

**Transition of Civic Tendencies through Military Exposure:**

**From Civilian to Military: Concluding with Veterans**

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# TRANSITION OF CIVIC TENDENCIES THROUGH MILITARY EXPOSURE

## INTRODUCTION

The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines civics as, "the study of the rights and duties of citizens and of how government works." The consensus of understanding goes a little deeper, signifying the actions that people engage in which end up affecting their fellow citizens, especially concerning maintaining and advancement in urban development. The word civics originates from the French word *civique*, which means *citizen*, as well as the Latin word, *civic*, which is a *garland of oak leaves worn around the head mimicking a crown*, that is given as a reward to those who saved another citizen from death. This utmost significance brings forth a much higher sense of seriousness and importance to the topic at hand. It perfectly ties into the relevance to those who have not only protected a single citizen, but instead took it a step further protecting the nation as a military member.

The importance of civic behaviors has unfortunately and undoubtedly diminished throughout the progression of history on our nation. In other words, when taking a step back to analyze our history, it is clear that in the olden days, citizens had a much higher tendency to do various good deeds in favor of the congregation where they resided, and ultimately with the wellbeing of the entire nation as a unit. Nowadays, however, the public views on what they should or should not do differ immensely from what they actually do or do not do. This shift in mentality has taken us away from our ancestral teachings. Even the beliefs that some modern religions try to instill in their members has had a variety of influences causing said shift. Some of these influences have been due to overexposure to liberal ideologies. Due to the ability of twisting information and misguided deliverance of such, the public media is protected under the umbrella of our established freedoms our forefathers fought for so valiantly. The struggle of those who served in the military,

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once their service time is over, attempting to reinstate themselves back into their old civilian life, is been evolving throughout their initial military training and their prior overall civic tendencies.

### **CIVIC TENDENCIES BEFORE AND AFTER THE MILITARY**

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) defined civic skills as the “communications and organizational abilities that allow citizens to use time and money effectively in political life” (p. 304). Civic engagement is a concept that involves multidimensional aspects fusing different things among different people relying greatly on their theoretical, normative assumptions. The tendencies often displayed by civic behaviors are active participation and the aim to influence community life regardless of motivation whether that be self-interested reasons, moral principles, political viewpoints, altruistic concerns, or combination thereof. Problem-solving activities undertaken voluntarily to help others may include a wide range of work done either alone or with others with the same intent to affect change, is a virtue of civic tendencies. A common perception of democracy more often than not places it against bureaucracy and its teachings. However, upon recent analysis, the notion of exposure to bureaucratic life and military service has provided a threshold toward voluntarism and civic service.

The stage of life that is most critical, in the formation of one's character, social and political views, as well as structuring of civic identities, is that of the adolescent years. In 2012, research for additional pathways to educate citizens was performed by the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement National Taskforce under direct mandate by President Barack Obama, which goes to show that even at a presidential level, civic health is a concern throughout the American people. Across the board, most high school graduates choose their next milestone to be either college education or full-time civilian employment.

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It is common knowledge that many who choose military service are quite patriotic. Not only this but many military veterans come from families who traditionally served in the military thanks to who have strongly shaped their civic identities. Initial efforts to construct the ideal character of recruits occur at the first stages of basic training and the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina. This necessary character formation is motivated based on the observations and lack of data regarding the development of civic tendencies across the United States. More often than not, the similarities of churches and the military are overlooked; however, both functions to foster civic engagement. Providing disadvantaged youth, the opportunities to learn social skills and occupational skills that prove to be, not only helpful but utterly necessary for volunteering.

In today's day and age, it is clear to see that society elevates the individual and the behaviors that make someone stand out. In recent times there has been a variety of research that has concluded in results pointing toward a link between military service and civic health. Individualistic characteristics are tossed aside from the very beginning of boot camp, when the enlistees are regularly instructed that the Marine Corps values honor courage and commitment above all else. It is thanks to this upbringing that recruits find themselves immersed in a world where the group as a whole is supreme. A study performed in 2013 by Matthieu, Monica, Smith, Morrow-Howell, and McBride funded by the Washington University's Center for Social Development, resulted in evidence suggesting that the aftermath of war affecting the public, can be healed by community involvement and civic behaviors. The average age groups of military members who choose to serve, fall between the ages of 18 to 26.

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It is a widely known fact, that the United States Marine Corps is always the first to set foot in combat environments, to clear the path for other branches to come in and set up military presence during time of war. Thus, recruits who voluntarily join in times of war understand very clearly the possibility of deployment in support of the United States. "Should servicemen obey orders without question?" This question is commonly misinterpreted by the civilian public, especially by the media whenever a tragedy involving the military arises.

A recent graduate of the Air Force Academy answered this in the most perfect way possible, that being "Yes, servicemen should obey orders as long as the orders are lawful," of course this answer translates further signifying that "the servicemen should first question the lawfulness of the orders" (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal & O'Malley, 2000, 573). The trait of unquestioning obedience has been found significantly higher in High School seniors heading towards military service than their classmates. However, this was not the case after actually commencing their service in the military; this trait significantly changed, resulting in the majority of said service members to have lesser support for unquestioning obedience.

The military affects the different thoughts towards unquestioning obedience, canceling the initial differences between those choosing civilian life versus military service. According to Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), it is not only required to have the skills necessary to volunteer for service, but also people must possess the motivation to serve their communities. A different iteration done by Nesbit stated that "successful military socialization leaves military recruits with the values of duty, honor, and loyalty to the country; motivation to serve in one's community is closely linked with his or her civic norms and values" (Hodges, 2017, p. 92).

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When asked for the reason behind joining the military, an overwhelming typical response of “to serve my country” was heard throughout the decade of 2001 to 2010. At the start of this study, in 2001, the recruits who selected as this for their reason to serve constituted 36%; from then to 2007 that reasons have significantly increased to 48%, after which it maintained a positive slope. The average age of recruits through the decade of 2001 to 2010 has fluctuated from 19.6 to 20.0 with the highest ages being seen in 2008. This increase in ages in 2008 is believed to be associated with the push from Congress that same year, to support ongoing combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan by increasing the total number of active duty personnel from 182,00 to 202,000. According to a research done in 2011 reported by Pew Research Center, voluntary participation in the military forces has hit the lowest point in American history with the only exception being the peacetime between the two world wars. A vast majority of people surveyed, 90%, strongly agreed that service in the military with the basic responsibility that every American should perform. The discovery of a connection between the practices of the United States Marine Corps Recruit Training and civic engagement offer great possibilities for those interested in further pursuit of strengthening civic education within our nation. “Furthermore, this study focused on enlisted Marines and not Marine Corps officers” (Hodges, 2017, 105).

### **MILITARY IDEOLOGY: SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING BEFORE & AFTER SERVICE**

In sum, the evidence thus far shows clear selection effects: those headed for military service were more pro-military than average before they left high school (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal, and O’Malley 2000, 571). High school graduates from 1976-1985 were surveyed, resulting in findings portraying higher support towards the military by those open to perusing military

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service and far more intensity was felt by those in a “pre-military” stage. Other topics supported by the graduates encompassed “U.S. Military Supremacy and willingness to see U.S. Military interventions in other parts of the world” (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal, and O’Malley 2000, 568). Attitudes of the surveyed members towards military supremacy was reviewed before, and after enlistment, as well as looking at the changes that took place during the progression between the surveys. Overall support for military intervention dropped when the main purpose was to “protect the rights of other countries” as opposed to our very own United States economic interest. The thought of allowing the United States military to go to war to protect the right of other countries changed significantly enough increasing its support according to Bachman. Socialization effects have played a pivotal part in current military processes. Some of which can be seen by the military policy on zero tolerance and random testing, which has stopped the use of illicit drugs by enlistees. And an equally significantly example of the selection effects shaping the military can be appreciated through the institution of tobacco-free basic training, deterring smokers from enlisting.

Have Patterns of Military Attitudes Changed in Recent Years? (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal, and O’Malley 2000, 576). Globally, military branches share the same goals as the United States Marine Corps in the pursuit of maintaining and increasing its prowess, both physically and mentally. Ensuring their newly enrolled members, develop disciplined bodies that will prove capable of waging war on the enemy and sustaining the daily work required by the branch and instilling honor, courage and commitment in everything they do. The beginning stage into any military branch, individuals go through a series of events that break down the individualistic mindset carried by all civilians. Once that sense of individualism has been eradicated, the roots of military conduct and brotherhood are instilled shaping the strong kindred experienced within the military culture. After which, follows a through reconstruction of a new identity by unwavering

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exposure to military norms, such as values, authority and discipline. A list of the fourteen leadership traits that every Marine must, not only learn, but recite by heart during their basic training time, before they can even be considered apt for graduation, is known to all as the acronym *JJ DID TIE BUCKLE*. Simultaneously, each Marine must know the eleven leadership principles:

“Be technically and tactically proficient; Know yourself and seek self-improvement; Know your Marines and look after their welfare; Keep your Marines informed; Set the example; Ensure that the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished; Train your Marines as a Team; Make sound and timely decisions; Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates; Employ your unit in accordance with its capabilities; Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions” (MCWP 6-11 Leading Marine. (n.d.), 105).

Studies found that the teachings of the military culture instilled in the individual members, have been clearly expressed and recognized in their daily tasks. Performance in tactical operations conducted, thanks to the skills picked up during training periods such as technical operations and weapons handling, grounded the ideology and pride of each individual within their military capabilities. This kind of mentality plays part behind the thought process that military training not only teaches, but bestows citizenship, which later gave birth to the term "Citizen-soldier.”

The structure that the military is known for, acts as something to "hold onto" in the chaos of war zones, and also as a system which offers opportunities to excel. This often is described by members as "black & white," where orders are plainly given and obeyed. The studies ran by Bachman, found that selection effects in the military have direct correlation to higher support for military influence averaging more than one third standard deviation, in the classes of 1976-1985 when compared to either civilian counterparts; and when running the same comparison between classes of 1986-1995, a standard deviation of over 50% was uncovered. During the two-decade long study, graduating youth favored United States military supremacy and had very little enthusiasm in unilateral disarmament



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College sophomores and freshmen who participated in the original survey when they were High School seniors, attested significantly less support towards the military influence, when surveyed a second time. Proving evidence of socialization effects towards less civic support for the military driven forward by college attendance. When comparing students who were opting to stay in the civilian sector, being either college bound or employment bound, virtually identical stands towards military influence were showcased. Once again, we see significant declines in military support by those who had completed one or two years of college versus their civilian counterparts, who chose employment route. Military culture has a sense of institutional socialization, by demanding a highly structured and scheduled lifestyle from its personnel. This lifestyle offers such demand of one's self that demeanors change becoming rigid and regulated; to the point of making anatomically automated processes such as breathing, regulated behaviors, forging the behavior of "breathing like a soldier" a second nature.

The results of over two decades worth of research, impresses the researchers exponentially more by the similarities than the differences across such lengthy time frame. Thomas E. Ricks suggests that "U.S. military personnel of all ranks are feeling increasingly alienated from their own country and are becoming both more conservative and more politically active than ever before" (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal, and O'Malley 2000, 562). Analysis of high-ranking officers in the military suggest that they tend to have more conservative ideals and a more militantly internationalist than those in the civilian sector. Common misconception upon the mentality behind those supporting the use of military force is had by most civilians. The true meaning behind the sternness is to have a properly funded, influential, and superior force than those of other nations. This does not mean that those in support of the use of military force are eager to use the military

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in actions of war for any other reason than to solely retaliate in case of an attack on the United States itself

Additional research shows further differences between the three groups when taking into consideration Government trust. Practically equal viewpoints are seen between those choosing military service and those college-bound; those in the civilian workforce however, tend to have strong ties toward the process of civilian control of the military. As expected those who chose military service, showed significantly greater than average willingness and support to use military force to support and defend United States economic interest.

When Bachman (2000) compared personality traits, it became evident that those who leaned towards military service were more hawkish compared to their civilian counterparts in the workforce. Entry into military forces have proven to be a strong parameter to take into consideration which increases the differences later found when comparing the service members and their civilian counterparts. Minorities who have served in the military, and learned the skills required by their respective branches, attain much better outcomes than their civilian counterparts in respects to education and occupation.

Towards the end of the catastrophic World War II, researchers surveyed a number of service members who were about to end their military contracts, asking the, soon-to-be-veterans, what they planned to do after returning home, once the war was over. The responses indicated that they planned on being active in veteran organizations as well as in other civic entities. Taking into account racial differences, the volunteering differences between whites who have served during war times and those who have not served at all, is that the veterans are more likely to volunteer than the civilians, if they're male. Though, just as likely to volunteer if we focus on females. As

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for the black community, those who served are much more likely to volunteer than those who stayed in the civilian side. This is the same when comparing the gender differences. There seems to be a clear difference in the processes experienced by the two groups of veterans we are all familiar with; those who have served during a period of war and those who have not seen combat. This offers insight on the idea that military culture is quite different between these periods. Not only that, but the veterans serving during these periods had a stronger connection to the institutional experience. A group of 17 Marines both veterans and current enlisted were interviewed, out of which 10 of them emphasized that Boot Camp develops a strong sense of loyalty. Not only this but every single Marine ensured that loyalty was a defining value of the Marine Corps

Despite the Marine boot camp's reputation for brutality, most recruits, especially the African American and Hispanic recruits, found it a "more trusting place than the neighborhoods they left behind (Hodges 2017, 96). "If America were more like the Marines, there would be less crime, less racial tension among people — because Marine Corps discipline is also about brotherhood" (Hodges 2017, 96). A Marine Corps veteran, Jim Roberts, explained how the concept of loyalty he acquired in the service affects the way he interacts with his colleagues in the civilian side by allowing us to see how he acted in the Marine Corps when he said "I'm supposed to take care of my brother. The morality of the Marines is to take care of your brother. They're going to look out for you, and you look out for them. And you'll get anything done" (Hodges 2017, 99). That structure is a primary reason why some veterans choose to return to the military after they conclude their initial service contract. Even though this is a common sensation felt by a great majority of service members, there are some that feel the need to end their compromise with the military and return to the civilian sector. A contributing factor believed to be the reason why some

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find appeal in the civilian sector after having lived through a structured lifestyle in the military can be attributed to age. As members get older, they begin longing for emotional companionship, constituting families & children and the elusive positive notion of freedom from, their then current, structured surroundings.

### **VETERAN STRUGGLE**

Research shows that once military members finish their contracted time of service to take the new identity of military veterans, nearly 18% of veterans compose civic groups in their respective communities, compared to just 5.8% civilians who do the same. The veteran's civic engagement strengthens the belief that they are seen as positive assets for communities. The process by which an active military member trades, life in the military to become a veteran, has been defined by scholars as to the process of transition. Veterans often feel out of place when they first get out of the military as they do not quite feel that the term "veteran" applies to them. This is due to the misconception found in society, that upon hearing the term "veteran," one immediately thinks of military personnel from the World War II era and the likes. Thus, when the new veterans begin taking over this label, they feel it does not quite apply to them even though the government's definition of a veteran indicates their inclusion as such. A common aspect often left untouched or forgotten, when attempting to understand the transition of a military member into the civilian sector, is the influence that the military as a culture has on the individual.

Along with just how deeply intertwined the individual's core behavior has become to that culture. So, when the time comes to leave the military behind and tackle the civilian sector, the individual's perception of that civilian life, left behind long ago, may now appear unfamiliar and even alien. For the service person in transition, this means that they may find themselves

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reproducing military, cultural attitudes and behavioral actions, without being explicitly aware of how their conduct remains oriented towards the military field (Cooper, Caddick, Godier, Cooper, & Fossey, 2016, 164). “There are certain expectations that you can rely on while you're over there, such as... [when] things need to be done, they're done, [because] your life depends upon it. Whereas here, there's a lot more leeway. And initially when I came back, I just couldn't deal with that gray area that's neither black nor white, and people talking back [and] making excuses...So I was pretty quick to get mad or frustrated” (Ahern, Worthen, Masters, Lippman, Ozer, & Moos 2015, 6). Agreement upon suggestions that point towards the idea that, service members constantly become estranged from society, and society from them, has been made apparent by a variance of studies. To understand the challenges that service members go through when transitioning into the civilian sector, a theory was developed after World War II named, "Homecoming Theory." This theory proposes that a traveler who is separated from home by space and time, from his friends and family at home, has unique experiences during that separation. Not only does the traveler undergo changes during the journey, but so do the people and environments at home. Thus, each will become unfamiliar and even unknown to the other upon returning. The differences between what is expected, and the reality of things for the returning traveler as well as for the family & friends at home, often result in a shock to both sides.

Proper and successful homecoming, involves a reestablishment of connections despite these differences. Theories with parallel findings have been recorded throughout various other returning transitions, such as returning refugees and migrants, and even prisoners reentering society. Servicemen experience two unmovable hurdles when first returning to civilian life, the notion that the military is their family and that which was once "normal" is now "alien." The presence of four subsidiary themes, "disconnection, unsupportive institutions, lack of civilian

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structure, and loss of purpose” are the cause of said alienating feelings. Everyday life continued its normal evolution, since the individual's original integration to the military, a moment in which thought processes began undergoing changes. The newly released veteran returning to the civilian culture encounters more difficulty when reacquainting his- or her-self with their old civilian persona.

Twenty-four veterans were surveyed, resulting in the overwhelming majority, 19 veterans, feeling a sense of disconnection from people at home, one said veteran expressed an example by saying: "I can tell stories all night long and [my family] probably won't really grasp what's going on" (Ahern et al., 2015, 5). Further disconnection was felt by the surveyed veterans, from their friends and strangers alike, when they would make "unwarranted assumptions" about those in the military and the military service as a whole. They asked insensitive questions about experiences in service, such as "did you kill anyone?" or even taking it a step further on disrespect, by attempting to connect veteran's experiences to their own mundane experiences, as if they were equally impactful. Frustration towards the common youth of America is something else that veterans encounter, by the notion that most young men believe “the only good reason for the U.S. to go to war is to defend against an attack on our own country” (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, Segal and O’Malley 2000, 573).

One respondent expressed his frustration in a way that perfectly embodies the lack of support and flexibility that institutions have toward veterans. In his case, he used to be an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in the military, which meant he had the training and experience necessary to perform his duties. However, said experiences and training weren't permitted to translate into a civilian EMT job. The institution employing him, told him ““You can

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drive an ambulance...[but] you can't treat anybody." To which he responded "But I've done all these things. Look at my training certificate" only to receive further disdain when they said to him "Oh we don't honor that certificate." Without a doubt any person would feel immense frustration and a sense of unimportance, if an institution were to disregard prior experience in this way, making it seem as though it had all been a waste of time. "The majority of veterans who receive training with a civilian counterpart do not use that training when they return to civilian life. This suggests little direct positive earnings effect from job training in service on post service earnings" (Cutright 1974, 326).

Military personnel face many challenges when transitioning into the civilian realm. Some of these may not appear to have major impacts, as is the case of the loss of previous titles and roles, or adjusting to new family routines. Others can have a detrimental effect on the individual, as is the case of securing civilian employment and making the emotional transition from forming an important part of the military, into being another lonesome individual in the civilian society. "I was a Warrant Officer but all the questions in my interview were about how I would deal with conflict because they thought I was bound to blow a fuse. I managed 40 engineers in a submarine with a nuclear reactor, and they said they didn't think I would be able to manage a department" (Ashcroft 2014, 165). When a veteran, that had served during the combats in Iraq, returned from his tour of duty and reentered the civilian sector, he began to take his next steps in life. He began his job hunt, hoping to find something that would validate his experiences while in the service, something along the lines of first aid or security. Although, after two months of searching with no positive outcomes, he finally found employment, however it was only an entry level at a surplus store. This gave him mixed feelings about it, after all he was glad he had finally found employment, but he felt it just didn't matter that he had been to Iraq.

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After deployment it is not uncommon for members to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, early physical disability or even suicide. A concerning trend, rather problematic in people's minds, was uncovered in 2008 to 2010. This being the increase in smokeless tobacco use and caffeine use in recruits, as well as an increase in angry outburst over the decade. Several studies throughout the years have indicated that young service members who deploy and experience combat firsthand, are at an increased risk of heavy weekly drinking, binge- drinking, and alcohol related problems. For this reason, it can prove to be beneficial, to prevent future increases on said behavior, to set up in-service interventions targeting young service members. Active duty military personnel use caffeine to improve alertness and focus regularly; in fact, deployed Marines have reported that at least 45% of them consume one energy drink daily, in order to maintain focus (Horton, 2014). Overwhelming results came from the survey of recruits regarding childhood trauma, with 61% reporting at least one event (Horton, 2014). The most common impactful event recorded, was the divorce of the parents, affecting 43% of those recruits (Horton, 2014). The second affected 17% with physical neglect; at 16 % was emotional neglect, and 13% of the recruits suffered emotional abuse (Horton, 2014). Overall, a 6% of recruit displayed frequent angry outbursts (Horton, 2014).

The military as a whole, is perceived by veterans as an institution that takes care of its members. Many take it a step further, describing that even though there are many challenges in military service, members experience the military environment as a "family," that not only protects the members but also provides a structured set of expectations. Statements such as, "the guys that I served with, they were my family over there. So, we have that connection, that bond. And there's always somebody that you can talk to" (Ahern, Worthen, Masters, Lippman, Ozer, and Moos. 2015, 4) are testament to such claim. "The Mission Continues empowers veterans facing the



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challenge of adjusting to life at home to find new missions. We redeploy veterans in their communities, so that their shared legacy will be one of action and service. We focus the innate spirit of service demonstrated by the men and women of the U.S. military” (Hodges, 2017, 105). Researchers have indicated that service members who return to the civilian sector, typically take at least a year's time to re-adjust to civilian life.

### RESULTS

Upon complete review of these articles, the importance of civic education throughout the educational upbringing of young people, can be easily distinguished, and thusly proven that there needs to be changes put in place in order for our nation to continue moving forward in the global scene of things. There are those, including myself, who believe that in order to teach proper civic behaviors, not only does the schooling agendas need to be kept outside the classrooms, but at the same time, a type of mandatory military service needs to occur. Similar things are currently being implemented in other great nations, which instills in their citizens that much needed and earned sense of pride of their nation. This is something we so desperately need. Not necessarily referring to a mandatory draft like we had in the past during world wars, but at the very minimum every resident upon completion and graduation from High School, should be mandated to undergo basic training on one of the branches of our military armed forces. It should be followed by, at minimum, a two-year service. New adults should have to earn the right to enjoy the birthright of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that our forefathers, ancestors, as well as those in current service continually do. They should do their part and fight to keep our nation’s declarations of independence alive and strong.

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