

FROM THE EDITOR

The Who of Leadership

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It is common in the leader development space for people to talk about the “why.” At a fundamental level, this makes sense. We should know why we are doing something, or in some cases, not doing something. We should know why we feel the way that we do. We should know why we are choosing to work somewhere. We should know why we are showing up the way that we are. Understanding our why, helps us to contextualize what is going on around us and provides fidelity to the decisions and sacrifices that we are willing to make. People often will refer to this as their passion or their purpose. Regardless, it serves as an orienting function for ourselves, and even those with whom we interact. As leaders, we must understand this, and we must get our why right or we could be operating out of alignment with our actions.

If we have a clear enough why, it keeps everything else in focus. That doesn’t mean we won’t take detours, but it does mean that we have a way to find our way back. It doesn’t mean we won’t make mistakes, but it provides guidance on how to recover from those missteps. When we look at our why as it relates to being a leader, it helps us to frame what our leadership is all about, its larger purpose. At the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) this is codified in the mission: To educate, train and inspire men and women to become officers of character motivated to lead the U.S. Air Force and Space Force in service to our nation. Endemic in that statement are several whys. There is a why around the notion of being a leader. There is a why around the type of leader, a leader of character, one should aspire to be. There is a why around a cause bigger than oneself. There is a why around professionalism. Finally, there is a why around service. Individually, each of those whys are worthwhile. Put together, however, they form a superordinate why that can be a powerful motivating force for one’s life. Those who journey down such a road quickly realize, however, it is not without bumps, bruises, or sacrifice. They also realize it is about more

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than themselves. A leader of character takes the time to understand, consider, and value those they are entrusted to lead. That is, in part, why USAFA developed the Leader of Character Framework¹ that focuses on living honorably, lifting others, and elevating performance. It is an aspirational framework that not only helps one to understand how they are to be a leader, but also how to provide, protect, and develop those they lead...the who. If the why is our orienting function, then the who is our value proposition.

Whether in formal leadership position or not, we all have influence on those around us. A leader understands this influence and endeavors to maximize that value. Not in a self-serving manner, as is often highlighted in headline news, but in a way that supports the *why* and the *who*. Granted, this is no easy task. There are a myriad of challenges and inducements to act in opposition to the *why* and counter to the value of the *who*. In fact, leaders often fail not because of a lack of knowledge or expertise, but because of failure to manage the discretion that they are given. For that reason, organizations spend billions of dollars every year on leader development. They realize that the balance between the *why* and the *who* is vital.

Coincidentally, what often hangs people up is that they feel that they are not leaders or it does not apply to them because they are not in a formal leadership position. The shortsightedness of these thoughts is that they deny the individual of the awareness of the influence and impact that they currently have. It not only robs the individual of their development and the impact that they have, it also affects the organization. We lead from where we are, whether that be a follower or a formally appointed leader. Our organizations need us to lead where we are. The people around us need us

to lead where we are. Our teams need us to lead where we are. This manifests itself in many different ways. It is reflected in the actions that we take at work, when people are around, and when they are not. It is revealed in the words that we say and the language that we use. For example, when a leader's decision is counter to our own opinion, what are we doing and saying to either support or impede that decision? What impact do our words and actions have on the success of that decision? How are we influencing and leading those around us in those situations? If we notice an area that needs development in ourselves, what are we doing about it? Are we willing to make the investment in ourselves to be better for those around us—to show up better tomorrow than we did today? That is leadership, and it doesn't require a formal position or title. However, it does allow us to support and influence the *who* of our organizations.

It involves a developmental mindset that is fully aware of how we are showing up in the present, but also is mindful of what we will need to be, leadership-wise, in the future. It is about developing leadership capacity in ourselves, but also in those around us. While this sounds rather straightforward, the challenge often comes in balancing those aspects with also being technically proficient at our tasks. Often, we tend to place the urgency of our tasks ahead of potentially more distal development of self and others. This makes sense, of course, because we can often get immediate feedback if we are not performing on our task whereas feedback on our development may come down the road. Therefore, people often tend to prioritize the task—the *why* or what—at the expense of the *who*. The reality is that it is a balance of the two. Effective leaders do not sacrifice one for the other. They mutually support the *why* and the *who*. They see development as a core competency of what they are doing. They see the influence and development of those around them

¹ <https://caplalacaplpfwstorprod01.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/web/character-development-project/repository/developing-leaders-of-character-conceptual-framework.pdf>

as part of their why and their identity as one who leads. They don't see the who as a means to an end for what they need to do, but as a critical component. Think back to the effective leaders you have worked with before. What words do you use to describe them? There are likely words that describe who they were and what they did. However, chances are there are more words to describe who they were (person) versus just what they did (task). That is because effective leaders make those around them better. The powerful message here is that everyone can develop in those areas and it doesn't require a certain title or rank. It requires intentionality, perseverance, and humility.

With this in mind, we clearly need to understand our why. We also need to understand the who and we are included in that who. Leadership, at least effective leadership, comes with an awareness and understanding of both. Regardless of where you are at in your leadership journey, you can lead here and lead now.

In This Issue

In this Issue of the JCLD, you will notice two distinct parts. In the first part, there are several articles focusing on the USAFA Leader of Character (LoC) Framework. These articles are designed to explain what each of the three areas of the framework means: Living Honorably, Lifting Others, and Elevating Performance. Each article is a deep dive for those who want to understand how to develop specific habits and behaviors of a leader of character. While focused for those at USAFA, all leaders can learn from these articles regardless of your domain. In the second part, we continue our annual connection to the National Character & Leadership Symposium (NCLS)² held every February at the United States Air Force Academy. NCLS is a multi-

day, intentionally focused symposium on character and leadership. It brings together a wide range of local, national, and international leaders around a particular theme. The theme lines up with one of USAFA's organizational outcomes. This year's theme was ethics and respect for human dignity³.

The issue begins with an orienting article by Scott Heyler (USAFA Class of 1994) and Michele Johnson who discuss the Leader of Character Framework at USAFA. They begin by explaining how the framework came to be, and then go on to discuss how it is integrated at the institution. They finish by setting up the need for the following three articles on each of the specific components of the framework.

The first of the three LoC articles focuses on how a leader lifts others. In this article, Johnson and colleagues discuss what it means to lift others by examining how to exert a positive influence on others. They walk the reader through five leader responsibilities that underlie lifting others. The responsibilities are being mindful of others, helping others envision their best possible selves, motivating others to work toward their best possible selves, guiding others in their progress, and creating and nurturing a culture of accountability. This in-depth review of leader responsibilities includes behavioral examples to help guide the reader on how to integrate them into their own leadership and leadership development.

The second article examines the importance of living honorably. Mark Jensen and Adam Pelsner discuss what it means to live honorably as leaders in the profession of arms. They walk the leaders through a review of honor to include linguistics, history, philosophy, and

² <https://www.usafa.edu/character/national-character-leadership-symposium-ncls/>

³ A copy of the white paper that explains the outcome can be found at: <https://www.usafa.edu/app/uploads/Ethics-and-Respect-White-Paper-approved.pdf>

then propose a model for honorable living that includes aspects for the code and community. They summarize by stating, “Leaders living honorably belong to a virtuous honor community (the military organization) with a unique and specific good (defense of the nation), a hierarchical organization (the system of rank and advancement), and an honor code.” Included throughout the article are specific recommendations for leaders.

The third article in this section by Heyler and colleagues reviews how a leader of character elevates performance, for themselves, and those around them. They recommend, based on evidence from the military and business experiences, several constructs that form the foundation for elevating performance. They are flexible and adaptive leadership, moral performance/positive organizational ethics, and ethical culture. They tie those constructs into the Air Force Major Performance Areas—executing the mission, leading people, managing resources, and improving the unit—in order to provide guidance on how to elevate the performance of individuals and organizations. Taken together, the three preceding articles, along the Leader of Character Framework, serve as a guide for developing leaders of character.

Switching sections in the issue, we turn to the NCLS theme of ethics & respect for human dignity, which is one of institutional outcomes at USAFA. The institution expects cadets to graduate with a combination of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities reflected in nine outcomes.⁴ This section begins with an in-depth look at what is meant by ethics and respect for human dignity. Authors Pelser and Jensen step the reader through what it means by addressing moral knowledge, respect for human dignity, moral decision-making, and how one can develop habits of moral

excellence. It is a great read for those interested in understanding one of the critical aspects of becoming a leader of character.

The next article is a follow up to a provocative article that Drs. Leonard Wong and Steve Gerras of the U.S. Army War College wrote in 2015 about dishonesty in the U.S. Army. Their new article titled *Still Lying to Ourselves: A Retrospective Look at Dishonesty in the Army Profession* highlights the reactions to the original article and subsequent actions that have been taken. They step the reader through several stages of denying the obvious, to taking notice, and finally, to understanding what it really means for the profession. It is an enlightening journey to help a large organization grapple with, and ultimately address, a significant challenge.

We follow that thought-provoking piece with some reflections on ethics at the tactical level by U.S. Navy RAMD (Ret) Margaret Klein and CDR (Ret) Timothy Demy. In this article, they share about some of the key tensions and questions that exist in most squadrons and tactical units. Through their own personal reflections and experiences, they highlight how ethical decisions and actions are critical at all levels of the organization. While ethics are often thought of at the organizational level, the insights that they share indicate how it is vitally important especially at the tactical level.

David Keller (USAFA Class of 1990), Director of the Hollingsworth Center for Ethical Leadership for the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M University, next discusses efforts they have taken to advance the core value of respect within students and faculty. He begins by covering some of the challenges Senior Military Colleges (SMCs) face, and then moves on to how they went about implementing their Corps Leadership Development Model. This article

⁴ <https://www.usafa.edu/academics/outcomes/>

highlights intentional steps that they took to create alignment through programs and competencies aimed at increasing respect.

Laura Parsons and colleagues next discuss how they are implementing their Ethical Leadership Framework at Air University (AU) to create alignment across its leadership development programs. Specifically, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, they identify 18 competencies of Air Force ethical leadership by collecting and analyzing data from across the Air University enterprise (students, faculty, staff, etc.). As a result of this study, they will use this information to help guide curriculum development in order to support the development of these competencies for all Air University students.

Continuing the theme of ethics and respect for human dignity, Peter Reiley of The Pennsylvania State University discusses how leadership and character development can be influenced through ethics education. In his article, he discusses several situations in the military that can make ethical challenges difficult to recognize and overcome. He follows this with a discussion on how intentional ethics education can be utilized to help overcome those challenges to support both joint and multinational efforts.

In a unique contribution to the JCLD, Christopher Miller and Cadets Caden Wilson, Marc Brunner, and Madelyn Letendre offer their thoughts on honesty and character. The article begins with each cadet offering a critique on Miller's previous work on honesty and character. They offer their insights on where they feel Miller has missed the mark on his conceptualizations of virtue labeling, honesty and utilitarianism, and motivation as it relates to honesty. In an eloquent series of responses, Miller answers each of the critiques and

expertly displays how we can address criticism when it is levied against our ideas, thoughts, and work.

We follow with an article by Charles Dusch about General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. This is the first of a two-part biographical essay where highlighting Davis' career beginning with his upbringing, and moving through his time as the Commander of the 332nd Fighter Group. In this detailed essay, Dusch walks the reader through several pivotal times in Davis' career highlighting his courage under fire, his exacting standards and discipline, his tenacity and commitment, and his ability to innovate and find a way forward.

The final article is by Greig Glover (USFA Class of 1983). Glover, a former hospital CEO for Mayo Clinic Health Systems, shares his experiences as they relate to the COVID-19 crisis. Through firsthand accounts, he shares what it was like working in the health care industry as COVID-19 took over the health care system. His insights, personal examples, challenges, successes, and lessons learned as the health care field struggled and adapted to the global pandemic, offers a unique perspective on struggle and perseverance in the midst of unprecedented challenges.

Book Reviews

As an added contribution to the field of character and leadership development, we include several book reviews intended to highlight some of the great work that is being done in these domains. Since there are too many books to read, as thousands come out every year on these topics, we endeavor to highlight several of them in every issue that can aid you in your own development. For this issue, we would like to offer three such reviews. The first is a review of *Rotten: Why Corporate Misconduct Continues and What to Do About It* by Marc Epstein and Kirk Hanson. The book talks

about corporate misconduct, why it exists, and what can be done to mitigate it. Through leveraging their decades of experience and past examples of misconduct, they discuss steps that can be taken to prevent it from happening. It is an important read regarding what organizations can do to minimize misconduct. The second review is on *Grit – The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth. In this work, Duckworth examines the power grit has to improve performance through presenting examples across many different domains (e.g., corporate, athletics, etc.) as well as through her own research. She finishes the book discussing how to build grit. It is a great read for those looking for ways to improve their performance. The third review is of *Wellbeing at Work: How to Build Resilient and Thriving Teams* by Jim Clifton and Jim Harter. In this book, the authors discuss practical ways that one can assess, intervene, and even enhance wellbeing. They do this through examining the concepts of feedback for hybrid teams, the importance of interesting work, and career wellbeing among other important topics. They finish their work by presenting practical examples that can be utilized in the “new normal” work environment. It is hoped that through examining these books, you will be able to support your ongoing developmental efforts.

Profile in Leadership

In every issue of the JCLD, we have a section where we do a deep dive on a leader, since we know that intentional investigation of what previous leaders have done can help robust and inform our own leadership and character development. Understanding what these noted leaders were dealing with, the decisions they made, and the outcomes that resulted, are very informative and help us learn from one another. For this issue’s profile, John Abbatiello (USFA Class of 1987) examines General James H. “Jimmy” Doolittle.

He keys in on Eighth Air Force Memorandum 75-1, which dealt with crew rotations during World War II. Through his examination, Abbatiello describes Doolittle’s decision processes and need for moral courage in countering the culture of the time regarding aircrews and targeting. He highlights examples, such as the targeting of Berlin, to show how Doolittle, even though he was at opposition with his superiors, was able to effect change in organizational culture.

Looking Ahead

Historically, the JCLD has been published three times a year. In the future, we are undergoing a revision that will add changes to the format and content of the Journal. We will still keep our focus on character and leadership development, but we will incorporate formal sections (e.g., Research, Program/Intervention, Insights, etc.) that will help to organize the content into more predictable segments. More will follow on the upcoming changes, but they will take place over the next 12 months.

If you have an interest in submitting manuscripts to the JCLD or know of someone who would be interesting to have a conversation with, please contact me at douglas.lindsay@afacademy.af.edu with your ideas.