownership in the product. Further, consensus building might tend to mitigate poor decisions made in a vacuum for example, when people take shortcuts to improve efficiency due to a lack of good communications with their seniors, or when someone is hesitant to report an issue that senior leadership needs to address.

Jones gave the example of a person who received his guidance and six months later was able to implement that guidance as if it were their own idea. Jones said, “Successful leadership is when the feedback you get indirectly or even accidentally confirms what you thought about six months before or a year before is actually working...So, it is the same thing with ethical behavior. And this is something you must talk about.”

## **Discipline**

General Jones discussed indicators that reflect a climate focused on ethical behavior. One of the key indicators is discipline. Jones said, “What do the troops look like? How do the officers handle themselves? What is their off-duty incident rate? How are they doing on drugs and alcohol?” Jones believed that discipline is critical to operational confidence and success on the battlefield. Jones discussed the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) as one of the primary tools for a commander to use that will reduce misconduct incidents and poor ethical decision-making within the organization.



**Martial arts training and ethics.** Jones suggested that it is important for commanders to build an ethical foundation for the Marines when he said, “Understanding ethical behavior within the rules of engagement for example, on the battlefield, is extremely important.” This ethical foundation is based on the Marine Corps values and discipline. One of the programs Jones implemented when he was CMC to instill discipline and reinforce Marine Corps values was the MCMAP.

When General Jones was a second lieutenant in Vietnam, he was assigned to work with the Korean Marines, who would get up in the morning and exercise using the martial art of Taekwondo. This type of martial art required discipline and was physically demanding. Jones said, “...I saw the discipline and ethical value of it. So, in 1996 at Camp Pendleton, I made it voluntary in the battalion...almost immediately, the ethical behavior of the battalion changed.”

Jones realized that Marines would embrace the idea of being confident enough to defend themselves, avoid confrontations, and if necessary, fight smarter without losing their dignity. As a battalion commander, he noticed a reduction in drug and alcohol related incidents, and reckless behavior. He also realized more reenlistments and evidence of discipline in the command. Therefore, based on his experiences, when he became CMC, he directed that the Marine Corps adopt the MCMAP Corps-wide.

Today, Marines practice MCMAP in all Marine Corps units. A MCMAP belt is highly valued by Marines. The MCMAP belt is a “badge of courage” that not only signifies the level of martial arts proficiency for that Marine (e.g., tan belt for beginners, and green belt for advanced), but it also demonstrates a high degree of self-discipline.

Jones said, “They don’t want to lose that belt. And they could lose that belt just by being undisciplined and in many cases, unethical.” Jones suggested that when commanders include a strong MCMAP within their units, they will realize a reduction in misconduct incidents associated with poor ethical decision-making, and they will benefit from an increase in the overall discipline within the organization.

### **The Environment**

Jones said, “It’s much tougher now to command. It’s much tougher to be a CEO of a corporation. Anybody who thinks they can hide behind their behavior is wrong.” In other words, due to social media and enhanced technology, commanders are much more visible today than in years past. Jones discussed the CNN effect when he said, “So, the first thing I think you have to do in training our officers and staff noncommissioned officers (SNCOs) is to make sure that they understand that they are not invisible. In fact, they are visible 24/7 and 365.”

**Commanders are visible.** Jones suggested that commanders are always being watched, and the example they set is critical. Due to the advent of social media, for example, commanders are very visible, and they must be very careful about what they say, what they post, and what personal information they decide to share on social media because they represent the Marine Corps as an institution.

General Jones believed that an increased level of visibility was a good thing to hold commanders accountable for their own leadership by example. Every move a commander makes is scrutinized as Jones said, “You should never do anything that embarrasses yourself, your family, your unit, or your country.” Setting the right

command climate that influences the ethical behavior of the Marines takes effort and constant attention as Jones said, “You have to work on it.” Again, he used the example of hazing.

When Jones was CMC, he said, “There is only one form of authorized hazing, and that is recruit training and officer training. That’s it.” He mentioned that the problem of hazing and other issues is like ethical training, which must be discussed on a regular basis or the Marines’ character development will begin to erode. He also suggested that hazing is something that occurs when leaders have lost control of their organizations based on a lack of attention to getting out and seeing what is going on within their organizations.

### **Summary**

General Jones believed that one of the most important things a commander can do in establishing the right climate is to set the proper example. He suggested that commander’s must include open communications as part of their command climates to promote ethical behavior. Further, he recommended consensus building for commanders to ensure that they have buy-in from other leaders within the organization.

Jones advocated for commanders to study various metrics such as, alcohol related incidents, drug use, and other misconduct as indicators of the command climate’s success. According to Jones, one of the best tools a commander can use to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines is the MCMAP. He discussed how the program promotes ethical behavior through the discipline associated with martial arts. He suggested that Marines cherish the MCMAP belts that symbolize an individual’s level of martial arts proficiency and discipline.

Finally, Jones discussed the environment, and how it acts as a double-edged sword since a commander's behavior is always being scrutinized and social media opens the door for an even greater amount of inspection. Conversely, social media can also ensure that commanders are being held to their own high standards while at work, and when they are living their private lives away from the base.

## **General Michael W. Hagee, 33<sup>rd</sup> Commandant (2003-2007)**

### **Background**

On 13 January 2003, General Michael W. Hagee became the 33<sup>rd</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps during a ceremony at the U.S. Naval Academy (Appendix G). At this time, there were approximately 177,000 Marines in the Corps. While Hagee assumed command, Marines were rapidly building up combat power in Kuwait as the nation faced a possible war with Iraq. In March 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom began with cruise missile attacks on military targets around Baghdad, Iraq. In early April, Iraqi resistance in Baghdad collapsed as American forces captured the capital city, ending major combat operations (*Command Chronology*, 2003-2007).

Other significant events took place after hostilities in Iraq ended. In the spring of 2003, Marines left Vieques, Puerto Rico and Iceland after years of a Marine Corps presence in both locations. In addition, Marines were notified that they would be returning to Iraq as part of the U.S. troop rotation to fight a growing insurgency in the country. While Marines were preparing to return to Iraq, other Marines were pursuing al-Qaida and Taliban forces in Afghanistan (*Command Chronology*, 2003-2007).

In 2004, the Corps participated in other operations such as providing Marine security forces in Haiti who were tasked to evacuate American citizens from the country as part of a multinational interim force; conducting security and humanitarian assistance operations with the new Iraqi security forces; providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Philippines after two weeks of severe tropical storms; and

participating in humanitarian assistance operations for victims of the tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean in December 2004 (*Command Chronology*, 2003-2007).

Another significant event occurred in 2005: the creation of the Marine Corps' Special Operations Command (SOCOM) component, known as MARSOC. This organization would provide the U.S. Special Operations Command (U.S. SOCOM) with the Marine component of that organization. In 2006, the Marines continued to support operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan (*Command Chronology*, 2003-2007).

In the spring of 2006, the Marine Corps began moving personnel and equipment from Okinawa, Japan, to Guam, as part of the Pentagon's larger effort to better align security forces in the Pacific Rim. Other significant events in 2006 included the evacuation of U.S. citizens from Beirut, Lebanon, due to fighting between the Hezbollah and the Israelis. The Wounded Warrior Center opened at Camp Pendleton to mirror the center at Camp Lejeune. Finally, the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia was officially dedicated on the Corps' 231st birthday. In January 2007, General Hagee retired from the Marine Corps after serving for 42 years (*Command Chronology*, 2003-2007).

### **The Interview**

General Hagee was interviewed for approximately ninety minutes at his place of business, the Admiral Nimitz Foundation, in Fredericksburg, Texas. General Hagee emphasized the importance of setting the example, good communications, holding people accountable, and educating Marines on core values. First, this section will address setting the example and how climate is not about the commander and his or her success but, rather, climate is about the people in the organization and the integrity of the institution.

This will be followed by a discussion on open communications and how it builds trust that promotes ethical behavior within the organization. Next, the importance of maintaining high standards and holding people accountable will be covered. Finally, this section will address the commander's approach to educating the Marines on core values using the Socratic Method and ethical dilemmas to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines in the unit.

### **Setting the Example**

When Hagee was asked what had the greatest influence on him and his approach to command climate he said, "...watching individuals, both good leaders, guys that set the right climate, and individuals that did not set the right climate...So, it's constantly looking at your environment and learning from both good and bad examples." He referenced Admiral Chester Nimitz and how this officer always left his ego at the door; another important aspect of setting the example. Hagee described the command climate set by Nimitz as the epitome of an officer who was more concerned about the institution and other people than with his own personal success. Hagee shared two stories that can be used by commanders today of how Nimitz set the example and developed the right command climate for the Pacific Fleet during WWII.

**Admiral Chester Nimitz.** In 1941, Nimitz led the Bureau of Navigation in Washington, D.C. His position required close contact with the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the White House. President Roosevelt had become frustrated with the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet (CinCUS), Admiral John Richardson, who he relieved in early 1941 (Potter, 1976). As a result of his positive reputation in Washington, Roosevelt asked Nimitz to be the new CinCUS. Nimitz turned down the promotion because he

believed it would not be good for the Navy to pass over a hundred or more senior admirals who should be considered for the position (Potter, 1976). In other words, Nimitz was more concerned about the Navy as an institution, and the other more senior admirals than himself. This mentality was typical of Nimitz as evidenced by the command climate he established during the war in the Pacific.

Hagee discussed the importance of the commander “checking his ego at the door” and focusing on the institution and the people within the organization, as critical to influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines when he said, “...it’s not about the individual (commander). The guys I told you about who got fired, it was about them. Admiral Nimitz? It was never about him.” Hagee mentioned one final example of Nimitz setting the right climate and leading by example following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel was relieved of his command of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt directed Admiral Nimitz to assume the duties as the commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet (CinCPac) (Potter, 1976). As one of his first tasks, Nimitz had to select his new staff in Hawaii. Kimmel’s staff was expecting the worst and was preparing to be fired just before Christmas.

Nimitz gathered Kimmel’s entire staff together and told them he desired to keep them on for continuity and that if anyone requested a transfer he would listen to them and try to help them to get the assignments they requested (Potter, 1976). Hagee said, “That’s really command climate.” In response to the question, “How does the command climate influence ethical behavior?” Hagee discussed the importance of open communications and holding people accountable.



## **Open Communications**

One of the first things Hagee mentioned about communications is that commanders must have the ability to communicate with their Marines on all levels. He used an example when he was a platoon commander in Vietnam.

**The troops.** A white Marine from Alabama hung a small confederate flag on his tent and a black Marine took offense to this gesture. Hagee let the two Marines discuss the issue in a civil manner and once the white Marine understood the black Marine's position, he removed the flag from the tent. In other words, as Hagee said, "The Marines provided the solution for the betterment of that command, and therefore, the command climate...maybe we can bring problems to him (the commander) and he is going to help us resolve those problems." Hagee suggested that this type of communications promotes trust and facilitates better ethical decision making by the Marines.

**The staff.** As a commanding officer, you have a staff. As Hagee said, "So, you have to get the staff to where they will open up with you and have a conversation with you. And that means you must keep your damn mouth shut and listen, and not shoot anyone in the face." Hagee gave an example of an ethical dilemma faced by many senior commanding officers regarding the perquisites, benefits, etc. that are sometimes made available to them.

When he was the commanding general (CG) of First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) he had to take a flight to Twenty-Nine Palms, CA. There was an empty seat on the plane and he could have easily used that seat to bring his spouse on the trip. His staff recommended that he not use the extra seat for his spouse as it would set the wrong example and it violates ethical rules associated with the conduct of senior leaders. The

general, of course, listened to his staff and did not take his wife on the trip. This is an example of listening to the staff and exercising good leadership by example. Another example of open communications that Hagee shared was during the planning for Iraq.

During I MEF's planning leading up to the invasion of Iraq, Hagee's staff developed a solid plan for the ground invasion of that country. Based on the type of climate Hagee had established within the I MEF headquarters, Marines were able to feel comfortable voicing their opinions and disagreements with various planning suggestions made by senior leaders. On one occasion, Hagee was being briefed on the final plan that had been in the works for three to four months and a captain (junior officer) told General Hagee that he did not think the plan would work. Hagee said, "Ok, now tell me why? So, the captain explained his position in a very articulate manner and Hagee agreed to change the plan according to the captain's recommendation. This is an example of a command climate that is based on trust, open communications, and people trying to do what's in the best interests of the organization.

### **Accountability**

Hagee stressed the importance of holding people accountable. One example discussed by Hagee that demonstrates the importance of holding people accountable is when he was the CG of the First Marine Division at Camp Pendleton. Marines were shooting horses in California and General Hagee was going to court martial the Marines. Hagee received a phone call from a senior leader in the office of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) who suggested that Hagee discharge the Marines without a court martial based on political pressure from the parents of the Marines who were calling the SecDef's office.

**Upholding high standards.** Hagee was informed by his legal officer after his decision to court martial the Marines that the entire division was waiting to see if he was going to hold the Marines accountable for their actions. As Hagee said, “And that becomes very important in setting the climate...” Hagee suggested that junior Marines admire their commanders and want to be like them which is a positive aspect of command climate. However, the negative aspect of climate is when Marines recognize that the commander is serious and will hold them accountable if they make mistakes of character. As Hagee said, “If I cross that ethical line, then he (the commander) is going to hold me accountable, and I don’t want to do that.” In other words, you can’t expect Marines to make ethical decisions if you, as the commander, don’t uphold the Corps’ high standards and hold those accountable who choose to violate those high standards. One way for the commander to mitigate the risk of Marines not following the standards is to constantly teach and reinforce the Marine Corps’ Core Values through education and constant reinforcement.

### **Education and Values**

General Hagee’s approach to climate was influenced by his tour as an instructor at the Naval Academy when he was a colonel. The Navy had a cheating scandal at the Academy and the Secretary of the Navy sent Hagee to the Naval Academy to “fix” the ethical problem. Hagee suggested to the staff that the best way to tackle the problem was to establish a character development program for all Midshipmen at the Academy. The survey professors at the Academy took umbrage with Hagee’s plan, but he asked them “What happens if you shave a little bit to save money on that bridge you’re making. Is that an ethics thing?” The professors agreed with Hagee that ethics must become part of

the instruction at the Academy. Clearly, Hagee was able to get the Academy energized to establish a four-year ethics program across the curriculum, which is still taught today.

**Core values.** Hagee discussed how core values must be reinforced on a regular basis at the lowest possible level to have the greatest influence on the Marines in the unit (junior officers and NCOs). In reference to the importance of discussions on ethical dilemmas, Hagee said, “That is part of helping to set, in my opinion, the command climate to where individuals can think through that...And by having that discussion, you set up better individuals that can make better decisions, which is going to help the command climate.”

Hagee disagreed with the approach where an officer lectures the Marines about Kant, Utilitarianism, or Aristotle. Hagee said, “You’ve got to either have a real problem that you’re trying to resolve, or you have an issue that you want them to talk about it and say, if that issue came here, how would you handle it.” According to Hagee, one of the best ways to approach discussions on ethical dilemmas is to use the Socratic Method.

**The Socratic Method.** The Socratic Method is “a pedagogical technique in which a teacher does not give information directly but instead asks a series of questions, with the result that the student comes either to the desired knowledge by answering the question or to a deeper awareness of the limits of knowledge.” (The American Heritage dictionary, 2018). The Socratic Method enables the leader to guide the discussion without giving the answer to people. It forces people to think through the problem especially, during periods of awkward silence, when others are not sure how to respond to an ethical dilemma that has a positive and negative side to the answer (e.g., the poor man who steals the expensive wonder drug to save his dying wife). As Hagee said, “And

being yes-no, black-white, all the time, in my opinion, does not set the type of command climate that you necessarily want. Because there are ethical dilemmas.” Hagee suggested that the Marine Corps should teach the ethical dilemma associated with the story of O.P. Smith and the “Chowder Society.”

**Oliver P. Smith.** After WWII, Congress was pushing for the Marine Corps to be subsumed into the Army. A small group of Marine Corps officers who called themselves the “chowder society” were formed and began to write the “bended knee” speech as the speech to Congress on why the Corps should remain “a force in readiness, with its supporting arms and air wings intact” (Shisler, 2009, p.117). Based on this effort, the resulting National Security Act of 1947 described in the law, the mission of the Marine Corps (Shisler, 2009).

O.P. Smith, a career combat leader from WW II and Korea, and a general officer, chose not to be a part of this secret committee, as he believed they were not taking an ethical approach to securing the future of the Marine Corps (Shisler, 2009). Based on his lack of participation in this secret group, “Smith became an outsider and an enemy by not agreeing with their methods, even though he fully supported their objective” (Shisler, 2009, p. 120). As Hagee said, “O.P. Smith refused to participate because he thought it was underhanded.” Which side is correct? O.P. Smith’s view, or the view of the Chowder Society? Hagee suggested that commanders include these types of discussions with their Marines on a regular basis, to reinforce the core values by using the Socratic Method to force Marines to think through difficult ethical problems that do not always have easy solutions.

### **Summary**

General Hagee discussed the importance of setting the right example when you are leading others. He mentioned that the leaders' focus should be on the people and the institution, not on the leader (i.e., it's not about you!). Hagee referenced Admiral Chester Nimitz, as the epitome of selflessness, and as a leader who was focused on the people and the Navy, as an institution.

General Hagee emphasized the need for open communications if commanders hoped to create a command climate that influenced the ethical behavior of the Marines. Open communications must be part of the climate of the organization to get Marines to talk to each other in a civil manner (i.e., get along), and to facilitate recommendations from subordinates without the fear of repercussions.

Hagee discussed the value of high standards and holding Marines accountable if they violated those high standards. He offered the Socratic Method as the best way for commanders to ensure that Marines are having discussions about ethical dilemmas associated with the Marine Corps' Core Values. These discussions, Hagee recommended, must be led by junior officers and NCOs at the lowest possible level, to really influence the ethical behavior within the organization. Hagee made a second reference to a historical naval figure with General O.P. Smith, as a good example for commanders to use when discussing ethics with their Marines.

## **General James T. Conway, 34<sup>TH</sup> Commandant (2006-2010)**

### **Background**

General Conway became the 34<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps on 13 November 2006, during a ceremony at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. (Appendix H). At this time, there were approximately 179,000 Marines in the Corps. General Conway's number one priority was to support the Marines and Sailors in combat. In late 2006, Marines were experiencing a decline in the fighting in Iraq based on the results from "The Awakening" (Sunni Sheiks cooperating with the Iraqi Police, and Iraqi Provisional Army to counterbalance Al Qaeda). Although the Corps was experiencing a reduction in violence in Iraq, the Taliban in Afghanistan were becoming a significant problem requiring more Marines to deploy to that region (DON, HQMC, *United States Marine Corps Concepts & Programs*, 2009). Due to the number of casualties returning home, General Conway directed the establishment of the Wounded Warriors Regiment at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico, Virginia. This organization would assist injured Marines through their recovery and transition to their next assignment or to the private sector. Two subordinate Wounded Warrior Battalions were established on each coast (*Command Chronology*, 2006-2010).

In 2007, Marines continued to participate as part of the NATO-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Simultaneously, Marines increased their footprint in western Al Anbar Province in Iraq. During this period, General Conway visited the Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan, and conducted town hall-style meetings to discuss

numerous topics of interest. This style of leadership was very indicative of the commandant's command climate (*Command Chronology*, 2006-2010).

In September of 2008, the Marine Corps continued to support combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan with the Iraqi's taking over much of the security force mission. In Afghanistan, Marines captured key areas from the Taliban. During this period, Barack Obama was elected as the 44th President of the United States of America (*Command Chronology*, 2006-2010).

In 2009, Marines continued to support both Operations Enduring/Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) in Afghanistan and Iraq. Marines participated in numerous operations that covered combat operations, stability, and security operations, and transitioned to counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Marines transferred responsibility to Iraqi forces in the Anbar Province while Marines in Afghanistan continued to fight the Taliban, supporting the Afghan National Army (*Command Chronology*, 2006-2010).

During this period, the Corps was deployed globally, providing support to many other nations and allies through theater security cooperation (TSC) efforts. Further, the Marines deployed in support of civil-military and humanitarian assistance operations throughout the world such as in the Philippines with disaster relief in response to the devastating effects of two tropical storms (Marine Corps Concepts & Programs, 2009). Other examples of disaster relief and humanitarian operations included: disaster relief in Haiti, where Marines responded to the massive earthquake, and in Pakistan and the Philippines (*United States Marine Corps Concepts & Programs*, 2009). Finally,



coinciding with General Conway's change of command, Marines responded to the Typhoon Megi, in the Philippines, in October of 2010. Here, Marines provided food, water, tents, supplies, and air support to isolated villages that were destroyed by the typhoon. On October 22, 2010, General Conway relinquished his post as commandant during a ceremony at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. to General James F. Amos (*Command Chronology*, 2006-2010).

### **The Interview**

General Conway was interviewed at his residence in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania, for approximately ninety minutes. Conway emphasized three areas during the interview. First, that the climate is set by the commander and expressed through his, or her philosophy of command; second, that the commander must lead by personal example; and third, that commanding officers must act like human beings.

First, this section will discuss General Conway's thoughts on the philosophy of command, where he discussed the importance of conveying the commander's expectations to the Marines through their commitment to the core values, the need for open communications, the concept of collective leadership, and the importance of receiving constant feedback. Next, this section will address leadership by example, where Conway emphasized the need for the commander to instill discipline by holding people accountable and taking care of them while looking out for the institution. Finally, the importance of acting like a human being by taking care of the Marines' families, and by having a sense of humor will be covered.

## Philosophy of Command

General Conway discussed the philosophy of command as one of the first things a commander needs to convey to the Marines. This philosophy must be delivered to all the Marines (e.g., officers, NCOs, the commander's staff, and troops) face-to-face. Conway said, "...you have to talk to people...you have to be able to read the body language. The whole thing of communication up front, I think, is really key." Further, the commander must live it. Conway said, "You can't say one thing and then do something else." The commanding officer must walk the talk and follow through with those areas covered in the commander's philosophy of command.

An example of Conway's (2007b) philosophy of command was demonstrated in his 34<sup>th</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance, where he identified seven areas of focus for the Marine Corps such as, the importance of core values and creating quality citizens. Further, in 2007, he published a communication plan where he said, "Assuring Marine Corps success requires effectively articulating what we stand for, what we do, who we are, and what we aspire to be..." (DON, HQMC, *Strategic Communication Plan*, 2007). As part of his planning guidance and his communication plan, the CMC emphasized the importance of character and creating quality citizens, which all stem from the Marine Corps' Core Values.

**Core values.** Conway published guidance that established the expectations for the Marine Corps where he emphasized Marine Corps values and directed a rededication by all Marines to remain committed to those core values (2007b; DON, HQMC, *Marine*

*Corps Vision & Strategy 2025*). In other words, as CMC, he set the tone up front on the importance of Marine Corps values and the responsibility of the commanding officer to establish clear standards of personal behavior for their organizations and to maintain those standards.

Another example of Conway's (2009) commitment to core values and the importance of an ethical command climate was his guidance to all commanders on the topic of sexual assault when he said, "I charge you with educating yourselves on sexual assault, identifying the misconceptions your Marines may have about it, and creating a command climate that dispels these myths and establishes clear standards for personal behavior" (p.1). In other words, it is the responsibility of the commander to set the right climate that promotes ethical behavior in accordance with Marine Corps values. Conway (2007a) also said that "ethical behavior is a function of leadership..." (p.2). As part of the command philosophy and the climate set by the commander, Conway suggested that commanders must have open communications within their units to influence ethical behavior.

**Open communications.** The relationship between the commander and the subordinates must be one built on trust and frankness. Open communications can facilitate these ideas and promotes collective leadership, which provides good feedback to the commander. Conway shared one example that incorporates open communications, trust, and feedback when he was in command of I MEF in Iraq.

Brigadier General Richard Natonski arrived from Camp Lejeune, N.C., in command of Task Force Tarawa and was assigned to be attached to I MEF. Natonski claimed that his task force could do anything that Conway asked him to do. He was so eager to accept tactical missions that Conway began to wonder if Natonski was a “yes man”, or just truly enthusiastic for work. To satisfy his curiosity, Conway sent Natonski a ridiculous assignment, then called him and asked, “What do you think”? There was a pause on the other end of the phone, and Natonski said, “Sir, I think that’s the most fucked up thing I ever heard in my life.” Conway told Natonski that he had just passed the test!” In other words, commanders must set a climate that promotes honest and open communications, where people can speak their mind without fear of repercussions from the senior leadership. This type of climate, where the commander is very approachable, promotes ethical behavior in organizations. Similarly, Conway actively sought the ideas of others prior to deciding, and he valued the concept of collective leadership.

**Collective leadership.** Conway said, “I always believed that other people’s thoughts count...Early on I realized the value of democratic or collective leadership.” General Conway believed that a commander must establish a climate that promotes buy-in and develops trust among subordinates. According to Conway, open communications coupled with collective leadership promotes trust and confidence, and results in a greater likelihood of ethical behavior from subordinates. As Conway said, “You really do want to hear what they have to say, and you really do want to listen-it is important.”

For example, when Conway was CMC, he had concerns about how to take care of the wounded warriors. A member of his staff recommended the establishment of a Wounded Warrior Regiment that could oversee the two Wounded Warrior Battalions. So, Conway set up the Wounded Warrior Regiment in Quantico, Virginia. Conway always looked for the good ideas of others as he said, “One of the tenets of a good leader is to be able to understand it, appreciate it, and then put it into effect. So, that’s command climate.”

**Feedback.** As part of open communications, and closely associated with collective leadership, Conway emphasized that commanders need to receive continual feedback to ensure their command climate is working. Conway said, “Body language with your commanders, body language with your staff. Willingness of people to give feedback...” are all indicators of climate effectiveness and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines.

If the commander asks Marines what they think, and the climate is of a nature where the people feel intimidated, then the conversations will be very short and will rob the commander of hearing good ideas from subordinates. Conway suggested that commanders can receive valuable informal feedback by walking around when he said, “You can tell when troops are happy and when they’re not... You can tell in your individual conversations with them, if they feel they can talk to you...” Conway mentioned that when commanders ask their Marines how they are doing and solicits their opinions and recommendations, Marines will be more inclined to make better ethical

decisions because of the trust and confidence that has been established within the organization between the leader and the subordinates.

Another example of taking care of Marines was how Conway handled his general officers' professional development. Conway had been a general officer for nearly ten years before he became CMC and rarely, was he ever counseled on his performance as a general. Therefore, as CMC, he initiated a process where all one and two-star general officers would be counseled by the general officer senior to them in their chain of command. This report would be sent via the three-star level to the CMC notifying him that all generals were counseled. This process promoted open communications, trust, and good leadership. Senior leaders were willing to look other senior leaders in the eyes and discuss with them their performance, and their opportunities for future promotions. The feedback Conway received was very positive and underscored the healthy climate he established for his general officer corps.

### **Leadership by Example**

General Conway discussed two areas integral to leadership by example relative to the commanders' climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines. First, commanders must instill discipline in their Marines by holding them accountable for their actions. Second, it is the responsibility of the commander to take care of the Marine while protecting the Marine Corps as an institution.

**Discipline and accountability.** Conway said, “Discipline is important in a unit...You want to create a good command climate where people know that you’re going to get rewarded for good behavior, but you’re going to be punished for bad behavior.” Conway discussed the importance of setting high standards and holding people accountable to those high standards. He suggested that it is the responsibility of the commander to discipline the Marines when necessary and that a commander can’t be worried about whether he or she is popular with the troops, as Conway said, “But with that comes the responsibility of disciplining when you have to. You can’t be reluctant to do that.” One example of this is when Conway was a company commander and he had to discipline two of his best NCO’s.

General Conway’s Marines were training with the Germans in the Black Forest and when the training concluded, two of his best NCO’s met a German kid who linked them up with a merchant who sold them some peach brandy. Prior to the hike back to the ships, the two NCO’s were drunk and were barely able to walk back to the ships with the rest of the company. Conway held the NCO’s accountable by fining them and putting them on restriction which precluded the Marines from seeing England. Conway said, “The word spread like wild fire. If the company commander is willing to take two of our best guys and hammer them, gosh, God forbid if we do something stupid on liberty.” Conway was the only commander who had no incidents while on liberty in South Hampton or in Liverpool. As Conway said, “People take on the personality of the commander and reflect it.” Conway highlighted the importance of leadership by example and the need for holding people accountable. One final example of accountability is

when Conway had to relieve two of his battalion commanders due to abusive leadership styles. Conway became aware of the problem through junior officers who expressed that the battalion commander was out of control and abusive. Conway also uncovered more information about the commanders through division inspections and command climate surveys that provided him with enough information to hold the commanders accountable, relieving them of their duties.

**Protecting the institution.** Conway believed it was a commander's responsibility to protect the institution. To demonstrate this point, he used two examples relevant to climate and ethical behavior. The first example dealt with one of Conway's general officers. The second example juxtaposes the CMC's concerns for a warfighting institution, the Marine Corps, against political agendas being set in Washington.

When Conway was CMC, he had to relieve one of his general officers due to misconduct. Conway referred to it as "the Lance Corporal Rule" (a junior enlisted Marine) as Conway said, "If a Lance Corporal gets punished for doing this, then a general gets punished for doing the same thing. It's just that simple." Conway had to run the disciplinary action through the Secretary of the Navy (SecNav), who was opposed to the punishment for political reasons. Therefore, Conway approached the SecNav on three different occasions to attempt to convince him to do the right thing. Eventually, Conway was successful in convincing the SecNav to agree with the dismissal, and the general was relieved and forced to retire as a colonel. Conway pushed to do the right thing for pure ethical reasons, but also to do the right thing for the institution-The



Department of the Navy (Navy and Marine Corps) based on the negative precedence that would be set if the officer kept his position or retired as a general. The second example dealt with the U.S. Congress.

When General Conway was in Washington, D.C., numerous political initiatives would appear such as, homosexuals serving openly in the military, or women in infantry units. These initiatives had an impact on the Marine Corps as a warfighting organization. Conway was opposed to these initiatives as he said, “I think it’s really hard to put a Marine into a barracks with a homosexual, or two, or three, and think that, okay, there’s going to be automatic bonding here.” When he looked at each of the above proposals he asked, “Does that make the Marine Corps a better fighting force?” If the answer was yes, then it was something the Marine Corps needs to do. If the answer was no, then it was not in the best interest of the Marine Corps as an institution. Conway said, “As far as society and equal...absolutely. But that’s different; that’s not fighting and dying. That’s just living.” In other words, General Conway never looked at things from the perspective of what’s best for Jim Conway or society rather, he would look at an idea a try to determine what was best for the United States Marine Corps as a warfighting institution.

### **Being Human**

In addition to everything mentioned above, General Conway discussed the significance of acting like a human being when leading others. Conway said, “I don’t think I ever held a school circle-that’s when you gather all the Marines in one place and break ‘em down, and again you go eyeball to eyeball with people-that I didn’t feel like I

was trying to reveal some of my personality, some of my humanity.” He addressed two areas relative to climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines. First, he mentioned the importance of taking care of a Marines family. Second, he suggested that a commanding officer must have a good sense of humor.

**Taking care of Marines and their families.** Earlier, the Wounded Warrior Regiment was discussed as one of the examples of how Conway cared for his wounded Marines. Mrs. Conway had an influence on the CMC when she said, “Hey, it’s not just about the Marines. It’s about the families, too.” General Conway (2010) highlighted the importance of taking care of the families in his guidance to his commanders when he would talk to them before taking command. As Conway said, “While we recruit Marines, we retain families” (p.9). He believed that family readiness was instrumental to the long-term health of the Corps and to unit readiness prior to the rigors of deployments (Conway, 2007b; Conway, 2010). Commanders are responsible for ensuring their Marines’ families are taken care of and this should be part of their command climate which will also promote better ethical decision-making, when Marines know the commander is looking out for them and their families.

**Sense of humor.** At the end of the interview, Conway advocated for commanders to have a good sense of humor. For example, when he was a company commander as a young captain, he told his company staff to set up a range shoot (e.g., rifles, pistols, machineguns, etc.) and after the training was over and everything was cleaned up and accounted for, the company would go into an administrative bivouac

(similar to a campout) with hot chow and a campfire. Conway said, “And I remember walking around just standing back in the shadow...but Jesus Christ, the humor and the levity that was going on with the harassment and the things that were being said...it was unbelievable.”

This gesture raised morale and allowed the Marines to have fun while training in the field. Conway said, “So, I think that that’s an important part of creating a command climate and maintaining it, really that you can enjoy the humor that your troops put forward and be the butt of it if need be, but just have fun while you’re doing it.” Conway summed up his thoughts on command, climate, and leading Marines when he said, “There’s something wrong with your approach if you can’t enjoy the people around you that are patriots, dedicated, mission-oriented, and love their country.”

### **Summary**

General Conway recommended that commanders deliver their command philosophy to their Marines face-to-face to ensure that all personnel understand the commander’s expectations and intent. Conway believed the expectations for Marines should include a commitment to the Marine Corps’ Core Values. In addition, he suggested that commanders create a climate that facilitates open communications where the commander is accessible, and one where every Marine can offer suggestions and recommendations to the commander.

Conway suggested that commanders solicit feedback from their Marines and that commanders should seek the ideas and thoughts of others within the organization before deciding. Conway believed in leadership by example. As such, commanders must establish a climate that instilled discipline in Marines and held them accountable for their actions. While commanders must take care of their people, they must also protect the Marine Corps as an institution. Also, commanders need to take care of their Marines' families, which will promote better ethical decision-making because the Marines know their commander is looking out for them and their loved ones. Conway also advocated for commanders to have a good sense of humor and show their Marines that they are human beings who truly enjoy being a Marine and leading other Marines.

## **General James F. Amos, 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant (2010-2014)**

### **Background**

General Amos became the 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps on 22 October 2010, during a ceremony at Marine Barracks, Washington D.C. (Appendix I). General Amos was the first Marine Corps aviator to become commandant. Further, General Amos became the first assistant commandant in 27 years who moved up to assume the duties as commandant. At that time, they were approximately 202,000 Marines.

In 2010, the Commandant Amos issued his 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance with the number one priority as winning the fight in Afghanistan (DON, HQMC 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance, 2010). Commensurate with this priority, the Marine Corps conducted surge operations in Afghanistan under the command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. In keeping with his promise to keep the Marine Corps as the nation's Expeditionary Crisis Response Force, the Marines deployed a Special Purpose - Marine Air Ground Task Force-Crisis Response (SPMAGTF-CR) to both Africa and the Middle East (DON, HQMC, 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance, 2010).

As Marines continued to prosecute the War on Terror, they responded to numerous disaster relief/humanitarian assistance missions such as the 2012 disaster relief operation in the Philippines, where Marines delivered relief supplies, and, again in 2013 where Marines responded to Typhoon Haiyan, delivering supplies and humanitarian assistance.

In addition to these tasks, Marines focused on assisting allied partners and friends through theater security cooperation (TSC) efforts by strengthening the military capacity of other partner nations such as, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, India, Thailand, Australia, Japan, and the Philippines (Amos, 2014, *Commandant's Report to Congress on Posture of the Marine Corps*).

In 2013, Marines reduced their overall presence in Afghanistan through success in working with the Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan National Army (ANA). As the Marine Corps decreased its presence in Afghanistan, it continued to contribute to global security and stability through Marine Embassy Security detachments and Fleet Anti-Terrorism Support Teams (FAST) in support of U.S. diplomatic missions in Libya, and Yemen, and the other 148 embassies and consulates throughout the world (Amos, 2014, *Commandant's Report to Congress on Posture of the Marine Corps 2014*).

Marines also participated in other operations assisting American citizens at home such as, Marine participation through disaster relief in response to Hurricane Sandy. In addition to combat operations overseas and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief at home and abroad, Marines have also conducted counter-terrorism, foreign internal defense, and other special operations throughout the globe such as, combating al-Qaida organizations in Mali and Mauritania in North Africa (Amos, 2014, *Commandant's Report to Congress on Posture of the Marine Corps, 2014*).

The Marine Corps continued to provide expeditionary readiness in the Pacific through its forward presence in Australia. The Marine Rotational Force Darwin conducted training and readiness exercises throughout the Pacific region focused on building partner capacity and theater security cooperation efforts with nations such as,

Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia (Amos, 2014, *Commandant's Report to Congress on Posture of the Marine Corps*, 2014). In October of 2014, General Amos relinquished his duties to General Joseph Dunford, at Marine Corps Barracks, Washington D.C.

### **The Interview**

General Amos was interviewed in March, for ninety minutes. During the interview, he discussed the subject of command climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of Marines as critical, and one of the most important things a commander does. Amos emphasized good leadership and the spiritual health of the Marine Corps. He approached the subject of climate through a series of guidelines, papers, and face-to-face discussions (campaigns) that he initiated such as, his 35<sup>th</sup> Commandants Planning Guidance that discussed his priorities for the Marine Corps; his White Letters on Command Climate and Leadership, directed to commanding officers; the Heritage Brief, which provided details on what it meant to be a U.S. Marine and the importance of meeting the high (almost spiritual) standards of the Marines Corps, and the expectations of the American people; and the Reawakening Campaign, directed at NCO leadership.

First, this section will address climate and leadership covering open communications, dignity, and respect. Next, the significance of the Marine Corps' Core Values and the spiritual health of the Marine Corps will be discussed. The key documents mentioned in the previous paragraph will be used as references throughout the discussion and will also cover the importance of accountability and discipline.

## Climate and Leadership

Amos (2013b) said, “There is no more visible aspect of leadership than the climate a commanding officer establishes for the Marines in his or her charge...There is a disturbingly frequent correlation between Marines who act poorly and units with poor climates” (p.1). Amos made a clear connection between the climate set by the commander, and its influence on the behavior of the Marines in the organization. He underscored the importance of the commander setting the right climate and that the commander is the person responsible for that task when he said, “Whoever’s in charge is solely responsible for the command climate inside the organization, and that command climate will dictate the performance of the unit.”

In 2012, Amos responded to a series of sexual assault cases in the Marine Corps with a letter to all commanding officers and senior leaders where Amos (2012b) he said, “I expect each of you to do your duty and to set a command climate such that sexual assault is known among your Marines as shameful and unacceptable” (p.2). In other words, Amos (2012b) directed all commanders to set the right climate that would influence Marines to keep their moral compass as he said, “*On True North*” (p.1).

To further underscore the significance of climate and good leadership, Amos discussed the frequency in which he covered command climate during his travels to Marine Corps bases and stations when he said, “I probably spoke more about command climate in my last two years than I ever recall any commandant ever talking about it.” Clearly, Amos believed in the significance of the climate created by the commander as a critical aspect of good leadership, and instrumental in promoting ethical behavior. As



part of the commander's climate, Amos highlighted the value of open communications, dignity, and respect.

**Open communications.** General Amos suggested that open communications is one of the key steps the commander must implement when establishing the climate of the organization. As Amos said, "Number one, there had to be a constant line of open communications, absolutely, and it starts with the commanding officer and the Sergeant Major." He mentioned the need for a free-flow of information, up and down the chain of command.

One example of open communications and how it promotes trust within an organization is when Amos visited Marines in Iraq as a three-star general. He went to Hurricane Point, a Marine infantry command post in Iraq that was situated alongside the Euphrates River. The commanding officer greeted him and introduced him to one of his corporals (a junior NCO) who had been wounded in a firefight. The commander had the NCO escort General Amos around the battalion area which demonstrated the complete trust and confidence that the commander had in that Marine NCO. Further, the commander knew the Marines by their first names, where they were from, and details about their families that impressed Amos. This example depicts a healthy organization in which, the commander is setting the right climate by trusting a junior Marine to escort and brief a very senior leader.

**Dignity and respect.** Amos (2013a) said, "Leaders at every level are responsible to create an environment and command climate in which every Marine is treated with dignity and respect; one which enables Marines to trust their command...to take

appropriate action” (p.2). General Amos discussed the relevance of a climate that upholds a genuine respect for one another as instrumental in influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines. For example, even when a commander must punish a Marine for violating one of the Corps’ standards, it is done in a fair, compassionate, and professional manner, where the Marine is held accountable (another key aspect of climate), but still maintains his or her dignity. As Amos said, “You take someone’s dignity away and you probably have either made an enemy for life, or whatever positive thing you were trying to do has just been done away with.”

Amos believed that you can get a good sense for the command climate of an organization in the way people treat one another, and how they talk to each other. Using the same example mentioned in the previous section, when Amos visited the infantry unit in Iraq at Hurricane Point, he noticed the mutual respect the Marines had for each other and the deep affection they seemed to have for their commander. Amos said, “Those units that have a good command climate generally always have those kinds of things in common: respect, dignity, open communications, and that kind of thing.”

When Amos was asked if incidents of misconduct and poor ethical behavior would be reduced because of the right command climate, he said, “Yes, the answer is yes.” For example, when Amos was the commanding general of the Second Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) at Camp Lejeune, he instituted a unit award called the “Chesty Puller Award” for great leadership. The criteria for the award was based on the number of reenlistments, non-judicial punishments (NJPs), punitive actions (e.g., courts-martials), and successful enlistments (i.e., Honorable Discharges). Amos discussed how

he gave out these awards at various levels over his two years as the commanding general and he noticed fewer discipline issues, traffic violations and vehicle accidents, and an increase in morale and respect. Amos said, “As Mattis (retired Marine Corps General, James Mattis, now SecDef) used to say, “They’re fighting with a happy heart.” And that’s the truth.”

### **Core Values and the Spiritual Health of the Corps**

Amos emphasized the Marine Corps’ Core Values and the spiritual health of the Corps, as a commander’s responsibility to not only teach, but to reinforce to all Marines on a regular basis. Amos said, “These core values have been the compass for every Marine’s service throughout our rich history” (DON, HQMC, *35<sup>th</sup> Commandant’s Planning Guidance*, 2010). In other words, the spiritual health of the Corps is the “soul” of the Marine Corps. It is what is in a Marine’s blood. It is the Marine Corps’ ethos. It is the sense of love for one another, the pride and devotion someone feels because they are a Marine, and that they would never do anything to tarnish the image of the Corps. And, as Amos said, “It is a religious thing, I think...And that’s the thing that always must be garnered, cherished, nurtured, and carefully tended to by the commanding officers...” Amos’ statement underscores the importance of command climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization.

**The heritage and values brief.** In 2012, General Amos delivered the Heritage and Values brief to remind Marines what they stand for, who they are, and who they are not. Amos discussed how General Carl E. Mundy Jr. (30<sup>th</sup> CMC) told him that the institution is under attack from within (i.e., Marines violating the high standards) and

from the outside (e.g., Congress), and that he must not allow the spiritual health of the Marine Corps to decline, which could cause the American people to lose trust in the organization (Amos, 2012c).

Throughout the Heritage Brief, Amos discussed examples where Marines violated the Corps' high standards and its core values of honor, courage, and commitment such as, the hazing and suicide incident of a Marine in Afghanistan, or the Marines who urinated on dead Taliban soldiers, and the infantry Marines holding up the flag of the SS in Afghanistan (Amos, 2012c). Amos believed these examples were indicative of breakdowns in small unit leader leadership, accountability, discipline, and adherence to standards.

Amos discussed a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the "Tank" at the Pentagon in 2012, where the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Martin Dempsey said, "Those most responsible for maintaining our standards and discipline are allowing it to erode" (Amos, 2012c). In other words, the CJCS reminded the Service Chiefs (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, etc.) that it is their job to maintain the high standards, and discipline within each of their respective Services. Again, this example underscores the significance of the commander's climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines within the command.

In addition to the Heritage and Values brief, Amos published a letter to all of his commanders and senior leaders reinforcing the Heritage and Values brief and reminding them to get back to the basics of discipline, holding people accountable, and adherence to high standards when Amos (2012a) said, "a number of recent, widely-publicized

incidents have brought discredit on the Marine Corps and reverberated at the strategic level...these incidents threaten to overshadow all our good work and sacrifice...we are allowing our standards to erode” (p.1). These incidents point to the significance of a command climate where commanders lead by example, properly supervise, instill discipline, hold Marines accountable, and constantly reinforce the core values of honor, courage, and commitment. Amos targeted the NCOs as the next group of leaders who received his commander’s intent and guidance, which he called “The Reawakening.”

**The reawakening.** Amos discussed the criticality of NCO leadership in assisting the commanding officers with the implementation of their command climate. The impetus for his urge to address every NCO in the Marine Corps face-to-face, was the fact that out of approximately, 174,000 enlisted Marines in the Corps, 144,570 were below the rank of sergeant with 83% of the enlisted force led by NCO’s (Amos, 2013b). Amos (2013b) said, “Through your presence, leadership, and conduct, we will turn the tide of this battle against the insurgency of wrongdoing, restore our integrity with the American people, and keep our honor clean” (p.1). Clearly, General Amos (2013b) was concerned about the spiritual health of the Corps when he said to the NCO’s, “Move to the decisive point in this battle and through your presence, professionalism, and tenacity...turn the tide of this fight for the sake of Corps and country” (p.1).

General Amos strongly believed that commanders must include in their guidance to Marines their beliefs. He suggested that the quote from Victor “Brute” Krulak was the main message to all Marines, and that the hinge point of the future of the Marine Corps centered on that quote and the climate that commanders establish in their commands. As

Amos said, “We can’t fade from ethical behavior, and our core values...the Corps can’t allow itself to become like everyone else.”

### **Summary**

General Amos suggested that the most important thing a commanding officer can do is to establish the right command climate that promotes ethical behavior within the organization. The results of a good climate will increase the number of Marines who abide by the Marine Corps’ Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment. To facilitate the right climate, commanding officers must create an environment that encourages open communications where people are able to establish close relationships with one another, built on trust and confidence in their abilities as well as, the trust and confidence of their peers and the leaders. Amos suggested that this type of environment promotes dignity and respect, where Marines treat each other according to the “Golden Rule.”

Amos emphasized the importance of the Marine Corps’ Core Values, and he discussed the spiritual health of the Marine Corps during the Heritage and Values Brief, where he spoke to all Marines about their lineage and how they are perceived in the eyes of the American public. He published a series of White Letters outlining his guidance to commanding officers on topics such as sexual assault, leadership, and command climate, underscoring his emphasis on climate, values, and leadership. Further, he initiated the Reawakening Campaign which was directed at NCO leadership. Here, Amos (2013b) asked the NCOs of the Corps for their leadership in assisting him to get the organization back on track for “the sake of Corps and Country” (p.1).

## **General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., 36<sup>th</sup> Commandant (2014-2015)**

### **Background**

General Dunford spent roughly one year as the CMC before becoming the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) on October 1, 2015 (Appendix J). During this brief period as commandant, Marines continued to act as America's 911 force by responding to crises around the globe and providing combatant commanders (e.g., U.S. Central Command) forward-deployed and forward-engaged forces able to respond to contingencies, build partner capacity, build alliances, and project U.S. influence abroad (Dunford, 2015a).

Marines continued to contribute to the mission in Afghanistan by supporting the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) against terrorism in Southwest Asia (SWA). Due to a heavy Marine Corps presence in the region, successful elections were held in the summer of 2014 and Marines were able to transition the security mission to the ANSF. Marines continued to provide limited support to NATO in Afghanistan (Dunford, 2015a).

In 2014, multiple Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) deployed in support of the geographic combatant commanders (e.g., CENTCOM, PACOM, AFRICOM, and EUCOM) providing forces in support of their areas of responsibility (AORs). For example, in 2014, Marines conducted operations in support of the U.S. Embassy in Libya (Dunford, 2015a). Marines continued to deploy around the world providing reassurance to America's allies, and acting as a deterrence to potential foes. In addition to security operations in support of American diplomats, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task

Force-Crisis Response (SPMAGTF-CR) units conducted various missions such as embassy reinforcement, TSC exercises, and combat operations against the Islamic State, or ISIL.

In the Pacific region, Marines conducted numerous operations and exercises such as, Exercise Song Yong – the largest amphibious exercise of the year with the South Koreans. Also, the Corps positioned approximately 22,500 Marines west of the International Date Line to act as forward deployed forces in the Asia-Pacific Theater. Over the course of the next three decades, Marines will be positioned primarily in Australia, Guam, Japan, and Hawaii. For example, the Marine rotational force-Darwin (MRF-D), based at Robertson Barracks. This plan enables Marines to deploy to Australia conducting bi-lateral training and exercises with the Australian Marines and will be postured to support other military operations such as, Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) (Dunford, 2015a).

In addition, Marines deployed in support of security and stability operations in Europe, with an example being the Black Sea Rotational Force (BSRF) mission, which conducted numerous TSC activities in EUCOM and provided the combatant commander (COCOM) with Marines to act as a crisis response force. An example of this is the Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Teams (FAST) that have supported embassy reinforcement missions in Baghdad, Iraq and Sana'a, Yemen. Marines continued to support the State Department with Marine Security Guards, manning 173 embassies and consulates in 141 countries around the globe (Dunford, 2015a).



## **The Interview**

General Dunford was interviewed in his office at the Pentagon in December 2017, for approximately one hour. The primary message from General Dunford was that the commander is responsible for the “intangibles” of the unit. The intangibles he discussed were areas such as, character development, and being able to communicate to the Marines the importance of the Marine Corps’ Core Values, and how they influence the Marine Corps’ warfighting effectiveness and readiness.

First, this section will discuss command climate, and the intangibles of core values, and trust in small unit leadership. Next, this section will address how to establish the right climate through setting the example, implementing the concept of balanced excellence, establishing high ethical standards, and being a good communicator-in-chief.

### **The Intangibles of Command Climate**

General Dunford reflected on an incident when he was a young captain that had a profound impact on his approach to command climate and the value of the intangible qualities a leader can bring to the organization. He was at a mess night in Fuji, Japan (military formal dining in) and the officers in attendance had been drinking too much, which caused the night to unravel. Brigadier General Hank Stackpole was the guest speaker and stood up before his scheduled remarks. Once he had everyone’s attention, he proceeded to speak about what it meant to be a Marine officer. Then, he summarily dismissed the mess night and sent everyone home before the scheduled time. Dunford said, “It stuck with me. I don’t know why, but every time I see him I relay that story and what an impact it had on me as a young officer.”

Dunford believed this act required a significant amount of moral courage by General Stackpole, and it demonstrates that it is the responsibility of the senior leader, or the commanding officer, to ensure that Marines behave according to Marine Corps values and standards. This example of a senior leader exhibits the intangible nature of moral courage, which is one of the core values.

**Core values.** When asked if command climate influences ethical behavior, Dunford said, “I think it is the primary driver of ethical behavior...It all comes from the commander.” Dunford believed that the commander establishes the right climate within which the Marine Corps’ Core Values are taught and reinforced. He emphasized to those attending the course for new commanders, the significance of establishing the proper climate in which the Marine Corps’ Core Values are maintained once a Marine completes boot camp and joins their new organization (i.e., sustaining the transformation). As part of his message to the new commanders, Dunford emphasized who Marines are, and what the American public expects from its Marine Corps.

Further, he suggested that the only way America will defeat organizations such as, ISIS, is through our American values (e.g., life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness). He underscored the importance of values when he said, “when we go to war, for example, we bring our values with us...The issue for us in the long-term is can the United States after all these years at war maintain the ethical standards that define us.” Dunford’s message highlighted the significance of the core values training and regular reinforcement of the training.

Also, General Dunford discussed how leaders can institutionalize command climate and ethical behavior when he said, “If you say or do something that is

inconsistent with our core values it is not a reflection on you, it is a reflection on all of us.” Dunford mentioned that sense of accountability Marines have for one another and when they do something that contradicts the core values they are letting down the Marine on their left and on their right. This is another example of an intangible that Dunford discussed that must be reinforced by the commanding officer.

Dunford believed there is a general decency in the young people entering the Marine Corps today who want to be part of something bigger than themselves when he said, “They aspire to those core values that the Corps advertises. So, you have a pretty good group coming in.” To continue to reinforce the Marine Corps’ Core Values, small unit leadership is required to assist the commander with the character development of the Marines in the organization.

**Trust in small unit leadership.** General Dunford suggested that the NCO’s are critical to the ethical health of the Marine Corps and instrumental in sustaining the transformation of becoming a Marine as a quality citizen. The general quoted Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP 6-11D, *Sustaining the Transformation*, 2014) in his planning guidance when Dunford (2015b) said, “Significant to sustaining the transformation is selecting the best Marines to be NCO’s and continuing to train them to sustain the values and warfighting ethos of our Corps” (p.6). Further, Dunford used a historical example to further highlight the significance of small unit leadership and sustaining the core values that contribute to warfighting effectiveness.

E.B. Sledge was a WWII Marine who fought with the First Marine Division at Peleliu and at Okinawa. Sledge attributed his ability to survive months of horrific combat against the Japanese, to his trust in the small unit leadership of the junior officers

and the NCOs (Sledge, 1989). General Dunford discussed ethical behavior with trust as a subset of that behavior and referenced the intangibles (e.g., esprit, trust, ethical behavior, respect, selflessness) associated with small unit NCO leadership as discussed in *With the Old Breed* (Sledge, 1989).

As Dunford said, “It was trust. It was trust in my leadership, trust in myself because of my training, and trust in the Marine on my left and right. That is the commander’s business.” In other words, the commanding officer is responsible for setting the right climate that promotes the intangible qualities that identify Marines and requires the support of the small unit leadership (e.g., junior officers and NCOs) to reinforce those intangibles as part of the commander’s climate.

### **Establishing the Right Climate**

Dunford discussed three major areas critical to establishing the right command climate. These three areas were setting the example, establishing high standards, and being able to effectively communicate those standards to Marines. He said, “Command climate starts with the example of the leader, the role model, the individual who articulates what ethical behavior and what standards exist...it all comes from the commander.”

**Setting the example.** Dunford said, “The best way to communicate ethical behavior is by personal example and then by the priorities you establish as a commander.” The general suggested that commanders must be visible and that they must get around to see how the Marines are doing. By doing so, commanders can verify that their Marines have the means necessary to accomplish the tasks that they are responsible

for within the unit. Commanders must also ensure that the subordinate leaders are taking good care of the Marines.

For example, commanders must ensure that Marines have adequate equipment, that they are being accurately paid, and that they are receiving their awards on time. Dunford emphasized this when he said, “It is what you do as opposed to what you say.” In other words, commanders must live the example, walk the talk, and not just talk about what they plan to do. In addition, General Dunford emphasized the personality of the commander relative to setting the right climate and being able to influence ethical behavior.

Commanders can’t have ego’s that get in the way of their ability to lead their Marines. About leaving your ego at the door, Dunford said, “I think it is a personal example more than anything else.” He discussed famous Marines who were paternalistic figures such as, Chesty Puller, who had five Navy Cross decorations (second only to the Medal of Honor) and was a humble commanding officer, and O.P. Smith, who commanded the first Marine Division during the Korean War at the Chosin Reservoir, but always downplayed his incredible accomplishments giving the credit to his subordinate leaders and to his beloved Marines. These gentlemen epitomized the idea of service to others before service to self and left their ego at the door. Dunford suggested that selflessness and serving the needs of your Marines first is the best way to set the example when communicating with 19-22-year-old Marines. All the above competes with other things the commander is required to do; therefore, it takes balance to ensure the commander covers everything that needs to be taken care of for the overall health of the organization.

**Balanced excellence.** Dunford recommended a philosophy of command built on balanced excellence. The general indicated that the commanding officer is responsible for everything the unit does or fails to do, which includes training, maintenance, and personnel readiness. Many of these tasks can be accomplished by subordinate leaders (i.e., captains, gunnery sergeants, sergeants, etc.).

A unit must be proficient in its mission essential task list, but at the same time complete other required annual training such as, ethics instruction, character development (e.g., individual counseling), sexual assault awareness and prevention, rifle requalification, etc. According to Dunford, the commander is directly responsible for the intangibles discussed earlier in this paper such as, ethical behavior, trust, core values, respect, commitment, etc., where

He said,

On the one hand you have to develop proficiency in your mission essential tasks.

On the other hand, you have to take care of all the equipment and maintenance.

But then in the middle is what the commander is responsible for...And that is all the intangible qualities.

Dunford also referenced the Marine Corps publication *Leading Marines*, where he believed some of the intangibles are discussed that help guide commanders on areas relative to the expected standards that are expected within the organization (DON, HQMC, 2014, *MCWP 6-11, Leading Marines*).

**Establishing high ethical standards.** Dunford (2015b) directed all Marines to be committed to the Marine Corps' values and its high standards when he said, "I also need

the full commitment of all Marines to our high standards of professionalism, discipline, and core values” (p.3). Dunford believed it was the commander’s responsibility to create the environment that promotes ethical behavior, and how does the commander respond to incidents of misconduct? In other words, how does the institution respond by holding people accountable in the wake of an incident?

Dunford discussed the importance of Marine Corps values and how Marines must abide by the high standards, 24/7, 365, which includes combat operations. He underscored the need for ethical behavior in combat through discrimination, proportionality, and sound judgement. For example, Dunford discussed how the military applies its ethical standards when in combat relative to civilian casualties.

When he was commandant, and as the current CJCS, the guidance Dunford published on the rules of engagement are a part of his command climate when he said, “The Secretary of Defense and I are rewriting all of our instructions that relate to civilian casualties...in humanistic language that talks about respect for human life and why it’s important that we conduct operations in a way that absolutely minimizes the loss of innocent human life.”

Another example on the significance of high standards is when Dunford discussed his command tour of duty in Iraq as a regimental commander preparing to move his Marines across the Diyala River. As a colonel and in command of a large group of Marines, Dunford accepted an increased risk to his force when he decided not to shoot at enemy targets on the far side of the river based on the potential for innocent civilian casualties. As Dunford said, “Respect for human life is our business...I also think it mitigates the risk of moral injury on the backside of a conflict.” In other words, Marines

value life and are expected to live up to the Corps' high ethical standards, especially during combat operations. This will enable Marines to maintain the moral high ground and be able to live with their decisions and actions once they return home.

**Communicator-in-chief.** Dunford mentioned that now is not the time for our commanders to be the strong, silent type of leaders. Today's leaders must be able to effectively communicate their expectations of behavior and their expectations of ethical conduct to their subordinates when he said, "Your personal example has to be accompanied by talking to guys...And, I think using the tools that are available to us..."

He mentioned the tools commanders have available to them to reinforce ethical decision-making and how to handle ethical dilemmas such as, modern immersive training and simulation technologies (Dunford, 2015b). These technologies allow the Marine to develop ethical muscle memory necessary to prepare the Marine for the pressures associated with ethical decisions while under extreme conditions.

He also discussed the value of using the Socratic Method as a technique for leaders to employ that can generate dialogue causing the Marines to examine the facts of the scenario and discuss their decision-making process. As Dunford said, "The "what if" you're confronted with this kind of a situation and a conversation about how to deal with that is, in my judgment, one of the more important ways to teach people."

Finally, Dunford discussed the significance of communicating the sense of obligation each Marine has to the institution when

he said,

So, from the earliest days in recruit training, you are instilling in a private, the sense of accountability to the values of the institution and the sense that if you violate



those values it's not about you. You are actually doing something that is putting a black mark on the institution, as a whole, and that is particularly true the more senior you become.

For example, when he was CMC he would speak to the new general officers and he would tell them that they no longer have personal opinions when speaking in public when he said, "You can never again speak in public without being a reflection of the institution...And when you are communicating publicly, you actually don't have a personal opinion because you are the institution." In other words, what generals discuss or do in public represents the position of the Marine Corps and reflects on the Marine Corps as an institution. To underscore the significance of the command climate and the importance of winning in combat while maintaining the Marine Corps' Core Values, Dunford (2015b) said, "Although we remain proud of our heritage, we should expect no credit tomorrow for what we did yesterday" (p.5).

### **Summary**

General Dunford discussed the intangibles of command climate (e.g., trust, values, respect, etc.) as the responsibility of the commanding officer. He emphasized that commanders must create a climate that sustains the core values training that Marines receive during entry-level training (e.g., boot camp, or officer candidate school). For commanders to successfully accomplish this task, they need to rely on their junior officers and NCOs to assist them with this task. This concept promotes trust within the organization and enables junior leaders to reinforce the command climate at the lowest level within the organization.

Dunford identified setting the example as the first critical element for a commander who desires to establish the right command climate. Commanders are expected to do what they say they will do and to take good care of their people. Further, commanders have many competing priorities for time in the training schedule and sometimes core values training and reinforcement does not receive the attention it deserves. Therefore, Dunford recommended a balanced approach to command climate, where commanders focus on the intangibles and let their staff and subordinates take care of many of the other tasks such as, maintenance of equipment, the training schedule, and personnel matters.

Finally, Dunford suggested that the commanding officer must be a great communicator-in-chief, able to talk to Marines about what their service means to the country. It is the responsibility of the commander to teach and reinforce the core values as part of their command climate. Commanders must be able to communicate to their Marines that it is their responsibility to never do anything to tarnish the image of the Marine Corps, which could cause the American public to lose trust and confidence in its Marines.

## **General Robert B. Neller, 37th Commandant (2015-Present)**

### **Background**

General Neller became the 37<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps on 24 September 2015 (Appendix K). During this period, Marines have remained forward deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan responding to crises around the world. Marines have been involved in numerous types of operations around the world such as building partner capacity, theater security cooperation (TSC) efforts, and training and working with allied partners, and preparing for future contingencies. For example, in 2015, Marines executed approximately 100 operations, 20 amphibious operations, 140 theater security cooperation events, and 160 major exercises. Today, Marines are serving at 174 Embassies and Consulates in 146 countries around the world (Neller, 2017d).

The Marine Corps has deployed thousands of Marines on Navy amphibious shipping to all areas of the globe. Recently, five separate Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) supported every geographic Combatant Command (COCOM), (e.g., Africa Command (AFRICOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), etc.), participating in training exercises and operations such as the disaster relief operations on Saipan after Typhoon Soudelor, where Marines provided 11,000 gallons of fresh water and 48,000 meals within 12 hours after notification of the request for support (Neller, 2017d). Another example is when Marines deployed to the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) tasked with the reconstruction of a runway in Mocoron Airbase, Honduras (Neller, 2017d).

As part of Pacific Command's (PACOM) forward deployed force for crisis response, 22,500 Marines west of the International Date Line were operating within the Asia-Pacific Theater. Also, approximately 1,200 Marines deployed to Darwin for a six-

month deployment as part of the Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D), Australia (Neller, 2017d). As General Neller said to Congress “We will therefore continue to produce highly trained Marines, formed into combat-ready forces, and provide the capabilities the Joint Force requires” (Neller, 2017d).

### **The Interview**

General Neller was interviewed in his office at the Pentagon, on 21 November 2017, for approximately one hour. During the interview, the general emphasized that the right command climate is an outcome of the commander’s leadership that sets the conditions for Marines to be successful and to become better people. In other words, commanders’ set the right climate for their organizations and are responsible for developing their Marines to be better people, which will produce better Marines. The commandant centered his remarks on the philosophy of command, and the commander’s approach to leading people, which includes holding them accountable for their actions and being responsible citizens.

This section will address the philosophy of command, where Neller discussed how commanders must communicate the ethical message to the Marines, along with the commander’s expectations for the Marines in the organization (including the commander). Further, the commander is expected to set the proper conditions for individual and organizational success. Next, the section will address leading people, which covered setting the example, servant leadership, effective communications, and accountability, and responsibility.

## **Philosophy of Command**

Neller said, “Commanders have an obligation to do all they can to make all their Marines and Sailors successful...” This obligation entails creating an environment where Marines can achieve their individual goals if they are willing to work hard, and if they abide by the Marine Corps’ Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment. Two of the key elements of the philosophy of command are the expectations for both the leader and the followers, and that it is the commander’s responsibility to set Marines up for success.

**Communicating the expectations for the Marines.** Commanders must ensure that Marines understand who they are, where they come from, and why they are here (Neller, 2016). As Neller said, “But when you’re a Marine, you are expected to follow orders. You’re expected to be disciplined.” Marines must understand that they took an oath to serve with no expiration date attached to it. In other words, Marines are expected to act like Marines 24/7, 365 days a year and that they are Marines for life. In addition to the above, the command philosophy provides the commander an opportunity to cover how he or she likes to do business, and how they plan to approach the mission. Further, commanders can also discuss how they like to communicate, and what they want to accomplish during their time in command.

Just as the commander published what he or she expects from the Marines, the philosophy of command is also a good instrument for the commander to tell the Marines what they can expect from their commander as Neller said, “If you tell Marines what you expect from them, you should tell them what they should expect from you.”

**Expectations for the commander.** The Corps puts a lot of pressure on its commanding officers, maybe too much pressure according to Neller. However,

Commanders in the Marine Corps are held to an even higher standard than the Marines they lead which can cause them to be judged unfairly. But, commanders are still expected to set the tone for their organizations while demonstrating that they are men and women of the utmost character. Neller emphasized this point when he said, “They expect us to hold people accountable, ourselves first, and foremost...and to be somebody of virtue and character.”

General Neller discussed the importance of treating people fairly and how it relates to the ethical behavior of the Marines. He mentioned that Marines keep track of who gets punished and who does not when he said, “And the Marines, like your kids, they all keep score...so fairness can be relative. Similarly, General Neller referenced the book *Legacy*, which underscored the value of treating people fairly with no tolerance for “Dickheads” (Kerr, 2013).

Kerr (2013) suggests that it is the leaders’ job to promote trust and collaboration where “Success can be traced back to the connections between members of the team and their collective character, something true of all winning organizations” (p. 83). Clearly, the commanding officer must meet many expectations that include setting the right conditions for the Marines in his or her organization to succeed.

**Setting the right conditions.** General Neller suggested that many young people come into the Marine Corps from non-traditional homes as he said, “When 40 percent of young men and women grow up in this country without necessarily, what we would call a normal family, whatever that is, I’m not sure everybody knows what the right thing is...So, it’s up to us to teach them.” Therefore, one of the first steps to setting Marines up

for success is to ensure they understand the Marine Corps' values and that they meet their commanders' expectations and the expectations of their fellow Marines.

Also, the commander must create an environment that prides itself on the character of its Marines, but also, promotes initiative and growth through learning in an environment that is not based on a zero defects mentality. Neller offered an example of a good learning environment and of a command climate that seemed to be working.

During one of his recent trips to Twenty-nine Palms, California, he spent the night with one of the infantry battalions training in the field. In the morning, he listened and observed how the unit leaders moved the Marines. As Neller said, "My sense is that the unit that did it with the least amount of noise, the least amount of yelling, was probably the more effective unit." Further, he suggested that the better units had junior Marines communicating and checking on the troops, exercising initiative, while the senior leaders were just monitoring what was going on that morning.

As part of his guidance to all Marines that will set the conditions necessary for them to succeed Neller (2017a) said, "Drink less...That's all...I'm not telling you not to drink...You're a grown man...Drink less...Or stop...Because, I can guarantee you, it'll improve your prospects for success in life" (p.7).

Neller suggested that one of the biggest issues in the Marine Corps is that a small percentage of Marines abuse alcohol, which causes many of the misconduct problems in the Corps. For example, Neller mentioned a recent incident in Okinawa where two Marines and a Sailor, out of approximately, 22,000 Marines, did something that resulted in prison time and bad characterizations of service (e.g., a Bad Conduct Discharge). Similarly, these incidents of misconduct reflect poorly on the Marine Corps as an

institution, causing the Japanese and other allies in the Pacific Rim to form a more negative opinion of the Marine Corps.

Conversely, it is the responsibility of the commander to ensure the Marines understand that they own the blank space associated with their reputation and that they are well-educated on the core values. For example, a Marine must protect his or her reputation (Protect What You've Earned) and each Marine owns the space after their name as Neller said, "You won that space and what's it going to say? What do you want it to say? Because, it'll say whatever you decide it's going to say, good, bad, or otherwise."

Therefore, it is the commander's responsibility to ensure he or she establishes a command climate that promotes things which will lead to be Marines successful, and not things like alcohol use that could lead to a path of destruction.

### **Leading People**

Neller discussed the atmosphere when he joined the Marine Corps during the seventies when he believed the Corps was not very good. Further, he observed various leaders who took advantage of their positions causing some Marines to not believe in the chain of command. However, Neller stayed in the Corps as he said, "I bought into the idea that if you can convince a bunch of people to be like-minded about a mission which is worthy and noble, and you could convince them it was important, and you could do that through your own behavior and actions, then that was kind of a cool thing to do." Neller covered the importance of setting the example, selflessness, and effective communications.



**Setting the example.** General Neller emphasized the significance of setting the example and that it is the commander's responsibility to model the expected behavior when he said, "...if their leaders that are teaching them don't model it, it's either seen as simply words or hypocrisy." The general also suggested that units who are not effective have leaders who don't do what they say they will do and who do not model the right behavior. As Neller said, "Marines watch everything you do...and hear everything you say...You are on parade all the time." In other words, leaders are expected to set a good example for others to follow, and to be a man or woman of character. They must take care of their Marines and focus on the needs of the Marines before they take care of themselves.

**Servant leadership.** Commanding officers must not take advantage of their positions or be perceived as having an advantage because of their rank or status as Neller said, "Sometimes people get in a position of authority as commanders, and they can lose their way." Sometimes, commanders let the little things go that are very minor violations of rules and regulations, which overtime, can lead to bigger problems especially, when their ego gets involved. General Neller discussed the concept of "officers eat last."

Neller suggested that as a commander, it is not about you and that commanders should focus on the needs of their Marines before their own needs are met. One example he used was when he was a captain and his infantry unit was conducting cold weather training at Bridgeport, California. The Marines had been in the field for days but one night he had arranged for his Marines to eat hot chow in the field. When the food arrived one of his junior officers grabbed some cake from the truck. One of Neller's Marines observed this act and complained to Neller that the lieutenant had cake before any of the

other Marines. This example underscores the negative perceptions that are associated with leaders whenever they take care of themselves before taking care of their subordinates.

Another example Neller shared underscored the importance of commanders leaving their egos at the door. He believed that General Oliver P. Smith, hero from the Korean War epitomized selflessness and humility when he said, “Commanders need to check their ego at the door...O.P. Smith is a great example.” Neller mentioned how Smith always put the needs of his Marines first by sharing the risks with his Marines during battlefield circulation visits and serving alongside his men in combat, wearing the same cold weather gear that they wore in 40 degrees below zero conditions, eating the same cold food from cans, and questioning senior leadership when they were wrong (Shisler, 2009). Neller believed that Marines joined to serve the Marine Corps when he said, “They’re here to serve not us, they’re here to serve the Marine Corps.” It is the job of the commanding officer to take care of the Marines and make sure they have their needs met before the commander takes care of himself. This is another area that will promote good ethical behavior and produce better Marines.

**Effective communications.** One of Neller’s concerns dealt with how Marines communicate when he said, “I just worry about communication, how we communicate.” Today’s generation of Marines rely on social media and the CMC expressed concern that Marines are losing the skills of having face-to-face conversations. In addition, Neller directed all leaders to address the expectations and conduct associated with the use of social media (Neller, 2017b).

Further, Neller directed mandatory counseling for all Marines regarding the use of social media, where he emphasized core values, social media education, and leadership from commanding officers (Neller, 2017c). He did however, mention that social media is a double-edged sword as it provides leaders with another way to pass information when he said, "...social media is a very powerful tool for a commander to communicate their thoughts and ideas to address perceptions...or to reinforce their ideas, concepts, and philosophy..."

In addition, the CMC discussed his concerns with online training. He believed that the Corps needs to get back to small group discussions led by NCOs and junior leaders who can communicate current issues facing Marines and to assist them in developing solutions to the problems. Although, Neller mentioned that online training is better than no training, he emphasized the value of personal relationships and face-to-face communications with instructors as the preferred option.

### **Accountability, and Responsibility**

Neller recommended for commanders to hold their Marines accountable and that the commanders should be held to an even higher level of accountability, when he said, "He has got to hold himself more accountable than anybody else in the unit." He also suggested how it is the commander's responsibility to establish an environment where Marines take responsibility for their actions.

**Accountability.** Marines expect their leaders to hold them accountable as Neller said, "They expect us to hold people accountable, ourselves first, and foremost." General Neller suggested that most of the commanding officers that get relieved due so because of misconduct, not due to incompetence; therefore, it is incumbent upon commanding

officers to hold themselves accountable for their actions, and that their character should be without reproach.

The CMC also discussed the importance of holding Marines accountable when they make a mistake of commission as opposed to a mistake of omission. In other words, commanders must hold their Marines accountable when they violate rules, regulations, and Marine Corps standards, but they need to create a command climate that promotes initiative and enables Marines to make mistakes. This environment contributes to setting Marines up for success, so they can accomplish their goals (i.e., a learning environment). If the commander is unsure as to whether a violation of standards has occurred, then it is that commander's responsibility to investigate the matter to get all the facts and once they have all the facts, figure out how best to hold the Marines accountable.

In addition to the above, Neller raised the question, "Are we a self-correcting organization?" Commanders hold their Marines accountable. Marines expect their leaders to be held accountable. Does the Marine Corps as an institution hold itself accountable? Neller suggested that the Corps must always strive for improvement, so that it can be the most capable and the most lethal warfighting organization in the world. To that end, the Marines must be willing to accept criticism and make the necessary adjustments to continue to improve their efficiency and effectiveness as a military organization. This includes Marine commanding officers.

**Responsibility.** As officers are trained in the Marine Corps, it instills in them that the commanding officer is responsible for everything his or her unit does, or fails to do (DON, HQMC, MCWP 6-11, *Leading Marines*, 2014). For example, he charged his commanders with carrying out his guidance after the social media scandal, Marines

United, when Neller (2017b) said, “Leaders at all levels must address online sexual harassment, threats of violence, and other misconduct as we would address any other form of misconduct or destructive behavior” (p.1). Commanders are responsible for everything that goes on in their organization for example, training and education, maintenance of equipment, family, and personnel readiness.

Marines are expected to be responsible people and as such, they are expected to follow orders and abide by the core values. Neller acknowledged that Marines will make mistakes and that is to be expected, but as Neller said,

I guess the real question is why is it so difficult for some to follow? Is it weakness of the human condition, the weakness of human character, or temptation, or the impact of alcohol or drugs? Is it a lack of humility when you assume a leadership position? Is it a character flaw? I don’t know.

Ultimately, it is up to the commanding officer to ensure the Marines understand and acknowledge the standards, and that if they choose to be irresponsible, they will be held accountable.

### **Summary**

General Neller believed that it is important to ensure the Marines understand the commander’s expectations. Further, it is incumbent upon the commander to let his Marines know what they can expect from him or her. Neller suggested the command philosophy as one way to convey these expectations to the Marines along with talking to

people, videos, etc. He also suggested that the philosophy of command and the climate of the organization must promote an environment where Marines are set up for success, so they can accomplish their goals while in the Marines and in life.

Neller emphasized the importance of setting the example when leading others. He mentioned that it is the commander who must ensure the needs of the Marines are addressed first, before his or her needs and the needs of the other officers. He voiced his concerns on how Marines communicate, and that social media is taking the place of face-to-face dialogue. He suggested that the Marine Corps return to personal communications and small group discussions as the best way to learn.

Finally, Neller suggested that the commanding officer hold himself or herself to a higher level of accountability. Commanders must hold their Marines accountable and if they are not sure of the facts, then they should investigate. Also, Marines are expected to be responsible people even though they are not expected to be perfect and that it is understood they will make mistakes. It is the commanding officer's task to make sure that the command climate includes training where the focus is on the Marines' character.

## Part II: The Cross-Case Comparison

### Introduction

A Marine Corps commanding officer is directly responsible for everything his or her organization does or fails to do. Further, it is the responsibility of the commanding officer to create the right environment that promotes good order and discipline, while enabling the organization to accomplish its mission (DON, HQMC, *MCWP 6-11, Leading Marines* 2014). It is also the responsibility of the commanding officer to make Marines better people than before they came into the Marine Corps (Lejeune, 1930).

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command. Further, this study's exploratory multiple-case study/cross-case analysis design, supported by qualitative research methods, examined seven former living commandants of the Marine Corps, which included the current CMC and the current CJCS, also a former commandant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

More specifically, this study systematically examined and analyzed the individual perspectives of the former living commandants of the Marine Corps, covering three decades of the Marine Corps' most senior leaders and their perspectives about command climate and how it influences the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization. Although the commandants provided their individual perspectives, four major categories emerged from the individual commandant interviews that were grouped for comparison as follows: setting the example, open communications, core values, and accountability and responsibility. Each CMC offered his perspective on these categories which contributes directly to the commander's climate and its ability to influence the ethical

behavior of the Marines. Additionally, three themes emerged from the four categories and will be discussed in chapter five.

Every CMC had his own personal way of conveying his philosophy of command. Some commandants emphasized certain areas over others, for example, General Krulak focused most of his points on the core values while Jones emphasized setting an example. All of the CMCs, however, emphasized the importance of protecting the Marine Corps as an institution, which fell under the category of accountability and responsibility. Based on the interview data, it is the commandant who is held accountable to ensure that the Marine Corps continues to remain America's most formidable warfighting organization, capable of fighting and winning the nation's battles. The research questions that guided this study were:

What role does command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command? Two other supporting questions helped guide this study:

- How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines?
- How does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?

The commandants were studied as individual cases as previously mentioned, then the individual case studies were analyzed and compared. This section focuses on the four categories that were gleaned from the cross-case comparison beginning with *setting the example*. This discussion will be followed by an overview of the three themes produced from the four categories, which will provide the foundation for the recommendations



discussed in greater detail in chapter five. Finally, a cross-case comparison conclusion will follow this section.

### **Setting the Example**

Each commandant discussed the importance of setting the example. The commandants discussed how leaders set the example and that the example must start with the senior leader through his or her own personal example (live it). Also, commanders must be visible, so the troops can witness the commander's example. Finally, to set the right example the leader must be selfless.

**It begins with the leader (living it).** Dunford emphasized setting the example when he emphasized the importance of the message coming from the senior leader when he said, "Without proper command climate that starts with the example of the leader, the role model, the individual who articulates what ethical behavior and what standards exist for ethical behavior...it all comes from the commander." Amos and Neller aligned with Dunford when they both suggested that the commander sets the example and the command climate for the organization as Amos said, "Whoever's in charge is solely responsible for the command climate inside the organization, and that command climate will dictate the performance of the unit." Neller said, "The commander's got to model the behavior that he expects every other Marine to exhibit." Further, Neller recommended that commanders set the example by doing what they said they promised to do when he said, "...we've got to do what we say we're going to do. And I think most units that are not effective don't. The leaders don't."

Hagee and Neller both suggested that it is the little things that commanders do, or don't do. Neller used the example of the junior officer who had a piece of cake before the Marines had a chance to eat and said, "It's the little things, it's a lot of little things." In this case, it was the idea that the officers eat after the troops.

Interestingly, Krulak was one of the few generals who suggested that the commandant is the one who sets the climate for the Marine Corps when he said, "So, at the end of the day, what sets the climate, whether it's to a platoon or the Corps is one person, one person only...And that's the commandant...And how he acts is critical, and what example he sets, and does he walk his talk." As Gray said, "You have to live it and you have to believe it." In other words, what you profess to your Marines, and the expectations you set for them must be modeled by the leader.

The leaders must truly believe in the high standards and the high expectations that he or she establishes for their Marines. Gray said, "You have to set the example...But, you must not only set it, you have to live it." Gray mentioned the significance of "living it" through your own actions and creating an environment where you get your Marines to follow your example because they see you doing it. As Gray said, "You need to do it in such a way that you're not acting like a guy on a big white horse...You're doing it because you believe in it...You're setting the example because you hope that other people will follow it." Krulak and Amos both said, "You just live it, you live it."

**Being visible.** Krulak, Jones, Gray, Conway, and Neller all advocated for getting out and letting the Marines see your leadership by example. Krulak discussed the time when he was a battalion commander and went to the unit's motor pool, donned a set of coveralls, and proceeded to check under the hoods of military vehicles for basic

maintenance checks. The troops observed Krulak working next to them doing the same job that they were doing. Jones suggested that the commander must be visible and show the Marines how the leader acts when he said, “I mean, you have to show people how you handle yourself ethically, you know, people need to see that.”

Gray changed into old civilian clothes and walked around the Okinawan town of Kinville to talk to the Marines and the owners of the bars to see how he could reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents by Marines. Gray was not a drinker. He wanted to take care of his Marines and he eventually developed a courtesy patrol that brought Marines back to the barracks after they had consumed too much to drink. This act reduced the number of alcohol problems in the command. Jones underscored the significance of being visible while setting the example when he said, “...how you live your life and how you are seen by others is very important.”

Krulak travelled over 700, 000 miles while commandant, more than double the miles travelled by any other CMC, so he could visit the Marines twice per year at every post and station in the Corps. This was one of his techniques of setting the example for his Marines by showing them he cared enough about them to travel around the world to see them, and to share his commandant’s guidance with his Marines.

Conway emphasized the importance of getting out and talking with the troops about his philosophy of command when he said, “They’ve got to see you when you get intense, and see you when your eye starts to twitch, and your brain starts to bulge, and those types of things, so they understand their commander.” Neller suggested that commanders must be visible and that they must set the example by sharing the risk with their Marines when he said, “But you’ve got to show up... You’ve got to

compete...They've got to see you out there sharing the risk, or the deprivation, or the pain."

**Selflessness.** Jones and Neller both used the example that officers eat last, when they suggested that the leader must take care of the followers first before taking care of himself or herself. Jones' father was the youngest battalion commander in World War II at age 27 and role-modeled values and ethics as Jones said, "They dominated our discussion and we lived by it... Even when I was seven years old I remember my father saying, "Officer's eat last." In other words, the needs of the officers come second to the needs of the troops. Similarly, Dunford and Neller both discussed the importance of selflessness when leading others as Dunford said, "Service to others before service to self." Neller discussed the reason why people join the Marine Corps and expressed his perspective on what the leaders must remember when he said, "...we're here to serve them...They're not here to serve us, they're here to serve the Marine Corps."

Hagee also discussed the concept of selflessness and used Admiral Nimitz as his primary example. Nimitz was offered the position of Chief of Naval Operations by President Roosevelt, which Nimitz declined. Nimitz believed it would not be good for the Navy as a junior admiral to jump over so many other senior officers who were eligible for the position as Hagee said, "It was never, ever about him." Nimitz always put the needs of others, or the Navy as an institution, over his own needs and desires.

Like Neller, Dunford discussed the importance of setting the example when he said, "It is kind of what you do as opposed to what you say." Again, every commandant emphasized setting the example and that the command climate starts with the commander and the example that he or she provides for the others to follow. Another category where

the commandants seemed to agree collectively, was the need for the commander's climate to include open communications.

### **Open Communications**

Each commandant suggested that open communications is necessary for a healthy command climate, and one that influences the ethical behavior of the Marines. Although, General Krulak did not specifically use the words open communications, he discussed the importance of communicating with Congress and others in Washington to assist him when necessary, and he also provided numerous examples of getting out and talking to his Marines by travelling around the world to visit every Marine base and station. The other commandants specifically discussed open communications and emphasized talking to people face-to-face. They also highlighted the importance of listening and receiving feedback.

**Talking to people.** Gray suggested that you must talk to people and ask them how they are doing, and to show them that you care about them when he said, "I use to go around and talk to a lot of Marines...You've got to talk to them." Gray also talked to their families which had a significant impact on his command climate and its influence on the behavior of his Marines when he said, "You've got to take care of people, and that's part of your climate...and talking to the wives and the kids when their units are overseas...telling them how things are going."

Similarly, Conway emphasized the importance of taking care of the families and talking to the wives when he said, "Hey, it's not just about the Marines. It's about the families too." Conway suggested that a good command climate must include talking to

the families, and taking care of all the wounded warriors, which will also have a positive influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization. He also mentioned that commanders must talk to their Marines face-to-face when he said, “Break it down, bring it in...sit, kneel, bend, okay? And then you’ve got eyeball to eyeball contact, and every one of them can see you and again, gain their own impressions of you as you’re gaining your impressions on what you’re saying, and how it’s going over.” Likewise, Krulak suggested that there are other people besides the troops who the commander must talk to, for example, the commandant must establish open communications with Senators and Congressman as part of the Marine Corps’ command climate.

Krulak used the example of when the Marine Corps was directed by Congress to cut its end-strength from 200,000 Marines down to 159,000 Marines. Krulak was working for then, Commandant Carl Mundy Jr., and asked him for his permission to go to Capitol Hill and talk to Senator Dan Inouye about the “unassailable sale” which was the sale to get the Marine Corps fixed at 174,000 Marines. Krulak had spent 18 years in Hawaii as a child and knew the senator, so when he presented Inouye, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee (SAC), with the issue, Inouye realized that the drawdown would require the Marines to leave Hawaii which would cost the Hawaiian economy millions of dollars. Krulak said, “The SAC and the House Appropriations Committee (HAC) are the people who give you the money...And they ended up so impressed they gave us 177,000 Marines, which is where we were before going to Desert Storm.” Like Krulak, Hagee discussed the need for commanders to be able to communicate both internally and externally to their organizations.

Hagee said, “Commanders today, in my opinion, need to be able to talk...And they need to be able to talk both to their unit, and they need to be able to talk outside the Marine Corps.” Hagee also emphasized face-to-face communications when he used the example from his time in Vietnam, where he had a Marine from Alabama, who posted a Confederate flag outside of his tent, and one of the black Marines took umbrage with this flag. Hagee had the two Marines discuss the issue face-to-face and the Marine from Alabama removed the flag once he understood why it offended the black Marine. Hagee said, “The Marines provided the solution for the betterment of that particular command, and therefore, the command climate.” Conversely, both Neller and Amos expressed their concerns with open communications relative to the use of social media.

Neller said, “I think the one thing that concerns me is social media...People have become so wedded and dependent upon their phones to communicate that the ability to have conversation is something that doesn’t happen.” Neller published specific guidance to the Marines that covered the rules and regulations associated with the appropriate use of social media (Neller, 2017b). Also, Neller discussed how the Marines have transitioned from many online and computer-based programs of instruction, to classes covered by small unit leaders when he said, “We’ve directed more training be done by NCOs with their units where they have personal relationships with the Marines that are there...So there’s conversation.” Amos expressed similar concerns when he said, “I was the first commandant that really had to face the reality of this thing called social media...I don’t think the message changes (i.e., values). I think maybe the methodology of making the communication has to be addressed. And for me, it was face-to-face.”

Dunford emphasized the importance of open communications when he said, “Now is not the time for the strong silent type, right? I don’t actually think we should have the strong silent type in command... You’ve got to be the communicator-in-chief.” In other words, Dunford suggested that commanders must be able to articulate their expectations of behavior to their Marines, and that the commanding officer’s personal example must be accompanied by talking to his or her Marines. Dunford said, “It’s the way that the commander communicates the standards that are expected inside of that organization.” Correspondingly, Amos suggested that open communications is instrumental to a successful command climate.

For example, when Amos was asked to describe what a command climate looks like that encourages ethical behavior he said, “Number one, there had to be a constant line of open communications, absolutely, and it starts with, it starts with the commanding officer...it’s got to be leadership communicating down and followers communicating up.” Amos discussed the time when he visited Marines in Iraq and was escorted by a very junior NCO. The young Marine was a superb communicator and extremely confident in his abilities to converse with senior leaders. According to Amos, this was a positive reflection on the climate of that organization and an example of open communications. In addition to talking to people, the commandants discussed the importance of listening and soliciting feedback as part of open communications.

**Listening and feedback.** Gray and Conway both discussed the significance of critiques following military exercises, and that it is important to listen to your Marines to receive good feedback. Gray mentioned that officers standing in front of Marines after exercises, lecturing them on what went well and what did not go well, does not provide



the commanding officer with the best feedback when he said, “And there are times when you want to leave your rank behind, particularly at critiques and after exercises.” In other words, Gray wanted his Marines to have a chance to talk and that he would listen to them when he said, “I encouraged people to talk, sergeants, corporals...Because, I don’t care whether you went to the left or to the right...I care what you thought about it.” Similarly, Conway and Jones emphasized listening and feedback with Conway’s concept of collective leadership and Jones’ belief on the importance of consensus building.

Conway said, “But early on I realized the value of what I think is formally termed democratic or collective leadership style...I’ve just tried to employ it throughout my entire career.” Conway believed that other people’s opinions counted, and he wanted to hear what they had to say. Conway gave an example of when he was the senior evaluator for an exercise where the unit being evaluated was led by Col John Ripley, USMC (Ret). Ripley was an icon in the Marine Corps, and a hero from the Vietnam War that earned him the nation’s second highest combat decoration, the Navy Cross.

During the evaluation of Ripley’s unit, everyone was saying great things about Ripley’s organization, but Conway felt obligated to offer his critique on the things that did not go well for Ripley’s Marines. Conway’s critique was well received, and indicative of the command climate that Ripley had established. Further, Conway believed in listening to others for their good ideas when he said, “But I’ve always tried to make it better, and I think, again, that this whole idea of collective leadership-not just in commentary but in execution and demonstrating to people that you really mean it and you really do want to hear what they have to say, and you really do want to listen-is important.”

Jones said, “If you want something to survive your tenure, which is very brief, you’ve got to do a lot of consensus building and you’ve got to make sure people agree that what you’re asking them to do is actually worth doing.” Like Conway, Jones listened to others and wanted their opinions on how to make things better. Jones suggested that consensus building is one method to generate feedback and a way to get buy-in from your subordinates when he said, “You have to provide the command climate that generates those discussions, not from the top down, but really from the bottom up.” Jones believed that one of the best compliments a leader can receive is when the subordinates’ feedback confirms what you had planned or what the leader had thought about six months ago, is working.

Similar to Jones and Conway, Hagee expressed strong feelings about the significance of listening when he said, “So, you have to get the staff to where they will open up with you and have a conversation with you...And that means you have to keep your damn mouth shut and listen, and not shoot anyone in the face.” Hagee emphasized the importance of having people on your staff who will be very open and honest in providing the commander with advice as Hagee said, “You need to have someone like that...Because, if you don’t, the perks, the benefits, guys want to please you...Just like being a battery commander, and telling the battery gunnery sergeant, I would like, and then, the next morning it appears.”

Conversely, Dunford suggested that commanders who let their ego’s get in the way of leading their troops will impede their ability to listen to people and, deter Marines from offering good feedback when he said, “You look at Chesty Puller, and what was the one thing that characterized him in all of the exchanges with young enlisted Marines? He

was asking about their families...He was asking about their personal welfare.” Even though Puller, a five-time recipient of the Navy Cross, was a larger than life figure, he was very humble when he talked to his junior Marines. According to Dunford, humility is a necessary personal quality in attempting to establish the right climate to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines. One area that every commandant emphasized during the interviews was core values and the importance of maintaining the intangibles that make United States Marines special.

### **Core Values**

The commandants had various points to make regarding Marine Corps values and the Corps’ high standards. The primary areas covered by the commandants were the Marine Corps’ high, almost spiritual standards, the process of becoming a Marine, or what it means to become a Marine (The Transformation), and the significance of living up to those high standards. Although, the CMC’s discussed the above topics, no commandant emphasized the Marine Corps’ high standards or its core values more than General Krulak when he said, “The two most important things that the Marine Corps does for the nation are to make Marines and to win battles.” Krulak focused on the former and said that it is the individual Marines’ values that are key to the Corps’ success, and critical to its survival.

**High, almost spiritual standards.** Krulak assisted commanders with building the foundations of their command climates by publishing a series of messages to all Marines (ALMARs), which covered subjects linked to the Marine Corps’ Core Values and the Corps’ high standards such as integrity, courage, and fidelity. These ALMARs

were designed to supplement Krulak's 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance, where he discussed core values and said, "Our Marines' moral character, courage, and ethical values will dominate any location or operational area with unconditional certainty that the Marine Corps is a force for good" (Krulak, 1995, *31<sup>st</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance*). Further, Krulak suggested that Marines will be flexible, adaptive, innovative, and able to fight across the full spectrum of conflict as moral warriors when he said, "Marines must be seen, respected, and depended upon." In other words, the Marine Corps' Core Values are not to be interpreted as just a saying, Krulak expected "them to frame the way we live and act as Marines." Similarly, both Neller and Amos discussed the Corps' high standards and the importance of the core values.

Neller said, "So, I think if we are that Marine Corps that's willing to appeal because we are different, and we hold people to a higher standard, that we expect a higher level of performance, that we expect a higher level of integrity, of honor, courage, and commitment..." then the Marines will continue to be able to recruit good citizens who will make good Marines. Likewise, Amos suggested that the high standards Marines hold is a "spiritual thing" when he said, "...because it is a spiritual thing...That is the stuff that is the visceral deep-down-in things that cause us to be absolutely fearless on the battlefield, and willing to give our lives to the Marines to the left or the right..."

Further, when Krulak discussed the rationale behind developing the Crucible, he said, "The Crucible was to set the stage for what it is to really be a United States Marine, to live up to the high, almost spiritual standards of being a Marine." As Krulak said, "The mother and father are not going to sign on the dotted line to send their kids to the Marine Corps if we don't meet their almost spiritual standards." Interestingly, Gray correlated

moral behavior and values with command climate and various methods that can be employed by commanders to get their moral message across to the Marines when he said, “It’s kind of the art of getting things done as opposed to the science of getting things done...And the art part of it comes from little by little, without talking a lot about it, without hardly saying anything about it, but you let the people figure out what your moral philosophy is about things and about what’s right and what’s wrong.”

Conway emphasized the importance of core values and for Marines to always do the right thing, especially, when you are the leader. Conway had to relieve a general officer for misconduct, but the Secretary of the Navy (SecNav) did not want Conway to go through with the demotion of the officer, because the SecNav knew the officer and liked him. Conway said, “So, I got a great deal of pushback from the secretary on trying to do the right thing with the officer in question...It took me three trips...But he just almost refused to allow me to do the right thing.” Conway called it “the Lance Corporal Rule” when he said, “If a Lance Corporal gets punished for doing this, a general gets punished for doing the same thing.” Conway upheld the Corps’ high standards by relieving the senior officer, who was forced to retire. Three other commandants discussed the Corps’ high standards.

Jones said, “It’s not what people do when people are watching...It’s what you do when people aren’t watching.” Hagee discussed his observations of other commanders throughout this career when he said, “The guys I’ve seen fired as commanders were really outstanding officers... And most of them had an ethical lapse...They started to believe some of the stuff that they were above it, and that ended their careers.” Dunford suggested that one of the most important things our commanders can do is to

communicate the Marine Corps' high standards to their Marines when he said, "It's the way that the commander communicates the standards that are expected inside the organization." In addition to the high standards of the Marine Corps, which include the core values of honor, courage, and commitment, commanders are also responsible for making their Marines better people, which is a key aspect of the Transformation and the command climate.

**Better people make better Marines (The Transformation).** General Gray mentioned the message from General John A. Lejeune (13<sup>th</sup> Commandant) which suggested that it is the responsibility of the commanding officer to make their Marines better people when Gray said, "And that ought to be the guidance from the word go. And better people make better citizens in terms of the good of the country." Likewise, Krulak discussed the need for the Marine Corps to possess good people based on the chaotic nature of the global environment and the places where Marines will be sent to conduct military operations when he said, "We're in a world of chaos...And if you're going to be in a world of chaos, you'd better be able to tie that individual Marine to something more than just the ability to pull a trigger and hit a target, because they're going to be making decisions that are going to change the tide of how the battle is fought...They're going to be the strategic corporal."

Krulak used the example of the tragic events that unfolded with the U.S. Army at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, and the young female corporal who was photographed next to the hooded Iraqi prisoner. This was a shameful experience for the U.S. military and instead of receiving the support of the surrounding Arab countries like the military had during Desert Storm, the Arab countries turned against the U.S., which ultimately

changed the landscape of the strategic picture in the Middle East. This was also the birth of the insurgency in Iraq with organizations such as ISIS, also known as Daesh.

In addition, both Krulak and Amos emphasized the importance of character and how we recruit, train, and develop Marines which became known as the “Transformation.” Krulak said, “Because Marines are the centerpiece of the Corps, how we recruit them, train them, instill in them our core values and a sense of integrity and accountability, equip them to do the job, and treat them with dignity, care, and concern must be a principal emphasis.”

Further, Krulak developed the idea of the Transformation, which accounted for the chaotic nature of the asymmetric (non-traditional) battlefield; the Crucible where civilians are transformed into Marines; the idea of the strategic corporal; the concept of the three-block war (Peacekeeping operations, Humanitarian operations, combat operations all within three city blocks); and the needs of the Generation X recruits coming into the Marine Corps who wanted to be part of something with values that were bigger than themselves.

The previously mentioned ideas required a Marine Corps that possessed people with values and who had superior character as Krulak said, “What we want is ethical Marines...We want them to be thinking Marines...We want them to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason, when nobody’s watching...And at the end of four years or forty years, we’re going to send you back to the same place you came from, better for having been a Marine.” This was Krulak’s promise to the parents of a Marine recruit and his promise to the nation.

Similarly, Amos focused his remarks on the importance of core values and getting back to our roots as Marines when he delivered the Heritage and Values brief to Marines in 2012 and said, “The Marine Corps can’t allow itself to become like everyone else” (Amos, 2012c). In his 35<sup>th</sup> Commandant’s Planning Guidance he also emphasized that Marines are guided by the Marine Corps’ Core Values when he said, “These core values have been the compass for every Marine’s service throughout our rich history” (Amos, 2010, *35<sup>th</sup> Commandant’s Planning Guidance*).

In addition, Amos suggested that Marines must get back to good order and discipline when he stated, “We are allowing our standards to erode” (Amos, 2012a). Finally, Amos was the only commandant to put out specific guidance on command climate where he emphasized that it is the responsibility of the commanding officer to ensure Marines are abiding by the core values and doing what’s right when he said, “A commanding officer has the greatest influence in determining whether the Marines in the unit are combat ready, whether they’re honorable, whether they’re forthright, whether they’re focused, and how/whether they uphold our values and virtues” (Amos, 2013a). Both Krulak and Amos suggested that the NCO’s play a significant role in sustaining the Transformation.

Krulak used the term “Power Down” which emphasized small unit leadership (e.g., NCOs) as being key to sustaining the transformation and the character development of the individual Marine when Krulak (1998) said, “Everybody is going to have to spend some time during the week talking leadership...And we’re going to make sure that it goes down to the very lowest denominator...So we had something called Power Down...Krulak’s plan to empower the NCOs and junior officers...to sustain the



Transformation.” Like Krulak, Amos focused on command climate and the support from NCOs to assist the commander in his duties.

Amos launched the “Reawakening” campaign, which was designed to remind NCOs (corporals and sergeants) of their critical role in making sure Marines live up to the title of Marine when he said, “Fully 83.06% of our enlisted force is led by NCOs...And I need every one of you in this fight...Never forget *who we are* and *what we do* for our country” (Amos, 2013b). In addition to the NCOs, Amos delivered specific guidance to the commanding officers on the significance of conduct and the importance of the Marine Corps’ high standards when he said, “We lead by example, and provide continual and close supervision to those we have the privilege to lead...I expect each of you to hold yourselves and your Marines to the highest standards...nothing else is acceptable” (Amos, 2012a). Like Amos and Krulak, Jones suggested that commanders have various tools available to assist them in maintaining the high standards in the Corps by using the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) and junior leadership to reinforce discipline, values, and to promote character development.

Jones recommended the MCMAP as a way for Marines to maintain good order and discipline, and to ensure that Marines live by the core values. Jones relied on his experiences from Vietnam and how the Korean Marines kept their discipline and integrity. He mentioned that he realized good results from martial arts training by using the NCOs and junior officers when he said, “We let the NCOs and the young officers develop it and make it into something that was usable in the Marine Corps...But almost immediately, the ethical behavior of the battalion changed.” As Jones discussed, the Marines looked upon the belts associated with the MCMAP (i.e., black belt, tan belt, gray

belt, etc.) as a badge of honor and Marines understood that they could lose their belt for misconduct reasons.

Hagee, Dunford, and Neller all suggested that commanders utilize the Socratic Method as part of their command climate to ensure Marines stay in touch with the ethical issues required to sustain the Transformation. Hagee said, “And by having that discussion, you set up better individuals that make better decisions, which is going to help the command climate.” In his interview, Dunford emphasized the importance of the command climate and sustaining the core values and maintaining the high standards when he said, “Once you get beyond recruit training it is all about the commander establishing the proper climate within which our core values are maintained.” In addition, Dunford suggested the use of the Socratic Method to get Marines to think through problems when he said, “Socratic in the sense that you’re saying, “Hey look, here are the facts...Talk to me about your decision-making under these circumstances.” Neller advocated for values training to be conducted by the NCOs when he said, “I’ve directed this training be done by NCOs with their units where they have personal relationships with the Marines...So there’s conversation.”

The Marine Corps’ Core Values and its high standards enable Marines to maintain the trust of the American people. During his interview, Krulak suggested that America believes Marines are good for the country when he quoted his late father, Victor Krulak (1984), who said, “...should the American people ever lose that conviction as a result of our failure to meet their high almost spiritual standards, the Marine Corps will then quickly disappear” (p.xv).

**Winning the hearts and souls of America.** During their interviews, the commandants suggested that America does not need a Marine Corps, but America wants a Marine Corps. Therefore, to keep the trust of the American people and to ensure the survival of the Marine Corps, it is incumbent upon all Marines to continue to uphold the high standards of the American people and the high standards of the United States Marine Corps. As Gray said, “The nation expects you to be special...That’s the reason that you have a Marine Corps, because the nation wants you to have a Marine Corps, through Congress.”

When Krulak mentioned the need for a Marine Corps he said, “The American people want one.” He also suggested that the conduct of the individual Marine is just as important as winning America’s battles when he said, “So it’s not whether you can win the battles that counts...It’s do you win the hearts and souls of the American people.” Krulak shared the example of when two Marines and a Sailor in 1997, raped a twelve-year-old Okinawan girl. Krulak flew across the world to talk to all the Marines on Okinawa about the incident and to reinforce the Marine Corps’ values and standards.

Before leaving the island and after speaking with the Marines, Krulak received word that Governor Ota wanted to meet with him. As Krulak approached the Imperial Palace, he noticed it was lined with hundreds of photographers waiting to see what would happen next. When Krulak, a Christian, walked up to the Governor of Okinawa, the governor reached out to shake Krulak’s hand when Krulak grabbed the governor and hugged him. Krulak suggested that this act enabled the Japanese to save face and as Krulak said, “It really defused the people of Okinawa...But a simple act like that can have an amazing impact because they didn’t throw us off Okinawa.” Jones discussed the

need for Marines to uphold the special trust that America gives its Marines when he said, “You should never do anything that embarrasses yourself, your family, your unit, or your country.”

Hagee and Dunford emphasized that the Marine Corps values life and that we must take our American values with us wherever we go. Hagee recommended that commanders must have difficult ethical decision-making discussions with their Marines as part of their command climate, but discussions that are real and relevant issues that affect Marines when he said, “That is part of helping to set, in my opinion, the command climate to where individuals can think through that.” Hagee used the example of the dying wife and the poor husband who had an opportunity to steal a very expensive drug that would save her life. The ethical dilemma is the value of life juxtaposed against the husbands’ values and that stealing the medicine is wrong. It is an ethical dilemma, but the right choice is to steal the drug because the value of life takes priority over the moral issue of stealing.

Dunford suggested that the way America will eventually defeat organizations such as ISIS is that American military forces must bring with them the American values to the fight when he said, “And only by bringing our values with us and representing what’s best in the United States of America are we ever going to be able to compete with the perverse ideas that we’re dealing with...The issue for us in the long term is can the United States after all these years of war maintain the ethical standards that define us.” Conway discussed the importance of taking care of the wounded warriors and the families by establishing the Wounded Warrior Regiment, which also contributes to winning the hearts and minds of the American public when he said, “We need to make

these people feel like once they're wounded they're not set aside-they just joined another unit."

Similarly, Amos and Neller both discussed the importance of upholding the Marine Corps' Core Values and keeping the trust of the American people. Amos suggested that the soul of the Marine Corps is linked directly to the core values when he said, "And that's what really gets to this thing called the soul of the Marines, the soul of the Corps...And that's the thing we can never, ever, ever allow to change." Also, Amos (2012a) discussed the importance of upholding the standards relative to the survival of the Marine Corps when he said, "The high regard of our fellow citizens and our own self-image are at stake" (p.2).

Neller expressed his frustration with recent incidents of misconduct in the Marine Corps that stemmed from the abuse of alcohol. In his interview he recommended for all Marines to abide by the Corps' high standards and values when he said, "Read more, drink less." He believes that Marines are reading more and that they are making better decisions on their physical fitness. However, he also mentioned that some Marines are not drinking less, which has caused many of the misconduct problems in the Marine Corps that make the news and erode the trust of the American people. Further, Neller emphasized the importance of a Marines' oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States when he said, "This is not supposed to be easy...This is hard...You took an oath...It doesn't have an expiration date on it..." In other words, Neller discussed that every Marine has an obligation to fulfill his or her oath to defend the Constitution and as such, abide by the rules and regulations that govern the conduct of a Marine along

with the values that are imbued in every Marine. According to the commandants, when Marines do these things they promote greater trust with the American public.

### **Accountability and Responsibility**

Another category that originated from the interviews with the commandants was accountability and responsibility. Each CMC discussed the significance of commanders holding themselves accountable first, and that they must hold their Marines accountable for violations of Marine Corps standards and the core values. Also, the commandants suggested that it is the responsibility of the commandant, and all of the commanding officers to protect the Marine Corps as an institution. This idea underscores the importance of commanders setting the right climate that will influence the ethical behavior of the Marines.

**Commanders, climate, and accountability.** General Gray discussed how leaders must set the example and hold themselves to an even higher level of accountability, which requires self-discipline when he said, “And the nation expects me to be special...And if I can’t live up to that, I can’t be a Marine...And so I think it starts with self-discipline, and I think the commandant’s real solution is leadership.” Hagee suggested that one of the best ways for commanders to ensure they are holding themselves accountable is to continually evaluate their leadership and command climate when he said, “What I think the better leaders do, is you’re constantly thinking...evaluating your leadership...learning from both good and bad examples.” In other words, leaders must exercise the self-discipline necessary to constantly reflect on their own leadership and the type of environment they set within their organization.

Hagee mentioned that leaders must look themselves in the mirror and ask the question “Is that the person I want leading me”? General Jones emphasized the concept of self-discipline when he suggested that a commander’s climate is not working when “There is reckless behavior, evidence of a lack of discipline.” Further, he used the example of the MCMAP to act as a “badge” of discipline, to promote greater self-discipline and reduce incidents of misconduct for all ranks.

General Conway mentioned the importance of discipline when establishing the right command climate when he said, “But discipline is important in a unit.” Conway suggested that if the commander wants to set the right environment it must be of a nature where Marines exercise self-discipline and that they understand there will be rewards for good behavior and punishment for bad behavior. Amos underscored the significance of commanders establishing a climate where the organization has self-discipline, takes care of people, and does things the right way when he said, “And I hold them accountable for it.”

Likewise, Neller discussed how it is the commander’s responsibility to hold him or herself to an even higher level of accountability when leading others when he said, “But other than to say that the commander’s got to role model the behavior that he expects every other Marine to exhibit...And he’s got to hold himself more accountable than anybody else in the unit.” Neller mentioned that the followers have certain expectations of their commanders when he said, “They expect us to hold people accountable, ourselves first and foremost.”

When Krulak discussed accountability, authority, and responsibility he said, “The one thing that they can’t do is delegate the accountability.” In other words, the

commanding officer is ultimately held accountable for whatever his or her unit does or fails to do. Conversely, Dunford said, “When you’re a commander you are not responsible for the individual criminal conduct of any one individual...You’re responsible for the climate within which those individuals operate every day.”

**Holding your people accountable.** General Dunford suggested that when there is an incident, it is more important how the command, or the institution responds to the incident than what happened. He also emphasized that it is the commander’s command climate that sets the tone for the organization and that the commander must hold individuals accountable for their actions when he said, “It is holding people accountable.”

Amos suggested that “if commanders set the right climate then many of the other issues take care of themselves when you’ve got the right command climate, the right standards, the right things that have been told to your youngsters and the expectations, and you hold them accountable to it, I would say if there are a 100 bad things that can go wrong, 95 of them will be taken care of by good decision making.”

Krulak and Conway both used examples of holding senior leaders (i.e., general officers) accountable. Krulak suggested that senior leaders do not plan to make mistakes, but when they let their moral compass waiver, or ethical behavior is no longer their priority, and they fail to hold people accountable as Krulak said, “They’re dead...They’ve lost the moral authority to take action...The most important authority you have is not the four stars on your sleeves...It’s the moral authority you have in your soul.” Further, Krulak discussed the importance of holding general officers accountable when he said, “There’s no room in the Marine Corps for situational ethics or situational



morality...Those found wanting will be held accountable...I threw out three two-star generals...For not doing that...They were screwing their secretaries.”

Similarly, Conway had to relieve one of his senior leaders for misconduct when he said, “We used to call it the “Lance Corporal Rule,” any time I had to deal with a general...If a lance corporal (a junior enlisted Marine) gets punished for doing this, then a general gets punished for doing the same thing.” Conway emphasized that we must hold all Marines accountable for violations of our core values and standards regardless of their rank or position.

Hagee emphasized accountability when he said, “...holy cow, he’s really serious...If I cross that ethical line, then he is going to hold me accountable, and I don’t want to do that.” Hagee used the example of a Marine under his command who was caught for shooting some horses and everyone was waiting to see how Hagee was going to handle the matter as Hagee said, “I court martialed him...And that signal went out to everyone in the division...Uh-oh, we’d better do what’s right.” In other words, if Hagee would not have held the Marine accountable, he would have set a new standard in his division that would have made it difficult for him to punish Marines in the future for similar violations of the high standards.

**Responsible to the institution.** The commandants discussed the importance of protecting the Marine Corps as an institution. Similar to what was mentioned in the previous section on accountability, Dunford said, “But at the end of the day, I think if you look at how the institution responded in holding people accountable for aberrations of our core values, that to me is a reflection of the institution and the expectations of the

institution.” Dunford also suggested that a commander can use their climate as a tool to reinforce the message that all Marines receive in boot camp and at officer training when

he said,

“Keep our honor clean,” it is not keep my honor clean, right? It’s not keep your honor clean. Its keep our honor clean...So, it’s the sense of individual accountability to the institution and the sense of individual actions actually reflecting the Institution’s core values. So, from the very earliest days in recruit training you are instilling in a private the sense of accountability to the values of the Institution and the sense that if you violate those values it’s not about you...You are actually doing something that is putting a black mark on the Institution as a whole, and that’s particularly true the more senior you become.

In addition, Dunford would tell his new one-star general officers that they had to be very careful as to what they said and how they behaved in public when he said, “You can never again speak in public without being a reflection of the institution...You don’t have a personal opinion in public anymore...And when you are communicating publicly you actually don’t have a personal opinion because you are the institution.”

During his Reawakening Campaign, Amos directed the NCO’s in the Marine Corps to assist him along with their commanders to combat the rash of recent misconduct issues in 2013 when he said, “Move to the decisive point in this battle and through your presence, professionalism, and tenacity...turn the tide of this fight for the sake of Corps and country” (Amos, 2013b). Amos seemed to indicate that the mere existence of the Marine Corps as an institution was in jeopardy.

Also, during his campaign against sexual assault and hazing, Amos discussed leadership and his responsibility to protect the Marine Corps when he said, “As Commandant, I have no greater responsibility to our institution than to ensure that our Corps adheres to the legendary high levels of discipline and professionalism expected of us by the American people” (Amos, 2012b). During his Heritage and Values Brief to Marines, Amos quoted then Commandant Carl Mundy, Jr., 30<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, who said to Amos, “You can’t lose the spiritual health of the Corps as the 35<sup>th</sup> CMC” (Amos, 2012c). In other words, it is the responsibility of the commandant to ensure that the Marine Corps remains relevant and that the Marines continue to be wanted by the American people.

Gray said of Marines, “...the nation expects you to be special...That’s the reason that you have a Marine Corps is because the nation wants you to have a Marine Corps...” Likewise, Hagee suggested that it is the responsibility of the commander to protect the institution when he used Nimitz as the epitome of taking care of the needs of the Navy before his own personal goals.

Nimitz refused to take the position of Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) over other more senior admirals at the behest of President Roosevelt. Hagee suggested that one of the best leadership qualities of Admiral Nimitz, and one that was indicative of the climate he set within his organization was selflessness as Hagee said, “It was never about him.” Nimitz was always protecting the Navy as an institution, and he was always looking out for his Sailors before taking care of himself.

Jones discussed the environment, and how commanders must always be aware of their environment, and that the CNN effect is real and can create false perceptions about

the Marine Corps when he said, “So I think the first thing that you have to do in our training of officers and staff NCOs is to make sure they understand that they are not invisible...As a matter of fact, they are visible 24/7, 365.” In other words, like Dunford and Hagee suggested, Marines in leadership positions must be particularly sensitive to their words and actions which will reflect upon the Marine Corps as an institution. Finally, General Krulak emphasized the connection between the climate the commandant sets for the Marine Corps and his responsibility to the Corps as an institution.

As Krulak said, “Basically, what I learned early on was just what my father wrote and that is that your responsibility (as commandant) is to the American people...It’s do you win the hearts and souls of the United States people, the American people.” Krulak suggested that to continue to win the hearts and souls of the American people, Marines must continue to uphold their legacy when Krulak said, “Our Marines’ moral character, courage, and ethical values will dominate any location or operational area with the unconditional certainty that the Marine Corps is a force for good” (Krulak, 1995, 31<sup>st</sup> *Commandant’s Planning Guidance*).

In addition, Krulak (1995) discussed how the nation’s trust is the Marine Corps’ inheritance that must be sustained as a sacred responsibility when he said, “It is a debt we owe to those who have gone before us, and a promise we make to those who will follow...It is the guiding light of our ethos” (p.1). Further, Krulak discussed how the nation demands that its Marines be always ready, capable, and that Marines possess the values of honor, courage, and commitment when Krulak (1995) quoted the former 18<sup>th</sup> CMC, General Alexander Vandegrift who said, “...the Nation has placed a measure of its trust and hope in the one hundred thousand men who have volunteered to serve the cause

of freedom as United States Marines...The Marine Corps is always ready to fulfill that trust” (p.1). In other words, Marine commandants, Marine commanding officers, and all Marines are responsible for the stewardship of this sacred trust, which is carried out through living up to the reputation established by the Marines who have gone before, and by always doing the right thing as a force for good.

Again, Krulak quoted the 13<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, General John A. Lejeune when he emphasized the significance of the command climate established by all commanders and passed on to the next commander, to include the commandant, and said, “This high name of distinction and soldierly repute, we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the Corps. With that we also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our Corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age.”

Krulak discussed the transformation as an event that changes a person forever and instills in them the Marine Corps’ beliefs, ideals, and values of honor, courage, and commitment. Krulak (1996a) believed that the key to the Marine Corps’ survival is for the individual Marine to always live by these core values, which will help to maintain the trust of the American people. To reinforce his point, Krulak quoted President John F. Kennedy

who said,

And when at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us, recording whether in our brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities to the state, our success or failure in whatever office we hold, will be measured by the answers to four questions: First, were we truly men of courage...Second,

were we truly men of judgment...Third, were we truly men of integrity...Finally, were we truly men of dedication? (p.3)

### **Cross-Case Comparison Common Themes**

There were three common themes that emerged from the cross-case comparison: First, that the command climate set by the commanding officer is significant with respect to the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization; Second, that the commanding officer's climate must be focused on the routine maintenance of the Marine Corps' Core Values, and the character development of the individual Marine post entry-level training (sustaining the transformation); Third, that the best way for the United States Marine Corps to continue winning the hearts and souls of the American people is through the ethical behavior of the individual Marine both on, and off the battlefield, which is directly related to the Marine Corps' survival as an institution.

#### **Command Climate and Ethical Behavior**

The first theme suggests that the command climate established by the commanding officer is critical in influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines. Krulak discussed his experiences from Vietnam and his former battalion commander who established a superior command climate as Krulak said, "He espoused all the things that I'm trying to get across to you, the idea of the importance of what is command climate in your individual unit...What do they think; how do they act; and how do they respond." Amos said, "I published a paper to all my general officers, and actually, to my commanding officers as well, about the importance of command climate...the importance

of having the right tone set by the commanding officer is critical” to the behavior of the organization.

Dunford suggested that it is the responsibility of the commanding officer to take care of the “intangible qualities” of the unit when he said, “I think it (command climate) is the primary driver of ethical behavior.” Neller suggested that the commander must lead by example when he said, “I think climate is an outcome of leadership and ...people that we lead expect us to be competent...committed...fair...and to be somebody of virtue and character.” Jones said, “I mean, if you don’t have a good command climate you don’t do anything well...let alone ethical behavior...So, I think it is one of the most important missions the commander has to deal with up front.” The ethical behavior of the individual Marine is a key element of the transformation process of turning civilians into United States Marines and making them better citizens.

### **Sustaining the Transformation**

The second theme advocates for the sustainment of the transformation within Marine organizations after the Marine has completed his or her entry-level training. This is the responsibility of the commanding officer to ensure his or her Marines are better people than before they came to the unit. Gray said, “I think General Lejeune’s message had a great impact on me in terms of my thinking as an officer...particularly, Lejeune’s message about you owe it to the young people to make them better morally, ethically, and physically, when they leave you than when you joined them.” Dunford said, “Once you get beyond recruit training it is all about the commander establishing the proper climate within which our core values are maintained.”

In his interview, Krulak discussed the significance of commanders sustaining the transformation when

he said,

But the intent of the transformation was that you would continue that education (values training), that you would sustain the transformation through at least weekly discussions. Even if it's 15 minutes, just one little vignette and sitting around the table, and here's the vignette that's going to be x, y, or z. When you get to the majors or to the company commanders, or to the Expeditionary Warfare School, or the Command and Staff College, or the War College, at that point that education must become far more pointed. I mean, I would start it with that damn quote (Victor Krulak's quote) and I would use that as a pile driver into every one of their hearts and every one of their souls. Because that is what the American people expect of us...

Hagee suggested that commanders must sustain the core values and reinforce character development through the use of ethical dilemmas when he said, "But setting that command climate, and then checking what you're doing to make sure you're doing everything that you can to reinforce the climate that you're trying to set...And to understand ethical, what I would call ethical dilemmas...Where there is good on both sides and there's bad on both sides." Amos emphasized the importance of sustaining the transformation when he discussed the overall health of a Marine Corps unit, which is a reflection on the command climate and has a significant influence on the behavior of the individual Marine when



he said,

These healthy units, these well-led units, these units with high morale, these units that have great command climates, absolutely have fewer discipline problems.

Absolutely have higher reenlistments. Absolutely are happier units. The units that have a healthy command climate are happy units.

Jones suggested that commanders must work on reinforcing ethical behavior and that it must be done on a routine basis when he said, “You have to keep reminding people because new people are coming all the time...If they don’t hear that then all of a sudden the first thing that happens is you will have a major training, a major hazing incident...You have to keep talking about it.”

### **Winning the Hearts and Souls**

The third theme underscores the significance of the commander’s climate and the ethical behavior of the Marines by winning the hearts and souls of the American people. This theme suggests that Marines must live up to the expectations, the legacy, and the conduct associated with being a United States Marine. These are the lofty (almost spiritual) expectations of the American people. These themes are directly connected to the longevity of the Marine Corps since America already has a very capable land force resident in the U.S. Army, and a very capable air force in the U.S. Air Force. Therefore, it is the notion that America does not necessarily need a Marine Corps, but America wants a Marine Corps. The commandants suggest that the way Marines continue to be wanted is through their behavior and living up to their legacy as a force that is good for the country.

Jones discussed how the behavior of the individual Marine is critical in the eyes of the American public and is a reflection on the Marine Corps as an institution when he said, “You should never do anything that embarrasses yourself here, your family, your unit, or your country.” Neller underscored the importance of winning hearts and minds with an example from a recent incident in Okinawa when he said, “We’ve got three Marines who did some silly things on Okinawa here this past week...That’s three out of 22,000...And then, because of those three, it’s easy to say the climate sucks in Okinawa...No it doesn’t.”

Krulak suggested that America does not need a Marine Corps but rather, “The American people want one.” Why? Krulak answered this question when he discussed what he called “the business of the business” of the Marine Corps. In addition to discussing recruiting, recruit training, manpower, and sustaining Marine Corps values, he also traced the lineage of the Corps with great leaders such as General Holland “Howlin Mad” M. Smith whose vision of amphibious operations in the Pacific occurred while he was serving as a young officer staring out at the wheat fields (the ocean) of Belleau Woods in France during World War One, while preparing to attack the German positions (the Pacific islands).

Krulak discussed the island fighting battles in the Pacific and other great Marine Corps leaders such as Vandegrift, Twinning, Holland M. Smith, and of course his father, Victor Krulak Senior. His point was that Marines have been doing this business of fighting and protecting America for over 242 years and that the Marine Corps have never let down the country which it proudly serves. Along with the Corps’ illustrious history, Krulak suggested that all commanders must thoroughly understand the 1947 National

Security Act and its description of the mission of the Marine Corps and the speech (Bended Knee) given by then Commandant, General Vandegrift.

Vandegrift's speech addressed a Congress that was ready to disband the Marine Corps after the Second World War. These are all examples of the "business of the business" that Krulak referred to during the interview. Further, he suggested that the conduct of the individual Marine is equally as important, or even more important than the Corps' ability to win every battle that it fights when

he said,

I am telling you, we could have gotten the *shit* kicked out of us in Fallujah. And so long as we fought hard and we were honorable, we're fine. But take a picture of Marines urinating on enemy dead, that's not good, that's not good. Having Marines take pictures of fellow Marines nude or in a state of undress, and then posting them on Facebook in derogatory words, that's not good.

Krulak's (1984) father said it best about the significance of winning the hearts and souls of the American public when

he said,

We exist today, we flourish today, not because of what we know we are, or what we know we can do, but because of what the grass roots of our country believe we are, and believe we can do. The American people believe Marines are downright good for the country; that the Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youth into proud self-reliant stable citizens—citizens into whose hands the nation's affairs may safely be entrusted. And likewise, should the people ever lose that conviction as a result of our failure to meet their

high almost spiritual standards, the Marine Corps will then quickly disappear

(pp.xiv-xv). Amos supported the above quote when

he said,

I don't think anything has ever been written that's as poignant and as enduring as what he (Victor Krulak Sr.) described...if your behavior caused the American people to not believe in you...that you brought shame on your unit, and therefore, on the Marine Corps such that the American people no longer believed that a Marine Corps was just downright good for it, that would have a self-correcting...I mean that's a measure that would self-correct.

Dunford suggested that the people responsible for winning the hearts and minds of the American people are the leaders when

he said,

It's keep our honor clean. It's you got to be able to trust your fellow Marines. Its officers eat last in the mess line. So, it's very practical ways that these things have—We are an oral tribal society, right? So, this is a couple hundred years of oral tradition. What John W. Thomason calls such things as “Regiments hand down forever.” So, he is a World War I guy. He writes a book when he comes back home and talks about such things as, “Regiments hand down forever.” What he was talking about was all of these intangible qualities. And who did he say was responsible? The leaders. Passing those from one generation of Marines to another. So, that's why I think it is less about a program of instruction or a period of instruction then it is—it's part of the fiber. Of the institution.

### **Cross-Case Comparison Conclusion**

After interviewing each of the commandants and then comparing the individual cases, the analysis suggests that the most important thing a commanding officer of Marines can do is to establish the right command climate. A command climate that is focused on the Marine Corps' Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, the high standards (almost spiritual) that all Marines are expected to meet, and the individual character development of each Marine in the organization. Of course, the climate that the commander establishes will have a direct impact or influence on the behavior of his or her Marines and must be focused on the individual character of the Marine. For commanders to be able to influence the ethical behavior of their Marines they must primarily, set the example through their own individual actions.

Commanders must also establish a climate that encourages the thoughts and ideas of others through open communications both up and down the chain of command. The commander's climate must be an environment where every Marine believes that he or she has a voice in the organization and that anyone can speak their mind, if they do so in a professional, considerate, and respectful manner.

Further, for the climate to have the most impact or influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines, the sustainment of the transformation must be centered on the Marine Corps' Core Values, and the on-going character development of the individual Marine. This training and education can't be relegated to traditional lectures from senior officers, but rather, driven by junior leaders such as NCOs

and junior officers who are closest to the troops. These discussions should be weekly and must be based on the Socratic Method where the leaders present an ethical dilemma to the troops and allow them to develop a solution without the leaders providing the answers.

Finally, for the Marine Corps to continue to win the hearts and souls of the American people, it must continue to not only perform as the world's premier warfighting force, but it must also be known as the world's premier character development institution, and that it is truly an organization that is good for the country. This behavior will continue to promote the trust of the American people that the Marine Corps has experienced for over 242 years.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with an introduction that sets the stage for this final chapter; the introduction underscores the importance of a climate focused on ethical behavior. Next, the chapter will provide the reader with a brief overview of the methodology used to answer the research questions. This will be followed by a summary of findings; the summary will focus on, four categories that emerged from the cross-case comparison and the three themes that were extracted from the data. The subsequent section presents two recommendations that were generated from the three themes—a proposed definition for command climate and a proposed command climate survey—that would replace the survey that is currently used. Finally, the chapter will conclude with sections covering recommendations for future research, limitations of the study, significance of the study, and a few final thoughts.

#### **Introduction**

According to these Marine Corps Commandants, the Corps does a thorough job of training and educating its Marines on the importance of doing what's right. All Marines receive detailed instruction on the core values, Marine Corps standards, the ethos of the Marine Corps, Marine Corps orders, and regulations during entry-level training, as well as during follow-on professional schools (e.g., the Sergeants Course, and the Expeditionary Warfare School for captains). Further, most Marines serving the nation do so honorably and abide by the Marine Corps' Core Values and meet its high standards. In addition, based on the history of the United States Marine Corps and its reputation for

discipline, esprit de corps, and professionalism, it is reasonable to assume that most commanders establish the right climate for their Marines that incorporates the key elements of climate as previously discussed in this study.

However, routine incidents of misconduct that have been carried out by a small number of Marines within the organization continue to plague the Institution. Many of these incidents (e.g., Marines United), make the headlines of the local and national news, which has the potential to slowly erode the trust and confidence of the American people in their Marine Corps.

Why does this continue to occur? Why is the right path so difficult for some to follow? These are difficult questions to answer and questions that the commandants have all had to deal with during their tenure. If the Marine Corps always strives to improve as a warfighting organization, and it is willing to be self-critical, making the necessary adjustments to continue to be the most lethal, and capable warfighting organization on the planet, then it will certainly welcome the results of this study and examine how its commanders establish their climates.

### **Methodology Overview**

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that command climate plays in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command. The two supporting questions explored were: How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines? And, how does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior? To answer these questions, a qualitative social science research project was conducted over the course of



approximately one year. The unit of analysis for the study was seven former commandants and the current commandant of the Marine Corps. Prior to the study, a pilot study was conducted to verify the validity of the research topic. Once the topic of command climate and ethical behavior was validated based on the data collected from the personal interviews of commanding officers from the rank of captain to colonel, the main research project was developed.

The next step was to validate the semi-structured interview guide. This task was accomplished through a round table discussion in Quantico, Virginia prior to the commandant interviews. The round table members consisted of two retired colonels with extensive command climate experience, a Marine officer who is an instructor at the Lejeune Leadership Institute who teaches climate and ethics, and a civilian professor who teaches command climate and ethics at the same institution. After the interview guide questions were validated, the interviews were scheduled with seven living former commandants of the Marine Corps and the current Commandant of the Marine Corps.

All interviews were conducted in-person except for the General Amos interview, which was conducted telephonically. All interviews were audio-recorded and used the semi-structured interview guide, with jot notes taken during the interviews. Analytical memos were prepared within 24 hours after the conclusion of the interview.

Transcriptions were then prepared from each audio recording. The transcriptions were coded and analyzed prior to the writing of chapter four. Each commandant was treated as an individual case study then the cases were compared during the cross-case comparison phase.

### Summary of Findings

The data collected from the eight personal interviews with the commandants produced four common categories from which emerged three key themes. The four categories were setting the example, open communications, core values, and accountability and responsibility. The first theme suggests that the command climate set by the commanding officer is significant with respect to the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization. The second theme suggests that the command climate must be focused on the Marine Corps' Core Values, and the character development of the individual Marine post entry-level training (sustaining the transformation). The third theme underscores character and that the best way for the United States Marine Corps to continue winning the hearts and souls of the American people is through the ethical behavior of the individual Marine both on, and off the battlefield, which is directly related to the Marine Corps' survival as an institution. The three themes are discussed in greater detail below.

**Theme 1: The command climate set by the commanding officer is significant with respect to influencing the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization.** One theme that emerged from the cross-case comparison of the commandants was that the commander is solely responsible for setting the right climate in his or her organization. This requires that commanders set the example in everything they do through their own personal actions. Further, that they hold themselves accountable, and that they hold their Marines accountable.

In addition, the climate of the organization emerges from both the commanding officers' behavior and the expectations that commanders set for their subordinates.

Further, the policies, practices, and intentions that stem from the command philosophy all have an impact on the climate of the organization and the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization (Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macy, 2014). It is the commander's responsibility to establish an environment that not only sets the individual Marine up for success, but also sets up the unit and the Institution (The Marine Corps) for success.

**Theme 2: The commanding officer's climate must be focused on the Marine Corps' Core Values, and the character development of the individual Marine post entry-level training (sustaining the transformation).** The second theme produced from the cross-case comparison was that the commanding officer's climate must include a heavy emphasis on ethical behavior based on the Marine Corps' Core Values and the high standards that govern the conduct of United States Marines. As previously discussed, it is the responsibility of the commander to reinforce values and character to ensure that their Marines are better people because of their service in the Marine Corps. Reinforcement training and education must be conducted at the lowest level possible within the command structure, and ethical dilemmas should be introduced using the Socratic Method of questioning to develop solutions to ethical issues. The study revealed that current Marine Corps doctrine and ethics curriculum today is more focused on values-based training and is applicable for all ranks.

**Theme 3: The best way for the United States Marine Corps to continue winning the hearts and souls of the American people is through the ethical behavior of the individual Marine both on and off the battlefield, which is directly related to the Marine Corps' survival as an Institution.** The Marine Corps is known for its ability to make Marines and fight and win the nation's battles. Clearly, it must continue

to accomplish these tasks to remain relevant as a warfighting institution. Also, the results of the cross-case comparison suggest that the individual character of the Marine and the values the Marine Corps instills in its Marines contribute to warfighting effectiveness, and therefore, based on the Marine Corps' combat record it should also be known as the world's premier character development Institution.

Based on the above themes, two recommendations were produced. The first recommendation is a proposed definition of command climate. The second is for the Marine Corps to update its current command climate survey with the proposed survey provided in this dissertation. First, the proposed definition will be discussed followed by the updated survey.

### **Recommendations for a Definition and a Survey**

The four categories and the three themes previously discussed as findings were leveraged to construct a proposed definition of command climate for the United States Marine Corps. The proposed definition incorporates elements of the previously mentioned themes as a process climate focused on "internal processes that occur in organizations as part of daily organizational functioning such as, a procedural justice climate, or an ethical climate" (Ehrhart et al., 2014, p.87). Further, the definition will emphasize ethical behavior as the primary desired outcome of the command climate. In the proposed definition, the command climate puts a heavy emphasis on core values and the regular reinforcement of ethical training and education to sustain the transformation of the individual Marine.

The proposed definition includes the importance of winning the hearts and souls of the American public and that the command climate must prepare and groom Marines to live by, and demonstrate, the high, almost spiritual expectations of the American public. The cross-case comparison suggests that the longevity of the Marine Corps will be determined by how well Marines live up to those lofty expectations.

In the proposed definition of command climate, the commander sets the tone for the organization as well as expectations for subordinates. It is not about the actions of the commanders but, rather, the result of the actions of the commanders. Therefore, the environment does not simply “set Marines up for success, enabling them to accomplish their individual goals” but, equally important, accomplish the goals of the unit and the Marine Corps as an institution.

**Proposed definition of command climate:** Here is the definition I am proposing after analyzing the data generated in this study: *Command climate* refers to: the environment set by the commanding officer that enables success for the individual Marine, the unit, and the Institution by promoting the Marine Corps’ Core Values, enforcing its high, almost spiritual standards, and emphasizing the importance of living up to the historical expectations established by the American people who believe that Marines are good for the country.

The above definition charges leaders at every level with the responsibility for creating an environment that is grounded in the Marine Corps’ Core Values, ethos, and standards. This environment is where the policies, practices, and intentions of the leaders sends a clear and consistent message to Marines about what is valued the most in the organization—a Marine’s character. Further, this environment promotes setting the

example, open communications, non-negotiable core values, and accountability and responsibility. This environment sets Marines up for success, enabling them to accomplish their individual goals. This type of climate causes people to treat one another with dignity and respect, generating trust among members of the organization that the command will hold accountable, violators of Marine Corps standards and values, which tend to erode the American public's belief that "Marines are downright good for the manhood of our country" (Krulak, 1984, p.xv).

### **Proposed Command Climate Survey**

The second recommendation that emerged from the findings in study was the need for an update to the Marine Corps' Command Climate Survey (See Appendix L). The purpose of a new survey that would update the Marine Corps' existing command climate survey is to provide new questions to gather respondents' perceptions of their units' command climate and the role it plays on influencing their ethical behavior and character development. Further, participation in this survey provides the commanding officer with valuable feedback necessary for him/her to take the appropriate actions necessary to improve the command climate and enhance its warfighting effectiveness along with accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization and setting the right conditions for individual Marine, unit, and Institutional success. Further, this survey incorporates questions based on the findings from the interviews with the commandants.

This instrument uses a cross-sectional survey designed to capture a current snapshot of the member's perceptions of the command (Appendix L). The cross-

sectional survey design makes sense based on the routine, high volume of personnel turnover, and individuals assigned to temporary duty (e.g., attending professional schools, and special assignments external to the command).

The first group of questions consists of demographic information useful to commanders in analyzing their command climates. The next group of questions are associated with the unit's approach to character development, ethical decision-making, and personal communications.

These questions are organized using a Likert scale (Fowler, 2014) and are designed to gather feedback from respondents on their perception of how well the command is doing reinforcing the Marine Corps' Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment through classroom instruction, group, and individual discussions (e.g., Socratic Methods and ethical dilemmas, scenarios, etc.), as well as practical applications designed to further develop the character of the men and women in the command. These questions stem from ethical climate theory and are also based on various other ethical theories such as values-based ethics, ethical fading, and a pedagogy based on using the Socratic Method (Socratic Method, 2018).

Following the nine Likert scale questions are six open-ended questions that enable the respondent to elaborate on their perceptions of the command's ethical training, leadership, and the degree of leadership's involvement with the individual Marine's character development. The open-ended questions conclude with recommendations for making the unit a better organization. Finally, the survey concludes with three yes / no questions about the leadership of the organization and one question representing the

frequency of ethical discussion training that provides the respondent with a sliding scale to depict their perceived degree of frequency (Fowler, 2014).

As noted, this survey is included as Appendix (L) to this dissertation for the Marine Corps to review and consider as a possible survey instrument for commanders. This proposed survey instrument will provide commanding officers with a “pulse check” on how well their command climate influences the ethical behavior of the Marines in the command, and how their command climate influences the character development of the members of the organization.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has provided findings and themes that provide insight from the current commandant and the seven former living commandants of the Marine Corps on command climate and its influence on the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization. Future research could examine the same subject from the perspectives of more junior leaders such as company commanders. This study did not explore command climate from the perspectives of female leaders at any level, which should be studied based on the recent changes in DoD policy and women serving in combat arms (e.g., infantry, armor, and artillery) command positions. Finally, future research should explore command climate and ethical behavior from the perspectives of the enlisted leaders (e.g., NCOs, SNCOs) to gather their valuable insight, which can inform current and future commanding officers as they establish their command climates.



### **Limitations of the Study**

Even though this study offers a unique insight into the subject of climate from the perspectives of the Commandants of the Marine Corps, there are some limitations. Three limitations will be discussed. The first limitation is the commandants themselves. Each officer was white, male, and with one exception, all infantry officers by background (General Amos was a Naval Aviator). In addition to this limitation with the generals, one could argue that a former senior leader of the United States Marine Corps, a four-star general with typically 40 years or more of service, could be out-of-touch with a 25-year-old Marine (current average age of a Marine) for example, who uses social media to communicate. Although with age comes wisdom, the disparity in rank, position, gender and racial bias, and age could tend to limit the validity of the findings if the sole objective was to develop insights based on what types of climate issues are only relevant to younger people.

The second limitation in this study centers on my positionality. As mentioned previously in Chapter Three, Methodology, my personal experiences and subjectivity could skew or shape the study. However, subjectivity can be an asset rather than a liability if the researcher recognizes their subjectivity throughout the course of the research (Peshkin, 1988). My personal background and experience as a commissioned Marine Corps officer with 28 years of experience became more of an asset than a liability in knowing what questions to ask the generals, and in gaining access to conduct the interviews. Nevertheless, my biases and subjectivity had to be monitored throughout the research process to ensure these areas were not an impediment during the research gathering, analyzing, and writing stages of the study.

The final limitation to the study was the issue of generalizability. The study's findings are not generalizable in the traditional scientific sense because the use of a purposeful sampling strategy produces an unsaid set of constraints when attempting to apply the findings to other population groups. Further, as Donmoyer (1990) suggested, it is difficult to generalize from studies whose questions are focused on meaning and perspective, which was the case in this study even though the study is still valuable.

### **Significance of the Study**

Together with the literature review, the results of interviews with the eight commandants provides significant insight into the importance of command climate and the commander's ability to influence the ethical behavior of the Marines in the organization in three ways. First, since this study used as its unit of analysis the eight commandants of the Marine Corps, which covered over thirty years of senior leadership experience, makes the study significant. The insight from the commandants and the stories that were revealed provide the reader with a unique perspective not often discussed in the literature that is focused on one area of leadership (ethical) from such a senior group of leaders.

The second significant aspect of this study is that the Marine Corps prides itself on producing superior leaders at all levels and constantly strives for improvement. This study adds to the existing body of research and knowledge that the Marine Corps has accumulated to educate and train its leaders to be the most competent, committed, and fair leaders of virtue and character in both combat and in garrison (at home). The commandants suggested that the command climate established by the commanding

officer does influence the ethical behavior of the Marines, which has an impact on the Marine Corps' warfighting effectiveness, and its reputation as seen from the eyes of the American public. This study offers leaders of Marines the opportunity to explore the detailed perspectives from the former commandants and the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, so that they might use this study as a heuristic to better examine their own command climates and make the necessary adjustments to promote the success of the individual Marine, the unit, and the Institution.

Finally, the third significant aspect of this study is that it can benefit other leaders of organizations outside of the Marine Corps. Many of the commandants went on to other professions upon retirement from the Marine Corps and applied the same leadership techniques they used when they established their command climates as leaders in the Marine Corps. This study provides tips and suggestions on how to establish a command climate, what it looks like, and how to develop and maintain the right command climate that influences the ethical behavior of the people within the organization. This study has relevance for leaders within any large organization, not just the United States Marine Corps.

### **Final Thoughts**

The Phase One review of the academic curriculum taught to both enlisted Marines and officers within the Marine Corps' formal schools coupled with the review of the documents within the Marine Corps' doctrinal publications on leadership, demonstrated that the Marine Corps puts a heavy emphasis on character development and instills the Marine Corps' Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment in its Marines.

Further, the Phase Two interviews with the commandants revealed the many initiatives from these senior leaders discussed previously in chapter four such as the Crucible, the Reawakening Campaign, and the MCMAP designed to assist commanders with their command climates and sustaining the transformation. In addition, the Phase Two interviews with the commandants also revealed that they each had personal stories where their approach to command climate was influenced by both their background and upbringing, as well as their observations of both good and bad leaders while serving in the Marine Corps.

And yet, the Corps still suffers from breakdowns in ethical behavior by a small percentage of Marines who choose to take the wrong path. Some of the commandants discussed the problem of ego's getting in the way of the command's focus. Others mentioned breakdowns due to human frailty, temptation, and exercising small breaches of integrity that developed into bigger problems. Finally, a few of the senior leaders discussed the issue of substance abuse especially, the abuse of alcohol.

These areas contribute to breakdowns in discipline and promote poor ethical decision-making. As the results from this study suggest, the commanding officer sets the tone for the entire organization. The commander must live the core values and be seen setting the right example. The command climate must set the conditions for success of the individual Marine, the unit, and the Institution. The commander's climate must reinforce the core values and high standards on a routine basis using ethical discussions led by junior leaders such as the NCOs and the junior officers. Finally, the command climate must promote the fact that America wants a Marine Corps and that it is the responsibility of the individual Marine to uphold the legacy of all the Marines who have

gone before them and that when a Marine violates the Marine Corps standards and values, they let down not only their fellow Marines, but they let down the entire Institution. It is this area of “intangibles” where the commanding officer must focus.

It was truly an honor and a privilege to be able to interview such superb and gifted senior leaders of the Institution that I love. The Marine Corps prides itself on leadership. Each interview was unique and upon completion of the interviews, I realized how fortunate I was to have served on active duty during the period when these leaders were serving in the Marine Corps, as either the Commandant of the Marine Corps, or as general officers. The Marine Corps continues to be the most lethal, and capable fighting force on the planet, but equally as important, the Marine Corps continues to be an organization that has never let the American people down and is truly an institution that is good for the country.

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## APPENDIX A: DEAR COMMANDNANTS LETTER

Dear Commandants,

I am honored and humbled to send you this note requesting to interview you about command climate. My name is Brian Kerl and I retired in 2013 as a colonel of Marines. Since my retirement, I have attended night school as a student at the University of San Diego's School of Leadership and Education Sciences working on my PhD in leadership while running the MCJROTC program at Oceanside High School. I am assisting the Marine Corps University with research on command climate. I believe your contribution to my study would be invaluable. I wish to interview you before the end of the year for about an hour or so.

My study will examine a Marine Corps commanding officer's approach to his or her command climate and how it influences the ethical behavior of the Marines. What training do we need to provide our commanders to establish an ethical climate? What does an ethical climate look like? How does a commander establish an ethical climate?

Dr. Paolo Tripodi (LLI) will assist me throughout the research phase of the process and has agreed to be on my dissertation committee. I believe that my research will be able to contribute to the work already initiated by the Lejeune Leadership Institute. I would appreciate your willingness to be interviewed and I can be reached at 513-335-2303, or email: [bdkerl3@gmail.com](mailto:bdkerl3@gmail.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Very Respectfully,

Brian Kerl

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Introduction.** I have given you a consent form that asks for your permission to participate in this study. I will give you a few minutes to review the information on the consent form and confirm that you still are interested in participating.

Thank you for coming in today. Before we begin, I want to introduce myself and explain why I am conducting this study. My name is Brian Kerl and I am currently a doctoral student in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. I am conducting this study as part of my PhD program in leadership to fill a gap in leadership knowledge at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, and to offer a study to the university that will add to its existing literature to assist Marine Corps commanding officers in their approach to establishing an organizational climate that positively influences ethical behavior.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how command climate influences ethical behavior in a Marine Corps unit. My goal is to begin to explore the connection between these two phenomena using the theoretical framework for describing ethical leadership, ethical climate, and the ethical underpinnings associated with ethical climate theory. I've developed a set of questions to guide our conversation. Please feel free to share as much as you are comfortable sharing and understand that you are free to choose not to participate in all or any part of the study.

I would like your permission to audio-record the interview and to take notes during our conversation. I will be the only person who will use the notes and the audio

recording to ensure I have accurately recorded your responses. Is this all right? Do you have any questions?

**Research Question:** What role does command climate play in influencing the ethical behavior within a Marine Corps command?

1. First, please introduce yourself and briefly describe your military background.
2. Comment on the key events throughout your life and career that have had the greatest influence on your approach to your command climate?
3. While you were commandant, how did the Marine Corps approach command climate? How does command climate influence ethical behavior and why is it important?

**Supporting Question #1: How do the commandants describe a command climate that encourages ethical behavior among Marines?**

4. Describe what a command climate looks like that encourages ethical behavior?  
What are the key elements or components of a command climate that encourages ethical behavior?
5. Based on today's society and the challenges facing Marine commanding officers; what should the Marine Corps teach its commanders relative to climate and its ability to influence ethical behavior?

**Supporting Question #2: How does a commanding officer develop a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?**

6. What steps should a commander take to establish a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?

7. How does the commander know the climate is working? Can you offer some examples?
8. What direction if any, did you provide training and education command regarding the preparation required for Marine commanders and the climates they are expected to set?



## APPENDIX C: CODING CYCLES and CODES

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Coding Categories</b>	<b>Codes (32)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle Coding Categories</b>	<b>Codes (24)</b>
Leading Others	Role Model, Humility, Commander's Philosophy, Guidance, Ethical Lapse, Transparency, Families, Mission, Shaping, Cohesion, Influence, Environment, Maneuver Warfare Concept, Little Things	Setting the Example "Living It"	Selflessness, Trust, Servant Leadership, the Commander, Command Climate, The Transformation
Talking to People	Listening, Observations, Relationships, Feedback, Visibility, Distractions, Trust	Open Communications	Open Door Policy, Critiques, Face-to-Face, Expectations, Communicator-in-Chief, Being Human
Beliefs/Values	Ethical Decision Making, Teacher-Scholar, Ethical Dilemmas, Character, Standards, Values, Institution	Core Values	Dignity, Intangibles, Balanced Excellence, High Standards, Socratic Method, lowest level, Reinforcement, Hearts and Souls,
Discipline	Self, and others, Rules and Regulations, Expectations, Accountability,	Accountability and Responsibility	Discipline, Protecting the Institution, CMC, Commanders,

## APPENDIX D: GENERAL ALFRED M. GRAY Jr.

Official Biography: General Alfred M. Gray, Jr.

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### **General Alfred M. Gray, Jr. - Retired** **29th Commandant of the Marine Corps**

General Alfred M. Gray is a former Commandant of the Marine Corps, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.


General Gray enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1950. He served overseas with FMF, Pacific, attaining the rank of sergeant before being commissioned a second lieutenant in April 1952. Early tours included service with 11th and 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division in Korea, the 8th Marines, 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., during which he saw service in Guantanamo Bay and Vietnam.



As a major, General Gray joined the 12th Marines, 3d Marine Division, Vietnam in October 1965, serving concurrently as regimental communications officer, regimental training officer, and artillery aerial observer. He took command of the Composite Artillery Battalion and U.S. Free World Forces at Gio Linh in April 1967. In September 1967, General Gray was reassigned to the III Marine Amphibious Force in Da Nang where he commanded the 1st Radio Battalion elements throughout I Corps until February 1968. Following a brief tour in the United States, he returned to Vietnam from June to September 1969 in conjunction with surveillance and reconnaissance matters in the I Corps area.

After his Vietnam tour, General Gray served as Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, Battalion Landing Team 1/2; the 2d Marines; the 4th Marines; and Camp Commander of Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan. While commanding the 33d Marine Amphibious Unit and Regimental Landing Team-4, and concurrently serving as Deputy Commander, 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade, General Gray directed the Southeast Asia evacuation operations in 1975.

Advanced to brigadier general in March 1976, General Gray served as Commanding General, Landing Force Training Command, Atlantic, and the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade. Promoted to major general in February 1980, he assumed command of the 2d Marine Division, FMF, Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, N.C., in June 1981. Following his promotion to lieutenant general on Aug. 29, 1984, he was reassigned as Commanding General, FMF, Atlantic/Commanding General, II MAF, and Commanding General, FMF, Europe. General Gray was promoted to general and became Commandant of the Marine Corps on July 1, 1987.

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## APPENDIX E: GENERAL CHARLES C. KRULAK

Official Biography: General Charles C. Krulak

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### General Charles C. Krulak - Retired 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps

After graduating from The Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, N.H., General Krulak attended the U.S. Naval Academy. He graduated from there in 1964 with a B.S. degree in Engineering. General Krulak also holds an M.S. degree in Labor Relations from George Washington University (1973). He is a graduate of the Amphibious Warfare School (1968); the Army Command and General Staff College (1976); and the National War College (1982).

Since his commissioning and graduation from The Basic School at Quantico, General Krulak has held a variety of command and staff positions. He commanded a platoon and two rifle companies during his two tours of duty in Vietnam; Commanding Officer, Special Training Branch, and Recruit Series, MCRD, San Diego, Calif. (1966-1968); Commanding Officer, Counter-Guerrilla Warfare School, NTA, Okinawa (1970); Company Officer, U.S. Naval Academy (1970-1973); Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Naval Air Station, North Island, Calif. (1973-1976); and Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion, 3d Marines (1983-1985).



General Krulak's staff assignments include: S-3 of the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines (1977-1978); Chief of the Combat Arms Monitor Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. (1978-1979); Executive Assistant to the Director of Personnel Management, Headquarters Marine Corps (1979-1981); Plans Officer at FMF Pacific (1982-1983); Executive Officer, 3d Marines, 1st MEB; Assistant Chief of Staff for Maritime Pre-positioning Ships, 1st MEB; Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 1st MEB; and the Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

He was assigned duty as the Deputy Director, the White House Military Office in September 1987. While serving in this capacity, he was selected for promotion to brigadier general in November 1988. He was advanced to that grade on June 5, 1989, and assigned duties as the Commanding General, 10th Marine Expeditionary Brigade/Assistant Division Commander, 2d Marine Division, FMF, Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, N.C., on July 10, 1989. On June 1, 1990 he assumed duties as the Commanding General, 2d Force Service Support Group/Commanding General, 6th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, FMF, Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, N.C. He served in this capacity until July 12, 1991, and was assigned duty as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (Personnel Management/Personnel Procurement), Headquarters Marine Corps on Aug. 5, 1991.

He was advanced to major general on March 20, 1992. General Krulak was assigned as Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Virginia on Aug. 24, 1992, and was promoted to lieutenant general on Sept. 1, 1992. On July 22, 1994, he was assigned as Commander of Marine Forces Pacific/Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, headquartered at Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii.

[https://slsp.manpower.usmc.mil/gosa/biographies/rptBiography.asp?PERSON\\_ID=468&P...](https://slsp.manpower.usmc.mil/gosa/biographies/rptBiography.asp?PERSON_ID=468&P...) 11/9/2010


## Official Biography: General Charles C. Krulak

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General Krulak was promoted to General June 29, 1995 and assumed duties as the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps on June 30, 1995.

His decorations and medals include: the Defense Distinguished Service Medal; Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star Medal; Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" and two gold stars; Purple Heart with gold star; Meritorious Service Medal; Navy Commendation Medal; Combat Action Ribbon; Presidential Unit Citation with bronze star; National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; Vietnam Service Medal with silver star and two bronze stars; Southwest Asia Service Medal with two bronze stars; Sea Service Deployment Ribbon; Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry; Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation (Gallantry Cross Color); Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation (Civil Actions Color, 1st Class); the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal; and the Kuwait Liberation Medal.

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## APPENDIX F: GENERAL JAMES L. JONES

Official Biography: General James L. Jones, Jr.

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**General James L. Jones, Jr. - Retired**  
**32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps**

General Jones spent his formative years in France, returning to the United States to attend the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, from which he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1966. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps in January 1967. Upon completion of The Basic School, Quantico, VA, in October 1967, he was ordered to the Republic of Vietnam, where he served as a Platoon and Company Commander with Company G, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines. While overseas, he was promoted to First Lieutenant in June 1968.



Returning to the United States in December 1968, General Jones was assigned to Camp Pendleton, CA, where he served as a Company Commander until May 1970. He then received orders to Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, for duties as a Company Commander, serving in this assignment until July 1973. He was promoted to Captain in December 1970. From July 1973 until June 1974, he was a student at the Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico, VA.

In November 1974, he received orders to report to the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa, where he served as the Company Commander of Company H, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, until December 1975.

From January 1976 to August 1979, General Jones served in the Officer Assignments Section at Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, DC. During this assignment, he was promoted to Major in July 1977. Remaining in Washington, his next assignment was as the Marine Corps Liaison Officer to the United States Senate, where he served until July 1984. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in September 1982.

He was selected to attend the National War College in Washington, DC. Following graduation in June 1985, he was assigned to command the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, CA, from July 1985 to July 1987.

In August 1987, General Jones returned to Headquarters Marine Corps, where he served as Senior Aide to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He was promoted to Colonel in April 1988, and became the Military Secretary to the Commandant in February 1989.

During August 1990, General Jones was assigned as the Commanding Officer, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit at Camp Lejeune, NC. During his tour with the 24th MEU, he participated in Operation Provide Comfort in Northern Iraq and Turkey. He was advanced to Brigadier General on April 23, 1992. General Jones was assigned to duties as Deputy Director, J-3, U.S. European Command, Stuttgart, Germany, on July 15, 1992. During this tour of duty he was reassigned as Chief of Staff, Joint Task Force Provide Promise, for operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

Returning to the United States, he was advanced to the rank of Major General in July 1994, and was


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assigned as Commanding General, 2d Marine Division, Marine Forces Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, NC. General Jones next served as Director, Expeditionary Warfare Division (N85), Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, during 1996, then as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies and Operations, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, DC. He then was advanced to Lieutenant General on July 18, 1996.

His next assignment was as the Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. He was promoted to General on June 30, 1999, and became the 32nd Commandant of the United States Marine Corps on July 1, 1999. General Jones assumed duties as the Commander of U.S. European Command on 16 January 2003, and Supreme Allied Commander Europe on 17 January 2003.

General Jones retired after 40 years of service to the Nation on 1 February 2007.

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## APPENDIX G: GENERAL MICHAEL W. HAGEE

Official Biography: General Michael W. Hagee

Page 1 of 1



### **General Michael W. Hagee - Retired** **33rd Commandant of the Marine Corps**

General Michael W. Hagee retired on 1 January 2007 after serving as the 33rd Commandant of the Marine Corps from January 2003 through November 2006.

General Hagee graduated with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968 with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering. He also holds a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College. He is a graduate of the Command and Staff College and the U.S. Naval War College.

General Hagee's command assignments include: Commanding Officer Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines 1970; Platoon Commander, Company A and Commanding Officer Headquarters and Service Company, First Battalion, First Marines (1970-1971); Commanding Officer, Waikale-West Loch Guard Company (1974-1976); Commanding Officer, Pearl Harbor Guard Company (1976-1977); Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines (1988-1990); Commanding Officer, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (1992-1993); Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (1998-1999); and Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (2000-2002).



General Hagee's staff assignments include: Communications-Electronics Officer, 1st Marine Air Command and Control Squadron (1971); Assistant Director, Telecommunications School (1972-1974); Training Officer, 3d Marine Division (1977-1978); Electrical Engineering Instructor, U.S. Naval Academy (1978-1981); Head, Officer Plans Section, Headquarters Marine Corps (1982-1986); Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, 2d Marine Division (1987-1988); Executive Officer, 8th Marines (1988); Director Humanities and Social Science Division/Marine Corps Representative, U.S. Naval Academy (1990-1992); Liaison Officer to the U.S. Special Envoy to Somalia (1992-1993); Executive Assistant to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (1993-1994); Director, Character Development Division, United States Naval Academy (1994-1995); Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C.; Executive Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence (1995-1996); Deputy Director of Operations, Headquarters, U.S. European Command (1996-1998); and Director Strategic Plans and Policy, U.S. Pacific Command (1999-2000).

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## APPENDIX H: GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY

Official Biography: General James T. Conway

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### **General James T. Conway** Commandant of the Marine Corps

General Conway was born in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas and is a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University. He was commissioned in 1970 as an infantry officer. His company grade assignments included multiple platoon and company commander billets with both the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions; Executive Officer of the Marine Detachment aboard the USS Kitty Hawk (CVA-63); series and company commander at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego; aide to the Commanding General, and Director, Sea School.



As a field grade officer, he commanded two companies of officer students and taught tactics at The Basic School; he also served as operations officer for the 31st Marine Amphibious Unit to include contingency operations off Beirut, Lebanon; and as Senior Aide to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, he was reassigned to the 2d Marine Division as Division G-3 Operations Officer before assuming command of 3d Battalion, 2d Marines in January 1990. He commanded Battalion Landing Team 3/2 during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Selected for colonel, he served as the Ground Colonels' Monitor, and as Commanding Officer of The Basic School. His general officer duties included Deputy Director of Operations, J-34, Combating Terrorism, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.; and President, Marine Corps University at Quantico, VA. After promotion to Major General, he assumed command of the 1st Marine Division. In November 2002, Major General Conway was promoted to Lieutenant General and assumed command of the I Marine Expeditionary Force. He commanded I Marine Expeditionary Force during two combat tours in Iraq. In 2004, he was reassigned as the Director of Operations, J-3, Joint Staff, in Washington, D.C.

General Conway graduated with honors from The Basic School, the U.S. Army Infantry Officers' Advanced Course, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and the Air War College.

General Conway's personal decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal with palm, Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with two Gold Stars, Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal and the Combat Action Ribbon.

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## APPENDIX I: GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS

Official Biography: General James F. Amos

Page 1 of 1




### **General James F. Amos** **Commandant of the Marine Corps**

On October 22, 2010 General James F. Amos assumed the duties of Commandant of the Marine Corps. A graduate of the University of Idaho, General Amos has held command at all levels from Lieutenant Colonel to Lieutenant General.

General Amos' command tours have included: Marine Wing Support Squadron 173 from 1985-1986; Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 312 – attached to Carrier Air Wing 8 onboard USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) – from 1991-1993; Marine Aircraft Group 31 from 1996-1998; 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in combat during Operations IRAQI FREEDOM I and II from 2002-2004; II Marine Expeditionary Force from 2004-2006; and Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command and Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration from 2006 to 2008. Additional operational tours have included Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons 212, 235, 232, and 122.



General Amos' staff assignments include tours with Marine Aircraft Groups 15 and 31, the III Marine Amphibious Force, Training Squadron Seven, The Basic School, and with the MAGTF Staff Training Program. Additionally, he was assigned to NATO as Deputy Commander, Naval Striking Forces, Southern Europe, Naples Italy where he commanded NATO's Kosovo Verification Center, and later served as Chief of Staff, U.S. Joint Task Force Noble Anvil during the air campaign over Serbia. Transferred in 2000 to the Pentagon, he was assigned as Assistant Deputy Commandant for Aviation. Reassigned in December 2001, General Amos served as the Assistant Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations, Headquarters, Marine Corps. From 2008-2010 General Amos served as the 31st Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

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## APPENDIX J: GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, Jr.

Official Biography: General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.

Page 1 of 1



### **General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.** **Commandant of the Marine Corps**

General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr. assumed the duties of Commandant of the Marine Corps on October 17, 2014. A native of Boston, Massachusetts, he graduated from St. Michael's College and was commissioned in 1977. He previously served as the Commander, International Security Assistance Force and United States Forces-Afghanistan from February 2013 to August 2014.

General Dunford has served as an infantry officer at all levels. He commanded 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, he commanded the 5th Marine Regiment.

His Joint assignments include service as the Executive Assistant to the Vice Chairman, JCS, Chief, Global and Multilateral Affairs Division (J5), and Vice Director for Operations on the Joint Staff (J3).

He has also served as the Assistant Division Commander, 1st Marine Division, Marine Corps Director of Operations, and Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations. He commanded I Marine Expeditionary Force and served as the Commander, Marine Forces U.S. Central Command. From 2010-2012, he served as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

General Dunford is a graduate of the U.S. Army Ranger School, Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School, and the U.S. Army War College. He holds a M.A. in Government from Georgetown University and a M.A. in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.



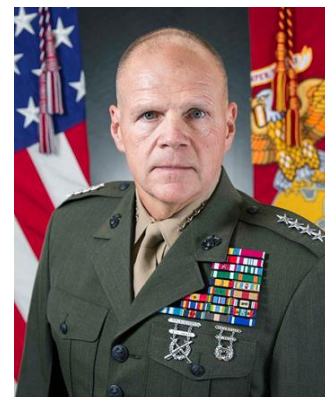
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## APPENDIX K: GENERAL ROBERT B. NELLER

General Robert B. Neller is the 37<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. Prior to his current assignment, he served as the Commander, Marine Forces Command from July 2014 to September 2015 and Commander, Marine Forces Central Command from September 2012 to June 2014.

A native of East Lansing, Michigan, General Neller graduated from the University of Virginia and was commissioned in 1975.

He has served as an infantry officer at all levels, including command of Marine Security Force Company Panama during Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY; 3d Light Armored Infantry Battalion during Operation RESTORE HOPE; 6th Marine Regiment; and 3d Marine Division. General Neller also served as Deputy Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (05-07); Assistant Division Commander for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2d Marine Divisions; and President of Marine Corps University. His Joint assignments include service in the Policy Division of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Casteau, Belgium, and as the Director of Operations (J-3) of the Joint Staff in Washington, D.C. General Neller is a graduate of the Armor Officer Advanced Course, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, NATO Defense College, and the Armed Forces Staff College. He holds a master's degree in Human Resource Management from Pepperdine University. Command from September 2012 to June 2014. A native of East Lansing, Michigan, General Neller graduated from the University of Virginia and was commissioned in 1975. He has served as an infantry officer at all levels, including command of Marine Security Force Company Panama during Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY; 3d Light Armored Infantry Battalion during Operation RESTORE HOPE; 6th Marine Regiment; and 3d Marine Division. General Neller also served as Deputy Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (05-07); Assistant Division Commander for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2d Marine Divisions; and President of Marine Corps University. His Joint assignments include service in the Policy Division of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Casteau, Belgium, and as the Director of Operations (J-3) of the Joint Staff in Washington, D.C. General Neller is a graduate of the Armor Officer Advanced Course, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, NATO Defense College, and the Armed Forces Staff College. He holds a master's degree in Human Resource Management from Pepperdine University.



## APPENDIX L: COMMAND CLIMATE SURVEY

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### Start of Block: Default Question Block

**Purpose:**

This survey is designed to give members of the organization the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback to the commander. The purpose of this survey is to gather respondents' perceptions of their unit's command climate and the role it plays on influencing their ethical behavior. Your participation in this survey provides the commanding officer with the feedback necessary for him/her to take the appropriate action to make improvements within the organization.

**Survey Instructions:**

- All survey items must be answered.
- The survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete.
- Once all survey items are completed, click on the Submit button at the top of the page.
- When you have submitted the survey, a "Thank You" note will appear.

**Our Commitment to Anonymity:**

-Responses cannot be tied to the respondent. Your responses are anonymous. Your responses are separated from your personal information (e.g., rank, gender, etc.) so that your commanding officer cannot tie the two together. For example, you may be the only female, E-8 in your unit, but your commanding officer cannot link your responses to that information.

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Q1.

Please select one:

☐ Military

☐ Civilian

---

Q2. Please select your grade / rank:

☐ E1

☐ E2

☐ E3

☐ E4

☐ E5

☐ E6

☐ E7

☐ E8

☐ E9

☐ WO1

☐ CW02

☐ CW03

☐ CW04

☐ CW05

☐ O1

☐ O2

☐ O3

☐ O4

☐ O5

- ☐ 06
  - ☐ 07-010
  - ☐ N/A
- 

Q3. Please select your age:

- ☐ 17-20
  - ☐ 21-24
  - ☐ 25-28
  - ☐ 29-32
  - ☐ 33-36
  - ☐ 37-40
  - ☐ 41-44
  - ☐ 45 or older
-

Q4. Please select your branch of service:

- ☐ USMC
  - ☐ USN
  - ☐ USA
  - ☐ USAF
  - ☐ Foreign Service
  - ☐ USCG
  - ☐ Prior Military Service
- 

Q5. Please select your status and check all that apply:

- ☐ Active Duty
  - ☐ Civilian
  - ☐ Contractor
  - ☐ Traditional Reservist / IMA
  - ☐ Work Study, Intern
  - ☐ Full-time technician
  - ☐ Federal Civil Service
  - ☐ Temporary employee
-

Q6. Please select your gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- 

Q7. Using the drop-down menu, please select your time in the unit:

▼ Use drop down to choose (1) ... >24 months (4)

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*Ethics* is defined as the study between right and wrong, good and bad behavior. *Values* can be defined as "important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable." *Ethical climates* set conditions for appropriate ethical behavior, and positive outcomes are created from ethical practices such as, integrity, trust, justice, and social responsibility. *Unit cohesion* is both vertical and horizontal. *Vertical cohesion* is the relationship between the seniors and the subordinates.

*Horizontal cohesion* is the relationship between peers and personnel of similar rank (e.g., NCO's, SNCO's, etc.).

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Q8. Please select an answer for each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Don't Know (5)
1. Leaders/supervisors emphasize the importance of doing what's right.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Leaders/supervisors participate in ethical discussions with the troops.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Leaders/supervisors communicate down to the most junior level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I feel leaders/supervisors are preparing me to make good ethical decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. My unit has a character development program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The command climate sets a good example for ethical decision making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The command climate has a positive influence on my ethical behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The members of this unit trust the leadership/supervisors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. My unit has strong cohesion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q9. Referring to the previous questions, if you have any additional comments, please provide them below in a sentence or two. Please reference the question(s) you are addressing:

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Q10. What is the biggest area your unit could improve on to set a command climate that promotes ethical behavior?

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Q11. Would you want to serve in this unit again? Why or why not?

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---



Q12. What training could your unit provide you that would prepare you to make good ethical decisions?

---



Q13. Describe how your leaders/supervisors provide mentoring on ethical behavior?

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Q14. Consistent with the Marine Corps' Core Values, does this unit encourage you to be a better person? Why? or Why Not?

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Q15. Do people in this unit correct each other when they notice someone is doing something wrong?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Q16. Does your commanding officer establish an environment that promotes mutual trust and respect?

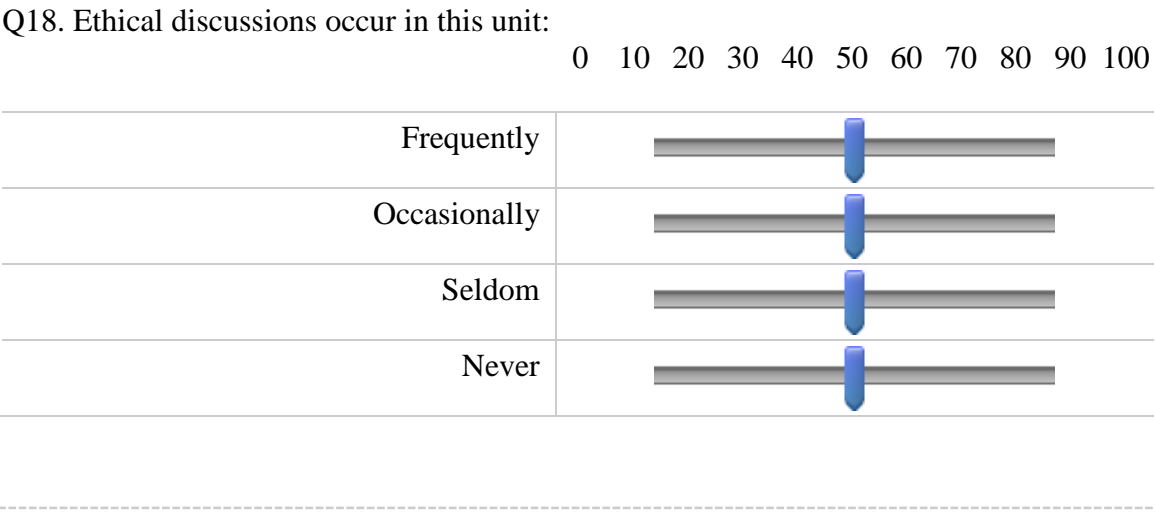
☐ Yes

☐ No

Q17. Do the non-commissioned officers guide discussions on ethical decision making?

Yes

No



The *transformation* is the process that begins with the prospective Marine's first contact with the Marine recruiter and continues through the Marine's entire life. During the *transformation*, Marines must continue to maintain a true compass of personal honor and commitment to forego interests of self for the interests of their comrades, their Corps, and their country. The legacy of the Marine Corps is ultimately judged by the entire *transformation* experience of all Marines and that legacy influences the next generation of Americans that will join our ranks that will start the cycle over again.

Q19. How well does this unit sustain the *transformation*?

- ☐ Extremely well
- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Moderately well
- ☐ Slightly well
- ☐ Not well at all

End of Block: Default Question Block

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## Institutional Review Board

### Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** September 18, 2017 *Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

**Type:** \_\_\_New Full Review ☒ New Expedited Review \_\_\_Continuation Review \_\_\_New Exempt Review  
\_\_\_Modification

**Action:** ☒ Approved \_\_\_Approved Pending Modification \_\_\_Not Approved

Project Number: IRB-2017-271

Researcher(s): Brian Kerl

School of Leadership and Education Sciences

Fred Galloway, Professor, Department of Leadership Studies, SOLES

Project Title: Ethics and Command Climate

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

Dr. Thomas R. Herrinton

Administrator, Institutional Review Board

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