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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:
**PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE USMC CULTURAL CHANGE WITH
SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

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

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Executive Summary:

Title: Proposal to Enhance USMC Cultural Change with Servant Leadership

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Thesis: The Marine Corps is striving to achieve an organizational culture change that promotes sound moral and ethical behavior, encourages innovation, and develops resiliency throughout the ranks. Current leadership training in the Marine Corps does not help the Marine Corps achieve its goal of culture change because ongoing Marine Corps leadership training focuses only on the hard skills and traits required of a warfighting organization while neglecting the soft skill traits required of an effective 21st-century leader. Integrating a servant leadership perspective into the current enlisted leadership training and development process would provide the necessary attributes to influence the cognitive shift required for the Marine Corps to achieve its goal of culture change. This paper analyzes the enlisted leadership development process and argues that the inadequacies in the current curriculum can be met by integrating the servant leadership philosophy. This paper provides recommendations to amend the Marine Corps current fourteen leadership traits, incorporate the servant leadership philosophy into current formal curriculum courses, and measure the effectiveness of the servant leadership philosophy, ultimately influencing culture change in the Marine Corps.

Discussion: The current state of Marine Corps leadership development process requires attention as competing interests continue to take away from the most valued and prized possession the Marine Corps has in its arsenal: the junior enlisted Marine. The Marine Corps has made advancements in technology and weapons systems which have significantly outpaced the leadership development process and have created an unbalanced scale that must improve to ensure the future success of the Marine Corps in garrison or on the battlefield. The Marine Corps leadership development process has not kept pace with the everchanging demands for 21st-century leadership to effectively develop and communicate with a new generation of Marines entering the Corps. Senior leaders call for a culture change that promotes good ethical and moral behavior, inspires innovation, and builds resiliency throughout the ranks to protect the Marine Corps image with the American people while winning battles on foreign soil. Analyzing the enlisted leadership development process and the effects that the servant leadership philosophy would have on influencing a mindset could lead to the culture change the Marine Corps seeks to transform. As the Marine Corps continues to push into the 21st-century, senior leaders must remain focused on the leadership development process and successfully incorporate a servant leadership philosophy to ignite the culture change the Marine Corps desires to achieve.

Conclusion: As the Marine Corps continues to invest in the developments of technology and weapons systems to remain relevant on the new age battlefield, it has not applied the same level of effort in modernizing its leadership traits to address present and future demands.¹ Just as the Marine Corps continues to adapt to the everchanging characteristics of war, it must also remain abreast with the leadership challenges offered in the 21st-century.

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Preface

Throughout my nineteen years of service as a Marine, I have had the privilege of serving with some of the most influential leaders who have since shaped the way I approach the topic of leadership. Each leader had a unique impact that taught me different leadership styles and forms that have affected the way I engage with people. As I surround myself with senior enlisted leaders throughout the Marine Corps, constant conversations emerge that question and debate which leadership styles and philosophies prove most effective.

As constant debates surface on the topic of leadership, coupled with a push to change the culture within the Marine Corps, I reflect on those inspirational leaders that have inspired and shaped me into, I believe, a successful leader in the Marine Corps. Though there are many books written that study and analyze the topic of leadership, I believe that the true path to successful leadership is through the way you interact and treat people. The most influential leaders I have had the privilege to serve with lived the servant leadership lifestyle. The purpose of this research is to highlight the inadequacies of the enlisted leadership development process while attempting to influence the reader to implement the servant leadership philosophy into their daily approach to mentoring Marines.

Developing people skills through effective communication while displaying genuine care and concern for those you lead will inspire others to want to follow you. Promoting the mindset that leadership is a position one should hold as a privilege, not a right, should not be taken for granted and needs to resonate throughout all ranks of the Marine Corps. If leaders spend more time facing outward and taking care of others rather than turning

inward to advance personal gains, the Marine Corps will achieve the culture change it desires. The servant leadership philosophy establishes the mindset to foster a positive relationship with the subordinates we lead and maximizes the potential for growth for those you serve. Servant leadership provides the necessary attributes for shifting the cognitive mindset to influence a culture change.

I want to thank my family for encouraging me over the last several months as I sacrificed time to work on this research. My family has supported me, and I hope that I continue to serve as a positive role model for my children to emulate and inspire them to set goals and accomplish what they set out to achieve.

I would also like to thank Dr. Linda Di Desidero and Lieutenant Colonel Erin McHale for taking the time to mentor me through this process. The level of patience, attention, and commitment you both displayed encouraged me to continue the writing and research process. The level of dedication that both of you displayed highlights the characteristics of servant leadership as you continued to place my success at the forefront of your actions which made this paper possible.

Introduction

Since the establishment of the Marine Corps on November 10, 1775, the Marine Corps has answered the calls to fight and win the nation's battles required to preserve the safety, security, and prosperity for the country which gained the trust of the American people. The citizens of the United States have entrusted the senior leaders of the Marine Corps to adequately care for and develop the sons and daughters who enter the service to become United States Marines. As the Marine Corps continues to adapt to new technology and advancement in weapons systems offered in 21st-century warfare, it must also keep up with the evolving leadership challenges offered within the United States (US) culture and society.

Throughout its 243 years of existence, the Marine Corps has experienced developments in technology and weapons systems that have enhanced and changed the character of war. Established as a warfighting organization, the Marine Corps depends on Marines to implement the evolutionary developments on the battlefield, and therefore, serve as the most valuable weapon within the Marine Corps arsenal. Without Marines, rifles do not fire, aircraft do not fly, and vehicles cannot operate. The Marines maintain the balance to keep the warfighting organization moving in an upward trajectory as the nation faces near peer threats offered in the 21st-century. However, as a new generation of Marines eagerly prepares to enter the ranks, the Marine Corps' approach to leadership development faces challenges and must quickly adapt to keep pace with the ever-changing social norms offered within the diverse US culture.

There are many facets of leadership that include various theories, styles, approaches, and traits which serve as the cornerstone to both military and corporate

leadership development. The Marine Corps rests upon the core values of honor, courage, and commitment which serve as the bedrock of Marine Corps ethos. Throughout the years, the Marine Corps has adopted fourteen leadership traits which serve as the guidelines to the characteristics and qualities required to be an effective leader. These traits-- judgment, justice, decisiveness, integrity, dependability, tact, initiative, endurance, bearing, unselfishness, courage, knowledge, loyalty, and enthusiasm (commonly referred to as JJ-DID-TIE-BUCKLE) -- are first introduced at recruit training and make up the attributes that contribute to the leadership development throughout the career for an enlisted Marine.

Leadership provides the fundamental foundation that links the Marines with either mission success or failure both in garrison or on the battlefield. There are many influential and inspirational leaders spread throughout every enlisted rank in the Marine Corps who exhibit the qualities and characteristics of great leaders. Teaching, coaching, and mentoring serve as critical parts to leadership development, which provides the direction necessary for Marines to sharpen the skills required to achieve success. However, as times change and people evolve, the Marine Corps seeks to develop a culture change within the organization. In the Commandant of the Marine Corps Final Message to the Force 2019: "Continue the Attack," General Neller remarks towards a push for a culture change to "eliminate the conduct that prevents us from going to the next level. Behaviors such as drunkenness, sexual assault, sexual harassment, inappropriate conduct on social media, hazing, recklessness, and general lack of discipline do nothing to help our readiness"² and place senior leaders in a situation that questions the current state of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps is striving to achieve an organizational culture change that promotes sound moral and ethical behavior, encourages innovation, and develops resiliency throughout the ranks. Current leadership training in the Marine Corps does not help the Marine Corps achieve its goal of culture change because ongoing Marine Corps leadership training focuses on the hard skills and traits necessary for a warfighting organization while neglecting the soft skill traits required of an effective 21st-century leader. Integrating a servant leadership perspective into the current enlisted leadership training and development process would provide the necessary attributes to influence the cognitive shift required for the Marine Corps to achieve its goal of culture change. This paper analyzes the enlisted leadership development process and argues that the inadequacies in the current curriculum can be met by integrating the servant leadership philosophy. This paper provides recommendations to amend the Marine Corps current fourteen leadership traits, incorporate the servant leadership philosophy into current formal curriculum courses, and measure the effectiveness of the servant leadership philosophy, ultimately influencing a culture change in the Marine Corps.

Enlisted Leadership Development Process

When ideas to incorporate cultural change become a program or regimen, the results turn into a check in the box that diminishes the relevance and importance of what the program sets out to accomplish. A cultural change within the Marine Corps requires a cognitive shift that becomes a way of life and not another program or regimen to manage while being evaluated during the Commanding General's Inspection Program. Incorporating the servant leadership philosophy into the lowest level of formal enlisted leadership development process builds upon the transformational lifestyle change that

occurs during recruit training and leads to the mindset required to increase moral and ethical behavior, promote innovation, and develop resiliency throughout the ranks.

Although the servant leadership philosophy can be traced back thousands of years, Robert Greenleaf's 1970 essay entitled "The Servant as Leader" started to highlight the effectiveness of the servant leadership philosophy, which has since ascended into 21st-century leadership development. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Rubye Howard Braye captures Greenleaf's explanation of servant leadership as:

The servant-leader is servant first.... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead...The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.³

The 21st century Marine Corps is an all-volunteer force. Fewer than one percent of United States civilians set off on the journey and make the transformation to become a United States Marine. Since the Marine Corps comprises an all-volunteer force, an individual's desire to serve their country, family, other Marines, or a higher calling highlights the initial step required of servant leadership which begins with service to others. The willingness or call to service underscores the servant leadership mentality already found within the Marines that enlist and can later build upon throughout the continuation of service.

The leadership journey for an enlisted Marine begins the first time they step on the yellow footprints at either Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego or Parris Island. The first experience of leadership comes from drill instructors who begin to teach the Marines what it takes to leave the civilian life behind and start the transformation in becoming a Marine. The Marine drill instructor bears the responsibility of physically and

mentally training a civilian recruit through a thirteen-week training cycle and serves as the first role model and mentor a young Marine recruit encounters upon entering the Marine Corps. Recruit training is a life-changing, transformative event which is sustained at follow-on schools and in successive units by leaders who are devoted to developing the next generation of Marines.⁴ Throughout the thirteen-week recruit training period, recruits conduct team-building exercises, learn Marine Corps history, and perform close order drill that contributes to the physical and mental development in beginning the life as a Marine in service to the nation.

After graduation, Marines enter a new stage in the development process by attending the School of Infantry (SOI), where they learn the requirements to become a rifleman. SOI builds upon the leadership foundations taught at recruit training where the combat instructors pick up the responsibility to train the next generation of warfighters. SOI continues to introduce team building exercises which place Marines into leadership roles to sustain the transformation which occurred at recruit training. Upon completion of SOI, a Marine either attends Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) school or enters the fleet Marine forces in the case of an infantryman. Each MOS school varies in length and duration to focus on the technical skills required to achieve MOS proficiency.

As a Marine enters the fleet Marine forces, Staff Noncommissioned Officers (SNCO) and Noncommissioned Officers (NCO) take on the responsibility to further enhance the leadership development process with their junior enlisted Marines. However, the formal leadership education development process occurs through the Marine attending various courses and schools offered through the College of Enlisted Military Education (CEME). CEME encompasses the command sponsored Lance

Corporal Leadership and Ethics Seminar, and the resident Corporals Course spread throughout the various units across the Marine Corps. CEME also hosts the resident Sergeant, Career, and Advanced schools at the established academies found in Camp Lejeune, NC; Camp Pendleton, CA; Twentynine Palms, CA; Quantico, VA; Okinawa, Japan; and Hawaii. It also hosts non-resident seminar schools at the SNCO ranks. Each course or school serves to enhance the leadership development and education process for enlisted Marines

The Lance Corporal Leadership and Ethics Seminar consists of a week-long course and serves as the first required formal course a Marine completes throughout their career. The Seminar is designed to develop lance corporals to serve as ethical leaders educated in the philosophies and doctrinal publications that provide the basis for Marine Corps organizational values and ethics, foundations of leadership, personal conduct, and total fitness to sustain the Marine's transformation⁵ that occurred in recruit training. The Seminar also seeks to instill the Marine Corps' values and ethics into the Marine and provide the tools necessary to influence ethical decisions both personally and professionally.

The three-week command sponsored Corporals Course serves as the second stage in formal Marine leadership development and begins to shape the Marine NCO for increased responsibility. The Corporals Course offers formal instruction and group discussion that cover topics such as leadership, close order drill, counseling, administration, and Marine Corps history. Marines receive 72.5 hours on leadership throughout the course.

The Sergeant School consists of a four-week curriculum that provides Sergeants

with the knowledge and skills to recognize how personal actions influence processes to comprehend warfighting functions and their impact on operations.⁶ Sergeant School spends 45 hours on leadership philosophy and discusses topics such as fundamentals or critical thinking, ethical decision making, and leadership programs and resources.

Career School consists of a seven-week program of instruction intended to enable Staff Sergeants to serve as ethical leaders, professional warfighters, and to become sound decision makers.⁷ Career School expounds upon the leadership and ethical training received through the previous CEME courses that provide SNCOs the tools and requirements to effectively lead Marines while understanding and carrying out the commanders intent for their units. Career School comprises of the first formal leadership school offered explicitly at the SNCO level and provides 94 hours on leadership and professional ethics training throughout the course of instruction.

The Advanced School consists of a seven-week course designed for Gunnery Sergeants that focuses on the theories behind Marine Corps command and control, the challenges of leadership development, and the fundamentals of expeditionary force at the tactical level.⁸ Advanced School provides an additional 104.5 hours of instruction on leadership and professional ethics throughout the course. Advanced School completes the mandatory courses and schools offered through CEME from the rank of lance corporal through gunnery sergeant.

Overall, CEME provides a total of twenty-two weeks of formal education that dedicates 316 hours towards the development of military leadership and ethical behavior for enlisted Marines from the rank of lance corporal through gunnery sergeant. The Marine Corps' fourteen leadership traits directly contribute to the leadership development

process found throughout each level of enlisted education; however, they inadequately meet the needs to instill the soft skills necessary for effective leadership. Evaluating the characteristics associated with the servant leadership philosophy will provide the Marine Corps with an option to introduce the soft skill attributes into the curriculum offered at CEME to enhance the effectiveness of the 21st-century warfighter. Further analysis and discussion of the servant leadership philosophy provides the relevancy of implementing the servant leadership characteristics into the fourteen leadership traits and the enlisted leadership development process to influence change.

Servant Leadership Provides Soft Skills

The servant leadership mindset initiates the steps required to develop trust within a senior/junior relationship that prioritizes the growth and development of the individual and team while managing other competing interests. Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities⁹; they foster an atmosphere that provides leadership with a better opportunity to engage with subordinates to address topics such as moral and ethical behavior while providing the mentorship required to instill and develop coping skills. As new leadership challenges continue to emerge, senior leaders “will have to change how it communicates to and trains individuals from the next generation”¹⁰ and adopt the soft skills required to communicate with Marines due to the increasing generational gap.

Incorporating the characteristics associated with the servant leadership philosophy could offer the soft skill approach to leadership and communication development to enhance the effectiveness of the 21st-century leader. Greenleaf’s essay provides the blueprint which outlines the essential characteristics that comprise servant leadership.

Commitment to the growth of people, listening, empathy healing, persuasion, awareness, foresight, conceptualization, stewardship, and building community serve as the ten general characteristics considered the central theme to developing servant leaders.¹¹

Acquiring these skills could lead to the establishment and maintenance of meaningful professional relationships that can inspire the culture change the Marine Corps seeks to transform. Further examination of the ten general characteristics will aid in understanding the purpose and intent surrounding the servant leadership philosophy and how each attribute can apply to a culture change within the Marine Corps.

Commitment to the Growth of People. The mainstay of the servant leadership philosophy involves the commitment to the growth of people. The selfless attention the servant leader places on themselves while focusing on the responsibility to develop others begins to expand the trust and confidence required for change to occur. Committing to the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of the individual while placing the needs of the others above the leader's own goals and ambitions exhibits the qualities of building the individual to develop resiliency, inspire innovation, and promote moral and ethical behavior. Larry Spears states that "the servant leader believes that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers...and recognize the tremendous responsibility to do everything within his or her power to nurture growth."¹²

The enlisted leadership development process takes more than the established nine to five work hours commonly found in corporate America. Commitment to the growth of people takes time, patience, and finesse, which are absent in the current enlisted leadership development process due to operational commitments that compete for time. A humble leader holds an accurate assessment of one's abilities and achievements,

acknowledges one's mistakes and limits, maintains openness to new ideas and advice, and preserves an appreciation of the value and contributions of others,¹³ which leads to the growth of people within an organization that inspires innovation.

A critical factor for the development and growth of people involves time. To determine a leader's priorities, examine where they spend their time. As deadlines draw near and the day winds to an end, the NCO's and SNCO's willingness to sacrifice and invest the after-hours time determines where their priorities rest. The NCO and SNCO as servant leaders ensure that the time invested contributes to the growth and development of the junior Marine.

However, the servant leader must establish the balance between doing too much--so that no growth occurs--and not doing enough--leaving the follower in the same situation in which they started. If the NCOs and SNCOs do an excellent job of mentoring, coaching, and teaching their junior Marines, then the amount of dependency on the leader decreases as the tools provided by the leader empowers the follower's capabilities to handle the problem. However, this does not relieve the leader of their responsibility to ensure that future development does not occur within the subordinate.

Listening. Listening provides a soft skill to receive and synthesize verbal information that leads to a better understanding of a problem. Leadership development begins with listening and establishes the roots necessary to start developing trust amongst seniors and subordinates alike. Whether an individual establishes a parent to child, teacher to student, or senior to subordinate relationship, listening provides the leader with the capability to effectively receive and digest concerns or issues from their subordinate while providing the coping skills necessary to develop resiliency and influence the

outcome of a situation. A leader's inability to effectively listen stifles innovation and often creates resistance between the leader and subordinate.

Effective listening presents challenges for Marine Corps leadership as daily tasks and requirements compete for priorities which often consume the better part of the day. Stanley Bednar describes "desk defilade" in his article "The Current State of Marine Corps Leadership" as the act of being covered by one's desk, as in being so mired in administrivia that a leader's responsibilities cannot penetrate him.¹⁴ Leaders often find themselves buried beneath a stack of papers or consumed by the influx of emails that appear in the inbox and often miss opportunities to engage with their Marines to fully capture innovative ideas and develop ethical behavior within the unit.

For example, a lance corporal walks into a sergeant's office only to find the sergeant's face buried behind the computer screen or a stack of papers waiting to get processed. As the lance corporal begins to express interest surrounding an issue, concern, or recommendation, the sergeant sporadically replies with words acknowledging the conversation taking place. However, the sergeant continues to multi-task both the other commitments that require attention while managing the interview with the lance corporal. Though the sergeant hears the lance corporal, the sergeant's inability to focus on the conversation highlights ineffective listening.

There is little to question that the lance corporal is expected to listen to the sergeant to understand an assigned task; however, the sergeant listening to the lance corporal surrounding an issue, concern, or recommendation does not receive the same priority which often results in a long-term problem. Listening enhances communication development and shows that the leader displays genuine care and concern for the

follower's opinions and interests which leads to inspiring innovative ideas and building resiliency throughout the ranks.

Access to leadership must remain a two-way street that supports active listening to understand what and how junior Marines think. Ineffective listening hinders Marine Corps leadership with opportunities to interact with their Marines, which causes a disconnect in communication that stifles innovative thoughts. Listening expands the leader's influence on an individual through the proper implementation of mentorship, coaching, training, and counseling required for a Marine to increase performance while contributing to the efforts of the team. Junior Marines possess a plethora of ideas often dismissed by the leader's inability to listen. The leader's willingness to humble themselves and effectively listen to their subordinates provides endless opportunities to gather insight on issues that Marines encounter. Listening also affords leaders with the option to engage with Marines to resolve those problems and provide teachable moments that assist in the further development of coping skills that lead to resiliency.

Empathy. Empathy shows that a leader understands what a follower thinks and feels. "Standing in the shoes" of another person and attempting to see the world from that person's point of view highlights the empathetic characteristic¹⁵ of a leader. As senior leaders progress through the ranks, "forgetting where you came from" cannot plague the SNCO ranks like amnesia as if they did not encounter some of the same issues or problems that challenge junior Marines today. Displaying empathy and the willingness to assist a junior Marine with issues must remain at the forefront of each leader's mind to effectively develop resiliency and promote sound moral and ethical behavior.

According to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, an E-3 with over two

years of service earns \$2,052.30 per month¹⁶ which does not equate to much if a married Marine with two children needs to pay the bills. Empathetic leaders, regardless of the circumstances, understand the situation and works with the junior Marine to establish a reasonable solution to the problem. Any issue that arises, whether from junior or senior Marines alike, the one characteristic to assist with solving the problem entails empathy.

Leaders serving in positions of increased responsibility within the Marine Corps must sacrifice time and display compassion to incorporate the cognitive shift required to influence change. Assisting Marines through a difficult time aids in building trust. Trust remains nonexistent if compassion is absent from the relationship. If a leader remains unapproachable with the absence of empathy, then barriers will form, and the relationship will wither.

Healing. Northouse argues, “To heal means to make whole. Servant leaders care about the personal well-being of their followers. They support followers by helping them overcome personal problems.”¹⁷ As junior Marines enter the Marine Corps, they take on a life-altering change that removes them from everything they once knew and catapulted them into a world of uncertainty. For many Marines, this may be the first time away from home where they now face the responsibility of not only taking care of themselves but are also met with the responsibility of defending the freedoms of the nation. The junior Marine looks to the NCOs’ and SNCOs’ leadership to provide mentorship that helps guide and assist them through the difficult transition.

Servant leaders learn how to heal difficult situations and recognize they have an opportunity to help make whole those people and institutions with whom they come in contact.¹⁸ Marines often go through difficult times as they progress in the ranks.

Whether experiencing a death in the family, marital separation, Non-Judicial Punishment, or various other challenges, a leader's priority on the healing process tends to fall short as the operational tempo and mission accomplishment supersede troop welfare.

All too often, leaders place mission accomplishment above troop welfare.

However, achieving mission accomplishment requires troop welfare, which needs time to heal and adjust when facing difficult challenges. As leaders, taking care of the junior enlisted Marines involves sharing personal experiences that could assist in the development of overcoming the obstacles life presents. As a way of healing and helping junior Marines navigate through difficult issues, leaders must allow time for reflection and intentionally engage with Marines to assist throughout the healing process. Leaders that sacrifice time to engage with Marines and share experiences help to make themselves whole while instilling coping skills for junior Marines to build resiliency.

Persuasion. The power to persuade takes careful consideration and evaluation to delineate the difference between persuasion, coercion, and manipulation. The examples a leader exhibits lead to the persuasion of individuals, which inspires them to want to follow with the full understanding behind the goals and intentions. Manipulation provides coercion and intimidation to lead individuals based under false pretenses, and possible fear, without the complete knowledge of the expectations and purpose. The Marine Corps leadership principle of setting the example epitomizes the meaning of persuasion. Setting the example creates the ability for leaders to persuade their subordinates and develop sound moral and ethical behavior both on and off duty.

To set the example means to do the right thing and relates to a person of integrity. Personal and professional relationships require building a certain degree of trust, which in

turn, establishes buy-in from the individual. If individuals “buy-in” to what the leader believes, then a healthy relationship begins to blossom. Along with participation from the follower, persuasion requires leadership involvement, communication, and transparency. Involvement from the follower legitimizes the goals and intentions set out to accomplish by taking ownership of the situation. For example, if a leader sets out to increase a healthier organization that improves physical fitness performance throughout the unit, then setting the example and inspiring others to live a healthier lifestyle works significantly better than just talking about the problem.

Involved leadership through human contact and connection leads to the establishment of buy-in. Living the lifestyle and displaying a genuine interest in others’ well-being allows a leader to persuade an individual to want to improve, not for only themselves, but the institution holistically. The ability to provide purpose, a sense of purpose, or adding a personal link to the reason surrounding an idea allows a leader the opportunity to inspire others to maximize their performance through shared goals and interests. Effective communication through influential conversations will enable leaders to reinforce organizational standards while establishing buy-in to achieve institutional goals for better ethical and moral behavior throughout the ranks.

Awareness. The Marine Corps needs leaders that are aware of the increasing temptations that Marines encounter through social media and the changes offered throughout society that lead to poor moral and ethical behavior. Stories of ethical misconduct continue to make the front page of service newspapers and only highlight the deficiency in awareness throughout the Marine Corps. Self-awareness aids one in understanding issues involving ethics and values,¹⁹ which continue to handicap Marine Corps leaders throughout its

ranks.

To promote positive ethical behavior and develop resiliency throughout the ranks, senior leaders must remain aware of the situations that Marines encounter today. Awareness leads to self-reflection and directly contributes to the healing process. Reflection provides insight on how you view yourself and leads to self-awareness to recognize shortfalls within one's own life. Awareness allows the leader the ability to identify not only the issues surrounding themselves but also shortfalls from their followers. The state of being alert and aware of your surroundings allows a leader the ability to grasp the full picture within any situation. The awareness to identify strengths and weaknesses within the follower allows the leader an opportunity to focus on developing the follower to instill resiliency and influence ethical behavior.

Recognizing and developing an awareness for subordinates concerns takes time and patience. The ability to identify the hardships Marines encounter through financial difficulty, challenges in marital relationships, or adjusting to a new way of life in the Marine Corps contributes to awareness and builds the coping skills required to develop resiliency. Awareness provides leaders with a better understanding to identify and resolve issues before they become problems. Taking the time to understand a subordinate's needs requires awareness and contributes to the trust necessary to nurture and maintain a fruitful relationship.

Foresight. Foresight provides the leader with the ability to observe a situation and determine the likely outcome surrounding the circumstances and contributes to the necessity of awareness. A leader that possesses foresight can predict what is coming based on what is occurring in the present and what has happened in the past.²⁰ Foresight

focuses on events in the past and present to predict the outcome of the future. The current status of Marine Corps leadership development takes a myopic approach and holds tight to the current traits which minimize the necessity of soft communication skills required for an effective 21st-century leader.

Individuals possess a certain amount of potential, and if harnessed positively, make significant contributions to any organization. The Marine Corps' ability to create and sustain leaders resides on foresight in an individual brought up through the ranks to inspire innovation. Foresight requires experience which the NCOs and SNCOs possess. The art of foresight lies within the NCOs' and SNCOs' willingness and ability to identify the capabilities of a follower and maximize on the potential qualities to develop the follower and better the institution.

Conceptualization. Conceptualization produces innovation. As the Marine Corps continues its quest to promote innovation and foster an environment for creative thinkers, conceptualization provides the characteristic to facilitate the desired outcome. The servant leader's ability to identify shortfalls within the institution, along with the empowerment of the organization, creates the ability to think beyond the day-to-day issues.

Conceptualization requires the servant leader to become a visionary of change by seeking to look outside the tasks of today and influence a difference for tomorrow. The servant leader inspires their followers to dream big to achieve not only their goals but contribute to the mission of the institution. Servant leadership promotes the mindset that provides a habit, routine, and way of life to transform a culture that promotes independent thinkers to inspire new innovative ideas.

Conceptualization equips servant leaders to respond to complex organizational problems in creative ways, enabling them to deal with the intricacies of the organization in relation to its long-term goals.²¹ The Marine Corps' ability to harness and channel the creative thinkers and innovators for tomorrow surround the servant leader's ability to encourage participation that better serves the organization. The servant leader's willingness to place the institution above one's self-ambitions allows the follower to creatively think, participate in innovative programs, and encourages them to freely "think outside the box" to achieve a viable solution to a long-standing problem.

Stewardship. Stewardship requires leaders to make sound ethical and moral decisions to influence behavior throughout the ranks positively. Taking responsibility for the leadership roles entrusted to the Marine SNCO places them as stewards of the institution to maintain good order and discipline within their assigned units. Setting the example establishes the foundation that builds the moral and ethical behavior the Marine Corps expects from Marines of all ranks. The servant leader accepts the responsibility to carefully manage the people and organization they have been given to lead²² and maintains the principles that the institution protects.

Stewardship safeguards the institution by protecting the Marines within the organization. NCOs and SNCOs bear the responsibility to establish sound moral and ethical behavior, build resiliency, and inspire innovation and serve as stewards to uphold the institutional values of the Marine Corps. NCOs and SNCOs serve as a layer of insulation that protects the foundational principles of the institution to harness moral and ethical behavior throughout the ranks. A good steward implements coaching, training, mentoring and displays genuine care and concern for the development and welfare of the

Marines they lead. Marine Corps stewardship protects the institutional values and seeks to uphold and instill the ethical and moral standards so that the next generation of Marines can pick up the torch and carry on the legacy.

Building Community. The phrase, “it takes a village” to accomplish a goal resonates true within the Marine Corps. Marines come from all walks of life and leave their families to join the Marine Corps. Establishing a sense of belonging encourages followers to participate within the community which begins to develop resiliency, inspire innovation, and promote good ethical and moral behavior throughout the ranks. Establishing a relationship as a father and son, mother and daughter, or any combination in between begins to build trust within the senior/junior relationship.

Just as a parent provides for their children, the Marine NCOs and SNCOs care for the welfare and development of the Marines in their charge. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11: Leading Marines captures the guidance left by the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General John A. Lejeune which provides the framework to Marine Corps leadership which states:

Young Marines respond quickly and readily to the exhibition of qualities of leadership on the part of their officers. Each officer must endeavor by all means in his power to develop within himself those qualities of leadership, including industry, justice, self-control, unselfishness, honor, and courage, which will fit him to be a real leader of men...The relation between officers and enlisted men should in no sense be that of superior and inferior not that of master and servant, but rather that of teacher and scholar. In fact, it should partake of the nature of the relationship between father and son.²³

The leadership guidance provided by General Lejeune captured the relationship between officers and enlisted; however, taking the holistic interpretation of Lejeune’s direction, his philosophy sets the expectations for enlisted ranks and provides guidance on how NCOs and SNCOs should interact with junior Marines.

The core component of building a community surrounds the term trust. Trust offers a two-way street that equally involves both the senior and junior's willingness to break down the barriers and understand that the best interest of each remains at the forefront of the relationship. The senior leader must trust the subordinate that the task provided is understood so that way the junior can execute the task with minimal supervision and mitigate micromanagement. Trust provides the foundation for building a community and only works if both the senior and junior display the willingness to work together.

Recommendations

After analyzing the ten characteristics commonly associated with the servant leadership philosophy and the current enlisted leadership development process, this paper provides three recommendations to influence a culture change throughout the USMC enlisted ranks: 1) amend the Marine Corps fourteen leadership traits; 2) incorporate the servant leadership characteristics into the enlisted development process; and 3) incorporate a 360-degree leadership evaluation into the fitness reports written on Sergeants through Sergeant Majors (E-5 through E-9). The subsequent paragraphs will further discuss each recommendation.

Amend Marine Corps Fourteen Leadership Traits. Amending the Marine Corps fourteen leadership traits by introducing Trustworthiness, Humility, and Empathy (THE) into the current leadership traits holistically captures the servant leadership characteristics while slightly changing the acronym from JJ-DID TIE-BUCKLE to JJ-DID-TIE-THE-BUCKLE. Introducing the additional leadership traits at recruit training allows for the further incorporation of the servant leadership philosophy to develop throughout follow-

on education courses offered at CEME. Furthermore, adding these three leadership traits combines the ten characteristics of servant leadership with the Marine Corps fourteen leadership traits and begins to instill the soft skill attributes required to influence a cognitive shift and enhance the effectiveness of a 21st-century leader.

Trustworthiness. The term “trust” appears as one underlying principle necessary to establish a relevant relationship built through servant leadership and bonds all aspects of the servant leadership characteristics together. Achieving trust through the servant leader way of life establishes the foundation for relationships to begin and mature throughout time. Finding an individual that possesses the trait of trustworthiness takes time and patience as the development process occurs. The NCO’s and SNCO’s ability to create and foster a climate of trust within the senior-junior relationship requires the mindset and way of life provided by implementing the servant leadership philosophy characteristics. Bedner states that “once troops are engaged by their leadership, receiving and truly hearing their leader's guidance, their trust that they are not alone in the fight catalyzed, they will begin to want to buy into the organization, to truly invest more of themselves than normal working hours.”²⁴

The servant leadership philosophy provides the principles and foundations to build trust within an established relationship. Whether working on a marriage, managing a multi-billion-dollar organization, or leading a squad into a combat situation, trust remains an essential component to success on the battlefield as near-peer threats continue to emerge in 21st-century warfare. Marines will not prevail in any future combat environment without adherence to the idea of trust as not only a leadership trait but also as a concept that reinforces leadership principles.²⁵ Leaders that engage with their

Marines and treat the position of responsibility as a privilege and not a right begin to develop trust amongst their subordinates. Adopting trustworthiness as a leadership trait ties the other traits together as trustworthiness begins the process for developing a team.

Humility. In an organization that thrives on success and pride, egos tend to inflate as Marines advance throughout their careers and take on positions of increased responsibility with additional power. The United States Marine Corps does not recognize humility as a primary input for effective leadership and it does not represent one of the organization's 14 leadership traits---This deficiency characterizes a critical vulnerability in the Marine Corps' approach to leadership: Marine leaders failing to understand or exercise humility trigger leadership failures due to arrogance and poor awareness,²⁶ which could lead to narcissistic behavior and a toxic command climate. A level of confidence is required to influence others. However, confidence without the presence of humility begins to inflate egos and could lead to narcissistic behavior. Those that never humble themselves to hear the hard truth about their performance tend to keep making the same mistakes and the growth of their ego is the only thing that balloons.

Humility, identified through the awareness characteristic, serves as a vital contributor to the servant leadership philosophy. Leaders that understand their surroundings and know the current situation can avoid narcissistic behavior. Humble leaders are most effective because they don't flaunt their egos and they suppress them for the good of the organization.²⁷ A leader's ability to humble themselves to place the needs of others and the institution above self-interests and goals displays authenticity, which assists in developing relationships based on trust. Humility, through the modest estimate of one's own importance, enables leaders to achieve organizational objectives by focusing

on the interests of others rather than self-interests²⁸ and serves as a conduit to influence a culture change within the Marine Corps. Incorporating humility as one of the leadership traits develops the soft skills of the servant leadership philosophy characteristics that encompass listening, the growth of the people, awareness, and building a community which leads to good moral and ethical behavior and promotes innovative ideas through genuine engagement with people.

Empathy. Empathy serves as a characteristic of servant leadership but also encompasses many of the other attributes found within the servant leadership philosophy. Listening, healing, commitment to the growth of people, awareness, and building a community require compassion that places the leader in the “boots” of the people they serve. The Marine Corps produces the image of toughness that transcends into the way leaders interact with subordinates by taking the “tough love” approach to leadership. Empathy introduces a level of compassion that assists in balancing the scales towards relationship development.

Just as a parent interacts with a child, empathy provides the parent with an opportunity to better develop the relationship by showing genuine concern for the problems or issues that surface, which opens the door for the teaching and coaching process to occur. Neglecting empathy stifles the growth potential within any relationship and serves as counterproductive to the leadership development process. Incorporating empathy as one of the leadership traits begins to shift the mindset required for culture change that builds resiliency, inspires innovation, and promotes good moral and ethical behavior throughout the ranks because the subordinate knows that the leader has the best interest at heart.

Incorporate Servant Leadership Philosophy into CEME. Incorporating the servant leadership philosophy at the lowest level of training offered at CEME, and later built upon at follow on courses and schools, establishes a baseline which sets the expectations for leadership growth and development for the enlisted ranks. Embedding the servant leadership philosophy within the allotted time provided throughout all levels of the twenty-two weeks of the formal enlisted leadership development process offers a tiered approach to promote a humble and selfless lifestyle that could lead to the cognitive transformation to influence a culture change that the Marine Corps seeks to transform. The emphasis of a selfless lifestyle approach, offered through servant leadership at the junior ranks, plants the seed to inculcate a culture change that transcends into the SNCO ranks over time and provides a solution to influence change.

Incorporating the servant leadership philosophy into the academics provided through CEME courses and schools initiates and develops the cognitive shift to influence the mindset to effect change within the organization. To create a culture change in the Marine Corps, incorporating the servant leadership philosophy into the formal education process provides an opportunity to initiate a cognitive shift in the Marine Corps approach towards leadership development. Teaching and focusing on the soft skill traits required of a 21st-century leader could directly contribute to the adoption of a new mindset necessary to implement change. The servant leadership philosophy provides the necessary tools to equip enlisted leaders and influence a culture change within the Marine Corps by offering soft skills that complement the current leadership traits.

Implement 360-Degree Leadership Evaluation. The question always remains: how can one realistically evaluate the effectiveness of a leader? How can one capture the

intangible qualities and characteristics that make up an effective leader? The answer to evaluating leadership resides in those they lead. Just as a command climate survey provides commanders with a tool to evaluate the overall satisfaction of the unit, a 360-degree assessment on SNCO leadership provides the commander or reporting senior with the ability to thoroughly assess the overall effectiveness of the SNCO. The current Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System (PES) provides the commander with a tool for evaluating the performance of an individual based on the observation of the officer writing the report. However, the failure to capture the input from both peers and subordinates provides an incomplete analysis for those reviewing the fitness reports.

The inclusion of a 360-degree performance assessment into the PES provides the commander with a relative performance evaluation from peers and juniors, which in turn allows the Marine Corps the capability to review and better select the best and most highly qualified leaders for promotion, command, and select assignments.²⁹ The 360-degree evaluation also holds the NCOs and SNCOs accountable for welfare and development, and treatment of the Marines under their charge. Just as the most dangerous part of an iceberg lays hidden under the water, the NCOs and SNCOs that commanders evaluate present only what they want the commander to see, which often masks the actual performance.

Response to Criticism

Critics may argue that the current Marine Corps leadership traits encompass both the hard and soft skills attributes required for leadership development. Critics may also argue that the Marine Corps leaders take care of their Marines and the enlisted leadership development process discusses relevant philosophies and styles to develop the warriors to

fight and win the nation's battles. However, Stanley Bednar reports that a rising trend in the relief of senior leaders for taking advantage of their Marines results in the erosion of trust from organizational down to familial³⁰ and leaves questions concerning the moral and ethical state of Marine Corps leadership.

As senior leaders continue to push calls towards a culture change within the Marine Corps, it is obvious that the current leadership development process is inadequate. Implementing the servant leadership philosophy takes the longer view to transform principles into behavior, ideas into action, and lofty intention into specific results,³¹ and in the end it could produce the cognitive shift in the mindset to create a selfless lifestyle that fosters the culture change the Marine Corps seeks to transform.

Conclusion

As the Marine Corps continues to invest in the developments of technology and weapons systems to remain relevant on the new age battlefield, it has not applied the same level of effort in modernizing its leadership traits to address present and future demands.³² Just as the Marine Corps continues to adapt to the ever-changing characteristics of war, it must also remain abreast with the leadership challenges offered in the 21st-century.

Servant leadership emphasizes developing leaders that promote face-to-face communication and establishes the human contact required to nurture a positive relationship between two individuals. Face-to-face interaction provides the foothold for building trust within the leader and follower relationship. Revisiting the guidance from General John A. Lejeune that states “the relationship between officers and enlisted men should in no sense be that of superior and inferior not that of master and servant, but

rather than that of teacher and scholar. In fact, it should partake of the nature of the relationship between father and son”³³ that the servant leadership philosophy provides.

The servant leader mindset prioritizes the time required to focus on the development of the individual and provides the organization a more efficient, intelligent, and capable individual empowered with the ability to make decisions in the absence of leadership. Adding trustworthiness, humility, and empathy as leadership traits, thus expanding the Marine Corps leadership traits from fourteen to seventeen, binds the servant leadership characteristics together and serves as the missing attributes required to stimulate a shift in the mindset to influence change. Introducing these three traits at recruit training helps combine the soft and hard skill attributes at the beginning stages of a Marine’s career and establishes the mindset required for a culture change from the start.

Incorporating the servant leadership philosophy at CEME provides an opportunity for leaders to further build upon the leadership traits initiated at recruit training. Moreover, CEME also offers the opportunity to implement and analyze the ten servant leadership characteristics to reinforce and expound upon the mindset required for change. Embedding the servant leadership philosophy at CEME serves as one way to develop and enhance the soft skill leadership attributes required throughout the enlisted leadership development process. Formalizing the training establishes the foundation and sets the standard for leadership development throughout the Marine Corps.

The 360-degree leadership assessment provides the commander with a tool to measure the performance and effectiveness of an individual by synthesizing the information provided through juniors’ and peers’ interaction. Incorporating the 360-degree leadership evaluation provides commanders with the capability to holistically

assess the effectiveness of an individual while establishing an institutional standard that places the growth and development of subordinates above a leader's personal goals and ambitions.

Opening the door to two-way communication maximizes the fullest potential in any relationship which the servant leadership philosophy provides. A servant leader remains accessible although competing interests may arise. Taking care of the people results in a more effective and well-oiled machine that, if steered correctly, rights its course and produces the desired results that contribute most to the institution. Servant leaders create possibility through empowerment and trust and commit energies to challenge ordinary men and women to pursue extraordinary careers as Marines and citizens.³⁴ When people feel that their best interests are at the forefront of their leader's mind, only then does the opportunity to build resilience, inspire innovation, and promote good ethical and moral behavior begin to arise. Until the Marine Corps places a priority on the soft skills and human relationships required to influence people, the Marine Corps will continue down the same path toward seeking culture change. Incorporating the servant leadership philosophy can provide the Marine Corps with an opportunity to initiate the change it seeks to transform the culture. The question remains, are senior leaders willing to make the change?

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² Robert B. Neller, *Message to the Force: "Continue the Attack"*, [2019]).

³ Rubye H. Braye, "Servant-Leadership: Leading in Today's Military," in *Focus on Leadership: Servant-Leadership for the 21st Century*, eds. Larry C. Spears and Michele Lawrence (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2002), 299.

⁴ Robert B. Neller, *Marine Corps Order 1500.61*, (2017), 1-6.

⁵ *Lance Corporals Leadership and Ethics Seminar: Leaders Guide*, (2014), 1.

⁶ "Resident Sergeant School," , <https://www.usmcu.edu/ceme/sergeants/>.

⁷ "Resident Career School," , <https://www.usmcu.edu/ceme/career/>.

⁸ "Resident Advanced School," , <https://www.usmcu.edu/ceme/courses/advanced/>.

- ⁹ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Sage Publications Inc. 2455 Teller Rd. Thousand Oaks, CA. 91320: Sage Publications Inc., 2016). 225.
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- ¹⁷ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 228.
- ¹⁸ Burkhardt and Spears, "Servant-Leadership and Philanthropic Institutions," 226.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. 227
- ²⁰ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 228.
- ²¹ Ibid. 228
- ²² Ibid. 228
- ²³ USMC, "Leading Marines;" in *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 6-11*, 2014), 2-2.
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