



**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
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## 1.3 Military Culture

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## Why People Join the Military?

People joined the military for different reasons (Figure 1.3a).



**Figure 1.3a**

*Reasons for Joining the Military*

**Source:**

*Indeed Editorial Team, 2023*

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Military Life

Enlisting in the military is a big step that requires careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of military life. There are pros and cons for joining the military (Figure 1.3b).



**Figure 1.3b**  
*Pros and Cons of the Military Life*  
**Source**  
*Dowd, 2021*

## What is Military Culture?

Culture is a set of values, conventions, or social practices a group may share. Some cultural elements, such as language, food, or customs, may be objective. Other elements, such as beliefs, values, and expectations, may be subjective. **Military culture** includes the customs, worldview, values, and identity that are all shaped by military service (Redmond et al., 2015).

### WARRIOR ETHOS

Another important and unifying aspect of the military culture is the warrior ethos philosophy and values that all U.S. armed forces aim to ingrain in their members (Figure 1.3c). The warrior ethos emphasizes placing the mission above everything else, not accepting defeat, never quitting, and never leaving another American behind (Redmond et al., 2015).

The military ethos and **core values** of each branch help to make up the military culture experienced by servicemembers and Veterans. An **ethos** is the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution. Service members are inculcated and trained to gain the military ethos. They take an oath to serve the nation, and all their actions reinforce that commitment (Watson, 2015). Service members are directly exposed to the military ethos and the importance of teamwork.

**Teamwork** is the building block of military operations, learned as a group experience during initial training and reinforced throughout military service by instilling the importance of selflessness, honesty, and loyalty. It can be very powerful for service members and Veterans.

The **general military ethos** comprises the values of

- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Discipline
- ◆ Pride
- ◆ Commitment to every mission

However, military culture and values extend beyond warrior ethos. The military tries to create uniformity by highlighting core values that become central to military culture and experiences (Redmon et al., 2015).

The core values and military ethos are meant to instill a sense of purpose, identity, morality, belonging, honor, duty, and sacrifice. These ideals come with pros and cons, as they can instill pride in service members but also prevent them from asking for help. This can promote the idea of “suffering in silence,” which causes service members to not complain about whatever circumstances or difficulties they face during and/or after their military service.

Seeing the core values of each branch allows us to understand the mindset of service members and the values of each ethos.



It is important for you to understand the core values that each branch of the military has because these values must become integral to the code of conduct when members of the military are on and off duty (Figure 1.3c).

<b>Branch</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Ethos</b>	<b>Motto</b>
<b>ARMY</b>	Loyalty Duty Respect Selfless Service Honor Integrity Personal Courage	"I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade."	<b>This We'll Defend</b>
<b>MARINES</b>	Honor Courage Commitment	"Marines fight and win—that's what we do; that's who we are. To be a Marine is to do what is right in the face of overwhelming adversity."	<b>"Semper Fidelis" Always Faithful</b>
<b>NAVY</b>	Honor Courage Commitment	"We are... our nation's sea power... We are professional Sailors and civilians. Integrity... respect ... decisive leadership is crucial to our success. We are a team, disciplined and well-prepared. We are patriots, forged by the Navy's core values. We defend our nation and prevail in the face of adversity with strength, determination, and dignity."	<b>"Non sibi sed patriae" Not for self, but for country</b>
<b>AIR FORCE</b>	Integrity First Service Before Self Excellence in All We Do	The foundation of what it means to be an Airman. It takes a strong mind, body, and spirit to be an Air Force warrior. The Air Force warrior demonstrates a moral and physical courage, placing service before self, answering the nation's call, and being faithful to a tradition of honor and a legacy of Valor. An Air Force warrior defends the country with his life. We never leave an Airman behind; we never falter; we never fail."	<b>Aim High ... Fly-Fight-Win</b>
<b>COAST GUARD</b>	Honor Respect, Devotion to Duty	"I am America's Maritime Guardian. I serve the citizens of the United States. I will protect them. I will defend them. I am their shield. For them, I am Semper Paratus (Always Prepared). I live the Coast Guard values. I am a guardian."	<b>"Semper Paratus" Always Ready</b>
<b>SPACE FORCE</b>	Character Connection Courage Commitment	"We rely on an inner moral compass, character, and connection with fellow Guardians as we pursue the mission of the Space Force with commitment and courage. Our values are our North Star, and much like Polaris, they serve as a guide for daily action as we navigate a complex strategic environment. Values unite us, make us stronger, sustain us as a ready force, and reflect what we believe as a Service"	<b>"Semper Supra" / Always Above</b>

**Figure 1.3c: Core Values, Ethos, and Motto Per Military Branch**  
**Source:** Watson, 2015; Naval Postgraduate School, 2024

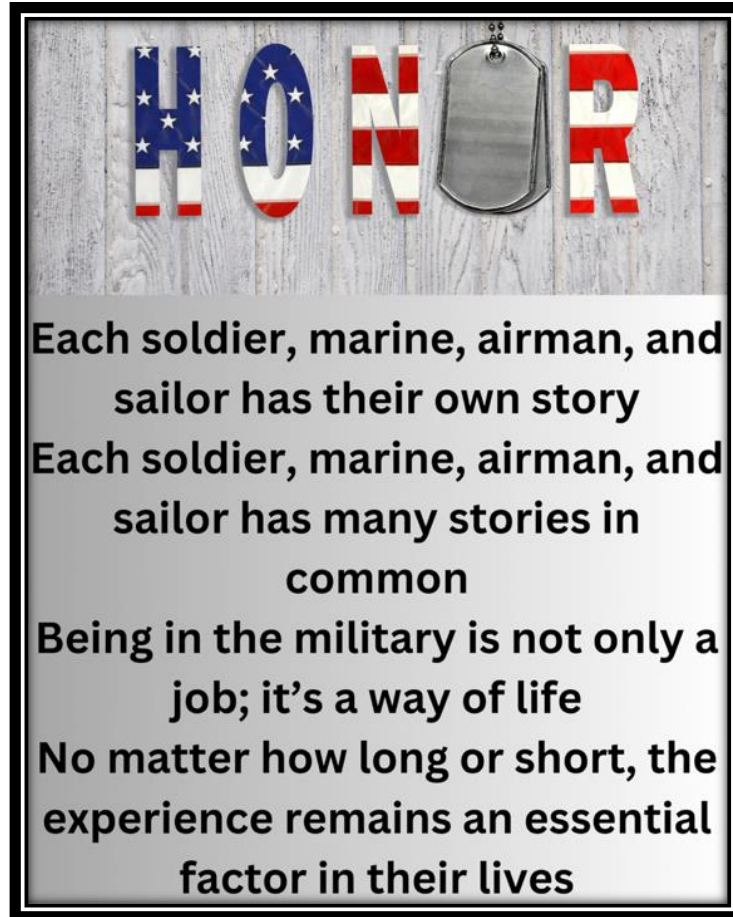
## Military Sub-Cultures

Military culture is complex. There is no **ONE** culture to which ALL military service members adhere, or that can predict their behavior, their worldview, or their associations. Each branch has its own separate culture. Within each branch, there are sub-cultures. These subcultures can draw service members in different directions, and whom they associate with or whom they are drawn to can be decided by means other than simply being in the same branch, being in the same unit, or even having the same ranking (Watson, 2015).

When attempting to understand the diverse nature of subcultures, there are many points to consider. People join the military for many reasons, and the reasons each person joins can affect their subculture preferences. People come into the military with certain ways of viewing the world and their place in it. This includes a *collectivistic versus Individualistic mindset*. The military attempts to ingrain a collectivist mindset into its members. While some may go through basic training and adopt a more collectivist mindset, this does not guarantee that someone will lose all sense of the individualist culture they had before entering the service. Their collectivistic or individualistic mindset may lead to preferences in who a service member associates with or how they spend their free time for example (Watson, 2015).

The role each individual has in the service can lead to the creation of a subculture. For instance, there is a difference in the roles between someone who is designated to be in a *combat role* versus a *support role*, whether you are deployed or not, fighting vs. not fighting, and you have a leadership role vs. those who do what they are told to do. There is no one way of seeing the world or interacting with other service members; therefore, there is no unified military culture (Watson, 2015).

Joining the military is not only a job but a way of life; the experiences lived will remain an important factor in their life (Figure 1.3d).



**Figure 1.3d**  
Military as a Way of Life  
**Source**  
*Watson, 2015*

## References

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