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Phone: 719-333-4904

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Cover Photo: The picture on the cover highlights two iconic buildings at USAFA. In the forefront is the Center for Character & Leadership Development which was made possible through generous contributions of USAFA graduates and donors and the United States Air Force. In the background is the USAFA Cadet Chapel. Both buildings represent the necessity for character development in all leaders.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Ethical Leadership at Work and with Friends and Family: Within-Person and Between-Raters Variability Matters

Michael Palanski, Rochester Institute of Technology

Michelle Hammond, Oakland University

Jayoung Kim, Binghamton University

Gretchen Vogelgesang Lester, San Jose State University

Rachel Clapp Smith, Purdue University Northwest

ABSTRACT

Despite its theoretical grounding in the personal moral characteristics of leaders, most research on Brown et al.'s (2005) ethical leadership construct has tended to ignore the personal life (friends/family) aspects of leaders. In this study, we consider ethical leadership behavior in both work and non-work (i.e., with friends and family) domains at both the intra-individual (domain) and individual (leader as a whole person) levels of analysis. We examine our research questions with a sample of 104 leaders and their 1,458 raters in executive MBA programs in the United States and Ireland. Our findings demonstrate that ethical leadership

CONTACT Michael Palanski **mpalanski@saunders.rit.edu**

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operates at the individual level of analysis in both work and non-work contexts, with the implication that researchers should consider both the mean and variation of ethical leadership. Our findings also indicate strong within-domain and limited cross-domain effects of ethical leadership and ethical leadership variation on cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Multi-Domain Leadership, Levels of Analysis, Trust, Affective Trust, Cognitive Trust, Abusive Supervision

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The notion that effective leaders are also ethical persons is nearly axiomatic in leadership studies (i.e., Bedi et al., 2016). Consensus about personal ethical behavior—that is, different people in different situations observing similar levels of ethical behavior of a particular leader—helps to provide credibility, predictability, and trustworthiness, ultimately leading to outcomes such as increased trust in the leader and increased leader effectiveness (Hoch et al., 2018; Ng & Feldman, 2015; Simons et al., 2015). Some even argue that ethical leadership is itself the *very essence* of effective leadership (Newstead et al., 2021; Sturm et al., 2017). Indeed, according to findings from the GLOBE study of over 17,000 leaders in 62 countries (Javidan et al., 2006), elements relating to a positive sense of ethics are included in most people's implicit leadership theories (House et al., 2002). For example, universal facilitators of leadership effectiveness included being trustworthy, just, and honest, whereas universal impediments included being self-protective and malevolent.

While many popular leadership theories contain ethical elements (e.g., transformational, authentic, and servant), Brown et al.'s (2005) theory of ethical leadership arguably sets the standard as the theory most focused on the ethical behavior of individual leaders. Ethical leaders are considered to be attractive and credible role models as they demonstrate integrity, set and maintain high ethical standards, engender trust and justice (Brown et al., 2005), and foster an ethical climate (Eisenbeiss et al., 2015). As most of the aspects of ethical leadership are focused on characteristics and consistent behavior of the individual leader, we might assume—as most theorizing seems to do—that the leader more or less acts morally, regardless of context. We note that aspects of the ethical leadership construct theoretically align with virtues, the habitual behaviors that are congruent with living the good life (Newstead et al., 2021). Indeed, ethical leadership has been defined from a characterological perspective as the adherence to the four cardinal virtues across all areas of life (Riggio et al., 2010). As such, virtues are inherently multi-domain in nature; that is, they are concerned with both the leader's work and non-work lives. As Newstead et al. (2021, p. 3) illustrate, a CEO's compassion and wisdom in a board meeting should also be present with the waiter at lunch. Specifically, we argue that to truly understand ethical leadership, it is important to consider the context of a leader's outside-of-work life, particularly relationships with family and friends.

Doing so is important for at least two reasons. First, insofar as ethical behavior reflects overall leader character, then a multi-domain perspective is necessary for the examination of the fullness of the construct. There is much evidence to suggest that individuals are not always consistent in their ethical behavior across life domains. For example, Riggio et al. (2010) ask readers to recall the many religious or political leaders who "railed against certain vices but engaged in those same behaviors in private" (p. 236) believing (and perhaps convincing those in work setting) they were ethical leaders but living personal lives far from it. Inconsistent behavior across domains may represent a dark or "hidden private life" or a systematic situational contingency in which the character traits manifest across domains (Fleeson, 2007). Indeed, research suggests that social roles across domains (parent or professional) represented a systematic situational contingency for the enactment of several virtues—what they referred to as "virtue states" (Bleidorn & Denissen, 2015). Whether it be a hidden personal life or systematic variation, considerations across domains are meaningful and important for consideration.

Second, a multi-domain consideration is especially important for creating a greater understanding of leaders' actual experiences (Liao et al., 2015). In particular, some studies have suggested that leaders' ethical leadership might have reach beyond just the work domain. For example, Liao et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between employee perceptions of ethical leadership and spouse's family satisfaction. Similarly, Zhang and Tu (2018) found that employees of highly ethical supervisors report more work-to-family enrichment, which in turn leads to greater family and life satisfaction, especially when the supervisor also provided family-supportive behaviors. We surmise that these types of cross-domain effects exist because of the (inherently multi-domain) personal aspects of ethical leadership.

Further, because a leader's work and non-work relationships are different, it is possible that an effective leader might display at least somewhat different ethical behaviors in work and non-work (family and friends) situations. This dynamic raises the possibility that even within the same person, the "ethical leader at work" acts differently than the "ethical leader with friends and family." Investigation of this possible variation and its implications lends itself to a levels-of-analysis perspective (e.g., Dansereau et al., 1984) in which we might consider a particular leader's ethical leadership behaviors at work and ethical leadership behaviors with friends and family to be two different—and possibly even independent—levels of analysis.

In short, despite a myriad of reasons why we might assume that a person would be perceived as an ethical leader across all situations, we believe that it is important to test this assumption. We seek to answer the fundamental research question, "What role does variation play with respect to ethical leader behavior?" by focusing on the ubiquitous construct of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005). In this article, we address these issues by first exploring the theoretical case for a high level of consensus regarding a leader's display of ethical leadership. Next, we review research about multi-domain leadership (Hammond et al., 2017) and demonstrate how it is helpful for gaining a better understanding of ethical leader behavior both at work and with friends/family. We then present a way to test our assumptions by explicating a levels-of-analysis framework (Dansereau et al., 1984) based on ethical leader behavior as experienced by relevant others (e.g., peers, direct reports, and family members) and its impact on commonly-studied outcomes such as cognitive and affective trust in the leader (Yang & Mossholder, 2010), as well as leader abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007). In doing so, we present a series of research questions to guide our analysis. Finally, we test our research questions by examining multi-source, multi-domain data from 1,458 raters of 104 leaders in the United States and Ireland.

Theoretical Development

Overview of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is defined "as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). From its original theorizing, ethical leadership has been framed as a process of social learning in which leaders affect the ethical conduct of followers through modeling appropriate behavior and norms (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders gain a reputation as such through two means (Brown & Treviño, 2006). First, an ethical leader is considered a moral person in that he or she demonstrates and embodies ethical principles, care, and fairness. Second, a reputation as an ethical leader is also built on being perceived as a moral manager through specific behaviors that encourage ethical practices in organizations such as discussing ethics and disciplining ethical violations (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Together, ethical leaders are considered to be attractive and credible role models as they demonstrate integrity, set and maintain high ethical standards, and engender trust and justice (Brown et al., 2005) and foster an ethical climate (Eisenbeiss et al., 2015).

An increasing body of literature highlights the positive relationship between ethical leadership and follower outcomes including perceptions of fairness, follower ethical behavior, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and well-being (Bedi et al., 2016). Meta-analysis (Bedi et al., 2016) indicated a very high mean corrected correlation (0.77), between perceptions of ethical leadership and leader effectiveness.

Impact of Ethical Leadership Variability

Once viewed as mostly a nuisance resulting from error, more recent leadership research has begun to recognize the possible importance of rater variability (Lester et al., 2021). Despite this newfound interest, relatively few studies have examined rater variability in perceptions of ethical leadership within workgroups or organizations. These early examinations of variation in perceptions of ethical leadership suggest that a focus on the levels of analysis of ethical leadership is important (Bormann et al., 2018). For example, using a within- and between-group analytic procedure (WABA), Den Hartog and De Hoogh (2009) differentiated aspects of ethical leadership into perceptions of fairness and empowering leadership. They found that team members tend to share consistent evaluations of their leaders' ethical behaviors in terms of fairness, but greater variability for empowering behaviors. In other words, fairness tended to be a group-level phenomenon whereas perceptions of empowerment tended to be an individual-level phenomenon rated in the eye of the beholder. Additionally, Bai and colleagues (2019) found that 35% of the variance of ethical leadership occurred at the group level.

Research in moral behavior also supports the potential importance of variability in ethical leader behavior. For example, in a series of studies, Hannah et al. (2018) demonstrated that moral identity—that is, how individuals construe their moral self (Blasi, 1993)—is a complex construct. They found that moral identity consists of four elements (justice, benevolence, obligation, and integrity), but that the importance of these elements will vary according to sub-identity or role (e.g., son/daughter, friend, coworker, follower). Their findings hint at the notion that variability in ethical leadership might extend beyond a particular role (i.e., the leader at work).

Multi-domain Perspective of Ethical Leadership

Multi-domain leadership (Hammond et al., 2017) takes a whole-person approach to understanding how individuals see themselves as leader and how this leader identity interacts and develops across the leader's many life domains (Hammond et al., 2017). Hammond and colleagues suggest that the leader identity is unique in that it spans multiple domains: one can be a leader as a manager, but also as a parent, sibling, little league coach, etc. As such, several sub-identities contribute to the overall identity as a leader and thus can involve many different leadership behaviors. By taking a multi-domain leadership perspective (Hammond et al., 2017), we highlight the nuance associated with variability-based constructs to unpack the within- and between-contextual situations that may serve to clarify the patterns of consistency and variability to resolve the tensions between the two. Multi-domain leadership theory is well suited not only to address this tension because it takes a whole-person approach in understanding a leader, on the one hand, but also to address the inherent variability of sub-identities that exist by leading across life domains (work and non-work), on the other hand.

Hammond and colleagues (2017) suggest that in addition to work, there can be many non-work domains in which leaders are embedded that contribute to their sense of self as a leader. We focus primarily on the friends and family domain because, in questions of consensus and variability of ethical leader behavior, friends and family provide a perspective of leaders that are potentially more robust, more reliable, and more deeply held. Work and family roles tend to be the most salient roles held by individuals, and leader behaviors within both domains reciprocally influence each other (Courtright et al., 2016). Friends and family generally see a leader more frequently and over longer time horizons than peers, supervisors, and followers. Even if a leader changes roles or organizations, their friends and family remain the same. Second, relationships in the friends and family domain generally involve greater levels of intimacy and trust—in other words, friends and family tend to know a leader at a deeper level than work colleagues and vice versa. When it comes to leading among friends and family, because the relationships are long-standing and trust an important ingredient, there may be more at stake for a leader among friends and family than at work.

To our knowledge, up until now, there has not been a published investigation that considers the idea that, with respect to ethical leadership, a leader could be viewed similarly in one domain but variable in another domain, or that the pattern of ethical leadership in one domain may impact the variability of outcomes in the other domain. Given all these nuanced complexities that multi-domain leadership theory helps us tackle, we turn now to explaining observer perspectives of leader behavior followed by the various levels of analysis that help us to examine variability in perceptions of ethical leader behavior.

The Importance of Variable Observer Perspectives on Ethical Leadership

One approach to investigating these questions is by examining the variability in ratings of leadership across multiple sources, a common approach in much of the extant leadership literature, especially in the self-other agreement literature (Lee & Carpenter, 2018) and levels of analysis literature (Dansereau et al., 1984). Over the past couple of decades, to address the limitations of single-source assessment, many organizations have adopted multi-source feedback, commonly referred to as 360-degree assessments (Brett & Atwater, 2001). A key assumption of 360-degree feedback is that multiple perspectives from multiple levels in the organization provide a more accurate and holistic assessment of behavior and performance than that provided by the manager alone.

As ethical leadership is grounded in social learning theories, naturally most studies of ethical leadership rely primarily on follower ratings of the leader (Magalhães et al., 2019). However, multiple perspectives of perceived ethical leadership may be informative, as ethical leadership addresses a "multi-faceted network of stakeholders" (Eisenbeiß & Giessner, 2012, p. 17). Further, ethical leadership is defined as "normatively appropriate conduct" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120), suggesting that appropriate behavior may be context-dependent. What individuals determine as morally appropriate may vary based on their own personal and cultural perspectives.

While Brown and colleagues (2005) describe ethical leadership as a collective phenomenon, in which members of the same team share perceptions, few studies have examined rater agreement in perceptions of ethical leadership within workgroups or organizations. The few studies that have done so indicate that the operative level of analysis for ethical leadership is unclear (see Bai et al., 2019; Bormann et al., 2018; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Lin et al., 2019). These early examinations of variation in perceptions of ethical leadership suggest that a focus on the levels of analysis of ethical leadership is worthy of further explanation.

Levels of Analysis of Ethical Leadership

Levels of analysis are simply the objects or entities of study (Dansereau et al., 1984; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Yammarino et al., 2005). In the current investigation, we focus on the individual leader as our primary level of analysis, with a focus on lower-level "building blocks" (Palanski & Yammarino, 2011) of different domains (work and friends/family) and different persons within those situations. In order to adequately consider the fullness of ethical behavior, we need to consider the variability of such behavior both within and between domains, which we do as a two-step process, as outlined below and summarized in Table 1.

Step 1: Variability of Ethical Leadership Within Domain (Intra-individual) Levels of Analysis

The purpose of Step 1 is to assess the operative level of analysis for each of two domain-level sub-identities (work and friends/family, respectively). Variability at any particular level of analysis may be described as consisting of one of four conditions (Dansereau et al., 1984; also see Klein et al. [1994] for a complementary discussion). First, a "wholes" condition occurs when there is significant variation between entities (e.g., between leaders), but not within entities. Second, a "parts" condition occurs when there is no significant variation between entities, but there is significant variation within entities. Third, an "equivocal" condition occurs when there is significant variation both between and within entities. Fourth, a "null" condition occurs when there is no significant variation either between or within entities. A null condition often indicates the presence of a very strong effect residing at a different (often higher) level of analysis. For example, imagine leaders functioning under a totalitarian regime whose strong norms govern all areas of life, resulting in no meaningful variation of behavior between leaders at work or in personal life.

Given that our two domains (intra-individual levels of analysis) may have any of these four conditions

Table 1

Ethical Leadership Levels of Analysis Possibilities

	Scenario	Step 1 Domain (Sub-Individual) Level of Analysis Possibilities* Domain A	 Domain B		Interpretation of Domain (Sub-Individual) Level Possibility Domain A	 Domain B		Step 2 Leader (Individual) Level of Analysis Implications (Operative Variables for Testing EL's Impact on Outcomes) Domain A	 Domain B	Regression Testing Method
Like Combinations	1	Whole	Whole	≈	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningless, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningless, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	➡	EL mean	EL mean	Polynomial
	2	Parts	Parts	≈	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningless	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningless	➡	EL variation	EL variation	Polynomial
	3	Equivocal	Equivocal	≈	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, and • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, and • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	➡	EL mean & EL variation	EL mean & EL variation	Linear
Unlike Combinations	4	Whole	Parts	≈	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningless, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningless	➡	EL mean	EL variation	Polynomial
	5	Whole	Equivocal	≈	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningless, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, and • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	➡	EL mean	EL mean & EL variation	Linear
	6	Parts	Equivocal	≈	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, but • Between-leader EL variation is meaningless	• Within-leader EL variation is meaningful, and • Between-leader EL variation is meaningful	➡	EL variation	EL mean & EL variation	Linear

Notes: EL = Ethical Leadership

*We use the generic Domain A and Domain B labels instead of work and Friends/Family to highlight the notation that in Scenarios 4, 5, and 6, the logic is the same even if the domains are reversed.

present when comparing the domains we have a total of 16 (4 × 4) possible combinations to consider. To simplify our explanation, in Table 1 we consider six of these possible combinations. We omit discussion of the four combinations with null conditions because a null condition simply indicates that we would need to consider an altogether different level of analysis (something other than an individual leader and the leader's work and family/friends intra-individual levels). We also simplify the discussion of the remaining 12 combinations down to 6 by noting that the arguments and inferences are the same if we reverse the domain classifications for unlike combinations of levels of analysis (represented as scenarios 4–6 in Table 1). It is important to note that in Step 1, we are considering the appropriate level of analysis in the same way as presented in prior leadership research (e.g., transformational leadership [Yammarino & Bass, 1990]; behavioral integrity [Palanski & Yammarino, 2011]; fairness/empowering leadership [De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008]). The only difference is that we are considering it two times (once for each respective domain).

> **Research Question 1a and 1b:** What is the operative level of analysis condition for ethical leadership in the (a) work domain and (b) friends and family domain?

Although not our primary concern, it is also necessary to investigate the operative level of analysis for our outcome variables. While we recognize that many studies naturally focus on the outcome constructs of interest, in this investigation we take the liberty of including three well-established "usual suspect" outcomes because our primary interest is on the multi-domain and multi-level characteristics of ethical leadership as an exogenous (independent) construct. Specifically, we focus on perhaps the most common outcome of ethical leadership (i.e., trust; Mayer et al., 1995). Numerous studies and multiple meta-analyses (Bedi et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018; Ng & Feldman, 2015) have firmly established trust in the leader as a robust and enduring result of consistent ethical leadership. Often, studies focus on the role of trust in the leader as a mediator between ethical leadership and other outcomes such as employee well-being (e.g., Chughtai et al., 2015). In this study, we examine trust in the forms of both affective trust and cognitive trust (Newman et al., 2014). Likewise, we also focus on an important "anti-ethical" outcome (i.e., abusive supervision) (Tepper, 2007) because of its ubiquity and importance in the broader ethical leadership literature.

> **Research Question 1c and 1d**: What is the operative level of analysis condition for cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision, respectively, in the (c) work domain and (d) friends and family domain?

Step 2: Relationship of Ethical Leadership and Outcome Variables

Having assessed the operative level of analysis of ethical leadership for both work and friends/family in Step 1, the purpose of Step 2 is to identify the relevant variables to be used for investigating the impact of ethical leadership on outcome variables (in our investigation, cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision, respectively) and to decide how to test these relationships.

Identifying the relevant variables is fairly simple. For a wholes condition, one may use the individual-level mean score of ethical leadership; that is, the average score for all raters within a domain. For a parts condition, one needs to choose and calculate some measure of variability of the scores from raters within a particular domain, for example, standard deviation (SD). For an equivocal condition, one may use the mean (representing between-leader variation), a chosen variability measure such as SD (representing within-leader variation), or some combination of these two.

Although identification of the relevant variables is fairly straightforward, there are multiple challenges with deciding how to use these variables in an empirical test with respect to outcome variables. First, there is a challenge in interpreting any combinations of ethical leadership that include a parts condition (e.g., wholes for Domain A with parts for Domain B); second, there is a challenge of interpreting ethical leadership variables that include an equivocal condition; third, even if we consider outcome variables for each domain separately, there is a challenge for interpreting any outcome variables which occur in an equivocal condition. Table 1 provides guidance for interpreting the results in any of these scenarios. With these different scenarios in mind, we ask the following research question.

> **Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between ethical leadership and (a) cognitive trust, (b) affective trust, and (c) abusive supervision with respect to the level (mean) and variability of ethical leadership at work and with friends and family?

Methods

Sample and Procedures

Data were collected from 124 working adults in executive MBA, executive education, and MBA programs. Within their programs, participants completed a multi-domain 360-degree survey administered by the authors at three universities in the United States and one university in Ireland. Participants could opt in to receive feedback in up to three domains (work, community organizations, and friends/family) (NB: data focused on community organizations were not used in this study). Participants who elected to receive feedback in more than one domain were instructed to complete the questions about each respective domain in their own survey on different days in order to focus attention on each domain individually. We received responses from 1,458 raters (926 in work and 532 in friends/family), but only participant leaders who had multiple ratings in both domains (work and friends/family, respectively) were included in our final sample. Thus, our final sample included 1,310 responses (782 in work and 528 in friends/family domain) on 104 participants. Each participant averaged 7.5 raters in the work domain (SD = 4.05, range = 2–23 raters) and 5.1 raters in the friends and family domain (SD = 2.46, range = 2–14 raters).

Measures

Ethical Leadership

Following Mayer et al. (2012), we used the 10-item ethical leadership scale developed by Brown et al. (2005), which includes the two sub-dimensions of moral person (5 items) and moral manager (5 items). However, also like Mayer et al. (2012) and others, the subscales did not hold independently in our study; therefore, we collapsed all 10 items into a single ethical leadership scale. We slightly modified some statements to better suit use across domains. For instance, "discusses business ethics or values with employees" was modified to "discusses ethics and values with others." The items were assessed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include "this person asks what is the right thing to do when making decisions" and "conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner" ($\alpha = 0.91$ in work, $\alpha = 0.87$ in friends and family).

Trust

The scales for cognitive and affective trust were taken from Yang and Mossholder (2010). Each scale includes five items on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Yang and Mossholder's (2010) original scale development research distinguishes parallel scales for affective and cognitive trust across two foci: management and supervisor. For consistency across ratings sources within our 360, we changed the referent to "this person." Sample items for cognitive trust include "I can depend on this person to meet his/her responsibilities" and "given this person's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence." Sample items of affective trust include "I'm confident that this person will always care about my personal needs" and "I'm sure I could openly communicate my feelings to this person" (α = 0.93 for cognitive trust in work, α = 0.87 for cognitive trust in friends and family, α = 0.94 for affective trust in work, and α = 0.93 for affective trust in friends and family).

Abusive Supervision

Following Mitchell and Ambrose (2007), we measured abusive supervision with a shortened (5-item) scale from Tepper's (2000) original abusive supervision measure. Raters indicated the frequency to which the individual demonstrated abusive behaviors such as "ridicules me" and "puts me down in front of others." The items were rated on a 1–5 scale from 1= I cannot remember him/her ever using this behavior with me to 5 = he/she uses this behavior very often with me (α =.83 in work and α = 0.82 in friends and family).

Variability

Similar to Bormann et al. (2018), we used SD across raters as an operationalization of variability. SD is a robust indicator of dispersion especially when also examining strength or interaction effects (Roberson et al., 2007).

Analytic Strategy and Results

Step 1: Variability Within Domain (Intra-individual) Levels

To address Research Question 1, which focuses on understanding the levels of analysis of ethical leadership, cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision in two domains (i.e., work, friends and family), we used Within and Between Analysis (WABA) (Dansereau et al., 1984) via the DETECT software package.[1] Similar to intraclass correlation (ICC), WABA examines within- and between-group variance and can be utilized to make decisions on aggregation. However, unlike ICC, WABA can provide additional insights into group-level effects as it also considers heterogeneity within groups (group parts levels of analysis) (Dixon & Cunningham, 2006). As we were not solely focused on testing for aggregation, but rather we were exploring and open to different possibilities of levels of analysis, WABA was more suitable for our analysis purpose.

In WABA, variations within an entity (e.g., dyad, group) and variations between entities (e.g., dyad, group) are compared and the ratio of the two variations is tested for practical (*E*-tests) and statistical significance (*F*-tests). As noted in Dansereau et al. (1984), practical significance tests (*E*-tests), which are free from the effect of sample size, are conducted first to check which eta-correlation was larger and whether the ratio (i.e., E ratio) is significant by examining its geometric properties via 15-degree test or 30-degree test for a more conservative test (see Dansereau et al., 1984, p. 170 for more information). Based on the *E*-test results, statistical significance (*F*-tests), which accounts for the degrees of freedom/sample size, is calculated. Specifically, if between-eta correlation is larger than within-eta correlation, traditional F is calculated, and if within-eta correlation is larger than between-eta correlation, corrected F (inverse F) is computed. Results of both significance tests are used to make inference about whether the level of the variable of interest is wholes, parts, or equivocal (Dansereau et al., 1984; Yammarino, 1998). Wholes are inferred if between-entity variations are significantly greater than within-entity variations ($E \geq 1.30$); parts are inferred if within-entity variations are significantly greater than between-entity variations ($0.77 \geq E \geq 0$); equivocal is inferred if either of between-entity variations or within-entity variations is not significantly greater than the other ($1.30 > E > 0.77$), meaning that both variations are meaningful.

The analysis was conducted separately for each domain. The input data included scale scores of all variables (i.e., ethical leadership, cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision) and were organized by each leader. The unit of each cell was the individual leader and the unit within each cell was raters' responses

1 Available at: https://www.binghamton.edu/som/research/cls/resources.html

on each leader. In other words, the cell size of each leader was the number of raters for each leader. For each variable in both domains, between-eta correlations (i.e., variations between leaders) and within-eta correlations (i.e., variations within each leader) were calculated and the ratio of the two eta correlations was tested for practical (*E*-tests) and statistical significance (*F*-tests). Inferences on the levels of the variables were made based on both practical and statistical significance test results. Descriptive statistics of variables in work domain and friends/family domain are presented in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Research Question 1 explored the level of ethical leadership (RQ 1a) and outcome variables (RQ 1c) in the work domain, as well as ethical leadership (RQ 1b) and outcome variables (RQ 1d) in the friends/family domain. For the work domain, as presented in Table 4, difference between the within-eta correlations and the between-eta correlations for ethical leadership ($E = 0.60$, $^{+}$ $\theta > 15°$; $F = 0.43$, $p = 1.00$), cognitive trust ($E = 0.51$, $^{++}$ $\theta > 30°$; $F = 0.58$, $p = 1.00$), affective trust ($E = 0.52$, $^{++}$ $\theta > 30°$; $F = 0.56$, $p = 1.00$), and abusive supervision ($E = 0.68$, $^{+}$ $\theta > 15°$; $F = 0.33$, $p = 1.00$) were all practically significant but not statistically significant. Although *E*-test results alone suggested significant leader parts/within-leader effects (i.e., significant variation within each leader but no variation between leaders) as the *E* ratios for all four variables were between the 0.77 and 1.30 range, the within-leader effects should be considered weak statistically, given that corrected *F*-tests were not statistically significant. In other

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations—Work Domain Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	EL	CT	AT	AS
EL	4.20	0.53	(0.91)			
CT	4.47	0.58	0.69	(0.93)		
AT	4.09	0.73	0.71	0.62	(0.94)	
AS	1.28	0.45	−0.41	−0.37	−0.43	(0.83)

Note. $N = 782$. $r \geq 0.07$ significant at 0.05 level, $r \geq 0.09$ significant at 0.01 level. Coefficient alphas are presented on the diagonal in parentheses. EL, ethical leadership; CT, cognitive trust; AT, affective trust; AS, abusive supervision.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations—Friends/Family Domain Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	EL	CT	AT	AS
EL	4.45	0.42	(0.87)			
CT	4.77	38	0.63	(0.87)		
AT	4.60	0.55	0.61	0.62	(0.93)	
AS	1.30	0.46	−0.52	−0.33	−0.40	(0.82)

Note. $N = 528$. $r \geq 0.09$ significant at 0.05 level, $r \geq 0.11$ significant at 0.01 level. Coefficient alphas are presented on the diagonal in parentheses. EL, ethical leadership; CT, cognitive trust; AT, affective trust; AS, abusive supervision.

words, within variations were not significantly greater than between variations. Considering the *E*- and *F*-test results together, it would be safe to say that the operative level of analysis for all four variables was equivocal, meaning significant variability in both within and between leaders.

Likewise, regarding the friends/family domain as shown in Table 5, the difference between the within-eta correlations and the between-eta correlations for ethical leadership ($E = 0.63$, $^{+}\ \theta > 15°$; $F = 0.61$, $p = 1.00$), cognitive trust ($E = 0.56$, $^{++}\ \theta > 30°$; $F = 0.76$, $p = 0.97$), affective trust ($E = 0.63$, $^{+}\ \theta > 15°$; $F = 0.61$, $p = 1.00$), and abusive supervision ($E = 0.69$, $^{+}\ \theta > 15°$; $F = 0.52$, $p = 1.00$) were also practically significant. Specifically, *E* ratios were in the 0.77 and 1.30 range, which suggested leader parts/within-leader effects. However, the results were not statistically significant given the corrected F-tests results. Again, the *E*- and *F*-test results together suggested that the operative level of analysis for all four variables was equivocal.

In summary, both variability within leader and between leaders for ethical leadership and all three outcome variables (cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision, respectively) should be considered in further analysis. Thus, in Step 2, we proceed with linear regression as indicated in Scenario 3 (equivocal/equivocal).

Table 4

WABA I Results for Work Domain Variables (782 responses, 104 leaders)

	Eta Correlations		*E*	*F*	Inference
	Between	**Within**			
EL	0.51	0.86	0.60^{+}	0.43	Equivocal
CT	0.46	0.89	0.51^{++}	0.58	Equivocal
AT	0.46	0.89	0.52^{++}	0.56	Equivocal
AS	0.56	0.83	0.68^{+}	0.33	Equivocal

Note: *df* for (between) $F = 103, 678$; *df* for (within) $F = 678, 103$. $^{+}\theta > 15°$. $^{++}\theta > 30°$. EL, ethical leadership; CT, cognitive trust; AT, affective trust; AS, abusive supervision.

Table 5

WABA I Results for Friends/Family Domain Variables (528 Responses, 104 Leaders)

	Eta Correlations		*E*	*F*	Inference
	Between	**Within**			
EL	0.53	0.84	0.63^{+}	0.61	Equivocal
CT	0.49	0.87	0.56^{++}	0.76	Equivocal
AT	0.53	0.85	0.63^{+}	0.61	Equivocal
AS	0.57	0.82	0.69^{+}	0.52	Equivocal

Note: *df* for (between) $F = 103, 424$; *df* for (within) $F = 424, 103$. $^{+}\theta > 15°$. $^{++}\theta > 30°$. EL, ethical leadership; CT, cognitive trust; AT, affective trust; AS, abusive supervision.

Step 2: Relationship of Ethical Leadership and Outcome Variables

Given the WABA I results, which suggested that all variables in both domains had significant variance within the individual leader and between leaders, aggregated mean and SD (LeBreton & Senter, 2008) of all variables for each leader were calculated and used in our analysis. Following our suggestion presented earlier regarding Scenario 3 (equivocal/equivocal), we used linear regression to explore our research questions on the relationship between variability of ethical leadership and various outcomes (RQ 2). As the aggregated means and SDs of all independent and dependent variables were at the same level (i.e., leader) and our models did not involve any cross-level effects, we applied multiple linear regression. Specifically, we regressed each outcome variable (the mean and SD, respectively, for cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision, respectively, for both the work and family/friends domains, respectively—a total of 12 outcome variables) on the mean of ethical leadership at work, the SD of ethical leadership at work, the mean of ethical leadership with friends/family, and the SD of ethical leadership of friends/family (a total of four predictor variables).

Means, SDs, and correlations among variables are presented in Table 6. Table 7 shows the results for all relationships tested. Rather than repeat the same information from Table 7 in written form, we instead highlight some key findings according to the framework we suggested for answering Research Questions 2a, 2b, and 2c.

Mean to Mean

Results indicated a positive and significant relationship between the mean of ethical leadership at work and the means of cognitive trust ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$) and affective trust ($\beta = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$) at work and a negative and significant relationship between the mean of ethical leadership at work and abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.54$, $p < 0.001$) at work. The same pattern of results held for the friends and family domain as well. Specifically, the mean of ethical leadership in friends/family domain had a positive and significant relationship with the means of cognitive trust ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$) and affective trust ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$) in the same domain, and a negative and significant relationship with abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.80$, $p < 0.001$) in friends/family domain. There were no significant cross-domain relationships between ethical leadership and outcome variables.

Variation to Mean

Results indicated no significant relationship between the SD of ethical leadership at work and the means of cognitive trust ($\beta = -0.03$, $p =$ n.s.), affective trust ($\beta = 0.04$, $p =$ n.s.), and abusive supervision ($\beta = 0.11$, $p =$ n.s.) at work. However, in the friends/family domain, there was a negative and significant relationship between the SD of ethical leadership and the mean of both cognitive ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < 0.10$ [marginally significant]) and affective trust ($\beta = -0.59$, $p < 0.001$), but not abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.04$, $p =$ n.s.). There were no significant cross-domain relationships between ethical leadership and outcome variables. Interestingly, there is a significant and positive cross-domain relationship between the SD of ethical leadership at work and the mean of abusive supervision ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.05$) in the friends/family domain.

Mean to Variation

Results indicated a negative and significant within-domain relationship between the mean of ethical leadership and SD of cognitive trust in both domains (work domain: $\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.001$; friends/family domain: $\beta = -0.41$, $p < 0.001$), affective trust ($\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$) in friends/family domain, and abusive supervision in both domains (work domain: $\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$; friends/family domain: $\beta = -0.47$, $p < 0.001$). However, the relationship between the mean ethical leadership and the SD of affective trust ($\beta = -0.05$, $p =$ n.s.) at work was not significant. In terms of cross-domain relationship, results indicated a

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. w_EL_m	4.22	0.28															
2. w_EL_sd	0.44	0.14	−0.26														
3. w_CT_m	4.50	0.26	0.67	−0.21													
4. w_CT_sd	0.49	0.19	−0.41	0.43	−0.62												
5. w_AT_m	4.12	0.35	0.72	−0.18	0.55	−0.33											
6. w_AT_sd	0.63	0.23	−0.16	0.44	−0.21	0.32	−0.44										
7. w_AS_m	1.28	0.27	−0.55	0.19	−0.47	0.28	−0.65	0.34									
8. w_AS_sd	0.32	0.26	−0.45	0.26	−0.41	0.29	−0.54	0.42	0.87								
9. f_EL_m	4.47	0.23	0.15	0.07	0.10	−0.04	0.05	0.02	−0.08	−0.11							
10. f_EL_sd	0.35	0.18	−0.14	0.16	−0.19	0.18	−0.07	−0.06	0.08	0.07	−0.42						
11. f_CT_m	4.77	0.20	0.04	0.12	0.11	0.07	−0.05	0.11	0.00	−0.03	0.69	−0.39					
12. f_CT_sd	0.29	0.22	0.02	−0.09	−0.11	−0.04	0.15	−0.15	−0.07	−0.05	−0.57	0.51	−0.83				
13. f_AT_m	4.62	0.29	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.09	0.06	−0.09	−0.13	0.65	−0.56	0.62	−0.53			
14. f_AT_sd	0.44	.030	0.14	0.00	0.10	−0.07	0.06	−0.05	−0.02	0.05	−0.46	0.59	−0.42	0.50	−0.76		
15. f_AS_m	1.28	0.28	−0.13	0.11	−0.05	0.10	−0.05	0.03	0.15	0.20	−0.64	0.28	−0.42	0.33	−0.40	0.34	
16. f_AS_sd	0.30	0.27	−0.09	0.14	−0.04	0.06	−0.12	0.08	0.18	0.25	−0.48	0.40	−0.31	0.28	−0.48	0.43	0.75

Note: $N = 104$, $r \geq 0.19$ significant at 0.05 level; $r \geq 0.25$ significant at 0.01 level. EL, ethical leadership; CT, cognitive trust; AT, affective trust; AS, abusive supervision; w, work domain; f, friends/family domain; m, mean; SD, standard deviation.

Table 7
Regression Results

Variables	Cognitive Trust				Affective Trust				Abusive Supervision			
	Work		Friends/Family		Work		Friends/Family		Work		Friends/Family	
	W_ CT_m	W_ CT_sd	F_ CT_m	F_ CT_sd	W_ AT_m	W_ AT_sd	F_ AT_m	F_ AT_sd	W_ AS_m	W_ AS_sd	F_ AS_m	F_ AS_sd
Constant	2.12***	1.10**	2.55***	1.68***	0.46	0.93+	2.14***	0.56	3.54***	2.19***	4.66***	2.01**
W_EL_m	0.63***	−0.21***	−0.04	0.09	0.95***	−0.05	−0.10	0.28**	−0.54***	−0.38***	0.01	0.04
W_EL_sd	−0.03	0.46***	0.13	−0.14	0.04	0.76***	0.05	0.00	0.11	0.33+	0.34*	0.30+
F_EL_m	−0.05	0.01	0.54***	−0.41***	−0.08	−0.08	0.63***	−0.36***	−0.01	−0.09	−0.80***	−0.47***
F_EL_sd	−0.17	0.09	−0.16+	0.44***	0.02	−0.22+	−0.59***	0.84***	−0.02	−0.07	−0.04	0.31*
R^2	0.44	0.26	0.48	0.42	0.51	0.18	0.51	0.45	0.28	0.20	0.41	0.27
F	21.29	9.95	25	19.37	27.73	6.84	27.64	21.97	10.98	7.33	18.98	10.42

Note: N = 104 leaders. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. $^{+}p < 0.1$. $^{*}p < 0.05$. $^{**}p < 0.01$. $^{***}p < 0.001$. w, work domain; f, friends and family domain; EL, ethical leadership; CT, cognitive trust; AT, affective trust; AS, abusive supervision; m, mean; SD, standard deviation.

significant and positive cross-domain relationship of the mean ethical leadership at work and the SD of affective trust ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$) with friends/family.

Variation to Variation

Results indicated a positive and significant within-domain relationship between the SDs of ethical leadership and the SDs of cognitive trust (work domain: $\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$; friends/family domain: $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), affective trust (work domain: $\beta = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$; friends/family domain: $\beta = 0.84$, $p < 0.001$), and abusive supervision (work domain: $\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.10$ [marginally significant]; friends/family domain: $\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$) both at work and in friends/family (note: the work domain ethical leadership–abusive supervision relationship is marginally significant). There are also two marginally significant cross-domain relationships: first between work ethical leadership and friends/family abusive supervision (positive) ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.10$) and second between friends/family ethical leadership and work affective trust (negative) ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.10$).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine questions of variability in ethical leadership and leadership outcomes. Using data from a 360-degree survey that includes ratings from observers both at work (i.e., bosses, peers, and direct reports) and non-work (i.e., friends and family members), we first examined the operative level of analysis condition for ethical leadership. Our WABA results suggest that an "equivocal" inference is appropriate for both ethical leadership and our outcome variables of cognitive trust, affective trust, and abusive supervision. These results highlight the importance of both the level and the variation in ratings. In general, approximately 25%–30% of the variance resided between leaders, whereas 70%–75% resided within leaders, as rated by others. Our findings roughly correspond to previous WABA results of leadership behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009; Palanski & Yammarino, 2011) and Bormann and colleague's (2018) study of within-unit variability. While others have examined constructs related to ethical leadership such as behavioral integrity (Palanski & Yammarino, 2011) and empowering leadership and fairness (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009), we know of no WABA analyses on ethical leadership itself, particularly using the most frequently used measure—that of Brown et al. (2005). Likewise, we know of no studies that extend beyond a leader's direct subordinates to consider variability in the larger work and non-work contexts. Dionne and colleagues (2014) highlighted a lack of levels reflected in data analysis for ethical leadership, which is a contribution of this study.

First, we consider mean ratings of ethical leadership and our outcome variables. These analyses are the most common approach. Our findings are very consistent with previous findings highlighting the positive relationships of ethical leadership and trust (Bedi et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018; Ng & Feldman, 2015) and we show evidence that these relationships extend within the friends/family domain. The relationships were slightly stronger for affective than cognitive-based trust, which is the opposite of Newman and colleagues' (2014) findings at an individual level. This pattern also held in the friends and family domain, although the relationships were generally weaker. Likewise, we found a negative relationship between mean ethical leadership and abusive supervision, consistent with previous research (Lin et al., 2016). Interestingly, this relationship was even stronger in friends and family domains than in work. Taken together, these findings highlight the robustness of these relationships even beyond work.

Second, we consider the variability of ethical leadership on mean level outcomes. These analyses most directly describe the impact of ethical leadership variability on outcomes. Interestingly, we found no relationships between the deviations of ethical leadership on outcomes within the work domain. This contrasts with the only other study we know of examining ethical leadership variability (Bormann et al., 2018), who found small negative relationships between variability and trust in the leader in general. Perhaps these relationships fade when considering other relationships (peers and supervisors) and when distinguishing dimensions of trust. However, these relationships did hold in the friends and family domain, such that greater variability in perceptions of ethical leadership in the family/friends domain was related to reduced affective trust and approached significance for cognitive-based trust. Inconsistent attention to ethics and morality in personal relationships may be more harmful to emotion-based trust, which may be a more personally vulnerable form of trust—"trust from the heart" (Chua et al., 2008).

When individuals are assessing their leaders' ethical leadership, they may be holding observed behaviors against their own implicit moral and ethical ideals, leading to increased variance in ethical leadership across raters (Keck et al., 2018). Indeed, ratings of ethical leadership reflect the extent to which a leaders' relational style matches followers' ideal interactional norms which form the basis of moral imperatives in relationships (Keck et al., 2018). These findings suggest that assessments of ethical leadership are determined in part by individually determined normally appropriate conduct in leader-follower relationships. Beyond different determinants of morally appropriate behavior, variance in observer ratings of ethical leadership may also reflect unique relationships within work teams or departments or individual differences in perception of similar behavior. For example, some individuals may have higher-quality relationships with their leaders and assess them more globally positive.

Third, we examined the relationships between the mean levels of ethical leadership on the variability of the outcomes. With the exception of affective trust in work, all pairs of relationships were significant and negative such that higher ethical ratings were related to greater consensus in ratings of outcomes. That is, leaders perceived to be more ethical overall had more similar ratings of trust and abusive supervision. We could argue that these findings are in line with an integrity-based view of ethical leadership, such that higher levels of ethical leadership produce a similar response across raters. We know of no studies examining this type of relationship, which is worthy of future study as the relationships seem to be robust.

Fourth, we examined the relationships among the variability within ethical leadership and in outcomes. These relationships also appeared to be quite robust, yet we know of no research primarily focused on variation. In general, these relationships were strong and positive across all outcomes. The relationships were strongest with affective trust in both domains, followed by cognitive-based trust in both domains. The relationships were weakest with variability in abusive supervision and only approached significance in the work domain.

Finally, our data collection in work and family/friends networks allowed us to examine cross-domain effects. In their original description of ethical leaders, Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 597) describe ethical leaders as individuals "who behave ethically in their personal and professional lives"; therefore, we were curious to see if there is support for cross-domain relationships, particularly from the family/friends domain to work outcomes. However, only two of the possible 24 cross-domain relationships were significant (and one additional approached significance), suggesting these relationships reside largely within domain. Interestingly, the two significant relationships were from work ethical leadership to family/friend outcomes. The mean of work ethical leadership was positively related to variability within affective trust in friends and family domain, which was the opposite direction from the within-person effects. Perhaps this reflects something akin to the "kick the dog effect" in which work stressors spillover in home life. Additionally, the deviation in work ethical leadership was positively related to mean levels of abusive supervision in the family/friends domain, such that greater deviation in perceptions of work ethical leadership was associated with more abusive supervision with family and friends. While some literature has begun to examine the effects of leadership on follower work-family outcomes, very little has examined leaders' own experiences outside of work. We echo calls to examine leaders' own cross-domain experiences and relationships (Hammond et al., 2017).

Future Research Directions, Limitations, and Conclusion

As noted earlier, there are interesting opportunities for future research particularly examining rater variability and multiple domains, but there are also some variations in this approach that might be worth considering. First, it might be interesting to include a leader's self-rating of his/her ethical leadership in both domains. It is possible that the relative level of agreement between self- and other ratings might impact the nature of the relationships under investigation. For example, a leader who is rated similarly by others across domains and whose self-ratings agree with observer ratings might indicate more intentionality in ethical leadership than a leader who has significant disagreement between self- and other ratings.

Additionally, although prior studies have generally not found an empirical distinction between the *moral manager* and *moral person* aspects of ethical leadership, it is possible that there is a meaningful distinction in the family/friends domain. For example, the moral manager aspect of "disciplining others who violate ethical standards" may not be nearly as relevant in personal relationships. If such a distinction holds, then it may be desirable to consider a third level of analysis (based on moral manager and moral person) for the family/friends domain.

Finally, future research is needed to address limitations of this study. While the multi-domain 360-degree survey provided an excellent opportunity to collect responses from many raters both in work and family/friends domains, the data were collected cross sectionally. Longitudinal designs are necessary for examining any causal claiming such as the effect of variation on outcomes. Additionally, as part of the 360-degree survey, leaders self-nominated their raters. While leaders were encouraged to invite raters across a variety of relationships, it is possible that some leaders selected those with whom they held close relationships or might view them more favorably.

In conclusion, in this article, we have explored both the work and non-work (friends/family) aspects of ethical leadership, as well as the levels of analysis of ethical leadership. Our findings emphasized the importance of examining not only levels of leader behaviors and outcomes, but also variation in ratings as a meaningful variable of interest both in terms of leader behaviors (Bormann et al., 2018) and follower outcomes. We also provided several recommendations on issues and analytic strategies associated with these examinations in Table 1. Likewise, the study contributed to the multi-domain leadership theory (Hammond et al., 2017) by replicating and extending previous research findings of leader behaviors on outcomes to domains outside of work as well as highlighting cross-domain relationships.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Virtue in All We Do: Aristotelian Insight into Character Development and the Air Force's Core Values

Joel Brown, U.S. Air Force

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates how Aristotle's political and ethical thought serves as a unique lens to understand character development and the Air Force's core values. This article first moves to show that because the moral lapses occurring in the Air Force were seeen as stemming from character flaws, a program of character development like Aristotle's would offer ideas superior to value-systems that emphasize rule following. This essay then looks to Aristotle to provide conceptual content for the ideas of character, character development, and each of the Air Force core values of integrity, service before self, and excellence–which also translates from the Greek as "virtue"–in all we do.

Keywords: Character Development, Aristotle, Virtue, Core Values, Phronesis

Introduction

The Air Force's core values have their roots in the project of one particularly sharp pupil who arrived at the Academy at the age of 17. He not only would go onto become a respected instructor and prolific author, publishing extensively on ethics, excellence in all human endeavors, and character development but also would be the principal mentor

CONTACT Joel Brown **DocBrownjn@gmail.com**

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to one of the most famous military leaders the world has known. More than that, the ripples of his influence would be felt outside the Academy and contribute to ongoing dialogues in virtually all subjects, from botonny to business ethics. That Academy was Plato's Academy, and the student, Aristotle. Though the Air Force core values were undoubtedly shaped by many thinkers, the influence and echoes of Aristotle clearly resound within them. This article aims to uncover how Aristotle's distinctive thought lends a deeper and richer understanding to the Air Force's core values in particular and character development more broadly.

The first section of this essay addresses the historic question of how the core values emerged as the answer to certain misguided ideas that were taking root in parts of the Air Force. It addresses how, since the problems went beyond individuals not following rules, Aristotle's character-centric ethic commends itself above other programs as the way to heal the ailment, by building a strong character in those who follow rules. The second section elucidates the stages of Aristotle's program of character development, tracing how the learner grows from having good habits to having an understanding of theories of goodness which habits express. The final section attends to each of the particular core values to demonstrate the theoretical moorings Aristotle's program provides them.

Diagnosing a Dysfunction

In Book Eight of his *Politics*, Aristotle warned that an institution erodes when it neglects virtue cultivation in its members (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./2007).[1] Breakdowns in social structure, prioritizing selfish interests over community interests, and the eventual inability to accomplish its institutional goals would inevitably ensue. Comparing institutions to living creatures, the Athenian warned that as vicious values replace virtuous ones, deformation and degradation of the institution would set in much like unhealthy habits that lead to a diseased body. Without healthy habits, functionality erodes; collapse follows.

Discerning dysfunction is relatively easy. For Aristotle, something is identified as dysfunctional when it fails to realize its unique purpose. Conversely, it performs with excellence when it achieves its purposes well. An unhealthy body cannot think and act with excellence. Analogously, an organization aimed at prevailing in its nation's conflicts cannot achieve its purpose without a high degree of readiness. Viewed in these terms, the Air Force of the early 1990s was plagued. An increasingly palatable ailment had grown in the military branch in the waning years of the Cold War. Tragedy and scandal had forced leadership to take pause and prompted focused reflection on organizational culture, ethical leadership, and what principles garnered praise and promotion amongst its members.

In many units, being humble and approachable brought scorn, not praise. The Air Force appeared to reward hubris, not competence and approachability. The noxious environment fostered events like Lieutenant Colonel Arthur "Bud" Holland's vainglorious stunt at Fairchild Air Force Base in June of 1994, a feat that took four lives and destroyed a B-52 Stratofortress. The event was part of a pattern. There was the friendly fire episode that took place on the Iraqi border 2 months earlier, stealing away 26 lives (Hoover, 2017). Then, there was the crash of a CT-43 in Europe where 35 people including that of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown died, a crash that occurred in airspace that should never have been entered in the first place.

These were more than professional lapses; they stemmed in no small measure from the professional personas of the Airmen involved and a culture that enabled those traits to both exist and thrive. What grew increasingly apparent was that these failures were not one-offs. They had evolved from and were magnifications of

1 Citations from Aristotle's will be denoted by a P when from his *Politics*, N when from *Nichomachean Ethics*, and EE when from the *Eudemian Ethics*. The Bekker number will follow when appropriate.

character attributes that the Air Force's culture esteemed, even revered. But they were corrupting the institution's health.

Drawn into question was if the linchpin of operational effectiveness was the Air Force's high-tech platforms or its people. Multi-million-dollar aircraft were destroyed not because of maintenance or manufacturing glitches but because of breeches in character. Finally, the root issue came into focus: mission effectiveness begins with the Air Force's most crucial assets, Airmen. The organization would stand or fall with their values, what they esteemed, when they would stay quiet, when they paused operations, and the kind of people they promoted. The malady called for a sustained focus on core values.

To address both these broader Air Force issues and its particular struggles, the Air Force Academy first instituted in 1994 what a year later the Air Force as a whole would adopt as its core values: "Integrity first, Service before self, Excellence in all we do." The trinity of ideals did not emerge out of an ethical or theoretical vacuum.[2] Among the voices that may be heard in these values, it is the Stagirite's, Aristotle's, that are of primary interest here. If we listen for his voice in these values, we find Aristotle's advice for organizational healing and thriving, a regimen focusing on virtue and character development.

The Salve of Character, and What Rule-Following Leaves Out

The virtue-based approach to character development provides a unique and fitting paradigm for the military profession. Perhaps no philosopher attends to the topic of character and character development more than Aristotle. While other ethicists have concentrated their energies on what makes something right or wrong, or what the rules of ethical action are, Aristotle saw that exclusively focusing on rules falls short at critical points. For one, we regularly find ourselves in situations where a rule has not been clearly outlined. Should I act or remain silent now? Should I study this weekend or spend time with family? Should money be spent on improvements or leisure? Rules and laws are important, indispensable even, but incomplete as an ethical system. In many situations, there simply are no rules available.

Additionally, ethical decision-making cannot be likened to deciding which checklist to run. Not only are circumstances ever in flux, but being ethical is fundamentally different than following a checklist. Even if a relevant rule was identified, the agent who acts still needs the resolve to follow the rule. We often know the rule that needs to be followed but lack the ethical resolve to pursue it. A robust ethical program needs to give insight into how our resolve to act becomes fortified. Rule-based ethical systems leave a void at another point as well. When the rule is followed, the agent ought to follow it for the right reason. Aristotle's virtue-based approach, as we will see, will attend to these reasons. Good people decide and act from a stable and upright disposition; they do the right thing with the right reasons. Character and its formation, Aristotle surmised, has to go beyond the intellectual and legal exercise of rule identification. The student of Plato would delve deeper into how ethical formation takes place and offer a more accurate picture of how it should take place.

2 Circumstantial evidence suggests that philosophical content was present when the values were first adopted. Though the faculty at the Air Force Academy had long promoted its slogan of "Commitment to Excellence in Service to Country" (Discovery, 1984, p. 3), and elements like the class of 1991's motto *semper integritatas* (integrity always) were surely present at USAFA in the early 1990's, the fingerprints of Brigadier General (retired) Malkin Wakin's Philosophy Department can also be detected at the time of the adoption. Lieutenant Colonel Pat Tower, who had been in the department for some years, co-authored the inaugural document explaining the core values to the Air Force, the "Air Force Core Values Guru's Guide." Wakin, a founding member of the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE), invited the Secretary of the Air Force to give its keynote address in 1995, where she expressed an admiration for the Academy's values (Tower & Dunford, n.d., p. 8). He was also consulted by the Secretary in May of 1995 as she considered their adoption for the Air Force as a whole (Bowden, 2016).

Long before Kant, Aquinas, or Augustine, Aristotle understood that a person's moral identity and their character are inseparable. We are what we habitually do, say, feel, and think. Character constrains the kinds of choices we might make, the feelings we have, the things we are willing to do, and even the thoughts we have. Opposing the idea that with each decision every possible choice is open, Aristotle saw that the well-worn grooves of many past decisions serve to aid, inform, and limit the kind of decisions we make going forward. Veering outside of these lanes becomes increasingly less likely, so where there is an upright character, ethical temptations become less salient. Someone refuses to take a bribe, to abuse funds, or to have another drink because that is just not the type of person they are. Malham Wakin summarizes, "For Aristotle, it was very important that we develop the moral virtues through habit and practice, doing right actions so that they become part of our identity—our character" (2000, p. 115). The deepest of grooves of our way of life are rightly thought of as our second nature. Second nature, because these grooves are not innate; they become incorporated into who we are over time. We grow ethically by practice; with each new situation, we can strengthen the skill of perceiving circumstances and responding with the actions called for in that particular circumstance.

Character-focused ethics carries the discussion beyond focusing just on the duty of rule-following. One way it goes further is by delving into the reasons actions ought to be done. Performing duties out of an understanding and affection for the reasons that underly the particular duty—ethical, operational, or strategic reasons—differentiates thoughtfully-engaged people from mere rule followers. A deeper ethical theory looks for the good which a particular rule might encapsulate. As philosopher Charles Pfaff has pointed out, "A virtuous person is more concerned with being the kind of person that does the right thing at the right time and in the right way and not as much on the act itself" (1998). People of character see the good in a rule, but even where there are no rules, they do the right thing *because* they understand it is the right thing to do.

An ethic that focuses on character is particularly fitting for members of a profession. Robert Kennedy delineates between trades, which tend to center on highly precise and repeatable processes, and the professions, whose members regularly find themselves in conditions of uncertainty (2000). Because of persistent uncertainty, professionals must be able to connect and apply broad ethical and operational goods and principles to constantly changing situations. With a profession, many times there are no off-the-shelf checklists pointing to an exact rule to be followed. Instead, the professional comes to know an array of theoretical and ethical principles through a robust liberal education, and the professional has the trait of applying these principles in the right way. If Kennedy is right when he argues, "The unique and indispensable characteristic of a professional is the ability to exercise sound and reasonable judgment about important matters in conditions of uncertainty" (2000), then the mere knowledge of rules will fall short of ensuring sound judgments are made. Professionals need to know the good that is to be pursued in a situation and have a disposition to pursue it. A character-focused ethic fits the need. It goes beyond ensuring people just know lists of equations, regulations, ethical principles, or checklists to run. It focuses also on ensuring its members act from the known and habitually employed principles that define their character.[3]

The Air Force's emphasis on mission command pushes the service to this character-focused ethic. *Air Force Doctrine Publication-1* lists mission command as a tenet of Airpower, explaining that mission command empowers subordinates, allows for their flexibility and initiative,

3 Aristotle makes this point when he writes that, beyond just doing the right act, "the agent must also be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character" (N, 1105a30ff).

and in doing so, requires them to have character. "Mission command," the publication reads, "provides Airmen operating in environments of increasing uncertainty, complexity, and rapid change with the freedom of action needed to exploit emergent opportunities and succeed" (USAF, 2021). The mark of a profession is inherent in the Air Force's mission—decision-making in often-changing conditions. But Kennedy warns that uncoupled from ethical-mindedness, the demand for efficiency and effectiveness out prioritize ethical demands, and this would lead to moral disaster. Airmen without moral insight are directionless, and therefore dangerous (Kennedy, 2000). Aristotle's insight for the professional Airman, as with any professional, attends to developing an uncompromising character in its constituents, and Aristotle was not silent on how this development happens.

Training, Education, and the Stages of Character Development

Character formation and character transformation occur slowly. It is nothing less than the re-forming of a person's second nature, those aspects that we speak of when describing the type of person someone is. Over time, we will have attained a virtuous nature when our thoughts, emotions, and conduct emerge with a measure of spontaneity. The less we have to concentrate on overcoming pain, awkwardness, or temptation, the more we freely and naturally accomplish a feat. That is, when our manner of life is *a* spontaneous manifestation of our thoughts, emotions, and sincerely held values, not merely a simple conformity to external rules, we express our nature. The Athenian philosopher suggests that to the extent we dependably think, act, and have ethically upright emotions, we have gained a virtuous nature. If, on the other hand, there exists a real chance that we lapse at a crossroads, the integrity of our character is still deficient and requires more development.

Aristotle attends to the question of how character develops in his writings on politics and writings on ethics. Ethics is very much a political question. "A city can be virtuous only when the citizens who have a share in the government are virtuous," he writes. Adding, "and in our state all the citizens share in the government" (P, 1332a32-34). Since individuals cannot develop well without a virtuous city, the ethos of the city and of the individual are linked. What citizens should value, what they should shun, and what education they should receive are of political importance. Those who structure curriculum must have a clear conception of a virtuous citizen, individual goodness, corporate goodness, and how character formation takes place. The Greek philosopher's unique contribution pressed this last issue beyond his predecessor. Disagreeing with his mentor Plato, Aristotle submitted that a character-forming program cannot divorce education from training.

Where Plato contended that merely possessing knowledge sufficed to move a person to action, Aristotle discerned that intellectualism often stagnates and fails. Frequently, we intellectually grasp the right thing to do, but we still are not able or moved to do it. Reading about playing an instrument cannot make us a virtuoso. Until knowledge fuses to our nature in the requisite way, actions may not follow. In those with moral character, a well-worn track record of doing right will accompany the mental awareness of what is right. Repeated performance begins to seal knowledge into our nature, so along with education, with mental commitment and an intellectual understanding of relevant principles, training builds the habits of proper character. Education must be married to continuous practice. This process might be likened to the building of a person's muscle memory. Moving and performing rightly enables us to act with increasing ease. As in sports, our second nature arises when we repeatedly engage the intellect in the diversity of situations that confront us, taking account of all the factors on the field, and willing ourselves to act accordingly.

Aristotle's more detailed explanation of the shaping of character takes into account the stages of our physical and intellectual growth. While the three stages overlap, they are critical to understanding Aristotle's theory of developing excellence. Habit <*ethos*> formation occurs first followed by the development of practical intelligence <*phronesis*>, and finally, we acquire full virtue when we possess an understanding <*noesis*> of the most general principles of human flourishing. Attending to the nuance in each of these sheds light on his pedagogical program.

Stage 1: Virtues of Habit

Our ethical development requires at its foundation the formation of good habits, what Aristotle refers to as *ethos*. Well known for his "golden mean," Aristotle suggests that good habits lie at a point of excellence, a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency. He recognizes that we all have certain predispositions to react to certain situations, but virtuous exemplars consistently hit the mean because they are disposed to reasoned reflection and willingly act in the right way, at the right time, with the right emotion. Their consistent action becomes habit, and habit resides at the foundation of character.

Migrating from one set of habits to another requires time, practice, and principled thinking that may sometimes feel foreign. It takes discipline and consistency, but over time, the formation of new habits makes the old ones obsolete. The new skill set becomes a second nature. With good habits, an exemplary moral character begins. A new personal identity emerges.

Aristotle realizes that at this early stage, role models play a critical function in helping us find where the mean lies. Language and its use also reveal much, and the intellect aids our knowledge of the mean even at this stage, but exemplars, those well-versed in a particular area demonstrate the mean to learners (N, 1107a2). Exemplars help us to definitively discern the point of excellence by explaining, correcting, and rewarding excellent work. Good habits emerge through this close-to-hand feedback. We read: "We must attend, then, to the undemonstrated remarks and beliefs of experienced and older people or of intelligent people, no less than to demonstrations. For these people see correctly because experience has given them their eye" (N, 1143b11-14).

In shadowing exemplars, our actions and thoughts move forward on the character-development path. The apprenticeship model of development finds Aristotle as a strong proponent so long as it is remembered that the purpose of apprenticeships is to move learners to the point where they grasp and apply the principle involved on their own. The apprentice follows the example of the craftsman to learn these principles. As we gain aptitude, the passive aspect of our nature, things like observing and copying, has primacy, but it recedes as the active aspects advance, deciding for ourselves the right way to act in a situation. Novices must learn by first being impressed upon so they may later take the reins of leadership.

Just as we learn language before being taught the rules of grammar, character formation begins as our parents, friends, mentors, and communities forge particular patterns of behavior in us. The later we wait to form ethical patterns of behavior, the harder they are to become impressed in us. Aristotle writes the habits formed in youths are "all important" (N, 1103b25). He lists many of the individual virtues that require cultivation—courage, temperance, generosity, wittiness, friendship, and modesty. Along with these, he traces the associated vices, what an excess or deficiency in the action or feeling would look like. It falls to teachers, mentors, and coaches to aid the forming of right habits and feelings in the impressionable by cultivating the virtue and curbing the vice.

The development of *ethos* is not limited to the actions of an apprentice. The forming of emotions, feelings, and pleasures toward and in response to the world also takes shape at this early stage of development. If we are to be ethical over the long term, what we enjoy must be properly cultivated (Burnyeat, 1980). Those who become habituated in taking pleasure in the true, the beautiful, and the good (N, 1099a13-15, 1104b3-13) will be less apt to be captivated by the unethical lures of the convenient, hedonistic, or self-indulgent. Training the student to listen and to enjoy ideas, to appreciate beauty, and to desire justice not only prepares them to prize the ethical over the expedient but also binds the ethical to an inner drive, the pursuit of happiness.

Earlier, Aristotle was depicted as a critic of rule-following as an overarching ethic. While this is true of his overall ethical system, in the habit-forming stage of character development, rule-following has an important place. Memorizing lists in an effort to develop character is often critical. Apprenticeships, shadowing exemplars, continued practice, and the recitation of facts work to produce character through habituation. As Aristotle writes in his *Politics*, "For he would learn to command well must, as men say, first of all learn to obey." (1333a2).

In her chapter aptly entitled "The Habituation of Character," ethicist Nancy Sherman points out that Aristotle pushes for what she calls a participatory model even at this first stage. When we memorize or perform particular actions, we are still mentally engaged, attuned to the reason inherent in the actions (Sherman, 1989, p. 162). Memorization, training, focused ethical and technical education, and repeated demonstration engage the mind. It is not passive even in these acts. Aristotle would remind us that it "listens to reason" and assesses the reasons expressed in the activity (N, 1102b32). Dialogical followership, in which the student asks and gets questions answered from an exemplar, allows these acts to penetrate even deeper. Dialogue ensures the always-engaged intellect begins to grasp why actions are performed in a certain way.

As we practice and come to gain habits, we come to recognize the good reflected in many acts through a range of contexts. Seeing an exemplar act in diverse settings develops sensitivities to the unique situational factors; it allows the student insight into how the dynamic factors relate to the constant principles that the exemplar expresses.[4] In turn, as learners become more and more sensitive to the specifics of the situation, they repeatedly engage their will to enact principle correctly, through the right action, and in this way their character strengthens.

As we develop, our identity, which is to say our character, increasingly constrains what options are really open to us. Someone used to acting courageously will find it quite hard to not act courageously. Our nature assimilates repeated thoughts, acts, or emotions. But this can work in two ways. While everyone has a character, not everyone is of high moral caliber. Not all habits are good habits. The villain has deeply infused habits; vicious words and acts can emerge spontaneously from consistent ways of acting, responding, and thinking. The formation of an upright character, on the other hand, requires the hammering, chiseling, and sanding off of poor habits, vicious emotions, and unreasoned thinking by substituting them with good ones. Because we are often ensnared by old habits, the process of acquiring a virtuous character is fraught with challenges. To ensure the vestiges of poor old habits do not reemerge, proper ones must be actively and consistently cultivated.

Stage 2: Developing the Practical Intellect

Aristotle begins with the virtues of character, those acquired through habit, but he addresses another stage

4 Aristotle is undeniably and ethical objectivist, and this is fully consistent with his program of casuistry. There are objective solutions and principles which exist. The virtuous agent must remain sensitive to the situationally unique details and make judgments about how to apply these principles despite the changing circumstance. Connecting a lesson learned from history to a contemporary context requires a keen intellect and creativity. A virtuous person will always act *kata ton orthon logon*, according to right reason (N, 1138b25). Right reason correctly judges the circumstances and sees how principles apply to the uniqueness of the situation.

in our ethical developing, acquiring intellectual virtue or *phronesis*. Phronesis describes the capacity of a person to judge and apply principles to the ever-varying circumstances of everyday life. Discerning the environment and responding appropriately could be described as practical wisdom, but these words sometimes carry connotations of stagnant reflection, pompousness, and inactivity, so many have instead translated *phroenesis* as practical intelligence. Aristotle's idea is that the person with practical intelligence consistently engages their experience-informed principles in matters of practical importance. To have practical intelligence is to be a competent, engaged expert.

As we saw earlier, the choice of doing right, even if we habitually do so, involves the will, and the will is informed by our practical intelligence. If we are to identify *right* habits, practical intelligence is indispensable. On this point, Aristotle speaks with clarity: "We cannot be fully good without intelligence" (N, 1145a33). Acting rightly requires discernment. Through watching, practicing, and listening, the habituated person's practical intellect grows. As apprentices grow into masters, practical intelligence flourishes.

Those with practical intelligence can discern what "right" amounts to in a myriad of situations. Their excellent actions will be done "at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way" (N, 1106a21-24). The right speed to drive, right time to speak, and the right amount to drink will vary by situation. The actions and habits of those with practical intelligence will form along the lines of right reason, at the point of excellence. Excellence will come to be a mark of their character, a description of the kind of person they are.

Some may mistakenly think that Aristotle is a relativist because he believes what is right is relative to the specifics of the situation. This is hardly the case. Aristotle is quite clear that it is never right to perform some actions—they are by definition extremes; attending to the specifics of each situation ensures a right response. If, for instance, you need to get to the Emergency Room with haste, breaking the speed limit might be in order. Wielding a weapon is fitting for some circumstances and not for others. There are objective answers, and those with practical intelligence discern and act correctly in them (N, 1107a6).

Translating and employing principles requires an intellect sensitive to the dynamics of the situation, including the limitations arising from our physical capacities. Our bodies and our capabilities are part of the circumstance. Internal, external, personal, and interpersonal factors inform each unique opportunity to act. Those who have mastered practical intelligence are able to consistently discern the mean way to act with excellence and have themselves grown fit to be exemplars for others (1106b3).

Stage 3: Understanding the Principles of Action

In the last phase of character development, learners come to understand <*noesis*> the origins of the principles of practical intelligence. Those with practical intellect will know the right thing to do and do it with the right aim. They may yet lack an important element. Without insight into why their aims are actually the right ones, they appear to have luckily blundered into what is right. Even while the actions of warriors on either side of a conflict may appear similar in many regards, in the final analysis, we do not say they are moral equals when one fights for a side conducting a just war and the other fights to seize more territory.

Externally, the actions of the person without understanding may appear just the same as those who know *why* their actions are exemplary (Rorty, 1980, p. 350). Actions and conduct must serve as the barometer of a person's character for the outside observer. But knowing why a person acts the way they do makes all the ethical difference, and the person who fully embodies excellence is the person with understanding, the person who understands and acts on right principles.[5]

These principles (which Aristotle spends little time exploring with Nichomachus, his son and namesake of his ethical text) are the origins of virtue (1095a31-35, 1139b27-30). While not everyone will venture into this contemplative arena to understand these origins, the leaders of a just and virtuous society, with its political structure and aims, will rear their constituents in light of these origins. The habits cultivated in the learners, well before they could possibly grasp "the why" of their acts, flourish because of the understanding of the guardians of the city (N, 1095b4-8).

If no one in an organization understands the basis of the principles being acted on, the organization and its individuals are a danger. The organization and its people would be detached from the moorings which give them ethical value, meaning, and significance. In that case, moral terms are emptied of their meaning and easily become weaponized to achieve any subjective end of their wielders. Aristotle uses the metaphor of a stumbling person to describe those who lack an understanding of their truth. Virtue without understanding is compared to a blind, staggering heavy person. They are a hazard to themselves and to others (N, 1144b9). The conclusion he offers is critical: "If someone acquires understanding <*nous*>, he improves his actions; and the state he now has, though similar, will be virtue <*arete*> to the full extent" (N, 1144b11-13). For Aristotle, the most complete person and leader will need to explore and grasp the first principles of ethical behavior.

Integrity of Character

Greek thought pours helpful conceptual content into each core value. The first of these, integrity, which encapsulates large swathes of Aristotle's thought, moves well beyond simply telling the truth. While truthfulness is a particular virtue, integrity captures a personal disposition of possessing solid ethical principles and holding fast to them regardless of external pressures. In this sense, integrity closely parallels an architectural usage. When a bridge has integrity, it will not break under massive loads of weight, will not fail, or falter under pressure. It holds true to its purposes and principles.

An observation made by architect Frank Lloyd Wright captures how Aristotle might think of personal integrity. Comparing a home to an individual, the icon wrote:

> "In speaking of integrity and architecture, I mean much the same thing that you would mean were you speaking of an individual. Integrity is not something to be put on and taken off like a garment. Integrity is a quality *within* and *of* the man himself. So it is in a building. It cannot be changed by any other person either, nor by the exterior pressures of any outward circumstance; integrity cannot change except from within because it is that in you which *is you*—And due to which you will try to live your life (as you would build your building) in the best possible way." (Wright, 2010, p. 349)

Like a building, solid principles must come to be part of who we are. Integrity cannot be coerced. The deepest, defining convictions finally set in when we are rationally convinced that that our disposition to act in a certain way is how we want ourselves to be defined.

Aristotle would depict the idea of integrity as being the product of a number of characteristics. We find his discussion in the context of his portrayal of a person of fine actions (N, 1105A30). First, he writes that this individual knows what they are doing is actually right. They do not mindlessly or fortuitously produce right actions (N, 1105a23); their intellect and understanding are engaged. They have been educated in what is fine,

5 For a discussion of the debates surrounding the place of understanding and theory in Aristotle's ethics (see Moline, 1983).

honorable, and worthy of being pursued. In the terms of the earlier discussion, they express *phronesis*.

Second, the person of integrity performs the act with the right motive. We would not say that someone has integrity if we learn their apparent action was performed with duplicitous purposes. Aristotle was no consequentialist. Intentions matter. Intentions, if we knew them, inform our moral assessment of the actor. Character is not merely the ledger of acts performed; having a morally upright character will saturate why the acts are done (EE, 1228a2). A person of integrity will act for the right reasons.

A third criterion reveals that only actions done from a "firm and unchanging state" are properly those of a person of integrity (N, 1105a34). Every person of integrity must have deep convictions. Not having convictions undercuts the very possibility of integrity. How could a person have integrity and act from a firm and an unchanging state if they have no values and no principles to hold fast to? Integrity wards off superficiality and shallowness. Those who have it do not adjust their character with each new fad. Convictions endure. Acting with uprightness requires both being principled and acting on those principles. Aristotle views character as a state, not a fleeting feeling, capacity, or a temporarily expressed value. For a person of integrity, it is in their nature to act in a certain manner. John Burnet helpfully summarizes by pointing out that our ethical actions will be the manifestation of a constant character, not an isolated effort (1900, p. 87). Integrity binds our actions to *the enduring state* of our character, uniting who we are with what we do.

Strong ethical theories explain why ethical failures occur. Aristotle's virtue ethics shines a light on this topic as well. As was seen, one way to fail is to have no moral principles. Another way is to not know ethical principles. Still others fail because they have no convictions about ethical truths. Aristotle was particularly interested in the scenarios where we have and know principles and have convictions, but we become overwhelmed by other desires. A lapse occurs. In the sixth chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he calls this the vice of *akrasia*, the opposite of integrity. *Akrasia* could be understood as being weak willed, failing to have self-mastery, or being incontinent. It describes the person who fails to act on the good, even if they know it, a person without integrity.

When we set out to act in a certain way but are drawn away from our commitments, the unity in our purposes and commitments fractures. We want to eat healthy, but we cannot resist another helping of butter pecan ice cream. Conflicting desires leave us prone to breaches of integrity. If not quelled, appetites, passions, and impatience may become distracting sirens, drawing us away from what sound reason and known truths otherwise suggest.

Habituating right habits is pivotal to internalizing ethical principles, growing integrity. At that point, temptations that otherwise would loom large fail to have their allure. We saw above that habituating the right desires early in life helps to ensure we pursue the good over the expedient.

Aristotle is aware that external factors may threaten integrity as well (N, 1099b). When a noxious culture adds to the chorus of distractions, even leaders with uncompromising integrity will be tested. Preventative measures help to subdue distractions. Accountability plans, oversights, and mentors help us retain our integrity. They prevent certain voices from influencing us so our integrity remains fully intact.

Importantly, Aristotle recognized that integrity is praiseworthy *only insofar as someone possesses upright beliefs*. To arrive at these, we must be willing to relinquish ill-informed and unjust principles. As Lynn McFall has pointed out, we cannot be people of integrity if we hold to flawed principles (Mcfall, 1987). We must be willing to discard beliefs that are ill-founded, and by good argumentation and by having exemplars point us rightly, we can and do arrive at right principles of action (N, 1146a20). This again requires a balance. We must hold fast to particular well-grounded convictions while adjusting our less-informed ones in light of more solid reasoning. Greg Scherkoske notes that this is another instance of Aristotle's mean between an excess and a deficiency (2020). If we think too highly or too lowly of ourselves, we will not yield to right reason.

Having integrity means that we maintain our noble principles amidst the most pressing situations, those with loud distractions or those when no one is looking. When these noble principles are our deepest convictions, they come to be descriptions of the unique individuals that we are. Our personal identity becomes inseparable from these abiding convictions. Because they are not easily supplanted by the latest fad, the resiliency of these convictions is synonymous with integrity. In summary, to the degree that a person holds fast to a set of right moral principles, ideals, and rules in their actions, words, and thoughts, they are not just resilient, steadfast, and dependable; they have integrity.

Community Before Self

The second core value also has a solid backing in Aristotle's thought. For the father of Nichomachus, the good of the self-rests on the good of the community (P, 1253a20; N, 1094b8). He sees that we are everywhere dependent on a community. Individuals, like their particular wants and desires, while having potential value, presuppose a greater whole, a societal infrastructure, and a community without which an individual could not hope to thrive (N, 1094b7-10). If we want to realize potential and live the good life, we need a good society. Individuals are dependent beings. Unlike a community, we as individuals are not self-sufficient. Language, commerce, parents, political arrangements, security, and sustenance precede the self. Individuals thrive only when these institutional arrangements are well ordered. Their proper functioning, Aristotle concludes, comes before self.

The philosopher did not argue that service to any institution would do. Rather, the virtuous person looks to serve an ethical political society, prioritizing it over their own comfort. A person is a *politikon zoon*, a political animal (P, 1253a; N, 1097b11). We are not monads, isolated from the well-being of the community. Individuals cannot separate their individual identity from the life of the community. Severed from the community, individuals fail to flourish. Serving the community protects the goods that individuals hold dear—certain freedoms, security, and personal property.

Serving these institutions, protecting them, and fostering their betterment preserve and promote one's own interests in turn. We value our security, expressing our voice and seeing our families thrive. Our social relationships are part of what we as individuals hold most dearly. When they are not present or thriving, we do not thrive. Service to the community makes pursuing self-interest possible.

Not everyone is equally fit to protect the community. Like Plato, Aristotle saw that the responsibility to guide and guard the community and to develop it along the right path would fall to a subset of the population. This group would need to be more than just habituated in virtue. They need to have progressed through all stages of character development. Their knowledge and understanding of goodness, their knowledge of which ends should be pursued and avoided, and their understanding of prudential, ethical, and efficient means of reaching those ends are vital to the society's flourishing. Possessing integrity, their positions as guardians, servants, and guides of the city would not be used or abused for personal gain, private interest, or to indulge a self-serving desire. Plato, and Aristotle after him, designated this class "guardians."

Those fit to lead the community must not only perceive how to efficiently pursue the goals of the community; they must know which goods to pursue.

Virtue in All We Do

Ethicists classify Aristotle's moral philosophy as virtue ethics, but it could equally be classified as excellence ethics. This is because the Greek word *arête* translates as either "excellence" or as "virtue." What it means to be virtuous is no more mysterious to the Greek mind than what it means to be excellent. Straightforwardly, identifying a virtuous example begins with identifying excellence in a unique function, characteristic, or activity. We might, for instance, observe that the virtue of a dog is to follow commands. Of an eye, it is to see. An ax, to chop. When something or someone fully expresses its unique function or characteristics, it is an excellent example of its kind. Only the most excellent canines win the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. Eyes function excellently when they see with 20/20 vision. Or an ax that is heavy, sharp, and cuts deeply into wood with a single strike is called an excellent ax. These are virtuous because they are exemplars of their unique kind, performing their unique function virtuously. Aristotle moves forward with the question that marks off ethics as its own field of study: what is the unique function of a human being?[6]

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre comments that for Aristotle, human excellence would be having dispositions to act and feel on the basis of true and rational judgment (1981, p. 140). These judgments are involved in both everyday and monumental decisions. The virtuous person correctly identifies the goal to be pursued, sees the many factors that will affect the path to that goal, and makes the right judgment regarding the means to achieve the goal. Those who make the right decision at the right time and place, and in the right way, hit the point of excellence. Those with excellent character consistently act, think, and have the right emotions which fit the context they find themselves in. When we become exemplars of our characteristically unique function, actively and consistently applying right reason to the variety of situations in our life, and understand why the good involved ought to be pursued, we express and exemplify excellence, virtue in all we do.

6 Aristotle pursues this question in the context of asking about how we achieve true happiness. What he contends is that living a fulfilling and happy life can only occur when one lives virtuously—living in terms of what it means to be a human being generally and in terms of their unique occupational role particularly (N, 1102a5). The path taken in the pursuit of virtue turns out to be the same path for the pursuit and obtaining of happiness. For the ancients, individuals who are truly happy are also those who are virtuous.

Conclusion

Aristotle's ethic, with its emphasis on character development, resonates and even amplifies through the corridor of time. The need for an unwavering character among its members became apparent early in the Air Force's relatively short history. Decentralized control to operate tremendous firepower, carry out complex missions, and make informed decisions to gain operational advantage was seen as demanding that those who wield these powers are not corrupted by it. The American way of war necessitates a force whose members have uncompromising character. In the service to their country, they must possess integrity, an unwavering commitment to pursue what is good over what is expedient and to express virtue in all they do.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Equifinality and the Key Role it Plays in Understanding the Future of Leadership

Sam Hunter, National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE) Center of Excellence, University of Nebraska Omaha

Austin C. Doctor, National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE) Center of Excellence, University of Nebraska Omaha

Matthew Allen, National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE) Center of Excellence, University of Nebraska Omaha

Gina S. Ligon, National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE) Center of Excellence, University of Nebraska Omaha

ABSTRACT

As organizations continue to increase in diversity across a range of demographic, value-based, and attitudinal variables, there can be a natural tension around differing styles and approaches to leading. We offer that these differences need not necessarily serve as a source of conflict if organizations are able to embrace the principle of equifinality. Equifinality, applied to leadership, represents the notion that there is more than one pathway to leading successfully. By focusing on equifinality as a core principle, stylistic differences can add to the fabric of organizational life rather than being a source of tension in it. We offer an example of an equifinality based approach to leading, the charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic (CIP) model to illustrate

CONTACT Sam Hunter **samuelhunter@unomaha.edu**

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equifinality successfully applied as a core principle. We conclude by offering practical guidance on how to effectively apply an equifinality approach to leadership in organizations.

Keywords: Equifinality, Pathways, Leadership, CIP, Diversity

As researchers at the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center of Excellence, we engage with scholars and practitioners across the national, and increasingly international, homeland security enterprise (HSE). A pleasant observation made with ongoing engagement in the HSE is how varied and unique the community is. That is, there is notable diversity in the HSE, defined as those with a vested interest in security across all levels of government, nonprofits (including academia), private sector, and community members. We use diversity here as a broad term to non-exhaustively include demographic characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identification, as well as more readily perceived positional forms such as academic discipline (e.g., psychology, political science, criminology, and management), agency or department (e.g., DoD, DHS, FBI, CIA, and Home Office), and attitudinal forms of diversity such as political affiliation.

The diversity across the HSE is not entirely surprising given demographic shifts in the U.S. where the most recent Census reveals significant increases in racial and ethnic diversity, as well as within National Security elements such as the Department of Homeland Security whose workforce diversity is "almost double the federal workforce benchmarks" (DHS Inclusive Strategic Plan, 2022, p. 6). We are becoming more diverse as a nation, and our security apparatus appropriately, if imperfectly, increasingly reflects that.

Organizational diversity that accurately reflects the broader national population is a noble if not wholly necessary goal. Yet, given current and recent tensions within the U.S. and across the globe, such an ethical and even pragmatic aim does not come without a cost. Differences, be they actual or perceived, are often a source of conflict and tension within organizations (e.g., Jehn et al., 2008). As extremism and terrorism researchers, we are all too familiar with the extreme ends of this tension, studying groups that seek to accelerate race wars, observing individuals with increased hatred and potential for violence against elected officials, and researching the ideology of groups who seek to attack or even overthrow the U.S. government.

Tension surrounding differences is not limited to hiring and promotion initiatives or national demographic shifts and has extended to the study of leadership as well. Leadership approaches more frequently adopted by women versus men (and vice-versa), for example, are pitted against one another with researchers offering that one approach is superior to the other (e.g., Rosette & Tost, 2010). Early research on the topic of implicit leadership revealed that for many subordinates, if a leader physically looked a certain way (e.g., tall, white, and male), their behaviors were seen as more competent than those who did not fit that stereotypic mold. The extension of such an observation was taken by some to indicate that there was a singular ideal leader type. As a counterpoint, research on women in leadership roles exalted that in the modern era of work, communal and relationship-oriented qualities stereotypically linked to female leaders were superior to those qualities more frequently associated with male leaders—a phenomena termed the "female leadership advantage" (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Post et al., 2019). Generational differences are also discussed with seemingly greater frequency, with some suggesting traditional forms of leadership are outdated, and younger followers need alternative “fresh” forms of leadership. Older generations, some suggest, pine for a time when leaders operated in a way they most strongly identified with (Salahuddin, 2010).

Debates over differences in leaders and leadership also extend beyond the surface level (i.e., demographic differences) to differences in leaders’ methods of influence. One of the most pervasive of these is between transformational or transactional models of leadership (Bass, 1990), with several scholars offering that transformational leadership being superior and transactional being inferior. Stated differently, a natural by-product of such framing is the pervasive belief there is one best way to lead, and that alternatives are simply inferior if not harmful to leader and organizational performance.

Building off more than 25 studies across 20 years (Hunter & Lovelace, 2020, 2022; Lovelace et al., 2019), we challenge this implicit view and offer that such a singular approach is flawed in its underlying premise and will perpetually result in unnecessary, counterproductive conflict. Instead, we argue that a simple idea affords a more tenable and sustainable path forward. Namely, leadership researchers and practitioners would benefit from embracing the principle of equifinality.

The premise of equifinality—*that there is more than one path to reach the same outcome*—has early roots in the fields of biology and physics (Von Bertalanffy, 1950). Outside of leadership, there are several illustrations of equifinality. Yet within the field, these principles have not been widely embraced. This is not to say that all leadership researchers have avoided the topic. Indeed, a few have tried. Hackman and Wageman (2007), for example, suggest that equifinality would be quite useful in the study of leadership, but noted that the core notion of multiple pathways is often missed due to a preference for static, singular, or fixed approaches. This is well-illustrated by the fact that leadership research has been dominated by a few frameworks in recent years, most notably transformational leadership. In the management field, Ashmos and Huber (1987) as well as Gresov and Drazin (1997) lamented that equifinality as a concept was not more prominent, noting it as one of the key “missed opportunities” (Gresov & Drazin, 1997, p. 404) in the study of systems and management.

In the vein of the researchers above, there have been a few rare examples of successfully applying equifinality to understanding leaders and managers. In the organizational strategy literature, Porter (1980) offers that a competitive edge could be gained via three equally viable strategic approaches: being unique and different with a focus on change; being focused on what was done previously; and pragmatically tackling cost issues. Relatedly, Miles and colleagues suggest that organizations could manage change using differing yet equally viable tactics that included: *prospectors* who emphasize change (Miles et al., 1978), *defenders* who sought stability via insulation and a narrowed focus, and *analyzers* who keep an eye on emerging trends, shifting to engage in problem-solving as needed. Perhaps most impactfully, in their work on systems theory, Katz and Kahn offer that equifinality happens when “a system can reach the same final state, from different initial conditions and by a variety of different paths” (1978, p. 30).

Although less popular in the study of leadership, multiple viable pathways to achievement have been observed in research areas outside of leadership. This includes the education literature, where mastery pathways and performance-approach pathways both led to success (Harackiewicz & Linnenbrink, 2005). Other areas include engagement in collective action (e.g., Saab et al., 2015), where researchers found that some individuals chose to engage in collective action due to strongly identifying with a root cause, with others engaging in collective action due to a more rational cost-benefit approach. In the area of innovation, creativity researchers have hypothesized that individuals with approach-oriented traits and avoidance-oriented traits are both capable of creative performance, yet the differing orientations result in different pathways to achievement.

Finally, Weber (1924, 1947) suggested that for managers, there were three primary forms of authority. Rational authority, he argued, derives from the perceived competence of a leader, resulting in follower stability, clarity, and perhaps most critically, efficiency on the part of the follower. Traditional authority was derived from an emphasis on core values and traditions, with followers sharing those values being most impacted by that form of authority. Weber described charismatic authority as the least common type of authority, occurring where followers believe the leader possessed special qualities and are drawn to the rarity and positive appeal of their charisma. Mumford (2006) and more recently some of our own work (e.g., Hunter & Lovelace, 2020; Ligon et al., 2020) returned to the original work of Weber (1924) and proposed that there were three viable pathways to outstanding leadership: charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic (CIP).

CIP Theory of Leadership: An Example of a Successful Equifinality-Based Approach

Although there are number of frameworks that may be showcases as illustrations of equifinality, few have the concept as foundational to their theories. As such, we offer CIP as a non-exhaustive illustration of how equifinality can successfully be used as a foundation in thinking about leadership. The CIP theory is grounded in the notion of providing sensemaking to followers, drawing on the leader's view of the world. Specifically, leaders are theorized to experience life events that shape how they believe the world operates, and those beliefs, in turn, shape how the leader makes sense of the world when engaging with followers. Differing, meaningful life events, therefore, represent a key driving force in shaping CIP forms of leadership (Ligon et al., 2008).

Charismatic Pathway

Charismatic leaders inspire others to act via a compelling, positive, future-oriented vision. They make broad appeals to a wide range of individuals, offering a sentiment of hope to produce positive outcomes for everyone. Exemplar charismatic leaders have included: Lee Iocca, Eva Peron, David Ben-Gurion, Henry Ford, Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Pete Carrol, and Margaret Thatcher.

Ideological Pathway

Ideological leaders have a narrower appeal as compared to charismatic leaders, yet this appeal is often quite powerful as it is based on a shared belief system. Ideological leaders offer that the best path forward is deeply grounded in tradition and a return to behavior normative of a previous era, when the values they embody were perceived to be most represented. These leaders are more likely to utilize negative affect to compel followers to recreate a period where such values can thrive once again. Exemplar ideological leaders have included: Betty Friedan, Emma Goldman, Ronald Reagan, Paul "Bear" Bryant, Jane Addams, W.E.B. du Bois, Lech Walesa, and Mohandas Ghandi.

Pragmatic Pathway

As compared to charismatic leaders and even ideological leaders, pragmatic leaders are least likely to fit a stereotypical view of leadership, relying less often on emotion or inspiration and instead acting as rational problem solvers. Pragmatic leaders are focused on finding solutions, using logic rather than emotion to engage with their followers. Exemplar pragmatic leaders have included: Walt Disney, Katharine Graham, Thomas Watson Alfred Dupont, Mikail Gorbechev, Sam Walton, Bill Belichick, and Warren Buffet.

Empirical Support and Key Findings of CIP Leadership Theory

Perhaps the most compelling result of the nearly 20 years and more than 25 investigations of the CIP theory is the consistent *non-finding* of performance differences across successful leaders (see Allen et al., 2020 for review). Whether the method be a historiometric, content analysis of world leaders (Mumford, 2006), college and NFL football coaches (Hunter et al., 2011), a lab-based computer simulation (Hunter et al., 2009), or a case-analysis of civil rights leader exchanges (Bedell-Avers et al., 2008), results have consistently revealed that all three pathways offer viable routes to success and impact. This is not to say there has been a complete dearth of differences in outcomes when moderators such as nature of the task or phase of a project were taken into account. Rather, when examining final outcomes, particularly long-term outcomes (Mumford, 2006), results consistently indicate that all three pathways are possible routes to achievement with no one pathway emerging as a dominant avenue to success. As such, CIP offers one glimpse into how equifinality can be embraced in the study and application of leadership. There is further hope, moreover, with organizations such as Gallup also recommending the principle be embraced more fully (Musser, 2019).

How Can Equifinality Help Reduce Conflict?

At the outset of our discussion, we offered that the organizations we engage with most are increasing in diversity, a natural by-product of a changing nation and workforce. Hinted at in this discussion but not discussed expressly is greater tension—and even violence—in the workplace across lines that, on the surface, differentiate us. Such tension seems particularly taught when discussing leaders, who represent us in places we cannot attend ourselves. Candidly, given recent turmoil, it would be willfully naïve to suggest that we can wave our academic hands and simply make that tension go away.

However, despite such turmoil, we are optimistic in embracing the principle that a collective shift in openness of multiple pathways to success, in some cases centered on leadership, can take the edge out of perceived conflict. Consider a scenario where we view a given leader not as suggesting their way is superior but rather as using a pathway that is best for them. The sentiment here is that the style one leader uses does not inherently represent a challenging of the style another leader chooses. There is room for multiple pathways to the same outcome. Many roads lead to Rome, so to speak.

Admittedly, there is some gaudiness in the notion that calling for a shift in how leaders are simply thought of can have a substantive impact in how leaders and followers shift their thinking on what leadership looks like. Yet, we have seen it. Transformational leadership was born from the initially obscure work of James MacGregor Burns, who used it to study and think about political leaders. Bernard Bass was stuck on an airplane tarmac and, as the story goes, drafted an extended version of the theory on the literal back of a napkin. Transformational leadership not only took over the field of leadership, but in many ways saved it (Hunt, 1999). As scholars gave talks, consultants took notice and began developing and training leaders in the vein of charisma and transformational approaches (see, for example, Deloitte's transformational leadership training services). Students were also trained in that environment, eventually seeing one primary way to think of leadership. From the back of a napkin to a generation of leadership researchers, it is certainly *possible* for a theoretical framework to shape a generation of leaders. We believe that this theoretical framework need not be limited to one style of leadership. And more, a broader acceptance of the principle of equifinality creates needed space for different types of leaders to have impact and shift our focus from seeing our differences as competition to accepting them as one approach among many.

What Does Equifinality Mean for Developing Future Leaders?

Having introduced the notion of equifinality, and if the reader is convinced of the potential use of the premise, the emergent question becomes: How do we leverage this principle in developing and supporting leaders?

Flowing from similar efforts that focus on a more holistic approach to developing leaders (e.g., Lindsay & Friesen, 2020), we offer that the answer is two-fold. First, embracing the principle of equifinality means shifting a mindset from one of identifying the best way to identifying one good way. Although more varied and interdisciplinary approaches are recommended by reports such as the National Leadership Education Research Agenda (e.g., Andenoro & Skendall, 2020; Lindsay & Friesen, 2020), an equifinality approach is often easier said than done. We are naturally inclined toward competition, be that against others or simply in seeking a solution to a problem. Embracing equifinality means breaking a few bad habits, a challenge particularly faced by adult learners.

Second, and related to the first, is an active seeking of alternative pathways. Should a viable approach to leading emerge, it is tempting to conclude this is the way it *should* be done by other leaders from that point on. However, when a mentee asks our advice on leading, it is imperative that we offer alternative pathways and begin to guide younger leaders into thinking about equifinality in their approach to leadership. Providing such guidance, however, means having pathways to offer. As such, we must be open to these pathways, cognitively tuck away and remember pathways as we witness them and express them when we are able. As a general technique, coaching emerging leaders to embrace a culture that embodies equifinality would help further elicit recognition and application of multiple leadership pathways. In addition, leaders who simply role-model an equifinality approach can further serve to guide young and emerging leaders toward embracing alternative paths of leading.

In line with the above is the potential for an adopted equifinality framework to expand options for leading to go beyond typical or traditional leadership structures. That is, in addition to stylistic approaches such as CIP, the equifinality principle could be used as a catalyst to embrace shared leadership structures such as dual or co-leadership (Hunter et al., 2017), or used to encourage more collaborative structures to tackle the complex problems of modern civilian and military organizations. Broadly, an equifinality-based approach to leading encourages decision makers in organizations to push past traditional boundaries and think about how a given situation might be leveraged to find a unique, but still viable, pathway to success.

Concluding Comments

As we close, a few key points and caveats should be borne in mind. The first is subtle, noting that there are several nuances to embracing equifinality as a core concept in leadership. Namely, we do not suggest that all leadership approaches are equivalent in their ability to produce successful outcomes. Indeed, a laissez-fare approach to leading is inferior to either transformational or transactional approaches. An approach that embraces coercion as a power base will be less effective in the long run than an approach that embraces referent or expert power bases. There is such a thing as bad leadership, and we do not mean to equivocate poor performance with a stylistic difference.

Rather, we offer that there is utility in *being open to the potential* for equifinality. That is, when a leader engages in a style that differs from one's own or from traditionally employed approaches, being open to that approach as a viable alternative pathway is a good starting point. A different approach need not inherently challenge our own style and approach to leading. That leader may simply be finding their own path and one that can allow them and their followers to find the same outcome as we are capable of.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Creating a Culture of Character Growth: Developing Faculty Character and Competence at the United States Military Academy

Ryan G. Erbe, United States Military Academy

Darcy Schnack, United States Military Academy

Peter Meindl, United States Military Academy

ABSTRACT

Background: Institutions of higher education, specifically service academies, interested in developing character in their students/cadets should consider creating a culture of character growth to accomplish their task. One potential way to do this is to focus on developing faculty character along with character competence as it relates to student/cadet character formation.

Objective: At the United States Military Academy, we recently piloted a character faculty development series for Center for Enhanced Performance faculty aimed at improving faculty character formation, increas-

CONTACT Ryan G. Erbe ✉ **ryan.erbe@westpoint.edu**

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ing faculty competence with respect to developing cadet character through one-on-one relationships, and integrating character formation into their teaching. The goal of this project was to assess feasibility and acceptability of the series.

Methods: The Center for Enhanced Performance faculty experienced a three-part character faculty development series: (1) Faculty character formation, (2) Developing cadet character through one-on-one relationships, and (3) Integrating character into the classroom. To assess feasibility and acceptability of the series, a survey was sent to faculty after completion.

Results: A total of nine faculty members completed the survey and found the training worthwhile, that it increased their confidence in developing cadets' character and integrating character formation into their teaching, along with each character formation tool being useful.

Conclusions: Character faculty developing series should be tried and can be feasible and acceptable to faculty.

Keywords: Character, Virtue Formation, Faculty Development, Higher Education

Introduction

At the heart of the United States Military Academy (USMA) mission is to "educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character" (United States Mili tary Academy, n.d.). Toward that end, in 2020, the Superintendent proposed various Lines of Effort (LOE) described in "The USMA Strategy." The second line of effort, also known as LOE 2, is to "Create a Culture of Character Growth." Specifically, LOE 2 states, "West Point cultivates a culture of character growth when staff, faculty, and cadets consistently value, reinforce, support, and pursue character development. In support of that effort, West Point strives for organizational integrity by ensuring all policies, artifacts, and social norms are consistent with the aspirational ideals of living honorably, leading honorably, and demonstrating excellence (United States M ilitary Academy, 2020, p. 14)." It is also stated in the USMA Strategy that the most critical enabler of the West Point Leadership Development System is the ubiquitous culture of character growth (United States Military Academy, 2020).

An integral part of any school or training system's ability to create a culture of character growth is its leadership and faculty. As Derek Bok (2020), former Harvard University president observed, "Another way in which colleges may have a significant impact on their students' character is through the example set by the institution and its staff" (p. 66). This idea is also conveyed in the Jubilee Center's Character Framework for Universities through their claim that character is "caught" via university staff (among others) who help provide the culture, inspirational example, and positive influence that creates the context for character formation (Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues, 2020). As John Locke (1968) states, "nothing sinking so gently, and so deep, into Men's Minds, as *Example*" (p. 182).

Not only is it necessary for institutions of higher education dedicated to character formation to have faculty demonstrating good character, but it can also be helpful to have competent teachers of character. While not all members of the faculty (or many) likely have a background in character and virtue formation, they can, however, be taught the basics and can be provided with ideas about integrating character into teaching their own academic discipline. Furthermore, faculty can be given strategies for developing character in their students through one-on-one relationships. Calls for faculty, regardless of academic discipline, to demonstrate good character as examples for their students along with integrating character and virtue formation opportunities and exercises into teaching broadly have been articulated (Bok, 2020; Roche, 2009).

Initial work has been done to help universities develop their faculties' competence in forming character within their students in the classroom. One framework integrating effective teacher behaviors with character strengths and virtues has been designed (McGovern & Miller, 2008). This framework has been created with four faculty development modules that better enable instructors and teachers to integrate character strengths and virtues into the classroom and teaching environment (McGovern, 2011). Recent work at Wake Forest University using Communities of Practice to increase faculty's' ability to integrate character education into a diverse range of classrooms was shown to increase participants' understanding of the meaning of character education, how to develop character in their students along with how to assess character (Allman et al., 2023).

To date, little work has been done to examine whether faculty development aimed at promoting good character in faculty and increasing faculty character education competence should be tried and whether it would be feasible and acceptable to staff. At USMA, we decided to pilot a faculty development series focused on character formation for members of the Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP). West Point's CEP offers multiple courses and individual appointments aimed at enhancing cadet performance across all programs, including character, physical, academic, and military. The CEP, composed of three programs (Academic Excellence, Athletic Academic Support, and Performance Psychology), takes a holistic approach to cadet development, bridging the gap between cadets' past experiences and college expectations as they make the transition to USMA. Specifically, CEP assists cadets in learning to: Develop confidence, summon and maintain concentration, develop the ability to remain calm and composed under pressure, manage time, organize efforts, plan for success, and to read, study, and execute tests with deliberate strategies. CEP was chosen because of the Director's prioritization of character within the department and the positioning of a character developer within the Center along with the uniqueness of CEP's dual roles of both teaching and work in one-on-one relationships with cadets. Our aim with this small pilot was to test the feasibility and acceptability of character formation training with faculty.

Methods

Study Sample

The CEP is composed of seven men and 10 women, of whom two are Army officers, and 15 are civilian faculty. There are three specialty programs within the department: the Academic Excellence Program (AEP) has five members who specialize in academic skill development and academic counseling, the Athletic Academic Support Coordinator Program (AASC) has five members who focus their academic advising on USMA's Corps Squad (NCAA Division 1) population (which is approximately 25% of the Corps of Cadets), and the Performance Psychology Program (PPP) has four members who use applied sports psychology to develop mental skills in cadets. CEP's faculty range in experience from nearly 30 years of service in the CEP to a few who recently joined the team after completing their graduate schooling. All CEP faculty members teach the RS101: Student Success Course in addition to discipline-specific courses, and all members conduct one-on-one appointments with cadets.

Description of Faculty Development Series

The faculty development series began with a goal of personal character development in the fall of 2021. This segment of the series focused on personal character development for faculty and included basic descriptions of character and virtue, each faculty member selecting a virtue to focus on developing through the semester and proper goal-setting techniques. CEP faculty also selected "Friends of Mutual Accountability" (Lamb et al., 2021), where each faculty member chose two or three friends that would share their goals and support each other's goal pursuit. The segment also included "Character Call-Outs" where faculty could identify examples of good character they noticed in CEP faculty along with brief Mindfulness Meditation (MM) practice because of its ability to enhance self-regulation (Tang et al., 2015).

The goal of the second segment in the series (spring 2022) was to help faculty learn how to develop cadet character more effectively through one-on-one relationships. We chose to focus on one-on-one relationships because CEP faculty spend a significant amount of time advising cadets on personal performance related matters. "Character Call-Outs" and MM continued in this segment but a shift in focus to cadet development involved strategies to enhance cadets' *Motivation* to be a person of character, character growth *Mindset*, and providing cadets with the *Means* for character growth (i.e. goal-setting, "Friends of Mutual Accountability," MM, moral exemplars) also known as the 3M's framework (Erbe et al., 2023). The goal of this segment was to help faculty consider ways of developing cadets' character using the 3M's framework in their one-on-one interactions with cadets.

The goal of the third and final segment in the series was to help faculty more effectively integrate character topics into teaching CEP's RS101 Student Success Course. The Student Success Course offers cadets an opportunity to engage with learning science and performance psychology strategies to enhance their academic, physical, and leadership performance at USMA. Strategies presented include effective thinking, goal setting, time management, self-regulated learning, concentration, test taking, memory, note taking, and energy management. Through academically engaging activities, this course assists cadets in developing personalized skills and attributes that support thriving along with helping to facilitate a successful transition to USMA. The Student Success Course provides a learning experience that reveals, develops, and builds upon the unique strengths and talents of each cadet.

"Character Call-Outs" and MM continued in the series with a shift toward helping faculty consider ways to bring virtues into class discussions and reflections on how course content connected with virtues (see Figure 1 for a list of virtues and definitions used in the course). A detailed description and breakdown of each segment in the faculty development series can be found in Figure 2.

Instrument and Analysis

We used a Qualtrics survey that asked the following questions: "How worthwhile was the CEP Character Faculty Development (CFD) (*0-Not at all worthwhile to 4-Extremely worthwhile*)?" "How much has the CEP CFD helped motivate you to be a person of character (*0-None to 4-A great deal*)?" "As a result of participating in the CEP CFD, how much has the material helped you see that your character can change, how many more tools do you believe you now have to develop your own character, and how much has your character developed (*0-None to 5-A great deal*)?" "How useful do you find the following tools for character development (self-monitoring and goal-setting, friends of mutual accountability, mindfulness meditation, moral exemplars) (*0-None to 5-A great deal*)?" Finally, "As a result of participating in the CEP CFD how much more confident are you in developing cadets' character and integrating character development into your teaching (*0-None to 5-A great deal*)?" Our data analyses included examining means and standard deviations for each question. If our

Figure 1
Student Success Course Virtue Definitions

Character Connections

Five Key Virtue Domains

Good character is a person's reliability to do what is right in all circumstances. That reliability is grounded in values, developed through practice, and sustained by virtue.

RS101 will intentionally make character connections and encourage reflection upon the below virtues throughout the course.

MORAL VIRTUES: **Character traits that respect the humanity of ourselves and others**

- **Gratitude:** feeling and expressing thankfulness
- **Humility:** accurately judging your own abilities and limitations

CIVIC VIRTUES: **Character traits that serve the community and common good**

- **Empathy:** understanding and feeling what someone else feels

INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES: **Character traits that enhance learning and thinking**

- **Intellectual Humility:** recognizing there is always more to learn
- **Critical Thinking:** analyzing information objectively

PERFORMANCE VIRTUES: **Character traits that make it possible for goals to be achieved**

- **SELF-CONTROL:** REGULATING YOUR THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, AND BEHAVIORS
- **Discipline:** adhering to a planned course of action

MARTIAL VIRTUES: **Character traits that must be exceptionally well-developed in the profession of arms**

- **Courage (Moral):** to act rightly in the face of discouragement or opposition, possibly and knowingly running the risk of adverse personal consequences
- **Courage (Physical):** overcoming fear to act to do what is right

Character Connections

Figure 2

Character Faculty Development Segment Details

Focus of Segment	Date	Specific Content	Outcomes Intended
Personal Character Development	Monday 21, September, 2021	Character and Virtue descriptions Virtue selection and goal creation Selection of virtue friends	Begin working on goal with virtue friends
	Tuesday 2, November, 2021	Character and Virtue review Meditation Reflect on goals with virtue friends Set new goals for next time	Reflection on goal progress and setting intentions for new goal
	Monday 13, December, 2021	Character call-out Meditation Final goal-reflection Review character forming tools	Final reflection on goal progress/attainment and review of character tools
Cadet Development Through One-on-One	Tuesday 15, February, 2022	Character call-out Meditation Character framework and virtue Motivation, Mindset, & Means (3M's)	Begin thinking about 3M's in one-on-ones with cadets
	Wednesday 6, April, 2022	Character call-out Meditation 3M's review Brainstorm how faculty are using 3M's	Continue using 3M's with cadets in one-on-one interactions
	Wednesday 11, May, 2022	Character call-out Meditation 3 M's reflection	Reflect on use of 3M's and set intentions for using them in the future
Character Education in RS101 Course	Monday 29, August, 2022	Character call-out Meditation Character framework and 3M's review Discuss virtues in RS101 & reflection	Discuss virtues in RS101 and how cadets can reflect on these throughout
	Tuesday 11, October, 2022	Character call-out Meditation Reflect on character integration in RS101	Reinforce successes with virtue integration and troubleshoot barriers
	Monday 12, December, 2022	Character call-out Meditation Final reflection on character integration in RS101	Discuss successes and plan for a more seamless virtue integration

means were above zero, then we determined the faculty development series was feasible and acceptable to staff.

Results

Table 1 displays study demographics along with means and standard deviations for each item.

Discussion

Service academies and institutions of higher education interested in developing their students' character should focus on creating a culture of character growth through developing their faculty's character and competence. We piloted a faculty development series at USMA for

Table 1

Participant Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Characteristic	*N* (%)
Sex	
Female	3 (33.3)
Male	5 (55.6)
Prefer not to say	1 (11.1)
How long employed at West Point	
1–5 years	4 (44.4)
6–10 years	4 (44.4)
11–15 years	0
16–20 years	0
Over 20 years	1 (11.1)
Means and standard deviations	
Worthwhileness of Fac Dev	2.11 (0.99)
Motivation to be a person of character	2.44 (1.17)
See your character can change	3.22 (1.13)
How many more tools to develop your character	3.33 (0.67)
How much has your character developed	3.00 (1.15)
How useful was self-monitoring and goal-setting	3.44 (0.96)
How useful was friends of mutual accountability	3.44 (0.68)
How useful was mindfulness meditation	3.22 (1.47)
How useful were moral exemplars	3.44 (0.96)
How much more confident are you in developing cadets' character	3.33 (0.94)
How much more confident are you in integrating character into teaching	3.44 (0.68)

the CEP's Faculty to determine feasibility and acceptability. Our experience and initial evidence from our small sample suggests that programs like this should be tried and may be feasible and acceptable to faculty.

Other CFD interventions have been developed and tested (Allman et al., 2023; McGovern, 2011; McGovern & Miller, 2008). Our work is consistent with Allman et al. (2023) in showing the feasibility and acceptability of CFD with our results showing faculty finding the faculty development series to be worthwhile and helping faculty to feel confident in developing cadets' character and integrating character into the classroom. Two unique features of the current faculty development series are the focus on personal character development for faculty and the emphasis on developing cadet character through one-on-one relationships. These components along with the third need further testing with larger samples and more rigorous study methods to determine effectiveness.

Our study was not without limitations. Our small sample size and unique population do not allow for effectiveness determination or the ability to generalize to a larger population within or outside of USMA. Furthermore, only post-assessment data were collected, and without a comparison group, it is impossible to tell whether the results were due to the intervention, or some other experience faculty had at the academy. Lastly, although the aim of this pilot study was to determine feasibility and acceptability of the intervention for faculty participants, one critical impact of the intervention that remains unknown is the effect on cadets. To examine outcomes of faculty character development on cadet character, an experimental wait-list control design could be used. Specifically, half of interested instructors teaching a course should receive the character development intervention with a control condition of interested instructors experiencing faculty development as usual (followed up in the next semester with the character intervention). Cadets in classes with instructors from both groups should be surveyed pre and post intervention on how often character elements were brought up in class and potentially character mindset and motivation outcomes. The two groups should be compared to each other to determine impacts of the intervention.

Although the aforementioned limitations exist, the initial findings from this pilot study indicate that the intervention was feasible (could be effectively delivered) and acceptable to the faculty members and should be tested further for wider spread applicability and effectiveness. A second phase of this intervention, with modifications based on the findings presented here, is planned to begin in the fall of 2023. Future research should also test the impact of the faculty development series in other departments at USMA and at other institutions including both service academies and universities interested in creating a culture of character growth.

Conclusions

Character development programs for faculty aimed at developing both character and competence should be tried and can be feasible and acceptable for faculty. Institutions of higher education interested in creating a culture of character growth can develop, plan, and implement these types of programs for the potential benefit and flourishing of all.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Developing Leaders of Character for Responsible Artificial Intelligence

Christopher S. Kuennen, Headquarters United States Air Force

ABSTRACT

Who is responsible for Responsible AI (RAI)? As the Department of Defense (DoD) invests in AI workforce education, this question serves as starting point for an argument that effective training for military RAI demands focused character development for officers. This essay makes that case in three parts. First, while norms around responsibility and AI are likely to evolve, there remains long-standing legal, ethical, and practical precedent to think of commissioned officers as the loci of responsibility for the application of military AI. Next, given DoD's emphasis on responsibility, it should devote significant pedagogical attention to the subjective skills, motivations, and perceptions of operators who depend on AI to execute their mission, beyond merely promoting technical literacy. Finally, the significance of character for RAI entails the application of proven character development methodologies from pre-commissioning education onward: critical dialogue, hands-on practice applying AI in complex circumstances, and moral reminders about the relevance of the DoD's ethical principles for AI.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, RAI, Character Development, Military Ethics, Responsibility

Who is responsible for Responsible AI (RAI)? In November 2022, a diverse cohort of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets, civilian undergraduates, philosophy faculty, and active-duty Air Force personnel wrangled over this question in an echoey ballroom at the University of Texas-El Paso (UTEP). The group was considering a

CONTACT Christopher S. Kuennen **kuennencs@gmail.com**

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case study involving the application of a machine learning-trained target identification tool, which, through a series of unfortunate events, was implicated in the avoidable deaths of civilians in a combat zone. Students, faculty, and Airmen were invited to consider who was most responsible for the incident—the analyst who used the tool, software developers who designed it, senior leaders who adopted it, the operator who acted upon its output, or someone else? After half an hour of debate, the last word was given by a young Security Forces officer who answered—as if it was obvious—"The commander."

The concept of responsibility is inextricable from the Department of Defense's (DoD's) approach to artificial intelligence. Ever since it published its initial AI strategy in 2018, the DoD has committed itself to "leading in military ethics and AI safety" (p. 8). In 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin deemed "Responsible AI…the only kind of AI that we do." By June 2022, the Department had tasked its components to—among 15 other lines of effort—"Supplement existing DoD AI training efforts with curricula that will enable RAI implementation" (p. 32). In line with the DoD AI Education Strategy, these efforts have largely prioritized educational investment in senior leaders (e.g., Chief Digital and AI Office, 2023), product managers (e.g., Kobren, 2022), and AI developers (e.g., Del Aguila, 2022).

This essay makes a plea to those involved in curating the DoD's AI education. Their approach must not neglect those who bear the ultimate moral responsibility for RAI—the officers and future officers who will command AI-augmented teams. The capacity for true responsibility is a virtue of character, and thus training for responsibility is tied to the professional character development programs that begin in the services' pre-commissioning programs. Developing responsible leaders for the future means letting go of the assumption that "ethical algorithms" are a panacea for RAI and equipping future officers with the specific technical competence and moral virtues required for truly responsible action with AI (cf. Kearns & Roth, 2020).

Who is Responsible?

Responsible AI—one of the Department's original five ethical principles for AI—means "DoD personnel will exercise appropriate levels of judgment and care, while remaining responsible for the development, deployment, and use of AI capabilities" (Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, 2020). This principle underlies the 2023 DoD policy on autonomy in weapon systems: "Autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems will be designed to allow commanders and operators to exercise appropriate levels of human judgment over the use of force" (p. 3). However, the adoption of responsibility as an ethical principle for AI goes beyond the demand—popularized by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots—for "meaningful human control" of lethal autonomous weapons systems. The Department's understanding of responsibility as essentially dependent on human judgment holds across lethal and non-lethal applications, from collaborative combat aircraft to talent management software. Nevertheless, questions about which humans should be responsible and what kinds of judgment might make them so remain open.

While views on moral responsibility will undoubtedly evolve with increasingly pervasive AI adoption, it seems safe to assume that one primary locus of practical responsibility for military AI will continue to be the leaders employing it. There are long-standing legal, ethical, and practical norms that justify attention on officers, and specifically officers in command, as the responsible agents on AI-augmented teams. No matter how societal norms around responsibility change in the long term, the DoD's commitment to human judgment as a precondition for RAI means these individuals are a critical audience for RAI education.

Legal

The Constitution's Appointments Clause provides the legal basis for officers "to command military force on behalf of the government" (Office of Legal Counsel, 2007, p. 77). As extensions of Presidential authority, commanders are responsible for their forces' exercise of military power. This Constitutional precept is consistent with international humanitarian law, which has upheld the doctrine of command responsibility since the advent of modern warfare, making commanders liable for war crimes committed by their subordinates (Legal Information Institute, 2022). Command responsibility, in turn, depends upon the legal definition of a combatant as someone operating under a "responsible command" (Medecins Sans Frontieres, n.d.). The underlying norm across all these precepts is that the individual military commander represents the state and thus incurs individual responsibility for lethal action in accordance with the common good.

Ethical

Ultimately, the legal principles of command derive from the more fundamental premise of military officership as a public service. Samuel Huntington (1985) defines the "vocation of officership" as a profession because its members manifest distinctive expertise, corporateness, and perhaps most importantly, social responsibility. Like doctors, lawyers, and educators, the military officer is "a practicing expert, working in a social context, and performing a service…essential to the functioning of society" (p. 9). So long as American society entrusts the DoD with its defense, its officers maintain professional responsibility for both securing that defense and doing so in a manner compatible with American values.

Practical

Legal and ethical precedent aside, there is an important practical impetus for holding commanders responsible for military employment of AI. Namely, since AI systems can diffuse responsibility across a variety of stakeholders, and since commanders possess ultimate authority for their use, commanders can reasonably be expected to assume responsibility for particular AI outcomes. In short, the buck stops with the boss. This was the instinct of the Security Forces officer at the UTEP workshop and a fundamental tenet of popular leadership theory in and out of the military. Commentators from Chester Barnard (e.g., 1971) to Jocko Willink (e.g., 2017) have consistently affirmed leader accountability as a defining feature of effective management and organizational performance.

For the US military, the concept of responsibility is essential to the role that officers play as stewards of the common good and public trust. RAI education focused too narrowly on senior leaders, acquisitions specialists, and software developers ignores long-standing norms around how the military thinks about responsibility. Doing so assumes that the ethical risks of irresponsible AI inhere primarily in the technology itself, such that if the DoD trains personnel to account for ethical risk in the development of military AI, then its systems are bound to be used responsibly in practice. This assumption fundamentally misconstrues the role of personal responsibility in ethics and thus underestimates the task of developing officers capable of such responsibility.

Objective and Subjective Responsibility

Contemporary discussion around AI ethics often divides moral philosophy into three types of "theories"—deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics—then attempts to incorporate one or more of these theories in the AI system design (e.g., Pflanzer et al., 2022). Deontological ethics prioritizes development of, and compliance with, morally sound rules—for example, "always tell the truth." Consequentialist ethics, often identified with utilitarianism, focuses instead on morally preferred outcomes—for example, "it is alright to lie, steal, and cheat, if doing so protects an innocent child." Finally, virtue ethics focuses on exploring the constitution of moral character—for example, "developing a sense of when it is legitimate to mislead someone takes years of experience." These concepts, refined in moral philosophy, implicitly or explicitly inform AI system engineering from model development and user experience design through deployment and application.

While the three approaches introduced above are often presented as competing alternatives, the etymological root of ethics points to a substantially more inclusive conception. The Greek *ethos* refers specifically to character or way of life—as in, for example, the "warrior ethos." Understood as a theory of character, ethics is not only about good outcomes or rules. It is also about what it means for moral subjects to live well. Such a conception of ethics accounts for both the objective and subjective aspects of moral behavior, so that it need not be necessary to directly contrast virtue ethics with the normative prescriptions of rule-based or outcome-based systems. By and large, virtue ethics is concerned with the character of moral agents as they develop over time, not with the objective criteria by which acts can be judged in specific instances.

Given a robust conception of both the subjective and objective aspects of ethics, attempting to design an AI to produce ethical outcomes appears inadequate for the task of developing and deploying ethical AI. Writing thousands of years before the invention of the modern computer, Aristotle (350/2002) discerned that ethical excellence is not something achieved in a single act, but rather an accomplishment judged retrospectively over time (p.12, 1098a). Hence, for Aristotle, the point of ethics cannot be merely to prescribe what to do, but to clarify what it means to be excellent.

What does it mean to be excellent with AI? In the case of military AI, the notion of responsibility can help answer this question in two ways. First, whatever excellence entails is largely relative to particular practices: flourishing for the Buddhist monk does not take the same form as it does for the Air Force fighter pilot. As Huntington observed, the military professional assumes objective responsibility for acting in the public interest as an essential demand of his or her practice. For today's officer, to be excellent with AI entails accepting responsibility for the public interest...with AI. Officers must be able to use AI while still exercising responsibility for their role as public servants, a task that requires not only technical but moral virtues.

A second, subjective sense of responsibility illuminates another aspect of ethical AI excellence. One established model of moral psychology suggests ethical behavior requires a combination of moral sensitivity, judgment, motivation, and character (Rest, 1994). Rule-based or outcome-based frameworks might give someone a means of deducing a morally preferable judgment, but such theories cannot make someone sensitive to all the morally salient features of a situation or instill the motivation and character to actually follow through on deliberation about those features. These latter three components of moral psychology—sensitivity, motivation, and character—depend in part on whether an agent feels responsible for acting in an ethical way. Thus, in this case, ethical excellence with AI also requires officers to *feel* responsible for their behavior with AI in the first place.

RAI Training as Character Development

The concept of responsibility is critical to ethical AI in the DoD because ethical AI is ultimately dependent on human character. Achieving RAI requires developing officers competent to accept objective responsibility for using AI in the public interest and capable of feeling subjectively responsible for the ways their teams use AI. What exactly, then, constitutes "curricula that will enable RAI implementation"? Genuine training for RAI must be approached as character development, and the methodologies of character development should be considered the vehicle of any effective RAI curricula.

Just as the military aims to develop technical competence through disciplined, repetitive training, education, and exercising, it has traditionally relied on the same approach to instill virtues of character. From uniform wear and customs and courtesies, to leadership reaction courses and drill and ceremonies, the basic building blocks of military training have long served to form habits of discipline, decisiveness, courage, and respect. Given the military's long-standing focus on character, Secretary Austin's remark that RAI is the "only kind of AI we do" may seem less a charge than a foregone conclusion. If DoD already does character development, why should it be concerned that its officers might develop and deploy AI irresponsibly?

In his 2022 book, *Is Remote Warfare Moral?*, Joseph Chapa explores how technological evolution in warfare changes the ethical demands on military character. We expect courage from our servicemembers, for instance, but technology can change the context in which courage is exercised and thus, for example, how that virtue might manifest in an infantry officer versus a remotely piloted aircraft operator. As Dutch philosopher Peter-Paul Verbeek (2011) has observed, technology plays a fundamental role in framing human choices, mediating our experience of the world, and providing the means through which we act. If having an excellent character means being able to navigate our technologically mediated world ethically and effectively, then excellent character education must involve habituating servicemembers to the responsible use of the technologies they depend on.

The 2020 DoD AI Education Strategy focuses RAI training for the majority of its members on "understanding the ethical issues related to AI and adhering to all relevant regulations" (p. 46). In order to promote the kind of understanding and compliance that is conducive to genuine responsibility, academic knowledge of relevant issues and regulations must be supplemented by a more holistic approach to character development for RAI. To be effective, such an approach should involve the following:

- Critical dialogue about the general ethical risks posed by AI technology and associated responsibilities of servicemembers
- Real or simulated practice navigating AI-mediated choices
- Moral reminders that prompt self-reflection and continuing development

Since responsible action requires both moral and technical competence, current efforts to improve AI literacy across the DoD are a vital part of character development for RAI. Education across the force on AI concepts, applications, and risks gives practitioners a framework to understand their relationships with AI technologies and a vocabulary to dialogue about the appropriate use of such tools. Indeed, critical dialogue should be a goal throughout initial AI literacy education. Research on classroom discourse by Soter et al. (2008) suggests that "the most productive discussions (whether peer or teacher-led) are structured, focused, occur when students hold the floor for extended periods of time, [and] when students are prompted to discuss texts through open-ended or authentic questions..." (p. 373). Critical, open-ended dialogue promotes RAI insofar as it personalizes AI concepts—including ethical risks—and challenges individual preconceptions about AI, promoting subjective responsibility. Alternatively, traditional "click-through" computer-based trainings are inadequate for RAI education.

While discourse about risks and responsibilities is necessary, it is not sufficient for the development of a character capable of RAI. The knowledge servicemembers gain through RAI literacy efforts is only valuable if it translates into responsible action. If the ability to consistently do anything well depends on practice, then RAI requires practice using AI responsibly. What might RAI practice entail? Perhaps the most obvious starting point is to put AI tools in the hands of servicemembers. The kinds of AI tools and the kinds of contexts in which they are applied will naturally vary across services and functional areas, but Don Howard (2014) articulates a general Aristotelean approach: "Training should begin with drill, grow with practice, and be nurtured by example" (p. 163). This training could take many forms. One option might be simply talking through a hypothetical scenario—like the one discussed at the UTEP workshop—that presents trainees with decisions relating to applications or outcomes of AI tools. More advanced scenarios could be integrated into large-scale exercises, where AI failures might present tactical and operational decision-makers with morally weighty problems nested in complex warfighting networks. In any case, practitioners must be able to gain cumulative, first-hand experience aligning the decisions they make with AI with their operational and ethical priorities.

Since character development occurs gradually and within different contexts, conceptual discussion and practice navigating complex situations with AI should be supplemented by regular "moral reminders" about the obligations associated with RAI. The military is already familiar with moral reminders in various forms: oaths of office and enlistment, core values statements and service songs, and periodic refresher training on topics ranging from resource stewardship to suicide intervention. Research conducted for the Oxford Character Project suggests that periodic and explicit exposure to the moral principles underlying our routine behavior can help align actions with values (Lamb et al., 2021). Incorporating the DoD's five ethical principles for AI into the battle rhythm of AI-assisted operators—whether through prompting by a system itself or external continuation training—is a vital aspect of sustaining character for RAI, as recurring engagement with underlying principles not only keeps them both salient and relevant to decision-makers as AI capabilities and applicability rapidly evolve.

Conclusion

As the military's service academies, training commands, and professional military education schools seek to educate an AI-enabled force, these institutions must come to terms with what AI means for developing responsible military professionals. While norms around responsibility and AI will certainly evolve, there remains long-standing legal, ethical, and practical precedent to think of commissioned officers as the loci of responsibility for the application of military AI. Given DoD's commitment to RAI, it should devote significant pedagogical attention to the subjective skills, motivations, and perceptions of operators and leaders who depend on AI to execute their mission, beyond merely promoting technical literacy. Ultimately, the significance of character for RAI entails the application of proven character development methodologies from pre-commissioning education onward: critical dialogue, hands-on practice applying AI in complex circumstances, and moral reminders about the continuing and evolving relevance of the DoD's ethical principles for AI.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

"Officers of Character": What it Means, Why We Need it, and How We Mandate it

Kathryn Toms, Baylor University

ABSTRACT

Our nation requires that service academies "develop officers of character." But the term "character" seems shrouded in ambiguity and is thus dubiously enforceable. What is character? Moreover, in a society ruled by law, perhaps this clarion call to character is unnecessary. Perhaps assiduously specified posited law alone is sufficient to bring about society's desired ends–character, then, is not needed. But if character is needed in a nation's officers, it would seem fitting for that nation to mandate "officers of character." If needed, does our nation have such a mandate, and if so, how is it manifested? I will address these questions in three parts. First, character is (1) deep and (2) inextricably linked to virtue. Centuries of classic moral philosophy inform this understanding. Second, character is needed because posited law can be (1) wrong, (2) absent, (3) underspecified, or (4) applied by wily scoundrels. Third, our nation does, in fact, mandate character. This is appropriate, in light of the fact that character is needed. This character mandate manifests (1) legally, (2) ethically, and (3) from common sense.

Keywords: Character, Character Education, Military Officers, Virtue Ethics

There are times when a nation mandates that its citizens have character. Military officers are one such example; the nation rightly demands "officers of character" both formally and informally. In this essay, I will do three things. First, I will briefly establish what is meant by "character." Second, I will argue that demanding character is, indeed,

CONTACT Kathryn Toms **kathryn.toms@afacademy.af.edu**

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a requirement that is *necessary*—for an officer's mere external compliance with posited law will not suffice. With these two foundational prerequisite points established, I will then move to my third and final point: a character mandate exists. This mandate is manifested legally, ethically, and by common sense.

What Is Meant by "Character"?

First, some definitions are in order. What is meant by character? If the state is seeking—nay, requiring—that some outcome be produced, then that outcome must be both definable and identifiable—at least to some reasonable, feasible extent. In short, we must answer, "What are we trying to get and how will we know when we get it?" Much can be said on this topic, of course. For now, I will limit my analysis to that which most saliently concerns this mandate to instill character. The core of the classic literature concerning moral virtue notes two virtually undisputed things. First, that character is not superficial. It involves the whole, integrated, person. Second, character is inextricable from virtuous activity. Virtuous activity both *inculcates* character (by way of habit) and also serves to *indicate* the presence of good moral character.

Character Is Deep

Character is not superficial. Character is deep and enduring; it is an essential part of one's personhood, what some modern moral philosophers have described as "robust" (Doris, 2002). We find clear instances of this concept throughout the classic canon. To name a few: Plato writes of a courageous warrior trained so as to be "dyed in the wool" courageous (Plato, 2011, p. 137). His courage is so deeply instilled as to be inseparable as wool fiber is inseparable from the dye that saturates it. The point Plato is making is that one becomes genuinely courageous when the (mere) attribute cannot be washed away. The courage has become part of the person—a metaphorical dye that saturates every fiber of their being. "Courageous" is who they *are*—or rather, who they have become. As such, we can say that that person, indeed, has a courageous *character*.

Aristotle also distinguishes merely superficial attributes from true, deep, character. Both Aristotle and Aquinas explain the crucial difference between "incontinence," (mere) "continence," and the (*bona fide*) "virtue" of temperance (Aristotle, 2011, pp. 316–317, 322; Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 155, 156). The *incontinent* person knows the right action, but fails to do it—they give in to the temptation to do wrong. The *continent* person also knows the right action. But, in contrast to the incontinent person, they utilize self-discipline and dogged commitment and successfully resist the temptation. The continent person is victorious in the struggle...but, crucially, there is a struggle.

But the truly virtuous person is notably different. The truly virtuous person *delights* in living virtuously. There is no struggle.[1] And this desire and delight to act with virtue is not ephemeral, subject to the vicissitudes of emotion. Rather, it exists "from a firm and unchanging state" (Aristotle, 2011, p. 268). Such a state, Aristotle notes, is indicative that the person has become truly virtuous; they have developed beyond mere continence. The desired action is performed easily because *who they are* makes it so. For the genuinely virtuous person, it is easy to live a genuinely virtuous life. If one was only superficially "virtuous," behaving with virtue would be a struggle (thus indicating continence—which is still more praiseworthy than vice or incontinence—but not virtue). Action aligned with *who one is* is easy—for one is swimming with the current of their very selfhood. Aristotle's discernment between continence and virtue illustrates that traits that are deeply embedded are natural and easy to manifest. That which is deeply

1 To apply this concept to the virtue of temperance and, say, a box of donuts: the incontinent person gorges themselves on the donuts. The continent person doggedly resists. But the truly virtuous (in this case, temperate) person has no desire to gorge themselves on donuts in the first place—they actually enjoy eating in wise, healthful moderation.

embedded is *who one is*—their character. Character, as our most prominent philosophers understood it, is not superficial—it is deep.

Character Is Inextricable From Virtuous Activity

Second, character is inextricable from virtuous activity. Virtuous activity, by definition, is activity done in accordance with a virtue—so we must identify virtue. While some debate surrounds just which traits are worthy of acceptance into the "virtue canon," the Cardinal Virtues enjoy undisputed acceptance. The Cardinal Virtues are prudence (sometimes translated as practical wisdom), justice, courage (fortitude), and temperance (self-control). Character, then, is inextricable from activity in accordance with these Cardinal (and other) Virtues.

This character-virtue marriage manifests in two ways. First, virtue is what inculcates character. One becomes a virtuous person by habituating virtuous action. This, of course, requires first defining virtuous action. Happily, many virtue theorists provide vigorous definitions. For present purposes, a cursory overview will suffice: Aristotle advises that virtue is a mean between two extremes. This mean is best discerned by engaging reason and wise counsel. The salient point here is that virtue, and the character that will come of it, is conspicuous; *it can be found*, if only the seeker is willing to look. Moreover, habituating virtuous activity is a choice. It is well within the locus of control of the agent. Any willing agent, then, can choose to behave virtuously ... again and again, until the habit forms their character. So, the relevant takeaways gleaned from two millennia of virtue theory are (1) virtue is knowable, (2) one can choose to habituate virtuous action, and (3) habit forms character.

Character is inextricable from virtuous activity in a second way: the latter *indicates* the former. Though character is a deeply internal condition, it has external manifestations: virtuous activity. Such external manifestations are visible to, and thus potentially assessable by, others. Of course, the extent to which an external action *accurately* manifests an internal mindset is debatable; consider the begrudging gift-giver who smiles through gritted teeth. This is not the virtue of generosity, even if an onlooker mistakenly identifies it as such. It is not immediately obvious that *genuine* virtue can ever be *truly and fully* known by anyone other than the agent herself, for the mindset with which one performs an action informs whether mere continence or *bona fide* virtue is in play. And this crucial internal mindset is simply not privy to an onlooker. (Moreover, even *self*-analysis is suspect, for self-deception and self-delusion are surely ubiquitous gremlins.) Despite these unavoidable drawbacks, still, we have, for all reasonable purposes, a feasible harbinger of good moral character: the exhibition of virtuous activity.

So, character is both (1) deep and (2) inextricable from virtuous activity. At present, I will limit my claims to these two. Much more could be said regarding both, of course, but my purpose today is only to establish an understanding of what we are looking for when we say "officer of character." From (1), we know that genuine character is "dyed in the wool." If virtuous action is easily shaken from a person, then the person never truly possessed "virtue" to begin with—at best it was continence turned incontinent. From (2), we know that virtue both *establishes* and *indicates* good moral character.

The Character Mandate Is Needed

So, we have a reasonable way to understand, identify, and inculcate good character. But what of it? An opponent might question if developing "officers of character" is really necessary. After all, laws are already written and passed for the very purpose of forbidding, mandating, or incentivizing behavior. What a society desires or forbids is simply *stated outright*. This is posited law. Citizens choose to comply or face some form of consequence. This is straightforward. And it is the hallmark of a society ruled by law.

Where, then, is the alleged impetus to introduce—and even go so far as to *mandate*—this concept of character? A challenger will surely note that the term "character" seems riddled with subjectivity and ambiguity and therefore is of questionable enforceability. This opponent might go on to say that military officers, despite being a specific subcategory of society, are for the most part in the same boat as the nations' general citizenry: laws exist, and the military officer is to follow them. Granted, military officers might face *some* unique situations not shared by civil society. But this uniqueness is already accounted for in a commensurately unique code of laws: the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). There is, then, no need to even *consider* character, much less to *mandate* it.

I offer four refutations to this line of thinking. Posited law, at times, will not suffice because the present situation could be such that (1) the law is morally repugnant, (2) the law is absent, (3) the law is underspecified, or (4) the officer is wily and could maneuver around the law. The first three situations are similar in that the law is found wanting in some way. In these situations (and, surely others), the officer has only their character to fall back on. Moreover, even in situations when extant posited law *is* morally good, present, and sufficiently specified, it is *still* one's character that informs *why* they abide lawfully (or not) in the first place. This latter topic is certainly worthy of much discussion, but tabled for today. In the case of the fourth refutation, even in the presence of good, present, and specified law, a "wily officer" can find ways to creatively subvert the law for nefarious purposes. The following examples will help to illustrate these four refutations.

One: Character Is Needed Because Posited Law Is Sometimes Morally Repugnant

First, sometimes the posited law is "just wrong"—or, more specifically, "morally repugnant." By "law," I mean the broad category of regulatory guidance, rules of engagement, operations orders, and the like. So long as such guidance is binding upon the member in some formal sense, and non-compliance would warrant sanction, then such guidance shares with posited law aspects relevant for my purposes. In the interest of brevity, then, I will use the term "law" to encompass these many forms of written guidance with which compliance is mandatory.

The most obvious examples of law being wrong are cases of state-inflicted genocide. Sadly, there are many instances of this in recent history (Powers, 2002). To note just one example, in 1935 the German Parliament passed the "Reich Citizenship Law" and the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" (Ball, 1999, pp. 36–44; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019). These formed the legal basis for the Nazi's further persecution and genocidal ambitions.

Similarly, in the 1990s, states inflicted genocide in Rwanda and the Balkans. Both occasions included people groups who published and circulated plans and propaganda that catalyzed atrocities (Human Rights Watch, 2006). An opponent might state that these cases are not clear-cut examples of a *law* that has been passed that is wrong (Powers, 2002, pp. 338–339). Rather, they are cases where angry powerful *factions* wreaked wicked havoc. This is bad, of course, but it is not bad *law*. In response, first I note that the plans and propaganda circulated shared many aspects of law—they were intentionally written by a collaborating group, endorsed by a majority of citizens and enforceable (although by illegitimate means). Second, I would respond that whether the wickedness is catalyzed by law or by an angry faction is beside the main point. Both cases require the opposer to possess stalwart noble character.

Additionally, good moral character is required to *recognize* that such genocide-inducing laws (or powerful popular factions) are, in fact, wrong and that the morally correct action is to *swim upstream* against that law and the society that produced it. This is hard, of course. But as the Nuremburg Trials formalized, an appeal to law and/or formal guidance from an authority ("I was just following orders") is no excuse (Nuremburg Principle IV, see Ball, 1999, p. 87). Something deeper than law, deeper than formal guidance, deeper than superiors' orders exists. And this deeper thing ought to recognize "crimes against humanity" when it sees it. This deeper thing is character. As Nuremburg codified, character is needed, because sometimes the law is *just wrong*.

Two: Character is Needed Because Law is Sometimes Absent

Second, good moral character is required because sometimes law is absent. For example, cyber warfare has emerged as a new, novel form of aggression. And given its novelty, cyberwarfare has been met with a "virtual policy vacuum" (Dipert, 2010, p. 385). Randall Dipert further notes that "most legal frameworks do not clearly apply to many instances of cyberwarfare, and cyberwarfare involves aspects of damage or harm that are typically not addressed by law, such as harm to the functioning of information and other systems that might not harm physical objects or persons" (p. 395). What, then, is the moral warfighter (or policymaker) to do? The only thing she can do: fall back on that which is ubiquitously present—her character. In the clear absence of formal, authoritative guidance, character alone remains to inform decisions. This is true even if a decision-maker consults other, non-judicial forces of potential persuasion—majority opinion, say, or *de facto* cultural practice. Even in the presence of such unofficial influences, the decision-maker's chosen way forward will ultimately be informed by their character. Character matters. And when law is absent, character matters all the more.

Three: Character Is Needed Because Law Is Sometimes Underspecified

Third, good character is required because sometimes the law is underspecified. Underspecification is rarely a problem for law that governs that which is straightforward and frequently occurring. This is because lawmakers can alter and add laws to account for changes in society, for unexpected situations, and for loopholes that become exposed and need closing. Tax code is a good example of this. Filing taxes is a common practice: it occurs annually for millions of citizens. These millions of citizens encompass diverse and thus potentially uncommon financial situations, but tax law has had plenty of time and occasion to evolve to address such needs. Thus, one would be hard-pressed to describe tax law as underspecified—the sheer quantity of tax law attests to the level of meticulous detail therein. And such specificity leaves—purposely—no room to wiggle. Consider that the term "creative accountant" implies that one must be operating outside the law, for assiduous stipulation within the law has removed any possibility of licit creativity. We see that straightforward and frequently occurring situations make for law that is sufficiently specified.

But war is neither straightforward nor frequently occurring. As such, the laws that govern war are prone to be riddled with frustrating underspecificity. One can expect the military decision-maker to encounter new, novel situations for which extant UCMJ, Rules of Engagement (ROEs), Operating Instructions, and the like do not address. To illustrate this point, recall the famed "Lone Survivor" case. In 2005, four Navy SEALs were on a mission to surveil, capture, and/or kill Ben Sharmak, a Taliban leader. Unfortunately, the team had no choice but to surveil from locations that offered poor concealment. A herd of goats and three shepherds happened upon the team. It was unclear if the shepherds were Taliban or not; there was evidence to support either conclusion. The team was left with the difficult decision of what to do with the shepherds. They had no rope or other gear to constrain them. Killing them seemed morally dubious, but if released, the shepherds could alert area Taliban who would likely return *en masse* to kill the SEALs. Frustratingly, radio problems prevented garnering guidance from Higher Headquarters (Rubel & Lucas, 2011, pp. 39–42; Sandel, 2009, pp. 24–27).

This situation involved an unlikely—and terrible—concatenation of circumstances. Extant formal guidance was unable to answer the question, "What should I do with possibly-but-not-assuredly-nefarious-Taliban shepherds who, if left alive, will undoubtedly doom this crucial mission and likely return to kill us?" Though Lieutenant Murphy did discuss the situation with his team members, he alone was the decision authority. As such, it was his character, ultimately, that would advise him. Indeed, sometimes law is underspecified. In such situations, it is necessary to have a military leader with good character, because their character will inform their decision. The character mandate is needed.

Four: Character Is Needed Because Wily Officers Exist

I offer a fourth and final reason why the character mandate is needed. Posited law will not suffice because a wily enough officer will simply maneuver around it. The old adage, "You cannot legislate morality" is, at the end of the day, true. If someone does not want to act in accordance with good character, they will find a way to do so. With enough motivation and creative gerrymandering, the wily officer can further nefarious ends and yet still remain within the letter of the law. This is to be technically lawful but morally impermissible. Such situations may be rare, of course, especially if law is wisely crafted and assiduously nuanced. But a sufficiently motivated scoundrel will simply rise to the challenge with commensurately deft maneuvering—if for no other reason than to prove that he can. Law, indeed, is a poor substitute for good moral character. Posited law does not suffice to bring about the ends desired and achieved by good moral decision-making. Good moral character is needed.

Consider the following example. When running for President of the United States, Bill Clinton was asked if he had used recreational drugs. He responded that he had never broken the antidrug laws of his country or state. In fact, he had tried marijuana in the United Kingdom, a location that is—factually—neither his country nor state (Sandel, 2009, pp. 134–135). Moreover, Clinton's infamous equivocation concerning the meaning of "sexual relations" underscores the fact that a person is capable of maneuvering in creative ways so as to avoid stipulated law and its attendant consequences. Yet, by Clinton's lawyer's own admission, Clinton "deceived the American people" and his actions were "wrong" and "blameworthy" (Sandel, 2009, p. 136). This is a paradigmatic example that illustrates that wily people exist and so character is indeed needed.

In conclusion, we find that posited law does not suffice—good moral character is needed. This is because law can be outright wrong, as with genocidal policies. Law can be absent, as in the case of emerging technologies. Law can be underspecified, as in "worst case" scenarios like Lone Survivor. And officers can be wily and creative to accomplish malicious ends despite remaining within the technical bounds of the law. A character mandate is most certainly needed.

A Character Mandate Does Exist

The character mandate is most assuredly needed. I hope to have convinced the reader that this point is true and relatively non-controversial. Let us follow this line of thinking into the practical realm: if "officers of character" is a thing that is "assuredly needed," then the nation ought to recognize this in some way(s). To only "recommend" officers of character is not strong enough. A "mandate"—something with teeth—is fitting. It is appropriate, then, that the nation does mandate "officers of character." We find this mandate manifested in three ways. First, legally: the UCMJ and other official guidance mandates officers of character. This legal path enjoys enforceability. Second and third, the nation's character mandate manifests in what I call broadly "ethical" and "common sense" thinking.

Legally

The character mandate exists in legal form. By this I mean posited law, as well as written formal guidance and authoritative instructions. In the interest of efficiency, I will limit my analysis to only one branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, the Air Force.

The U.S. Air Force mandates character in the guidance given in Air Force Instruction (AFI) 1-1, *Air Force Standards* (USAF, 2023). This document applies to all Air Force personnel and outlines conduct standards in many diverse realms. It is wide in breadth though shallow in depth. Because this is an AFI, the document "has teeth"—non-compliance is punitive. The first line of this (as with any) instruction reads: "Compliance with this publication is mandatory." Lest the reader overlook it, this sentence is emboldened and in all capital letters. Additionally, the publication goes on to explain, "This instruction is directive in nature and failure to adhere to the standards set out in this instruction can form the basis for adverse action under UCMJ. An example would be a dereliction of duty offense under Article 92" (AFI 1-1, p. 1). Finally, AFI 1-1 takes primacy of place as a foundational document, as indicated by the content therein and also reflected in the titular numerical prominence. This document itself, specifically, speaks to the authority of AFIs, generally. This might be disputed as a self-referencing circular logic (a document says "documents have authority," which is true because the document, in all its authority, says so). But nonetheless, the authors aim to leave no room for ambiguity:

> *The Secretary of the Air Force approves the promulgation of all Air Force Instructions (AFIs). Unless expressly stated otherwise in a particular instruction, or a waiver has been granted by the appropriate authority, all Airmen must follow AFIs. AFIs do not provide optional guidance, and failure to comply with AFIs can result in disciplinary action.* (AFI 1-1, paragraph 1.9)

Indeed, the content of this document is, without question, enforceable.

So, what then is the content that is so enforceable, and how does it apply to servicemembers' character? Among many other things, this document does directly speak to the character of the servicemember. It lauds integrity as one of the Core Values and explains, "Integrity is a character trait" (AFI 1-1, para 1.3). Integrity, Air Force Standards explains, is "the willingness to do what is right even when no one is looking. It is the 'moral compass'—the inner voice; the voice of self–control; the basis for the trust that is essential in today's military" (para 1.2). Recall that the classical understanding of character regards character as deep, not superficial. So, too, *Air Force Standards* describes integrity as "the inner voice" and the "moral compass." These are not superficial entities. The Air Force is not mandating mere *external compliance* to rules: do this, don't do that. Rather, the Air Force is mandating an inner, deep, condition of the servicemember: *be* this, *don't be* that. This AFI is mandating character.

There is more to be said on the classical understanding of character as something deep and not superficial. With this attribute of depth, one's character cannot be "turned off or on" given a context change (though, admittedly, some scholars challenge this claim. See Doris, 2002, and Harmon, 2009, pp. 235–242). Moreover, this acknowledgment of "who you are…all the time" is reflected in the AFI's acknowledgment that *Air Force Standards* "encompasses the actions, values and standards we live by each and every day, whether on or off duty" (AFI 1-1, para 1.1). Moreover, there are two other examples of how this document seeks to address deep character and not merely superficial compliance. First, "employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties" (para 2.3.1.5). Honest effort is an internal and largely subjective condition, known only (if by anyone) to the individual themselves. Nonetheless, *Air Force Standards* boldly regulates—mandates—this internal condition.

Second, *Air Force Standards* requires that "Our core values demand that Airmen treat others with genuine dignity, fairness, and respect at all times" (para 2.1). Mere *ostensible* respect, say, utterances of the right words unaccompanied by the right heart and motive, will not do.

The salient point here is that "honest effort" and "genuine[ness]" address *internal* conditions, not merely some parroted compliance to some externally evident behavior. Whether such a requirement is enforceable (or even knowable, as it concerns another person's internal mental disposition) is beyond the scope of this essay. I only underscore that these non-superficial, internal entities are the stuff of character. The Air Force recognizes that and, rather unflinchingly, mandates it.

In addition to AFI 1-1, character is mandated in the UCMJ.[2] The UCMJ is applicable to all branches of service. A conspicuous account of mandated character is found in Article 133, "Actions Unbecoming of an Officer and a Gentleman." The explanation notes that "the term 'gentleman' connotes failings in an officer's personal character, regardless of gender" (Manuel for Courts-Martial, 2019, p. IV-134). Note the explicit reference to personal character. Additionally, the "nature of the offense" description further clarifies:

> *Conduct violative of this article is action or behavior in an official capacity which, in dishonoring or disgracing the person as an officer, seriously compromises the officer's character as a gentleman, or action or behavior in an unofficial capacity which, in dishonoring or disgracing the officer personally, seriously compromises the person's standing as an officer.* (Emerson, 2003, pp. 9–16).

The law goes on to list examples: "acts of dishonesty, unfair dealing, indecency, indecorum, lawlessness, injustice, or cruelty." I draw attention to the fact that the law applies to acts/omissions done in both an *official* and an *unofficial* capacity. This aligns with the concept of character as being something deep, an essential part of one's being and thus not able to be compartmentalized when one happens to be off duty. If one claims a "character" trait while on, but not off duty, then that trait is not, in fact, indicative of their true character. For example, one cannot claim their character is honest under the justification, "I'm honest as the day is long while at work…it just so happens that at home I'm unfaithful to my spouse." This person's trait of honesty is evidently mutable and ephemeral—which, by definition, is discordant with true character. As noted previously, character is deep and virtue-infused.

The second thing to notice about Article 133 is that the "nature of offense" description actually recognizes the "officer's *character* as a gentleman." In so stating, the UCMJ recognizes that character exists and an offense against character is significant and rebarbative. Moreover, the nature of Article 133 is "catch all"—posited law may not satisfactorily encompass all actions that are expected of the military officer (the law can be wrong, absent, and/or underspecified, as noted earlier). But Article 133 exists to ensure the high standard of character can nonetheless remain enforced. The Air Force undoubtedly recognizes that officers must have good character and it is enforceable by way of AFI 1-1 and the UCMJ.

Third, in addition to Article 133, the UCMJ mandates character in that it appeals to prudence. Prudence is a virtue—and an undisputed Cardinal Virtue at that. The four Cardinal Virtues are so categorized (from *cardo*, Latin for "hinge") because all other virtues depend on them: prudence, justice, courage, self-control. As such, prudence is a crucial component of good character formation. Given that the Air Force recognizes that character matters, it is unsurprising, then, that the UCMJ appeals to the "reasonable, prudent person" in determining the grounds for six offenses and defenses (MCM, 2019).[3] This is a blatant and

2 The US Constitution, Article I, Section 8, states that "Congress shall have power…To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;" This is the justification of the UCMJ. See James Madison, et al. (2020). *The Constitution of the United States*. Washington, DC: National Archives. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

3 The six offenses/defenses that employ a "prudent" person are: apprehension (page II-20), use of force in self-defense (II-129), frisking (III-13), dereliction of duty (IV-28), negligence (IV-62), and "mistake of fact as to [sexual] consent." (A21-5). See 2019 Manual for Courts-Martial.

unhesitating stipulation that the military member is expected to be "reasonable and prudent." Indeed, character (or at least the one virtue of prudence) is mandated by the law.

Fourth, we find a mandate for character in the mission statement of the USAF Academy (USAFA). That mission is, "To educate, train, and inspire men and women to become officers of character motivated to lead the United States Air and Space Force in service to our nation."[4] As one might expect, the Academy goes on to note that a component of fulfilling that mission is "developing character and leadership." In 2015, the Academy published the institution's strategic goals. The first goal is to "Focus institutional efforts on character and leadership development" (USAFA Strategic Plan, 2015). Here we see that the concept of character is unapologetically central to the entire mission of this military service academy.

Moreover, USAFA has an entire Center for Character and Leadership Development[5] dedicated to achieving the goal of developing officers of character. This Center enjoys considerable resource support with both staff and budget. This is a testament that the Air Force considers the character development of future officers with due gravitas and of prime importance. Additionally, the Center produces a peer-reviewed journal that "aims to enhance intellectual understanding and empower development of effective, character-based leadership."[6] All this is evidence that the character mandate found in the Academy's mission is taken seriously.

Ethically

The U.S. Armed Forces exist in service to the nation. In both the Oath of Enlistment and the Oath of Office, the servicemember pledges to "support and defend the Constitution...against all enemies, foreign and domestic" (*America's Air Force, A Profession of Arms*, 2015). This service often manifests in national defense and/or support of U.S. interests around the globe. The Constitution, of course, ultimately vests power in the American voter. In this way, then, service to the nation is recognized formally, if not already widely recognized culturally.

Additionally, the American citizenry (by way of Congress) authorizes its military in terms of funding[7] and manning.[8] Military service to civilian control is further recognized in that the Commander in Chief is not a military member, but an elected civilian president. Any authority that the military has, then, is authorized by and in service to the American citizen. In turn, America asks the military to justly apply force—even, at times, and in accordance with lawful authority, to take life. This is a grave and sobering responsibility.

It is fitting, then, that America's military—especially its leaders—have character. Trust between the appliers of force and the authorizers of force is crucial, lest the tenuous arrangement digress into mayhem and chaos. Former Air Force Chief of Staff General Charles Gabriel expressed this concept succinctly: "Integrity is the fundamental premise for military service in a free society. Without integrity, the moral pillars of our military strength, public trust, and self-respect are lost" (*The Challenge of Leadership and Command*, 2006). Much more could be said on this topic, of course. But I think the point is sufficiently established by simply noting: given that the American citizens authorize, fund, staff, empower, and trust their military, it is obviously fitting that that military be deserving of that trust. And the person who deserves that trust is the person who possesses character (as defined by deep, robust habituation of virtue). Such broad realizations among society establish that a character mandate exists, and it exists for ethical reasons.

4 https://www.usafa.edu/about/mission/
5 https://www.usafa.edu/character/
6 https://www.jcldusafa.org

7 Congress gives the power to raise and support an army, but such appropriations are limited to 2 years. See *US Constitution*, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 12.
8 Congress approves certain appointments and promotions.

From Common Sense

As a final point, requiring military officers to have character aligns with common sense. It is reasonable to infer that military officers have some form of training and experience in leading people toward a common goal. This skill may exist in varying degrees of course, but we can assume some leadership ability is present. Second, it is also reasonable to expect that the officers have some sort of training in the application of force. This, too, exists in varying degrees—the infantry or artillery leader's skills are notably different from that of, say, the finance officer or Judge Advocate. But leadership ability and weapons, together with malicious character make for a dangerous trifecta. As of this writing, a military coup is occurring in Myanmar, rendering the government inoperable and in a state of emergency (Cuddy, 2021). An analysis of the legitimacy of the alleged military takeover (ostensibly due to a disputed election) is beyond the scope of this short example. I only note that if a military force is going to be running a country, and that force is without civilian control or any other form of power-limiting authority, one hopes—ardently—that those with both power and guns also have character. And with such an enticing lure of unchecked power, it is all the more important that this good moral character is thoroughly habituated and runs deep. Indeed, the Cardinal Virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and self-control seem crucially needed here. The same analysis would apply to any revolution or other non-peaceful change of power—of which human history has no dearth.

Moreover, we can reflect on common sense and note that character seems all the more crucial when one considers the implications of modern technology and social media. The Internet enables information to flow to and from (almost) any person or agency. Consider that information—and, crucially, *mis*information—can be shared effortlessly and instantaneously. While some agencies may perform due diligence to vet information before they spread it (by way of fact-checking, etc.), it is all too easy for an irresponsible or misled person to disseminate false information. Moreover, social media, which is both prevalent and addictive, provides an easy venue to propagate "memes." A meme often takes a complex, multifaced social/political issue and reduces it to a comic picture and short caption. Such a drastic oversimplification is academically irresponsible at best and, at worst, serves as kerosene to the public's tinderbox of incensed divisiveness. A society inflamed with angry divisiveness is fertile ground for violence—violence that military officers might have a role in, either as a lawful force to restore order … or as vigilantes, themselves caught up in the masses' tsunami of impetuous, unreflective calls to action. All the more reason to have those with leadership and weapons steeped in prudence, justice, courage, and self-control. Our military officers should have character, and it is common sense to mandate such.

Conclusion

This essay concerned the concept of "officers of character." I drew on seminal moral philosophers and offered that "character" is defined as something (1) deep and (2) inextricably linked to virtue. Second, I argued that "officers of character" are needed because law can be morally repugnant, absent, underspecified, or wielded by a wily scoundrel. It is entirely appropriate, then, that our nation does, in fact, mandate character. We find this character mandate manifests legally, ethically, and from common sense.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Mentoring, Reflection, and Student Engagement: Initial Findings from a Liberal Arts Pilot Study

Jim B. Fatzinger, Vanderbilt University

ABSTRACT

A Research Working Group conducted as part of an American Council on Education (ACE) Learning Laboratory (2022) concluded that "mentoring relationships are fundamentally developmental and learner-centered." These relationships are "distinct from other meaningful relationships in that they: (1) Promote academic, social, personal, cultural, and career-focused learning and development in intentional, sustained, and integrative ways, (2) Evolve over time, becoming more reciprocal and mutually beneficial, [and] (3) Are individualized, attending to mentees' developing strengths and shifting needs, mentors' expertise, and all members' identities." In addition, application of Gallup's *"Big Six" College Experiences Linked to Life Preparedness* further supports these findings. This pilot project, a collaboration between the School of Business and School of Education at a selective Liberal Arts Institution, presents the initial findings from the Instructor of Record and Peer Mentors in BUS1110: Gateway to Business courses. These initial findings might be utilized by readers as a way of augmenting and/or enhancing classroom learning

CONTACT Jim B. Fatzinger **jim.fatzinger@vanderbilt.edu**

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applicable in their own courses with the goal of preparing students for what Ted Mitchell, President, ACE in Weaver et al. (2023), refers to as "a world of uncertainty, imperfect information," at times, "unrelenting pressure…" The application of "real world insights" enhances students' intellectual development and classroom pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: Peer Mentoring, Pedagogy, Program Innovation

Introduction

"Leaders today," as related by Ted Mitchell, President, American Council on Education (ACE) in Weaver et al. (2023), face "a world of uncertainty, imperfect information," and at times, "unrelenting pressure ..." Higher education prepares students not only for the known challenges of today but also those not yet identified. In alignment with the *Journal of Character and Leadership Development* mission, the application of student and faculty member "real world insights" enhances intellectual development in the classroom setting. Notably, when our students "commence," they begin the next chapter in their lives at the Commencement Ceremony. This pilot study was intended to prepare students not only with the skills required for their next 4 years of their educational journey, but beyond as well.

Background

The general framework for reporting our pilot study's selected findings is provided by Keeling et al.'s (2008) *Assessment Reconsidered: Institutional Effectiveness for Student Success.* According to the authors, "The framing of assessment practice in higher education begins with understanding the variations among institutions and individuals that create a particular context for every college or university: institutional type, defined needs of learners, and organization functioning." This understanding was grounded in a collaborative effort between a distinguished faculty member in the School of Education and a distinguished Visiting Faculty member in the School of Business. Specifically, the mission of the institution challenges faculty to "nurture a rich intellectual community characterized by active student engagement with a faculty dedicated to excellent teaching and scholarly accomplishment." The pilot study fulfilled the mission of the institution, promoted student success, and met students where they were at in their educational journeys: generally, their second semester of their first year. An Honor Statement formed the core of the community's expectations:

"On my honor, I will uphold the values of...honesty, integrity, responsibility, and respect."

The pilot study: BUS1110 gateway to business

In this Liberal Arts, first-year pilot, selected findings are shared from a BUS1110: Gateway to Business course which by its description is "designed to introduce students to the diverse and exciting world of business, which engages professionals in creative and analytical thinking to solve problems and seize opportunity."

Selected student learning outcomes include students' ability to:

- Describe the role of business in society including ethical, sociological, and global contexts.
- Apply ethical frameworks in business applications and problem solving.
- Develop written and oral communication skills.
- Plan, build, and collaborate in a team environment.
- Analyze individual and group competitive strategies applicable in personal and career decisions.

Instructor

A previous Senior Associate Provost (CASO) and faculty member responsible for designing the "Integrated Educational Experience" along with the Academic Deans Council at the first, 4-year public institution of the 21st century, our work developing common curricular and co-curricular outcomes was recognized with a perfect SACS/COC review of areas in record time – faster than any other institution in the history of SACS/COC. Applying this experience in the classroom as a Visiting Faculty Member at a 4-year, selective Liberal Arts institution, the pilot study represented a collaborative initiative between the School of Business and School of Education. It presented the opportunity to apply "lessons learned" from two decades of classroom experience, administration, and national presentations on teaching and learning outcomes. The pilot further allowed for collaboration across institutional area and expertise sharing.

Re-visiting course learning outcomes

Notably, the course student learning outcomes were not only included in the syllabus but also regularly revisited over the course of the semester. As suggested in Gabelnick et al. (1990), "a variety of factors make the notion of [a] meaningful educational community – the root of the word college [community]..." In BUS1110, our learning was centered around the course learning outcomes. Specifically, the student learning outcomes provided "coherence to the curriculum and provided students and faculty with a sense of shared inquiry" upon which the course was constructed. Students viewed their progress in the course through the lenses of the student learning outcomes as well as the course timeline.

Application of Gallup's "big six" with re-enforcement by peer mentors

Seymour and Lopez (2015), in the inaugural Gallup-Purdue Index, a research study supported by Purdue University and the Lumina Foundation, identified "six experiences linked to preparedness for life outside of college." These experiences included: (1) "at least one professor" who while at college, "made me excited about learning," (2) "cared about me as a person," (3) "encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams," (4) "worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete," (5) "had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom," (6) "was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations." These "Big Six" were incorporated in the classroom learning experience as an innovation to the curriculum and as reported by Gallup, for preparing students for "long-term life outcomes such as employee engagement and well-being." While successful in the first-year learning environment pilot, "lessons learned" by students were re-enforced by Peer Mentors and narrowed the gap between classroom learning and post-graduation expectations of students.

Anticipating: "What's the next question?" in-class reflection

The Instructor of Record (corresponding author) utilized on-going assessments in the form of student reflections, both formally (grades were provided on responses) and informally (responses became part of the course discussions), emphasizing interest in students as a person as well as a learner, encouraging them to pursue their dreams. Responses were incorporated into lecture and allowed students to reflect individually. This approach not only aligned with the findings by Gallup, but also the "best practices" in mentoring contained in the ACE report. Specifically, applying the findings of Goodrich (2021), "reflection is an important part of the learning process for student mentors who can reinforce their prior knowledge." Opportunities for student reflection included:

- When building a team, would you prefer to hire those with more expertise (or talent) than your own or team members that can be further developed?

- Name one way that you might use social media when making a career decision.
- What standards do you use when making a decision that has ethical implications?

These on-going, semester-long reflections/assignments were incorporated in BUS1110 as a semester-long "project" consistent with Gallup's "six experiences linked to preparedness for life outside of college." Furthermore, *In What the Best College Teachers Do,* Bain (2004), challenges that "Many teachers never raise questions; they simply give students answers" suggesting that faculty "create a natural critical learning environment" that leaves students with a question: "What's the next question?" Reflection questions were instrumental to student learning.

Connecting learning outcomes with students' experience

While the course text was utilized as the fundamental source of course content, student reflections demonstrated understanding of content on an on-going basis. These reflections supported student learning outcomes. For example, when students were asked to, "Apply ethical frameworks in business applications and problem solving," they considered ways of applying common frameworks informing decisions (e.g., the newspaper test). After considering these frameworks, one student demonstrated a deeper understanding of the concept, "closing the assessment loop" responding, "no matter what decision you make, you have to live with the consequences."

Assessment and evaluation

Student reflections were incorporated into the course discussion as a form of assessment of student learning. Reflections, while generally voluntary, served as a form of assessment of course content. In class, the reflections revealed a diverse array of student perspectives. Peer Mentors could moderate, reinforce, or challenge responses along with the moderation of the faculty member. Once submitted, on-going feedback could be provided. This feedback as re-enforced utilizing summative evaluations of the student learning included a midterm and final exam. Students who had a provocative or well-written response, could be re-engaged outside the classroom with an email from the Instructor of Record and/or Peer Mentor facilitating learning in-between face-to-face meetings. Specifically, weekly quizzes and reflections accounted for 20% of the overall BUS1110 grade and the midterm/final exams accounted for 20%, respectively.

Self-reported study evaluation

"Peer Mentoring," as defined in Goodrich (2021) "is a multi-faceted and complex instructional technique comprised of different learning arrangements…" The Peer Mentor(s), in BUS1110, were selected as either current or previous semester Strategic Management fourth year students who could share their insights, work with peers, and/or lead course discussions. One Peer Mentor in BUS1110, for example, completed a successful internship and accepted a professional opportunity with the firm following graduation. The Peer Mentor was a positive role model for students. When invited to provide feedback on their pilot experiences, Peer Mentors reported:

- "The best part about my Peer Mentor experience was being able to connect with first-year students that I otherwise wouldn't have interacted with much. I think it was impactful for the first-year students to see where they might be and what opportunities they might have awaiting them at the end of their Elon journey."
- "The best part of my Peer Mentor experience was getting to share my experiences with those interested and developing relationships with the students who did engage with us as resources, as well as developing a relationship with the other mentor and the professor in both classes. I have a natural

desire to want to help those around me succeed, and being an example, to share my experiences and give my advice – I am super grateful to have been offered an opportunity to help these future leaders succeed in their next 4 years at the institution that has given me so much."

Peer Mentors also reported the following opportunities for improvement:

- Peer Mentors were not paid and yet, took pride in student engagement and recommended selection as early as possible to plan for the semester.
- Student Peer Mentors requested Learning Management System access as appropriate, including access to the course timeline in advance of course participants.
- Peer Mentor feedback also included the opportunity of meeting with students in as many ways as possible concluding, "In reality, peer mentors are really not that far removed from the same spot as the mentees themselves are in. This allows for a unique and positive dynamic between the mentor and mentees that needs to be taken all advantage of."

Feedback from students on Peer Mentor participation included:

- "One thing that I would tell our Peer [Mentor] would be thank you for waking up at 8:00 a.m. voluntarily and giving feedback when needed."
- "Good luck at your job, you will crush it. Thank you for spending this semester with us."
- "...thank you for the insight you gave us."
- "...The real world can be scary, but if you stay true to yourself you will be fine..."

The initial evaluation by Peer Mentors may be utilized by readers as a way of augmenting and/or enhancing classroom learning applicable in their academic communities or respective courses. The feedback has applicability across institution types, academic communities, and pedagogical approaches.

Conclusion and continued study

A Research Working Group conducted as part of an ACE Learning Laboratory (2022) concluded that "mentoring relationships are fundamentally developmental and learner-centered." These relationships are "distinct from other meaningful relationships in that they: (1) Promote academic, social, personal, cultural, and career-focused learning and development in intentional, sustained, and integrative ways, (2) Evolve over time, becoming more reciprocal and mutually beneficial, (3) Are individualized, attending to mentees' developing strengths and shifting needs, mentors' expertise, and all members' identities." These findings, connected nicely to the pilot study's design.

Well-aligned with the mission of the institution, the semester-long, on-going reflection and course Peer Mentoring, complemented each other. Applying Gallup's "six experiences linked to preparedness for life outside of college" further supported the pedagogical approaches. Future manuscripts should consider additional pedagogical techniques applied in assessment and specifically, how Exemplars were incorporated in the course. The "lessons learned" are reported and recommended for their applicability across institution types, fields, and subject areas.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Using the High Order Performance Framework for Effective Leadership

James Davis, Good Athlete Project

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Leaders, does your behavior match your goal? For those interested in leadership and character development, the first task is to build awareness and intentionality around the direction in which you hope to lead. Identify a goal. Only then can you create a culture, articulate a plan, and install feedback and enforcement mechanisms to align subsequent behaviors. In doing so, remember that the human condition is complex. As a leader, are you aware of *all* the components that impact high order performance outcomes? Are you creating situations that give your people a strong opportunity to succeed, or are you subconsciously degrading their top end performance? Effective leaders are not always perfect, but they must be aware of the myriad contributing factors at play. Effective leaders clarify objectives and thoughtfully craft environments. They set their people up for success.

Even with clear objectives, leadership misalignments have unfortunately been normalized. We create systems that hinge on immediate gratification, then wonder why work ethic is not stronger. We serve students unhealthy food, then wonder why they act out or nod off during the second half of the school day (Wiles et al., 2009). A father might say he cares for his family more than anything, but is cranky and distant when he comes home. At the same dinner table, a teenager who loves his mom might be short and unintentionally cruel. Coaches create cultures that do not serve their team's ambitions and infighting among teammates (who allegedly share a purpose) is all too common. Where do these misalignments come from?

CONTACT James Davis jim@goodathleteproject.com

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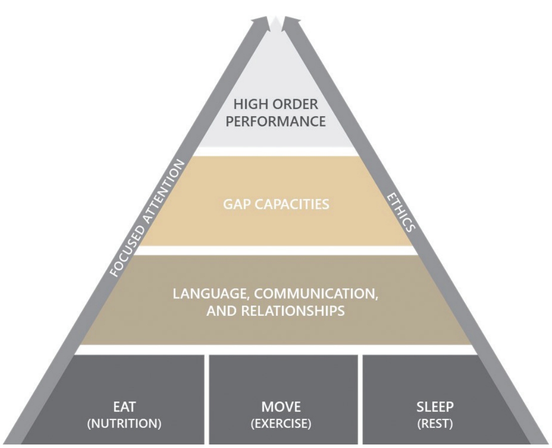
One tool that has been developed to help leaders set their teams up for success is the High Order Performance (HOP) Framework (Figure 1). It helps leaders evaluate situations and guide their teams toward positive outcomes. The tool, created at Harvard University, has been used to evaluate essential components of performance and maintain awareness of how those components interact (Davis, 2023). The framework fits into a category referred to as a content model. Notable content models include the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework for social emotional learning (Borowski, 2019) and Abraham Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs which, like the HOP Framework, also highlights the essential role of physiological requirements in the pursuit of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). A primary differentiating factor in the HOP Framework occurs at the "Bedrock" level, highlighted by three categories: Eat (nutrition), Move (physical activity), and Sleep (rest/recovery). Too often, similar frameworks neglect the role of the body in high level cognitive processing and overall performance. This framework highlights the impact of the physical state on cognitive, social, emotional, and what we refer to as "high-order performance" capacities.

Figure 1
High Order Performance Framework



The HOP framework is a content model intended to support performance across domains. It can be used for an individual, a team of people, an organization, and at the level of public health. It offers the user a research-based, experience-validated, usable, and effective tool after years of field research, and battle-testing the approach with more than 40 state and national championship teams as well as leaders from a variety of professional fields (Davis, 2023).

The model was developed with the recognition that, even with clear intentions, leaders will occasionally misunderstand the components of human behavior and make decisions that do not serve their end goal. During a Good Athlete Project engagement with a Chicago-area wrestling team, we worked with a successful coach who was trying to add another state championship to his resume. The goal-directed coach had created a situation where certain outcomes had been unintentionally prioritized over variables that limited the likelihood of those outcomes...without awareness of the incongruency. The HOP Framework allowed for thoughtful assessment of the situation, behavioral alignment with the motives of the coach, and empowerment for more effective leadership.

Good Intentions

The coach started practice at 5:30am. He believed these early mornings would teach toughness and discipline. The team responded well to the challenge and 4:30am wakeup calls became the norm. With puffy eyes and heavy feet, they would stroll in, tired but ready to work. This part of his approach was successful. His team was tough.

"But they're just not listening," said the coach, referring to the fact that the students did not seem to be retaining information from practice. Whether it was a new skill or a logistical note, like when to be on the bus for an upcoming tournament, details did not seem to stick. He also noted that, although team discipline was high, many of the athletes were having a tough time making weight.

"John," captain of the wrestling team, was dedicated. He got out of his car at 5:10 am in the winter dark, put his hood up and braved the wind and snow on his walk toward the practice facility. He and his teammates nodded to each other but did not talk much, still groggy, but determined. Once they had all assembled in the wrestling room, which was sweltering with radiator heat, the coach blew a whistle and they automatically entered a pre-practice warmup. They trained hard. John was a leader, challenging, encouraging, and listening intently to cues from the head coach.

This morning, the team had to do a few extra accountability drills at the end of practice because, the night before, a few of them were late to the bus heading to a dual meet across town. "Honestly," John admitted, "[the athletes who were late] care a lot and just forgot." He was echoing one of the coach's concerns that, more often than normal, information did not seem to stick with this group. While there were countless possible factors at play, sleep deprivation was an immediate concern.

Sleep deprivation, or what some researchers refer to as prolonged wakefulness, directly impacts "attentional functions, working memory, and long-term memory" (Alhola & Polo-Kantola, 2007). Especially on mornings like these when, after the previous night's match, the athletes did not return to campus until 10:30 pm, sleep deprivation was not possible, it was pre-determined. Many acknowledged, including John, that after commuting from campus to home, then eating and showering, the earliest they could be in bed was midnight. At best. With alarms set before 5:00 am, the schedule made sleep deprivation an absolute outcome. The schedule was impacting the athletes' attention and memory.

The coach also noted a secondary concern about athletes making weight. Wrestlers compete in classes determined by bodyweight. In order to compete in the 170 lb weight class, for example, the wrestler has to weigh-in on the day of competition to confirm that their bodyweight is true to their division. This often requires disciplined nutritional practices. These guys had discipline. Discipline was not enough. Sleep deprivation was again the suspected culprit.

Sleep deprivation modulates ghrelin and leptin, two key hormones responsible for hunger, satiation, and what sort of food people crave (Taheri et al., 2004). In a study of more than 1,000 participants, sleep deprivation reduced leptin, raised ghrelin, and correlated strongly with weight gain and increased BMI (body-mass index). In other words, chronic sleep deprivation was unintentionally impeding athletes' ability to maintain their desired body weight. Turning down a Snicker's bar was not impossible, but the schedule-induced sleep deprivation was stacking the deck against the desired outcome.

The schedule, while well-intentioned (making sure the team was tough and psychologically prepared), seemed to be inadvertently setting the athletes up for failure. During our post-practice debrief and professional development session, we realized that something had to be adjusted – either the schedule, or the expectations. We discussed the HOP framework to guide self- and system-level reflection as well as future strategy. To ensure receptivity with the coach and his staff, we reminded them that coaches, parents, schools, corporations, even governments routinely experience these types of well-intended misalignments (Kerr, 1995). Forgive yourselves and be willing to reevaluate, we suggested. After all, the challenge for this team was not a matter of discipline, toughness, or intellect. Physiological processes were set into motion which, due to significant sleep deprivation, contributed predictably to certain outcomes (toughness, mindset) and degraded others (attention, cognition, body weight). The challenge was to step back and rearrange the system, with a more wholistic approach. Once aware of the situation, he altered the practice schedule, and now has the HOP Framework taped up above his desk.

Levels of Performance

Understanding should precede problem-solving It is the only place to start. Effective leadership requires an understanding of one's team as a system. Leadership expert Lex Sisney defines human systems as "a series of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole" (Sisney, 2013, p. 26). He goes on to note that this applies to individual physical systems as well, which are comprised of biological processes, emotions, relationships, and other factors. Understanding how the individual system operates can provide leaders with greater insight into that individual's impact on the group. If one member of a team is being rude and impatient, rubbing others the wrong way and unnecessarily barking at subordinates, then the group might falter. That behavior must go. But understanding that the person is running on 2 h of sleep, or that the person has just lost a loved one back home, gives the leader insight into effective and sustainable behavioral management. After all, that sleep-deprived person "is a system with a fixed amount of available energy" (Sisney, 2013, p. 29). When energy is depleted, skills falter. A full understanding of HOP Framework components provides leaders with a powerful tool for effective problem-solving.

The levels of the HOP Framework are divided for ease of use, but they are not static. The framework aligns with the concept of dynamic psychology, which acknowledges that "mental experience and behavior [is] a function of the interaction of motivational, affective, and cognitive variables of different degrees of intensity or strength," which exists to counter a lower-level understanding of human behavior through simple descriptions and face-value assessments (Wolitzky, 2010; Woodworth, 1930). Humans are complex. Leaders should work toward a full understanding of what drives their team's behavior.

Just like the well-intentioned wrestling coach, leaders can conduct similar evaluations on individual and organizational levels. What would happen if the coach were regularly sleep deprived? Everyone in the school? Everyone in the city? This is not hyperbole. We are, unfortunately, a sleep deprived nation with effects seen... (Davis, 2019).

HOP Level

At the top of the framework is the High Order Performance level. This is where the user is asked to articulate a goal and envision what their own performance would have to look like to achieve it. HOP takes its name from, among other concepts, Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom created a system of classification beginning with "lower-order" skills like knowledge retention, comprehension, and application. The skills increased in complexity toward "higher-order" skills like analysis, synthesis, evaluation and eventually, creation (Adams, 2015; Bloom, 1956). Arthur Lewis and David Smith suggest that higher order thinking occurs "when a person takes new information and information stored in memory and interrelates and/or rearranges and extends this information to achieve a purpose or find possible answers in perplexing situations" (Lewis & Smith, 1993, p. 136). To engage in complex problem solving, creativity, and innovation, higher-order thinking is necessary (Anderson et al., 2001).

The name also alludes to ambition and top-tier performance standards. Menial tasks can be accomplished without considering the framework. While it can be used to navigate a variety of pursuits, the HOP Framework is best suited for the ambitious and goal-directed.

Often, the first step in utilizing the Framework includes the identification of a goal – a championship, a promotion, a relationship outcome, or any of the essential tasks required of an Air Force pilot. Once that HOP outcome has been identified, one can evaluate whether or not systems and behaviors align with achieving it.

By sitting atop the Framework, the HOP level highlights the fact that elite performance outcomes are built over time and require the onboarding of lower-order skills. Talent aside, the most exceptional conflict negotiator will require a more basic understanding of language and grammar in order to relay their ideas. Herman Melville needed the lower-order skills of grammar and spelling to achieve the higher-level innovation that is *Moby Dick*. Even Leonardo DaVinci needed to mix paint and clean a brush before he could bring the Mona Lisa to life; in fact, he did not paint his most celebrated piece until he was fifty-one years old, onboarding a plethora of lower-order skills in order to create his highest outcomes.

GAP Level

The gap level highlights skills that help bridge the gap between lower-order processes (remembering, understanding, and certain degrees of application) to successful high order processes like analysis, synthesis, and creation. The advancement does not happen automatically. In order to bridge the gap, utilizing skills such as resilience, toughness, and grit can prove advantageous. The entire field of social emotional learning (SEL) fits into this level, as we continually emphasize skills like emotion regulation (De Neve et al., 2023), deliberate practice (Ericsson, 2007), and practical empathy (Davis, 2022). Certain skills are almost universally beneficial, while others can be specifically identified to align with the desired HOP outcome. For relationship outcomes, empathy might be prioritized; to finish an important project on a deadline, grit and resilience might be necessary. Effective use of skills at this level often depend on the levels below it (Anderson et al., 2001).

LCR Level

Language, Communication, and Relationships impact performance and, bold as it may sound, the nature of one's existence. How we relate to others and our constantly evolving environment is central to any pursuit. Communication is so important that it is, perhaps, our first skill; both child and parent are in tune at the moment of the first cry. As we develop, the language we use to communicate, relate, and even talk to ourselves (self-talk) has dramatic impacts on the way we experience the world (Kim et al, 2021). Cognitive and dialectical behavioral therapies use language to navigate intense emotions, social relationships, and steer self-directed behavior (Panos et al, 2014). Personal mantras are increasingly common in performance psychology and improving outcomes. LCR impacts motivation and connection. It creates the gameplan and allows for adaptation. It allows us to share ideas like the ones in this article. Language matters.

Additionally, skills across the framework depend on skills at the LCR level. Growth Mindset, for example, made famous by Stanford professor Carol Dweck, is an effective tool for long-term success (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Growth mindset depends on the way one names an obstacle and frames their approach to navigating the challenge. This requires a deliberate cultivation of self-talk and, often, effective communication with other stakeholders (LCR functions). When a leader tells her team that the mission they face is impossible, and publicly demeans the commanding officer who has put them in such a disadvantageous position, that will impact mindsets and subsequent behaviors. Conversely, if the language that leader used was positive, they would have the power to induce effective nonconscious predispositions that directly align with a shared goal, since they have created "mental representations... associated with positive affect," (Custers and Aarts, 2005). The power of behavioral priming is real; the way we name challenges has an impact on the way we behave in their presence (Weingarten et al, 2016). Even the act of motivation, a task required of all leaders, depends on alignment with the motives of stakeholders. Without curiosity, relationships, and effective communication, a shared motive is difficult to establish. The importance of intentionally developing skills at this level cannot be overstated. Leaders should practice and share methods on effective use of language, communication, and relationships with their teams. They should recognize its importance and set institutional standards for effective interaction. And keep in mind that it is all influenced by Bedrock.

EMS Level (Bedrock)

The nuances of human experience are irrelevant if the body's fundamental needs are not met. Consider that the evolved outer cortex of the brain, capable of designing and constructing spacecrafts, evolved *after* the limbic system, which is responsible for our deeper and more essential needs (Rakic, 2009). On a biological level, emotion, hunger, and sleep-drive come first. Higher-level outcomes evolved over time to ease the procurement of those basic needs. When needs are not met, the body might deprioritize high level cognition, empathy, and creativity to respond to the physiological alarm bells (Holding et al, 2019; Steinberg et al., 1997). After all, there is no need to contemplate string theory and muse on the nature of the universe when one is on all fours in the desert, desperate for a drop of water.

For this reason, we can most effectively shift resources to higher levels if the limbic foundation is settled. This is most true over time. We can push through sleep deprivation temporarily. We can fast temporarily. But to standardize these physiologically degrading behaviors pre-determines the limited and stunted pursuit of our higher capacities (much like the impact of the wrestling coach having early practices).

There is a growing body of research in psychophysiology, which studies the interrelationship between body and mind (Schell & Dawson, 2001). While the research behind this concept is still evolving, an aware leader should be able to recognize that a malnourished, sedentary, sleep-deprived human does not stand its best chance to fulfill its potential. Effective leaders will take note of the body's role in all other processes. As leadership expert Dr. Alan Watkins explains, "internal physiological awareness… facilitates emotional coherence," and notes that the "body is always playing a tune… problems occur when we're deaf to the tune we are playing," (Watkins, 2013, pg. 12). Leaders should build this awareness within themselves and continue that awareness as they construct systems and expectations for those within their charge.

Can we build psychological resilience to endure a degraded physiological state? Can you go to work and power through on 4 h of sleep? Of course. One should be tough, resilient, and in control of self-talk to perform in the face of that challenge. It happens all the time. But it should not be the norm, and it should not be imposed by leaders who truly want the best for those in their charge. Leaders have an opportunity to reflect on the distinction between surviving and thriving. With clear direction and a compliant team, we all have the potential to lead people from point A to point B. The most thoughtful, effective leaders will work to create situations where their people may grow and thrive, and ultimately achieve their highest potential.

An Integrated Approach to Empowerment

We must all be wary of any one-stop-shop, silver bullet, or social meme that begins with "the key to success is ________." If a key to success was even possible, it would be a concept, not an action. It would not be namable in a soundbite, but require a wholistic view of the environment, the self, and as many contextual factors as one is able to understand.

Leaders should be willing to go up and down the Framework, using it as a guide rather than a prescription. Notice how its components influence one another. While someone might have built the skills utilized by elite performers, a malnourished, sedentary, sleep-deprived version of themselves might not have the ability to access them. In that state, emotion regulation would be impacted alongside their ability to creatively solve problems (Saghir, 2018). Sleep-deprivation might have impacted their mental health and ability to maintain optimism in the face of adversity (Davis, 2021). Their physiological state would have limited their ability to access previously developed skills. Skills at any level will be either enhanced or degraded by the physical state of the user. When the Bedrock foundation is solid, they would theoretically have full access.

Antonio Damasio taught us that "mind derives from the entire organism as an ensemble" (Damasio, 1994). The human condition is complex. All contributing components impact the whole. If that sounds like a lot of work, it is. Or it can feel like it at first. Like any sort of training, working toward wholistic understanding gets easier over time, especially when the benefits become clear.

When outcomes do not align with intention, when performance falters and frustrations rise, it is easy to feel stuck. The HOP Framework provides a way for leaders to help teams become unstuck. Use it to self-check. Check the systems you are creating and those systems within which you operate. Focus on one level at a time, then work to understand how they interact with each other. Focus on it. Change it. And share your strategies along the way. The most powerful form of leadership includes empowering others to effectively take ownership of their outcomes. Leaders, does your behavior match your goal? We should all be able to say yes.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Reflections on Starting and Growing a Leadership Podcast

Scott J. Allen, John Carroll University

ABSTRACT

This essay explores my experience with podcasts as a medium for leader development. The paper delves into podcasts as tools for leadership learning and provides insights for potential podcasters. Challenges are discussed, along with the benefits derived, and the essay concludes by highlighting several themes that have emerged with guests from around the globe.

Keywords: Leadership Learning, Podcasting, Leader Development, Curriculum, Instructional Strategies

Introduction

Like many others, I had some nervous energy in March of 2020 with the shutdowns relating to COVID-19. I was home with family, had some extra time and started brainstorming the path forward. I knew I would be teaching remotely for some time so I turned to podcasts as an instructional strategy—a convenient and novel way for my graduate students to consume information and learn from some of the best thought leaders. However, I discovered an opportunity because I could not find podcasts featuring the leadership scholars and practitioners I hoped to highlight. So, I turned to YouTube and began exploring videos on podcasting and what it would take to start my own.

I quickly learned there are several considerations—format, artwork, intro/outro music, requisite technology (e.g., microphone), guest recruitment, marketing techniques, and inclusion on various platforms (e.g., Apple Podcasts, Spotify). The platform I chose (and there are several) was Buzzsprout, and it has been a wonderful resource. They provide a full-service platform from educational videos to user-friendly tutorials on everything a would-be podcaster

CONTACT Scott J. Allen sallen@jcu.edu

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needs to know. In addition to the tutorials, my eyes were opened to just how popular the medium has become since its inception in 2001. The landscape is intriguing. For instance, 53% of Americans have tuned into a podcast in the last month, and roughly 90 million are monthly podcast listeners (Buzzsprout, 2023).

In this brief essay, I highlight my journey with the medium. I will begin by exploring why podcasts are an effective vehicle for learning leadership and offer several observations for readers considering starting a podcast. I continue with some of the challenges I have experienced and will share the many benefits. I conclude by sharing some of the common threads and themes that have emerged as I interact with guests from across the globe.

Why Podcasts as a Vehicle for Learning?

Podcasts are important for educators interested in adding on-demand options for learners. Like documentaries, films or TED Talks, learners can listen to (or view) the podcast at their convenience across several platforms (e.g., television, smartphone, iPad/tablet, computer). When I began *Phronesis: Practical Wisdom for Leaders*,[1] I knew I would need a medium other than Zoom for my students to learn and engage with content. In addition, podcasts complement learning across course delivery options (e.g., in-person, hybrid, synchronous and asynchronous online courses). As a result, they align with any medium of delivery, and I have found them to be extremely durable.

Likewise, podcasts allow learners to make traditionally "unproductive" time (e.g., riding in a car) a venue for learning. Learners can multi-task and learn while running, working out, gardening, or cooking. Moreover, the content is accessible to all—regardless of location. Learners worldwide have access to the content, and the medium fosters accessibility because most podcasts are low/no-cost. Learners can access the world's greatest minds—in essence, learning and access are democratised. Moreover, podcasting offers learners timely and cutting-edge information. A listener can gain real-time insights into the latest findings of scholars and does not have to wait for the content to make its way through the peer view process in academia. Academics can discuss their findings in real time.

Starting a Podcast: Some Considerations

Several items are worthy of consideration for those interested in starting a podcast. Firstly, what is the purpose, and what need does the podcast fill? Clarity on this dimension can help hone in on the need they hope to fill in the marketplace. For me, the purpose was to give listeners practical wisdom on leadership. My goal was to speak with academics, political leaders, founders, organizational leaders, and even students about how they think about leadership.

Along with purpose and need is the question of who is the target audience? I needed clarification on this and admittedly could have planned better. Most of my interviews have been with individuals within or adjacent to academia. However, I knew there needed to be an academically grounded outlet to hear from scholars *and* practitioners and was not able to find outlets that did that besides the Journal of Character & Leadership Development.[2] I capitalized on this void in the podcasting marketplace, and as a result, most of my listeners are academics, consultants, students, and to a lesser degree, practitioners. The practitioner audience is an area of focus—increasing the base of practitioners among guests *and* listeners.

Another consideration for potential podcasters is length, format, and cadence. There are short-form

1 https://practicalwisdom.buzzsprout.com/

2 https://www.jcldusafa.org

podcasts (30 min) and several long-form (3+ h). Also, there are story-based podcasts (e.g., true crime), monologue or solo format (e.g., an expert shares their wisdom), interview-style podcasts, highly produced narratives, and panel-based discussions or roundtables. I quickly landed on an interview format and often aimed to conclude within 45 min. Just enough time to complete a commute (for most), complete a workout, or get dinner on the table. A shorter format also makes editing more realistic because this dimension can be one of the most time-intensive aspects of the work. The host must decide from the beginning if they will edit out long pauses, awkward phrasing, and excessive space fillers. Ultimately, this is where I landed. I wanted my guests to sound their best, so I worked hard to edit each episode carefully. However, this takes time, and each 45-min episode can take upwards of 2 h to edit. This is one reason I have also chosen not to videotape the episodes. I may someday, but it would require a different approach—I would need to let guests know that whatever is recorded goes live. It feels like there is less control with this live approach (unless one has an extensive production budget and a video editing team). Thus, I landed on a short-form, semi-structured interview format released weekly.

Another consideration is equipment. Initially, I thought I would need to purchase extensive equipment. And while there was an investment to get up and running, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that it only required a few hundred dollars. I purchased a $150 microphone and an ethernet chord and used my Zoom account to record the discussion. As mentioned, I also used Buzzsprout, which helped me get the audio to all the major hosting platforms (e.g., Spotify, Apple Podcasts). Artwork, music, and front/back matter were also considerations. Several videos I watched said not to overthink these dimensions, so I did not. My daughters recorded the intro/outro, I had a friend design the logo, and I was ready to invite guests!

What are the Challenges?

There have been several challenges in this 3-year project that are worthy of discussion. The most challenging three are sound, time, and marketing. While I have invested in some basic equipment like a microphone and an ethernet cable to ensure a solid internet connection, many guests still need to do the same. Like the bad Zoom meeting from the early days of COVID-19, some guests still need to invest in quality solutions for sound and connectivity. This makes it difficult to make *them* sound their best, and in some cases, I have had to remove entire segments because the connectivity could have improved. While I prepare guests for these requirements, a good number still enter Zoom unprepared.

Another challenge is time. In the early days of the pandemic, 5–6 h a week on a podcast episode (e.g., recording, editing, cleaning the transcript, developing the show notes) was manageable for me. However, I recently reached a point where I could not do it alone, so I recruited some talented people to help with editing and transcription. Interestingly, several new automations have been introduced to streamline the process further. For instance, software can adjust audio levels, suggest episode titles, complete the transcript, break the discussion into chapters, and suggest show notes. Some platforms will even help you find sponsors and monetize your podcast if you want subscribers.

Building an audience is the third challenge. It has been a slow and steady endeavor to build the base of listeners. On average, the podcast has about 4,500 listeners each month and is rated among the top 3% of all podcasts (www.listennotes.com). At the time of this writing, the podcast is just shy of 100,000+ downloads. One of the challenges for podcasters is that very few people stick with it long enough to gain traction. Good content, consistency, and longevity are key components to success. More than 190 episodes of *Phronesis* have been released, and it continues to grow gradually—the chart is a slow slope moving "up and to the right." To build awareness, I have partnered with the International Leadership Association, which has served as a wonderful partner in securing guests and an international base of listeners. In addition, I post weekly episode announcements in several areas of LinkedIn, post to a listserve, and reach out to a list of about 3,000 individuals. Another growth mechanism involves co-hosts and their networks—One of my most successful series of episodes was with Dr. Jonathan Reams. We interviewed many authors from a book he wrote about his interest in adult development and leadership.

A final challenge, and it is more subtle, is my comfort about putting myself "out there." I am always concerned that I will inadvertently offend, disturb or cause controversy. My guests and I discuss nuanced topics that are not always in my area of expertise. I try approaching these conversations with a "beginner's mind," but I imagine that could be frustrating for some listeners. Another dimension of putting myself out there is the self-promotion dimension of the work. This does not come naturally, nor does the prospect of centering myself. However, for the podcast to grow, I need to build awareness and stay on the radar of potential listeners. One of the ways I do this is to focus on the content and the guest and use that to help drive awareness.

What are the Benefits?

The podcast has been the most rewarding professional project I have undertaken and has many benefits. However, I will focus on four themes that have emerged for me. These benefits can be placed into four primary domains—relationships/networking, professional growth, finding my contribution, and casting light on guests. First, I have built so many wonderful relationships because of *Phronesis*. Guests I met online have turned into multi-episode conversations and real-life talks over coffee. Likewise, some of these relationships have led to writing projects, and others have led to workshops or in-person consulting engagements. As a result of these 200+ conversations from the podcast, I have built my network and have a much stronger command of the landscape of leadership scholars.

Secondly, without a doubt, I have grown more professionally than I ever would have imagined. I would have told anyone I knew "a lot" about leadership in March 2020. And in some ways, I did; but now I know how little I knew. The podcast has profoundly systemized my learning. Each week I speak with an expert on a topic, and I must be "on game" and ready to be present for the conversation. Truth be told, there have been a few "deep end" moments – but that is okay. That is how I know I am learning and growing, and that feels so good. A wonderful gift is that I get to learn alongside listeners. These conversations are helping me synthesize my perspective on leadership. As leadership scholars and practitioners, we should all be in the mode of lifelong learning and knowledge expansion.

I truly enjoy writing, but mostly with a practitioner's eye, versus wanting to excel in the top academic journals. This left me uncertain of my "place" as an academic. While I have published in strong journals, written textbooks, edited special issues, and won best paper awards, that is not "home" to me. It is not where my natural energy lies. The podcast has helped me find my voice and the space to contribute to the community. And hopefully, as listeners engage and learn with me, they also make better sense of this grand puzzle called leadership and leader development. We all have our role in the process, and the podcast has helped me to solidify mine.

A fourth benefit is that I have an opportunity to shine a light on the incredible work of others. Not only the academics that so many of us have learned from but the practitioners as well—the individuals doing *the work*. I think of Sara Safari, a woman who has climbed the seven summits and is helping women in need worldwide. Or Funto Boroffice, founder/CEO of award-winning Chanja

Datti, a waste collection and recycling social enterprise dedicated to transforming the waste in her environment to value and creating jobs. I think about Doug Keil, who represented the United States in the 1980 Winter Paralympics, won 2 Gold Medals in para-alpine skiing, and founded *Challenge Alaska*. And, of course, Sara Saeed Khurram, M.D., who is digitizing healthcare in Pakistan—a country where upwards of half its citizens have never seen a physician. It has been a pleasure to learn from and to amplify their messages.

Threads and Themes

A mentor whom I met through the podcast often laments that leadership is a field is a Wild West of random topics, incoherent narratives, poorly developed ideas, and continues to encourage me to keep working to make sense of it all. I am on that journey, and it has become a purpose of mine to synthesize the themes across various conversations. So, at almost 200 episodes, here are some items for consideration as we continue to explore and learn.

I have had Dr. Barbara Kellerman (Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School) on the podcast three times, and it is always a lively conversation. She discusses the leadership triad—leaders, followers, and contexts. And in many ways, the themes of my discussions nicely fit into these three domains. One could also think of them as levels—individual, group, contextual.

First, at the individual level, Dr. Douglas Lindsay (United States Air Force Academy) shared during our conversation on a podcast a thought from Dr. Robert Hogan (Hogan Assessments) and Robert Kaiser (Kaiser Leadership Solutions) that "who we are is how we lead" (2005). That floored me— "Who you are is how you lead." As my guest Dr, Mike Mascolo (Merrimack College) suggested, "Each person is an infinity," so an entire world is underneath the Hogan & Kaiser quote. For instance, I have had several conversations that rest on the notion that leadership is not sustainable without character, integrity, and a solid understanding of one's values. However, we can add lived experience, personality, maturity level (i.e., developmental level), knowledge/expertise, and several other ingredients underneath that umbrella. So fundamentally, if you are in a position of authority, who are you? As my guest Chip Souba, MD suggested, this personal growth work is a "mountain without a top." What are you doing to *become* a better version of yourself *every* day? What's your system for achieving this objective? If others are in our care, they deserve it. So, at the individual level, what are we doing to prepare to be the "who" we want (and need) to be as leaders?

Another theme throughout my conversations is the followership or the "partnership" that is the next level of our conversation. Once the individual interfaces with others to move toward a better future or some other cause, how are they approaching the work? As Dr. Ron Riggio (Claremont McKenna) said in an episode, "Leaders don't do leadership, 'leadership' is co-created by leaders and followers working together." Think about that for a minute. How leaders engage in their work with others matters. People like Dr. Ira Chaleff (Executive Coaching & Consulting Associates), Dr. Barbara Kellerman, and Sharna Fabiano (Author) continue highlighting followers and their critical role in the conversation. We need to understand better how leaders *and* followers co-create a space where the best work can be done. This is an area of exploration for several scholars who view leadership as much more than just an individual contribution.

A third theme is the many contextual shifts we have witnessed in recent years. Context is an important part of Kellerman's leadership triad. There are so many to name, but a few that took up bandwidth were COVID-19, hybrid work, supply chain, hiring, remote teaming, social justice, complexity, and digitization. These contextual shifts have profoundly impacted how leaders approach the work. And many of these topics serve as ripe opportunities for young scholars to explore as we work to understand better how each will impact organizational life. While we have seen several contextual shifts in a short period, these seem to represent the "work" of leadership. Whether it is a regional banking crisis, a war in Ukraine, or crippling political tensions, leadership is increasingly complex, and we have an opportunity to help practitioners navigate the "whitewater," as management scholar Dr. Peter Vaill would say. Contextual shifts are the norm. *How* leaders think about the work matters greatly. To simplify, are the problems technical or adaptive (e.g., Heifetz & Linsky, 2017) or, put another way, simple, complicated, complex, or chaotic (e.g., Snowden & Boone, 2007). How are we as leaders moving to understand our context more fully?

Conclusion

In short, podcasting has been a highlight of my career. It has helped me find my voice and contribute to the conversation of leadership and leader development in a productive and unique way. As you consider whether podcasting is for you, I hope the above thoughts will help guide your decision. While I love *Phronesis*, I want to underscore other wonderful podcasts on leadership (and followership) that can help you decide. They are—*The Leadership Educator Podcast, WorkLife with Adam Grant, Leadership Lab* and *Lead & Follow*. Each provides a wonderful contribution to the conversation.

In one of my most memorable episodes, former Major League Baseball pitcher Josh Lindblom shared his journey of attending undergraduate and graduate collegiate courses *while playing*. He had so many pearls of wisdom in the episode, but this quote nicely summarized my thinking about this project. Josh said, "I'm a work in progress and not where I want to be. But that doesn't mean that I stop working." Exactly!

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Continuing to Serve

Chris Cassidy & Kevin Basik, National Medal of Honor Museum

Interviewed By: Douglas Lindsay

Lindsay: Do you both mind sharing a bit about your background, your goals with the National Medal of Honor Museum[1] and the Institute, and why you are involved?

Cassidy: I'm a 1993 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. In my junior year, I was an exchange cadet at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) and had a really awesome semester in Colorado Springs. One big takeaway from that was that all cadets and midshipmen are really the same people. The floor that your feet are on might be different, the walls are slightly different, but the culture, the humor, and the just get through it together type thing were all similar. I remember walking away literally thinking that the "Air Force is the same as Navy and then it's the same as West Point. It's just a different uniform and wrapper around each individual person."

After the Naval Academy, I spent 11 years in the SEAL teams, and during that time, I met the first Navy SEAL to become an astronaut. He inspired me to apply and try. Up to that point, I thought you had to be an aviator to be an astronaut. In fact, I didn't even think that there was a path for me. Through his guidance and mentorship, I applied in 2000 and didn't get selected. Then, 4 years later in 2004, I reapplied and got selected. I was at NASA for 17 and a half years and had three space flights. During the last of those in 2020 on the Space Station, I knew it would be the end of my government career, and I was going to retire.

All three of us have gotten to that point where we're like, "Okay, I conceptually understand leaving the government and hanging my uniform up. But what then?" I had just come home from space, and it was in that process of time where my friend reached out to me, who happens to be on the Board of the Medal of Honor Museum and asked if I would be interested in working with the project. And to be honest with you, at first I was like, "Well, maybe. But I don't know what direction I want to go." But then, I learned a little bit more, I met the people, I came here to site, and just felt like a really good fit. It just felt like a cool way to serve the country and continue serving the country, just without a uniform on. That was the summer of 2021, and I became the President and CEO. At night, I'd go home and go, "I don't know how to be a President and CEO." While there are books, actually, that help, there's nothing

1 https://mohmuseum.org/

CONTACT Chris Cassidy & Kevin Basik ccassidy@mohmuseum.org & kbasik@mohmuseum.org

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like flying straight and level like doing it. You can read the book on how to fly straight and level, but then you have to get in the airplane and actually make the plane go straight and level.

In that process, getting to know the Medal of Honor recipients, I was excited about it. But then once, I don't know how Kevin feels, but I imagine it's similar. Once I started to meet the Medal of Honor recipients and they became individual people that I know, it just became even more exciting for me to be a part of this project instead of just like this, "Oh, that's a guy that's on page 98 of the book that is on my dining room table. It's a real human being." I just felt really excited and humbled about it.

Our project has three components—a museum here in Texas, with an institute that will be housed in the museum, and then a monument on the mall in DC. So, it's multifaceted. Initially, for good reason, we were just focusing on the closest target, which was building the museum. Then, when we got to the point where we're ready to develop the institute, the class of 1993 worlds collided. And when Kevin and I met, it was here we go.

Basik: I'm a 1993 Air Force Academy grad and gravitated to the Behavioral Science major because I love the people thing. I bought into the leadership thing at the Academy very early. I was one of those cadets who actually cared about my Military Performance Average (MPA),[2] not in a competitive or hard-core military sense, but because I wanted to do well as a growing leader. So, I embraced the leadership aspect of the Academy experience and wanted to just learn about it and dive into it. As a Behavioral Scientist going into the Air Force, like you Doug, I was sponsored to get a Master's Degree and come back and teach at the Academy. It allowed me to go a little bit deeper into the topic. I studied industrial and organizational psychology, focused on leadership, particularly in small teams and units.

I went out and did some operational assignments in the Air Force and then got sponsored for a Ph.D. to dive even deeper. This time I studied leadership through the perspective of values and character because I knew I was going to be coming back to the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD). I knew part of my charge was going to be to help really clarify what we mean when we say, "We develop leaders of character." Given that, the lens that showed up for me was behavioral integrity, which is that critical alignment between the leader's words, their values, their commitments, and their actions. When that's out of alignment, there are big consequences. I bought into that big time.

Soon, I was back at the Air Force Academy, and we created what became USAFA's "conceptual framework"[3]—an approach for developing leaders of character. The idea of values-based leadership—working toward the identity that you're trying to create in your personal and professional life—I just got obsessed with that. So, after my time at CCLD, I got to explore that more in the Air Force at the Pentagon level and across the DoD. In 2017, I retired and started my own company, and it was just to continue that journey. I just loved that stuff. So, I was off doing my thing and working with a lot of government and corporate audiences.

Then, my dear friend, mentor and classmate, Mo Barrett called me and said, "Hey, some folks are asking about if I know you because they are exploring this idea of a Leadership Institute for the Medal of Honor, and they would like to pick your brain a little bit." I joined a meeting up in DC and got introduced to Chris and some other folks who were leading this charge, and it started

2 The objective of the MPA program is to help cadets internalize the Air Force Core Values by providing cadets with an accurate reflection of their officership development, using feedback and a competency-based rating process (USAFAI 36-2401).

3 https://www.usafa.edu/app/uploads/21st-Century-LoC-Final-March-2021.pdf

our journey together. What got me excited to come on board is that behavioral integrity concept. And you know this, Doug, when the test is on and the pressures are real, do you take a step and bring your values to life or not? And I cannot think of any context that demonstrates that more clearly than the Medal of Honor. So, when they said, "We're exploring what you love through the virtues and values of the Medal of Honor. Do you want to play?" That just seemed like a natural fit.

Lindsay: Thank you both for sharing that. You are both very humble in your backgrounds. Chris, you had mentioned the idea, and I think it's an important one, that we hear about these Medal of Honor recipients, and we have the notion that they are these larger-than-life people. But you mentioned once you got to know them and to interact with them, they became these very real people. Can you talk a little bit about that power of the exemplars beyond just the story, but the importance of having that interaction and having those exemplars be more than just a story?

Cassidy: Absolutely. There are 65 of them living today. When I came on board, we had a World War II recipient still alive – Woody Williams. He has now passed away. So, the population of recipients is from Vietnam and younger now. But every one of them, regardless of age or conflict, all had this message that the Medal was heavier to wear...that it is harder to wear than to earn. And that they are wearing it for the nation. They are wearing it for their brothers and arms that didn't come back. Or "It's the nation's medal and I'm just keeping care of this particular one." But the concept is all the same. As a side note, but for me personally, it resonated loudly because I have a similar feeling about service about being an astronaut. I feel really lucky that I got to go in space and I think, "Why me and not somebody else?" So, I understood that sentiment, and it really just means a lot to me. These are real people who grew up playing soccer or had a paper route or had the same conversation in their head of, "What am I going to do after the military that I just did," that Kevin did a couple years ago, and you did. They are real people who had an incredible challenging day and did incredible actions in that gap.

Basik: I'll piggyback on what he said. A phrase I've heard, I think Medal of Honor recipient Kyle Carpenter is who described the medal as the "beautiful burden." It is heavy to wear, and you feel the importance and significance of it. So, obviously you want to honor the Medal of Honor and everyone else who earned it, but also the stories that you get to tell about those who didn't receive it but deserved it. There's the whole community of folks who went above and beyond, but don't wear the Medal. So that burden is powerful, but it's worth it, so they can tell the stories of so many others.

The other thing is with regard to a human face. When you get up close and personal, their imperfections are so refreshing. The fact that they're just normal people is a relief to the rest of us. Yes, in one moment, they rose to the occasion, and that deserves to be honored. But they describe repeatedly themselves as ordinary people who happened to do something extraordinary in a moment. But these same people also still struggle with other things. They still struggle with courage in other moments, or avoid having tough conversations in their own life like the rest of us. They're scared of getting out of the military. They struggle being parents and spouses. They're on the journey with the rest of us. For me, it was encouraging that someone who was able to achieve that level of honor in combat has within them the same imperfections that I have. So maybe by contrast, I've got within me some of the greatness that they displayed in that moment.

Lindsay: That's an important point, that idea of the humanity, right? It shows the humanness of that aspect and the importance of thinking about it as the cost associated with having that designation from being in that moment. Because there is still the human side that they've got to still deal with. That's pretty powerful.

Basik: We call it the two bridges. Dr. Dave Keller, USAFA class of 1990, actually, is the one who introduced this idea. As we're trying to do what we do at the Museum and the Institute, we emphasize that it's not a military museum or a military institute. It's about values. Now, the stories we share happen to have played out in a military context. But as we describe the two bridges, the first bridge is you hear the story, can you identify the value that was on display in the story, or the virtue that was brought to life by their action? Usually, we easily identify that they demonstrated courage, sacrifice, commitment, and so on.

But the second bridge is the one that is our challenge and is the most important one, honestly. That requires you to connect the value on display in the story to your life. The bridge has to be, "I'm likely not going to be on a rooftop in Fallujah when a grenade rolls between me and my buddy, but I am going to face moments where I have to sacrifice for the people I'm leading. I am (now or in the future) going to have a moment where I need to make a call and put other priorities ahead of myself and make the hard call. So, maybe what helped that guy can help me in the battle of my life." One we use in the Institute is, "What is your battle?" because at some time, everybody's going to be afraid, exhausted, unprepared, overwhelmed, hopeless, etc. Our mission at the Museum and Institute is to take the clues left from the Medal of Honor recipients and offer paths for application into the battles of our lives.

Lindsay: That is so important because we all have those decisions, those moments, and that gap that we all have to decide to cross at some point. So, is it fair to say that part of the aspect of the museum is to really identify those exemplars and honor those that have earned that medal in that way. But secondary is to show how that can help inform others and how they lead, live their own lives and educate them?

Cassidy: You nailed it, Doug. You absolutely nailed it. That is exactly what we're trying to do. Kevin just wrote down the words, "inspire" and "equip," and that is our mission in the Institute and the Museum. It is a different experience. We want the visitor coming through the Museum to walk away inspired the same way as if they attended an Institute program, and the experience intertwines. It's all about that second bridge that Kevin talks about and how, "Okay do I take that piece of motivation and inspire myself to lead a better life through that example?"

Basik: Our goal is to go beyond the "what" of the recipient stories, which is inspirational just by its nature. When we see that on display, there's awe and wonder. You can't help but be inspired. But we want to then get from the "what" to the "so what" to the "now what" and equip people with whatever clues were just displayed in the story. Whatever insights the Medal of Honor recipients might be able to offer, maybe we can tease those out in our workshops or in the interactions in the Museum the realization, "I think I can take a step in this challenging moment in my relationship, work, or life in a way I otherwise wouldn't." Remember, inspiration is temporary. It's fleeting. You've got to connect it with a commitment to do something.

Lindsay: Well, you don't have to, right? We see that fall short a lot of times in leader development. Let's tell a story, let's get people invested and go, "Yeah, that was awesome moment." Unfortunately, when they walk away, they are left asking, "What does it mean for me? How does that change who I am? How does that inform, acknowledge or validate what I'm doing?" What I'm hearing from you both is the idea of the Institute is to help bring that education and tie in that experience, that inspiration to where the person is at and the challenges they are facing. That's the equipping piece of it. Regardless of your military affiliation, anybody who comes through there, you are able to give them an avenue to really help put that on themselves, and equip them with those values.

Basik: We want to inspire, which is the easy part because of who we are spotlighting. We want to equip, so that you're ready for the battles to come. And finally, we want to connect people in a "community of honor," because there is power in knowing you don't have to do this alone. Leaning on each other, whether that's the cohort you go through an experience with, or just other people committed to being a little bit stronger in their honor or character in their life. This is also about the power of action. No one ever earned the Medal of Honor for *intending* to do something. They did something. In spite of all the obstacles, they took action in at least one moment. And, interestingly, 19 people earned the Medal of Honor twice. That's a whole other thing to explore! It's a demonstration that living honorably is not just about a single event or isolated opportunity. It could and should be part of our character across situations. Habits of honor.

Lindsay: What I really like in what you guys are talking about is this idea of community. It's larger than oneself. You mentioned that with the Medal itself, is that idea of a burden to wear it? It's because of the connection to something larger, right? What it means in a larger sense than just that one action, or series of actions. That idea of community, that idea of being there for one another, supporting one another, and being part of something larger are so important because I think as a society, we've lost some of that connection to one another. So that's really encouraging to think about that community of honor, that idea that, "You are not in this alone." It's a larger aspect by being able to have the Museum and the Institute to showcase that, really points to the idea of how we are connected. And what does that mean for me, the so what, the now what? That whole aspect really draws me in beyond just inspiring. It gives me something I can commit to and something larger than me.

Basik: Exactly. And I will say that we've spotlighted six values that are so central to the Medal of Honor. In the Medal stories, you come to understand integrity, courage, commitment, sacrifice, citizenship, and patriotism. Those last two, I think speak to service to something bigger than yourself. That you're a part of something.

There's three parts to the essence of Honor. First, there's the group. That's the community who is defining whether you are in or out of honor. Maybe it's your profession, your family, your school, or your faith group. This is the community to which you want to belong.

The second part of Honor is the code. That's the standard of excellence expected by its members, defined by the group. We say "of excellence" to make sure we're shooting for a moral and noble target. With the SEALs, there's a standard that Chris and the others are challenged to live up to. It's right there in the SEAL Creed.[4] Or for others, it is the Airman's Creed,[5] the Hippocratic Oath,[6] the Honor Code,[7] or the rules of this family. Informally, it declares, "Hey, we do this, we don't do that. And if you keep doing that, there's a consequence."

That's the third part of Honor—the cost. Honor can be lost. If it can't be lost, it's not honor. So, the fact that you can be perceived by the group you want to identify with as dishonorable, that you have lost the right to be part of this group—that should pain you. The Medal of Honor is an American award. Yes, we're global citizens and all that, but the Medal of Honor is about an American standard of excellence. We say there are certain values and virtues in America that we think are worthy of upholding and living by, and that's the code that we lift up. There should be a cost if you say, "I'll opt out of that." What's at risk if you don't meet that standard?

4 https://navyseals.com/nsw/seal-code-warrior-creed/
5 https://www.airforce.com/vision
6 https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/greek/greek_oath.html
7 https://www.usafa.edu/about/honor/

Lindsay: Then, what happens if we fall outside of that standard? Can we come back? How do we think about that if we fall short? Is there a way to reconcile that? One way to reconcile is go, "Well, I don't want to be part of that group anymore. I'm going to change what I say I am or who I say I am." But the other part is, "Can I work my way back? Can I figure out where that is?" And because I think we have a lot of times where people get into a spot of, "Wow, I was not who I said I was, and I've got to reconcile that." And when you're alone, it's hard to reconcile that because all we see is a repeat in our head of what we did wrong versus feeling like part of a community, and how do we get back, and how do we earn our way back, or think about what that means if it's important to us. You are helping folks think through that process.

With that in mind, you talked about having the Museum, having the Institute, and then a monument in Washington, DC. As you think about where you're at right now and then looking ahead 5 years from now, what would success look like for you?

Cassidy: Right now, people can name more sports stars than they can Medal of Honor recipients. If we can move that needle a tick or two and have the Medal of Honor recipients be household names to some degree. It's never going to be exactly that, but certainly an increased awareness. Also, to have the programs and seminars and offerings at our Institute roll off the tongue as if you are talking about the other high-quality programs out there. That our programs and seminars are talked about in the same sentence. And that people leave our Museum with 12-year-old kids tugging on their parents' shirt like, "Let's go again." Or sitting at dinner going, "Did you read that story about a Medal of Honor recipient? Oh my gosh, it was amazing."

Lindsay: If I understand where the museum is going to be located, it's in a really neat area surrounded by things like a sports stadium to really start normalizing this idea of honor as being something where people want to go to, right? "Hey, we're going to go to the ball game, but let's stop by the Museum on the way out or on the way in." Or, "Hey, I went to the Museum and it triggered something in me and I want to learn a little bit more about that." Or I'm at the Monument and I see that, and I'm like, "Wow, where do I go for a little bit more of this? So, it becomes more normalized right?"

Basik: Yes. The Museum in Arlington, Texas, is surrounded by the entertainment district. But when you look around, you see these huge stadiums as monuments built to excellence in sports. But this Museum is a beautiful contrast because it is about excellence in life. It's excellence in humanity. I hope the contrast prompts people to consider which one's more important in the grand scheme of things. Still, this Monument is pretty grand in scale too. It proudly declares, "Hey, you want to talk excellence? Pay attention to these stories. This is world-class."

Lindsay: When you talk about that idea of excellence in virtue, or excellence in honor, or excellence in life, it starts to put that as part of the conversation of, "We can think about this, we can study this, we can get better at this. I can see myself and I'm not showing up the way I want to. How do I move the needle on that? How can I get better on how I want to do that?" Or, maybe I'm struggling, but I realize I'm not alone and where can I go to learn a little bit more about that? So, is the idea then that the Institute becomes that action arm in a way of serving? Is it serving communities? Is it serving schools? Is it all of that? Or what's the vision there with how you're rolling that out?

Cassidy: It's all of the above where we're going to inspire kids, adults, and the nation. We can't do it all in person, right? If you want to inspire the nation, you have got to reach out electronically and through the internet and have multiple paths to impact a person. That is actually what we're exploring. Right now, we're developing some really world-class, interactive products and curriculum with partners at EverFi and the NFL that will help us engage the nations' youth. This is just a first, exciting step in scaling the Medal of Honor impact nationally, but we feel like we have a good roadmap to that success.

Lindsay: So, to be a place that people can go and be, like maybe in a workshop, but something that can be exported as well. Or they could bring it into a school and go, hey, here's some curriculum, or program, or speaker, or event.

Basik: Absolutely. There's going to be a physical structure where we will have the opportunity to host experiences in person. But there will also be a need and an opportunity for us to deploy things virtually and in-person to the nation. As Chris said, we are partnering with some other organizations that are already integrated into schools across the nation, so we can offer Medal of Honor stories, and the Medal of Honor values as an integrated part of the curriculum for teachers, parents, and coaches, but also for adults in the corporate world and the military. Our goal is to hit them all. It is to create a national culture of honor.

Lindsay: That's exciting to hear about because I think a lot of times we think about the student, we think about the recipient of some of this training, but I think a lot of times what gets lost in there are the teachers of the content. It is also the faculty. How do we teach elementary school teachers the foundations that undergird this idea of honor and what these virtues and values are? How do we give them the information they need so they can be the example?

Basik: But you hit it. If those force multipliers, the teachers, parents, community leaders, and coaches are bought into it, we can move the needles. If they are lit up about the importance of it and believe their job is to develop leaders of character who happen to play lacrosse, or study biology, or work in their stores, then they can easily weave character into their conversations. But if the teachers aren't bought into it or they are not equipped to discuss it, that's a tough sell for the kids to pick it up by themselves. I'll quote Arthur Schwartz, "Character is taught, but it's mostly caught and sought." If we can get the adults to embrace, model, and emphasize the values of honor where they live, it can be contagious.

Lindsay: That is very exciting. The Museum will be completed when?

Cassidy: Two years.

Lindsay: Between now and then, what is the goal you work toward that? Is it socializing the idea, building the infrastructure, getting the word out about what the vision is, and what you're trying to do? You've got an impressive Board and everybody who's bought into the idea of what you are doing. What does the next couple years look like as you're starting to roll this out?

Cassidy: You described it well. Using these 2 years to really get the infrastructure in place such that when the doors open physically at the Museum, the Institute will have a full offering of programs and seminars, and opportunities to impact people. Of course, we'll tune that up as we go and we'll learn things. But right now, the conversations and the partnerships that we're forging are so helpful. I think to be on a path that takes advantage of the lessons learned from a lot of other institutes that have walked the path ahead of us.

Basik: Exactly. The goal is to build a strong foundation of who we are, what are we trying to espouse, what's our philosophy, and our theory of change. Then build momentum over the next 2 years and start rolling out a very deliberate portfolio of offerings. I think we can also work through social media, maybe some publications, but even partnerships with organizations like CCLD[8] at

8 https://www.usafa.edu/character/

the Air Force Academy. For example, in February, we are hosting our second Medal of Honor Service Academy Character Summit—a ½ day interactive workshop with cadets and faculty from all the service academies. It's a powerful event that rolls beautifully into the National Character and Leadership Symposium (NCLS).[9] So those momentum-building events will help us scale as we get closer to 2025.

Lindsay: How do you create those synergies? How do you get that going? How do you cross-pollinate between the different domains that exist out there, business, military, nonprofit, academic, all of those that have a part to play in this?

Basik: You are hitting on the third piece of the trifecta that I previously mentioned. We want to connect people around the spirit of honor. We want to be the organization that brings together people to have conversations they otherwise wouldn't have through issues and ideas related to the values of honor. We could be the catalyst to explore ideas like courage, resilience, duty, sacrifice, and decision-making in crisis. Who is better? There are a lot of great thought leaders and practitioners out there in the trenches doing great work, and we can facilitate learning and sharing among them. We can really benefit from hearing and sharpening each other. So, when the doors of the Museum and Institute open, we want to be the place that people go, "Hey, this is the logical place for us to huddle and dive into this topic we all hold dear." We want to be the engine for thought leadership, ideas, and solutions around topics of character and honor.

Lindsay: You have talked about the Medal of Honor recipients and how they feel the weight of that, of carrying that around. What has been the response from them, the 65 that are still alive, to this endeavor or being able to serve back and be a part of that and be connected to something larger? Because it can maybe seem a little isolated when that honor is placed upon you for something that you did in the moment. Being able to connect them or bring them. What has been their response?

Cassidy: What's interesting is that there have been a few efforts over the last 50 or 60 years to get a national museum going for them. So, some of the older ones with that experience go, "Well, we've seen this rodeo before and those didn't pan out for whatever reason." And for me, in just a year and a half that I've been part of the project, it's been interesting to see a little bit of that reaction to we are actually coming through with it. It's no longer just PowerPoint. Literally, just out the window here is construction, concrete, and steel, and donor money is coming in. So, it's been fun to see that mindset, particularly on the ones that understand the efforts in the past go, "Oh my gosh, well, this might actually happen." And the younger recipient crowd, they're excited. As you mentioned, we're right here next to AT&T Stadium. The Cowboys are a big part of our existence because of Charlotte Jones being on our board. We have events here in town. The salute to service game that every NFL organization has in November, the Cowboys are generous to recognize Medal of Honor recipients on their salute service day. It's just really exciting to see the enthusiasm grow in the recipient community of, "Wow, this is going to be a real thing. And my story will be told in there."

Basik: And the scale and the size of it are noteworthy. It is a significant structure, as it should be, because it represents the legacy of the stories. But all these recipients are so humble. To a person, they are so humble. I think they appreciate that this building will also carry the legacy of the stories of the other service members who did not receive the Medal but demonstrated courage, valor, and honor nonetheless. As the Museum goes vertical, I think people are thinking, "I get it. I see it.

9 https://www.usafa.edu/character/national-character-leadership-symposium-ncls/

And I see what this does for the stories of those who need their stories told."

Lindsay: What's been the biggest surprise and what's been the biggest encouragement that you've seen in your time since you said, "Yes, I want to do this?"

Basik: It's not easy to get a monument on the mall in Washington, DC. It's on this dang National Mall! It is not easy to get on that mall. But it was unanimously approved by Congress! 100%. 100% approval. Just simmer in that for a second. This could be the type of thing that can unify a nation. Even if folks are not necessarily pro-military, the values embodied in the Medal are enduring and commonly significant. We can invite people to rally around living those values by sharing the stories of courageous but imperfect people. For me, I'm excited about what this can do to our nation. And it was demonstrated in Congress for crying out loud!

Cassidy: For me, a large part of my job is to help spread the word and quite honestly, fundraising for the Foundation. Before I got into the job, I had this, "Oh, man. Fundraising. I feel like a used car salesman." But the surprising part is that feeling of asking people for money is completely removed when you are selling this ideal of the Medal of Honor. The level of support it echoes is what Kevin said about the support in Congress. When we're out talking to people and companies and family offices, the answer is always, "Oh my gosh, this is something that means a lot to me. And I can see many things where this is applicable to the nation." And everybody supports in whatever is a meaningful way for them, whether it be just telling friends and family, giving financial support, or in the case of a business, providing some in-kind service. We even we have a local company that helps us with flowers for events, and every entity has their own way of supporting. That's been cool to see. The answer is always "Yes," in some way.

Basik: But think about that, that's an important phrase. You say, the answer to honor is always yes. When people are offered just this pure thing of honor, people go, "Of course." It's that obvious. Maybe the answer to the value of honor is always yes. But, the ability to *execute* honor is not always "Yes" or easy, but there's just something inherently aspirational and appealing in celebrating the values embodied in the Medal. Especially in comparison to the alternative–what we so often see in the world these days—when people are instead presented with the appeal of life lived with honor, the response is, "Yes! More of that!" I think that's part of the reason they want to be part of what we're doing.

Lindsay: That's powerful because you have the recipients of the Medal of Honor, that's the action, that's what happened and you have the values that underlie that. But I think from a humanity standpoint, there's always an aspirational aspect of that too. Seeing myself in that. As I think about courage, it's like I want to be courageous when the moment comes. I want to have virtue when the time comes. So, I think there's this connectedness to us of, "I see these people who did it. I understand what it's about and why it's important. And at a basic human level, I want to be connected. I want aspirationally to live that." And from a real practical standpoint, to offer a little bit of healing in that community aspect of what we've seen society-wise on how some people are treating one another. That idea of getting back to values, and virtues, and that aspirational nature of it as, maybe I'm not there, but I want to be there. Okay, now let's engage you right there.

Cassidy: Yes, the pursuit of our best possible selves.

Lindsay: Absolutely. I know my actual self because I live with it every single day. I've got to deal with that. But what you are offering is an aspirational self of who I can be and how I can grow and be better as a spouse, parent, a community member, a member of a profession, or whatever that is. I think you're offering people something that they can see themselves in. That's the connection piece that I think it's easy to say yes to.

Basik: And that's bridge number two! "I know I want to be or need to be, better in *that* virtue in my life." Now the question is, can you equip me to do that? For example, "if I'm struggling with fear, maybe I can better understand how that guy (recipient) struggled with fear, and pulled it off. So maybe there's something there."

Lindsay: Maybe I can be a little less fearful in the moment when it happens because it's really about being in the moment of that aspect. That's pretty powerful. Looking forward, what are you excited about? What is it that helps you come into work every single day and go, "I am excited. I am exactly where I need to be. This is exactly what we need to be about."

Cassidy: We were just a small group of people trying to scream in the woods 2 years ago, and we weren't really sure if people could hear. Now that hard work is paying off, the staff is growing, the dollars are coming in, which I equate to awareness and effectiveness in our mission of getting it out there, and the building's coming to life. So, I'm most excited about standing there 2 years from now with the core group of people that made this happen before the living Medal of Honor recipients, opening the door and saying, "Welcome, gentlemen into your building. And this is for you, from the nation. Thank you." I say gentlemen, because the only female recipient, Mary Walker, is no longer alive. You can picture that line of people walking in all with the blue medal. It gives me chill right now just thinking about that.

Lindsay: Because that's really what it's all about, right? That ability to sit here and say, "Here's what we can now offer. Here's how we can serve. Here's how we can give back." That's pretty powerful.

Basik: I see them walking in and looking around and going, "Oh my gosh, it's so much better than I imagined." Because it will be. I've seen the scale and scope. The values are represented here, but this is the megaphone that will send the message out. This building is big, but it's small in stature to the sacrifices made. It's going to amplify and it's going to be the beacon that sends these values out in a new way.

Lindsay: In a way that everybody can connect to.

Cassidy: Speaking of that connection, so far, we've raised $232 million. We've got $41 million to go to close out the formal fundraising for the Museum and Institute portion of the project. We are making progress!

Lindsay: I think that is a testament to that success, and where you're headed, and what it represents. Best of luck to you both.

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

A More Perfect Union: Meaning in the Preamble of the United States Constitution

Aaron Dimmock, Missouri Leadership Academy

Dana Born, Harvard University

The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America contains language that is incredibly meaningful to some, misunderstood by many, and in need of periodic revisitation for all. What did the framers mean when they used the language they chose to use? This article intends to provide a basic review of that language so that more of us understand the intent of the framers and, for those in positions of leadership, to embrace their responsibility of more completely understanding why they do what they do.

> We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.
>
> – Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

To Form a More Perfect Union

The phrase "to form a more perfect union" is one of the stated purposes for establishing the constitution. To understand this phrase more fully, we must consider the historical context in which the constitution was written. Before the constitution, the United States was governed by the Articles of Confederation, which created a weak central government. Under the Articles, the states retained most of their sovereignty and operated more like independent entities rather than parts of a unified nation. This system led to several challenges that included economic issues,

CONTACT Aaron Dimmock aarondimmock@me.com

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defense concerns, interstate disputes, and the lack of a central executive.

Without a strong central authority, there were disputes among states over tariffs and trade. Also, states printed their own money. This often led to confusion and inflation. The central government had difficulties raising an army and there was no consistent means of defending the nation in its entirety. States often had disputes over boundaries and other matters because the central government lacked an effective mechanism to resolve these issues. Finally, the Articles did not establish an executive branch to enforce laws or a judiciary to interpret them. This resulted in inefficient and mostly ineffective governance.

Given these challenges and the increasing desire to create a robust and lasting nation-state, the framers of the constitution aimed to establish a governmental structure that would be robust and more collaborative than that which existed under the Articles. In this context, "to form a more perfect union" meant they wanted to create a system of government that was more effective, cohesive, and united than as prescribed by the Articles. Furthermore, the phrase speaks to the aspiration of the framers. They did not want to claim the new system was perfect. They did, however, believe it would be a significant improvement to the Articles. For them, use of the words "more perfect" also implied eternal effort. The endeavor for the United States of America to always strive to improve and refine its union continues to this day.

Establish Justice

When the framers included the phrase "establish justice," they were emphasizing the importance of creating a system of fairness and equity for the new nation. To understand this in the context of the constitution and the intentions of the framers, we must consider the rule of law, the judiciary, protection of rights, correcting injustices of the Articles of Confederation, along with moral and ethical implications.

A fundamental principle of any democracy is that everyone, regardless of status or power, is subject to the rule of law. The framers wanted a system where laws are transparently created, consistently enforced, and impartially judged. One of the primary means of ensuring justice is through a judicial system. The constitution provides for a Supreme Court and leaves the establishment of lower courts to Congress. This judiciary serves to interpret the law, settle disputes, and ensure that laws are consistent with the constitution. The framers were also concerned about protecting individual rights and ensuring that the government does not overstep its boundaries. This protection is seen in various parts of the constitution, most notably in the Bill of Rights, which specifies protections for individuals against potential governmental overreach. Among other problems as noticed previously, the Articles of Confederation lacked a strong judiciary. The constitution sought to rectify these shortcomings and create a more robust framework for justice. Lastly, and beyond the logistical and structural aspects of establishing a justice system, the phrase "establish justice" also carries moral and ethical undertones. The framers wanted the new nation to be just in its treatment of citizens and in its interactions with other nations.

Insure Domestic Tranquility

The framers also held a desire to maintain peace and order within the country's borders. The factors that contributed to the inclusion of insuring domestic tranquility were Shays' Rebellion, interstate disputes, uprisings, economic stability, and social order.

Shortly before the Constitutional Convention, Shays' Rebellion took place in Massachusetts in 1786 and 1787. This was an uprising led by disaffected Revolutionary War veterans facing economic hardships, particularly due to high taxes and debts. The weak central government under the Articles of Confederation struggled to respond effectively to this internal crisis. This event, in particular, highlighted the need for a stronger central authority capable of maintaining order and addressing internal disturbances.

Under the Articles of Confederation, states often acted with a high degree of autonomy, leading to disputes and tensions among them. The framers aimed to create a system that would mediate such conflicts, preventing them from escalating and ensuring peaceful coexistence among states. The framers were additionally concerned about potential uprisings or rebellions that could threaten the stability of the young nation. They believed that a strong central government would be better equipped to prevent or address such disturbances, ensuring a stable environment for its citizens. Domestic tranquility also encompasses economic stability. A peaceful and orderly environment is conducive to economic activities, trade, and commerce. By insuring domestic tranquility, the framers hoped to create conditions that would allow businesses and commerce to flourish.

Finally, insuring domestic tranquility suggests a broader societal goal, that of maintaining social harmony and preventing conflicts that could arise. Such conflicts include disputes over rights, political disagreements, or other civil unrest. In essence, here the framers were emphasizing the need for a stable and peaceful environment within the country, an environment free from internal strife, rebellion, and significant disorder. This tranquility would provide a foundation for the new nation's growth, prosperity, and continued success.

Provide for the Common Defence

For the framers, a primary duty of the new federal government was to defend the nation and its citizens against external threats. Here again, it is helpful to consider the historical and geopolitical context. Under the Articles of Confederation, the central government had limited power to raise and maintain an army and navy. This lack of centralized military authority made the young nation vulnerable to external threats and foreign interference. At the time the constitution was drafted, the United States faced potential threats from European powers with interests in North America, including Britain, Spain, and France. Additionally, there were concerns about conflicts with Native American tribes on the frontiers. It was believed that by pooling resources and coordinating defense at the federal level, states could better protect themselves as a collective unit than they could individually. The framers recognized the importance of presenting a united front against potential adversaries. The constitution, in its main body, granted Congress the powers to raise and support armies, provide and maintain a navy, and call forth the militia to execute federal laws, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions. The role of the President as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces was also established.

While the framers recognized the need for a strong centralized defense, they were also wary of standing armies as potential tools of tyranny. Hence, they put checks and balances in place, such as giving Congress, the representatives of the people, the power of the purse and the authority to declare war. Providing for the common defense underscores the federal government's responsibility to protect the nation and its citizens from foreign threats and aggressions, ensuring that the United States can maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Promote the General Welfare

The framers also intended that the federal government should act in ways that benefit the well-being of all its citizens. This broad directive suggests several ideas. First is the common good. The federal government should operate in the interest of all its citizens rather than cater to specific factions, interest groups, or classes. The goal was to create a government that served the collective interests of the nation. Second, the government should also create conditions where commerce, trade, and industry can thrive, benefiting the population at large. This includes regulating interstate commerce and other economic activities as needed to ensure fairness and stability. Third, the government has the responsibility to undertake or support endeavors that benefit the public broadly, such as infrastructure projects that would facilitate transportation, communication, and commerce. Lastly, part of ensuring the general welfare is safeguarding the rights and liberties of citizens. This idea is fleshed out in more detail in the Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments.

Additionally, the government should act to protect the health and safety of its citizens, whether that means regulating practices that could harm the public or providing direct assistance in times of need. The United States was, and remains, a vast country with a diverse population. Different regions and groups have varied interests and concerns. "Promote the general welfare" implies striving for policies and actions that consider and balance these diverse interests for the broader good of the nation. Over time, the concept of "general welfare" has been the subject of debate, particularly when discussing the scope and role of federal government intervention in various sectors. Some argue for a more limited interpretation, while others see it as justification for broader government involvement in areas that benefit public well-being. While the precise boundaries of "promote the general welfare" have been and continue to be debated, the phrase underscores the framers' intent that the federal government should work to create conditions conducive to the well-being and prosperity of *all* its citizens.

Secure the Blessings of Liberty

Securing the "blessings of liberty" underscores the framers' dedication to protecting and perpetuating individual freedoms and rights for both current and future generations of Americans. From an historical perspective, the framers of the constitution had recently participated in the American Revolution, a war fought primarily to break free from British rule and perceived tyrannies. They deeply valued individual rights and freedoms and were keen on establishing a government that would guard against the loss of these liberties. The framers also embraced liberty as a core value and one of the fundamental principles upon which the United States was founded. The framers intended for the new government to not just protect existing freedoms but to also foster an environment where liberty could flourish.

The framers were also quite wary of oppressive government power, having experienced it under British rule. The constitution, with its checks and balances and separation of powers, was designed to prevent any single branch of government from becoming too powerful and threatening the liberties of the people. Shortly following the ratification of the constitution, the first 10 amendments were added. Known as the Bill of Rights, these amendments explicitly enumerated various individual rights and protections, such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, further emphasizing the commitment to protecting liberty.

The framers focused on securing liberty for their own generation and the generations to come. The idea was to create a lasting framework that would ensure the freedoms they valued would endure for their "posterity," or descendants. The choice of the word "blessings" holds significance here as well. It conveys the idea that liberty is not just a right or principle but a precious gift, something to be cherished and revered. The framers purposefully enshrined and protected the principles of freedom and individual rights as the foundational law of the land to ensure that current and future citizens would enjoy the benefits of a free society.

The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America serves as the guidepost by which to measure our national progress in perpetuity. It is prudent to periodically revisit and refresh our minds with the framer's language. A more perfect union does not just happen. It is the outcome of representatives and citizens alike being ever mindful of and dedicated to upholding justice, insuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, and continually securing the blessings of liberty. These are all elements that mirror effective leadership. Leaders protect and support their teams. Leaders maintain social harmony and accountability. Leaders provide structure and clarity while safeguarding the rights and liberties of all. The list truly does go on. As our American experiment continues, let this remain our collective persistent charge.

Supplemental Resources

Sources on topics related to the Constitution of the United States of America, its interpretation, and critical examinations of the framers' language and intent that informed this basic review included the following:

Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States (1833) by Joseph Story is a foundational work on constitutional law.

Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution (1996) by Jack N. Rakove won the Pulitzer Prize and provides a deep dive into the framers' intent. It is most noteworthy for its exploration of the complex politics and diverse viewpoints that influenced the drafting of the constitution.

"The Anti-Federalist Papers" is the collective name given to the works written by multiple anonymous authors, likely Patrick Henry, George Clinton, and Samuel Bryan among several others – between September 25, 1787, and the early 1790s. These authors voiced concerns about the power of the federal government under the constitution and succeeded in influencing the first assembly of the United States Congress to draft the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights: Creation and Reconstruction (1998) by Akhil Reed Amar examines the framers' intent and how interpretations have evolved over time.

"The Constitution of the United States of America"

The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787 (1998) and *Power and Liberty: Constitutionalism in the American Revolution* (2021) by Gordon S. Wood provide valuable context for understanding the political and intellectual climate in which the Constitution and its Preamble were written.

The Federalist, commonly referred to as "The Federalist Papers," is a series of 85 essays written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison – all under the pen name "Publius" – between October 1787 and May 1788 promoting the ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America.

The Framers' Coup: The Making of the United States Constitution (2016) by Michael J. Klarman delves into the historical context and development of the constitution while also providing insight into the framers' intent.

BOOK REVIEW

A Review of "Debrief to Win"

Robert "Cujo" Teschner, Chesterfield: RTI Press (2018)

Review By: Kristina Book

Debriefing is part of the lifeblood of the armed forces. We must constantly review our missions to identify critical and noncritical issues that can mean future success or failure if not addressed. We also look at the best use of the resources we have—time, money, people and materials. *Debrief to Win* brings this integral debrief lens to the public in an attempt to show the ways in which the military debrief can influence organizational culture, methods, and overall bottom line—in all walks of life.

In order to "debrief to win," there needs to first be a set understanding of what debriefing is. Robert Teschner acknowledges that his process of debriefing is just one possible style and then hones into the method he recommends—the Objectives-Focused/Methodology-Based Debrief, a commonly used U.S. Air Force technique that he later breaks down as "the RAPTOR method." As a pilot, former weapons school instructor, and professional, Teschner enthusiastically shares this U.S. Air Force debriefing method regarding learning, verifying ability and continuous process improvement. The key item Teschner focuses on is that debriefing is not always about the things that went poorly nor blaming failures on individuals; rather, it is about the overall root causes within a mission/event. To create a space for a discussion of the root causes without blame or shame, a leader must construct an environment where the debrief is a "team intervention event, designed to address the challenge human beings have in working together, in making decisions supportive of group goals and overcoming objections" (p. 47). Then, he explains how creating a culture where psychological safety thrives, with a "focus on the behavior and not the individual(s)" effectively builds a tribe (p. 48).

In a culture based on psychological safety, team members are able to call each other out and bring them into the discussions to improve overall success; all while adding a level of vulnerability and "moderate risk-taking, speaking [ones] mind, creativity, and sticking your neck out without fear of having it cut off" (p. 63). Within these underlying values (i.e., when individuals are seen, valued, and heard), the team can function at higher levels than without.

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In addition to psychological safety, we also need to know the WHY of what we are doing. These may be our objectives. Teschner provides a hierarchy for identifying these using Mikal Belicove's framework from a 2013 *Forbes* article: Goals, Strategy, Objectives, and Tactics.[1] Goals are broad primary outcomes of an event, strategy is the approach you take to achieving a goal, objectives are the measurable steps you take to achieve a strategy, and finally tactics are the tools used in pursuit of an objective associated with a strategy. When we know the objective and the tactics then we have an understanding not only of the why but the how.

Objectives-Focused/Methodology-Based Debrief method involves a high degree of reflection especially in the flying world. Pilots utilise a tape review in which they collect information from video and audio sources to review what actually happened from various perspectives and not just personal recollection. In a non-flying world, this can be obtained through reviewing emails, messages, conversations, meetings, etc., and taking into consideration the perspectives of others. Once a tape review is completed, then the real work starts.

After reviewing the general information, the bulk of the RAPTOR method can begin. RAPTOR Debrief consists of six steps:

1. **R**econstruct what happened
2. **A**gree on the fundamental questions and focus points
3. **P**resent the driving factors (explore possible answers to the fundamental questions)
4. **T**horoughly agree on the root causes
5. **O**rganize a plan to improve or to maintain success, and finally
6. **R**apidly improve by "memorialization," (i.e., by recording findings and next steps in a way that the debrief is available for future reference)

The setup for integrating the RAPTOR method into a culture is vital to achieve good results, just as creating a culture of accountable leadership where psychological safety is important to team success and the ability to have valuable debriefs. To have appropriate preparation for a valuable RAPTOR debrief, a leader and contributors to the debrief must take time to take notes on the event, review prior performance (may include review of past events), conduct a visualization of the event, and subsequently lead the debrief. Additional advice includes: focusing on understanding the why of the debrief (including improvement, growth, or maintenance of proficiency), a shared knowledge of who is leading and who is attending the debrief, and lastly defining the rules of engagement for the debrief.

Levels of analysis discussed in Chapter 5 bring up an interesting insight into the depth of which we go to get to the root cause of meeting an objective. Often in the military context, we may engage in an after-action report process that gives an overarching review of the tactics and execution of events. In some circumstances, the debrief is seen as an onerous requirement rather than an activity vital to the long-term success of an event or even an organization.

While Teschner's examples at times lack a level of depth, there are parts of this book that bring up important concepts that leaders should invest in during their developmental journey. If we can be accountable to our leadership and have psychological safety within our workspace—where we focus not only on the event or project at hand but on the fact that this is one of many events or projects we will collaborate on—we should utilize each one as an opportunity to better ourselves, our team, our processes, and our view of the end goal.

1 https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikalbelicove/2013/09/27/understanding-goals-strategies-objectives-and-tactics-in-the-age-of-social/?sh=6d43e1fd4c79

I encourage all to take a look at the concepts explained in Teschner's book and review your own debriefing processes. Ask yourself and your team: who is leading, who is involved and who is the level of analysis really getting to the root cause(s)? And finally, is your culture one that has psychological safety where anyone can share without blame, shame, or belittlement? With this change in mindset, we can move toward being able to use debriefing to actually win in the work we each do.

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