In order to make ethical behavior resonate within its ranks, the United States Marine Corps must change the institutional impression of ethics by implementing an Ethical Fitness Assessment, which would standardize and evaluate ethical behavior and lay the foundation for translating ethical knowledge into ethical practice. The Ethical Fitness Assessment consists of two parts: one designed to test ethical knowledge and application of theory and the other designed to assess ethical behavior for each Marine over a given period of time and include a prospective outlook indicator as to the Marine's potential ethical growth. How the implementation of the Ethical Fitness Assessment would differ from all other ethical programs enacted by the Marine Corps is its key benefit – it provides a mechanism for translating ethical knowledge into ethical behavior, the ultimate goal of any ethical program.
FUTURE WAR PAPER

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Getting Marines to Behave Ethically: The Ethical Fitness Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

The endeavor to improve overall ethical behavior within the Marine Corps is not a 21st Century development. Since 1996, the senior leadership in the Department of Navy (the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), and Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC)) has published more than seven communiques discussing ethical behavior and military virtues in the naval service. The 35th CMC wrote in his 23 March 2012 White Letter 1-12 that “…a number of recent, widely-publicized incidents have brought discredit on the Marine Corps and reverberated at the strategic level.”¹ The CMC then mandated the creation of a period of instruction (POI) on ethical behavior, designed to “enable Marines to engage in ethical decision-making processes and participate in on-going discussion and debate. Marines should have a deepened understanding of our ethos and be better able to recognize and explain ethical challenges. The end state desired is a lasting, positive ethical culture and climate.”² Thus, the Marine Corps was challenged to address ethical shortfalls within its ranks.

In addition to the 35th CMC’s attempt to instruct Marines on ethical behavior, several other notable attempts were made in the Marine Corps to bring about an appreciation for ethical development. General C.C. Krulak, the 31st CMC, launched perhaps the biggest mandate on ethics and virtues in the form of Marine Corps Order 1500.56, Marine Corps Values Program, an organization-wide effort to “focus and coordinate our [Marine Corps] efforts and generate a constancy of purpose in promoting our core values.”³ General James Jones, the 32nd CMC, officially implemented the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) in 2002, whose three disciplines are mental, character, and physical, with character involving ethical development. The Department of the Navy launched an “ethical culture” survey in 2008 to receive feedback on the impression of the ethical environment of the Marine Corps and Navy. Each of the programs
had merit, but each was insufficient to change the overall institutional perception and appreciation of ethics. Such a void would necessarily preclude changes in ethical behavior. In order to make ethical behavior resonate within its ranks, the United States Marine Corps must change the institutional impression of ethics by implementing an Ethical Fitness Assessment, which would standardize and evaluate ethical behavior and lay the foundation for translating ethical knowledge into ethical practice.

SECTION I: STANDARDIZATION AND THE ETHICS RUBRIC

One of the main faults with previous Marine Corps ethical programs was the lack of a common understanding about (1) what ethics is and (2) what is the standard for ethical behavior. Because Marines did not have a standard from which to measure their personal behavior, they could not adequately assess if they are meeting those standards. Former Secretary of the Navy Gordon England referenced the standards designed “to ensure that we earn the trust of the American people” found in Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5500.57 in his All-Marines Message (ALMAR) titled “Expectation of Ethical Conduct.” The DoD Directive, “Standards of Conduct” published on 29 November 2007, simply identifies that “DoD personnel shall perform their official duties lawfully and comply with the highest ethical standards.”

The Directive does not define those standards, nor does any official Marine publication. As a result, Marines are left with no tangible description of ethical behavior. If the Marine Corps cannot define what it means by ethics or present the standards of ethical behavior, it is unfair and illogical that the leadership assumes Marines will “be ethical.” The lack of a standard definition of ethics or clarification of ethical standards results in an assumption of what is acceptable ethical behavior and that Marines will follow it. Therefore, the first measure required to change the institutional
perception of ethics and create an Ethical Fitness Assessment is to create definitions for ethics and a by-rank standard for expected ethical behavior.

Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted definition of ethics. To many in the Marine Corps, ethics is interpreted as “doing what is right.” While there might be value in this outlook, Marines should understand how ethics is a fundamental aspect of their own personal military being. To achieve an understanding of this connection, the Marine Corps needs to define ethics in terms of the individual, essentially putting onus on the individual Marine to understand and exercise ethical behavior. This is necessary to give the individual a direct and personal relationship with the aspects of ethics. To develop a functioning, Marine-centric concept of ethics, it is necessary to incorporate several subcomponents from various sources.

The subcomponent of ethics that is known by all Marines is identified in the Marine Corps Values Program. Three words – honor, courage, commitment – define the values of the Naval Service and, coupled with the “basic concept of right and wrong, are cornerstones in building Marines.”6 Values are the “important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable.”7 The shared values are the manifestation of what the Marine Corps identifies as desirable qualities to be found in each Marine. In this case, values are synonymous with virtues, those “character traits worth having.”8 As Aristotle wrote in his Nicomachean Ethics, virtues are a “disposition of character, to be developed by finding a middle ground between too much and too little in both feeling and doing.”9 A Marine must understand that a virtue is a balance, a middle ground between excess and deficiency. For example, too much courage results in recklessness; too little is cowardice. Virtues are traits of character. Character can be described as a “moral compass within one’s self
that helps us make right decisions even in the midst of the shifting winds of adversity.” The element that ties these three concepts together (character, values, virtues) is ethics.

Ethics is the application of principles to realize values or virtues. To a Marine, ethics is essentially a choice to do what will help preserve virtues. “Ethics emphasizes systematically finding the best reasons for making particular choices. Studying ethics helps people distinguish between better and worse reasons behind particular courses of action and choose the most reasonable path in light of values.” The goal of Marine leadership should therefore be to foster the understanding of the consequences of choice and enhance ethical decision making ability.

Ethical decision making requires three qualities:

- The first is the ability to recognize ethical issues and to reason through the ethical consequences of decisions. The ability to see second and third order effects, one of the elements of strategic thinking, is very important. The second is the ability to look at alternative points of view, deciding what is right in a particular set of circumstances. This is similar to the ability to reframe. And the third is the ability to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty; making a decision on the best information available.

Making the ethical decision leads a Marine to sustain virtues and lead a balanced life; the unethical alternative leads to a disruption of that balance, resulting in chaos.

The standards of ethical behavior for Marines must be codified in a manner that reflects maturation. As a Marine grows in age, in experience, and in rank, he is given more responsibility in the assumption that he has further developed his judgment and skill. That judgment is inherently linked with maturity, for an immature Marine does not have the same ability to discern the consequences of a choice as a mature Marine. However, maturity is not all or nothing. There are levels of maturity, and it is continuously developing. As a result, there cannot be one universal standard of ethical behavior for all Marines. There must be various standards based on rank that reflect the growth of Marines as they advance from junior ranks to more senior ones. It is therefore necessary to establish categories of maturity based on rank and
produce standards of ethical behavior for each. The foundation of the ethical behavior categories can most easily be based on Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory on moral development, which posited that moral reasoning, the basis for ethical behavior, is based on six identifiable developmental stages. These stages can be adapted to the Marine Corps and structured along ranks and levels of responsibility. In general, the lowest ranks have the least amount of responsibility and are the least experienced. As a result, they are the least ethically developed. The structure would progress with rank and responsibility, and each tier group is expected to be more ethically developed than the tier below. The point is that with a structure, all Marines can find themselves in a particular category with others that hold similar responsibilities, experience, or rank.

The next component required to establish standards for each category is a set of virtues that serve as the grading criteria against which behavior is measured. These virtue categories are comparable to a graded event on a physical fitness test (such as pull-ups, sit-ups, or run). From these virtues, the standard for each ethical development category is derived. To continue the physical fitness analogy, if the event is pull-ups, a Marine of a certain group has a set number he must complete to be determined “physically fit.” The same notion is applicable to an Ethics Rubric with a set standard a Marine of a category must meet in order to be determined as “ethically fit.” The fundamental virtues that should be apparent in the ethical behavior of all Marines are the foundations for which a moral being is developed. A description of the quintessential virtues of the moral being were first captured in Plato’s Protagoras and later adapted by Thomas Aquinas in Summa Theologica:

Prudence – able to judge between actions with regard to appropriate actions at a given time;
Justice – the perpetual and constant will of rendering to each one his right;
Temperance – practicing self-control or restraint and moderation;
The four cardinal virtues provide an ethical framework against which each category can be measured based on degrees. Category 1 (non-NCO) Marines would have a basic expectation of behavior with regards to each virtue. Marines of category 5 (Senior Leaders) would have a very high expectation of behavior with regards to each virtue. Although each category would have a standard (ranging from basic appreciation and performance to advanced appreciation and performance) and expected behavior for each of the four virtues, the virtues themselves would be the same for all Marines. This standardization and range of behavior would facilitate an assessment of behavior and ability to measure the level of ethical fitness a Marine holds.

SECTION II: THE COMPONENTS OF THE ETHICAL FITNESS ASSESSMENT

The Marine Corps Values Program, MCMAP, and the CMC-mandated ethics POI are three methods that the Marine Corps has chosen to teach Marines about ethics and the consequences of choice. The programs are designed to train all Marines, regardless of rank or location, on some element of ethical development. The CMC-mandated POI was temporary, meaning it only lasted for the amount of hours directed in the White Letter. The Values Program has a phasing schedule for ethics and value training and even includes a discussion leader’s guide. Not included in the Values Program, however, are a mandated schedule of when to conduct the training (it essentially dictates an ad hoc training program) and a means to ensure it is understood. The program is therefore incomplete and will not bring about a change in the institutional perception of ethics. The Basic School (TBS), the initial course that introduces the fundamentals of the Marine Corps to new officers, has added an additional step to ethics education and created Ethical Decision Games (EDG) that force students to examine scenarios containing an ethical dilemma and decide on the best decision based on given circumstances.
The decision is then discussed and evaluated based on what the students have learned to that point on ethics as taught by the Marine Corps and through personal background. The EDGs are a useful tool to assist in the appreciation of ethics and a very positive measure to facilitate ethics education, but it too is incomplete as it only applies to a very small percentage of the total population of the Marine Corps and does not offer a way to assess the comprehension of ethics. Each examination for attaining a new level of proficiency in MCMAP includes several questions relating to ethics and values, but in actuality they amount to nothing more than a test question answered sufficiently by repeating a memorized response. This is a failure to achieve the true aim of MCMAP: to harmonize the physical, mental, and character aspects of the Marine warrior. The program also requires no official sustainment once a level of proficiency is achieved. Without the ability to assess the comprehension and appreciation of ethics, there will be no way to measure or assess growth in ethical behavior. Therefore, the second measure required to change the institutional perception of ethics and chief benefit of the Ethical Fitness Assessment is the establishment of a system that will evaluate and assess the ethical behavior of a Marine.

Determining if a Marine’s behavior conforms to the established standard is the goal of the Ethical Fitness Assessment and provides a means to grade a Marine’s ethical fitness. To be ethically fit, a Marine’s behavior and knowledge must be at or exceed a level predetermined by an established matrix, i.e. the Ethics Rubric. A description of a proposed method to verify or test whether the behavior is at, below, or above the standard is the aim of Section II.

An ethical test, which will be referred to as the Ethical Fitness Assessment, is the tool to determine at what level a Marine’s behavior falls in the established Ethics Rubric, which allows each Marine to know the expectations of behavior commensurate with a rank or category. It is necessary to know where a Marine’s behavior falls on the Ethics Rubric in order to facilitate the
professional and personal development of the individual. It is essential for a leader to know the ethical nature of his Marines, as Captain Adolf Von Schell in the book *Battle Leadership* states:

...as leaders we must have some knowledge of the souls of our soldiers, because the soldier, the living man, is the instrument with which we have to work in war.... No commander lacking in this inner knowledge of his men can accomplish great things.\(^\text{18}\)

Since the Ethical Fitness Assessment would aim to gauge both knowledge and behavior, it will necessarily comprise two parts (A and B), one element designed to test ethical knowledge and application of theory, and the other element purely subjective, which will assess ethical behavior for each Marine over a given period of time and include a prospective outlook indicator as to the Marine’s potential ethical growth.

Part A of the Ethical Fitness Assessment – Knowing the Path – would be a written test that seeks to assess a Marine’s understanding of ethics and virtues and especially ethical dilemmas. In *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*, Rushworth Kidder suggests that decision making is driven by core values and falls into two categories: moral temptations and ethical dilemmas.\(^\text{19}\) Moral temptations are choices that involve a right versus wrong situation in which the correct, proper choice is rather obvious. The category of ethical choices that present more difficult decision than those in moral temptations is what Kidder calls ethical dilemmas, in which a choice can be viewed as right versus right (i.e. when both options can be justified from different perspectives. Part A would include a basic examination of knowledge of the theory and concepts of ethics, such as the relationship between virtues, values, character, and ethics, but also would need to assess the application of theory.

Ethical behavior is ethical decision making, and testing the ability to recognize the ethical situations that warrant such decisions is the objective of the Part A. This part of the Ethical Fitness Assessment would test a Marine’s knowledge on the criteria for recognizing both moral temptations and ethical dilemmas in the form of multiple choice answers to short scenarios. A
situation would be described that has an ethical choice. The Marine taking the test would be required to choose from the list of possible decisions based on his knowledge of the type of situation (i.e. a moral temptation or an ethical dilemma) and experience involving similar situations. It is necessary to educate Marines on how the situations may manifest themselves, how to understand it, and how to make the best decision. Understanding the type of dilemma will allow a Marine to separate what he knows to be right from what he knows to be wrong, reduce the complexity and confusion of the situation, and eliminate extraneous detail and focus on the true ethical choice at hand. In ethical dilemmas, there is not a “correct” answer, but the test questions involving those situations will provide telling details as to the character of the Marine under examination. Both the answer and the amount of time required to arrive at each answer should be key components to the overall assessment the test reveals about the ethical fitness of the Marine.

Part B of the Ethical Fitness Assessment – Walking the Path – will be a subjective evaluation of each Marine performed by that Marine’s immediate superior officer. The immediate superior presumably knows the Marine whom he is evaluating the best among the officers in the chain of command, and the reporting structure would allow the officer with the most familiarity and observation of the evaluated Marine to conduct Part B of the Ethical Fitness Assessment. Part B would evaluate a Marines’ ethical behavior according to the criteria in the Ethics Rubric, but also in context to a Marine’s past, present, and projected future performance. While not necessarily assigning a numerical value or figure to the evaluation, Part B would assess the ethical behavior of the Marine and comment on the standing in relation to the rank’s standard – e.g. the Marine is at, below, or above the standard. Additionally, Part B would assess future behavior, citing a historical trend of good or bad behavior – e.g. given the past and current behavior of this Marine,
it is fair to assume he will continue to develop as expected, make no development, or exceed expectations. Additional comments and criteria would be necessary to prevent Part B from becoming an automatic assignment of the highest mark possible to protect a Marine’s promotion chances. This evaluation could therefore be used to identify potential sources of misconduct in advance, putting additional attention and emphasis on developing and improving the behavior of identified Marines.

In order to allow growth and development in ethical knowledge and behavior, Parts A and B of the Ethical Fitness Assessment would be conducted on a biannual basis. This gives the Marine time to grow but keeps a continuous monitoring and record of that growth (or lack thereof). With the creation of an Ethical Fitness Assessment, ethical knowledge and ethical behavior are evaluated against established standards. The assessment allows the recognition of potential ethical shortfalls in various Marines, facilitating the devotion of additional resources to correct the deficiencies, a noteworthy benefit of the Ethical Fitness Assessment. The institutional perception of ethics would be altered, making it a standard element of a Marine’s overall professional and personal development. The focus offered by the standardization of ethical knowledge and behavior helps to guide ethical training and education in the Marine Corps.

SECTION III: THE ETHICAL FITNESS ASSESSMENT’S VALUE AS A MOTIVATOR

The creation of an Ethical Fitness Assessment will make ethics a standard element of a Marine’s daily routine, providing a standardization of expected ethical behavior and the ability to measure if a Marine’s demeanor matches that expected behavior. How the implementation of the Ethical Fitness Assessment would differ from all other ethical programs enacted by the Marine Corps is its key benefit – it provides a mechanism for translating ethical knowledge into
ethical behavior, the ultimate goal of any ethical program: “Without a system for translating that knowledge into practice and sharing it in a comprehensible form, it will remain meaningless to most practitioners.” The third measure required to change the institutional perception of ethics and the key to getting Marines to act ethically is translating ethical knowledge into ethical behavior.

The Ethical Fitness Assessment provides a system for translating knowledge into practice. Under previous Marine Corps programs, e.g. Values Program or the CMC-directed POI, there is no long-term motivation for Marines to continue their ethical development. The Ethical Fitness Assessment would provide a source of motivation for Marine to behave ethically: one-half of the Assessment is an evaluation of their behavior. If they behave unethically, they will receive poor marks. However, because the evaluation (Part B) of the Marine’s behavior would be based on behavior observed since the last evaluation, the Marine is always being assessed. Never knowing when the evaluation will occur results in a Marine’s need to always be ethically ready and act in accordance with ethical standards. In order to make those marks mean something tangible for any Marine, the results of the Ethical Fitness Assessment should be tied to promotion requirements. For example, until a Marine achieves acceptable marks for his category and rank and begins to exhibit behavior commensurate with the next level higher, he should not be promoted. Such a requirement would force Marines to appreciate understanding ethics and act in accordance with expectations or face the possibility of missing a promotion opportunity. The test will provide a continuous means of motivation for Marines to increase or at a minimum, maintain their ethical fitness.

Because every rank in the Marine Corps is included in the Ethics Rubric, no Marine would be exempt from the Ethical Fitness Assessment. In point of fact, the test would get harder
with each promotion, as senior leaders are given more responsibility and have more experience, which would necessarily lead to a higher standard of ethical behavior. Additionally, the very fact that the test would be required for each rank means that Marines would be exposed to ethical assessment, regardless of rank, twice per year for their entire career. This creates an omnipresent event for all Marines that specifically addresses ethics. Marksmanship and physical fitness, for example, are graded events that Marines are required to pass at least annually. Because of the known recurring nature of the event, Marines make preparation for those events a priority in their daily routines. The same would apply to the Ethical Fitness Assessment.

Preparation for the Ethical Fitness Assessment would require Marine leadership to be actively involved in the ethics training and education of Marines. In annual training plans, Marine commanders should mandate a minimum number of hours of instruction be dedicated to ethical scenario-based exercises each week. This would include role-playing events in which Marine units could create or re-create situations where they were ethically challenged. Different Marines would act out the scenario and could rotate roles to provide changes to the situation. This could add a dimension of realism to the training, as no situation would ever be the same and no Marine would experience or view the ethical situation the same as another Marine. In the scenario-based training events, the choice (decision) made would be discussed and related to the knowledge of ethical situations described previously. Marines would try to categorize the scenario in one of the four types of ethical dilemmas or use the Kohlberg’s principles to determine if the scenario was a moral temptation. This would assist in providing perspective on second- and third-order effects of ethical choices.

To further revolutionize ethical fitness in the Marine Corps, the CMC could mandate that five hours per week be spent on ethical education. This would require all Marine units to create
a training schedule with both physical and ethical training incorporated as part of the everyday rituals. The daily training could encompass classes on the different types of ethical situations a Marine could face (moral temptations and ethical dilemmas) and the characteristics of each. The training could also include historical case studies of major ethical failures, such as those that took place at My Lai in Vietnam or Biscari in Italy during World War II. The goal of these daily training sessions would be to increase ethical knowledge which could then be applied not only in scenario training but in real life situations as well.

The training required or mandated to prepare for the Ethical Fitness Assessment will help to translate knowledge into behavior through continuous evaluation and reflection. In the proposed program, Marines are continuously exposed to education on ethics, discussion on ethics, training involved with ethics, and are constantly receiving evaluations on their ethical behavior. The implementation of the Ethical Fitness Assessment would restructure the basis of ethics in the Marine Corps by making it a part of every Marine's life every day: "That is why each of us must learn to make good moral decisions in our lives. When the right course of action is unclear, only the habit of doing the right thing, as practiced every day in all areas of our lives, can be counted upon."22

It is imperative that the training and education conducted in preparation for the Ethical Fitness Assessment not be done in isolation. That is, ethics training and education should take place at every opportunity and be linked with every other training or real-world event. When Marines patrol in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan, many will face ethical situations that should be discussed to develop an ability to recognize situations involving ethical choices and help to better understanding of the effects of the choices confronted. When Marines participate in marksmanship training, they receive instruction on how to pull the trigger (the mechanics of
ensuring the round hits the designated target). By incorporating ethical education to marksmanship training, Marines will be able to understand if they should pull the trigger (the fundamentals perspectives on restraint, military necessity, protected persons, and other protocols of the law of armed conflict). The objective is to make Marines understand that every activity in which they participate, however minor, may have ethical implications. Marines need to understand them and, armed with the appropriate knowledge, make the appropriate choice, and thus behave ethically.

CONCLUSION

Causing Marines to behave ethically is the purpose of the Ethical Fitness Assessment. It is the best ethical program proposed to arrive at the aim of getting Marines to behave ethically. Marines would prepare for the test and make sure their behavior is in keeping with the established standard. Performance on the Ethical Fitness Assessment would be a powerful motivator for Marines to behave ethically. However, behaving ethically because of the test should not be the end state for a Marine’s appreciation of ethics. The source of true motivation to behave ethically should come from within, i.e. from self-motivation: “The only reason to behave ethically is to discover its real value to the quality of your life.”23 The aim of understanding and living a virtuous life is not to perform better on a test, but to perform better in life. The quintessential measure of effectiveness of any ethical development program is the creation of a self-regulating virtuous person. The character of such a being is grounded in living a balanced life between excess and defect and understanding that living an ethical life is more valuable to one’s self than living an unethical life. This ideal ethical being has reached the highest stratum of Kohlberg’s stages of moral development and does not need social acceptance or coercion to motivate him. If he made an unethical choice, the ideal ethical being would think
"I let myself down," not "I let you down." His self-awareness and understanding of the merits of an ethical lifestyle are the only true motivators. "Only our individual wills, our determination to do what is right, whether or not it is profitable, save us from choosing between chaos and stagnation." Ethical behavior must be intrinsically rewarding to be truly motivating to alter action and influence choices. At the highest stage of ethical development, an ethical person does what is right because doing right is an end in itself. Coercion, fear, and evaluation are motivators only for those that have yet to reach the ultimate level of ethical appreciation and understanding.

The key to getting Marines to behave ethically is getting them to think about ethics every day and making it a part of their personal character. "Sound morals and ethical behavior cannot be established or created in a day...a semester...or a year. They must be institutionalized within our character over time...they must become a way of life." It is not something that can be done easily or quickly, and continuous development is paramount. Rushworth Kidder explains the enduring nature of ethical development:

Ethics is not an inoculation, it's a process. Most of us would scoff at a physical fitness program that says you can take a magic potion once in your life and be physically fit forever. Similarly, being ethically fit involves constant practice and challenging yourself. You don't "get" ethics by reading one article, talking to one guru, or going to one seminar. You may learn a lot of fundamental ideas and get a conceptual platform to work with. But you need to do something to develop your skill, just as runners or musicians develop theirs. And, in my experience, if you don't continue to exercise your ethical skill, you begin to lose it.

The fundamental element of ethics is choice – and the choice to act or behave in a certain way reflects that most inherently human characteristic of free will. Each Marine, each person must see the value in behaving ethically and decide to do so because it is of value in his life. No assessment, POI, program, or class will disrupt free will. They only aim to guide it.


9 Ibid.


14 Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development: Stage 1 – Heteronomous Morality (How can I avoid punishment?); Stage 2 – Individualism, Instrumental Purpose, and Exchange (What’s in it for me?); Stage 3 – Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Interpersonal Conformity (What will others think of my actions?); Stage 4 – Social System and Conscience (What would happen if everyone acted this way?); Stage 5 – Social Contract or Utility and Individual Rights (What values must be upheld regardless of majority opinion?); Stage 6 – Universal Ethical Principles (Social arrangements derive from a moral, not vice versa). From Lawrence Kohlberg. “Resolving Moral Conflicts within the Just Community,” in *Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Reasoning*, ed. Carol Gibb Harding (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 72-73.

15 Consider the following five-tier structure: (1) Privates, Privates First Class, and Lance Corporals (Non-NCO category); (2) Corporals and Sergeants (NCO category); (3) Warrant Officers 1, Chief Warrant Officers 2 and 3, 2nd Lieutenants, First Lieutenants, Captains, Staff Sergeants, Gunny Sergeants, Master Sergeants, and First Sergeants (Company Grade category); (4) Chief Warrant Officers 4 and 5, Majors, Lieutenant Colonels, Colonels, Master Gunny Sergeants, Sergeants Major (Field Grade category); (5) General Officers (Senior Leader category). The structure is merely a suggestion. If categorization of Marines according to ethical behavior expectations was actually conducted, many more variables would need to be considered to properly organize the structure.

16 For the Marine Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT), scores for each event are based on a Marine’s age and gender.

Kidder proposes four principles to assist in determining the correct choice in moral temptations:

- **the Legal Test**: Is law breaking involved? If yes, the issue is one of obedience to the enforceable laws of the land, as opposed to the unenforceable canons of moral code. If the answer is, “yes it is legal” there are three other tests for right vs. wrong;

- **the Stench Test**: Does this course of action have about it an indefinable odor of corruption that makes you recoil? This is a “gut test” and a “gut level” determination. Always listen to your gut because it tests your internal code of morality at the psychological level;

- **the Front Page Test**: How would you feel if what you are about to do showed up tomorrow morning on the front pages of the nation’s newspaper? What would your response if a decision made in private suddenly became public? This is a test of your social mores;

- **the Mom Test**: If I were my Mother, what would I do?” or “If Mom knew about this what would she think?” This is about the moral exemplar that cares deeply about you and means a great deal to you. Put yourself in another’s shoes and think about what you are on the verge of doing. It might well be wrong.

The category of ethical choices that present more difficult decision than those in moral temptations is what Kidder calls ethical dilemmas, in which a choice can be viewed as right versus right (i.e. when both options can be justified from different perspectives).

- **Truth vs. Loyalty**: Truth, for most people, is conformity with facts or reality. Loyalty involves allegiance to a person, corporation or body of people, a government, or set of ideas to which one owes fidelity. It is right to stand on truth. It is right to be loyal.

- **Individual vs. Community**: Individualism assumes that in a society where each person vigorously pursues his own interests, the social good would automatically emerge. As such, the rights of the individual are to be preserved. By “community” it is meant that the needs of the majority outweigh the interests of the individual. Communities speak to us in a moral voice. They lay claims on their members. It is right to consider the individual. It is right to consider the community.

- **Short-Term vs. Long-Term**: Short-term concerns are usually associated with the satisfaction of current needs in such a way as to preserve the possibility of a future. Long-term concerns are usually defined by the projection of future interests in such a way that there will be ample means to meet future required needs. It is right to think and plan short-term. It is right to think and plan long-term.

- **Justice vs. Mercy**: Justice urges us to stick by our principles, hold to the rules despite the pressures of the moment, and pursue fairness without attention to personalities or situations. Mercy urges us to care for the peculiar needs so individuals case by case and to seek benevolence in every way possible. It is right to be merciful. It is right to enforce justice.

This is one of the reasons the new Performance Evaluation System for Fitness Reports was created. The simple box checking method on the previous version of fitness reports became so inflated that if any Marine received a mark of anything other than “outstanding,” that Marine was considered below average. Strict monitoring of Ethical Fitness Assessment markings and comments will be a necessity to prevent inflation.


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