

**Translational Research Group
Marine Corps University
U.S. Marine Corps Stress and Resilience Project
(Resilience Project)**

**Notice of Data Availability in Qualitative Data Repository
June 2020**

Project Location in Repository: <https://doi.org/10.5064/F6NON328>

Translational Research Group Background:

The Translational Research Group (TRG) was a multidisciplinary group of social scientists within the U.S. Marine Corps' culture center that focused on providing cultural, regional, and language education and training. TRG operated from 2010 through June 2020. Its work was balanced between two core functions. Its primary function was to conduct social science research on Marines and Marine Corps organizations and provide scientific advising to Marine Corps leaders. It also supported the culture center by providing conceptual guidance for education and training and by running the center's assessment program to evaluate the effectiveness of the center's activities. The group's director was the cultural anthropologist, Kerry Foshier (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9421-9243>). Additional information about the group can be found in two articles:

- Foshier, K. 2018. Field Report: Implementing a Social Science Capability in a Marine Corps Organization. *Journal of Business Anthropology*. Spring. 7(1):133-152. <https://doi.org/10.22439/jba.v7i1.5495>.
- Foshier, K. et al. 2020. Translational Research in a Military Organization: The Marine Corps Organizational Culture Research Project. *Annals of Anthropological Practice*. May. 44(1):14-32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12130>.

Qualitative Data Repository (QDR) Information:

The [QDR](#) is an archive for storing and sharing data and associated materials from qualitative and mixed methods projects. It is hosted by the [Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry](#), a unit of the [Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs](#) at [Syracuse University](#). Users do not have to have an institutional membership agreement to access materials on the QDR, but do need to sign up for a free account.

Project Background:

In late 2011, TRG began a long-term research effort to examine the socio-cultural and lived experience aspects of stress and resilience among Marines. The overall effort was specifically designed to address a gap in resilience research, which was largely based in biomedical and psychological theories, through leveraging social science theory, methods, and expertise to understand the personal and contextual aspects of Marine resilience. This project was conducted under Marine Corps Human Subjects Protection Protocol MCCDC.2012.005. A more detailed project overview is provided as an appendix to this document.

Lead Researcher: Frank Tortorello. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3609-3352>

Principal Investigator/Government Supervisor: Kerry Foshier. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9421-9243>

Data and Supplementary Material Overview:

This dataset comprises 39 interview transcripts. Interviews were of varying length and were conducted in 2012 at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia and Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island in South Carolina. Participants included Marine officers and enlisted Marines, predominately those involved with the early training of Marine enlisted recruits and officer candidates. Also included in the archive are an annotated bibliography of related scholarly, military, and news source material, a project overview, original human subjects protection documentation, and examples of public domain applied research outcomes from the project. All data and materials are publicly available on the QDR.

Associated publications:

Tortorello, Frank and William Marcellino. 2013. "Military resilience, suicide, and post-traumatic stress: What's behind it all?" *Foreign Affairs Best Defense*. March 21. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/21/military-resilience-suicide-and-post-traumatic-stress-whats-behind-it-all/>)

Marcellino, William and Frank Tortorello. 2015. "I Don't Think I Would Have Recovered: A Personal and Sociocultural Study of Resilience among US Marines." *Armed Forces and Society*. July. 41(3):496-518. (<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0095327X14536709>).

Methods:

TRG researchers employed a mix of qualitative and documentary methods in several phases. The most intensive and structured phase was a six-month effort sponsored by Training and Education Command Headquarters, which included a six-month study of instructor staff and candidates/recruits at Officer Candidate School (OCS) and Marine Corps Recruiting Depot (MCRD) Parris Island. The primary method employed during this phase was group and individual interviews along with some observation of training events. Additionally, the researchers conducted a quantitative study of institutional language at OCS, a linguistic survey of Marine Corps doctrinal publications, and a literature review on resilience resulting in an annotated resource library on resilience containing approximately 300 scholarly, news, and Marine Corps documents. Note: This was an older TRG project and, at the time of deposit, the lead researcher had been gone from the organization for several years. Consequently, not all data and supplemental materials are available for deposit. See additional information below.

Recruitment and Sample:

TRG researchers used snowball sampling at OCS and MCRD Parris Island. Additionally, one interview was conducted at the Basic School (TBS). Potential participants were made aware of the opportunity through the routine Marine Corps staffing process.

TRG researchers conducted a total of 39 interviews. Transcripts were not marked with the characteristics of the interviewees, such as rank, sex, age, etc., and those characteristics were not available in any of the project documentation. Interviewees were categorized by location and role or position, including:

- Senior Drill Instructors
- Drill Instructors in Training
- Recruits (individuals going through basic training prior to becoming enlisted Marines)
- OCS Staff
- Officer Candidates (individuals going through basic training prior to becoming Marine officers)
- TBS Staff.

Interview Location and Length:

Interviews were conducted by two researchers at OCS and TBS on Marine Corps Base Quantico (Virginia) and at MCRD Parris Island (South Carolina). Typically, only one researcher conducted each interview, but sometimes a second researcher was present. Each interview was tentatively scheduled for one hour, but actual length varied based on the interviewee's preference.

Dataset:

This dataset comprises 39 transcripts as described below. Data from the quantitative study of institutional language and linguistic survey of doctrinal publications were no longer available at the time of deposit. Likewise, information developed through observation, meetings, and other unstructured interactions was contained only in researcher field journals and was not available for deposit.

Location	Participant Category	Number of Interviews	Date(s)
OCS	Officer Candidates (OCAN in file naming convention)	5	June 5-July 1, 2012
OCS	Staff	16	June 11- August 15, 2012
TBS	Staff	1	August 2, 2012

MCRD Parris Island	Senior Drill Instructors (SDI in file naming convention)	13	July 9-Oct 2, 2012
MCRD Parris Island	Drill Instructors in-training (DIT in file naming convention)	2	July 11-Sept 19, 2012
MCRD Parris Island	Recruits	2	July 13-October 1, 2012
<i>Total</i>		<i>39</i>	<i>June 5 – Oct 2, 2012</i>

Data Processing:

All audio files were transcribed by an outside service. TRG researchers did a secondary review of each transcript and audio file to correct acronyms and mis-transcribed Marine references and remove names of interviewees. All raw data, code keys, and participant contact information have been destroyed.

Special note: The transcripts are now considered releasable, although we request that future researchers not release them in full and that they take care in using the data to avoid mosaic identification/ data triangulation.

Topics:

Although interviews focused on Marine experiences and perceptions of stress and resilience, in discussing these topics, Marines reflected on work and personal life experiences. Therefore, the data cover a very broad range of topics and locations, including family life and relationships, work in the U.S., deployments, and combat.

Additional Materials:

The documentation associated with this project includes human subjects review documentation, an annotated bibliography of related source material, a public domain project overview, and several public domain project outcomes.

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Appendix 1

Resilience Project Overview

Note: The Project Overview is a public domain document.

**Translational Research Group
Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning
Marine Corps University
Marine Stress and Resilience Project 2012-2015
Project Overview
June 2020**

In late 2011, the U.S. Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning's (CAOCL) Translational Research Group (TRG) began a long-term research effort to examine the socio-cultural and lived experience aspects of stress and resilience among Marines. The overall effort was specifically designed to address a gap in resilience research, which was largely based in biomedical and psychological theories, through leveraging social science theory, methods, and expertise to understand the personal and contextual aspects of Marine resilience.

The project employed a mix of qualitative and documentary methods in several phases. The most intensive and structured phase was a six-month effort sponsored by Training and Education Command (TECOM) Headquarters, which included a six-month study of instructor staff and candidates/recruits at Officer Candidate School (OCS) and Marine Corps Recruiting Depot Parris Island. The primary method employed during this phase was group and individual interviews along with some observation of training events. Additionally, the researchers conducted a quantitative study of institutional language at OCS, a linguistic survey of Marine Corps doctrinal publications, and a literature review on resilience resulting in an annotated resource library on resilience containing approximately 300 scholarly, news, and Marine Corps documents.

Initial research indicated that, for Marines, stress and resilience were more a matter of Marines' interest in striving to live by their cultural values rather than simply the functioning of their biology or psychology. For example, achieving a 1st class Physical Fitness Test (PFT) evaluation is a value-orientation shared by many Marines. Simply put, the pursuit of a 1st class PFT score can be stressor, and failing to achieve one in many cases is a stressor. Why? Because for Marines the physical ability to perform on deployments is the foundation for effectiveness. As such, being physically fit is an expression of a Marine's commitment to the value of being ready for any mission, anywhere, anytime. If this view is correct, then biology and psychology are means—not ends—to a Marine's personal goal of being the best Marine possible; they cannot explain why a Marine is stressed because they are focused on the mechanics of biology and psychology, not on what Marines actually say and do.

During the course of the research, researchers found that most Marines were stressed by their attempts to be a good Marine along with a host of other "good types of person"—good father, good mother, good believer, good financial planner, good friend, and so on. Stress came from Marines striving to be steadfast in their commitment to values even as those values were contradicted or challenged. A Marine who strives to be a good Marine during a pre-deployment workup may find it impossible to also be a good father or mother and, thus, may experience stress. In short, while stress may have biological consequences like increased blood pressure or feelings of frustration, the origin of stress is in the value-oriented, cultural practices of Marines. These findings reinforced emerging findings in other studies that discuss how combat-related trauma was not the —sole—and perhaps not the primary—source of unresolved stress among military personnel.

Researchers also found some similar and some very different kinds of stressors among Marines depending on the context (e.g., combat versus garrison versus home) and on military occupational specialty (MOS) (e.g., infantry versus logistics versus aviation). For example, Marines from the aviation community noted that accounting for tools can be a stressor on par with the infantry community's concern with accounting for rifles. This does not mean, however, that the stress is "the same." The context is different and so are the potential consequences, again, depending on the context: during combat operations versus during a training iteration at Quantico. Addressing these differences with appropriate effective training support tools would have required further research to understand from Marines themselves how stress, resilience, and steadfastness are connected in their particular community and MOS.

Based on the basic research findings, the researchers recommended to TECOM a series of educational and training support products, entitled Leadership Development Exercises, that were based on the Tactical Decision Game model. In these exercises, instead of tactical problems, Marines are faced with moral problems, which were taken from real-life experiences of Marines who participated in this project. Additional project outcomes included inputs to the Marine Corps' Resilience Working Group and resulting programs, numerous briefs and classes, and more scholarly publications. The article, "I don't think I would have recovered": A Personal and Sociocultural Study of Resilience among US

Marines,” by William Marcellino and lead researcher Frank Tortorello was published in *Armed Forces & Society* in 2015 and the book, *Brains, Bodies, and Marines: The Science of Stress and Resilience in the United States Marine Corps*, by Frank Tortorello has been accepted for publication and is under revision at the time of this deposit.

As was the case with a number of TRG’s projects, one of the core outcomes from the Marine Stress and Resilience Project was the lead researcher’s ability to advise Marine Corps leaders and working groups based on the research. He was able to work with Marine Corps organizations throughout the duration of the project to help them integrate results. These integration efforts were not always successful, but still served the broader purpose of TRG by helping the entire research team learn about impediments to implementation, lessons we were able to apply in later projects. Additionally, even after the lead researcher left the organization, TRG continued to get requests related to the topic and was able to respond with materials he developed or by putting the requestor in contact with him.