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FEATURE ARTICLE

Examining Cadets' Beliefs about Meditation Using the Reasoned Action Approach

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ABSTRACT

Meditation has been shown to be a character and virtue formation tool due to its emotion regulation capabilities. Training academies can help their students better develop their character by enabling meditation behavior acquisition. This study examines United States Military cadets' beliefs about meditation as a means of informing education and intervention programming to maximize the likelihood of cadets adopting the behavior. Implications and suggestions for character education programs are provided.

Keywords: Meditation, Mindfulness, Character Formation, Behavior Theory

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Authors' Statement:

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Introduction

At the core of our armed forces military academies' missions, to include the United States Naval Academy, the United States Military Academy, and the United States Air Force Academy, is to develop leaders of character. Development suggests an intentional training regiment, leader entails someone who will go first and be willing to stand alone, and character is the core of a person comprised of his or her dispositions and traits (Lamb et al., 2021). Promoting such development is no small task for our military academies given the pressure and demands placed on commissioned officers. The development of our future military leaders requires intention and effort in providing these young men and women with proven means by which their character can be formed.

Virtues, or excellences of character, are constellations of positive psychological constructs that motivate moral behavior (Berkowitz, 2012). While scholars once minimized the importance of emotions for character, today it is believed that emotions are the main driver of many character-related behaviors (Haidt, 2003). Consequently, effective emotion regulation strategies are essential for forming virtue.

Meditation is a behavior whose origin dates back thousands of years in various religious traditions and has become increasingly popular in modern society (Clarke et al., 2018) and in scientific inquiry (Baminiwatta & Solangaarachchi, 2021). Defined as a variety of complex mental activities aimed at attention and emotion regulation for the purpose of well-being promotion (Lutz et al., 2008), in its original form within some religious contexts, the practice was intended to shape the soul or character of the individual (Willard, 1998).

Recent work suggests that meditation enables character and virtue cultivation by down-regulating negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger) that often underlie viscous behavior and upregulating positive emotions (e.g., courage, compassion) that lead to virtuous behavior; this is done through cultivating states of mind that are foundational for virtue (Upton, 2017). There is growing empirical evidence for this assertion in meta-analyses and systematic reviews of meditation interventions. A meta-analysis of meditation studies for health and well-being concluded that meditation reduces stress, anxiety, and depression (Goyal et al., 2014). A review of Mindfulness Meditation (a type of meditation that trains present moment awareness) conducted by RAND for the United States Army found support for meditation's ability to increase attention control and emotion regulation, and reduce stress (Hepner et al., 2022). Finally, a recent systematic review of Mindfulness Meditation neuroscience studies identified the neurobiological underpinnings of meditation's ability to promote self-regulation by improving brain networks and regions associated with attention control, emotion regulation, and self-awareness (Tang et al., 2015).

Researchers have also found evidence for meditation's ability to impact different aspects of prosociality including interpersonal connectedness, empathy, and compassion (Kreplin et al., 2018; Luberto et al., 2018). It was noted in one meta-analysis of the impact of meditation on prosociality that the emotional mechanisms enhanced through meditation that lead to more prosociality include increased positive affect, decreased stress and negative affect, and greater trait mindfulness (Luberto et al., 2018). These findings provide empirical support for the idea that meditation enables individuals to develop the mental states, specifically attention control, emotion regulation, and social connectedness, that are central to many of the virtues (Upton, 2017).

Taken together, the evidence suggests meditation can be an important character and virtue cultivating tool that can help our nation's training academies more effectively accomplish the core of their mission to develop leaders of character. But, a challenge perhaps unique to helping future officers adopt meditation as a practice is the perception that meditation is "soft" and has no place

in the military or leadership training (Richtel, 2019). How can this be overcome? A starting point is to better understand future officers' beliefs about meditation.

The Reasoned Action Approach (RAA), a decision-making and behavior theory, suggests that an individual's beliefs about a behavior must be captured and examined prior to attempting to change or adopt the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The theory identifies a person's intention to engage the behavior as the primary behavioral determinant, which is influenced by three constructs: Attitude toward the behavior, perceived norms regarding the behavior, and a person's perceived behavioral control (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Underlying each of these factors is a set of beliefs about the consequences of engaging in the behavior, social referents, and circumstances that facilitate or create barriers for performing the behavior. However, according to the theory, not all beliefs influence intention, only the top-of-the-mind beliefs do. By understanding these commonly held beliefs, intervention designers can create programs that reinforce positive beliefs about a behavior to support its acquisition. Negative beliefs that can prevent adoption of the behavior can be combatted. Interventions aimed at helping individuals change or adopt a variety of behaviors that have used the RAA as a guiding framework have been successful (Steinmetz et al., 2016).

Only two studies to date have been used to explore meditation beliefs using the RAA. One study examined a university population consisting of both students and faculty and found advantages of meditation (such as reducing stress and feeling calmer) and disadvantages including the amount of time it takes. The study also identified facilitators of meditation usage such as having time and a quiet space (Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014). A second study examined a high school student population and found similar advantages to the first study of reducing stress and enhancing relaxation and the disadvantage of taking time. Participants identified family members and friends as approvers of meditation, but a larger number said their friends would disapprove. Finally, similar to the first study, the main facilitator participants pointed to was having time and a space to meditate (Erbe et al., 2020).

The current study used the RAA as the theoretical framework as it has been successfully used to both change and predict a variety of behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Steinmetz et al., 2016). Our first aim was to explore the relationship between mindfulness and character in a cadet population. The second and primary aim of this study was to elicit the most frequently mentioned meditation beliefs of cadets at the United States Military Academy. The essential first step in this process, according to the RAA, was to specify the behavior in terms of action, target, context, and time (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The chosen action and target were United States Military Academy cadets meditating. The context was "anywhere" as to not limit responses, and the "time" was most days over the next week as it was assumed that a fair number of cadets would have tried meditating before or would have a somewhat regular practice.

Methods

Cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point were recruited for the current study through the SONA psychology pool in the fall semester of 2021 (IRB# 22-017). Participants received extra credit for their participation. Approximately 200 cadets enrolled in the study, while 191 successfully completed the elicitation items along with the demographic questions. We first provided participants with a definition of meditation as consisting of a focus of attention (a chosen word, the breath or present moment) and a non-judgmental attitude (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, 2022). Participants then completed a 23-item survey. After viewing the study information sheet and the provided definition, participants were able to complete the Qualtrics survey.

To examine the relationship between mindfulness and character in our cadet population, we used the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale consisting of 10-items (Feldman et al., 2007) (sample item: *I can tolerate emotional pain* rated from 1-Rarely/Not at All to 4-Almost Always) and a two-item measure of character (*I always act to promote the good in all circumstances, even in difficult and challenging situations* and *I am always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later* rated from 0-Not True of Me to 10-Completely True of Me) (VanderWeele, 2017).

The RAA items for the present study were developed consistent with RAA specifications (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) and prior meditation elicitation studies (Erbe et al., 2020; Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014). Six open-ended items were used to elicit beliefs regarding "meditating almost every day for the next 7 days." Two questions were related to consequences "what one good thing might happen to you if you meditate almost every day for the next 7 days?" and "What one bad thing might happen ...?" Two questions asked about those who might approve or disapprove of their attempts to meditate: "Who is one person or group that might support you meditating almost every day for the next 7 days" and "Who is the one person or group that might disapprove of you meditating?" Two questions were related to facilitators and barriers of meditating: "What is the one thing that might make it easier for you to meditate almost every day for the next 7 days" and "What is the one thing that might make it harder...?" Instructions were provided for responding to the elicitation items: "Please tell us the things that come to your mind for each of the following questions. List 1 top-of-the-mind response. There are no right or wrong answers; just write what comes to your mind first." Demographic information (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, year in school, and parent/caregiver military experience) was also solicited.

We conducted an inductive content analysis of the six open-ended item responses to create "themes" consisting of similar responses. Verbatim text responses from Qualtrics were downloaded to a separate Excel file for each of the six questions. Entire responses were reviewed and grouped together with similar responses in each category (advantage, disadvantage, those who approve, those who disapprove, facilitator, barrier). Once a group of responses was established (consisting of at least a few responses) it became a theme. Theme labels (taken directly from responses) became names for each code. After codes were established for each category, coding procedures were created to identify approximately 15 codes of the most common responses for each open-ended question. A team of two researchers with experience using the RAA analyzed each theme and recommended theme merging or differentiation. Themes were then re-created and reviewed by the research team.

After each theme was reviewed and agreed upon by the research team, independent data coding was conducted to establish reliability. First, a subset of responses (20% of the data for each of the categories: advantages, disadvantages, approve, disapprove, facilitator, barrier) was randomly selected and coded by two team members. Interrater reliability was then calculated and established using the kappa statistic. Kappas for five of the categories demonstrated a high level of reliability: 0.875 for advantages; 0.971 for approvers; 0.901 for disapprovers; 0.822 for facilitators; and 0.794 for barriers. A lower reliability initially was found for disadvantages (0.623), so the two raters discussed coding discrepancies, came to agreement on the discrepancies, and recoded a different random set of responses for the disadvantages category. After recoding, a Kappa of 1.000 was established and accepted for disadvantages (Landis & Koch, 1977).

After the codes were established, the primary investigator coded each response. Next, a frequency analysis was conducted to determine totals for each code and which code was mentioned most often. These were then reviewed, and codes were placed together with similar

codes to create larger themes as noted in each of the following tables.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the study sample are represented in Table 1. The final study sample (N = 191) included a much larger percentage of males than females and white/Caucasian than minority participants which is representative of the total cadet population at the United States Military Academy.[1] There was a slightly larger number of upperclassman participants (56%) than lowerclassman participants (43%) and most participants did not have a parent or caregiver with current or former military experience (70.7%; Table 1).

As a preliminary analysis, we investigated whether mindfulness and character were related in this population. When we examined the relationship, we found a statistically significant correlation of $r = 0.402$; $p < 0.001$. Given that mindfulness is related to character in cadets, we then investigated what might contribute to a practice known to develop mindfulness; that being meditation.

Results displayed below include the number of participants who mentioned each thematic code within the corresponding category. Some participants listed more than one response and since all responses were coded, some percentages may exceed 100%. Due to only the most common themes being identified, the number of participants who identified each theme will not equal the final analytical sample of 191.

The most common advantage belief of meditating most days of the next 7 days was *will help me relax* (36%, n = 69), which included responses such as "I may be more relaxed," "increase calm," and "increased peace." Another common advantage was *will reduce my stress* (31%, n = 61), which included responses such as "less stress" and "decrease in stress." A third common advantage was *will improve focus* (9%, n = 19) included responses such as "more focused" and "more focus in daily tasks" (Table 2).

The main disadvantage that emerged in the data involved issues with time including having less time for other things or losing time. The main disadvantage of *having less time for other things* (69%, n = 132) included responses such as "I lose study time" or "I might not get studying or homework done that I need to." This disadvantage also included responses about *losing time* with participants saying "loss of time" and "waste of time" (Table 2).

Roommates/Friends (45%, n = 87), *Family* (20%, n = 40) and *Staff and Faculty* (12%, n = 24) were identified by participants as individuals or groups of people that would approve of them meditating most days over the next 7 days. Most who identified *roommates or friends* responded with "my roommate" or "my friends." Most participants identifying *family* as approvers indicated "my mom" or "my family." Those who indicated *staff and faculty* responded with "my teachers" or "Center for Enhanced Performance" (Table 3).

Although a large percentage of participants identified roommates/friends as those that would approve of them meditating, a large percentage also indicated that *roommates/friends* would disapprove of them meditating. Specifically, 34% (n = 66) of participants responded with "roommate" or "my friends" when asked who would disapprove of them meditating. A large number of participants indicated that *No One* would disapprove of them meditating (28%, n = 55) with responses such as "no one" or "I cannot think of anyone." Finally, a third category of disapprovers included *staff and faculty* with responses such as "teachers/instructors" and "my TAC" (Table 3).

The salient circumstances that would facilitate or provide a barrier to meditating most days over the next 7 days for cadets mostly had to do with issues related to

1 Total cadet population demographics can be found here: https://datausa.io/profile/university/united-states-military-academy

Table 1

Participant Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Female	57	29
Male	130	68
Prefer not to say	2	1
Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	120	62.8
Black or African American	13	6.8
Latino or Hispanic	10	5.2
Asian or Asian American	30	15.7
Multiracial	12	8.5
Year in school		
Freshman (Plebe)	79	41.4
Sophomore (Yearling)	3	1.6
Junior (Cow)	88	46.1
Senior (Firstie)	19	9.9
Parent/Caregivers current/Former military		
Both	9	4.7
Father	42	22
Mother	1	0.5
None	135	70.7
Other	1	0.5
Days meditated past week		
0	112	58.6
1	31	16.2
2	13	6.8
3	11	5.8
4	6	3.1
5	10	5.2
6	2	1.0
7	4	2.1

(*Continued*)

Table 1
Continued

Characteristic	n	%
Meditation past year		
Never	35	18.3
A few times	58	30.4
Only for class at school or program	42	22.0
Once per month	8	4.2
A few times a month	27	14.1
Weekly	19	9.9

Table 2
Salient Perceived Consequences Meditating Most Days in the Next Seven Days

Consequence	n	%
Advantages		
Meditating most days in the next 7 days … (N = 191)		
Might help me relax	69	36
Might help me relax	33	17
Might make me calmer	26	13
Might give me more peace	13	6
Might reduce my stress	61	31
Might reduce my stress	52	27
Might make me less anxious	10	5
Might improve my focus	19	9
Might make me more self-aware	16	8
Might make me more self-aware	11	5
Might help me control my thoughts	3	1
Might make me more mindful	2	1
Might improve my mood	15	7
Might improve my mood	6	3
Might help me feel happier	4	2
Might help me have a more positive outlook	4	2
Might increase my gratitude	2	1
Might improve my mental and physical health	11	5
Might improve my mental health	5	2

(*Continued*)

Table 2
Continued

Consequence	n	%
Might lower my heart rate	3	1
Might lower my blood pressure	2	1
Might improve my brain function	1	0.5
Disadvantages		
Meditating most days in the next 7 days … (N = 191)		
Might mean I have less time for other things	132	69
Might mean I have less time for other things	64	33
Might take time/time loss	31	16
Might be a waste of time	27	14
Might disrupt time management	5	2
Might lead to no benefits	3	1
Might not have enough time	2	1
Might make me frustrated	16	8
Might make me frustrated	6	3
Might make me overwhelmed/overthink	6	3
Might give me stress	4	2
Might make me tired/Too relaxed	14	7
Nothing	9	4

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100%, since participants could list multiple answers.

Table 3
Salient Referents for Meditating Most Days in the Next Seven Days

Salient referents	n	%	Salient referents	n	%
Approving referents			**Disapproving referents**		
… might approve of me meditating most days in the next 7 days (N = 191)			... might disapprove of me meditating most days in the next 7 days (N = 191)		
Roommates/Friends	87	45	Roommates/Friends	66	34
Roommate	36	18	Roommate	41	21
Friend	31	16	Friend	15	7
Teammate	10	5	Teammate	–	–
Girlfriend	8	4	Girlfriend	–	–
Boyfriend	4	2	Boyfriend	–	–

(*Continued*)

Table 3
Continued

Salient referents	n	%	Salient referents	n	%
Approving referents			**Disapproving referents**		
… might approve of me meditating most days in the next 7 days (N = 191)			... might disapprove of me meditating most days in the next 7 days (N = 191)		
Peers	–	–	Peers	8	4
Cadets	–	–	Cadets	4	2
Family	40	20	Family	10	5
Family	10	5	Family	2	1
Parents	26	13	Parents	8	4
Parents	9	4	Parents	3	1
Mom/Mother	15	7	Mom/Mother	2	1
Dad/Father	2	1	Dad/Father	3	1
Sister	3	1	Sister	–	–
Brother	1	0.5	Brother	–	–
Faculty	24	12	Faculty	19	9
Teacher/Instructor	12	6	Teacher/Instructor	19	9
Center for enhanced performance	8	4	Center for enhanced performance	–	–
Coach	5	2	Coach	–	–
Spiritual leaders	14	7	Spiritual leaders	–	–
Yoga club/Instructor	8	4	Yoga club/Instruct	–	–
Religious leader	6	3	Religious leader	–	–
Military leader	5	2	Military leader	8	4
Team leader	3	1	Team leader	–	–
TAC officer	2	1	TAC officer	5	3
Officers	–	–	Officers	3	1
No one	–	–	No one	55	28

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100%, since participants could list multiple answers.

time. Facilitators included either *Having Time/Less To Do* (31%, n = 61) or *Scheduling Time For It* (38%, n = 73) which included responses such as "having more free time" and "deliberate scheduling of it." Conversely, *Having No Time/Having Things To Do* (71%, n = 138) was by far identified as the greatest barrier to meditating with responses such as "lack of time" and "homework requirements" (Table 4).

Table 4

Salient Circumstances for Meditating Most Days in the Next Seven Days

Salient circumstances	n	%	Salient circumstances	n	%
Facilitators			**Barriers**		
… might make it easier to meditate most days in the next 7 days (N = 191)			… might make it more difficult to meditate most days in the next 7 days (N = 191)		
Having time	35	18	Not having time	56	29
Having free/spare time	35	18	Having no time/free time	33	16
Not being busy	0	–	Being busy	23	12
Having less to do	26	13	Having things to do	82	42
Having less homework	20	10	Having homework	27	14
Having less tasks/obligations	6	3	Having tasks/obligations	13	6
			Having schoolwork	25	13
			Having school	11	5
			Having tests/WPR's	9	4
			Having sports	5	2
			Having papers	4	2
			Having a Thayer Week	4	2
Scheduling time/resources	73	38			
Scheduling it	28	14			
Setting aside time for it	26	13			
Having a reminder	11	5			
Waking up earlier/doing it in the morning	3	1			
Doing it before bed	2	1			
Adding it to a class or having designated times	3	1			
Having a conducive space	35	18	Not having a conducive space	28	14
Having a quiet space	24	12	Not having a quiet space	12	6
Having alone space	14	7	Not having an alone space	7	3
Having a space	4	2	Not having a space	0	–
Not having people around	1	0.5	Being around people	10	5
Having a support or accountability group	9	4			
Being able to ignore social media	2	1	Having distractions	11	5
			Being tired	5	2

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100%, since participants could list multiple answers.

Discussion

This study was the first to examine future officers' beliefs about meditation. Because meditation has been shown to be an effective character and virtue cultivating behavior (Kreplin et al., 2018; Luberto et al., 2018; Upton, 2017) and training academies share a common mission of developing leaders of character, understanding the beliefs these future officers hold about meditation should inform character education and program planning so as to increase the likelihood of behavior acquisition. Using the RAA as a guiding framework, beliefs related attitudes, norms, and behavioral control associated with meditating most days over the next 7 days were elicited. Because our study used a proven theory-based approach, education and intervention efforts based on these findings are likely to be effective (Steinmetz et al., 2016).

Our quantitative analysis of mindfulness' relationship with character revealed a strong and statistically significant correlation. This finding provides support for the suggestion that meditation is character and virtue forming by way of emotion regulation and mindfulness (Luberto et al., 2018). Because meditation enhances mindfulness, it can be an effective way to create the mental states that underlie moral character traits (Upton, 2017).

Our salient belief elicitation uncovered several top-of-the-mind consequences, referents, and circumstances that could influence future officers' decision to meditate. Participants identified advantages of meditation including greater relaxation, reduced stress, and improved focus that is consistent with empirical research showing meditation's ability to reduce stress and promote relaxation (Goyal et al., 2014; Hepner et al., 2022), and increase attention control (Hepner et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2007, 2015). Notably absent from participants' responses are the prosocial effects of meditation (Kreplin et al., 2018; Luberto et al., 2018). Advantages and disadvantages (will take time) elicited from the current study are strikingly similar to other meditation belief elicitations with college students (Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014) and high school students (Erbe et al., 2020). It is likely that with increasing numbers of individuals practicing meditation (Black et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2018) and more research being done on the behavior (Baminiwatta & Solangaarachchi, 2021) people are becoming more aware of meditation's benefits.

Many participants considered their roommates or friends as people who would approve of their meditating while the second largest group of "approvers" were family members followed by staff and faculty. Notably, the largest number of identified disapprovers was also roommates or friends along with a third category of disapprovers being staff and faculty who were also identified as approvers. These findings diverge from the meditation belief elicitation study with high school students being that unsurprisingly roommates are never identified as a referent but also a larger percentage considered family as approvers and a smaller percentage identified friends as approvers (Erbe et al., 2020). Our findings were, however, more similar to findings from the study with college students with respect to friends as approvers (although roommates were not identified) and family members (Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014). The divergent findings may be due to high school students' families being a more immediate social context while college students are with their friends much more frequently. Also, cadets are more likely to identify their roommates as either an approver or disapprover than college students due to having roommates all 4 years at the academy. It is noteworthy that cadets in the current study identified staff and faculty as approvers while some also identified staff and faculty as disapprovers given a recent study finding among cadets that their injunctive norms related to meditation or their perception that others think they should or should not meditate is a strong predictor of their meditation intention (Erbe et al., 2022).

Time was the most salient circumstance identified by participants that could either facilitate or create a barrier to their usage of meditation and was also considered the greatest disadvantage. This finding is consistent with meditation belief elicitation studies (Erbe et al., 2020; Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014) and a study investigating barriers to meditation practice (Williams et al., 2012). Participants did, however, offer the strategy of scheduling time to meditate as a means to overcome the time circumstance, which was also a strategy identified in the previous meditation belief elicitation studies (Erbe et al., 2020; Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014). Strategies for overcoming behavioral obstacles have been found in elicitation studies examining other behaviors (Middlestadt, 2012) and can provide solutions that the study population deems feasible. Enabling cadets to schedule time for meditation, adding it to scheduled activities such as classes or training, helping them see that even short doses of meditation consistently can have a positive effect (Kirby et al., 2021) may be helpful ways to overcome the time barrier.

The current study is not without limitations. A small, specific study sample was used and therefore results may not be generalizable to future officers at other training academies. Small sample sizes are, however, appropriate for elicitation studies (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The current study does provide a framework and model for researchers at other training academies interested in promoting meditation usage as a character cultivating tool among their future officers. Also, questions used in the present study did not undergo additional validity testing, but they were developed using RAA procedures (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) and were used in prior research examining meditation beliefs (Erbe et al., 2020; Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014).

Conclusions

Meditation has been shown to be an effective character cultivating behavior (Kreplin et al., 2018; Luberto et al., 2018; Upton, 2017) that training academies whose central mission is to develop leaders of character should help their future officers acquire to better accomplish that mission. Findings from the current study can inform character education and intervention efforts toward that end. Cadets perceive meditation to have benefits such as reduced stress, increased relaxation, and improved focus, which could be strengthened by sharing these benefits with future officers but should also understand that meditation can improve their emotion regulation and can enhance prosocial behavior as well. This information can be shared through character education and psychology courses. Cadets do see meditation as socially acceptable but view some peers and staff and faculty as disapproving of meditation. It is important that cadets perceive important others in their social environment as positive about meditation due to injunctive norms regarding meditation being an important predictor of their intention to meditate (Erbe et al., 2022). This could be accomplished by having meditation education and experiential programs for staff and faculty. For example, the United States Military Academy at West Point hosts a meditation retreat for staff and faculty and offers meditation session throughout the year approximately once per week. Finally, helping cadets see that meditation can have positive effects even in small doses (Kirby et al., 2021), enabling them to schedule time to meditate, and adding it to classes and training may increase the likelihood of cadets meditating. Equipping future officers with the practice of meditation can better enable service academies to accomplish their mission and help them become the leaders of character they are meant to be.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

A Strategic Organizational Approach to Developing Leadership Developers

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ABSTRACT

In leadership development, the emphasis is often on the direct development of the individual, focusing on the individual's development as a leader or on skills to deal with the process of leadership. However, less attention is paid to developing those that develop the leaders–the leadership developers. This article provides two frameworks to consider in developing leaders through a layered approach focused on leadership developers rather than simply those that are being developed. The first framework highlights the levels of leadership development within an organization: the emerging leaders, those that develop the leaders–leadership developers, and those that develop the leadership developers–leadership tutors. All levels require cognitive understanding of the necessary leadership concepts–*knowing*, behavioral patterns that foster success–*doing*, and cultivation of affective qualities of "*being a leader*." The article highlights how the experiential learning cycle serves as a foundation for both leader and leadership development as it enables emerging leaders to grow in the domains of *knowing, doing*, and *being* a leader and gaining leadership skills. The article further highlights how leadership developers support the development of emerging leaders by actively engaging the experiential leader cycle. The second framework links the experiential learning cycle with a deliberately developmental organization focused on continued growth of those within the organization relative to core leader and leadership competencies. The deliberately developmental leader-

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ship organization utilizes principles embedded into the culture of the organization, practices enacted by all in the organization, and community to robustly form successful leaders.

Introduction

Leadership can't be taught. Leaders are born, not made. The only way to learn leadership is at the school of hard knocks. These myths of leadership development still exist today despite decades of study that demonstrate they are in reality, myths. The science of leadership development is ongoing and increasingly revealing leadership as complex, occurring through a social dynamic process (Hollander, 2009; Wallace et al., 2021). In the process of leadership, there is an interaction that takes place between the leader, the followers, and the context of the leadership situation (Avolio, 2007; Silva, 2016). For decades, leadership development programs have tried to enhance leaders and improve their ability to navigate this social dynamic process. However, no singular solution has abounded, and leadership development programs have fallen short due to a gap between leadership theory and practice (Day & Thornton, 2017), allowing the myths to persist.

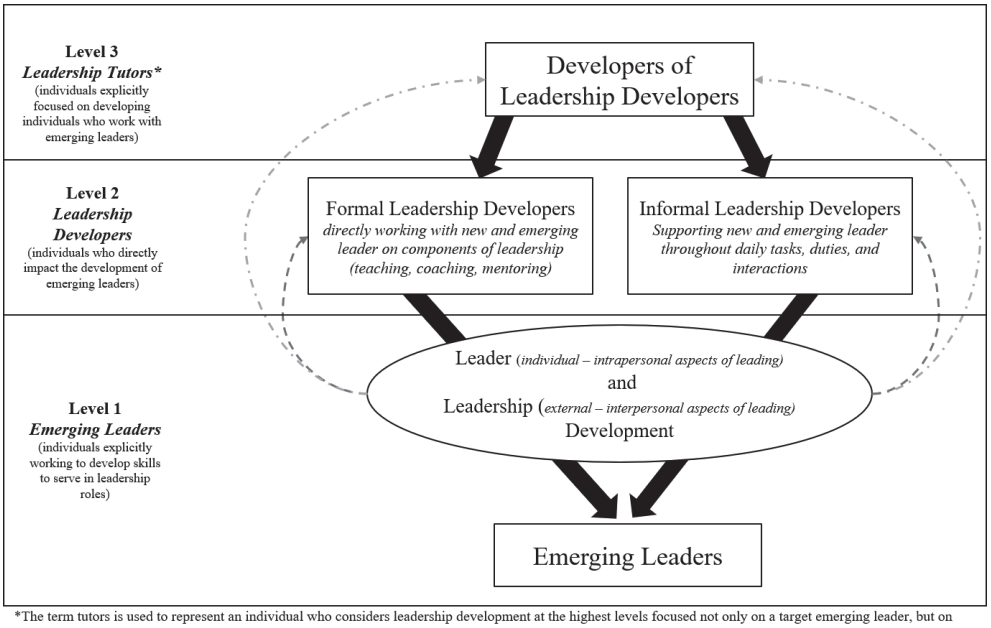
There is agreement that to develop a well-rounded leader, leadership development programs must focus on both the advance of the person, the leader, as well as pedagogy regarding the leadership process (Day et al., 2009; Lunsford & Brown, 2017). However, this focus on both the leader and social dynamic process of leadership alone does not develop expert leaders (Day & Thornton, 2017). Over the last decade, a more holistic approach to the complexities of leadership development has begun. Researchers have suggested that leadership development programs should concentrate on cognitive, behavioral, and affective development (Kolditz et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2021). Others have highlighted how leadership development must take place over time, where long-term development only occurs with deliberate and dedicated practice (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Recent research proposes the importance of a deliberately developmental organization (DDO) approach to leadership development (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). A DDO embeds an enriching and holistic approach within the culture of the organization.

To establish a culture that fosters this continuous development, there must be an emphasis on developing both the target audience—the emerging leaders—as well as the key influencers that will have an impact on the target audience. Yet, leadership development programs and organizations focus almost exclusively on developing the target audience. Little emphasis is placed on developing the individuals—*leadership developers*—who have an impact on the emerging leaders. Leadership developers are those who serve in both formal and informal roles to develop future and emerging leaders' cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively through both short-term and long-term interactions.

This article will begin to address these gaps by providing a framework to think of leadership development through a multilayered approach focused on the target audience—the emerging leaders—those that develop the leaders—the leadership developers—and those that develop the leadership developers—the leadership tutors. This framework requires a consideration of the multiple levels of leadership development, which are presented in Figure 1. In the model, Level 1 entails the emerging leaders, where development of both the leader at the individual (intrapersonal) and leadership (interpersonal) level can be achieved with a focus on building specific competencies. Level 2 incorporates those that formally and informally serve to develop emerging leaders, referenced as leadership developers. Level 3 holds the leadership tutors; those that dedicate time explicitly to developing the leadership

Figure 1

Levels of Leadership Development.



*The term tutors is used to represent an individual who considers leadership development at the highest levels focused not only on a target emerging leader, but on those that will impact that emerging leader.

Lines – – – and – · – · represent the idea that both Leadership Developers and Leadership Tutors are constantly honing their leader and leadership capabilities.

developers. One important component in the model is that leadership development is perpetual. Thus, leadership developers and leadership tutors must continuously focus on their own leader and leadership competencies to avoid stagnation. This article will first highlight developmental approaches that should inform the development of leaders. Then, using the model presented in Figure 1, the article will build a framework for a multilayered approach for leadership development focused on both the emerging leaders and the leadership developers.

Approaches to Development

Domains of Learning

An approach to development in general that applies equally to leadership development incorporates three domains of learning: the cognitive, behavioral, and affective (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001; Bloom et al., 1956). Development across these domains ensures complete understanding of the concept being taught (knowing), deliberate practice (doing), and personal integration of the idea into how one operates (being). The cognitive domain contains the intellectual development—*knowing* (Bloom et al., 1956). In this domain, there are six levels which range from basic awareness of a certain idea (remembering) to being able to synthesize and generate new ideas based on the underlying knowledge of a concept. In the development of leaders, this *knowing*, or the cognitive domain, must be integrated into the developmental process to ensure the individual has foundational knowledge about components of human behavior (both their own and others) and the dynamics of teams, organizations, and society that impact leadership effectiveness (Day & Zaccaro, 2004; Kolditz et al., 2021).

The behavioral domain describes psychomotor functions—*doing* (Harrow, 1972). In this domain, the

emphasis is on physically accomplishing tasks, performing movements, and skills; the highest level is a mastery of the skills. Leadership is inherently an active endeavor; it requires a leader to respond to others and the situation in which one is immersed. Leaders must *do;* they cannot passively allow the world to shift around them. Thus, leadership development should include a focus on *doing* activities associated with leading. In other words, effective leadership development programs incorporate a focus on the behavioral domain of learning (Brown, 2022; Kolditz et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2021).

The affective domain entails emotions and attitudes—*being* (Bloom et al., 1956). Development in this domain enables individuals to move from lower processing of emotions to higher processing (placing value on ideas which enable an individual to find solutions to intrapersonal or interpersonal issues) (Krathwohl et al., 1964; Pierre & Oughton, 2007). In general, the ability to process information at more complex levels and in turn respond to the world centers on internalization which is central to development in the affective domain (Hoque, 2016). One progresses through the affective domain of learning with an internalization process where comprehension of an emotion goes from general awareness to a value that guides or controls behavior. For leadership development, the affective domain—*being*—is central to one's growth as a leader (Kolditz et al., 2021). Much of leading centers on awareness of one's emotions, which become internalized into the leader's values that then serve to guide the leader in responding to situations (Wallace et al., 2021). Thus, leadership development programs are remiss if they do not focus on the affective—*being*—aspects of leading.

Although each of the domains has a specific focus, learning activities can certainly overlap. One of the ways to magnify and capitalize on this overlap is to combine the domains of learning with other developmental approaches, such as the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). There is support to suggest developmental approaches that combine the learning domains with experiential learning lead to higher level cognition, psychomotor acumen, and affective capabilities (Bergsteinera & Avery, 2014; Simm & Marvell, 2015).

Developmental Approach

Experiential learning theory lays out a holistic learning process which enables individuals to learn, grow, and develop complex capabilities (Kolb et al., 2014). There are four components of the learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Concrete experience involves having an experience; the behavioral domain of learning, and at times the cognitive depending on the experience, is engaged during this phase. This experience generates emotions. Reflective observation centers on analyzing the emotions generated by the experience, reflecting upon the experience or engaging the affective domain of learning. Abstract conceptualization moves to thinking about the experience which generates learning, which involves both the affective and cognitive domains. Finally, during active experimentation, one tries out what they have learned engaging the behavioral domain through doing.

Experiential learning can serve as a foundation for leader and leadership development programs (Guthrie & Bertrand Jones, 2012; Huey et al., 2014). Relative to leadership, an example of the experiential learning cycle can be seen on the athletic field with the team captain pushing the members of the team to peak performance. As the team has a concrete experience, losing against a team they should have beaten, for example, the team captain reflects on what she or he observed, formulates a concept of why it happened, and then draws conclusions. The team captain then actively experiments with ways to address the conceptualization that mitigates the problem in the hopes of a more positive future experience, the team winning their next game. This cycle con-

tinues in the hope of optimizing behavior for optimal performance.

The experience learning theory is used in leadership development at service academies, such as the U.S. Naval Academy (Huey et al., 2014), in the development of business leaders (Baden & Parks, 2013), and broadly in leadership education (Guthrie & Bertrand Jones, 2012). In leadership development organizations, the experiential learning cycle may be used either explicitly or implicitly (Guthrie & Bertrand Jones, 2012; Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Individuals at leadership institutions or programs who are tasked with developing leaders utilize key elements of the cycle (Huey et al., 2014), specifically the reflection and conceptualization phases, to drive home lessons that allow the students to effectively generate and experiment with their own leadership style. Learning about leadership in the classroom, as one example of where development in the cognitive domain can be found, is only one step in the effective leadership learning process.

To impact the affective domain, cognitive learning must be followed up with an experiential process that can leverage the reflection and conceptualization phases of Kolb's (1984) cycle to alter the behavioral domain (Wallace et al., 2021). These critical elements of this learning process, the reflection and conceptualization phases, can often be overlooked, especially by those that have been in leadership positions for years but lack the leadership education background to understand the process of developing leaders. The importance of reflection in this cycle has been documented (e.g., Healey & Jenkins, 2000; Leberman & Martin, 2004), as well as the importance of reflection in general to leadership development (e.g., Raver Luning & Raver, 2021; Wu & Crocco, 2019). Being a leader does not imply that one can effectively develop leaders or provide leadership development; it requires an educated understanding of the key components of the learning cycle and most importantly, the space in the development process for reflection and conceptualization to occur which helps one in *becoming* a leader.

Developing Emerging Leaders

Moving beyond the general frameworks that are informing the development of leaders, we must consider the specific methods used for building emerging leaders (Level 1 from Figure 1). In developing leaders, it is important to strike a balance between developing the person through a concentration on the intrapersonal aspects of behavior and teaching the individual how to navigate the social dynamic process (interpersonal aspects) of leadership (Dalakoura, 2010). If too much emphasis is placed on intrapersonal aspects of developing a leader, there is a risk of generating an individual who is highly aware of who he or she is, but lacks the ability to form and foster relationships that are the key to the process of leadership (Wood & Dibben, 2015). On the other hand, if developmental approaches are grounded in merely a process perspective, there is the potential to generate leaders who can form relationships and accomplish shared goals, but lack insight into who they are (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Before thriving in a leadership role, leaders need to expend effort to develop themselves as individuals first, taking primarily a leader development focus (Wallace et al., 2021). As the individual gains greater self-awareness and strong underlying values, it then becomes important to transition to building skills related to the process components of leadership.

Leader Development

As described in the previous sections, the development of the leader can be maximized by linking cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning to experiential leadership activities that are connected to the four phases of the experiential learning cycle. Allowing space for the reflective and conceptual aspects of learning not only deepens the leader development process but increases the longevity of development for the leader (Guthrie & Bertrand Jones, 2012).

One of the primary goals of integrating these developmental frameworks is to increase self-awareness of basic human functioning and personal values, both of which are central to developing the person as a leader (Karp, 2013; Karp & Helgø, 2009). Capitalizing on this awareness, attention can then begin on specific attributes and skills for personal excellence. One way to approach this development of specific attributes and skills is to categorize them broadly into competencies. Competencies are the clusters of related behaviors (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2009) which stem from the knowledge and skills that drive behavior (Koedijk et al., 2021). Interest in developing competencies has a long history as an approach to leader and leadership development (e.g., Boyatzis, 1982; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2009; McClelland, 1973; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). While there is debate as to the value of competency-based approaches to developing leaders (e.g., Bolden & Gosling, 2006; Conger & Ready, 2004), there has been an ongoing push to integrate some type of competency development as one is growing as a leader (Fowler, 2018; Wallace et al., 2021).

One competency-based approach to leader and leadership development was presented by Macris et al. (in press). This framework breaks down the focus relative to four meta-competencies with several subsidiaries. Two of those meta-competencies and respective subsidiary competencies highlight the intrapersonal aspects of developing as a leader: self-leadership and character. This competency approach provides a way to consider the multiple aspects of leader development and ingrain these competencies using the *know, do, be* framework linked to the phases of the experiential learning cycle. Mastery of the competencies involves an individual moving along a continuum to develop expertise. The individual initially learns the basics of what the competency is, cognition or *knowing*. As the individual moves further on the continuum, they begin *doing* (developing the competency through behaviors), gaining more acumen in the competency. Then, through programs that focus on the experiential learning cycle, specifically the reflective and conceptualization components, the emerging leader gains more expertise in the competency as they begin to value it—*be*—as part of their leadership identity. Table 1 presents the specific intrapersonal competencies. Ultimately, an approach such as this generates self-aware leaders who have a clear sense of their identity and are invested in their ongoing development.

Leadership Development

Despite the mistaken tendency for many to interchange leader development with leadership development, the two terms signify separate concepts (Day et al., 2014). Leadership development moves beyond just the leader and represents an expansion of collective capability to engage in the social dynamic aspects of leadership, the leadership process (Day, 2000; Wallace et al., 2021). The complex interaction between the leader, the followers, and the teams and organizations in which they are immersed, which is further influenced by the environment, requires a cognitive understanding of the multitude of interacting elements as well as a learned behavioral response. In leadership development, experimentation with group interaction followed by reflective observation and conceptualization is critical to achieve leadership effectiveness (Wallace et al., 2021). The greater the extent this takes place, the greater the organization collectively utilizes the leadership process to effectively achieve its goals and thereby reinforces the leader's realization of affective learning, in essence emotionally feeling like a leader—*being*.

Similar to leader development, a competency-based approach can be used for leadership development, which provides a method for those that influence leadership development to have the most impact. Leadership development that incorporates a set of competencies—interpersonal behaviors as well as small unit leadership skills can lead to greater leadership

Table 1

Leader Development Competencies

Self Leadership	
Competency	**Demonstration of Competency**
Self-Awareness	Excellent leaders are self-aware of their internal states and motivations
Self-Development	Excellent leaders lead and develop themselves with insight, intention, and consistency
Decision Making	Excellent leaders are excellent thinkers and decision makers
Individual Talents	Excellent leaders understand and optimize their talents
Emotional Management	Excellent leaders proactively engage and manage their emotions
Optimal Performance	Excellent leaders can create resilience and set the conditions for optimal performance
Cultural Competency	Excellent leaders effectively integrate themselves within cultures
Character	
Competency	**Demonstration of Competency**
Prudence	Excellent leaders exemplify good judgment and practical wisdom
Justice	Excellent leaders recognize both rights and duties and strive for a fairness
Fortitude	Excellent leaders have the courage to pursue the good in the face of danger
Temperance	Excellent leaders exercise self control and align their behavior with their values and intentions

effectiveness (Table 2). Similar to the intrapersonal and character competencies, the leadership competencies incorporate a spectrum of understanding moving from knowledge (cognition) to psychomotor acumen (learning through doing—behaviors) to expertise which centers on affective adoption (being) of the competency. A combination of the leader and leadership competencies provides a robust approach and allows leadership developers a deliberate destination for their development activities.

Developing Leadership Developers

As we consider Level 2 and to a lesser degree Level 3 (a robust discussion of the leadership tutors is beyond the scope of this article and will be addressed in future work) from Figure 1, it is important to consider how to move beyond direct leader and leadership development to developing leadership developers—those directly and indirectly focused on building emerging leaders' competencies. In many ways, the idea of developing leadership developers can be likened to train-the-trainer concepts. Train-the-trainer models are often used in professional settings as a way to provide training to those responsible for delivering professional development material to a targeted audience (Pancucci, 2007; van Baarle et al., 2017). Yet, there is minimal literature linking train-the-trainer frameworks to leader and leadership development. Persaud et al. (2022) study a link between train-the-trainer programs for opioid reduction in the workplace to

Table 2

Leadership Development Competencies

Interpersonal Skills	
Competency	**Demonstration of Competency**
Social Skills	Excellent leaders are highly socially intelligent and competent
Building and Maintaining Relationships	Excellent leaders establish and maintain high quality relationships of trust
Communication Skills	Excellent leaders communicate effectively
Performance Management	Excellent leaders help make other people great (e.g., goal setting, feedback, coaching, mentoring)
Resolving Conflict and Difference	Excellent leaders capitalize on diversity and manage conflicts
Exercising Influence	Excellent leaders effectively influence others
Generating Motivation	Excellent leaders use multiple approaches to generate motivation
Small Unit Leadership	
Competency	**Demonstration of Competency**
Professional Competence and Presence	Excellent leaders exemplify professional competence [Inhabiting the standard]
Providing Vision and Creating Purpose	Excellent leaders provide vision and direction
Implementing, Executing, and Monitoring	Excellent leaders create and sustain the structures necessary for effective function with a bias for action while managing risk
Delegating	Great leaders lead through others
Building Cohesion and Inclusivity	Excellent leaders lead and manage teams so that the sum is greater than the parts
Engaging Culture and Climate	Excellent leaders understand and engage the cultures and climates of their units and manage change

leadership program goals; however, this does not link the train-the-trainer model to specific development of leaders or leadership skills. Thus, to gather a robust underpinning for developing leadership developers, we move beyond a focus on train-the-trainer models. One approach to developing leadership developers that extends beyond the train-the-training framework is to create DDOs that focus on an ongoing developmental approach within organizations that are embedded into the culture (Kegan & Lahey, 2016).

Deliberately Developmental Organizations

The central principle with DDO is that organizations are able to thrive when they are aligned with people's motivations to grow (Kegan et al., 2014a). Developing individuals is woven into the cultural norms of DDOs; they are driven by the notion that adults can grow and everyone within the organization contributes to the growth of one another. There are three main developmental features of DDOs: principles, practices, and community (Kegan et al., 2014b). DDOs are driven by

a set of deeply ingrained principles, which drive daily decision making. These principles center on embedding a growth mindset (Dweck, 2016) into the individuals in the organization and weaving a culture of growth mindset (Murphy & Dweck, 2010) into the fabric of the organization.

Developmental practices are applied to carry out these developmental principles in the daily and ongoing operations of DDOs (Kegan et al., 2014b). Developmental practices of DDOs set them apart from other organizations in that they depart from the routines, structure, and language of most organizations. One of the key aspects of developmental practices is that individuals feel they can be their true self in DDOs. They are able to be authentic to their values, which is at the core of developing one's leader identity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Finally, community plays a central role in DDOs where value is placed on the individual, all are held accountable, and there is real and sustained dialogue.

A Framework for Developing Leadership Developers

We propose that to optimize the development of emerging leaders, a concerted effort must be placed on the development of the leadership developers. This can be accomplished through the creation of a DDO concentrated not merely on growth alone but growth within the domains of leadership, specifically ongoing and continual growth of leader and leadership competencies. Considering the three features of a DDO (Kegan et al., 2014b), the developmental principles, practices, and community, within the context of leader and leadership development provide the optimum holistic framework for building a leadership development culture in the organization.

Developmental principles are those that can be understood and embodied by each member of the organization regardless of their job title as it relates to leader and leadership development. They are unifying principles, *North Stars*, that align the members of the leadership development program or organization so that all are in tune with one another (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). A leadership focused DDO leverages a growth mindset (Dweck, 2016), to not only embrace overcoming obstacles for the emerging leader but also with navigating the complexity of learning successful group interaction. Closely related is that errors and mistakes are allowed and viewed as opportunities for this growth (Kegan et al., 2014b). The experimentation phase of the learning cycle fully expects that mistakes will be made and learned from; this is an essential part of the leader and leadership development process (Wallace et al., 2021). The leadership DDO as an organizational principle provides space for mistakes to happen. More specifically, these mistakes are in the realms of leadership actions and decisions, enabling all those within the program or organization to build and foster their leadership acumen.

There is also interdependence between the desired goals and outcomes of the organization along with the prioritization of the members of the organization (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). This interdependence parallels the ideas of leadership effectiveness providing a balance between results (task and mission accomplishment) and the retention (taking care of the people) of the followers (Horstman, 2016). This interdependence principle suggests that the desired results of the organization can be achieved with a focus on the members. The two elements are not separate or prioritized over one another. Ensuring these principles are realized by all members of the organization is an essential component of a leadership development focused DDO and provides the foundation for its critical practices.

A leadership DDO community comprises all three sub-groups of Figure 1: emerging leaders, formal and informal leadership developers, as well as leadership development tutors charged with developing those that educate others in leadership principles and practices. It is this community that utilizes the experiential learning

cycle (Kolb, 1984) to enhance cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning. Both leader and leadership development occur as the developmental practice within the learning cycle. The practices provide output measured with leader and leadership competencies, which are the developmental principles of the DDO.

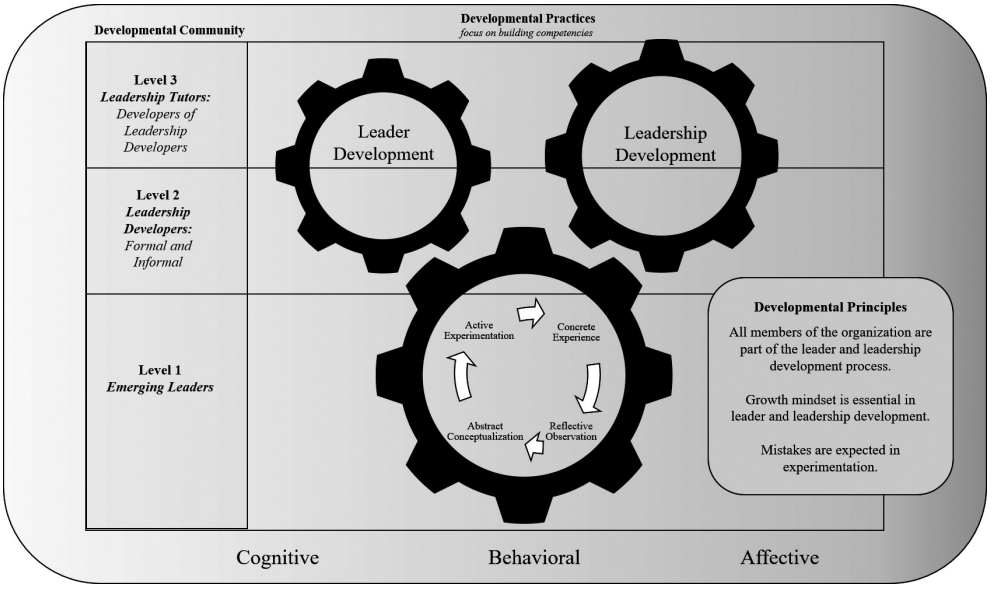
The developmental practices of a leadership DDO incorporate the elements of the experiential learning cycle along the domains of learning by the developmental community of the program or organization. Whether a formal or informal leadership developer, all members of the leadership DDO play a role in the cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning of the emerging leaders. This is accomplished through understanding the experiential learning cycle as an organizational standard and then actively allowing room for reflective observation, conceptualization, and experimentation to take place. Developmental practices incorporate this cycle in both leader and leadership development, as well as across the three domains of learning as a way to embed the development deeply into the culture of the leadership organization. These practices are specific to leadership DDO's. Figure 2 presents a framework for how all of these components of a leadership DDO converge.

Conclusion

Leadership research over the last several decades provided a distinct refutation of the common leadership myths of the past that leadership cannot be taught or that the school of hard-knocks is the only possible avenue for leadership development (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Day & Thornton, 2017; Kolditz et al., 2021; Lunsford & Brown, 2017; Wallace et al., 2021). This article highlights how both leader and leadership development can be embedded into the culture of an organization to foster true development utilizing a DDO (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). This leadership focused DDO is comprised of formal and informal leadership developers, common principles shared across the organization that enhances learning, as well as common practices in which learning is cognitive, behavioral, and affective

Figure 2

Leadership Focused Deliberately Developmental Organizational Framework.



which serve to generate and inform one's leader identity. This approach requires a concerted effort from those that develop the developers (leadership tutors) to influence leader and leadership development taking a targeted focus on developing leadership developers, to properly create this framework. More work is certainly needed in studying the effectiveness of such leadership development tutors in creating this framework, the best approaches to developing leadership developers, and the outcomes of developing the emerging leaders.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Warrior Ethos versus Well-Being: Correcting a Cultural Dichotomy

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ABSTRACT

The Army's warrior mindset, while crucial for being successful in battle, can also lead to chronic suppression of emotions, and hamper help-seeking behavior. Messages to prioritize well-being are often presented in a confusing juxtaposition to the warrior mindset. In spite of the Army's emphasis on a "People First Strategy," accompanied by calls to reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, the culture of toughness created by the Warrior Ethos continues to be an imposing obstacle for those in need of help. We integrate the Healthy Minds framework with the Army ethos, to focus on the development of foundational skills: mindfulness, connection, insight, and purpose. Our hope is this framework will contribute to a culture that views the Warrior Ethos and well-being as complementary, rather than conflicting, ideas.

Keywords: Well-Being, Warrior Ethos, Army, Mindfullness, Emotional Regulation

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Introduction

Cadets at the United States Military Academy memorize the Warrior Ethos during their first week of training: "I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade." Cadets are taught physical and mental toughness: to manage pain and fatigue during ruck marches and summer military training, and to conquer fear in classes like boxing. This "tough" messaging is crucial to their indoctrination as Army officers. Enduring hardships and managing stress are part of building the capacity to handle future challenges and develop resilience, which the Army defines as "the mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral ability to face and cope with adversity, adapt to change, recover, learn, and grow from setbacks" (Department of the Army 350–53, 2014). The Warrior Ethos and the message of perseverance against all odds are embedded throughout the Army's culture (i.e., the 1st Infantry Division's motto is "No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great, Duty First!").

While the Warrior Ethos can create a culture of determination and motivation, it can also encourage soldiers to be stoic and to ignore their feelings (Piellusch, 2017; Weiss & Coll, 2011). Edgar Schein's (2004) organizational culture model provides "artifacts" as observable manifestations of a culture's unobservable "espoused beliefs and values" and even deeper, the "underlying assumptions." Some observable artifacts are the hierarchical rank structures that drive decisions, the use of uniforms and standardization across personnel, equipment, and even regulations, and dedicated daily time for physical fitness training. Even this superficial list of artifacts demonstrates organizational norms and values of obedience, subordination, sacrifice, conformity, reliability, strength, and resilience. The underlying assumptions that support these values are that the military is a high-performance organization and one that relies on the consistency of its members to achieve this, that group collectivism and teamwork is an important part of the organizational framework, and that individual fitness and reliability contribute to these ends (Gerras et al., 2008). Considering this culture, it follows that soldiers would shirk individualism and concern for themselves, as they may directly contradict the needs of the group.

The reality is being successful in battle *does* require leaders to temporarily suppress fear, discomfort, and stress to focus on the task at hand; remaining calm during combat helps the soldier focus on their mission first (Bryan et al., 2012). For the long-term, however, chronic ignoring of or suppressing of feelings may lead to difficulties with identifying, understanding, accepting, and modulating emotions (Gross, 2002; Gross & Levenson, 1997), and sustained lack of emotional awareness or expression can create longer-lasting emotional difficulties (Davies et al., 2019). Consistently ignoring or suppressing emotions should not be equated with *emotion regulation* (a positive strategy to exert influence over emotions). The habitual suppression of emotional distress, common to military culture even away from the battlefield, is related to negative outcomes such as heavy alcohol consumption and illicit drug use, inappropriate aggressive behavior and violent outbursts, domestic violence, and physical or sexual assault (reviewed in Stanley & Larsen, 2021). Ironically, the ethos intended to strengthen a warrior during combat may lead to long-term emotional damage once combat is over (Davies et al., 2019).

Compounding the problem, the Army's culture of toughness has been implicated in impeding help-seeking behavior, with many service personnel believing that those who seek help are "weak" (Weiss & Coll, 2011). Seeking help can appear to run counter to the military culture's emphasis on perseverance and self-reliance (Gibbons et al., 2014). Individuals with strong beliefs and values about honor tend to be concerned with how seeking help for mental health issues will negatively impact their reputations (Brown et al., 2014; Foster et al., 2020; Gul et al., 2021). Gender norms must also

be taken into account when considering this issue. Men make up 82.8% of the Department of Defense's (DoD) active duty force and 84.5% of the Army's active duty force (United States Department of Defense, 2020). In general, men are less likely to seek help for mental health issues than women (DeBate et al., 2018; Silvestrini & Chen, 2022), as are individuals who conform to dominant United States masculinity norms (Vogel et al., 2011). Militaries have historically valued and promoted traits more commonly associated with stereotypical masculinity and the Army is no exception to this cultural practice (Do & Samuels, 2020; Schaefer et al., 2021). The perceived masculine cultural ideal may be incongruous with soldiers' perceptions of the acceptability of seeking help or treatment (Cogan et al., 2021).

Indeed, soldiers who met the screening criteria for a mental health problem were twice as likely to report concerns about stigma and other barriers to care than those who did not meet the criteria (Hoge et al., 2004). Notably, the mental health care utilization rate is lower for military members than for the general population (Hom et al., 2017). This lower utilization may partially explain the discrepancy in diagnoses; 8.4% of active service members were diagnosed with a behavioral health disorder in 2019 (Defense Health Agency, 2020), compared to a rate of 20.6% within the general population (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020).

While these statistics could be interpreted to mean that there are fewer mental health problems in the Army, other data suggest this is likely *not* the case. In 2020, one-third of military medical evacuations from the Middle East were for mental health (Kime, 2021). Even more notably, in 2020, the suicide rate of active-duty troops rose to an all-time high of 28.7 per 100,000 (Department of Defense, 2021). When the data were adjusted for demographic factors, the Army's suicide rate had been similar to the general population up until 2008, when it began to exceed the general population (Griffin et al., 2021). Whereas the suicide rate for the general U.S. population declined in 2019 and 2020 (Hedegaard et al., 2021), the military's rate continues at an all-time high, and is dangerously close to double that of 2008 (DoD, 2021). After the publication of the 2020 Suicide Report, Department of Defense Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (2021) stated "We must all do more, at every level, to end the stigma against getting help. We all need counsel, community, and connection. Reaching out is a sign of strength and resilience."

In fact, the Army had been addressing Austin's concern for several years in programs like Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2), the Army's People First Strategy, and "This is My Squad." In 2020, the U.S. Army even replaced the reception basic trainees had long endured from shouting drill sergeants (aka "Shark Attack") with "First 100 Yards" approach intended to introduce basic trainees to the Army with a focus on team cohesion through trust building and teaching values (Cox, 2020).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, efforts to present a different image of Army culture have led to accusations that the U.S. military is "going soft." Major General Hughes addressed the idea that the Army is going soft when he spoke about emotional intelligence in a 2018 ROTC seminar:

> "A few years ago someone would have asked why are we talking about this squishy stuff? This soft science? Why is it important to leadership? But after 35 years of experiential learning, I've learned there is one truism and that is the business of the Army is people...You can fly a helicopter, shoot a cannon or be whatever you want, but technical skills are just that – skills that can be taught to anyone...Cognitive skills, interpersonal skills and the ability to work with people, is something I've learned we've failed to talk about in the Army... You need to get to know [your soldiers], not only to let them know

> you care, but you know what makes them tick. That's what you need to understand as you move out and take over these platoons – it's all about caring." (Maddox, 2018)

The statistics and trends cited earlier in this article indicate that help-seeking and mental health continue to be an issue for the Army. Efforts that do not directly consider the development of well-being within the context of the military's cultural norms are likely to struggle to fully take root. Balancing messages of well-being (e.g., "take care of yourself") with toughness (e.g., "don't give in") is challenging. However, what if well-being was not an additional message placed in an often-confusing juxtaposition to the warrior mindset? What if instead, well-being was seen as something that enables stronger warriors, and allows warriors to recover after the challenge of battle? We propose that well-being enhances the Warrior Ethos and builds traits necessary to persevere in combat without the negative impact of emotional suppression and unhealthy stoicism.

A framework recently proposed by Dahl et al. (2020) promotes well-being skills that can complement the Warrior Ethos. The framework proffers four core malleable dimensions of well-being: mindfulness (what they call "awareness"), connection, self-insight, and purpose. Growing these dimensions enhances an individual's emotion regulation, mental and emotional health, resilience, prosocial behavior, and reduces stress, anxiety, depression, and risk-taking behaviors (Dahl et al., 2020). This framework was chosen because of the empirical support from both psychosocial and neuroscience research for its ability to enhance the model's psychological well-being components that align well with the Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) doctrine (Department of the Army, 2020). Specifically, the capabilities of H2F's mental readiness align with three components of Dahl's et al.'s (2020) model: H2F's cognitive and emotional capability aligns with "mindfulness/awareness" and "self-insight"; H2F's interpersonal capability aligns with "connection"; H2F's spiritual readiness component aligns with "purpose." This well-being framework advances H2F by providing the empirical support for each dimension, while also providing evidence-based mental training strategies to enhance each component. Additionally, developing the model's components may increase the likelihood of help-seeking by encouraging soldiers to develop their purpose (providing the motivation to seek help), their self-insight and awareness (better recognizing when help is needed) and connection with others (a mental capacity that underlies seeking social support). In the following sections, we use Dahl et al.'s (2020) framework to provide ideas on how Army leaders can promote well-being in a way that supports the Warrior Ethos.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the self-regulation of attention on immediate experiences, with an orientation characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004). The research on how mindfulness improves well-being has exploded over the past two decades (Baminiwatta & Solangaarachchi, 2021), with positive impacts of mindfulness training suggested for gambling behavior (Griffiths et al., 2016), emotional regulation (Hülsheger et al., 2013; Teper et al., 2013), and anxiety and depression (Blanck et al., 2018). In the military, one type of mindfulness training, meditation, enhanced both cognitive and emotional regulation capacities, leading to better emotion regulation, resilience, and overall well-being (Jha et al., 2010, 2015). In a more recent Army sample, Hepner et al. (2022) found benefits of mindfulness training in attention control, emotion regulation, and stress reduction. Additionally, Sun et al.'s (2021) meta-analysis concluded that mindfulness meditation can alleviate symptoms related to military post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

An important facet of mindfulness is noticing the thoughts and emotions that arise when experiencing

a set-back or difficulty, along with paying attention to the treatment of oneself during such an experience. Self-compassion requires seeing one's struggle as a common human difficulty, while holding painful thoughts and memories in mindful awareness and not overidentifying with them (Neff, 2003). Self-compassion has been shown to aid soldiers in their ability to successfully navigate stress in the face of adversity (Mantzios, 2014), and is identified as an important protective factor against PTSD (Forkus et al., 2019) and comorbid substance abuse (Forkus et al., 2020).

Meditation practices, even those of only five minutes (e.g., Mahmood et al., 2016), can improve mindfulness and self-compassion. Even online mindfulness interventions have been shown to effectively enhance mindfulness and reduce stress (Jayewardene et al., 2017), and research suggests intervention via an app might be as successful as in person mindfulness-based training (Orosa-Duarte et al., 2021).

How a Leader Can Foster Mindfulness in Their Unit

Acknowledging emotions is one way to promote mindfulness in the self and others. Encouraging self-compassion in a military context can be as simple as a leader acknowledging "what we are doing is hard right now." This does not mean that leaders can or should allow soldiers to stop doing something because it is hard. The warrior perseveres, but we can acknowledge our struggles, and not criticize ourselves for experiencing normal human emotions and reactions. Most importantly, a leader can set the example with the language they use to talk about their own challenges (e.g., "this is challenging, but I will keep working at it," or "we all have our strengths and weaknesses").

A leader can spend a few moments before or after a briefing or mission having their team focus on their breathing and tuning into their thoughts, emotions, and desired reactions to help soldiers become more mindful. Practicing in low-stress environments first, such as taking five minutes at the beginning or end of physical training to practice mindful breathing, trains the mind for more high-stress environments.

Connection

According to Dahl and colleagues' (2020) model of well-being, connection is conceptualized as a person's subjective sense of care for and togetherness with others that enhances supportive relationships and prosocial behavior. This component of well-being is developed through cultivating gratitude, appreciation, and compassion for others. In fact, the aforementioned practice of meditation can inculcate compassion (Kreplin et al., 2018).

Powerful evidence for the importance of relationships for well-being comes from the Grant study, which tracked Harvard graduates over an 80-year period. As one of the study's lead researchers explains, the results of this study show that when it comes to living a satisfying life, "the only thing that really matters in life are your relationships to other people" (Shenk, 2009). Social connections lead to better psychological health and can act as a buffer against mental and emotional health disorders such as anxiety and depression (Santini et al., 2015; Teo et al., 2013). Notably, the importance of relationships was emphasized for the DOD's National Suicide Prevention Month in 2021 which bore the theme "Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach."

Brooks and Greenberg (2018) conclude that relationships should be prioritized for psychological well-being of military personnel. One way to promote connection is by improving communication skills, which enhance relationship strength (Petrovici & Dobrescu 2014; Eğeci & Gençöz 2006). Furthermore, ensuring soldiers are connected to community matters; in a recent study, connections to community predicted ability to cope with military demands (O'Neal et al., 2020).

Caring for others (prosocial behavior) increases feelings of well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2016), and Hui

(2022) recently highlighted the dynamic, reciprocal relationship between prosocial behavior and well-being. Being kind matters; a meta-analysis of 27 experimental studies suggests a small to moderate effect of kindness interventions on the actor's well-being (Curry et al., 2018). This is not limited to your loved ones—research suggests the effect of performing acts of kindness is independent of the type of relationship between the actor and recipient (Rowland & Curry, 2019).

How a Leader Can Foster Connection in Their Unit

A simple practice that can help build connection is allowing time for people to reflect on who they are grateful for in their unit and why, and then presenting opportunities for people to express that gratitude verbally. To further foster connection in their unit, a leader must focus on caring for their soldiers. For example, a leader can ask about someone's children or family by name or help soldiers find the time to connect with their families. It may be possible to have a later start one day a week so that soldiers can have breakfast with their children and put them on the school bus.

Beyond this, developing appropriate coaching or mentoring relationships can help soldiers beyond providing feedback on duty performance; this demonstrates an investment in their growth and is supported by regulation (Table 6-3 in ADP 6-22 clearly delineates between coaching, counseling, and mentoring).

Insight

Insight, or self-awareness, is a type of self-knowledge that includes understanding the ways in which thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and other factors influence an individual's subjective experience, especially their sense of self (Dahl et al., 2020). Self-insight around one's own thinking and emotions positively relates to psychological health and life satisfaction (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010). This self-awareness is also a key component in several impactful mental health treatment modalities such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which helps individuals alter their maladaptive beliefs in exchange for more adaptive beliefs. Empirical research suggests CBT can reduce stress and alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hofmann et al., 2012). There is also initial evidence that insight development via a type of mental training known as deconstructive meditation can undo maladaptive cognitive patterns and increase healthy emotion regulation strategies. This technique helps individuals to develop insight into their internal models of the self, other, and the world as well as exploring the dynamics of perception, emotion, and cognition (Dahl et al., 2015; Singer & Engert, 2019).

> Notably, Army Doctrine Publication: Army Leadership and the Profession (2019) (ADP 6-22) specifically emphasizes the importance of self-awareness for their leaders:
>
> Self-awareness is fundamental to understanding one's abilities. Leaders should know their strengths and weaknesses: what they do or do not know, what they are or are not skilled at, and what is in their span of control...Leaders require self-awareness if they are to accurately assess their own experience and competence as well as earn the trust of those they influence. (p. 1–17)

This concept of self-awareness is woven through the entirety of ADP 6-22 and discussed as a crucial component of several aspects of Army leadership including humility, interpersonal tact, leading with confidence in adverse and changing conditions, leader preparation, and resiliency. In fact, given the importance of developing self-awareness, the U.S. Military Academy has recently instituted daily reflective practices during Cadet Basic Training.

How a Leader Can Foster Insight in Their Unit

Creating time for reflection can help us be more insightful. Some might want to journal; others might benefit more from peer-to-peer discussion, unit discussions, or

meditation. Creating a built-in time for these types of practices can be beneficial. Our own cadets experienced an interpersonal after-action review after their field training exercise, where they focused on their relationships and how they felt during the experience. This type of deliberate, "sensing session" can allow people to focus on points of friction for the good of the unit; in this scenario, a leader should go into a listening role—simply facilitating and taking notes.

As a leader, counseling subordinates is a real opportunity to help others develop greater insight. Asking a subordinate during counseling to reflect on their own strengths and areas for improvement helps them become more self-aware.

Purpose

Purpose can be defined as a sense of clarity regarding personally meaningful aims and values that can be applied in daily life. Having a strong sense of purpose can foster the self-perception that an individual has aims and values which they can embody. In turn, this self-perception can help us to feel that our life and goals have meaning and significance (Dahl et al., 2020). Purpose and meaning in life can improve well-being; research has demonstrated outcomes on improved physical and psychological health, as well as reduced risk of chronic diseases (Dahl et al., 2020).

Feeling a sense of purpose can serve as a protective factor against mental illness. In an active-duty military sample, those who perceived more meaning in life had reduced emotional distress and suicide risk, as well as an increase in performance across several domains (Bryan et al., 2013). Relatedly, a meta-analysis of studies using U.S. military personnel found that meaning in life plays a critical role in adjusting to traumatic events (Fischer et al., 2020). Finally, other work has found that military leader-provided purpose may promote resilience and reduce risk for suicidal ideation among active-duty soldiers (Trachik et al., 2020).

Recent work has suggested that purpose and meaning in life can be clarified and strengthened through targeted interventions that promote healthy behaviors and increase resilience such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the Healthy Minds Program (Dahl et al., 2020). ACT, which focuses on acceptance and affirming personal values, has been shown to enhance both emotional resilience as well as physical functioning (Bramwell & Richardson, 2018). Such interventions need not be overly complex, cumbersome, or time-consuming. For example, the previously mentioned Healthy Minds Innovations app includes a series of guided meditations to help affirm an individual's values toward developing a clearer sense of their purpose in life.

How a Leader Can Foster Purpose in Their Unit

Taking time to reflect on or remind others of the purpose of a mission or task is a simple way to keep others grounded in what they are doing, and why. One evidence-based activity to help people clarify what matters the most to them is *Values Affirmation*, whereby one identifies what is most important to them, why, and how they can better live these values out (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Duckworth, 2020). This practice better enables what is most important in life to be salient (Dahl et al., 2020).

On a more macro-level, there are ways to ensure others feel a sense of purpose. In the military, reminding the soldiers of the oath they made, swearing to defend the constitution of the United States, can help focus them on their task. In addition to this organizational purpose, a leader can ask soldiers during counseling what is most important to them and help them see alignment between their own personal goals and goals of their service.

Conclusion

Focusing on well-being should not come at the expense of developing the warrior; rather, it should be seen as an

integral part of the mission. An approach that develops mindfulness, connection, self-insight, and purpose will support soldiers' readiness and resiliency, not weaken them. Given the reluctance to seek help during a crisis, this skills-building approach will likely work better with military personnel, as it focuses on prevention and training to promote resiliency. Furthermore, the benefits of training skills of well-being will extend beyond soldiers' years of active duty and yield mentally healthier veterans.

Ideally, this work can be integrated into other aspects of military training and preparation. For example, mindfulness can be integrated into physical training, discussing purpose can be part of counseling or prior to engagement, reflection time can be added during training to build self-awareness, and leaders can prioritize the development of relationships within a team.

Of course, humans are motivated by the incentives around them. It is worth asking if the systems in place properly incentivize the pillars of well-being through training, allocation of time, rewards, and promotion criteria. By integrating the pillars of well-being into our military's culture and training, as well as developing effective messaging to soldiers and cadets that highlight how the construct of warrior and well-being are complimentary rather than contradictory, we can correct a cultural dichotomy to help form better leaders who serve and defend the American people.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Learning from Leaders of Character

Sean Talamas, Executive Director, Character Lab

The best leaders are learners. They study, analyze, and emulate those who have lit the path to leadership for them. I have had the privilege of learning from and carrying the torch for the exceptional leaders of Character Lab, a nonprofit founded by scientist Dr. Angela Duckworth and educators Dave Levin and Dominic Randolph. Character Lab is a nonprofit organization that connects researchers with educators to create greater knowledge about the conditions that lead to character development for young people throughout the country.

Our mission is laser-focused on building character in kids, but as its leader, I have spent the majority of my waking hours ensuring that we, as an organization, practice what we preach. We can't credibly consider ourselves experts on adolescent character development and not demonstrate strong character ourselves. We can't talk about how to help all kids thrive without creating the conditions for our team to offer their greatest contributions to our work.

Fortunately, Character Lab's Board of Directors and Advisors laid the foundation for an organizational culture that allows our team's character to shine. Through their leadership, they taught us that we couldn't leverage our team's best character strengths without developing the conditions for them to be successful. Here's what I learned from these exceptional leaders.

To Create a Gritty Organization, Establish a North Star–And a Goal Hierarchy

When she co-founded Character Lab, Angela already knew that she wanted to use psychological science to help kids thrive. She studies grit—passion and perseverance for long-term goals—and exemplifies it as well. But how could Character Lab align what the staff did each day to this ultimate goal?

Feroz Dewan, a founding Board Member of Character Lab, always focused the team on the relentless pursuit of helping kids thrive, but he also emphasized the importance of flexibility in the tactics taken to get there. To foster individual ownership, Luis von Ahn, Character Lab's Board Chair (and co-founder and CEO of Duolingo), suggested implementing Objectives and Key Results (OKRs; Doerr, 2018). He taught us that the key to high-performing teams

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is establishing clear metrics for success. By clearly articulating the "what"—the desired outcome—we free our teams to be creative on the "how."

For example, we created an OKR around increasing scientific evidence and measured progress through the number of publications in peer-reviewed journals. Initially, we encouraged more character development research with adolescents by incentivizing researchers with grants. But the pace of advancement was slow, and the process was not scaling.

As we grappled with this problem, Character Lab helped organize a symposium where Nobel laureate Danny Kahneman shared the very best idea he'd ever encountered for changing behavior. He spoke about the same concept on the "Freakonomics" podcast:

> "[Kurt] Lewin's insight was that if you want to achieve change in behavior, there is one good way to do it and one bad way to do it. The good way to do it is by diminishing the restraining forces, not by increasing the driving forces. That turns out to be profoundly nonintuitive...Diminishing the restraining forces is a completely different kind of activity, because instead of asking, 'How can I get him or her to do it?' it starts with a question of, 'Why isn't she doing it already?'" (Dubner, 2017)

So, we asked top scientists why they weren't already doing research on character development. They told us it takes far too much time and is far too difficult logistically. Thus, to diminish the restraining forces on character development research, we created Character Lab Research Network (CLRN). CLRN helps researchers and schools facilitate research at scale, providing an infrastructure that cuts the time of a typical research cycle in half. This approach doubled the number of publications compared to our previous approach.

We Are Better Leaders When We Focus on Context as Much as Character

Organizational leaders often spend significant energy on hiring and professional development. When we hire, we assess a candidate's "fit" based on their experience and the character traits they display during the interview process. But how a person behaves—and what they contribute to an organization's goals—depends on two mutually reinforcing components: their character and the conditions in which they are asked to contribute. Leaders must ask themselves: "What can I do to create conditions that cultivate character?" How are we, as leaders, creating an environment that gets the best out of each teammate while ensuring they are supported and satisfied with their work?

To foster creativity, Dominic Randolph taught us the importance of design thinking, a problem-solving framework that centers users' needs and challenges while creating innovative solutions. Making mistakes and learning from them is built into the process (Liedtka, 2018). Ideation sessions that held space for team members to flex their creativity—along with a push from founding Board Member Jackie Bezos, a fierce advocate for empowering youth voice—led to the founding of the Character Lab Internship Program (CLIP),[1] a remote, year-round education program where high school students learn about research methods, contribute to research on student well-being, and engage in the research process from start to finish. Prior to CLIP, most researchers conducted studies in a vacuum without input from those whom the insights were meant to help. The result: articles that were out of touch with adolescents' needs and current realities. Now, with more than 100 students in CLIP connecting with researchers, our scientific insights are stronger and more relevant.

1 Character Lab Internship Program: https://characterlab.org/clip/.

The context we create matters as much to an individual's performance as their talent and experience—and often determines how their character shows up. For example, Steve Arnold, Chair of Character Lab's Advisory Board, taught us the importance of building trust through vulnerability to enhance collaboration. When I joined Character Lab, Steve advocated for a trust-building exercise in which we shared personal stories about why we chose this work. Based on that experience, we rebuilt our new-hire onboarding to focus on building relationships and trust with fellow teammates because research told us that fostering empathy and authenticity leads to more trusting teams (Frei & Moriss, 2020). Through get-to-know-you meetings and conversations about conflict thresholds, we understand how each teammate's work fits into their broader personal narrative and how they approach healthy debate. When it comes time to discuss challenges or have productive conflict, we have built a foundation of trust and respect so that teammates come to the table with courage and humility.

Foster an Environment of Continuous Improvement

In Character Lab's Culture Book, we say that organizational culture is like a garden: it will grow whether or not you do anything. Ignore it, and the weeds will take over. Tend to it by explicitly defining and reinforcing your values, and you create an environment where your team's best selves can bloom. Culture is everyone's responsibility, but leaders must model the culture they wish to cultivate while creating systems that will allow it to evolve over time.

Since co-founding Character Lab, Angela Duckworth has infused the practice of kaizen—Japanese for "continuous improvement"—into Character Lab's culture. Her research has found that the most successful people and organizations constantly think of ways to do their work better (Duckworth, 2016). As she has written, "one form of perseverance is the daily discipline of trying to do things better than we did yesterday" (Duckworth, 2016, p. 91). Angela embodies this: After every speaking engagement, the first thing she does is request feedback. She's a great public speaker, but she does not want to hear about what she did well. Instead, she wants to hear what she could have done better, and she uses that feedback to master her craft.

At Character Lab, we practice kaizen daily—it is one of our core values. The leadership team invests time in monthly kaizen conversations with their direct reports in ways that allow for two-way feedback. They have embraced the concept of continuous improvement and expanded on insights from the Board and Advisors, which they have embedded into the culture in ways I would never have imagined. Rather than expecting perfection, which can engender fear, shame, and blame, our culture of continuous improvement normalizes making mistakes and striving for excellence in new and creative ways.

When I first took leadership at Character Lab, I was interested in applying a concept I learned in the military called Team of Teams, developed by General Stanley A. McChrystal (McChrystal et al., 2015). Team of Teams is a decentralized model of working groups in which teammates with various and sometimes unrelated job responsibilities come together around a discrete project to advance an organization's goals. It fosters a growth mindset—the belief that our abilities are not fixed and can be developed through dedication and hard work (Dweck, 2006)—because teammates learn new skills as they work across functional areas to solve a problem.

Initially, Dave Levin, Character Lab's Co-Founder and Board Member, was skeptical. He was concerned that this approach would diffuse accountability and that putting people with less experience in leadership roles would be risky. However, he supported the decision to pilot it, learn from the experience, and iterate. His trust and support allowed me to candidly share with him what was and wasn't working, and together, we continued to improve the model. For example,

after some miscommunications amongst the team on decision-making (as Dave predicted), we educated the team on Situational Leadership (Hersey et al., 1979), to scaffold leadership support, and RAPID, Bain's tool to clarify decision authority (Klein et al., 1986). Today, Team of Teams is a regular part of how we foster growth and learning, and it helps our emerging organizational leaders practice their leadership skills. Our commitment to continuous improvement has made us a more fulfilled, collaborative, and productive team.

Align Energizers with Roles and Responsibilities

Many people have had the experience of working on a project that, while challenging, gives them energy. It doesn't feel like work. When that happens, they may want to work even harder to meet their goals. By creating a space for individual teammates to share what they're passionate about and what gives them the most energy, leaders can better align their roles and responsibilities to foster grit. Then the organization can hire or develop others to fill in the gaps.

Angela Duckworth is a role model for playing to your strengths. Creating a platform for world-class scientists to conduct research and promote their work is not easy or glamorous. And it didn't happen quickly—she has been open about the difficulties and her personal misgivings (Duckworth, 2019). But Angela helped lay a foundation our team could build on to accelerate her vision.

After spending time as CEO of Character Lab, Angela recognized that she didn't particularly enjoy the day-to-day activities of organizational management, as she shared on her podcast, "No Stupid Questions." What did she do? She hired me, someone who wakes up and goes to sleep thinking about organizational culture and management. This self-awareness freed her up to leverage her writing ability, scientific knowledge, and communications skills to help Character Lab thrive. Instead of preparing for board meetings, she wrote guides to character strengths and invited top scientists like Dan Ariely and Adam Grant to contribute as well. Instead of developing a leadership team, she used her decades of expertise in behavior change to co-design a platform that radically accelerates research with adolescents. Instead of setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), she did speaking engagements with Fortune 500 CEOs about character development and donated her speaking fees back to help fund Character Lab.

Excellent leaders "walk the walk" of character and culture. Knowing what gives you and your team energy is a key component of being an effective leader and allows you to race your strengths. Leaders at Character Lab are obsessed with understanding what their team gets energy from and are constantly working to align roles and responsibilities accordingly.

I am honored to have learned from and been supported by the strong leaders at Character Lab, who have created a culture that is equally demanding and supportive. Since its conception a decade ago, Character Lab has laid the groundwork for a new generation of leaders who are holding high expectations but doing so with care and concern for crafting conditions that cultivate character.

In the spirit of kaizen, I have chosen to step away from my role as executive director of Character Lab to pursue opportunities that energize and challenge me in new ways. I'm confident that this move will further benefit the organization by making room for new ideas and leaders to flourish.

I'm proud of how much Character Lab has grown. We have facilitated the research of over 150 world-class scientists—including Nobel Laureates and MacArthur winners as well as emerging scholars of color—which has led to dozens of publications in top-tier publications such as *Science* and *Nature*.

We've published 15 Playbooks[2]—research-based guides to cultivate character strengths—and more than 175 Tips—60 seconds of actionable advice, based on science. Through Character Lab's strategic partners including McGraw Hill, TED-Ed, USA Swimming, and others, these Tips and Playbooks have reached millions of parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors, helping facilitate character development in the young people they work with every day. Our Playbooks and Tips have also been featured in a range of outlets, from the back of Corn Flakes cereal boxes to CBS Mornings.

So, I step away confident in our Boards', Advisers', and leadership teams' ongoing commitment to helping kids and creating the conditions for other leaders of character within the organization to make their greatest contributions. Because we can only cultivate new leaders of character when we lead from a place of character ourselves.

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2 Playbooks—Research-based guides to cultivate strengths of heart, mind, and will: https://characterlab.org/playbooks/.

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Applied Strategic Leadership Process: Setting Direction in a VUCA World

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ABSTRACT

Strategic leadership frameworks have become more complex in response to our increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. While comprehensive strategic approaches may help leaders of large bureaucratic organizations exercise control over their staff and resources, these approaches may not be optimal for all organizations and contexts. Given the acceleration of environmental volatility, complexity, and competition, we offer leader developers and aspiring strategic leaders the Applied Strategic Leadership Process (ASLP), a focused and simplified strategic leadership approach that integrates relevant scholarship and practical tools to better enable the success of strategic leaders across cultures, situations, and leadership styles. The ASLP is organized with the themes of strategic judgment, strategic influence, and strategic resilience. Strategic judgment includes assessing the external environment, assessing the internal environment, and setting strategic direction by choosing the optimal big ideas. Strategic influence includes leading the organizational change needed to accomplish the big ideas. Strategic resilience includes developing its leaders' strategic competencies, character, and wellness while attracting and building a pipeline of junior leaders. We conclude by sharing the 10 strategic leader competencies that several modern-day senior leaders believe will be the most important to leading successfully in the future.

Keywords: Strategy, Leadership, Values, Leading Change, Leader Development

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Introduction

Strategic leadership frameworks have become intricate in response to an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. While detailed strategic approaches may be useful for strategic leaders exercising control over a large staff and resources and facing multidomain global competition, they may be too unwieldy for many organizations and contexts. Ease of implementation is critical because strategic leaders in VUCA environments must gain and maintain an advantageous pace by seeing, understanding, and exploiting opportunities faster than their competitors (Dempsey, 2012). Superior speed in cycles of strategic decision-making and leading change are akin to military strategist John Boyd's idea that decision-making pace provides competitive advantage by executing the "observe-orient-decide-act (OODA) loop" faster than one's competitors (Boyd, 1995; Dempsey, 2012). Given the acceleration of environmental volatility and complexity and the need for faster strategic action, we believe the appropriate response is a simplified strategic leadership process that operates across cultures, situations, and leadership styles. As such, we offer a streamlined, applied strategic leadership process (ASLP) that is accessible to aspiring strategic leaders. This method is currently used within the Eisenhower Leader Development Program, a joint graduate program run by West Point and Teachers College, Columbia University, to educate today's leader developers and tomorrow's strategic leaders. The framework has the potential to add value across a range of mid- to senior-level leader education programs and by organizations seeking clarity and parsimony in their strategic leadership processes.

Prior to defining effective strategic leadership, we must first understand the meaning of both *strategy* and *leadership*. Merriam-Webster (1983) defines strategy as "the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems towards a goal." Informing their seminal model of organizational change, management scholars Burke and Litwin (1992) define strategy as the process by which an organization achieves its purpose over an extended period. Economists Froeb et al. (2015) define strategy as the steps to gain sustainable competitive advantage. We define strategy as the plan to get from the current reality to the envisioned future, all while operating in a competitive environment.

The U.S. Army defines leadership as "the activity of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization" (ADP 6-22, 2019). John Maxwell (2007) defines it as "influence" and Ron Heifetz et al. (2009) defines it as "mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive." Leadership includes motivating followers to achieve group goals while emphasizing organizational functions such as strategy and systems (Kaiser et al., 2012).

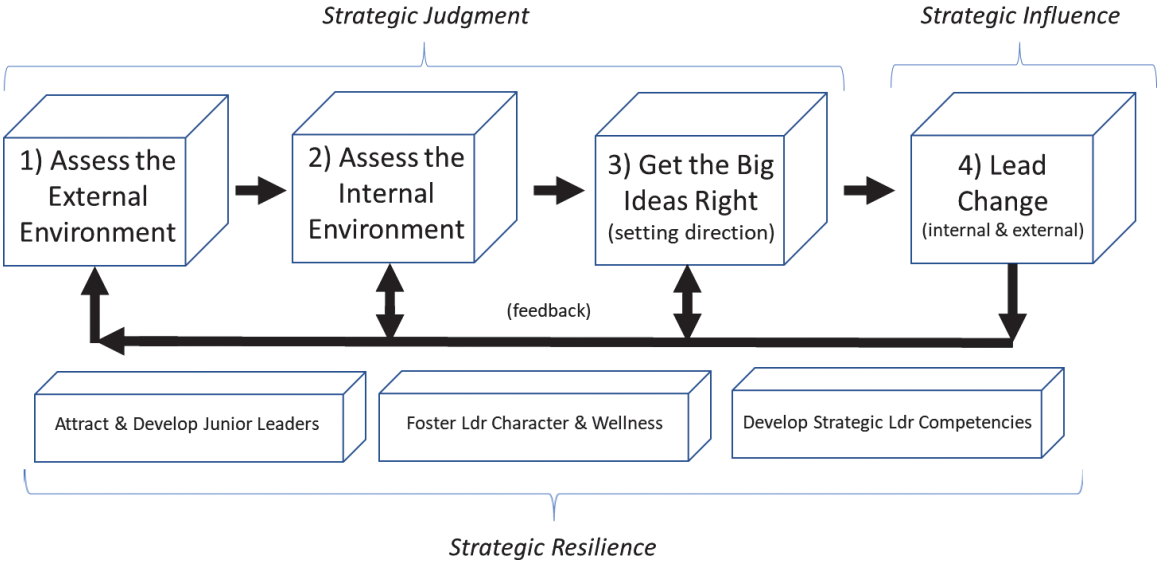
By integrating the meanings of strategy and leadership, we define strategic leadership as *determining where an organization needs to go to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and getting it there.* Recognizing that firms are at risk of going out of business, non-profits are at risk of losing their access and funding streams, and nations are at risk of being conquered, strategic leadership includes the major decisions and direction setting likely to have existential consequences, where day-to-day leadership and management does not.

The ASLP flows from this definition and includes the themes of *strategic judgment*—assessing the external environment, assessing the internal environment, and setting direction by deciding on the optimal big ideas; *strategic influence*—leading the organizational change needed to accomplish the big ideas; and *strategic resilience*—developing its leaders' strategic competencies, character, and wellness while attracting and building a talent pipeline of junior leaders (see Figure 1).

Though the ASLP's four steps within the themes of strategic judgment and strategic influence are presented

Figure 1

The Applied Strategic Leadership Process (ASLP).



in a linear stepwise progression, they certainly overlap in concept and reality. Additionally, strategic leaders should revisit each step when exogenous shocks occur or when competitive dynamics are altered. Lastly, strategic leaders should always adapt the ASLP to best leverage the idiosyncrasies of the leader, the organization (and its people), and the external environment.

Strategic Judgment

ASLP Step 1: Assess the External Environment

Lewin's seminal theory on behavior (1936) explains a person's behavior is a function of both that person and his or her environment. The organizational equivalent to Lewin's theory would be that organizational-level behavior is a function of its strengths and weaknesses (internal assessment) and its environment (external assessment).

Before making decisions of strategic consequence, leaders applying the ASLP should comprehensively assess their external environment. In fact, the Burke-Litwin model asserts that the external environment, more than any other factor, drives the need for and nature of organizational change (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Observing the local, national, and global news cycle clearly illustrates how strategic leaders must be able to recognize and lead their organizations through a complex array of forces outside of their control, including the effects of pandemics, disruptions to global supply chains, cultural/political/social/technological megatrends, economic interdependence, artificial intelligence, and the ubiquity of data.

Additionally, strategic leaders should also understand competitive externalities. Porter's Five Forces (2008) offers a steady lens to do so and has been broadly accepted across academe and industry. These include *rivalry among existing competitors, power of suppliers to drive up costs, power of buyers (customers) to drive down revenue, threats of substitutes,* and *threats of new entrants*. Though the five forces were designed to be used to assess a competitive business environment, they can readily be adapted to a national-security, U.S. government agency, educational institution, or non-profit analysis. Indeed,

a previous study demonstrated that applying the five forces enabled a comprehensive assessment of the maritime security environment (Yetkin, 2013). Strategic leaders should ultimately use the tools they find effective and are most comfortable with. The key is that they understand the external environment and how observable changes are creating opportunities and threats for their organization.

Additionally, a strategic leader could initiate a strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, which integrates both ASLP Step 1 (SWOT's opportunities and threats) and Step 2 (SWOT's strengths and weaknesses, discussed in this paper's next section). With its four lenses, the SWOT matrix is meant to simplify the complex, dynamic internal and external environment of a competitive organization (Mintzberg, 1994).

ASLP Step 2: Assess the Internal Environment

After assessing the external environment, strategic leaders should assess their organizations' internal environment. A systematic way to examine strengths and weaknesses is to assess each of the Burke-Litwin model's internal dimensions of *management practices, organizational culture, climate, systems, structure, task and skills*, and *individual needs and values.* The wisdom of other prominent scholars can be used to complement this framework. For example, strategic leaders can assess their organizational culture by applying Edgar Schein's (1990) framework of artifacts, espoused values, enacted (in-use) values, and underlying assumptions. Alternatively, they can apply Tushman and O'Reilly's Congruence Model (2002) to examine the alignment of their big ideas with their organization's capabilities of its people (human capital), structure (formal organization), culture, and nature of the work (systems). These internal-focused frameworks will allow leaders to assess if their organization can accomplish its current and future strategies within its competitive environment.

ASLP Step 3: Get the Big Ideas Right (Setting Direction through Deliberate Decision-Making)

The analysis and assessment of the organization's external and internal environments will likely identify emerging opportunities and threats with strategic implications for the organization. Strategic leaders visualize these emerging opportunities and threats through the lens of their core organizational values to set the organization's strategic direction through the creation of a vision (the big ideas) and making decisions of long-term consequence. Examples of these types of decisions include selection on where and how a firm will compete, where an army will commit its main forces in battle, and which major services a non-profit will provide and where. In short, these decisions set the direction of the entire organization and serve as the basis from which most other decisions and actions flow.

The ASLP's third step expands on and operationalizes the Burke-Litwin model's *mission and strategy, organizational culture,* and *leadership* dimensions. Knowing that there is a field of management research dedicated to decision-making sciences, our process suggests several options for decision-making, including the recommend, agree, perform, provide input, and decide (RAPID) and deciders, advisors, recommenders, and execution stakeholders (DARE) approaches, which clarify who does what, and the rational decision-making approach, which is focused on process and informed by the organization's core values and an ethical decision-making tree.

RAPID, developed by Bain & Company (2011), is a way to assign roles and accountability in the decision process. It helps clarify who provides input to a decision, who shapes the decision, who makes the final decision, and who executes the decision. DARE, developed by McKinsey & Company (2022), identifies the decision maker and decision stakeholders/contributors and promotes delegating and empowering others to make all but the most critical or strategic decisions. Both

approaches accelerate the decision-making process by clarifying who does what and enable strategic leaders to focus on getting the big ideas right.

The rational decision-making process includes understanding the problem, generating alternative solutions, analyzing and testing competing solutions, and choosing a course of action (Shattuck et al., 2017). Informed by the ASLP's assessment of the external and internal environment, the rational decision-making process continues as the strategic leaders leverage their organization to generate and deliberately analyze their courses of action against measurable evaluation criterion.

When working through the rational decision-making process, wise strategic leaders will always check themselves (or ask a trusted colleagues to check them) for personal cognitive biases, actively solicit others' input, and pre-test potential courses of action by putting it through an ethical decision-making tree (Shattuck et al., 2017). The ethical decision-making tree asks three questions, (1) Is the proposed course of action legal? (2) Does it serve important organizational interests? and (3) If I do it (or do not do it), would it violate others' rights or my responsibilities as a person or leader? Strategic leaders should always reexamine potential courses of action that display one or more "red flags" of being against a stakeholder's recommendation, potentially made with personal bias, or violating the ethical decision-making tree.

Though it is required for strategic decisions to be both rational and ethical, it is not sufficient. Strategic direction and decisions must also flow from the organization's espoused values, with those same values being reinforced by the decision and its implementation. This requires organizations to select and develop leaders with integrity early in their careers and continue that development throughout their tenures, which this paper will discuss later.

Strategic Influence

ASLP Step 4: Lead Change (Internal and External)
Steps 1–3 represent a leader's *strategic judgment* and serve to create an optimal strategy. With the big ideas set for this decision cycle, a strategic leader's fourth and final step is to lead the internal and external changes needed to accomplish the big ideas, which operationalizes the ASLP's theme of *strategic influence*.

Leading change is a complex task made more challenging because problems manifested in one area (e.g., systems) may be the consequence of problems or misalignment in another area (e.g., structure). Strategic leadership scholar Doug Waters (2019) writes that a strategic leader needs the ability to influence and change the political, cultural, and economic systems that impact the organization. To enable success of planned internal change, an effective strategic leader must first influence the world around the organization to help facilitate, or at least not overly resist, the desired internal change. The strategic leader must also address the internal gaps that could prevent the accomplishment of these big ideas (Tushman et al., 2002).

To lead these external and internal changes, the ASLP suggests using Kotter's eight-Steps for leading change (1995) and Schein's Embedding and Reinforcing Mechanisms for changing organizations (1990). Kotter's eight-Steps are designed to be applied sequentially, and they include (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) forming a powerful guiding coalition, (3) developing a vision, (4) communicating the vision, (5) empowering others to act on the vision, (6) planning for and creating short-term wins, (7) consolidating improvements and producing more change, and (8) institutionalizing the new approaches within the culture.

Schein's five embedding mechanisms give strategic leaders levers to pull to enable the organization to pivot and include leader attention, measurement, and control; reactions to critical incidents; deliberate role modeling;

criteria for reward allocation; and criteria for recruitment selection, and retention. Schein's five reinforcing mechanisms enable strategic leaders to lock in the pivot after it is made and include organizational design and structure; organizational systems and procedures; design of physical space; stories, myths, legends, and parables; and formal statements about organizational philosophy.

Strategic Resilience

When done well, the ASLP can enable an organization to see its competitive environment, see itself, develop its big ideas, and get to where it needs to go. Yet without the strategic resilience needed to sustain the strategic leaders' ability to keep their organizations on the right path in a complex environment or to adjust strategically in the future, organizations are at significant risk of future failure. To achieve strategic resilience, organizations must attract and develop their junior leaders, foster their senior leaders' character and wellness, and develop their leaders' strategic competencies.

Attract and Develop Junior Leaders

Organizations must attract and develop junior leaders so they will be present and ready to fill the strategic leader roles needed in the future. Developmental organizations focus on all talent management stages for their junior leaders, including recruiting, assessing, onboarding, developing, employing, and retaining talent. The U.S. Army does the developing thread well through its formal officer education schools (OES) program, where it gathers and trains each annual cohort of leaders (officers) for a four- to ten-month in-residence professional development course approximately every five years. As part of this effort to attract and build junior leaders, a strategically minded organization will create deliberate and comprehensive leader selection processes to objectively choose which of its leaders are most prepared to advance to senior leadership such as the U.S. Army's new battalion and brigade commander assessment programs (Spain, 2020). Additionally, it will provide those leaders with the coaching and mentorship needed to be effective in their more senior leadership roles (Woodruff et al., 2021).

Foster Leaders' Character and Wellness

Strategic leaders' ability to stay morally centered and healthy is critical to their ability to lead their organizations toward maintaining competitive advantage. The increased stress and temptation often experienced by senior leaders combine to create situations where senior leaders are susceptible to failing in character, which can result in significant negative ripple effects felt by their organization and people (Ludwig & Longenecker, 1993). Organizations who actively care for their leaders' physical and emotional health while consistently developing their character through formal courses, deliberate mentorship, and individual study can keep their leaders more healthy, resilient, and thus less susceptible to these potential pitfalls (Spain et al., 2022).

Develop Leaders' Strategic Competencies

Effective strategic and high-potential leader development programs are based on the assessed needs of their leaders, teams, and organizations (Riggio, 2008). Knowing there is an almost endless list of competencies desired in our strategic leaders, we recently questioned six highly successful leaders who were responsible for the strategic direction of global and national-level organizations to identify what competencies are most essential to leading strategically in today and tomorrow's complex competitive environments. Between them, they have effectively led armies in combat theaters, Fortune 50 companies, U.S. Cabinet-level agencies, and nationally renowned non-profit organizations.[1] Their perspectives informed the development of the ASLP.

1 These interactions took place in 2019 as part of designing the semester-long 3.0 credit-hour course *LD730: Strategic and Cross-cultural Leadership*, taught by the authors in West Point's masters-level Eisenhower Leader Development Program. The perspectives were provided by strategic leaders whose collective

Table 1

Strategic Leader Competencies (Direct and Enabling).

Direct competencies	Strategic judgment	Strategic influence	Strategic resilience
1) Learning agility	X	X	X
2) Span organizational boundaries	X	X	
3) Thorough decision-making process	X	X	
4) Lead/facilitate innovation	X	X	X
5) Build high-performing teams/culture		X	X
6) Interpersonal influence		X	
7) Forthrightness	X	X	
Enabling competencies			
8) Engages in character development/wellness activities			X
9) Leveraging diversity	X		X
10) Actively recruits and develops other leaders			X

We consolidated their perspectives into 10 competencies essential for strategic leaders of the future. We then ranked seven of them in order of importance (with the first being most essential) and identified the other three as underlying enablers of the others' success. The seven direct competencies include learning agility, spanning organizational boundaries, thorough decision-making process, innovation, building high-performing teams/culture, interpersonal influence, and forthrightness. The three strategic enablers included developing values and wellness, embracing diversity, and actively attracting and developing junior leaders. We describe their 10 strategic competencies above (see Table 1).

Direct Competencies

Learning agility is a strategic leader competency that includes fluid intelligence, openness, curiosity, lifelong learning, cognitive ability, digital fluency, and propensity to use big data and analytics (Mitchinson et al., 2012). Confirming the importance placed on learning, Burke and Church found that leader learning has a powerful impact on managing change (1992) while Yukl and Mahsud (2010) found that flexible and adaptive leadership is increasingly important for most organizations as change and volatility accelerate. In the ASLP, learning agility enables strategic leaders across all four steps. When strategic leaders analyze their internal and external environments, they would be wise to remember that their perspectives are both informed and limited by their experiences. Therefore, a strategic leader needs learning agility, an active and prudent imagination, and dedication to question their beliefs in pursuit of testable hypotheses.

The ability to *span organizational boundaries* is a strategic competency that includes political skill, consensus building, and networking ability. The strategic leaders' ability to coordinate and direct actions across many boundaries has become an increasingly important capability for the success of large organizations. As

experiences include serving as secretaries of U.S. Cabinet agencies, CEOs of Fortune 50 companies, 4-star military leaders of the US Department of Defense combatant commands, and as the senior psychologist of a major U.S. national security organization.

a start point, leaders can apply the Schotter et al. model for effective boundary spanning in global organizations (2017). In the ASLP, the ability to span boundaries most enables strategic leaders in Step 1, Assess the External Environment and Step 4, Lead Change.

Establishing a *thorough decision-making process* is essential for strategic leaders. Strategic leaders often operate in public view, as their decisions have significant consequences for the organization, its people, and the competitive marketplace. Therefore, strategic leaders should be communicative, objective, factual, and reflective. They should strive to clarify the process for how their organizations will make decisions, including how information is sought, who is responsible for what, how decisions will be made, and provide timelines for decision points. Essential in this process is how decisions are assessed against organizational values and how stakeholders such as employees can submit ideas to the decision makers and contribute to the organization's collective intelligence. Though this competency directly aligns with ASLP Step 3, sharing the entire ASLP with an organization's stakeholders can help facilitate its successful execution.

Innovation is the ability to produce something new and useful by using disciplined creativity and sustained organizational performance (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Disciplined innovation includes an empirical and qualitative ability to assign probabilities to things and phenomena that were previously unknown or unpredicted (Scoblic, 2020). In the ASLP, *innovation* fuels the strategic leaders' analysis of the external and internal environments to identify emerging opportunities and intrepid decision-making in Steps 1–3. Strategic leaders do not depend exclusively on their previous experiences, they also imagine the range of possibilities that face the organization, whether the opportunity flows from the organization itself (e.g., develops new proprietary technology that disrupts competition) or the external environment (e.g., a global pandemic that disrupts the existing dominant products and services).

Building high performing teams and cultures is an interpersonal competency that includes promoting a competitive team spirit (winning with honor) and the organizational resiliency to bounce back from setbacks and most directly supports strategic leaders in Step 4. This competency is also the primary outcome of the Burke-Litwin model, which provides insight for how leadership affects organizational performance.

Interpersonal influence is a competency that includes emotional intelligence, social skill, negotiations skills, interpersonal affability, oral and written communication skill, and the ability to lead up. In the ASLP, *interpersonal influence* most enables strategic leaders in Step 4, Lead Change. Indeed, strategic leaders can use interpersonal influence to create transformational effects (Feinberg et al., 2005).

Forthrightness is an interpersonal competency that includes character, courage, trust, humility, conscientiousness, and commitment to the organization. In our process, *forthrightness* most enables strategic leaders in Step 3, Getting the Big Ideas Right, and Step 4, Lead Change.

Enabling Competencies

Engaging in character development (including personal wellness) activities is a strategic competency that includes developing and displaying the grit, hardiness, and resilience to not only survive, but to thrive in a high-stress strategic leadership role. Studies of elites, which include many strategic leaders, found them to display incredible levels of resilience and stamina (Snook & Khurana, 2015). Without this hardiness, strategic leaders will not be able to effectively keep up with the incredible demands on their time and attention, and the organization will likely suffer.

Leveraging diversity is an enabling competency that includes global citizenship and cross-cultural expertise. In our process, *leveraging diversity* creates strategic resiliency through the creation of a diverse strategic leader talent pipeline. Additionally, strategic leaders shape organizational values that enable organizations to gain and benefit from both informational and experiential diversity, potentially improving strategic decision-making (Dunphy, 2004). Moreover, organizations that celebrate and fully include and empower underrepresented groups have been shown to be more moral and profitable (Gipson et al., 2017; Waclawski et al., 1995).

Finally, *actively recruiting and developing other leaders* is a technical competency that fills the organization's leadership pipeline. The requirements for a strategic leader are so vast and complex that an organization that fails to assess and develop strategic leader competencies in its junior leaders is destined for future failure in a highly competitive, unpredictable environment. Strategic leaders seeking actionable steps to leverage this competency can begin with "Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory" (Day et al., 2014) as they chart a path forward. As strategic leaders create and implement their recruitment and development programs, in addition to developing the aforementioned strategic competencies, they should always garner input from those high-potential junior leaders they are seeking to develop and retain.

Conclusion

In the context of our VUCA world, the ASLP provides senior organizational leaders with a roadmap to assess their external and internal environments, set strategic direction by choosing the right big ideas, and lead the change needed to get there. Looking beyond short- and medium-term impacts, the ASLP posits that organizations that develop their leaders' strategic competencies, facilitate their leaders' character and v more likely to be able to maintain their hard-won sustainable competitive advantages into the deep future.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Building a Deliberate and Repeatable Program for Developing Leaders of Character

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ABSTRACT

For decades, Military Service Academies have long purported to build leaders of character. Over the last six years, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy has built a repeatable system for leader development with curriculum, evaluation, and assessments. The Loy Institute for Leadership has played a key role in this effort ingraining the Guide to Officer and Leader Development and the LEAD Strategy with the Coast Guard's 13 Coast Guard Leading Self and Leading Others Competencies by writing curricula across experiential programs, integrating core academic courses, evaluating leadership competencies, and providing an annual cycle for program assessment and review.

Keywords: leadership, leading change, leader development, student outcomes, measurement, experiential education

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Introduction

The mission of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy is to develop leaders of character. The Academy has been successfully executing that mission since its inception in 1876. The leader development experience, however, differed for each cadet depending on various factors such as a cadet's personality and opportunities presented or seized.

In the early 2000s, then Superintendent RADM Robert C. Olsen recognized the need to implement a program that would develop leaders using a more deliberate and repeatable approach. He collaborated with Dr. James S. Tyler, a member of the Class of 1958, to establish a leadership institute at the Academy. In 2005, the Institute for Leadership (IFL) was founded. Admiral James M. Loy, the 21st Commandant of the Coast Guard, became the first Distinguished Chair in Leadership. In 2014, upon stepping down as the inaugural chair, the IFL was renamed in his honor as the Admiral James M. Loy Institute for Leadership (Loy IFL).

The initial work of the Institute, shepherded by Admiral Loy, focused on the *what* and the *how* of developing cadets as leaders of character, and was comprised of three components. The first component, the Guide to Officer and Leadership Development (GOLD) philosophy[1] (U.S. Coast Guard Academy, 2012), adopted in 2002, shifted the Academy's approach from one of compliance to one of individual development grounded in educational, adult development (Kegan, 1994) and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). GOLD defines "A Leader of Character is one who embodies the Coast Guard's Core Values (honor, respect, and devotion to duty) and influences and inspires others to achieve a goal by seeking to discover the truth, deciding what is right and demonstrating the courage to act accordingly ... always." Captured within the GOLD philosophy is the second component, the framework for leader development. This novel framework was developed by the Academy's Management Department and explains the *how*. The framework guides cadets on their leader development journey as they Learn from theory, Experience through practice, Analyze through reflection, and Deepen understanding through mentoring (LEAD; Goulet et al., 2012). A third and critical component was adoption of the U.S. Coast Guard's well-established leadership competencies (2006), Leading Self and Leading Others, into the cadet leader development program (LDP). As part of the LEAD strategy, cadets would practice these competencies throughout their journey. In so doing, the cadets would engage in leadership behaviors that directly prepare them for the organization they will be serving.

GOLD invited all academic faculty, military company officers, and athletic coaches to align more cohesively with a unity of effort of their shared responsibility to develop each cadet across the physical, intellectual, professional and values domains and over the four years with increasing leadership roles of responsibility from follower, role modeler, cadre (specialized professional military trainer), and organizational leader. Growth and development are the predicted results of intentional engagements with faculty, staff, and coaches. GOLD also emphasized to the Academy community the importance of leaning into these Frequent Quality Interactions as part of the developmental process. The LEAD strategy enables leadership experiences to be rooted in a common language of a set of theories and models as well as the sense-making process of reflection and mentoring—thus, making more transparent and deliberate *how* cadets are developing as leaders of character and accelerating the potential value of the lessons of these experiences.

Once the *what* and the *how* were established, it was time to connect this work in such a way that cadets would know that a deliberate and repeatable effort was underway throughout their 200-week journey

1 See: https://sites.google.com/view/cgaldp-jcld/gold

to develop them into a leader of character. In 2015, then Academy Superintendent RADM James Rendon charged the Loy IFL with a complete audit of the legacy experiential programs (many of which had existed for decades such as Swab Summer, 3/c Eagle, 2/c Cadre) for how they encouraged cadet growth in the Coast Guard's 13 Leading Self and Leading Others Competencies. The result would ensure an accurate and repeatable measure of a cadet's demonstrated proficiency in each competency as a graduation requirement as captured by the cadet's evaluation report with dimensions grounded in the competencies.

Several Pieces of the Program Were Well Established:

- Every cadet participated in a select set of intentional experiential LDPs and courses over the 4-year program.
- Cadets received performance evaluation reports in each of these programs.
- The LEAD strategy was loosely woven throughout the programs.

The Work Ahead Included:

- A more deliberate connection of the 13 Leading Self and Leading Others Competencies to the legacy experiential LDP.
- A curriculum for experiential LDPs and courses that was repeatable and intentionally included the LEAD framework.
- A performance system to evaluate and track a cadet's proficiency in the Coast Guard's 13 Leading Self and Leading Others competencies.
- Establishment of processes for sustainability, continuous improvement and assessment.***

STEP 1—Put Pieces Together by Assigning Leadership Competencies to Programs

As previously mentioned, the Academy's core mission is the development of leaders of character. If one parses out those words—leadership being the influencing and inspiring of others to accomplish a goal, and character being all about oneself embodying moral virtues such as the Coast Guard's core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty, then our LDP's two-phased process focusing on Leading Self-competencies in the first two years and Leading Others in the second two years, is the cornerstone of the Academy's mission. The 13 Leading Self and Leading Others Competencies are part of the 28 competencies the Coast Guard identifies as keys to career success for all members of the organization. During the early part of designing the comprehensive systemic approach, our individual program managers would argue that they were doing all the competencies in any particular program. While these programs offered opportunities to engage and develop in any of the 13 competencies, we needed to organize the four-year program in such a way that the cadets could do a deep dive on no more than three leadership competencies during each of the nine experiential programs in order to have a deliberate focus that the cadets and facilitators could keep top of mind throughout. It made sense to have the Leading Self Competencies the focus during freshman & sophomore year and the Leading Others Competencies during junior and senior year.[2] The Leading Self can be seen as the behavioral manifestation of one's character. Recall our operational definition of a Leader of Character as "one who ... seeks to discover the truth, decide what is right, and has the courage to act accordingly ... always." These three actions define one's character and are reflected in the Coast Guard's Leading Self Competencies of Aligning Values, Followership, Accountability & Responsibility, Self Awareness & Learning, and Personal Conduct. It is important to note that one never stops guarding their character—one never stops "Leading Self." These high stress experiential programs including academics place cadets in numerous situations where they could be tempted to betray

2 For a listing of the 13 competencies and how they map onto the different programs, see https://sites.google.com/view/cgaldp-jcld/cgaldp

their integrity. Living under the Honor Concept places emphasis, training, and accountability into developing one's character.

Consistent with the GOLD philosophy of individual development versus compliance, it is expected that cadets will make mistakes within the Coast Guard Academy's (CGA) training environment, as it is viewed as a natural part of character development. When a cadet fails outside of policy, that is, does *not* act in accordance with established policy, rules, and regulations, CGA has two structured cadet remediation programs: honor & respect to correct identified character deficiencies. CGA's cadet remediation programs focus on the holistic character development of each cadet assigned and allow for all CGA faculty and staff, and mentors, to be directly involved. The programs are developmental in nature and focus on professional and character development and exist to promote reflection and critical thinking. Remediation is not a sanction or a punishment; it is instead an opportunity for a cadet to receive additional guidance and mentorship to correct their professional and character deficiencies.

STEP 2–Design Curriculum for Each Program Using the LEAD Framework

The LEAD framework is rooted in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) and Kegan's Adult Development Theory (1994). Students are given numerous leadership experiences, but what makes these experiences different from other college students is that students at the CGA are expected to apply leadership theory, practice, and make mistakes while leading. Then they are asked to reflect on their successes and failures and seek out mentors for sense making.

The requirement for all cadets to participate in the nine experiential programs has been a part of the LDP for decades. During the school year, this happens in the Chase Hall Practicum. Senior cadets are assigned to leadership positions with responsibilities for leading the Corps of Cadets using a chain of command and executing collateral duties. The first-year students, sophomores, and juniors are also assigned roles. This co-curricular military practicum with its focus on standardization, order, and discipline is deliberately austere and includes a regimented daily routine with required uniforms, inspections, formations, physical fitness, the enforcement of conduct standards, and an honor concept. The practicum is simultaneously a supportive and developmental environment where cadet leaders are facilitated by faculty, staff & coaches to foster norms that seek alignment with and reinforce internalization of the Coast Guard's core values. Feedback is provided during the execution of an evaluation system each semester that captures both performance and development on the targeted leadership competencies. During the summer, the experiential programs occur over multiple weeks at operational Coast Guard units, such as 5 weeks sailing aboard the tall ship EAGLE, participating in the 2-week Coastal Sail Training Program onboard 44' sloops, and 7 weeks while being indoctrinated as a swab (freshman).

Part of enhancing the LDP was weaving the LEAD framework through each of the nine experiential programs to create a fully developed and repeatable leadership curriculum across four years. Each of the nine experiential programs has a Leader Development Handbook.[3] The Handbook suggests the leadership theory the student could be applying when practicing the targeted leadership competencies for the program. It also lists the types of behaviors a leader would display in the program when applying the theory and demonstrating proficiency in the targeted leadership competencies. Lastly, it provides reflection prompts for cadets and mentors to deepen their understanding of leader development. The students now have a four-year, repeatable, fully developed leadership curriculum laid out in

3 For an example of what this looks like, see https://sites.google.com/view/cgaldp-jcld/handbook

nine Leader Development Handbooks that support the LEAD framework (Cadet Training Branch, 2020).

In keeping with the LEAD strategy, all students take a three-credit academic leadership course which provides opportunities to learn more about themselves and leadership theory. Organizational Behavior and Leadership, taken during a cadet's sophomore year, examines the relationship of behavior (individual and group) and organizational effectiveness. The course uses personality and leadership inventories, case studies, classroom exercises, lectures, and discussion to increase self-awareness and their understanding of, unconscious bias, motivation, team effectiveness, communication, and performance management. Cadets are introduced to the evolution of leadership theory and how these theories support the current leadership models used at the Coast Guard's Leadership Development Center (LDC). Much of the work in this course is focused on helping sophomore cadets develop their own Leadership Framework which they will test and revise for the remainder of their time at CGA, and eventually present to leaders in the Coast Guard as a LDP capstone experience during their senior cadet year.

During the early summer between sophomore and junior year, a weeklong leadership training course known as the Mid-Grade Cadet Transition Course (MCTC) is taken by students in preparation for their new leadership role as cadre defined as a specialized professional military trainer. In this role, the cadets are called on to train incoming first-year students, cadets participating in preparatory programs or high school students aspiring to be cadets. The course is facilitated in small groups by active-duty Coast Guard Officers and senior enlisted leaders who will mentor them during their cadre programs. Using lecture, activities, case studies, panel discussions, and one-on-one coaching sessions, cadets focus on developing a growth mindset, the practice of emotional intelligence and how to demonstrate proficiency in the cadre program's targeted leadership competencies of Accountability and Responsibility (for others), Taking Care of People, Influencing Others, Teambuilding, and Cultural Fluency. As with the nine experiential programs, these courses have a fully developed and repeatable curriculum which supports the LEAD framework.

STEP 3–Develop an Evaluation System Using the Leading Self & Leading Others Competencies

A major change to the LDP was to update the Cadet Evaluation Report (CER) which is used to assess cadet performance in the nine experiential programs. These report forms are now standardized across all programs. The first-year students, sophomores, and juniors are evaluated using similar forms to those used for enlisted personnel in the Coast Guard. The seniors are evaluated on similar forms used for Ensigns, which is the rank they will be when commissioned. A major modification to these Coast Guard forms was the addition of one or more of the 13 Leadership Competencies as elements of performance descriptions within the reports.[4]

A requirement of this new system is for supervisors to provide written feedback on the observed targeted leadership competencies for the experiential program in which the report is being used. Additionally, the students' proficiency in the targeted competencies is measured in the report using a scale from one to seven. If a student receives less than a four in a targeted competency, then they will be recommended for a remedial by their supervisor in the upcoming semester.

As an institution of higher education, we wanted to show the cadets how their performance was being measured in this co-curricular LDP. A critical undertaking in this effort was the creation of a Leader of Character

4 To see an excerpt from the Cadet Evaluation Report, see https://sites.google.com/view/cgaldp-jcld/cer

Information System (LCIS)[5] to track a cadet's performance in the 13 Leadership Competencies over the four years. This new system produces a leadership transcript that shows cadets, and their support network, their proficiency in the targeted leadership competencies upon the completion of each experiential program. Program Managers of each experiential program also have access to longitudinal data to ensure decisions regarding changes to the program are data informed. The LCIS recently reached Initial Operating Capability and the Class of 2021 was the first class to graduate having demonstrated proficiency in the Coast Guard's 13 leadership competencies as a graduation requirement by achieving an average evaluation of a 4 or greater on the corresponding performance dimensions from their CER's.

STEP 4—Long Term Sustainability and Continuous Improvement

To ensure sustainability of the enhanced LDP, a Leadership Assessment Team (LAT) has been established. This body is responsible for coordinating leadership assessments across the LDP system. The LAT is chaired by the Director of the Loy IFL and includes membership of Institutional Research, Cadet Training Branch, and faculty from the School of Leadership & Management. The duties of the LAT are to:

a. Develop, implement, and continuously improve the system by which cadets are assessed in their leadership proficiency.
b. Develop, implement, and continuously improve the system by which feedback is collected from cadets on how the nine experiential programs did in developing their leadership.
c. Make recommendations to experiential program managers for programmatic improvements.
d. Make recommendations for resource allocation regarding leader development.

5 For an example of how this is tracked, see https://sites.google.com/view/cgaldp-jcld/lcis

Additionally, Cadet Training in collaboration with the Loy IFL holds an annual LDP Summit during the fall semester. The Summit gathers the CGA community and stakeholders to learn, review, and celebrate the work of everyone involved with developing leaders of character. The following are the key components of the Summit:

- Experiential program managers provide a briefing of their program to the greater CGA community. The content of the brief covers: (1) how cadets are performing in the targeted leadership competencies, (2) improvements being made to curriculum, (3) changes being made to program execution, (4) changes made to practitioner training, and (5) changes made to assessment(s).
- Program Cross Pollination. A working session and facilitated discussion with Program Managers targeting lessons learned from After Action Reports (AARs), and how enhancements made in one program can be leveraged across other programs.

Conclusion

The CGA has been developing leaders of character for decades. In the past five years the Loy IFL collaborated with other CGA stakeholders to pursue enhancements to this legacy program so that demonstrating leadership proficiency of both the character attestation of Leading Self as well as the apprentice level of Leading Others is now a graduation requirement for all cadets. A system is in place to evaluate a cadet's proficiency in 13 of the Coast Guard's Leadership Competencies and a fully developed and repeatable curriculum using the LEAD framework has been developed for all nine experiential LDPs and courses. By using the same evaluation reports and leadership competencies against which students will be evaluated in their commissioned careers, the LDP prepares graduates to be successful by extrapolating their LEAD-based experience at the Academy directly into their commissioned careers.

The research regarding how best to develop leaders continues to evolve as we intend to put focus into empirically assessing impact, outcomes and improvements in addition to increased fidelity into remediation efforts to include better "warning signals" earlier in a cadet's 200 weeks. At the CGA, we now have a repeatable curriculum, standardized evaluation program, and a longitudinal data collection system that are all part of a continuous improvement cycle to ensure our program will evolve and meet the leader development needs of our cadets and officers in years to come.

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PROFILE IN LEADERSHIP

Bernhard Schriever, Moral Courage, and the Birth of the Space Age

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There is a point at which innovation becomes transformation, and General Bernard Schriever is the man who moved the Air Force across that point. At a time when the nation's Air and Space Forces are looking toward innovation as an imperative means of maintaining their effectiveness, it is worth some study of Schriever, arguably the most innovative leader in the history of the Air Force and the creator of what has now become the U.S. Space Force.

There is little danger of Schriever becoming forgotten—the first man ever to have an Air Force Base named after him while still alive, the originator of processes and working relationships that still govern Air and Space Force acquisition programs, and most of all, a man of remarkable moral courage—willing to accept any risk and any burden to ensure the security of his adopted nation. There is, however, some risk that the ways and means by which he transformed the Air Force will become generalized memories over time as we focus on the visible outcome of his work—which is reflected today in every launch of every rocket and missile, military or civilian, by this nation.

A Sketch of General Bernard Schriever's Career

Schriever's remarkable career had a remarkable opening. He was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1910, and his first memories were of Zeppelin warships flying overhead, en route to their bombing runs over England. His father was an officer on a German ship and was interned in the United States in 1916. Determined to reunite her family, Schriever's mother managed to take her family to the Netherlands and sail to the United States on a neutral ship. The family eventually settled in Texas, and Schriever became a naturalized citizen in 1923. After graduating from Texas A&M in 1932, he joined the Army Air Corps in 1933. Providentially and fatefully, his first commander was Lt. Col. "Hap" Arnold, who would repeatedly play a role in Schriever's career in the coming years. With less than a year of service, Schriever flew in the disastrous few months of the Army's attempt to take over the U.S. mail in 1934. This experience

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reinforced a focus on effective systems and processes that he would retain for the rest of his life.

Schriever left the Air Corps in 1937 to become a pilot with Northwest Airlines but returned to the service at Arnold's urging in October 1938. Graduating from the Air Corps Engineering School in July 1941, he then took an advanced course in aeronautical engineering at Stanford University, graduating in June 1942 with a master's degree and a promotion to major. A month later, he was deployed to the South Pacific, where he would spend the following 33 months in a theater still remembered for its austerity, its terrible combat conditions, and the bitterness of the fighting among American, Japanese, and Australian forces. Major Schriever flew with the 19th Bomb Wing until it returned to the United States in early 1943. When word arrived of the wing's redeployment back home, General George Kenney—a legend in his own right—called Schriever into his office and told him, "I'm not letting you go home. I need as much engineering help as I can get out here." In the coming months, Schriever was designated the commanding officer of advanced headquarters for the Far East Air Service Command, supporting theater operations from Hollandia, New Guinea, Manila, and Okinawa. Schriever was promoted to colonel in December 1943, and as the war closed in the Pacific Theater had the nearly unique honor of observing the Japanese surrender on the deck of the battleship *Missouri*, among the very few Army Air Forces members to do so.

The end of the war brought a pell-mell demobilization across the armed forces, and Chief of Staff Hap Arnold was concerned that the Air Force would lose the relationship with the scientific community that had played such an important part in the path to victory. He appointed Colonel Schriever as the chief of scientific liaison for the Headquarters Army Air Forces, a position he filled for over three years, building relationships with the scientists engaged in defense programs that would help sustain Schriever for the following years. Probably the most noteworthy of his work in this period lay in his responsibilities as the liaison with the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), working with Dr. Theodore von Karman in mapping long-term military requirements onto ongoing research and development.

After spending a year at the National War College, Schriever returned to the Pentagon in June 1950, serving another three-year tour as Assistant for Development Planning and earning his promotion to Brigadier General in June 1953. It was during a SAB meeting in March 1953 that Schriever learned of the possibility of designing a thermonuclear weapon—one light enough to be used with missiles that could be mission capable within a few years. That discovery would change the trajectory of his life. Schriever viewed the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States to field such weapons as a threat to the nation, and he devoted himself to conducting and winning the race to field nuclear-capable missile forces.

By that time, Schriever had been in the Air Force, off and on, for over 20 years. He had proved himself in combat, as a tireless and systematic planner, as a leader, and as an effective liaison with the scientific community. As significant as these accomplishments were, in retrospect they appear as a prologue to the final stages of his career, from 1954 to 1966.

He began his historic relationship with the Air Research and Development Command—later Air Force Systems Command—in June 1954, leading a group of officers who would establish the Air Force's ballistic and systems divisions: developing the missiles, ranges and support systems, and satellites that would establish the United States as a space power, serve as a mighty deterrent through the coldest days of the Cold War, and develop into commercial sectors that would transform the world. They accomplished all of this working out of the Western Development Division, formerly a parochial school in Inglewood, California.

Schriever's workload was almost unimaginable, as were his responsibilities and the stakes at play. Over the years 1954–1962, he was responsible for fielding the Atlas and Titan Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBMs), the Thor Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM), and finally the Minuteman solid-fuel ICBM. Each demanded rigorous testing and separate logistics chains and launch sites, all of which fell within Schriever's responsibilities in command. President Eisenhower's decision to develop the National Air and Space Agency (NASA) created yet another set of demands, with the Air Force supporting NASA launches and the development of satellites. In a program that demanded stability and steady funding, Schriever found himself on a roller coaster, boosted by the Soviet Union's detonation of a hydrogen bomb in 1954 and by the launch of the Sputnik satellite in October 1957, but recurrently handicapped by budget cuts.

These systems all reflect a deeper aspect of Schriever's accomplishments: his managerial competence and creativity. Generally speaking, the extreme urgency of the moment provided Schriever with unique scope when designing his processes and management structure. He took full advantage of that scope of maneuver. Among his most basic decisions, his selection of a commercial firm, Ramo-Wooldridge Corporation, to carry responsibility for systems engineering and technical direction set the project on the right path and established a precedent for civil-military projects that has been repeated frequently through the years. Given the extreme pressure to meet deadlines, and the complexity of the systems under development, Schriever adopted the management philosophy of concurrency in fielding these new programs—developing the critical elements of the program in such a sequence that they would be completed when needed. It was a risky approach and an expensive one when concurrency failed, but it was necessary to make deadlines, and the nation could bear the cost given the stakes at play.

Schriever was granted nearly carte blanche by the Air Force in selecting his subordinates, but his success in doing so was again a measure of his professionalism and managerial skill. He built a devoted and effective team, all sharing Schriever's passion and stamina—two prerequisites for working under Schriever's direction.

Character, Leadership, and Transforming the Air Force

General Bernhard Schriever was a very distinct type of leader: not flamboyant, no real charisma, not an orator, just a man with extraordinary moral courage, ceaseless professionalism, unbelievable stamina, boundless technical and managerial expertise, and a clear vision of the role of space in future military operations.

Few commentators have emphasized his moral courage, but this seems the most powerful of his leadership characteristics. If he was convinced that his position was right and the issue mattered, he would stand up to anyone. That characteristic stands out most clearly in his relationship with General Curtis LeMay, another icon of the Air Force, the service's central figure during the first two decades of the Cold War, and probably the finest operator the service has ever had. LeMay and Schriever had a mutually respectful relationship, but that often didn't make things pleasant during their conversations. They clashed recurrently during the early 1950s, as the Air Force looked toward its future and the shape of its force structure. During that time, Colonel Schriever served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Development, assessing the needs and requirements of the future force.

Their clashes were a combination of personality, mission, perspective, and style. LeMay was a bomber pilot and, by instinct and training, a superb operator. He was the living symbol of the Air Force through the 1950s, with immense power and prestige within the Air Force leadership. But he was skeptical of Schriever's management practices, dubious of his operational analyses, and dismissive of the value of missile warfare. In a recurrent pattern, from the rank of colonel to his arrival at the four-star level, Schriever found occasion to disagree with

LeMay, often at risk to his career. These clashes extended across a vast swath of major issues, including among others, the most effective method of inflight refueling, whether or not tactical forces should carry nuclear weapons, whether a nuclear-powered bomber was feasible, and the design and attack strategies of strategic bombers. In the end, the Air Force was big enough for both of them, but not by much. During the final years of their relationship, LeMay once pointed at Schriever's four-star insignia and commented, "If it was up to me, you wouldn't have those." Schriever replied, "I know."

Schriever's professionalism showed up in many ways. Perhaps the most remarkable was his stamina, which often blended into its near relative, resilience. His stamina was both physical and psychological. His work schedule during his years in Los Angeles, in particular, seems impossible. It was routine practice for him to work a full week, then fly Friday night to Washington, DC, returning in time for work on Monday. On a brighter note, he often invested his time on such trips to golf, a sport he had mastered in the early 1930s and used to good advantage throughout his career. The resilience shows up most clearly during the frantic days of the early Cold War, with the specter of Soviet domination looming over his program, as test after test failed, costs rose, and time shrank. His colleague Jacob Neufeld considered Schriever's two most significant attributes to be, first, "his calm, unflappable nature," and second, his "ability to persuade very senior and sometimes irascible officials to accept his views."

The best summary of Schriever's character, perhaps, is found in aligning it with the Leadership of Character framework that today shapes the Air Force Academy's leadership training. To an extent rarely found, Schriever lived honorably, with courage and discipline. He lifted those around him toward higher goals and higher achievements, inspiring and enabling those under his leadership. Most visibly, he elevated performance toward a noble purpose, one that has shaped and protected the world we live in.

Schriever's qualities are eternally useful to leaders and will be called on again as the U.S. military postures for the uncertain future that lies ahead. Under similar circumstances 65 years ago, Schriever lit a candle that still lights our world. The question that emerges is whether another Schriever will emerge, someone to bring clarity, vision, and burning passion to the task of adapting to the new strategic environment.

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BOOK REVIEW

A Review of "The Harder I Fall, The Higher I Bounce"

Max James, Issaquah, Washington: Made For Success Publishing (2021)

Review By: Kurt Wendt

Think you have what it takes to achieve immediate success as an entrepreneur in the business world? Think again, at least according to highly successful entrepreneur, veteran combat pilot, philanthropist, and author Max James. In his book, *The Harder I Fall, The Higher I Bounce* James lays out his own long and winding road to success, emphasizing character and leadership, and asserting—as the title implies—there are likely to be many failures along the way.

James' book may be primarily intended for hopeful entrepreneurs, but really has something for everyone as he chronicles his life's journey from modest beginnings growing up on a farm in West Tennessee, to graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy, serving as an Air Force rescue pilot in Vietnam, and ultimately venturing into the civilian sector and business world. Max James does an exceptional job telling his story, resulting in a book that is not only educational, but entertaining as well. Some of his best life lessons are found in the most humorous and even self-deprecating moments.

Besides being interesting and applicable to a wide audience, what sets James' writing apart are the themes of character and leadership which are woven throughout. He describes learning honesty and values from his father, growing up on the farm. He recounts the painful lessons of accountability as a leader at the Air Force Academy, being relieved from a cadet command position for the actions of one individual subordinate to him, learning that you can delegate authority but you cannot delegate responsibility. And, ultimately, he applies those lessons of leadership and character to become a decorated combat pilot, and eventually build and lead a billion-dollar business.

In one particularly poignant example, James recounts his first combat rescue mission in Vietnam. After locating a downed pilot in the jungle and establishing radio contact, James and his helicopter crew make multiple attempts to pick up the pilot. But each time, despite friendly air support and their own heroic efforts, heavy enemy fire thwarts their attempts and the

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helicopter crew must depart, knowing the pilot will either be killed or captured. In spite of this crushing blow, James manages to bounce back, ultimately saving 10 downed pilots during his tour in Vietnam—the epitome of living honorably, lifting others and elevating performance.

Not satisfied with simply being a successful military aviator and entrepreneur, James goes on to describe the great joy of his philanthropic efforts, particularly focusing on character and leadership programs at the Air Force Academy. He offers that you should "put your money where your heart is," and he has certainly put that advice into practice. One cannot help but feel his passion for developing young men and women as leaders of character, ultimately translating that drive into a design, fundraising, and construction effort resulting in the iconic Polaris Hall that the Air Force Academy's Center for Character and Leadership Development now calls home.

JCLD readers will also want to continue to the Appendix, where an interview with Max James from a previous issue of the *JCLD* further delves into his passion for character and leadership development. Overall, James' book is part wild ride, part heart-warming story, and all about character and leadership. Whether you are an aspiring entrepreneur, a future military leader, or simply interested in developing leaders of character, *The Harder I Fall, The Higher I Bounce* is definitely worth the read.

BOOK REVIEW

A Review of "Aiming Higher: A Journey through Military Aviation Leadership"

Chris Stricklin, Robert Teschner, Jason Harris, Kim Campbell and Daniel Walker, Chesterfield: RTI Press (2022)

Review By: CMSgt Ecatarina M. Garcia, 51st Intelligence Squadron

When five Air Force pilots in different phases of transition from military life come together to share and reflect on military and professional experiences, it yields a treasure trove of relatable and relevant leadership principles. *Aiming Higher* provides a glimpse into the authors' lived experiences and the lessons they drew from these experiences. From the perspective of a fighter pilot to a transport pilot, they all faced challenges, they all failed, but they all grew. That is the reoccurring theme throughout the book—failure will happen, but it is how you evaluate and reframe as you continue to grow that develops you as a leader.

Forming a coalition named "Military Mentorship Mastermind," these authors came together to continue to challenge each other as they led in new ways and new areas. Their shared purpose was to deliberately reflect on their challenges and push each other to develop into their best possible selves. In this compilation, they share leadership lessons but do so through story and in a relatable way. Not only do these stories get the reader thinking about similar challenges in their own lives, but the book offers "points to ponder" that provide a deliberate guide to this type of reflection. This encouragement of reflection transforms this from a leadership book with good stories to a helpful tool that readers can use daily in their lives and their particular contexts.

The authors point out the tenets of being a good leader. Not surprisingly, principles like trust, accountability, reflection, purpose, and credibility surface through each story. A unique element that was unexpectedly highlighted is

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how aviation training principles, in essence, are leadership principles. As an example, Robert Teschner tells the story of the unexpected discovery of a tumor. Adversity is undoubtedly something most readers relate to, yet he details how his Air Force training took over to guide him through this crisis. "Maintain aircraft control, analyze the situation and take appropriate action, and land as soon as conditions permit," he writes (p. 99). The connection of these training elements to his situation is not initially apparent. Still, he links how he was able to center himself, process information, make plans, and accept those alternate plans in the face of unexpected adversity. This is particularly salient as many followers will remember leaders most when they lead them through times of crisis or uncertainty.

As another example, Kim Campbell frames her stories around the U.S. Air Force Academy's Leader of Character framework and ties each experience to one of its three pillars. The importance of Living Honorably is tied to accountability, Lifting Others to challenging, motivating, and influencing, and Elevating Performance to the relentless pursuit of growth. The simplicity, yet power, of these stories makes it difficult for readers not to see the relevance of these principles in their daily lives. Like Teschner's use of Air Force aviation training elements, these applications continue to enhance the credibility and relevancy of these lessons to all readers in all contexts.

Daniel Walker writes, "at no stage in my life was I ever talented enough to completely avoid failure" (p. 108). The truth is that no one is. The problem, however, is that some leadership books make you feel as if the author has all the answers and you are "doing it wrong." It is hard to connect when you feel like you are so far away from the leader you want to be. That is the beauty of *Aiming Higher*. Core to the book is that each of these Air Force pilots and leaders failed. They failed hard, and they failed often, but those failures were essential to their growth. Failure is vital to our growth, and in the words of the authors, we need to "embrace failure."

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