

Jeanette Hsu, Ph.D.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

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OVERVIEW OF MILITARY CULTURE

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Learning Objectives

- ◆ Primary mission and core values of each branch of the military
- ◆ Cultural and behavioral norms for military personnel
- ◆ Battlefield mindset and adjustment issues that might arise when coming home
- ◆ Clinical implications for civilian/VA providers
- ◆ Additional resources

Basic Tenets of Military Culture

- ◆ *"Duty, Honor, Country"*
- ◆ The military emphasizes discipline and hierarchy, prioritizes the group over the individual, and uses specific rituals and symbols to convey important meanings and transitions.
- ◆ Military law requires commanding officers and those in authority to demonstrate virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination in all that they do.

Elements of Military Culture

- ◆ Discipline
- ◆ Professional Ethos
- ◆ Ceremony & Etiquette
- ◆ Cohesion
- ◆ Additional subcultures
 - ◆ Type of unit (e.g., fighter squadron)
 - ◆ Branch (e.g., Infantry)
 - ◆ War Fighting community (e.g., aviation, submarine, special operations)

Military Personnel

- ◆ Enlisted (84%) – perform specific job functions
- ◆ Warrant Officers (2%) – highly specialized experts
- ◆ Commissioned Officers (14%) – management and leadership roles, need bachelors degree or higher

The Average Soldier

- ◆ RANK: E-4 (Corporal / Specialist)
- ◆ AGE: 22
- ◆ TIME IN SERVICE: 4 Years
- ◆ BASE PAY: \$1,978.50/month
- ◆ EDUCATION: High School Graduate
- ◆ MARITAL STATUS: Married w/ two Children
- ◆ RACE: 60% Caucasian/40% Ethnic Minority
- ◆ GENDER: 85% Male/15% Female
- ◆ AVERAGE WORK DAY: When the mission is complete

Army

- ◆ **Motto:** This We'll Defend.
- ◆ **Army's Mission:** "To fight and win our Nation's wars by providing prompt, sustained land dominance across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders."

Army (cont.)

- ◆ Responsible for land-based military operations
- ◆ Largest and oldest branch
- ◆ 539,675 Active personnel
557,375 Reserve personnel
- ◆ Active Duty, Army Nat'l Guard & Army Reserves

Army 7 Core Values - LDRSHIP

- ◆ **Loyalty** – Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and fellow Soldiers.
- ◆ **Duty** – Fulfill your obligations. Accept responsibility for your own actions and those entrusted to your care.
- ◆ **Respect** – Treat others as they should be treated.
- ◆ **Selfless Service** – Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.
- ◆ **Honor** – Live the Army Values.
- ◆ **Integrity** – Do what's right, both legally and morally.
- ◆ **Personal Courage** – Face fear, danger, or adversity, both physical and moral.

Navy

- ◆ **Motto:** Semper Fortis, "Always Courageous"
- ◆ **Navy Mission:** "To maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas."

Sailor's Creed

I am a United States Sailor.

I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America and I will obey the orders of those appointed over me.

I represent the fighting spirit of the Navy and all who have gone before me to defend freedom and democracy around the world.

I proudly serve my country's Navy combat team with Honor, Courage and Commitment.

I am committed to excellence and the fair treatment of all.

Navy (cont.)

- ◆ The sea branch of the U.S. Armed Forces
- ◆ Three primary areas of responsibility:
 - ◆ "The preparation of naval forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war"
 - ◆ "The maintenance of naval aviation, including land-based naval aviation, air transport essential for naval operations and all air weapons and air techniques involved in the operations and activities of the Navy"
 - ◆ "The development of aircraft, weapons, tactics, technique, organization, and equipment of naval combat and service elements".

Navy Core Values

- ◆ Honor
- ◆ Courage
- ◆ Commitment

Marine Corps

- ◆ **Motto:** Semper Fidelis, “Always Faithful”
- ◆ **Marine Corps Mission:**
 - ◆ The seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and other land operations to support naval campaigns.
 - ◆ The development of tactics, techniques, and equipment used by amphibious landing forces.
 - ◆ Such other duties as the President may direct.
(National Security Act of 1947)

Marine Core Values

- ◆ Same as Navy
 - ◆ Honor
 - ◆ Courage
 - ◆ Commitment

- ◆ Marines are called marines, not soldiers
- ◆ Marine Corps operates administratively under the Navy

Air Force

- ◆ **Motto:** Above All
- ◆ **Air Force Mission:** “To deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests to fly and fight in air, space and cyberspace.”
- ◆ AD, AF Reserves, Aerial Nat’l Guard

Air Force Core Values

- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Service Before Self
- ◆ Excellence in all we do

US Coast Guard

- ◆ **Motto:** Semper Paratus, "Always Ready"
- ◆ **Coast Guard Mission:** "To protect the public, the environment, and the United States economic and security interests in any maritime region in which those interests may be at risk, including international waters and America's coasts, ports, and inland waterways."

Coast Guard Core Values

- ◆ Honor
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Devotion to Duty

Military Culture and Masculinity

The Combat Masculine-Warrior Paradigm (CMW)

Dunivin (1994, 1997)

- ◆ Combat, the preparation for and conduct of war, is the military's core activity, and its overwhelmingly primary reason for being
- ◆ As an institution, it has historically and continues to be comprised primarily of men, and soldiering has been viewed as a traditionally male role
- ◆ At present, this CMW paradigm may be changing
 - ◆ Increased diversity and expansion of women's roles
 - ◆ Broadening of the uses of the Armed Forces, to increasingly encompass humanitarian support, disaster relief, and peacekeeping role
- ◆ Special thanks to Dr. Tina Liu-Tom and Athena Yoneda for this reference

Military Belief Systems

- ◆ Shared set of beliefs → thinking & behavior
- ◆ Based on the shared understanding of the mission
- ◆ Barriers to seeking treatment
 - ◆ 65% fear the perception of being seen as “weak”
 - ◆ 63% fear leadership might treat them differently
 - ◆ 59% fear others would have less confidence in them

Induction into Military

- ◆ Boot camp/Basic Training www.todaysmilitary.com/before-serving/boot-camp
 - ◆ Prepares recruits for all elements of service: physical, mental, and emotional
 - ◆ Training in the basic tools necessary to perform in their roles during their tour of duty
 - ◆ Combination of physical training, field exercises, and classroom time
 - ◆ Ranges from 6.5 – 12 weeks depending on the branch of service
- ◆ Each branch has its own training program tailored to the its role in the military
- ◆ Goal to make individuals strong and capable
- ◆ Followed by formal training in specialized areas

Marine Boot Camp Video

- ◆ “Ears Open, Eyeballs Click”
- ◆ Documentary about Marine Corps basic training in Camp Pendleton, California
- ◆ Questions and Discussion

Aspects of Military Culture and Military Life

- ◆ Uniformity
- ◆ Anonymity
- ◆ Depersonalization
- ◆ Expendability
- ◆ Hard Work
- ◆ Boredom
- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Camaraderie
- ◆ Stoicism
- ◆ Loneliness
- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Orderliness

◆ Uniformity, Anonymity, Depersonalization, & Expendability

“Maybe it was the naïve optimism of youth, but the awesome reality that we were training to be cannon fodder in a global war that had already snuffed out millions of lives never seemed to occur to us. The fact that our lives might end violently or that we might be crippled while we were still boys didn’t seem to register.”

- ◆ *U.S. Marine Eugene Sludge, quoted in Paul Fussell, Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*

◆ Uniformity, Anonymity, Depersonalization, & Expendability

“It was common throughout the [Okinawa] Campaign for replacements to get hit before we even knew their names. They came up confused, frightened, and hopeful, got wounded or killed, and went right back to the rear on the route by which they had come, shocked, bleeding, or stiff. They were forlorn figures coming up to the meat grinder and going right back out of it like homeless waifs, unknown and faceless to us, like unread books on a shelf.”

- ◆ *U.S. Marine Eugene Sludge, quoted in Paul Fussell, Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*

- ◆ **Uniformity, Anonymity, Depersonalization, & Expendability**

You are something there are millions of
How can I care about you much, or pick you out
From all the others other people loved
And sent away to die for them?

- ◆ *"The Sick Naught," a poem to a convalescent soldier*
Jarrell

- ◆ **Uniformity, Anonymity, Depersonalization, & Expendability**

“...sir, I can handle your Marine Corps, sir.”

“[The drill instructor] punched the recruit square on the forehead. He swayed but his knees did not give. The recruit had made the mistake of using personal pronouns, which the recruit is not allowed to use when referring to the drill instructor or himself. The recruit is *the recruit*. The drill instructor is *the drill instructor* or *sir*.”

- ◆ *From Anthony Swofford, Jarhead*

- ◆ **Uniformity, Anonymity, Depersonalization, & Expendability**

“If your daddy is a doctor or if you come from the projects in East St. Louis or a reservation in Arizona, it no longer matters. Black. White. Mexican. Vietnamese. Navajo. The Marine Corps does not care! You are now green! You are light green or dark green. You are not black or white or brown or yellow or red. Do you understand me, recruits?”

- ◆ *From Anthony Swofford, Jarhead*

- ◆ **Uniformity, Anonymity, Depersonalization, & Expendability**

“While they passed the day waiting for dusk, a staff sergeant approached the female Marines...He let them know that they were not going to receive special treatment because they were women. They were Marines and every Marine (male or female) was a rifleman, and he expected things to run that way. Blais and Kispetik were grateful for this attitude.”

- ◆ *From Kirsten Holmstedt, Band of Sisters*

◆ Hard Work & Boredom

“If you weren’t humping, you were waiting. I remember the monotony. Digging foxholes. Slapping mosquitoes. The sun and the heat and the endless paddies. Even in the deep bush, where you could die any number of ways, the war was nakedly and aggressively boring. But it was a strange boredom. It was boredom with a twist, the kind of boredom that caused stomach disorders. You’d be sitting at the top of a high hill, and the flat paddies stretching out below, and the day would be calm and hot and utterly vacant, and you’d feel the boredom dripping inside you like a leaky faucet, except it wasn’t water, it was a sort of acid, and with each little droplet you’d feel the stuff eating away at important organs. You’d try to relax. You’d uncurl your fists and let your thoughts go. Well, you’d think, this isn’t so bad. And right then you’d hear gunfire behind you and your nuts would fly up into your throat and you’d be squealing pig squeals. That kind of boredom.”

- ◆ *Tim O’Brien, The Things They Carried*

◆ Hard Work & Boredom

“The men who were killed or wounded were replaced by cherries, and if the older men got bored enough they sometimes made the cherries fight each other. They’d been trained in hand-to-hand combat, so they all knew how to choke someone out...Choking guys out was considered fine sport, so soldiers tended to keep their backs to something so no one could sneak up from behind...The violence took many forms and could break out at almost any time. After one particularly quiet week – no firefights, in other words – the tension got so unbearable that First Squad finally went after Weapons Squad with rocks. A rock fight ensued that got so heavy, I took cover behind trees.”

◆ *Sebastian Junger, War*

◆ Teamwork & Camaraderie

“The reason First Platoon did not get wiped out had nothing to do with the Apaches flying overhead or the 155s at Blessing; it was because the men reacted not as individuals but as a unit. Stripped to its essence, combat is a series of quick decisions and rather precise actions carried out in concert with ten or twelve other men. In that sense it's much more like football than, say, like a gang fight. The unit that choreographs their actions best usually wins. They might take casualties, but they win.

“That choreography -- you lay down fire while I run forward, then I cover you while you move your team up -- is so powerful that it can overcome enormous tactical deficits.... The choreography always requires that each man make decisions based not on what's best for him, but on what's best for the group. If everyone does that, most of the group survives. If no one does, most of the group dies.

“That, in essence, is combat.”

- ◆ *Sebastian Junger, War*

- ◆ Stoicism

“Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.”

- ◆ *WWII slogan*

◆ Stoicism

“Brown was shocked that Hampton would admit to being on the verge of tears because she was so tough. The admission made her seem weak and vulnerable. Brown didn’t know of any pilots who would own up to thinking about crying, never mind actually cry. Saying you almost cried was a funny thing to admit, Brown thought at the time. Not only that, but it was a funny thing to feel. Brown thought that way because she, like so many other pilots, trained herself to turn off her emotions. And that works, until someone says there was an aircraft shot down.”

- ◆ *From Kirsten Holmstedt, Band of Sisters*

◆ Loneliness

“Fountain tells the story of how none of the remaining war wives [on base], home alone with the kids and the checkbook and the car, were interested in becoming friendly with him and his wife, and at first they tossed it off...but soon...he and his wife noticed the mysterious movement of POVs, personally owned vehicles, into the driveways of the war wives late at night and out of the driveways in the early morning.”

◆ *From Anthony Swofford, Jarhead*

◆ Loneliness

“These were the women Rita and her husband had socialized with. She’d been to their homes for barbeques. She had babysat their children. ... These women seemed only too happy to flirt with [other men]. They seemed starved for attention. The women either had had no idea of what life in the Army would be like, Rita gathered, or they clung to some idealized vision.”

- ◆ *From Tanya Biank, Army Wives: The Unwritten Code of Military Marriage*

◆ Loneliness

“Delores felt strongly that Army wives had to learn to take responsibility, or they wouldn’t be able to be independent when they returned to civilian life. ‘Figure out how to do for yourself, because your husband is not always going to be there.’ That was Delores’s credo. It was a lesson she knew only too well. She had often been both mother and father to her kids. Ski had missed Cherish’s birth, first birthday, and first Holy Communion; he hadn’t been there for Gary Shane’s high school graduation, or on countless holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries. Delores paid all the bills. She didn’t even know if Ski remembered how to write a check. When he was away she mowed the lawn, maintained cars, and ran the household. Wives had no choice but to carry the entire load, just as a single mother would have to do.”

- ◆ *From Tanya Biank, Army Wives: The Unwritten Code of Military Marriage*

◆ Women's Experiences

“In Iraq, a lot of the male Marines talked to Kispetik and Blais about their personal problems. Blais had a theory about this. They didn't talk to the women because they were better listeners but because they were supposed to be better listeners. And they were somebody different. The grunts needed a new sounding board, a fresh pair of ears.”

◆ *From Kirsten Holmstedt, Band of Sisters*

◆ Women's Experiences

“The staff sergeant slapped her on the back. “Nice f**ing job,” he yelled. Blais nodded her head. She didn’t know what to say. She had just taken a man’s life. The staff sergeant must have known it was the lance corporal’s first kill because he grabbed her Kevlar, turned her head so she was facing him, looked her in the eyes, and said, “Think of all the lives you just saved.” It was the first time in her Marine Corps career that Blais felt like she had made a difference.”

◆ *From Kirsten Holmstedt, Band of Sisters*

Contrasts with Aspects of Civilian Culture and Life

- ◆ Uniqueness
- ◆ Individuality
- ◆ Choices
- ◆ Relaxation
- ◆ Luxury
- ◆ Waste
- ◆ Emotionality
- ◆ Disorder
- ◆ Togetherness

Challenges in Transitioning from Combat to Home – “Battlemind”

Combat-Zone

- ◆ Cohesion with buddies
- ◆ Accountability and control
- ◆ Targeted aggression
- ◆ Tactical awareness
- ◆ Lethally armed
- ◆ Emotional control
- ◆ Non-defensive driving
- ◆ Discipline and obeying orders

Home-Zone

- ◆ Withdrawal from others
- ◆ Lack of control
- ◆ Inappropriate aggression
- ◆ Hypervigilance
- ◆ “Locked and loaded” at home
- ◆ Detached and uncaring
- ◆ Aggressive driving
- ◆ Giving orders leads to conflict (no clear “chain of command”)

Masculinity

Conformity to Masculine Norms

- ◆ Winning
- ◆ Risk-Taking
- ◆ Emotional Control
- ◆ Pursuit of Status
- ◆ Violence
- ◆ Dominance
- ◆ Playboy
- ◆ Self-Reliance
- ◆ Primacy of Work
- ◆ Power Over Women
- ◆ Disdain for Homosexuals

Masculine Gender Role Stress

- ◆ Physical Inadequacy
- ◆ Emotional Inexpressiveness
- ◆ Subordination to Women
- ◆ Intellectual Inferiority
- ◆ Performance Failure

Common Correlates of Masculine Gender Role Adherence

- ◆ Greater likelihood of engaging in health risk behaviors, including decreased exercise, poorer diet, unsafe sex, and alcohol misuse
- ◆ Greater psychological distress (e.g., PTSD symptom severity)
- ◆ Risk-taking
- ◆ Anger and aggression
- ◆ Alexithymia
- ◆ Less social support
- ◆ Decreased likelihood of seeking professional medical or mental health care, both preventive care or attention for more serious medical and mental health conditions

Fostering a Bicultural Civilian/Soldier Identity

- ◆ Acknowledging important skills learned during military service
- ◆ Honoring important relationships while in the service
- ◆ Moving toward identity integration
- ◆ Allowing for discussions of increased engagement with chosen values through greater awareness of cultural norms and flexibility in enacting them

Men and Masculinity: Treatment Implications

- ◆ Identify gender-linked cognitive distortions contributing to the maintenance of health-risk behaviors or cyclical maladaptive interpersonal patterns
- ◆ Using culturally-congruent language to decrease stigma and enhance compliance with care early in the treatment process
 - ◆ Acknowledging and validating gender-linked thoughts exacerbating distress
- ◆ Gender-related public health campaigns
 - ◆ VA suicide prevention “It takes the courage and strength of a warrior to ask for help”

Additional Training Resources

National Center for PTSD training on Understanding Military Culture when treating PTSD:

- ◆ <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/ptsd101/ptsd-101.asp>

Center for Deployment Psychology online training on Military Cultural Competence:

- ◆ <http://deploymentpsych.org/training/training-catalog/military-cultural-competence>

Selected Films Depicting Military Culture

World War II

- ◆ Band of Brothers (2001)
- ◆ Flags of Our Fathers (2006)
- ◆ Saving Private Ryan (1998)

Viet Nam

- ◆ Full Metal Jacket (1987)
- ◆ The Deer Hunter (1978)

Iraq

- ◆ The Hurt Locker (2008)

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