Final Report for the 'Great' Units Project

Rebecca J. Hannagan, PhD

"DISCLAIMER: The views presented in this work are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Marine Corps, or any other U.S. governmental agency."

Final Report for the 'Great' Units Project

Presented to
Col. Scott E. Erdelatz, Chief of Staff
Marine Corps University and Education Command
March 2016

Rebecca J. Hannagan, PhD
Senior Research Fellow
The Lejeune Leadership Institute
Marine Corps University

Structure of the Report

Executive Summary:

In 2015 a Senior Research Fellow, funded by the Marine Corps University Foundation, was invited to collaborate with the Lejeune Leadership Institute to answer the question: what makes a 'great' Marine unit? Undertaking a yearlong, mixed-methods approach, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with Marines as well as site observations of Marines in the operating forces. Top-level themes from analyses of the interviews provide the "what" of what makes a 'great' unit. Analyses from site observations provide the "how" of what makes leadership and trust so important to 'great' units in the Marine Corps. The data collection effort of this project has yielded numerous testimonials from Marines throughout the operating forces that what truly goes into making a great unit are relationships and paying attention to the "human factor." Not once did the researcher hear from Marines, "we would be great if only we had better gear." In all of the talk about leadership and trust, the meanings conveyed center on the socio-relational aspects of how units can be bad, good or great – depending on the shared values and motivations of the people in those units. The report concludes with suggestions by the researcher for next steps in understanding what stands between units being just ok and being 'great.'

Section I: Introduction to the 'Great' Marine Units Project

Background

The initiative to investigate what makes a 'great' Marine unit began in May 2013 with CMC White Letter 3-13, which directed a fresh look at how the Marine Corps conducts command climate surveys. The Lejeune Leadership Institute (LLI) was tasked by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, with developing a survey based on leadership issues. To complement the information gathered from the Command Climate Survey (CCS), LLI in cooperation with Marine Corps University (MCU) and Marine Corps University Foundation (MCUF) created a Senior Research Fellow position to pursue the question: "what makes a 'great' Marine unit?" The Fellow would be tasked with conducting qualitative and quantitative research to explore whether it was possible to gain a better understanding of what makes a 'great' Marine unit.

This unique project stems from the mission of LLI to offer training, education and doctrine in order to facilitate the development of ethical leaders who are firmly rooted in the Marine Corps heritage of selfless service, core values, and warfighting excellence. In order for leaders to take their units from 'good' to 'great', it is important to better understand what makes Marine units 'great' from the perspective of Marines themselves. This is even more important in light of the reality that identifying a great Marine unit and then naming the reasons why it ought to be considered great are not judgments that can be based on a simple formula.

The Senior Research Fellow (hereafter referred to as "researcher"), Dr. Rebecca J. Hannagan, was hired in December of 2014 and proposed a mixed methods approach to answer the research question. This study, now completed, includes data from both face-to-face interviews with Marines and sailors as well as observations of Marine units in the operating forces. This data was combined with existing Command Climate Survey data to produce this final report.

Research Approach and Methods

A mixed methods approach to a research question like, "What makes a great Marine unit?" makes good sense given the difficulty of defining, identifying, and naming the reasons why a great unit is great. The qualitative, or ethnographic, component can help illuminate the statistical data gleaned from surveys like the Command Climate Survey: when members of a unit identify a low rate of dental issues among the Marines of the unit, is this a cause or an effect of the unit being 'great'? In fact, we can ask whether it has anything to do with a unit being great at all, especially if it is true that there is no such thing as a perfect unit.

A mixed method approach is also a good approach in this kind of case because of the haziness of what counts as evidence. There are three ways in which qualitative and quantitative data differ, and in which ethnographic and survey research approaches differ. First, surveys generally pre-structure a range of possible or appropriate answers to what counts as good questions for the researcher (especially if the survey does not provide for written responses by the subject). What the subject and their community means, and a sense of the subjects

grappling with complex matters of meaning is, generally, compromised in survey research. Second, surveys often fail to capture context, or the characteristic variability of meaning observed in real-world settings for human social interaction. Third, surveys often mask important fault-lines in thinking and acting among subjects in being designed to produce aggregate statistical measures about a particular community. One strength of a mixed methods approach, for the purposes of this study, then is the possibility of achieving an understanding of the actual dynamics of Marines and their meaning-making when it comes to the components of a 'great' Marine unit. What makes a Marine unit 'great' are likely value-oriented actions in a context, and not merely variables to be quantified.

The techniques or methods involved in ethnographic research typically include, but are not limited to, structured and semi-structured interviews, observation, and participant observation. For this project, semi-structured interviews and observation were employed. Ethnographic research is further characterized by non-probabilistic approaches to the identification of research participants, such as chain referral or purposive sampling as opposed to random sampling. This project recruited participant by chain referral sampling for the semi-structured interviews.

Interviews

The sample of interviewees was comprised of volunteer participants, first those known to the researcher and then developed into a larger sample by asking participants to recommend others who might volunteer to participate. Participants were recruited via personal conversations, email correspondence, and announcements in MCU classes with instructor approval. Participants were also gleaned from independent referrals, where a participant mentioned his or her participation to other Marines who contacted the researcher in order to participate. The focus of the interviews was to gain insight into what constitutes a 'great' Marine unit from the perspective of Marines with experience serving in several units. All questions in the interview were aimed at clarifying the participant's responses. The interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis by the research fellow.

The researcher conducted 49 in-depth interviews with active duty and retired Marines from PFC to MajGen (Ret). The majority of the interviewees had experienced at least several years in the Corps, and therefore were able to share their perspective on what makes a unit 'great' as compared to 'good' or even not so good, based on their own experiences. The researcher interviewed the PFC, who was in her first duty station at MCU, as a way to contrast that perspective with the perspectives of more experienced Marines. This was particularly useful regarding interview questions having to do with why the Marine decided to join the Marine Corps in the first place, and how they saw themselves developing as a Marine or as a Marine leader as time went on. The semi-structured interviews lasted anywhere from 20 minutes to three hours, depending on the Marine and his or her experiences.

In many cases the researcher traveled to the work location of the participant to conduct the interview. The audio-recordings of the interviews were transcribed,

resulting in hundreds of pages of transcripts for qualitative thematic analysis. In total, these interviews provided the qualitative data to discern themes to begin to develop a typology of what makes a 'great' unit from the perspective of Marines. Since 'great' is a stand-in for some substantive meaning, an effort was made to identify the various categories that Marines named as primary or secondary, necessary or sufficient, in naming a unit "great," as well as why, and how those categories may vary by MOS, rank, or by geographic location, duty status, and other categories that emerged during the course of the study. Throughout the interviews, the researcher worked to develop a sense of the components of a 'great' Marine unit by investigating:

     1. How Marines conceive of 'great' units.
     2. How Marines conceive of 'bad' or 'failing' units. (the opposite of great)
     3. The relationship of 'great' units to success/effectiveness, trust/cohesion, and leadership/mentoring.
     4. Whether and how the Corps trains or educates for 'greatness.'
     5. Whether and how Marines are in control of being 'great' as individuals and/or part of a unit.
     6. What Marines think completes the phrase: "'Great' Marine units are ones that _____."

     The preliminary typology emerging from these interviews is preliminary because it is likely that Marines have more perspectives that bear on the question of what makes a 'great' Marine unit. This is one of the drawbacks of qualitative research: it can take a long time to develop a relatively stable understanding of the insider understanding of a judgment like what makes a great Marine unit given a culture like the Marine Corps. And this means that the probability of future revision needs to be kept in mind.

     Analysis of the transcripts from the 49 in-depth interviews revealed the following themes as most common among all the interviewees' experiences regarding what they believe makes a 'great' unit:

> *Trust between members of the unit/Trust in others' abilities/Trust in leadership/Embodying trustworthiness; Leaders providing Vision/Direction for the unit; Discipline/Standards being met/Accountability for actions; Leaders Walking the walk (not just talking the talk)/leading by example; Clear and consistent Communication up and down chain of command; Genuine care and concern for Marines/authenticity toward Marines not doing this just to look good or further one's career; Creating opportunity for junior Marines to show they are committed/create buy-in/empower young Marines; Accomplishing the mission of the unit/keeping the mission at the forefront.*

For the observations – the second component of the ethnographic approach – the units were selected by using the preliminary typology to sort existing quantitative data from the Command Climate Survey (CCS).

Observations

To identify the units to visit the researcher, in collaboration with the Director of LLI, developed a case selection method. Based on the themes that emerged to make up the preliminary typology, the questions on the CCS that most closely matched those themes were identified. The questions from the CCS used in the case selection were:

1. My unit is characterized by a high degree of trust.
2. Individuals in my unit are held accountable for their performance.
3. My CO makes clear what behavior is acceptable and not acceptable in my unit.
6. The environment in my unit is characterized by good order and discipline.
11. Leaders/Supervisors in my unit set a good example by following standards.
16. Leaders/Supervisors in my unit care about my quality of life.
17. My commanding officer clearly communicates priorities for the unit.
20. My unit is well prepared to accomplish its primary mission.
22. Leaders/Supervisors in my unit provide opportunities for junior Marines to assume greater responsibility.

All units that had initiated the CCS on or after 01 October 2014 were identified then sorted based on their Likert mean scores on the survey items listed above. Units having a disproportionately high percentage of fast respondents (those individuals taking less than three minutes to complete the CCS) were identified and determined not to be further studied because of concerns about the validity of their data. This process increased the likelihood that the units selected had taken the survey more seriously and, perhaps, had more useful responses to the open-ended questions. The remaining units were further culled by eliminating units with small sample sizes as their numeric results were more subject to sampling error. To assure that the project represented the key characteristics of the MAGTF, only combat logistics, combat aviation, and combat ground units were considered for case selection. Though the Director of LLI and the researcher recognized this was a limiting factor, the trade-off was made in the interest of the timeframe of the fellowship and reasonable completion of observations in the operating forces.

Based on this case selection data sorting process, the researcher in collaboration with the Director of LLI made two lists, one of 22 east coast units and one of 20 west coast units – the idea being that if time and money permitted, site visits to both coasts would be undertaken to increase the validity of the study. Initially, east coast units were contacted by the Director of LLI and invited to participate in the study by allowing the researcher to visit the unit and speak with Marines. Once it was clear that time and funds were available for a second round of observations, west coast units were contacted and invited to participate. Participation was voluntary, and in some cases, units contacted for participation were unable to do so due to deployment and training schedules. All units contacted were receptive to the opportunity to participate in the study and many of the COs

noted interest in the topic and conveyed a desire to view the final report and/or other products from the study.

Site observations for 5 infantry and 5 aviation units involved the researcher not only traveling to the location of the unit and arranging to meet with various individuals or groups of Marines, but also the ability to be flexible and adapt to opportunities that arise once co-located with Marines. Site observations also involved taking extensive notes either at the time of the observation or later in the day. These field notes represent the data collection for the site observations phase of the ethnography. In some cases the researcher took photos to assist in the write-up of something the Marines were doing that required an explanation related to the categories of what makes a 'great' unit. In addition to field notes, in some cases the research fellow requested other written materials from a command (e.g., command leadership philosophy, documentation of significant unit events, documentation of the history of the unit, etc.).

Analyses

The techniques and methods used to analyze the qualitative data collected from ethnographic research seek to understand what members of a particular culture actually do and say that is meaningful to them. This approach means that while the researcher may have hypotheses regarding why people do and say what they do and say, the subjects of the study actually have the ability not only to define what counts as a good answer to the researcher's questions, but to guide the researcher to better questions. The researcher, however, still uses scientific judgment to determine whether/when/how much to modify hypotheses in generating an understanding of what the subject means. For example, when a researcher discerns that a participant's judgment is being offered only through a particular lens, such as, "I hate so-and-so," then the researcher must exercise judgment as to applicability or suitability of the participant's answers. Thus, the researcher is continually balancing what the subject (seemingly) means, knowledge of other answers from community members, judgments about motivation, the research agenda, and the researcher's understanding of the community.

Since ethnographic methods generally yield qualitative results, interpretation of data by the researcher are validated by checking their precision, pertinence, and meaning with the same cultural members who have been part of the research, as well as with other stakeholders who are defined as such by their relationship to the social and cultural activities being examined. What counts as objectivity is clearly different in the case of social scientific research as contrasted with research in the hard sciences (e.g., chemistry, physics). In the case of the social sciences, objectivity is constituted by the researcher making obvious her theoretical commitments and bases for judgment for review by peers.

Discourse analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data from both interviews and observations. Discourse analysis focuses on understanding what is meaningful to some person, group or culture as they express themselves through talk and body movement. In analyzing discourse, interpretations by the researcher of what a person means by their speech and actions are constituted by crosschecking interpretations with that person as well as other members of the

community.

Section II: Top Level Themes

Top-level themes regarding what Marines believe makes a 'great' unit, as derived from the in-depth interviews, are:

Leadership **–** which was most often talked about as having *Vision*/giving a clear *Direction* for the unit/and embodies *Balance* and *Adaptability;*
Trust – which comes from *Walking the walk* (not just talking the talk)*; Clear and Consistent Communication; Genuine Care and Concern for Marines/showing Authenticity* toward Marines*; Creating Opportunity* for junior Marines to show they are committed/encourage buy-in and *Ownership in the Mission and the Unit*; establishing *Discipline/*ensuring *Standards are being met/*holding Marines *Accountable;*

Marines suggest that these things lead to:

Accomplishing the **Mission** of the unit as well as *building the* **Morale/ Cohesion** of the unit*.*

The Marines interviewed talked from their experiences, both personally and things they heard from other Marines. They offered different perspectives given their different experiences and roles in the Marine Corps. All interviews were conducted at MCB Quantico or the greater Washington, DC metro area. The top-level themes are those themes that came up most frequently across all the interviews, and were articulated as the most important aspects of what makes a great unit. The following are examples from the interviews of Marines talking about those themes. Bear in mind that not all Marines talked about these themes in the same way, due to their positions and organizational perspectives given those positions. The variation in talk about what makes a unit great, and what that variation means for Marines and their actions, will be discussed in the following section of this report.

1. Examples regarding *Leadership* **–** which was most often talked about as having *Vision*/giving a clear *Direction* for the unit/and embodies *Balance* and *Adaptability.*

"What makes a great unit requires excellence in leadership from multiple levels … unfortunately, in an effort to produce numbers and apply scientific management theory, the major assumption is that all inputs or ingredients are the same … in a human endeavor, not every 18 to 24 year old is the same … prepackaged methodologies don't produce the same outcomes. [The] reality of complex interactions, interpersonal dynamics, violent situations with unstoppable forces and immovable objects reveal the fragility of that approach. The excellence of individual leaders are [illustrated in examples of] those who are able to ***innovate and adapt*** within those complex and violent situations and come out of it … it is not just actions taken [that makes excellence in leadership], but ways of thinking."

<div align="right">- Major, Infantry</div>

"***Adaptability, innovation*** … really the big part of being a Marine officer is having a lot of initiative to adapt and innovate … embracing uncertainty."

<div align="right">- Captain, Intelligence</div>

"You can have a leader that is tactically and technically proficient, but what makes a good leader is that he knows to listen to people who are smarter than he is. You can have a unit that is completely ineffective simply because the implementation of set guidance and the commander's intent is terrible … People ***balance*** each other out … cohesiveness is you're strong in something and I'm strong in something else … [have to have] the ability to form the team … that is where Marine leadership comes in. The leader [that] can ***articulate an end-state***, or, their intent or guidance [and form a cohesive team, leads to great unit]."

<div align="right">- Major, Aviation</div>

"It's an interesting ***balance*** … the pairings [of officer and enlisted leaders] throughout the structure of the Marine Corps … most of the time it works really well, but [leadership success, and the success of the unit,] is dependent upon that relationship … It can be very difficult to power through that and be responsible for that relationship … both have to agree that it's a mutual job … [as an officer] you go through six months of TBS, then three months of infantry officer's course … nobody's got more current training, more rigorous training, more current knowledge about the gear and equipment … for nine months you go through decision games and tactical decision games and practical exercises in the field. [The mindset is that] you've gotta make decisions. You've gotta make the right decisions. So after that nine months of that, I felt like it was *all* my job and I had to do it right … the reality is you've got other people in the unit that have different experiences and good ideas … [I didn't know that but] in hindsight, I think that [successful leadership] is acknowledging that, 'hey, I've never done this before so we need to work together.' As a company commander, with a unit deployed to Iraq, my First Sergeant was very good at helping me know where he needed me to go. The company gunny was a crotchety, grumpy, mean son-of-a-gun but was a fantastic balance. He was the guy to tell you that you're all jacked up and bring everybody together on something … That coming together worked in that where somebody wasn't as strong, somebody else could come in and take care … the roles weren't based on what you are supposed to do so much as what needed to be done. That was a fantastic team."

<div align="right">- Major, Infantry</div>

2. Examples of ***Trust*** – which was most often talked about as *Walking the walk* (not just talking the talk)*; Clear and Consistent Communication; Genuine Care and Concern for Marines/showing Authenticity* toward Marines*; Creating Opportunity* for junior Marines to show they are committed/encourage buy-in and *Ownership in the Mission and the Unit*; establishing *Discipline/*ensuring *Standards are being met/*holding Marines *Accountable.*

"[What makes a great unit?] It comes down to leadership. How they lead is how we're gonna follow and get the job done. **Leading by example** … doing it *with* [your Marines]."

<div align="right">- Lance Corporal, Infantry</div>

"**Communication** is key and that's throughout a unit. Without it, there's a breakdown and Marines don't feel [like they] have **buy-in** … the last time I experienced [someone not passing word] was in Afghanistan, it was really bad but luckily we overcame it … Marines are smarter now, you have just as many enlisted with Bachelor's degrees as the officers … the field has been leveled so treat them [with respect] and they'll do great things … just give them the facts and you'll be amazed, if you get out of the way, what they can come up with."

<div align="right">- Master Sergeant, Communications</div>

"The leader's ability to **communicate** and make people understand that they **care** about them and that it's not just something that they say … a lot of leader's aren't very good at making people believe it … what's coming out of the squawk box isn't **demonstrated in your actions** and your interactions with the Marines."

<div align="right">- Major, Infantry</div>

"It's when you start to see leaders that are in**consistent in the way they handle situations** and the way they handle people or treat people, that's definitely something that'll make a unit go downhill really fast."

<div align="right">- Sergeant Major, Aviation</div>

"The **care** factor … I think that when you deal with Marines, they can tell whether you care or not."

<div align="right">- Staff Sergeant, Aviation</div>

"In units where leaders are working out with their people, they typically have a better bond … it is good for building teamwork and implicit communication. 'Cause when you spend a lot of time around people, you typically know how they think … it builds **trust**."

<div align="right">- Captain, Intelligence</div>

"One of the key words in leadership and getting to know your Marines is *listen*. If you actually listen to [your Marines] and listen to what people around him [are saying], you can actually know what they're talking about … Just a couple months ago I had a Marine talking, saying stuff, but if you actually listen to what he was saying it was a lot deeper … You have to listen to him and also **get to know your Marines** in a group."

<div align="right">- Master Sergeant, Infantry</div>

"My one regret as a squadron CO was that I didn't get out more, get down to the shop floor and see how the Marines are doing, go out on the flight line, you know,

jump in the back of a Huey and go flying. All those interactive personal things, I didn't do enough of them and I should have done more."

- Colonel (Ret), Aviation

"The leadership from the top, they have to have **genuine concern**. If your Marines don't feel like you care about them … then the morale in the unit is gonna drop. They're not going to work as hard for you as if you did have genuine concern."

- Captain, Administration

"There're certain individuals that I have so much respect for. They come to me and ask me about the family and how's the engagement going and all that. I have that kind of relationship with them, and when they come in to my shop with work related stuff, I want to look out for them and **take care of them**. It's like that **trust** right there … that respect for certain individuals. I want to help them out more than the guy who comes in and is always blasting me for no reason, and always harassing me. I'll pass that work off to somebody else, but my leader? I will break my back for him."

- Lance Corporal, Aviation

"I speak from personal experience when I'm talking to the Marines … I tell a story about something that I have done … how I learned from a mistake … that builds **trust**. Then I have an open door policy, whether it's a PFC or one of [my] peers."

- Sergeant, Infantry

"At my old unit it wasn't 'I can't wait to get off [work], you know, so I can get away from you.' It was, 'Hey, guys, what are we doing when we get off work?' I hung out after work with the same guys so we worked very well together, to a point where when we were clearing houses in Iraq, I knew what my buddies were going to do before they did it because I **trusted** them so much."

- Lance Corporal, Infantry

"I think that's another good indicator of a good unit is if everybody **feels like they have value to add** … and it goes back to leadership. I think the CO [of advisory team in Iraq] did a really good job talking about why the job was so important. Great guy, great team."

- Captain, Intelligence

"When it comes to the junior Marines that actually look up to their senior enlisted Marines … that could tell them anything … it shows … The last unit I just came from, we had, like our staff NCO corps was a tight, no-kidding, family corps … Another thing that built a lot [of trust] was when you got **junior Marines doing stuff that the staff NCOs should be doing**. My CO would give impact NAMs … that builds up that cohesion, and builds up the Marines wanting to work harder. That's a good running unit, you know?"

- Gunnery Sergeant, Aviation

"It's definitely not mission accomplishment alone by itself [that makes a unit great] … I've been in units where it's all about mission accomplishment but the morale is down the tubes, so it's not a great unit … I was with a unit where the senior members of the unit ensured, or make an effort to ensure, that junior members of the unit *felt invested* in the direction the unit was going … the battalion commander recognized *everyone had a working part* and he taught that down to his junior officers, to push that down to their staff, and the CO *empowered the young Marines* and got that *buy-in* … they had *a sense of purpose* … so when you have a unit that works on that level [you can have a great unit]."

- Major, Ground Supply

"I was a legal officer in my last unit … and it seemed like a lot of Marines that were getting into trouble felt like they didn't *have a sense of purpose*. When we were deployed we had one legal issue. One. Marines on deployment have a sense of purpose and they woke up each day knowing there was a mission they had to meet, so they worked hard to meet that mission … You have to challenge Marines and if you are not continuing to give them that challenge, they are going to find other ways to use that type-A personality."

- Captain, Administration

"If you tell [the Marine] to just shut up and keep coloring inside the lines, he's [going to be] a factory worker [and] that's it. He's just going to keep producing whatever it is you want him to produce. He's not going to go outside those lines and [develop as a leader]."

- Lance Corporal, Infantry

"I *give them a chance to prove themselves* … you have to give them enough room to mess up, but you also [have to] give them a chance to prove themselves, and that's how you *build trust* with them … You are not just the drill instructor all day. At some point we take our boots off. We are all human. I think the Marines need to see that."

- Corporal, Infantry

"I want there to be a level of *trust* in me to do my job correctly … that my intentions or my motives or my integrity isn't questioned … The loyalty piece … Marines get that mission accomplishment always takes precedence, but the best leaders always find a way to make sure that what is good for the unit is also good [for the Marines] … so that loyalty goes both ways, both up and down the chain."

- Sergeant Major, Aviation

"You can *trust* your superiors, that they're not telling you wrong. And you can *trust* your peers. *Trust* that you can work with them and they are just as committed at getting the job done as you are. If you have that, then you have cohesion."

- Private First Class, Administration

"In this unit I feel like there is more **trust** than distrust because of our record. I feel like the **trust** is there because of our record out in town. We don't have a lot of DUIs. We don't have a lot of out of work incidents. If we do, they are handled at the lowest levels, which is proof that the majority of Marines do **trust** their leaders."

- Lance Corporal, Aviation

"The unit I was in that was really good, we didn't have a lot of mishaps, we didn't have a lot of people screwing up or misbehaving … no suicides, no sexual assaults … it didn't feel like, at least with the staff, that people were in competition with each other. It had a lot to do with the CO … he didn't play favorites. We went through a 6 to 8 month workup and a yearlong deployment in Afghanistan. We really didn't have a lot of misbehavior or stealing or negligence or anything like that. It was a great place to work."

- Major, Infantry

Special Note Regarding Top Level Themes:

It may strike an experienced Marine that these themes are nothing new, quite typical of what Marines are likely to talk about, and perhaps even quite *un*interesting for a project of this nature. A study such as this can affirm that what is important in identifying and giving reasons for what makes a great unit is widely shared among Marines. It is unlikely that there are secrets to identifying great units that have been missed by the 200 plus years of Marine Corps history. Quite the contrary. If what makes a great unit strikes the Marine reader as "typical," then the important, shared aspects of Marine Corps culture on the topic are being brought to light. The point then is to ask how and why Marines can—and do—argue about the topic, why having a great unit appears so difficult to achieve, and why creating a great unit is *not* reducible to a formula teachable to Marine Corps leaders? No matter how "obvious" the themes appear, how they work and how they are generated appears quite difficult to state.

The issue that this study ought to highlight, in this researcher's opinion, is, "***How do these important themes Marines talk about get lost?***" Answers to this question were not a specific target in this study, but the outlines of such answers emerge in the talk of Marines as well. For example, some leaders fail to listen (intentionally as well as unintentionally) to what their Marines are saying, and so they can both mistake who their Marines are as well as who they are as a leader. Some leaders do not know how to listen *to* their Marines and *for* their Marines. Likewise, Marines may not know how to listen to what their leaders are saying and for what meanings they convey about expectations for performance and value orientation. Finally, there are situations in which a leader is not equipped to hear or see what is happening with his or her command because of a failure on the part of subordinates, tasking from superiors, or even a lack of the proper concept that would allow him or her to see an event in progress. This last issue is typical of human experience: "I didn't see that coming," is an everyday expression of a lack of a concept by and through which focus can be directed onto an event-in-progress. It is important to realize that such a lack is not necessarily a personal failure as such. It

can be that a leader never before encountered a similar situation, or that the team above, below, and around the leader did not do what they ought to have done.

Against this background, it is important to realize that one of the concepts that leaders cling to—and that may be part of the way important themes get lost—is that the differences in value orientation among Marines themselves has become significant. While it is clear that basic training re-orients aspiring civilians to the values of the Marine Corps, the background ethnic, religious, and economic class unit of the 40's and '50's in America is gone. That background, where all young men of a certain background were taught to "respect your elders" and "do what you're told," appears to have enabled Marine leaders to assume a unity of outlook and value orientation among their Marines that is otherwise impossible now. That is, leaders could depend on this shared background to fill gaps in their abilities or insights as leaders and to make up for gaps in what Marine teams might miss. There was some talk among Marines in the interviews about the "good old days" in this regard, but many also noted that those days are gone. Today, respect must be continually re-earned by leaders and this may entail teaching young Marines why they need to hold up *their* end of the bargain too and what holding up that end actually entails. Junior Marines are not simply an audience to the CO's performance, they are actually on-stage with the CO. Many of the Marines interviewed seem to not only understand, but also articulate this relational balance as a critical aspect of a great unit. Without it, you get the kind of talk that can only make meaning of the frustration with how the Marine Corps is changing, and not for the better.

Section III: Talk and Actions as What Makes Marine Units 'Great' (or not)

The practical contribution of this project is the notion that the talk and actions of Marines are what make a unit 'great.' In other words, *a great unit is not a list of specified characteristics, traits or attributes, but rather a cooperative, dynamic achievement.* When Marines talk about what makes a great unit, they refer to relationships and people and almost never to equipment, technology, or material items. There is no formula that can be applied to achieve a 'great' unit, but by listening to and observing Marines it is possible to understand the meaningful actions, decisions and relationships they point to as constituting 'greatness.'

The observation phase of the project was particularly useful in moving beyond the interviews and seeing how and why the themes in Section II of this report matter in the everyday contexts of Marines' lives. A series of examples from the units visited *constitute* the "how" of Marines making a unit great. Leadership, trust, communication and buy-in were mentioned frequently in the interviews as important to making a unit great. How are these achieved?

Example 1: Field Training Exercise of Infantry Battalion

The researcher participated in a training exercise designed to teach Marines how to survey a field for contamination, and if necessary take samples of potential contaminants. A Chief Warrant Officer and Gunnery Sergeant oversaw the exercise, but handed over to a Corporal the task to plan, organize and carry out the training. The manner of this "handing over" is important. The Cpl reported that he was told the day before the exercise that he had been selected to lead the exercise. Allowing a novice time to think through the possibilities, perhaps come up with an outline of a plan, maybe research the exercise, and then mull over the decisions he might have to make set the Cpl up for success. In the highly competitive Marine Corps, *not* being embarrassed is greatly valued, especially in front of peers, superiors, and subordinates. Of course the CWO and the GySgt *could* have sprung the role onto any of the trainees on the day of the exercise and then pressurized the exercise by giving the Marine a time limit to plan, organize, and carry out the training. But, in this case, the exercise leaders were not "testing" their Marines' ability to work under pressure, rather, they were attempting to teach them how to perform complex activities that they might need to perform in a lethal environment. As such, the exercise leaders sought to teach their Marines, not test them; the latter would be "putting the cart before the horse." The Cpl first sought input from the Marines on how to organize the squads, then chose squad leaders. After the CWO showed and demonstrated how to use the equipment, the Marines and corpsmen practiced and asked questions. Marines who had used the equipment before helped show the others what they knew. The Cpl reviewed the TTPs and developed the overall strategy with his squad leaders.

The CWO informed the researcher off to the side that the Cpl was selected because he had shown initiative in the past and he and the GySgt wanted to assess how his leadership was developing. To assess his leadership development the CWO first noted he would be looking for evidence of his passion, then his communication

with the squad leaders, and how he seeks feedback and responds to situations that come up regarding communication. It is interesting to note that that is how they characterize an assessment of leadership development. It could have been characterized other ways by other leaders and the Marines thus could have responded quite differently in their talk and actions.

As the squads put their gear together, the Cpl constructed his brief after talking with the squad leaders. After the brief by the Cpl (pictured above), the CWO reminded the Marines and corpsmen of the potential for heat stress once in MOPP4 and to hydrate, particularly after the objective rally point when they would go masks on. The difficulty of communication – both hearing and seeing – required Marines to use hand signals to communicate as well as rely on the plan developed by the Cpl and squad leaders.

As the Marines proceeded through the exercise, the CWO and GySgt occasionally stopped the squads to ask questions about the decisions they are making, not to correct but to instruct. For example, one squad was not using the JCAT correctly, so the CWO instructed them again and had them show him the correct way to use it. Instead of stopping to check for decision making and understanding, the CWO and GySgt could have just let the Marines go and waited until the end of the exercise to inform them what they did not do correctly. If that approach had been taken, it would be more difficult for the Marines to recall what they were thinking and doing at any given point during the training. The approach taken by the CWO and GySgt shows the Marines that the exercise is not about “getting through the training”, it is about *learning*. This respects the Marines in a way that a “checking the box” and just going through the motions approach does not. When Marines are simply told to show up and do something, do it, then told how they didn't do it correctly, they are basically invited to go through the motions. These leaders structured the training in a way to encourage the Marines to learn in order to become more confident in a potentially dangerous environment.

The GySgt and CWO discussed what they thought the Marines were thinking based on their actions. They surmised that the Marines thought they were doing a police exercise – or a search instead of a survey – based on the way the squads moved into the field (i.e., in a linear fashion instead of in a wedge). The researcher spoke to the Cpl halfway through the exercise and he indicated he selected the squad leaders based on his relationship with them and noted his trust in them and how that mattered in a situation where there were inexperienced Marines (i.e., only 4 or 5 out of the group had completed this training before) and communication would be difficult due to the gear and being spread out. The researcher asked if he was stressed being in charge and he indicated he had been asked the day before to run the exercise and he was a little nervous, but trusted CWO and GySgt who had put their trust in him.

In his debrief (pictured below), the CWO reminded the Marines that in every training situation, they need to put what they are doing into the larger context of the mission. He asked Marines if they had made that connection and a discussion ensued. This is symbolic of trust. A discussion would not likely have ensued had the Marines decided that the CWO was not genuinely interested in them learning. Leaders ask rhetorical questions and can otherwise signal that they are there because they have to be, or are not actually interested in their depth of understanding. It seems, based on this observation and the words he used and the Marines response to him, that he did have genuine interest in them and they had trust in him. This relationship – his interest and their trust – is constituted by the fact that a discussion took place. He noted that it takes awhile to get into the rhythm

of a task, especially using unfamiliar equipment, but that they can use what they know from other training and apply things to the new environment and context. He told them, "you don't make good decisions because you are a 'good decision maker', you make good decision because you learn and use information in new situations."

He told the Marines and corpsmen that he liked what he saw in the field, where the Cpl gave the squad leaders latitude to do their job, and that they all made adjustments in the field when the plan didn't go exactly as they planned. He also told the Marines that he and the GySgt learned something from their strategy – the single file movement into a center point and moving out from there. He said they had not seen that before and really liked the innovative plan. The GySgt stepped in and told the Marines that radios were not used on purpose because when they rely too much on radios, they tend to forget the basics of a line and the importance of communication and small unit leadership. He said that seeing the squads working independently and the Cpl checking in only when needed was he and the CWOs idea of things working well in a training exercise such as this. What the CWO did *not* do was scream, yell, nitpick, expose any particular Marine's faults, or embarrass anyone. Neither did the GySgt. He could have done any of these things and some Marines may argue that the training was successful. So, how is it that the talk and actions of the CWO and GySgt are related to the actions of their Marines? One might ask, *why* did he not yell or embarrass anyone? And what was the effect of his chosen way of interacting with the Marines in contrast with another way of potentially interacting? The effect was the dynamics observed between the Marines and the CWO and the GySgt. They produced those dynamics of trust and respect together.

During the debrief the CWO also asked the Marines how they were doing – referring to the gear and the rising heat of the day. They responded that they were good to go. He asked if they could do the exercise wearing flak and carrying weapons and ammo. They responded that they could. He asked if they thought they could do the exercise with the additional gear all day, instead of just the few hours they had spent. They responded that they could. He then reinforced the importance of them taking care of each other by stopping to hydrate and checking each others eyes through the masks for heat stress.

Raising this issue is not to suggest that the Marines responded in a way that is out of the ordinary. Any Marine reading this would suggest that, of course, the

Marines will respond to the CWO by telling him they are good to go. By presenting the information in this way, he is inviting them to envision the future, which shows his concern for them. Thinking through what it would be like to go for six more hours with flak and more gear is part of preparing them to handle such future situations when they arise. Also, in telling them to monitor each other he is teaching them, or reminding them, of their shared responsibility as Marines. The researcher noticed Marines assisting each other getting in and out of their gear, and not just among Marines who were clearly friends. For example, a Marine standing at a distance approached another Marine to assist him removing his gear when his friends standing closer could not.

Contextualizing the Observation

In this observation, what serves as evidence for the kinds of meaning Marines conveyed in the interviews as what makes a unit 'great'? The deliberate decision to choose the particular Cpl to run the training exercise shows planning and forethought on the part of the CWO and GySgt. It was clear that they were looking to help the Cpl, not throw him to the wolves or embarrass him. The Cpl expressed that he felt trusted by them. All the stories told to the researcher by Marines in the interviews about bad leaders – those who yell and scream and bully and belittle – was completely absent in the talk and actions of the CWO and the GySgt. There was no yelling or simply telling the Marines they were "doing it wrong." Why does this matter? It matters because it builds trust by showing respect to the Marines.

In the interviews, Marines told the researcher of leaders who didn't bother to spend time planning, but then held others responsible when training went awry. Junior Marines, in particular, noted that this was a complete lack of respect for them and their time. Note that they did not tell the researcher that it "showed a complete lack of a respect" but that it "*was* a complete lack of respect." Whether or not the Marine leader meant to convey complete lack of respect for their Marines that was what was conveyed by his or her actions. When Marine leaders do not plan and communicate that signals lack of respect for their Marines. There is a social context wherein those Marines can then decide not to trust their leaders. But how is it about *respect*? One might argue that due to the military hierarchy and rank, respect has nothing to do with it. This is not so, as the social reality of the way people interact is not removed even given a military context.

Consider the following example:

"[W]e can examine a simple example of how meaning-making can work in terms of a Marine leader and his Marines generating mutual respect. Early Monday morning, a gunnery sergeant rounds a corner and surprises two lance corporals joking about the weekend's adventures. The gunny smiles and shouts, "I need two volunteers!" The joking stops and the two lance corporals start off with the gunny. What has happened here and what does it have to do with respect?

The first thing to notice is that what was meant was not what was said by the gunny. That is, the gunny was not *really* asking for volunteers.

Rather, he was telling the two Marines that he was assigning them to a task. This meaning emerges from the rank difference between the gunny and the lance corporals… It is this context that prompts the lance corporals to realize that what the gunnery sergeant said was not actually what he meant…

Marines do have a choice to say no, but they are, generally, unwilling to … Similarly, the lance corporals could choose to protest their being "voluntold" to complete the as yet undefined assignment by grumbling, or perhaps by complaining loudly and seriously, so as to indicate that while they would comply with the masked order, they were doing so grudgingly… So why would the gunnery sergeant risk inviting his Marines to grumble or complain by using a less direct verbal and grammatical route to assigning them a task? Why would he face them both with the ambiguity of a masked order and with possibly confusing them about what he wants of them? One way to understand the gunny's strategy is as an attempt to embody the Marine Corps leadership trait of Tact, which is defined as interacting with others without creating offense. In this case, the gunny wants to position himself as someone who would prefer not to directly order the Marines to the task, despite the fact that ordering them is within the power accorded to him through his rank by the organization. Why? To respect his Marines. The gunny's use of language is a way of turning what is otherwise a formal relationship into something less formal. This move, which the gunnery sergeant could have chosen not to perform, opens a discursive space in which the two lance corporals have some room to move, so to speak… The gunny has respected their agency, their personhood, by investing them with the social power and social space to use their agency… To pull off this social interaction successfully however, requires that the two lance corporals actually recognize—actually *see* the offer as an offer, which means the use of concepts and values… This example and discussion should alert us to the fact that respect is a social construction, even a negotiation, *even in* a hierarchical organization like the Marine Corps."[1]

What Marine leaders get from respecting their Marines in the way noted in this example, as well as in the way exemplified by the CWO and GySgt the researcher observed, is an orientation toward a similar vision based on *trust*. So one might imagine the lessons learned in the training exercise (in addition to how to conduct a survey and correctly use a JCAT) *as a result of the talk and actions of their leadership*, are that they are allowed to make decisions and judgments about what to do, and if they do something and it doesn't work out, they will be given feedback and correction but not abuse and chastisement. In other words, they are invited to learn how to *think and act* like Marines and *become* Marine leaders. These leaders praised the Marines for being innovative and the Cpl for allowing the squads to operate

---

[1] From Frank J. Tortorello, Jr.'s "Brains, Bodies, and Marines: The Science of Stress and Resilience in the United States Marine Corps." Unpublished manuscript.

independently. They allowed him to make decisions, and praised him for allowing his squad leaders to do the same. Their actions matched their talk, which builds trust.

The researcher also heard from Marines in this unit that trust *between* Marines was strong, and that there were leaders in this battalion that Marines "would follow anywhere." In the context of an organization like the Marine Corps that is dedicated to the use of—and so exposure to—lethal violence (when necessary), this should not be taken lightly. We can surmise that this kind of statement, when genuine, is a marker of a history of the kind of respectful, trust-building interactions like the one detailed in this example. After all, such a statement amounts to something like, "I trust my leaders with my life." It was also notable that in a conversation with a group of junior Marines, though the conversation began with Marines complaining about word not being passed and how that impacts trust in leadership, the tone of the conversation quickly turned to the responsibility to ask for information in order to earn the trust of leaders (i.e., being trust*worthy*). This is an indication of Marines policing each other – within a cohort of their peers – toward a certain value orientation. If the conversation would have continued to go the direction of complaining about those at the top, or everything that is wrong with the Marine Corps, a different sort of value orientation would be in evidence and one not consistent with the talk and action the researcher saw in the training exercise.

This distinction is notable as it is not merely the presence of good leadership, as illustrated by the Chief Warrant Officer and Gunnery Sergeant and their talk and actions about how to be a Marine, that matters. What also matters is the talk and actions in the social groups where Marines live and work among their peers. This is why an ethnography, wherein the researcher can speak with groups of junior Marines without SNCOs or officers present, is informative. When the researcher noted shared values in the talk and actions of Marines at *all* levels of the organization, even though the organizational perspective of junior Marines and the CO and SgtMaj are very different, for example, this was an indicator that the unit could be one that the Marines there believe is 'great.'

Example 2: Training Exercise of Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion

The training observed was a multi-day exercise, and rather than observing from beginning to end, the researcher was present for part of one day. This provided an opportunity to have conversations with Marines in the context of their unit. A 1st Lt noted that in his platoon, leadership means "doing PT with Marines, eating after the Marines, and being able to relate to them as well as giving clear direction and treating Marines with respect."

What the 1st Lt said here is characteristic of when people think the thing "respect" is somehow separate from those actions enumerated. This is perhaps why Marines seem to miss "doing leadership" when it is right in front of them. The three things that the 1st Lt described *are* respect – it isn't that these are three things a leader ought to do *and* treat the Marines with respect. The doing of these three things is respect*ful* of Marines. This is everyday vernacular – or simply the way

people talk – but important to note because it shows that the way people talk assumes that the actions are somehow separate from the thing itself.

It is important not to forget that the gestures being offered as respect by this Marine leader have to be accepted as such by his Marines. If the Marines do not somehow think he is genuine, or if he changes his behavior toward them when his superior is around, they may not accept the gesture and therefore, what he is offering no longer counts as respect. In other words, it is a relational dynamic and that can change. There is no thing "out there" called respect abstracted from individuals offering and accepting gestures in contexts. As such, respect cannot be measured quantitatively. The underlying value orientation of this 1st Lt is that his Marines matter at least as much as he does, and most of the time they matter more. Compare this with the value orientation of the company GySgt who stole things so frequently that even on deployment the Capt. had to lock everything up. Who is being valued above all in this case? Certainly not his fellow Marines. By giving clear direction, PTing with them and eating last, the 1st Lt is showing, not just talking, his values as a Marine leader.

The Lt mentioned that there was not a single NJP in his platoon, and that he worked with the SSgt to give the NCOs responsibility and the power they deserve to have ownership in the platoon. To not have an NJP means that the Marines are taking the respect that the Lt has for them and repaying by either self-policing or policing each other such that they do not get into trouble. In his talk, it is clear that the Lt knows this. The point here is not whether or not it is technically true that the platoon has not had a single NJP, but that there is a value orientation that Marines believe to be true – that is, if you give Marines power and responsibility (i.e., respect) they can repay it by applying the organization's values to their own actions (i.e., not getting in trouble). This value orientation was expressed by many Marines in the interviews summarized in Section II of this report. The accuracy of the Lt's claim is not the point, but rather the belief that such a relationship can exist. To make it real it becomes an aspiration for the Marines that share that value. That may be another indicator of the kind of values and aspirations shared among Marines that make a 'great' unit. Again, it exists in their talk and actions and those talk and actions are relational and continuously reinforced or changed in the social context of the platoon.

The Lt finished his conversation with the researcher by stating that "it all comes down to trust and that comes out in how the Marines train." Again, this is another value orientation frequently offered by Marines – the notion that if you have built trust with your Marines, and them with each other, they will pay attention, seek to actually learn and not just get through it, they will take the training seriously, and so forth. It is the return on the leaders investment in that offering of trust. One of the Cpls told me that the human factor is what matters in the 1st Lt's platoon. He noted that Marines from a different battery all want to transfer to where he is, because their leadership is toxic and here Marines are respected. The researcher asked for an example of how Marines are respected in his battery versus the other one, and he told the story of a Marine who was going to be kicked out for being overweight. The Cpl said the Marine was mistreated and was actually a good Marine. His Lt had the overweight Marine come over to them and told him he

"believed in him," and the guy "turned it around." According to this Cpl, the human factor "is a respect thing. You can't just go off metrics [like PFTs]. There are perfect PFTers that are dumb [and can't do their job]." He indicated that he trusts his leadership because they do not rely on metrics, but what people are really capable of doing.

Another Cpl in the same platoon noted that among the platoons, sections and teams there is a great attitude and work ethic. The physical actions taken are due to the NCOs and their leadership. This statement and those of the other Cpls and LCpls the researcher spoke to seem to validate the 1st Lts value of empowering the NCOs. As a Marine leader, the Cpl noted that he goes around once a week to his junior Marines and says to them, "Ok, I am not a Cpl right now. Tell me what you think about x, y, and z." He said that is how he gets *them* to buy-in and help take part in what may be going the wrong direction.

This Cpl went on to say that as a leader, he wants to be sure that the Marines who deserve recognition and reward are the ones that get it, not just those who engage in "peacocking" (i.e., looking good when the higher ups are around). "Peacocking" shows self-interest is being prized over selflessness and so is a violation of the core value of Courage: courage *IS* selfless pursuit of the community's values in a context of moral and/or physical risk. Since there is a particular term that Marines use to capture the practice (i.e., "peacocking"), it is probably easily recognized and so an immediate burden on subordinates to find a way to continue to trust a superior who decides to engage in the practice.

The Cpl found out about a guy who is generally pretty quiet and is always off to the side. One by one, his Marines came to him and told him about this guy and how he performs. This is where he learned to do the one-on-one "I am not the Cpl now, tell me what is going on" technique. The "technique" used by the Cpl is a "how" of good leadership. It is a superior choosing to forego the role distance afforded by his/her rank and invite the subordinate to speak as a person and not as a subordinate. This personalization of communication, when done judiciously, demonstrates the superior's willingness to risk some degree of personal closeness with a subordinate – something that can definitely demonstrate "care and concern" by a leader for his/her Marines. This care and concern is one path to having Marines trust a leader, and so would say something like, "We would follow him/her anywhere." This is a fine line of course, and it is clear that the line is extremely sensitive, which should indicate something about the complexity and difficulty of walking the line. If the personal closeness goes too far in either direction, relationships can become problematic. Yet, there is no formal training or discussion of this practice. If the Marine Corps wants more great units, then the question becomes, why is there not formal training or discussion of this practice?

The Cpl realized that his Marines trusted him enough to share something that was meaningful to them. He said, "Respect is always earned. You can give it for rank, but it will erode if it isn't also for the person." The "doing leadership" – in contrast to just talking about leadership – in this story from the Cpl is a powerful lesson. He listened to what his Marines were saying both explicitly and implicitly. They were telling him "this guy is great" *and* "we trust you."

In the field exercise the researcher observed, the Marines were conducting training for securing a perimeter and defending an entry point. Those who were securing the perimeter were in Humvees and had to coordinate and communicate from a distance (pictured below). The Lt accompanying the researcher to the field indicated that this group was working extremely well together as a result of several months of doing training exercises together. This was echoed in a conversation with a L.Cpl. He said, "We train a lot. We use laser tag stuff and the leadership is always trying to get us out in great training situations. We got to go to a mountain training facility and go up against another battery. They outnumbered us, but we won because they couldn't communicate. It is hard to put it into words because you don't really think about it when you are out there, but in the Marine Corps you focus on losing – what did we *not* do? I guess the challenge for leadership is to balance out what you need to work on without losing what we're good at."

What this Marine shared gives an example of how exploratory research can set up in-depth research: the balance he mentions would be an excellent topic for further ethnographic study. *HOW* do leaders do this and how do subordinates recognize it, judge it, respect it, or not? Just such targets for further analysis is inherent in ethnographic research.

A Sgt noted that "cooperation, communication and leadership are key to having a unit where things work. There are groups of Marines that feel their roles in the Marine Corps differently. There are senior Marines who went to war, then garrison life, then back to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and back again to garrison.

There are junior Marines who went to Iraq and Afghanistan and then back to garrison life. Then there are the new Marines who only know garrison life. Everyone needs to know where they matter and fit into the unit. People need to know that they matter and they need to be utilized. NCOs need to take the ropes and have responsibility and power. Sgts and Cpls are the backbone of the Marine Corps and they need to run the show. In smaller units where the GySgt and MSgts get involved, the Sgts and Cpls cannot do what they need to do."

This Sgt seems to be expressing a structural or organizational issue that may be particularly amplified or problematic in some units but not others. There seems to be two options, the leaders (i.e., GySgts and MSgts) can choose to play a mentor role and ensure that the Sgts and Cpls do get to do what they need to do – this would be a selfless option. But if the GySgts and MSgts are looking to get promoted, they may be faced with a value conflict: do I sacrifice my being able to stand out in order to put forward my junior Marines? The organization should not face them with that kind of value conflict. If this kind of scenario is widespread and endemic to a certain kind of structural issue that Marines then have to work out as this kind of value conflict, this might suggest that the insistence on overt and visible personal performance is a knife that cuts both ways: it promotes "peacocking" as much as it promotes striving for excellence. The researcher does not have the depth of understanding of organizational structure to speak to the validity of this particular analysis.

The officers spoke to the importance of organizing the training calendar, as opposed to a non-focused approach where things may or may not get done "just good enough." Leadership being able to adjust and have the mental wherewithal to understand their Marines' thought process is important in planning and training, according to the officers. Taking the Marines into account means common sense leadership. Knowing what is going on in the battalion and what it takes to get the job done is absolutely necessary.

The officers are illustrating a choice to take the time, making life harder on themselves, in order to have training that matters – and is recognized in the talk of the LCpls and Cpls during the field exercise. Marines like being in this battalion because they train a lot and the training is, in their opinion, good training. The officers are engaging a selfless pursuit of an organizational value and a service to their subordinates by the talk and actions. While it may be a pursuit of excellence that pursuit is clearly a choice and not one that all leaders make – as illustrated by the stories from Marines about the other units who fall down during training. Given another option on the part of leaders, to gaff it off and just get it done, the choice can be considered selfless pursuit of organizational values. On the other hand, these leaders seem to be expressing acknowledgement that the training (and their time spent planning) is worth it. The picture may be made more complex had the officers expressed that making time for other types of training on the calendar does not lead to good outcomes – assuming there are some organizational responsibilities that Marines may see as a waste of time (e.g., SAPR training, ethics training, suicide prevention training, alcohol and drug abuse training).

One of the key thoughts expressed was "only set policies that should be followed." The researcher asked why this was important, and a 1st Lt offered that

"people will try to cut corners for all kinds of reasons. This way, you can explain it to the Marines. If you follow the book and don't add unnecessary burdens, your Marines will get that and you won't have issues. But you have to have discipline and hold Marines accountable. The laziness and complacency isn't just about work not getting done, it gets into the Marine. They start to feel it and you cannot have that mentality in the Marine Corps. You can't just talk your job as a Marine leader, you have to take your blinders off and recognize how things actually work … at the end of the day, it is all about keeping your unit alive. That's the goal of leadership. They all come home."

This statement seems to complement what the officers said about the careful and purposive planning with regard to training. It is reasonable to ask, in light of the talk and actions of the Marines in this battalion, whether the organization has considered the burden it places on Marine leaders and their Marines regarding mandatory training? Has anyone in the higher echelons of the organization thought through the second and third order consequences of such an approach (or, perhaps, imposition)? The researcher raises this issue not as a criticism for an imposition that resulted in disaster, or at the very least was uncalled for, but this is an indication of an organizational practice that suggests the Marine Corps has lost attention to the social in favor of the mechanistic. If the Marine Corps wants Marines not to rape each other, or to be lazy and complacent, what is it about the Corps and its practices – not the individual and his or her "traits" or "dispositions" – that invite them to be so? This example points out that great units *CAN BE* brought into existence, in part, through a communal/organizational/unit practice: only setting policies that should be followed. This practice sets clear goals and expectations and respects Marines. Could the larger Marine Corps achieve this practice as well?

Section IV: Quantitative Indicators of 'Great' Units

   In addition to the qualitative aspect of this project, the researcher in collaboration with the Director of LLI identified a list of quantitative measures, or markers, of units that could be considered related to what makes a unit 'great'. This list of tangibles is not meant to be a substitute for the intangibles, nor a comprehensive list of what a unit would have to have in order to be 'great.'

   The following quantitative measures are offered for consideration not as a way to determine or predict which units were 'great', but were gathered after case selection, site observation, and qualitative analyses as a way to validate the qualitative aspect of the study. The idea being that if a unit has the trust, morale, and relationships that Marines point to as what makes a unit 'great', it is likely that some of the performance and other quantitative measures would coincide.

   The quantitative measures examined were:
     Inspection Report Data
     Number of PFT/CFT failures
     Number of Drug Pops and DUIs
     Command Climate
     Number of Suicides
   *Number of FTAP/STAP Reenlistments*

Readiness
   A proxy for readiness could be the findings from inspections – in particular the number of findings and discrepancies can say something about a unit's readiness. Inspections may be one way of assessing readiness, but as one commander told me, a single inspection may not necessarily be indicative of anything much as there are too many variables to consider (i.e., who the inspectors are, where unit is at in deployment cycle, extenuating circumstances, etc.). There can be false positives (i.e., units that hurry up and make everything "inspection ready" when they know an inspection is coming, but operate largely by putting out fires otherwise). It may be that inspection data *over time* for a unit, however, may indicate something of that unit's ability (or inability) to efficiently and appropriately manage time and resources, but only in conjunction with other measures or indicators.

   In a conversation with a room full of commanders in 2015, General Dunford argued that readiness is not about resetting the USMC against the last mission (i.e., fixing the planes, the trucks, etc.). Readiness is when changes have been made in the institution to get ready for the next mission. He argued that the Marine Corps has to get better at what it is doing today as well as innovate to ways that will help it do better down the road. A 'great' unit may be one where having it's house in order – as indicated by inspection data – has become normalized and routine such that it can focus on getting better at what it is currently doing, as well as spending time innovating to be better. In other words, inspections of units that result in few or no findings or discrepancies may be those that are more likely to be spending their time on improving what they do and even innovating to become better.

For purposes of this study, FSMAO inspection data was considered for the units that were selected for site observations.[2] Although there are a number of inspections that could be used, FSMAO was selected due to it being recommended by a MEF commander as a metric he looks to as a proxy for readiness.

Comparisons among the units observed result in a certain kind of assessment. If these units do indeed stand out as 'great' or at least very good units, to truly make a meaningful comparison it would be useful to have FSMAO data for poor performing units as well, but that is beyond the scope of this project. The frequency of Non Mission Capable (NMC) findings on the FSMAO were 0 to 8 for the units observed, with an average of 2.42 NMC findings. The nature of these findings for the observed units were for things like improper records management on the Marine Corps Sponsorship program, or records management for the Government Travel Card, and similar findings regarding administration of programs or records management.

The chart below shows the distribution of NMC findings from the FSMAO for the observed units. Again, a much larger sample may reveal more variation and such variation may not correspond with units that could be considered 'great', but may be an indicator used in conjunction with other measures. This hypothesis could be borne out in future studies.

Distribution of NMC findings from FSMAO for observed units.
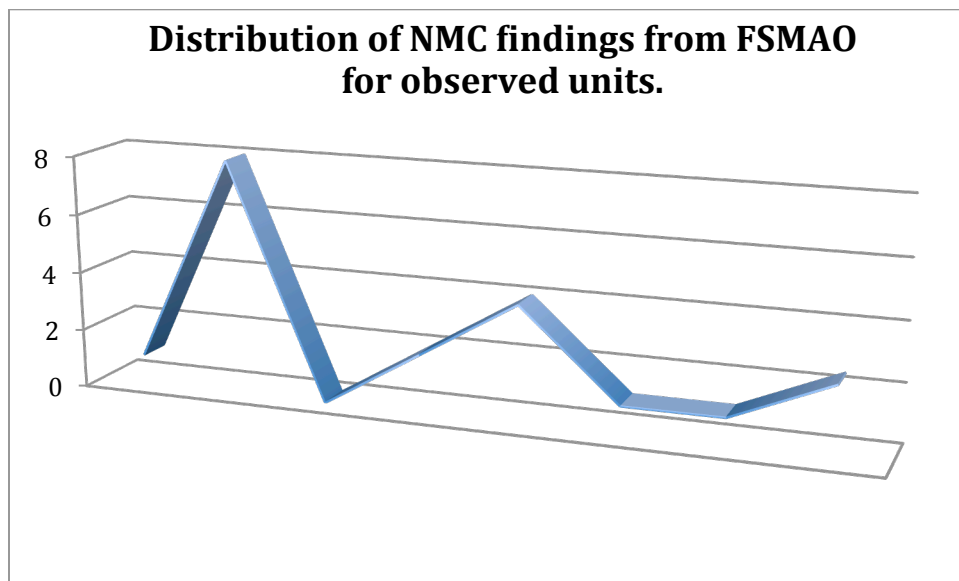
Whether using FSMAO or some other inspection data as a proxy for readiness, it is important to note that it is not the case that performing well on an inspection makes a unit 'great', nor are inspection data predictors of 'great' units. This kind of simplistic talk and assumptions lead to an expectation that a formula can be applied to make 'great' units.
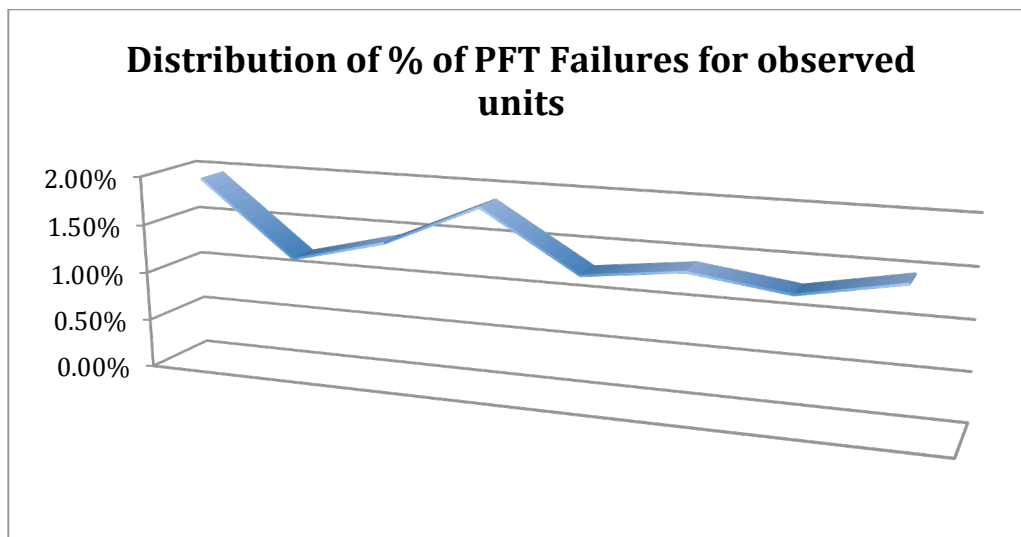
---

[2] Although ten units were selected for site observations, FSMAO data was only obtained for seven of those units.

Good Order and Discipline

A proxy for good order and discipline in a unit could be a low percentage of PFT and CFT failures. It would not be appropriate to say that fewer PFT/CFT failures are an indication of a 'great' unit, but it could be reasonably assumed that a unit that has it's house in order does not have a large percentage of Marines and sailors who are failing PFT/CFTs. Thus, it may be a good marker or indicator of a unit that is performing well, in terms of the fitness of it's Marines and sailors, and is taking care of the basics and spending time and energy on being a 'great' unit. Again, as with the FSMAO inspection data above, these data would only be an indicator given other measures and pieces of information.

Comparisons among the units observed result in a certain kind of assessment. If these units do indeed stand out as 'great,' or at least very good units, to truly make a meaningful comparison it would be useful to have PFT/CFT failure data for poor performing units as well, or at least a much wider swath of data from units to sample from, but that is beyond the scope of this project. The distribution of PFT failures were 1.20% to 1.96% for the units observed,[3] with an average of 1.48%.

The chart below shows the distribution of percentage of PFT failures for the observed units.

Whether using PFT/CFT failures or some other measure as a proxy for good order and discipline, it is reasonable to assume there is likely to be a correlation between units that have their house in order, and thus their Marines and sailors perform well on PFT/CFTs, and therefore can focus time and energy on making their unit 'great'. This is a hypothesis that could be borne out with more comparison cases or a more

---

[3] Although ten units were selected for site observations, PFT failures data was only available for eight of those units. Also, CFTs had not yet been conducted for the observed units at the time of observation, so such data is not included in this comparison.

data intensive analyses that includes other indicators. Again, it is important to note that it is not the case that fewer PFT/CFT failures makes a unit 'great', nor are such data predictors of 'great' units. This kind of simplistic talk and assumptions lead to an expectation that a formula can be applied to make 'great' units.

In an effort to change the way Marines talk about what counts and counting things, this researcher offers the suggestion of looking to the percent of PFTs above 285 for a unit instead of the number of failures. Perhaps generally units do not have more than a 2 percent failure rate, as indicated by the small sample of observed units, but if a larger sample of cases revealed much greater variation, taking a unit from 'good' to 'great' in terms of PFT may be accomplished by inspiring the unit to have a large percentage of Marines above 285, as opposed to a smaller number of failures. "Not failing" is not the same as "winning," or, as a wise man once so eloquently put it, "Never mistake success for greatness."

Another potential measure or indicator of good order and discipline could be the number of DUIs and drug pops in a unit. Again, the number of DUIs and drug pops could never be considered predictive of a great unit. As with the other measures, there are many variables that must go in to explaining such occurrences. As one Marine leader noted in his interview, "Good units can have bad days. It is how a unit responds to bad things that makes it great, not that bad things never happen."

Comparisons among the units observed result in a certain kind of assessment. If these units do indeed stand out as 'great,' or at least very good units, to truly make a meaningful comparison it would be useful to have DUI and drug pop data for poor performing units as well, or at least a much larger sample of units, but that is beyond the scope of this project. There is, however, more variation among the units observed for drug pops than for the other measures considered thus far. The distribution of DUIs were 1 to 6 for the units observed, with an average of 3. The distribution of drug pops were 0 to 19, with an average of 5.8, but a mode of 2, suggesting the unit with 19 drug pops is more of an outlier with regard to this measure compared with the other units.[4]

Also, noting variation where it appears, there are fewer DUIs and drug pops among aviation squadrons compared to wing communication squadrons and infantry battalions. There are also more personnel in the latter. Whether the variation here is meaningful could be borne out in a future study. The chart below shows the distribution of DUIs and drug pops for the observed units.

---

[4] Although ten units were selected for observation, DUI and drug pop data was only available for six of those units.

Distribution of DUIs and drug pops for observed units
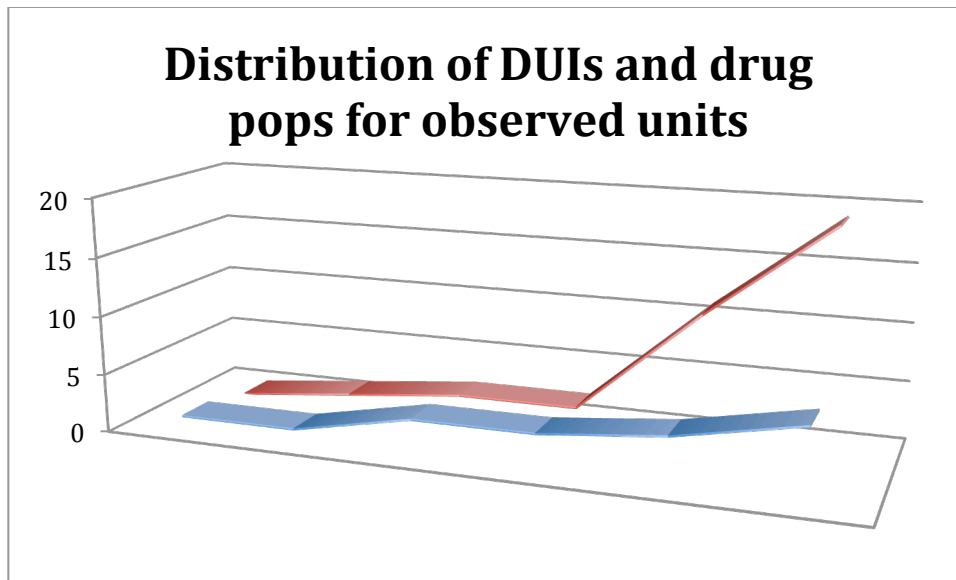
Whether using DUIs and drug pops or some other measure as a proxy for good order and discipline, it is reasonable to assume there is likely to be a correlation between 'great' units and their Marines and sailors not getting into trouble, but not because the unit keeps Marines so busy they don't have time. This would be another version of the false positive. The relationship between a 'great' unit and few DUIs or drug pops is as the Marines interviewed noted above: pride in the unit and the commitment to each other and the reputation of the unit results in Marines not wanting to diminish that or tarnish that by getting in trouble. This is a hypothesis that could be borne out with a more data intensive analysis that includes other indicators. Again, it is important to note that it is not the case that fewer DUIs and drug pops makes a unit 'great', nor are such data predictors of 'great' units. This kind of simplistic talk and assumptions lead to an expectation that a formula can be applied to make 'great' units.

Command Climate

The environment, local culture, or command climate is very much related to whether or not a unit is a 'great' unit. Many of the Marines interviewed referred to a 'great' unit as one that has a great command climate. What that means, exactly, depends on who you ask, but the idea that there is such a thing as a *command climate* and that it has a tremendous impact on the everyday interactions of Marines in that unit cannot be denied. Measuring such a thing is a bit more difficult, but surveys of command climate have been around for some time and many Marine leaders believe it gives an indication of the important issues (both good and bad) of that unit. Like all surveys, however, it only gives an indication of the opinion of Marines as pertains to the questions asked. There may be other important issues, but unless prompted by open-ended questions such as: "Are there any other issues you think the command ought to know about this unit?" then results will be of a certain character. Even with open-ended questions, survey responses are conditioned by who takes the survey and under what circumstances.

Survey results are highly related to not just how the questions are asked, the order in which they are asked, how many questions the survey contains, but also how the survey was presented, incentives offered for completing the survey, the mood of the respondent, recent events, how many surveys the respondent has been asked to complete recently, and so forth. In other words, though often presented as highly predictive, surveys are nothing of the sort. They _do not_ reveal latent attitudes or beliefs, as some social scientists attempt to convey. Well-constructed surveys given under positive circumstances to earnest respondents, however, can offer useful information.

For purposes of this study, Command Climate Survey (CCS) data was considered for the units that were selected for site observations. Comparisons among the units observed result in a certain kind of assessment. If these units do indeed stand out as 'great' or at least very good units, to truly make a meaningful comparison it would be useful to have CCS data for poor performing units as well, but that is beyond the scope of this project.

Comparisons here are made using number of yellow flag (i.e., survey items with mean responses below the filtered comparison group's mean, but within on-half standard deviation) and red flag (i.e., survey items with mean responses below one-half standard deviation below the filtered comparison group's mean) items on the CCS for each observed unit. Unlike the filtered process used for case selection of the units to be observed as explained in a previous section, all questions on the CCS were considered for comparison here.

The distribution of yellow flags were 1 to 29 for the units observed with a mean of 16.9, and red flags were 0 to 7 with a mean of 0.9 (the mode was 0). The nature of the yellow flag findings for the observed units were for responses to questions about resources (equipment, supplies, etc.) being managed well, leadership setting aside regular time for coaching and counseling, and being actively engaged during off-duty hours, for example. The one unit that was a clear outlier for number of issues also had flagged responses to questions about safety, Marines being held accountable, clear communication, and genuine care and concern for Marines.

The chart below shows the distribution of yellow and red flags on the CCS for the observed units.

Distribution of Yellow and Red Flags on CCS for observed units
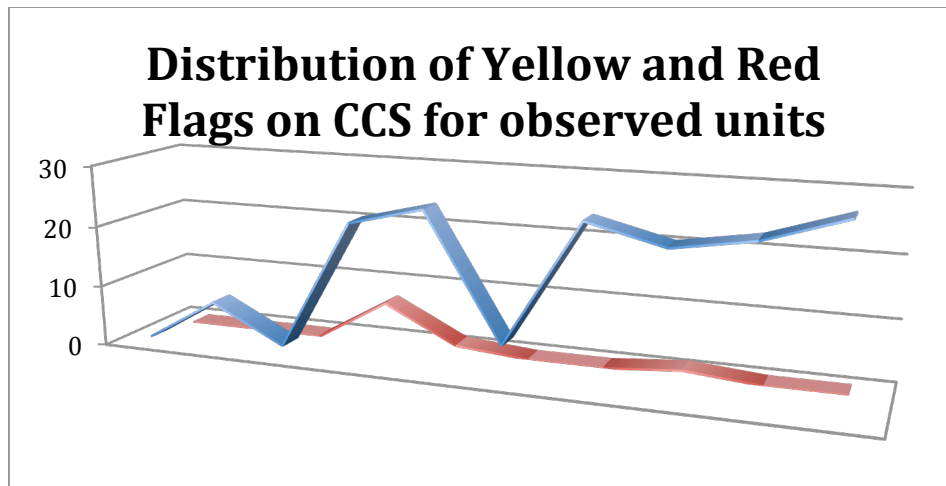
As noted with the other measures, a larger comparison group or sample may reveal variation of note regarding CCS as a potential indicator in conjunction with other measures. Since the CCS was used as a case selection tool for this project, the other indicators available for the observed units are the site observations. As a general rule, the observed units not only had a few number of yellow flags, but those that had a higher number were based on questions that did not correspond to what Marines indicated as making a 'great' unit. Site observations involving both in-depth conversations with Marines at all levels of the organization, as well as viewing training and/or field exercises and day-to-day activities left the impression that these were 'good' units, if not 'great.' Another validation for the II MEF units was that the researcher asked the II MEF CG whether he thought these were good units, and he indicated that all were very good but one stood out as great in his opinion and the opinion of his Chief of Staff. It is the opinion of this researcher that this indicator in combination with the site observations and data collected therein, is a validation of the CCS as an indicator to be used in conjunction with other measures to consider what counts as a 'great' unit.

Again, the questions from the CCS used in the case selection were:

4.   My unit is characterized by a high degree of trust.

5.   Individuals in my unit are held accountable for their performance.

6.   My CO makes clear what behavior is acceptable and not acceptable in my unit.

7.   The environment in my unit is characterized by good order and discipline.

12.   Leaders/Supervisors in my unit set a good example by following standards.

18.   Leaders/Supervisors in my unit care about my quality of life.

19.   My commanding officer clearly communicates priorities for the unit.

20.   My unit is well prepared to accomplish its primary mission.

22.   Leaders/Supervisors in my unit provide opportunities for junior Marines to assume greater responsibility.

Morale

There are a number of measures or indicators that could potentially be used to consider the morale of a unit. Some Marine leaders offered the number of suicides as a measure that could be used to gauge morale, but the researcher would caution against using such an indicator. First, as noted by the Marine leader above, "Great units can have bad days." And 'greatness' may be gauged by how the unit responds to a tragedy and not the tragedy itself. Further, there is a problem with assumptions about causality when considering something like suicide: is the morale of the unit low because of a Marine committing suicide, or did the Marine commit suicide because the morale of the unit was low? Such questions hinge on complex and multi-layered aspects of people's social and emotional lives, interpretations of events without clear information, and sometimes there are no definitive answers. There were no suicides in any of the observed units for this project and so a comparison of the data is not possible, and in the opinion of this researcher, would unnecessarily lead to simplistic comparisons and potentially erroneous conclusions.

A reasonable proxy for morale may be reenlistments. Common sense would suggest that if the morale of a unit is low, there would be few Marines (if any) who would reenlist if given the opportunity. Again, to the notion of false positives, it would be improper to argue that a low number of reenlistments would bar a unit from being considered 'great.' Marines may choose not to reenlist for a number of personal, social, and economic reasons that have nothing to do with the morale and 'greatness' of the unit. For example, a Marine with a great attitude who has spent the past several years in an outstanding unit may choose not to reenlist because he and his new wife are expecting a baby and want to move to Ohio to be close to family. Since the reality of the complexity of Marine's lives and their choices cannot be contained in any single measure, it is with caution that we consider even something as seemingly clear-cut as reenlistments as a measure of what may indicate a 'great' unit when combined with other measures.

Comparisons among the units observed result in a certain kind of assessment. If these units do indeed stand out as 'great,' or at least very good units, to truly make a meaningful comparison it would be useful to have FTAP (reenlistment of first term Marines) and STAP (reenlistment of second term Marines, or Marines who have reenlisted previously) data for poor performing units as well, or at least a much larger sample of units, but that is beyond the scope of this project. The distribution of FTAPs were 1 to 35 for the units observed, with an average of 18. The important measure, however, would be the percentage of FTAPs from the population available to reenlist. This data was only available for the aviation units and the distribution was 25% to 28% (and mission was 28%) for the five units for which this data was made available. There is no meaningful variation among these units for reenlistments. Again, a comparison to a greater sample of units may yield more variation.

The distribution of STAPs were 5 to 28, with an average of 18. Again the percentage of STAP based on the eligible population was only available for the aviation units and the distribution was 55% to 60% (and mission was 58%) for the five units for which this data was made available. There is no meaningful variation among these units for reenlistments.

With out information on the population from which reenlistments were drawn, it is difficult to assess whether the FTAP and STAP numbers for the infantry units is similar to that of the aviation units. There is, however, little variation that suggests the units are similar in reenlistments. Thus, as a proxy for morale, it is possible that with other indicators and as compared to a great number of units, FTAP and STAP data could serve as a measure or indicator of 'great' units.

Other Positive Measures

In a conscious move away from counting failures, negative events, and mishaps, it seems more consistent with the type of attitude inherent in how Marines characterize 'great' units and their leaders to use more positive measures in thinking about a way to measure or account for what makes a unit 'great'. Although not collected for purposes of comparison among the observed units for this project, it is recommended that Marine leaders consider the following positive measures (and likely others) as potential markers or indicators of 'great' units:

Meritorious Promotions and Awards

Number of MOS Specific Schools, PME/EPME, etc. Marines and sailors in the unit attend

Section V: Concluding Remarks

In order for leaders to take their units from 'good' to 'great', it is important to better understand what makes Marine units 'great' from the perspective of Marines themselves. This is even more important in light of the reality that identifying a great Marine unit and then naming the reasons why it ought to be considered great are not judgments that can be based on a simple formula or reduced to a list of characteristics, or metrics. Again, the objective of this project was to develop, from the perspective of Marines, a sense of what makes a 'great' Marine unit via in-depth interviews and site observations. The researcher asked questions mainly to assess:

1. How Marines conceive of 'great' units.
2. How Marines conceive of 'bad' or 'failing' units. (the opposite of great)
3. The relationship of 'great' units to success/effectiveness, trust/cohesion, and leadership/mentoring.
4. Whether and how the Corps trains or educates for 'greatness.'
5. Whether and how Marines are in control of being 'great' as individuals and/or part of a unit.
6. What Marines think completes the phrase: "'Great' Marine units are ones that _____."

The data collection effort of this project has yielded numerous testimonials from Marines throughout the operating forces that what truly goes into making a great unit are relationships and paying attention to the "human factor." Not once did the researcher hear from Marines, "we would be great if only we had better gear." In all of the talk about leadership and trust, the meanings conveyed center on the socio-relational aspects of how units can be bad, good or great – depending on the shared values and motivations of the people in those units. In a conversation with a MEU commander, he said, "Absent the CO communicating a common sense of purpose, someone *will* determine what that is." What he meant was that leadership entails communicating a clear vision and direction for the unit, but that is empty without the second part of what he said. There is a social component of command and leaders that do not understand that are unlikely to contribute to achieving a great unit. Marines, like all people, are primarily social not individual. Brands of individuality are only possible within a particular, socio-cultural context. For example, it is not possible in American culture to be the person "arrested for not wearing *hijab*." The values and purpose of individuals are collectively created, communicated, and reinforced, as Marine Corps basic training has been proving for decades. A "command climate" is nothing other than a value-based judgment about which values are being prioritized by that community or unit. As the MEU commander was articulating, even without an effective CO, the sense of purpose gets created and communicated anyway because that is how human groups work.

That same commander then said, "The CO may give his intent, and that message will get repeated, but *how* it gets repeated, *that* is critical – the translation of the COs vision into tangible outcomes." Again, his comment at first appears to be about the commander being an effective communicator, but really what he is saying is that the commander has to understand how he or she is being interpreted and to

what end. It is this translation activity that is at least as important if not more important than the commander being "clear." Clarity is relative to the context. If a commander's clarity contradicts a highly prized value then it is clear that Marines can and will modify, ignore, surpass, or circumvent the commander's directive. Again, achieving greatness is a dynamic social achievement involving everyone in the community or unit relative to that unit's mission, purpose, personnel, and context.

In the conversation with this Marine and many others over the course of the project, the researcher discerned a real sense of frustration from Marines regarding the direction of the Corps. This particular commander said that he felt like Colonels were on a teeter-totter with their Marines on one end and the generals on the other and his goal was to keep it so that the decisions of the organization did not roll down and crush the Marines. Stating it in this way, it seems, he sees the organization – as embodied in the general officers – as in opposition to the Marines in the operating forces. If accurate, the Marine Corps needs to understand this dynamic as soon as possible if it wants to encourage greatness in its units. The Marines that the researcher encountered were highly skilled in detecting when an aspirational goal was in direct contradiction to an organizational reality and so would dismiss the aspirational goal no matter how inviting or important.

A conversation with a CO of an aviation unit aptly illustrates this point. The expectation of the organization was that he operate as if he had 20 aircraft when he only had 12 (with perhaps 6 flying at any given time), and as if he had trained personnel filling essential billets when that was not the case. Such expectations came with the additional organizational challenge of not being able to retain or promote highly capable Marines – who had helped produced an excellent unit in collaboration with other highly motivated Marines *even without* aircraft and much needed personnel – because those Marines had tattoos placed below their elbows. The contradiction set up by the organization's pursuit of competing values seems readily apparent to the Marines involved, but somehow *un*seen by senior leadership.

The MEU commander further noted that although his definition of a good unit could never be about the absence of bad things, but about how the unit reacts to bad things that happen, he said that the higher up you go in the organization the more you rely on data and the less you recognize the human response to bad things. Perhaps some of this kind of thinking has resulted in a tendency for some Marines to try to "do the right thing" by engaging in more mechanistic thinking and behavior and hoping not to get in trouble, or even, to get rewarded. Another way of saying this is that when the people at the top of the organization have one way of thinking, characterized by focusing on data and forgetting the reality of the social and the human aspect of what makes units and the Marine Corps great, that way of talking and thinking can trickle down through the organization. People, both those who are sensitive to doing exactly what they need to do to get promoted by gaining the favor of those at the top, as well as those who earnestly intend to "do the right thing" and are taking their cues from the community around them, are likely to engage in this way of talking and thinking if the organizational leadership signals it is the thing to do. It is in this way that Marines and Marine leaders can miss the social and focus on values antithetical to making a unit great.

Despite this being exploratory research, the researcher would like to suggest some concluding remarks on a few distinct topics that seem particularly stark. Although Marines are well practiced in talking the leadership talk – as leadership values are as much a part of Marine Corps Culture as honor, courage and commitment – there appears to be a disconnect between the talk and in the actual *doing* of leadership. Talking in leadership generalities and hoping that Marines somehow stumble across how to do it tempts Marine leaders to become impersonal, disingenuous and formulaic. This was cited by many Marines throughout the study as the opposite of what a leader in a great unit does. Clearly not every Marine is a Marine's Marine, but there do exist those leaders who relate very well to their Marines. The Corps would do well to pay attention to (or further study) how those Marines who remain oriented toward their values do so. This researcher is not talking about looking at character traits, or genetic predispositions, but about social achievements among the Marines. The examples in the previous sections show how this is a choice and a particular value orientation given the relational dynamic between a leader and his or her Marines.

This project brings to light an aspect of what makes some Marine units great while others struggle. The section on "Building Will" in the widely read book, *Small Unit Leadership: A Commonsense Approach*, illustrates why the struggle persists. In this book, Col Malone precisely misses the reality that the social relationships in any particular group determine whether training is even possible. Col Malone claims that "the one best way to build will is to build skill" and "skill is the key to will" (p. 68), but all the skill in the world will not prepare a Marine to follow a leader who has demonstrated that his or her self-interest comes before the safety and well being of the Marines. Individual skill will never be a substitute for the social achievement of a unified vision and shared value orientation, as the talk and actions of Marines in this report suggest. Col Malone's construction is an example of what Marine leaders who are unaware of the social can start to sound like. They talk in social-*less* generalities.

The researcher can with confidence argue that Marines from junior enlisted, to senior enlisted, junior officers, to general officers all seem to be able to articulate what goes into making a great unit. That being the goal of this project, the summary presented in this report provides a first step in what could become a larger research agenda for the Marine Corps to not just understand, but also achieve more 'great' units. The next step in understanding how units either slide from being a great unit to being "just ok", or why many units do not ever come close to what the Marines in this project articulate as 'great,' would be to better understand (or study): *what gets in the way?* The researcher offers three places to start in pursuit of that question: (1) those Marines who do not care and refuse to share the values of the Corps, (2) mistakes on the part of Marines and Marine leaders with regard to privileging values antithetical to a great unit over those that achieve them, and (3) organizational structures that have second and third order impacts on social dynamics in the Corps.