# JCLD

JOURNAL OF CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Editor in Chief:
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CENTER FOR CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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## PROFILE IN LEADERSHIP

# Now Versus Later: How We Prepare for the Future

Douglas R. Lindsay, United States Air Force Academy

For those who have been in leadership positions, it is evident that effective leadership is not a point in time, but a journey. It occurs over time and is influenced by factors such as who we are, what we do, and whom we interact. While we can certainly see some short-term movement in skills that underlie and support that development, the reality is that it takes time. To that end, we need to ensure our developmental efforts (e.g., training, education, and experiential) have this longitudinal approach in mind. We must be mindful of where the leader is at, but we must also keep an eye on which direction he/she is headed. As a result, we need to ask, how can we provide just-in-time developmental efforts, but also scaffold it in such a way that we are setting leaders on a developmental trajectory that is beneficial for both the individual, as well as the organization? Such a question gives us two targets to keep in mind as we develop, execute, and assess all of our efforts aimed at character and leadership development.

The first target centers on the idea of what do leaders need to know, right now, to be successful? In addressing this question, I find it useful to go back to an old technique that I learned as a faculty member at the United States Air Force Academy. When we wanted to get feedback on how things were going right now, we would utilize a tool called *Start-Stop-Continue*. That tool asked three simple questions:

> What do I need to start doing that I am not doing right now?
> What am I doing that isn't effective that I need to stop?
> What am I doing right now that I need to continue doing?

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These may seem like very basic questions, but they get directly at the heart of development. In fact, those questions can get at the heart of any developmental effort. Development is rooted in an accurate assessment of where I am and how I am showing up. I must understand this reference point as it determines where I am starting from which can then translate into where I need to be heading. This applies to organizations as well, as they need to know where the leaders are at so that they can provide the necessary developmental interventions. In either case, the key is to make sure that we are getting accurate individual level information.

In most cases, getting information is easy. Sources abound on where we can get information. However, accurate information that can be used for development is less straightforward. For example, if we want to know how we are showing up into a leadership situation, who better to inform us than ourselves? We are, in fact, the one who is showing up. The challenge is that we do not show up alone. While we certainly bring our physical selves into the situation, we also bring along many other things as well such as thoughts about ourselves, our past experiences, our past successes/failures, immediate stressors, etc. All of these things will have an influence on how we interpret the events going on around us, and our place in those events. It is no surprise, then, that it can be difficult for us to an accurate assessment when we have all of these influences impacting us. The good news is that does not necessarily mean our perspective is incorrect. What it does this mean? It means that we need to aware of the impact of various influences on us, and how those influence our ability to accurately assess events impacting our leadership and our organizations. It also means that that it can be useful to gather other perspectives by which to compare our self-assessments. As character and leadership developers and practitioners are aware, 360-degree feedback is a useful tool to get at these various perspectives. This type of feedback not only captures what we think about ourselves, but it allows us to get feedback from various other perspectives (e.g., peers, subordinates, superiors, and others) by which we can compare perspectives. For example, if we are getting different feedback about our leadership effectiveness from our peers, subordinates, and our immediate supervisor, how can that feedback help inform us about our leadership effectiveness? This comparison is important because it gets at the true heart of development – the challenging of our perspectives and ourselves by weighing the information to determine where we need to be. It is the self-understanding needed to assess where we can be better, where we can improve, and most importantly, why we need that development.

While it may seem that this is an individual endeavor, focused on a particular individual, at a particular point in time—the organization also has a significant role in this process. Well-led organizations strategically invest in their people. They do this because it not only helps short term in terms of performance improvement, but also long term, by developing future capacity and capability. This gets at the second target of development.

The second target deals with where do I want to be in the future? It would be difficult to chart a path to where you want to go if you do not know where you are at now. That is why the first target is so important—it is the foundation upon which we begin, or begin again. If we are just starting out on our leadership journey, it is our true beginning. However, if we have already begun our journey, it is important to reassess our development and progress to ensure continual growth. For those who may have taken a pause on that developmental journey, it is a restart. For those who

are still on the journey, it is useful to take a pause and reshoot that azimuth to see if anything has changed. Even if we are on track, it is still useful to gauge that confirmation. Understanding where we are at gives us the ability to see where we want to go. However, equally as important, is deciding on how we are going to get there. That journey referenced in the opening of this thought piece, is part what happens to us, but the other part is what we choose to do. The encouraging piece of this is that we have an impact on what we want to develop. As we think about the future, most people see uncertainty. That is fair. When we think about leadership, however, we should also see stability. If we look back over a century of research on psychology and leadership, we see some common themes. We see the topics of communication, decision-making, team building, and the importance of relationships; of which all are themes that have stood the test of time. While the context in which those occurred may have certainly changed, those competencies (and others) have stayed stable. What we have also learned, is the way leadership is shown has changed over time. For example, as we look at coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, how we work has changed. People are not all in one place anymore, and many are working remotely. We are leveraging technology more significantly than we have in the past. We are learning that virtual teams can be as effective, and in some cases more effective, than an on-site team. These changes requires a concomitant change in how we view leadership. So, while some things have not changed (basic competencies), some contextual things have. As we look at leadership development, we must be agile enough to understand changes and intentionally account for them in our programs, courses, and processes. The challenge is to consider both targets in your development.

**In This Issue**

We need to attend to both preparing for now and preparing for the future. The key is that we understand that balance between now and later. The encouraging part is that it is not an either/or, but an and/both situation. We do not have to choose, as they are linked. Understanding the value of both of these targets allows us to leverage synergy in our efforts to amplify skill development in order to attain long-term leader development. This issue of the Journal of Character & Leadership Development (JCLD) is aimed directly at the two aforementioned targets. We have brought together a collection of articles that impact and inform both of these targets. Our goal with this issue is to shed light on different aspects to consider when looking at preparing leaders to be effective into the future.

The issue begins with an article by Stacey Dietsch who is a Partner at McKinsey & Company. In her article, she begins with the notion of reimagining leadership after COVID-19. Through an examination of several studies undertaken by McKinsey over the past year, she outlines how we can reset the bar for leadership. This includes a discussion of the importance of several leadership behaviors that are rising in importance post COVID-19. These behaviors cluster around three main categories: Caring, Curiosity, and Courage. She outlines each of these and discusses how to build them in organizations today and moving forward.

The issue continues with an article by Chris Beckert and Paul Jones of the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). They discuss the value of the human in the loop in the disrupted leadership environment. They begin by describing a global study done by CCL, which identified five major disruptions in organizations: big data and analytics; crafting an innovative culture;

artificial intelligence; equity, diversity, and inclusion; and communications overload. They step through each of these disruptions and provide actionable steps for leaders to deal with these disruptions in themselves and their organizations.

Next, we have an article by Samuel Hunter of the University of Nebraska at Omaha and colleagues which broaches the topic of the leader's role in shaping innovation. Starting with the basis of creativity and innovation as processes, they outline why it is important for leaders to support innovative efforts. They also describe why leading for innovation is challenging. Following that, they discuss how a leader can directly, and indirectly, shape innovation to have sustained innovative success. They wrap up their article with the reminder that innovation does not occur spontaneously, nor does it occur without dedicated leadership.

Edward Brooks of the Oxford Character Project at Oxford University continues the discussion by focusing on what character can contribute to a new generation of wise thinkers and good leaders. He starts with a description of the changing dynamics facing leaders today and into the future, and uses that as a basis for describing why there is a need for values-based and person-centered leadership. Through his article, he makes the strong, and needed, case for the value of character development in leadership education. Through his descriptions, he draws on research done as part of the Oxford Character Project.

The next article focuses on how purposeful engagement can be used in leader development. Robert Reimer of the United States Air Force Academy, Scott Allen of John Carrol University, and Greig Glover, of Fairview Heath System, discuss how intentionality

in leader fundamentals and theories of adult learning should inform our developmental efforts and practices. Through utilizing the framework of the what, the how, and the context of purposeful engagement, they walk the reader through their convincing approach.

Joe Don Looney offers a compelling discussion as to why diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical to leadership development at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA). As the Chief of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer at USAFA, he begins with definitions of these important topics and then integrates them into the guiding policy documents around these topics in the Air Force. By discussing three strategic lines of effort at USAFA (e.g., recruitment, retention/success, and development), he eloquently explains why and how these are integrated into leader development at USAFA.

The next article in this Issue is a conversation with Colonel Fred Gregory, USAF (Retired; USAFA 1964). Col Gregory served in many capacities during his career to include as a pilot, test pilot, astronaut, and as Acting Administrator of the National Aeronautical Space Administration (NASA). In the conversation, he discusses his professional journey and how he handled many hard stops along the way. Throughout his journey, he shares several compelling leadership lessons he learned along the way.

The final article is by Dr. J.R. Flatter of Flatter Inc. In his article, he discusses a framework for courageous leadership. Gleaned from his numerous years in the leadership field, Flatter talks about important leadership competencies, based on a foundation of courage, which can be utilized for effective leadership. Through discussing aspects of his own developmental journey, he walks through each of the categories and

talks about how each can be developed. With this approach, Flatter describes how any leader can develop courageous leadership.

## Book Reviews

In addition to the feature articles and conversations that are in the JCLD, one of our goals is to introduce readers to other works related to character and leadership development. While there are numerous books published yearly on these topics, we try to highlight several works that are especially applicable to character and leader development. In that light, we have two reviews in this issue of the JCLD. The first is a review is on the book *Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win* by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin. This book focuses on leadership best practices distilled from Navy SEAL experiences in combat, and how those skills can be applied to the private sector. The second review is on the book, *Unauthorized Progress, Leading from the Middle: Stories & Proven Strategies for Making Meaningful Impacts* by Geoff Abbott. In this book, Abbott leans on his decades of experiences to discuss techniques on how you can create positive change within organizations. While you already likely have your own reading list, we encourage you to add these to your list.

## Profile in Leadership

One effective way to understand leadership is to read about and study current and previous leaders. Through that examination, we are able to pull from their experiences to help inform our own development (both short term and long term). To support that approach, we have a Profile in Leadership section where we are able to take a bit of a deep dive into a particular leader. For this issue, John Farquhar explores the career of General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.. Through the examination of aspects of General Davis's career, Farquhar delves into how Davis was able to be

successful through perseverance, professionalism, and humility. By detailing the events around General Davis' command history, he discusses the challenging leadership situations Davis found himself in, and how he was able to successfully lead in spite of those challenges. It is a great overview of General Davis' approach to leadership.

## Looking Ahead

The next issue of the JCLD (October 2021) will be our annual Conversations with Leaders edition. In that issue, we will have numerous conversations with leaders from many different domains (e.g., military, academic, sports, business, etc.). These conversations will detail these leaders' leadership challenges, as well as their successes. This insightful approach to leader and character development gives a unique view of how leaders approach their charge of leadership. It is a great approach to finding out about the developmental journey of these leaders. That insight is useful as we all work on our leadership journey. The February 2022 issue of the JCLD will continue our linkage with the National Character and Leadership Symposium (NCLS) held annually at USAFA. The theme for the 2022 NCLS is Ethics and Respect for Human Dignity. The February 2022 JCLD will have that same theme.

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

# Reimagining Leadership Post COVID-19

Stacey Dietsch, McKinsey & Company

## Defining Leadership

Leadership is the responsibility to inspire and guide the work and careers of a group of people, ensuring the performance and health of that group contributes positively to that of the organization. This definition applies to those who lead agile (temporary) teams as well as to those who lead businesses and organizations.

At McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm that works with organizations across industries and functions to shape strategies, mobilize for change, build capabilities, and drive successful execution, we work with and through leaders.

McKinsey's Organizational Health Index (OHI; McKinsey & Company, n.d.), which measures the practices that define the way an organization runs, puts leadership at the center. Leadership sets the tone for how an organization aligns on a common vision, executes against that vision, and renews itself in the face of competition and change.

Leadership has been front and center this past year, as individual leaders guide their organizations through fear, uncertainty, and now hope.

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**Stacey Dietsch** is a Partner in the Boston office of McKinsey & Company, where she is a leader in McKinsey's People and Organizational Performance Practice and McKinsey Academy, the Firm's capability-building engine. Stacey works with leaders to translate business strategy into talent and culture strategy. Stacey helps organizations accelerate and sustain impact by linking talent to value creation and building capabilities in support of performance aspirations. She specializes in setting talent strategy, fostering leadership development, guiding change management, and boosting the value of human resources in both the public and private sectors across industries and geographies. Stacey is a leading expert in setting and driving agile implementation of talent strategy that proactively identifies and deploys talent to the most important strategic and business as usual priorities. Prior to McKinsey, Stacey worked in Field Training for Starbucks Coffee Corporation and as an Organizational Development consultant at Arthur Andersen. Stacey studied Psychology at Northwestern University and New York University.

**Figure 1**
*Effective Leader Behaviors*

# Certain leadership behaviors have become more important since the COVID crisis

**#** Percent point change

**Leadership behaviors exhibited by the most effective leaders,** change post vs. pre-COVID

### Rising in importance

**+25** **Coaching & consideration** i.e., demonstrating explicit empathy

**+25** Promoting an **inclusive** work environment

**+23** **Being employee focused**

**+15** **Creativity & innovation**

**+15** **Empowers others, i.e., delegating** to others and "standing back"

**+14** **Enables agility**

**+13** **Having comfort with ambiguity**

### Remain important

**Drives change** i.e., being provocative to inspire others to go above and beyond

Managing **consequence and accountability**

Showing **operational excellence**

**Performance management**

**Balances strategy/execution**

Focusing on **competitive insights**

**Customer focused**

### Falling in importance

**-26** **Consultative leadership,** i.e., leading by committee

**-18** **Authoritative leadership,** i.e., being directive, using position to get things done

**-15** **Promoting internal competition,** i.e., fostering competition within teams in pursuit of greater performance

**-15** **Making fully informed decisions,** i.e., having all the facts before acting

Source: McKinsey Leadership survey, fielded June 2020, N = 80                    McKinsey & Company

## Resetting the Bar for Leadership

For decades, the image conjured up by the word "leader" was a ruthless, hard-charging, command and control authority figure. Over time, we've seen a proliferation of different leadership styles and have tried to understand when and how different styles produce results — both on the operational performance of an organization and the health of the culture.

The need for a new leadership baseline is acute. The nature of work is changing at an unprecedented pace through digitization, automation, shifts in generational expectations of work – Boomers working later in life and Millennials wanting to advance faster – and a gig economy that enables dissatisfied workers to bridge more easily to another role.

COVID-19 provided an important moment to study how expectations of leaders are changing in the face of heightened leader visibility and profound uncertainty.

We looked at companies running the OHI survey to ensure both an adequate baseline to show changes over time as well as a holistic approach that included interviews and focus groups[1].

As we analyzed the results, we saw an exciting trend – employees were not looking for the all-knowing authoritative leader, but rather one who promoted an inclusive environment, open to change, and driving accountability at all levels.

As we looked at the individual leadership practices, we were able to cluster those seen most frequently at healthy organizations into three categories: caring, curiosity, and courage. We recognized these as timeless descriptors of the most essential leadership qualities under which specific behavioral expectations linked to culture, context, and strategy naturally fall.

1   We examined 15 years of Organizational Health Index (OHI) data comprising over 2,000 organizations and 6 million data points.

**Figure 2**
*Leadership Behaviors*

## The most important leadership behaviors cluster into three categories

**Caring**

**Coaching & consideration**
i.e., demostrating explicit empathy

Promoting an **inclusive** work environment

**Being employee focused**

**Creativity & innovation**

**Empowers others,** i.e., delegatingto others and "standing back"

**Curiosity**

**Creativity & innovation**

Focusing on **competitive insights**

**Customer focused**

**Enables agility**

**Courage**

Having **comfort with ambiguity**

Managing **consequences and accountability**

**Drives change** i.e., being provacative to inspire others to go above and beyond

McKinsey & Company

### Caring

Leaders must demonstrate care at three levels: commitment to the mission of the organization, investment in themselves, and development of their team.

People who are able to connect their personal sense of meaning to the mission or purpose of their organization are more productive than people who don't, because they authentically care about the success of the organization. This connection increases resilience and can be linked to retention (Dhingra et al., 2021).

Resilience also comes from self-care. Each of us must be healthy and happy to bring our best selves to our colleagues and our work. Conversations with the most successful leaders typically uncover well-being practices built into their daily rhythm – a focus on sleep, mindfulness, regular breaks for meals, and time allocated to family and friends. There is no one-size-fits-all recipe, but each leader must set real boundaries to prioritize self-care.

It is important that leaders are transparent about their self-care, so they role model this for their teams. This is a common miss among leaders who have mastered self-care. They forget to tell their teams why they have blocked specific times, resulting in a perception that they are unavailable or always working, which diminishes the benefit of this focus on self-care.

Once there is self-care and transparency about it, leaders must then focus on caring for their team. This is fundamentally about knowing each team member as a whole person.

The way we see this done best is through dedicated team learning sessions, where teams share their hopes, dreams, and development goals with each other. This can be done when a new team is formed, a new team member joins, and also at regular intervals throughout the year to create a shared understanding of how aspirations adapt as life and work context shifts.

While it is most effective to do this as a team, it is the leader's responsibility to internalize and follow up on the individual aspirations of the team in one-on-

one sessions linked to performance and development, to reinforce the relationship between what individuals share and the talent development the leader facilitates.

Team size is important here. We recommend between eight to 10 direct reports – small enough to easily share two pizzas, when teams can meet in person again.

Through the pandemic, we have seen an increase in organizations that recognize the importance of self-care and its link to performance at work. Many are now offering subscriptions to mindfulness apps as a benefit. At a consumer goods organization, teams have been encouraged to start with a mindfulness minute to ground themselves before the meeting begins. Then, team members share how they are feeling and if there are any interferences that would prevent them from being fully present so others can offer appropriate help.

## Curiosity

Leaders must remain curious about how the world is changing and anticipate the implications on their own sphere of influence.

Two themes in business today have curiosity at their heart – growth mindset and learning culture. In Carol Dweck's book *Mindset*, she introduced us to the concept of a growth mindset – the belief that talent and skill can be developed over time through effort and persistence (2008). We heard this reinforced in Angela Duckworth's *Grit* (2016), which adds passion into the mix. The formula of desire plus effort equals reward helps simplify the concept. Reward can mean many things – and should, as it is highly individual and often guided by a personal sense of purpose.

Within an organization, we see these concepts reframed at the level of culture, specifically a learning culture. Creating a culture that rewards and recognizes learning typically leans toward a more agile operating model, with experimentation as the mantra. To promote a culture of curiosity and experimentation, leaders must guide their teams with an inspiring north star – the collective purpose – and empower their teams to act without fear of failure. This takes systems work, too. To best promote curiosity, individual leaders must operate in an organizational construct guided by rapid cycles of prioritization, execution, measurement, transparent communication, and learning.

In a survey we conducted during the pandemic, we saw a staggering statistic – 98% of the leaders participated in a formal learning program since the pandemic began[2]. This role modeling of curiosity is an essential ingredient in creating a learning culture.

Demand for capability building is high and the virtual format has made it easier for leaders to join. At a medical devices company, they started an executive leadership development series for their top 300 global leaders linked to key strategic and cultural shifts, starting with growth mindset. This series became a monthly routine, a time for leaders to step back and focus on their own learning, with optional electives on topics individual leaders were curious about learning more deeply. These leaders were then asked to help cascade key concepts and tools to their teams, role modeling the importance of self-development and openness to new ideas and ways of working.

## Courage

To be caring and demonstrate or promote curiosity, a leader must have the courage to act. This means making hard choices, surfacing risks that others are not seeing, or even staying the course when others are swerving toward a new fad.

For individual leaders, this starts with sticking to the commitments of self- and team-care by choosing

2   The survey was the McKinsey Accelerate Survey conducted in August 2020 consisting of 868 respondents.

to carve out and preserve the time for these important activities in the face of competing priorities. Having an internal value system helps filter decisions and make important trade-offs.

What comes next is courageous conversations. Courageous conversations start by making yourself vulnerable as a leader, which we know from Amy Edmondson's work is a pre-condition for creating psychological safety in a team (Edmondson, 1999). With a foundation of psychological safety, a leader must have the courage to share honest feedback with team members and peers – and even leaders more senior in the hierarchy – about individual, team, and organizational performance.

Preparation is the key to helping leaders build the confidence to do this. This starts by taking time to ask for and understand the facts pertaining to a decision. The next step is to formulate a perspective – or at least a set of questions – on the topic at hand. Entering into dialogue with a spirit of curiosity – an assumption of positive intent – can help regulate the tension that might be present.

Organizations can build courage into the culture by cultivating space for these conversations at regular intervals, from daily stand-ups to quarterly business reviews, and by rewarding leaders and employees who demonstrate courage.

At consumer goods company, the top team instituted challenge sessions during the pandemic. The team meets weekly to review progress on their transformation. Underperforming initiative teams are invited to present their case, while the rest of the top team asks questions and provides guidance. The expectation is that every leader will ask a question and offer a perspective, demonstrating both genuine curiosity for the context and courage in sharing an idea for a solution.

## Building Caring, Curiosity, and Courage

Creating a population of caring, curious, and courageous leaders is the job of everyone in an organization, as the collective behaviors of each individual create the culture that either welcomes or shuts down these essential attributes.

We are in the *Talent Wins* era of business performance (Charan et al., 2018). It is now more widely understood than ever that an organization will not succeed if it does not have the right people – and that the behaviors of those people matter significantly.

Because leaders are very visible role models, it is essential to attract, develop, and retain the right leaders to role model a culture of caring, curiosity, and courage.

This work must be owned collectively by the top team in an organization, so there is a holistic view of the leadership needs that balances the fundamental attributes of caring, curiosity, and courage with strategic priorities, mission execution, and financial stewardship. In the private sector, we talk about the G3 – Chief Executive Office (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and Chief Human Resources Officers (CHRO)– who must be at the center of the processes that connect talent to value, through leadership.

At the healthiest organizations, we see the G3 driving an integrated process that links business strategy and talent strategy, ensuring the right investments are made in both. They do this by playing a role throughout the hire-to-retire process – and by ensuring quarterly business reviews track progress and impact holistically.

### Acquiring and Promoting

Choosing the right leaders to hire or promote is foundational and deserves significant attention from the top team. It should be based on the delicate balance between data and leadership dialogues that validate what the data say and put them in context of the mission and mandate for the role.

We see the most successful organizations use multiple sources to screen holistically. These include a suite of assessments linked to personality, acumen, and culture; problem-solving interviews that put leaders into real world scenarios; and 360-degree interviews to give peers and potential reports input into the decision to assess the type of environment the leader creates.

At a logistics start-up, interviewers shared a real-world business challenge and asked the candidates to share what they would do. By asking the same question, the interview remained fair, the leadership team heard multiple interesting ideas, and they were able to see how a candidate's experience and approach translated into the needs of their organization.

### Onboarding

Leadership onboarding is often neglected and this omission is a key source of turnover in the first year, which is extremely expensive for an organization, both in terms actual cost as well as impact to the culture and team dynamic. An onboarding program that sets the right expectations and builds the associated capabilities is a strategic investment that often outweighs the cost of executive search and other interventions linked to year one turnover.

Key elements of successful leadership onboarding include clarity of expectations in terms of performance, culture, and personal behaviors; time for personal reflection on individual strengths, opportunities, and how they will contribute to the achievement of the leader's mandate; one-on-one time with each team member; one-on-one time with key internal and external stakeholders to co-create a shared vision of success; and work on a leadership story that helps the leader articulate her or his vision and the collaborative plan to achieve it.

At a healthcare company, leaders are onboarded in cross-functional cohorts, to establish belonging from the start. Each cohort is introduced to the organization's purpose, hearing from actual members to understand the impact of the work they do. They are then introduced the company's leadership model, where they are invited to self-assess against the elements, design a leadership plan, and receive peer coaching on the plan. These groups stay connected monthly throughout their first year to provide accountability and a mini-board of peer advisors on questions of strategy, execution, or integration into the culture.

In some cases, additional capability building is required to ensure the leader is set up for success. This is especially true for first time leaders, leaders new to an organization, and those taking a step up in sphere of accountability and influence. In these cases, leaders will likely need a tailored combination of formal leadership development, coaching, reverse mentorship, special projects to develop skills and/or relationships, and linkages to external peer or industry networks.

### Assessing Impact

Fairness is the essential ingredient to performance management. To demonstrate fairness, expectations must be explicit before the role is taken, revisited on a regular cadence, and associated with the appropriate reward and consequences.

Leader assessments should balance performance results and behavioral impact, specifically assessing the level of caring, curiosity, and courage demonstrated throughout the review period.

The assessment of a leader's performance must be holistic, derived from a collection of indicators that reinforce the culture. Perceptions of unfairness by the leader or the leader's peers and direct reports, can significantly inhibit the achievement of organizational strategy and culture.

For this reason, leaders should be assessed regularly. For those with a greater sphere of influence, such as the top team, an evaluator outside the chain of command

should conduct a review to collect unbiased facts and synthesized observations.

At a financial services company, employees are asked to own their assessment, documenting the goals they commit to and their impact throughout the year. These self-assessments are the foundation for ongoing dialogues with supervisors, who act as catalysts and coaches to their team members to help them reach their full potential. This living document is then the foundation for the end of year review that the supervisor completes in dialogue with stakeholders and the employee.

*Ongoing Development*
Leaders must continue to develop in and across leadership roles. The interest and willingness to take on a new challenge, learn a new topic, or work with new team members demonstrates curiosity and courage. It should not be acceptable for leaders to stay in role without some clear demonstration that they want to grow and stretch themselves to deliver even more impact to the organization.

Development can happen through a variety of experiences and should be increasingly individualized as leaders advance. Leaders themselves must own this development and keep it centered on the aspirations they set and revisit on a regular basis.

It is the role of the talent organization to understand the full range of options, acting as curators of content and experience, knowing the best sources and matching those to the needs of each leader cohort.

The ability to do this stems from the curiosity of members of the talent team themselves as they seek out the latest research and trends and talk to peers about what has worked in building organizational and individual capability.

McKinsey's Consortium for Learning Innovation is one such body that convenes leading thinkers and doers in the field of adult learning – from neuroscientists to education technology providers – with the intent of exponentially advancing the collective ability to create meaningful learning experiences and careers (McKinsey & Company, n.d.). Members are invited to

**Figure 3**
*McKinsey Influence Model*

## Influence model



**Skills required for change**
"I have the skills, capabilities and opportunities to behave in the new way"

**Reinforcement mechanisms**
"The processes and systems reinforce the change in behavior I am being asked to make"

**Personal choice**
"I have insight and choose to transform"

**Role-modeling**
"I see leaders, peers, and those whom I respect with the new right mindsets and behaviors"

**Understanding and conviction**
"I know what is expected of me, I agree with it, and it in meaningful"

McKinsey & Company

pose questions or showcase research and receive input from this multi-disciplinary peer group.

In all cases, the approach to ongoing development should be a blended journey through a collection of experiences that stretch the leader to think, act, and lead differently, and increase their impact on the organization. Elements of this journey can include a formal development plan, annual learning budget for each leader, and annual cross-organizational capability building programs linked to critical shifts in strategy or culture.

### Executing on this Responsibility

Building a caring, curious, and courageous organization takes a consistent approach to change management. At McKinsey we employ the Influence Model to ensure there is a holistic plan to communicate, embed, develop, and reward the desired change.

We want leaders to make the choice to be caring, curious, and courageous. To help them get there, we start with examples of other leaders and influencers behaving in the desired manner. Then comes storytelling to demonstrate the why, what, and how in a compelling what that enables leaders to connect to the expectations at an emotional level, not just through logic. From there, organizations must ensure that systems and processes consistently incentivize the desired change. Finally, time and attention must be given to continually upskilling leaders to give them the tools and time to practice them.

The goals is that today's leaders inspire the next generation to care, be curious, and act courageously in service of organizational and personal performance and health.

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FEATURE ARTICLES

# Human in the Loop: Leadership in a Disrupted Environment

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Leaders find themselves disrupted constantly in the digitally enabled world. At the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), researchers discovered that technology and other forces only disrupt an organization if the leaders allow them to impact performance and productivity (Center for Creative Leadership, 2020a). Extrapolating these lessons from the business world into the military environment unlocks opportunities to ensure America's national defense remains ready and resolute for future challenges. Regardless of the pace of implementing cutting-edge technologies in national defense, the human leader remains in control of how disruption impacts their organization and mission.

In December of 2015, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work said in a symposium held by the Center for New American Studies (CNAS), "...we believe, strongly, that humans should be the only ones to decide when to use lethal force.  But when you're under attack, especially at machine speeds, we want to have a machine that can protect us" (2015). Following his remarks, the presentation euphemistically became known as the "human in the loop" speech. The Deputy Secretary firmly established in future decisions that although emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence (AI), could identify, assess, and act faster than humans, the defense department

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would not allow it. Human leaders— applying ethics, judgment, and national values—would ultimately make decisions regarding the use of force. The business world experiences these same challenges without the 'use of force' element every day. Lessons from these strategic decisions are helpful to explore as leaders embark on critical decisions in a disrupted world.

In 2020, the CCL conducted a groundbreaking study during the global pandemic to determine how leaders were coping with and leveraging disruptions in their organizations. The results of the survey yielded five major disruptions that were common across the hundreds of respondents:

- big data and analytics,
- crafting an innovative culture,
- artificial intelligence,
- equity, diversity, and inclusion, and
- communications overload.

They share a common element: the pace of the disruptive force is increasing exponentially in organizations globally. CCL developed strategies recommended to solve and leverage these disruptions, which can also be universally applied to both the public and private sector—keeping the "human in the loop" as a central theme to them all.

## Big Data and Analytics to Create New Opportunities

The world of business is still exploring how analytics of big data will create opportunities in the coming decades. The challenge from analytics points to how leaders and employees are adapting to this trend. Most report a slow adoption of big data and analytics (CCL, 2020a). The global conglomerates identified the trend earlier than most and could pivot to establish new organizations and procedures to harness the potential of big data with customers, clients, and product development. Even the global firms are being disrupted by the power of big data, and CCL sees evidence of that tension in medium- and smaller-sized businesses to be even greater. Leaders shared their concerns over this emerging trend and how business leaders perceived challenges from big data can serve to inform military leaders. The trends indicated that while data creates a competitive advantage for an organization, most of the strategic and upper-level leaders did not recognize how to leverage big data for business opportunities (CCL, 2020a). Most respondents felt that the culture of their organization was not capable of transforming to "unlock data's power" (CCL, 2020a). Solutions must be available for these types of challenges.

CCL offered several strategies to solving for big data that are built from years of research into leadership

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development. The first is targeted assessments of skill gaps that inhibit a greater adoption of big data into the business (CCL, 2020a). By communicating with leaders about their concerns and blind spots, organizations can work toward precisely developing an agile culture that embraces big data. Another strategy is identifying how leaders think, act, and influence strategically to integrate the emergence of big data and analytics into the organization's strategy. In many cases, leaders are challenged to see big data as a resource and analytics as a means to achieve new business goals. Addressing how strategic leaders think, act, and influence the inclusion of big data and analytics into their organization's overall business and leadership strategies can reverse the disruption and create opportunities. Finally, organizational cultures develop ways of working spontaneously through the social interactions of its employees. The organizations require a culture shift to adopt and integrate the capabilities of big data and analytics or it will lead to a less effective disruption. CCL's research into transforming cultures (McGuire, 2009) reveals that leading culture change is a leadership imperative that involves planning and commitment. Adopting big data and ways to make it readily accessible to all elements of an organization can trigger culture change. The benefits and rewards of bringing big data and analytics into an organization far outweigh the risks and leaders find themselves seeking to leverage this disruptive force for the benefit of their business and customers (CCL, 2020a).

## Creating an Innovative Culture Involves New Mindsets

Agile innovation is a somewhat older concept, dating back to the 1950's in the economic boom after World War II. Why then did 53% of respondents identify "agile innovation" as a top disruptive trend in CCL's 2020 survey (CCL, 2020a)? It would seem surprising that businesses are still adapting their cultures to be

more innovative to meet customer needs. Leaders acknowledged innovation as a key driver for business success and further identified how it disrupts internal processes, teams, and existing relationships due to its pace and urgency. Businesses disrupt themselves as they keep pace with customer needs and the market's competition. CCL research informs several solution strategies to this type of disruption.

Innovation within a business is vital to growth and product refinement while being an internal force that generates challenges to the organization and leadership culture. A known strategy that allows businesses to pivot and accept innovative disruption is to build trust and psychological safety across boundaries internally. People are normally cautious and intentional about relationships outside their teams and siloes. Leaders who deliberately develop their people to forge common ground and find ways to weave interdependence into their way of innovating new ideas thrive in the face of market disruption (CCL, 2020a). Another strategy to consider is creating tolerance for risk that fosters learning agility. Innovating, as a business process, creates risk by diverting talent and resources away from the main efforts of the core business. The outcomes are not always certain. When leaders open the aperture for risk tolerance in the leadership culture, innovation is accepted as an opportunity and not rejected as a risk. One key method for encouraging acceptable risk is to empower high-potential talent with the authority to experiment and share results. Finally, enabling the organization to have better conversations internally across stakeholder boundaries fosters innovation as an element of the culture. Better conversations are characterized by the following four actions: 1) listening to understand, 2) asking powerful questions, 3) challenging with feedback, and 4) extending support (CCL, 2020b) in order to ensure that innovation is part of the solution to business challenges. Fostering

an innovation culture takes leadership attention and effort to yield amazing results.

## Artificial Intelligence Disrupts the Humans in the Business

Watching an assembly line in a huge automobile manufacturer triggers an interesting observation: there are human workers watching and observing the robotic machines assembling the cars. Humans are incapable of working as fast and efficiently as the artificial intelligence (AI) guiding the machines and yet, the AI has no history or emotional investment in the values and brand of that automobile company. As military leaders consider the disruptive impact of AI as the "Third Offset" (Work, 2015) in military technology, the similarities with business leaders begin to emerge.

Leaders told CCL that AI would fundamentally cause businesses to rethink how they approach their way of working. The impacts have been measured and incremental and are now exponentially creating a reverberating disruption globally. AI is affecting nearly every sector of the global economy. As this wave affects the world of business, repurposing AI to eliminate costs and increase efficiency, the stakes with humans in the workplace have never been higher. The AI disruption can be leveraged with effective strategies to keep the focus on how humans and machines create opportunities together (CCL, 2020a).

The first strategy that CCL recommends is to invest deeply in the people skills around exceptional customer and employee experiences. CCL authored groundbreaking research on the "Four Fundamental Leadership Skills" for all levels of leaders: self-awareness, communications, influence, and learning agility. As AI disrupts a business or an organization,

these skills become vital links to the workforce to create empathy and drive decisions to ensure human interaction is not overlooked. Secondly, establishing a new vision with the purpose of integrating AI fosters the ability for an organization to begin changing and adopting to mitigate the disruption. The three "C's" of change—communicating the why; collaborating across boundaries; and committing to the purpose—reduce the impacts of new AI processes in the organization and create new possibilities. As AI becomes prevalent within an organization, leaders should be reminded to refresh the talent pipeline with a strategy aimed at adopting a new way of working. Often, talent development addresses the pressing current needs of an organization. AI is disruptive to talent development by creating unmet future demands for employees, so CCL suggests focusing on the diversity of the talented

> *The three "C's" of change—communicating the why; collaborating across boundaries; and committing to the purpose—reduce the impacts of new AI processes in the organization and create new possibilities.*

workforce and refreshing the approach to filling the talent gaps created by AI. AI will continue to grow in importance to the public and private sectors and disrupt established business cultures unless leaders proactively adapt the human workforce to seek new opportunities (CCL, 2020a).

## Tomorrow's Workforce Excels with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as a Centerpiece

Leaders consistently cited equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as highly valued in their workplace. They also identified the disruption around EDI to

be moving past awareness to actual practice of EDI values resulting in a culture of belonging. EDI is a fundamental standard by which to guide leadership in all organizations and requires constant attention to the norms and practices that support it. These norms matter to the entire workforce and reveal a leadership imperative to pay constant attention and engage in countermeasures to eliminate beliefs and practices not aligned with the organization's EDI values (CCL, 2020a).

CCL's REALTM framework provides leaders a way forward—revealing relevant issues through facilitated discovery; selecting strategically relevant actions to elevate equity; activating diversity; and leading more inclusively (CCL, 2020a). Leading EDI in a culture is every leader's responsibility; however, it is often segmented into the human resources function. CCL's first strategy to reduce disruption and build trust around EDI is to start with an internal look at the organizations processes, practices, and behaviors to spot the EDI blind spots that it might have and address them with the above principles in mind. Next, leaders can conduct a network analysis exercise within the organization to find EDI champions to activate and authorize to support an inclusive culture. Connections and belonging are foundational to EDI as a positive culture in the workforce and often champions help make those connections. Finally, managers are not always equipped to coach and provide feedback with EDI informing their interactions. If feedback becomes part of an organization's culture and managers are attuned to the positive forces that involve social identity, they create incredible momentum that reduces EDI as a disruption (CCL, 2020a).

## Countering the Chaos of Communication Overload

Over a third of the leaders who shared disruptions

with CCL defined communications management as a disruptor in their businesses (CCL, 2020a). There are many challenges that public and private sector leaders share with communications—from a lack of credible communications to incoherency among message streams, to the challenge of being overwhelmed by the staggering volume of communications—both internal and external. The complexity of communication management leads many leaders to describe how this creates disruption at all levels.

CCL has identified strategies for investing in leaders to reduce communications challenges beginning with promoting a resilient workforce. Surprisingly, the tidal wave of communications effects workforces both emotionally and professionally. Boosting resilience to avoid burning out is a practice developed by CCL that counters the strains of being overwhelmed by the multiple modalities of email, text, video, etc., that plague many leaders. Creating authentic, coherent, and powerful messages within communications management plans are another vital way to reduce disruption in the workplace. Leaders rarely pause to focus on how, when, and to whom a message is designed. Marketing groups are equipped to create precision in customer messaging and yet, the internal workforce is oftentimes forgotten in the maelstrom of messaging. CCL has found that a focus on message coherency reduces the disruptive nature of communications. Finally, when leaders gauge or measure their communications challenges by whether they create direction, alignment, and commitment within the organization, it helps them re-calibrate their messages to achieve collective results. CCL's research into effective leadership was published in 2008 (Drath et al., 2008). This research identified that when direction, alignment, and commitment are measurable and present in an organization, the team and business will see lasting outcomes from their efforts.

Communicating, internally and externally, is firmly a responsibility of every leader and when harmonized, reduces disruption (CCL, 2020a).

## Navigating Disruptions to Create Opportunities Requires the Human Factor of Leadership

CCL's 2020 research into identifying current disruptive trends and providing ways to solve for these challenges is re-shaping approaches for developing leaders. Leaders in the military, private sector, and government can reduce the multi-layered complexity of disruption by focusing on what makes us uniquely human and how humans, and thus organizations, react to disruption. The five trends—big data analytics; crafting an innovative culture; artificial intelligence; equity, diversity and inclusion; and communications overload—as identified by hundreds of leaders, are creating a chaotic and uncertain path towards being prosperous and healthy organizations. Lessons from business can apply directly to military and government counterparts finding similar disruptions encountered in the pursuit of their national missions. Keeping the focus on the 'human in the loop' is a research-supported strategy of creating opportunities.

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## FEATURE ARTICLES

# How Leaders Shape Innovation: A Seemingly Paradoxical Yet Necessary Endeavor

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During Operation Allied Force, the B-2 Spirit or "stealth bomber" was tasked with less than 1% of the total missions. Despite such limited use, however, the B-2 accounted for more than a third of the targets destroyed in the first two months of the conflict. To date, no B-2 has been lost in combat and the aircraft remains an effective tool in the arsenal of the United States military. The success of the B-2 can be attributed to a range of factors including its unique capabilities as a long range and extended duration aircraft in that there are no other aircraft like it in operation. In addition, the B-2 is notable in its novelty around defensive and elusive capabilities, which has allowed it to remain largely, if not entirely, undetected by the enemy. Such novel components include innovations ranging from radar-absorbing materials, radar reflective curved surfaces, and heat absorbing tiles that reduce detection of engine heat. To see the plane, if one is fortunate enough to do so given its moniker and rarity, is to recognize how wholly unique it is as an aircraft.

Creative thinking and novel design are hardly the purview, however, of the U.S. or its allies (Grissom, 2006). Thucydides (Thucydides, ca. 460 B.C.E./1972) illustrates the profound impact of innovation in conflict via the "proto flamethrower" used by the Boetians in the Peloponnesian War around 420 BC. In WWII, the German designed and manufactured "Tiger" tank was also uniquely feared as a tool of war. Such fear, it seems, was not unwarranted. A review by Willbeck (2004) revealed that Tiger tanks killed an impressive 11.52 tanks for every one lost in battle. Reasons for the success of the Tiger tank range from novel, extensive, and detailed engineering to heavy application of armor plating that other rival tanks were not able to replicate to, perhaps more importantly, being the first to effectively utilize radios.  Such a novel communication approach permitted coordination among units in ways that adversaries lacked. German forces were similarly innovative in their tactics and strategy, showcasing creative thought beyond design and engineering in the use of the blitzkrieg attack (Grissom, 2006). In the more modern era, novel thinking remains central to enemy capacity and capability. Use of hobbyist drones by terrorist organizations and application of cyberwarfare tactics to influence key elections represent modern approaches by the enemy that are threatening, in no small part, due to the originality that characterizes them. Although other examples exist, the above illustrations should suffice to highlight a key takeaway central to our understanding of leading in the military, homeland security, and beyond:  innovation is central to military effectiveness.

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## Defining Creativity and Innovation as a Process

Most of us have our own implicit definition of what *creativity* represents, yet it is useful to establish a working definition as a common framework for our discussion here. Creativity is defined as the generation of ideas that are both novel and useful or serve some purpose (Amabile, 1988). Thus, novel ideas that do not help solve a problem may be fun, wacky, or interesting but are not creative by this definition. Conversely, ideas that clearly solve a problem in a traditional way are certainly valued as solutions but are also not deemed creative by this definition. Rather, such ideas are more simply defined as effective solutions to a problem.

Innovation, in contrast to the generative nature of creativity, is defined as the implementation of creative ideas (West, 2002). Apparent with these definitions is that creativity and innovation are best represented as a series of processes that interconnect and flow between one another. As such, when discussing leadership for creativity and innovation, it is most accurate to think of success as resulting from performing well across a series of processes rather than being successful at a single task or stage of innovation. Put more directly, leading for innovation is not simply doing well at a generative, brainstorming session but rather influencing how problems are viewed and framed, how solutions are generated, and how they are evaluated and ultimately implemented.

## Why Supporting Innovative Efforts is Critical

If we accept the broad premise that innovation is a key component to long-term success across a range of organizational entities, it is useful to outline more specifically why supporting and ultimately, leading for innovation is so critical. Research offers two primary reasons innovation is essential to military thinking and beyond: gaining a competitive edge and building increased capacity to solve emerging problems in an agile way.

**Competitive Edge.** The first core reason, alluded to via the illustrations offered at the outset of our discussion, is that innovation is central to gaining a competitive edge (Cropley & Cropley, 2008). This competitive edge, however, can manifest in two related but somewhat unique ways. The first is through the pursuit of a common goal, whereby the first to achieve that goal gains an advantage over those who either do not achieve that goal or do so later than their competitor. In relatively recent history, perhaps the most direct illustration of this is the competition between the Soviet Union and United States in their pursuit of space superiority. Although on the surface, it may seem that putting a person on the moon was primarily a noble scientific and perhaps somewhat abstract goal; an underlying tension was between two nations and, ultimately, two forms of governing and ideological foci. The Soviet Union represented an efficient approach to innovation via communism,

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while the U.S. was more rebellious and dynamic in its approach via the application of democratic ideals. As would be surmised given such tension, when Russia successfully launched Sputnik, the first Earth orbiting satellite in 1957, there was a legitimate fear that a democratic model of governing would be viewed by the world as inferior. Visionary leadership via President John F. Kennedy, as well as expertise garnered from unsung female scientists (Holt, 2016) and talented - albeit controversial - German scientists fleeing Europe, ultimately led to the U.S. putting Buzz Aldrin on the moon well ahead of schedule and Russian competitors.

In contrast to the form of competition that aims to claim territory first (physical or mental), the second form of a competitive edge is more direct, where tools and tactics are utilized against an enemy. The aforementioned conflict between German Tiger tanks, European Allies, and U.S. made Sherman tanks is an illustration, as is the continued escalating competition between body armor and emerging forms of ballistic technology. Additional modern illustrations are available via competition in the form of security and detection, and extremist organizations' attempts to thwart them. Look no further than Ibrahim Al-Asiri's attempts to thwart body scanners via the use of embedded explosive devices under the skin. In this more direct form of competition, novel approaches give a clear tactical edge over one's adversary.

**Problem Solving Capacity and Agility.** Leaders who build organizations and units that are capable of innovating and gaining a competitive advantage over those less innovative have at their disposal a critical secondary ability: problem solving. That is, organizational entities adept at generating novel

*...innovation enables military organizations to be more powerfully proactive (i.e., staying ahead of their competitors and opponents), while secondarily granting them the capacity to react to new challenges in flexible and efficient ways.*

solutions and innovating have in place the policies, tools, and norms to solve emergent, everyday problems more effectively than those that are more rigid and less innovative. For example, Ford Motor Company, the company that instantiated the Detroit muscle car movement, was able to shift production during WWII to produce B-24 Liberator bombers. Likewise, Amazon in its early days simply sold books via the internet but as opportunities arose, shifted to the purchasing and shipping giant that it is today. Innovative

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organizations can shift and pivot in ways that those that are less innovative cannot. The implication here is that by developing an organization with innovative capacity, that organization secondarily becomes more capable at dealing with emerging and unanticipated problems. In fact, for highly innovative organizations, these unanticipated problems cease being problems and are instead viewed as opportunities. Taken together, innovation enables military organizations to be more powerfully proactive (i.e., staying ahead of their competitors and opponents), while secondarily granting them the capacity to react to new challenges in flexible and efficient ways.

## Why is Leading for Innovation Challenging?

If innovation is important, why then does innovation top the list of so many leaders as a difficult endeavor to pursue? Across surveys by consulting firms and organizations such as Development Dimensions International (DDI), PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and IBM, innovation was listed as one of, if not the, top sought-after outcomes; yet innovation was simultaneously also noted as a core weakness across hundreds of organizations (Hunter et al., 2013). This theme has been a consistent one in the academic literature as well – organizations seek innovative solutions but are unsure how to effectively accomplish that end (Mumford & Hunter, 2005). In fact, such a sentiment has given rise to the notion of an innovation paradox, where the pursuit of innovation is not only viewed as challenging but often at odds with traditional forms of organizational functioning (Bledow et al., 2009). In the military context specifically, Rosen (1991) reviewed 20 key innovations and depicted innovation as a type of ideological struggle, requiring a challenging alignment among forces seeking varying and often conflicting goals.

These challenges, tensions, or paradoxes were described in detail as they related to leading innovation processes (Hunter et al., 2011). Specifically, we outlined

14 different paradoxes leaders face in the pursuit of innovation and how to overcome them. Amongst those paradoxes, however, three stand out as most useful in highlighting the challenges leaders must overcome if innovation is a primary goal. In what is referred to as the *failure/success paradox*, for example, leaders face a tension developing "an organizational culture that embraces risk and failure yet is able to produce successful outcomes" (Hunter et al, 2011, pp. 55). Such tension is readily apparent in high stakes scenarios where taking a risk can result in destruction and potential loss of life. In such circumstances, however, failing to generate novel solutions to problems and operating in a stagnant manner can be equally as dangerous.

As a second illustration of an innovation challenge, the *champion/evaluator* paradox is defined as the tension occurring when leaders must be critical as they evaluate ideas and decide which to pursue, and then pivot to serve as a champion for the chosen idea to upper-level leadership and external stakeholders. This is a type of internal paradox that produces dissonance within the individual and can be challenging to perceive oneself as authentic given such conflicting behaviors. The third tension, known as the *vision/autonomy paradox*, occurs when a leader must "provide a vision and direction to team members but also allow for high levels of autonomy" (Hunter et al, 2011, pp. 55). In many military contexts, giving and receiving orders is central to expediency and, ultimately, successful operations. In situations requiring novel ideas, however, autonomy is a critical part of the process and can be at odds with the culture and norms of a typical command and control context.

Although other examples exist (Miron-Spektor et al., 2017), these three paradoxes serve to highlight a central theme in the leading for innovation literature: Leading for innovation is difficult and if not addressed specifically and directly, innovation will not occur. Stated differently, organizations that pursue a business-as-usual approach will not find

success in innovative endeavors. Instead, leaders must be proactive in developing their approach to innovation. In the next section, we outline how leaders can do just that.

## How Leaders Shape Innovation: Indirect and Direct Influences

Building to this section, we offered that innovation is a worthy if not necessary endeavor and that success in such an endeavor does not come readily. As a final chapter in our discussion, we turn now to how leaders impact innovation with the aim of offering guidance on how to succeed as innovative leaders. To do so, we turn to an indirect and direct model of leading innovation (Hunter & Cushenbery, 2011; see also Hunter, Cushenbery, & Jayne, 2017). In this framework, leaders are depicted as not only shepherds of creative ideas from subordinates, but also as a part of the innovation process whereby they too contribute to the creative ecosystem. An apt metaphor for this indirect and direct model of leading for innovation is a movie director tasked to develop an innovative film project. The director indirectly impacts innovation in multiple ways, including the staff hired, the actors chosen for the film's roles, and the sets constructed. The director, however, also impacts innovation more directly by the scenes they edit and retain, the words they direct others to say and, at times, the performance they offer if they choose to step in front of the camera themselves. Likewise, military leaders also play a hand in forming ideas, selecting ideas, and making personnel promotion decisions that shape the innovative climates and cultures of their organization. The indirect and direct framework captures the complexity of leading for innovation in that leaders should not only be depicted as drivers who solicit and encourage others to generate novel solutions, but also as participants in generating solutions and play a central role in choosing the path once novel options are developed.

*Indirect Influences.* Leaders shape innovation indirectly in four primary but related ways. First, they role model behaviors that showcase what is acceptable and unacceptable in their unit or organization. Leaders who ask others to take risks and offer unique ideas but who do not do so themselves will limit their ability to generate truly novel solutions. Instead, leaders must serve as role models for creative thinking and unconventional behavior. As is the case in other contexts, leaders are respected for their ability to "lead from the front" (Johnson, 2015) and the phenomenon of innovation is not unique in this regard.

> *...leaders must bring together diverse ideas, which often means engaging with differing perspectives and those with diverse backgrounds.*

Second, leaders set the tone for creative thinking by the rewards and recognition they provide. Because creative ideas often fail, leaders should reward attempts to introduce and share out-of-the-box ideas regardless of their likelihood of success. In contrast, leaders who only reward successes will indirectly send the message that only ideas that clearly produce predictable outcomes are valued. The unique demands of innovation require an openness to a range of ideas, many of which seem odd or strange on the surface initially. Tools that are commonplace in the arsenal of the modern military such as the Tomahawk missile and Predator Drone (Grissom, 2006; Lee, 2019), for example, were once viewed with severe skepticism and resistance. Leadership was essential in transitioning from resistance to utilization.

The third way leaders indirectly shape innovation is through the teams they form (Thayer et al., 2018). Leaders cannot simply place a group of homogenous thinkers together and naïvely hope for a novel

breakthrough (Miller, 2021). Instead, leaders must bring together diverse ideas, which often means engaging with differing perspectives and those with diverse backgrounds. As leaders, they must then actively manage such differences in perspectives to allow for the communication and exchange that permits novel ideas to emerge.

This brings us to the fourth indirect way that leaders shape innovation: through the climate they help establish. Climate represents people's perception about which set of behaviors are valued in a given team or organization. Climate is established in many ways, including the behaviors a leader engages in, the rewards given, and the people recognized as having a voice. The most common form of climate linked to creativity, however, is psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety means that individuals feel comfortable offering ideas that might be perceived as weird, wacky, or strange. How a leader responds to such ideas will fundamentally set the tone, and by proxy the climate, for a given unit, team, or organizational entity (Carmeli et al., 2010).

***Direct Influences.*** If indirect influences represent the "stage" set by a leader, direct influences are the specific direction offered from a leader. Recall earlier that an accurate representation of leading for innovation requires that leaders be recognized as part of the innovation ecosystem. As leaders, experience, wisdom, and knowledge are all essential ingredients for solving complex problems, and ignoring what leaders can contribute to innovation removes a crucial tool from an organization's problem-solving tool kit. Thus, leaders must be accurately depicted as not only decision makers and shepherds but also as idea generators themselves. Thus, the first direct way that leaders impact innovation is by offering their own ideas and solutions to solving problems. How leaders offer ideas, moreover, flows back to indirect influences as well. A leader who provides a novel and perhaps unconventional idea implicitly

sends the message that such ideas are reasonable and acceptable in that unit or team. In innovation, as in leading more broadly, leaders have to get their hands dirty alongside those doing the work.

The second way in which leaders directly shape innovation is through the strategy and vision they establish. Leadership is, at its core, a process of guiding and aligning others toward a goal. Leaders who set a vision or mission that has, as its primary outcome, creativity and innovation will be more likely to see novel ideas generated and instantiated. Put more simply, if a leader desires creative solutions, they must set a vision that requires and values them as part of that vision. As an illustration, Engel (1994) describes the development of the Tomahawk cruise missile as a result of a vision surrounding the establishment of a team that comprised both senior and mid-level officers. This coalition in the vision that defined the team was critical to overcoming barriers to the innovative tool that became a mainstay of the U.S. Navy (Grissom, 2006).

The third way leaders directly shape innovation is through resource allocation. If novel ideas receive few or no resources, innovation is unlikely to flourish. On the surface such advice may seem obvious, yet it is critical to bear in mind that novel ideas face significant bias. The more novel an idea, the more likely that idea is to be rejected. Framed differently, there is a natural tendency to prefer ideas that are "tried and true" rather than those that are untested. As such, these ideas tend to receive greater support and, by proxy, resources. If, however, a goal is to generate creative ideas and implement them, leaders must directly and explicitly focus on supporting ideas that are unique and may not present a clear and obvious return on investment. Leaders are in a unique position to be able to direct and guide original solutions from initial resistance to fully fledged breakthroughs.

The fourth and final way leaders directly shape innovation is through the decisions made surrounding novel ideas (Mueller et al., 2018). Consider as an illustration the head football coach who is facing a difficult defense on the opposing side. That coach can choose a more traditional approach or perhaps a new wrinkle or novel "trick play". As other examples, the CEO of a toy company chooses the lineup for the holiday season and the movie director chooses the scene edits or addition of an unconventional musical score. In a military context, leaders must decide if more conventional operations are the best approach or if an unconventional method would yield superior results. Lee (2019), for instance, discusses the thinking around the use and adoption of Predator Drones. Strongly resisted initially for a host of reasons, U.S. Air Force (USAF) General Ronald Fogleman ultimately made the case for the unconventional application and utilization of the Predator that became a core tool for the USAF. Such examples illustrate that not only do leaders shape the ideas that receive resource support, but also serve as gatekeepers to those ideas moving further in the innovation process. Leaders serve as key driving forces in soliciting original thinking, curating those ideas, and ultimately deciding if such ideas make their way into implementation.

## Sustained Innovative Success

To state the obvious albeit with implications that may be less obvious, innovation is easier in an organization when innovation has been previously successful. As a result, organizations that have historically limited their approach to innovation find it more difficult to develop a culture of innovation than those who have been built on, and found success via, an innovative approach or strategy. Therein lies a critical challenge for leaders seeking to develop and encourage innovation: building a long-term approach to innovating. Fortunately, there are four practical ways emerging from science and practice to guide sustained innovation.

The first lesson is taken from success at companies like Lockheed Martin in their Skunk Works model, which resulted in the development of aircraft such as the P-80 Shooting Star, the U-2 spy plane, and the SR-71 Blackbird. Other organizations have followed similar models to develop such advancements as the Motorola Razr, which revolutionized the cell phone market. Even organizations well known for innovation such as Google, have a branch or site dedicated to "moonshot" ideas. In Google's case, the Google X branch is home to its innovation research agenda. The approach utilized by these organizations, and many others, is to create a space for innovation away from the prying eyes of those that might dismiss more radical solutions before they have had a chance to develop and refine said ideas. The lesson is not to build a multimillion-dollar off-site and high-tech space, although that certainly helps; rather, the lesson is to create a location where individuals are free to express, test, and refine novel solutions without critical judgement. This can be as simple as an office dedicated to creative thinking where the understanding is, "in this space, all ideas are respected and considered". By carving out such a space, individuals can begin to build norms around developing, sharing, and improving creative ideas (Kallio et al., 2015). Once established in a small scale, these norms can be expanded on a larger scale in the organization.

Along related lines, a second lesson comes from organizations such as Lockheed Martin, which carefully and selectively develops established branches or units recognized as being innovative leaders. Such organizations will then purposefully bring in other individuals to that unit as a means to introduce them to what the creative process looks like, with the hope of training that individual to take those lessons back to their home unit. Individuals remain in the organization for a finite time, work on creative projects, and learn approaches and tactics for innovating. Such a model is an extension of the Skunk Works approach in that it

also emphasizes an established creative "home base", and then leverages the successes to establish a broader culture of innovating.

An implicit assumption throughout the discussion here is that innovation is highly unlikely or simply impossible without leadership aimed directly at supporting novel thinking and idea development. As such, organizations seeking to establish a long-term approach and strategy for innovation must be careful in who they select or task with serving as innovative leaders. Grissom (2006) notes that both Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson struggled with replacing older, more traditional senior leaders and innovation suffered as a result. Thus, in more traditional organizations, fresh thinking often occurs through seeking and hiring leaders who have a proven track record of innovative success. In organizations such as the military, selection may be more difficult and, instead, may be driven by task assignment. In either case, the central premise, and third lesson on sustained innovation holds:  building a culture of innovation means showing what innovative success looks like. Early wins can be crucial in establishing that culture, and care must be given to whomever is assigned a "leading for innovation" role within that organization. Drawing from our indirect and direct model earlier, leaders for innovation must be able to think creatively, have the interpersonal skills to elicit novel ideas from others, and have the relevant knowledge to effectively select and implement those ideas. Stated more directly, when building a broader strategy for innovation, organizations must build early wins, and this requires carefully choosing the right leader to develop those wins.

Given the challenges with innovation and the difficulty in managing paradoxes, one final lesson for building a long-term approach to innovation is to consider alternative leadership structures. For instance, Lindsay, Day, and Halpin (2011) proposed

shared leadership as a viable approach to addressing the increasingly complex environment of today's military. One specific form of shared leadership, co-leadership, has proven to be a highly viable approach to managing innovation (Lindsay et al., 2011). Summarizing, the tension that occurs when attempting to manage creative and innovative processes can be difficult for one leader to shoulder. Instead, distributing the various processes comprising innovation and creativity among multiple leaders can result in a scenario where each are committed to innovation and each can specialize in the tasks for which they are best suited. History is replete with shared leadership structures, including Smith and Wesson, Hewlett and Packard, and Oppenheimer and Groves in the development of the Manhattan project. By sharing leadership responsibilities, co-leaders are better able to manage the paradoxical demands of innovation, foster different aspects of military culture in support of new endeavors, and make critical decisions effectively through collective dialogue (Bergman et al., 2012).

## Summary and Concluding Comments

Many organizations and organizational entities seek innovation, yet most fail in achieving that end; and those that do find themselves performing well, find it frustratingly challenging to sustain that performance. Finding short and long-term success in innovation occurs due to doing several things well and nearly all tracks back to leadership who understands the unique demands of innovation, and focuses efforts on the effective management of the processes comprising the phenomenon. Put differently, innovation does not occur spontaneously, nor does it occur without dedicated leadership.

In this paper, we introduced several of the unique challenges comprising innovation, and in response offered a framework for thinking about how a leader shapes innovative success. Within this framework are behaviors that leaders can, and often must, engage in to

tackle the demands of innovation. As competitors and enemies seek to gain an edge they will undoubtedly turn to novel approaches and tactics. If we are to succeed, we too must embrace a more complete understanding of the innovation process and enable, train, and support leaders who are tasked to finding novel solutions to growing and shifting threats. Failure in this realm, even if challenging, is simply not an option.

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# A New Generation of Wise Thinkers and Good Leaders

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### ABSTRACT

Dynamics of connection, complexity, and precarity make leadership in the 21st century a challenging task. This article considers the turn to values-based and person-centered leadership that has resulted and the correlate movement in leadership development, where there is a focus not only on technical but relational competencies, allied to leader behaviors and mindsets. Deficits when it comes to the integration and depth of competency-based approaches highlight the importance of character. The article makes a case for character development in leadership education, drawing on the work of the Oxford Character Project at the University of Oxford to explore what character is, what character contributes when it comes to leadership, and how character might be cultivated in a new generation of wise thinkers and good leaders.[1]

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As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic into the challenges and opportunities of re-building, the need for competent, values-based leaders at all levels of society is evident. What is equally evident is that the task of leadership that lies before them is far from straightforward. In recent years, a succession of major societal challenges and prominent public failures have put the leadership of those in positions of power and authority in the spotlight. There are specific issues in different sectors of society and parts of the world, but they are manifestations of similar underlying dynamics and trust in leaders has been widely eroded. In 2020, the Edelman index highlighted the extent of the challenge, reporting that 66% of people in their global survey "do not have confidence that our current leaders will be able to successfully address our country's challenges" (Edelman, 2020, p. 6). According to Edelman, trust is built on two foundations: competence and ethics. This article will argue that a focus on character is key to their integration and so to the development of the leaders that we need to take us forward.

However, if it is tempting to invoke failures of character as the central issue in a widespread crisis of leadership, we should be cautious. While some leaders have fallen short of the expectations of their office and example of their predecessors, there have been many capable and responsible leaders who have been characterised by a commitment to the common good. What is more, where leaders have failed there are often institutional as well as individual factors at play. If character is part of the story, its role needs to be understood in a way that is nuanced, taking account of situational variables and the significant challenges that leaders face. To move forward, we need to consider the adequacy of current approaches to leadership in the face of complexity and uncertainty, and not only the flaws and failures of individual leaders themselves. We also need to consider the adequacy of leadership education to prepare leaders for the responsibilities they assume. The fact that a breakdown of trust in leaders across sectors has coincided with billions of dollars of annual investment in leadership development (Gurdjian et al., 2014; Kellerman, 2018) raises vital questions about the way leadership is imagined and leaders are prepared.

This article will explore in broad strokes some of the challenges of leadership in the 21st century, where dynamics of connectivity, complexity, and precarity, introduced along with incredible advances in digital technology, have resulted in widespread division, disorientation, and distrust. We will consider the turn to "values-based" and "human-centered" leadership that has resulted and the correlate movement when it comes to leadership development, where there is an increasing focus not only on technical but relational competencies, allied to leader behaviors and mindsets. This direction of travel is welcome. However, important deficits with respect to the integration and depth of prevalent competency-based approaches to leadership development need to be addressed. This article will argue that the introduction of character as a focal theme in contemporary leadership discourse might go some way to addressing these deficits. We will consider what character is, what character contributes when it comes to leadership, and how character might be cultivated in a new generation of wise thinkers and good leaders.

## Challenges of Leadership in the 21st Century

To discern the leadership and leader(ship) education that is needed as we look to the future requires an understanding of trends in the development of modernity that have and continue to shape the nature of the challenges that leaders face. The last hundred years have seen new technologies drive social, geopolitical, and environmental changes. Institutions across sectors have faced pressure to adapt, and there has been a growing transition from mechanistic to humanistic approaches to management and leadership that has accelerated in the early part of the 21st century. If the leaders of a century ago relied on technical expertise and a top-down approach of command and control, leaders

in the 21st century need to be able to get things done in a way that relies much more on collective purpose and creative cross-boundary collaboration.

In 1911, Frederick Winslow Taylor wrote what was to become one of the most influential management works of the 20th century (Bedeian & Wren, 2001). An engineer turned management consultant, Taylor's argument in *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor, 1911/1919) was that social prosperity could be advanced by raising productivity, and that productivity could be dramatically increased by the "substitution of science for rule-of-thumb methods in even the smallest details of the work of every trade" (Taylor, 1911/1919, p. 24). Systematic study of workplace processes, Taylor argued, would enable the identification of a single approach "which is quicker and better than the rest" (Taylor, 1911/1919, p. 25). The role of management is to identify and implement this approach, taking responsibility to determine the most efficient way for workers in specific areas to conduct their allotted tasks. Managers should select those best suited for each role according to natural aptitude and physiological ability, provide incentives that align with the increased profits of anticipated output, and train workers to carry out tasks in the most efficient way.

Taylor's was a doctrine designed to fit the world of work as he perceived it at the start of the 20th century. He advanced his case by way of examples from specific industrial processes, such as the manual transfer of pig iron onto haulage wagons at a steel company, and trades, such as bricklaying. At the heart of his approach is a commitment to efficiency and authority. Once managers had identified the most efficient method of work, it was their responsibility to implement them through "*enforced* standardization of methods, enforced adoption of the best implements and working conditions, and enforced cooperation" (Taylor, 1919, p. 83, emphasis in original). Taylor talked in the language of management rather than leadership, a focus on

which would only come to the fore later in the 20th century, but what is important is that the method is very much command and control. It came down to determining the right approach and directing the people and process.

Some aspects of Taylor's system are distinctly unscientific by today's reckoning, not least the idea from early 20th century eugenics that each person has a fixed "personal coefficient" (Taylor, 1919, p. 89) that should be used to determine the nature of work for which they are suited. However, while this disreputable idea could be left behind in the ongoing application of Taylor's basic method, changes in the complexity of systems that came with the 20th century transition from an industrial to digital economy, and the more recent introduction of smart machines in what has become known as the "fourth industrial revolution" (Schwab, 2017), have meant that Taylor's mechanised approach to management has become increasingly obsolete (Hamel & Zanini, 2020). If Taylor's principles could be successfully applied in tightly structured contexts, rising interest in the idea of leadership and the emergence of leadership studies as a distinct field of academic inquiry in the final quarter of the 20th century reflect the fact that they were insufficient for the increasing complexity of industry and society that emerged as the century progressed.

Central to this new wave of interest in leadership was a distinction between leaders and managers (Zaleznik, 1977/2004), and a focus on transformational over transactional models of leader-follower relations, stemming from the work of James McGregor Burns (Burns, 1978/2010). Transactional leadership is based on a dynamic of exchange, with clearly defined responsibilities, tasks, and targets. Transformational leadership, by contrast, centers on relational engagement, where the purposes of leader(s) and follower(s) "become fused" and they are both raised to "higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns,

2010, p. 18). As the idea of transformational leadership was developed (Burns' original term was "transforming leadership"), emphasis was placed on leaders "inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4), and the expansion of leadership beyond formal hierarchies. In this model, "Leadership is not just the province of people at the top. Leadership can occur at all levels and by any individual. In fact, we see that it is important for leaders to develop leadership in those below them" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 2).

If the idea of transformational leadership has been somewhat eclipsed by a plethora of leadership models in the last twenty years, it remains foundational to many of them, reflecting the limits of mechanistic and transactional approaches in a changing world. Considering the future of leadership education necessitates an awareness of these changes and the kinds of challenges they bring with them. As former Harvard President, Derek Bok, argues in his manifesto for higher education in the 21st century, "significant changes in our society have given rise to new pressures that call for fresh thought about the content and instructional methods" (Bok, 2021, p. 1). This is as true for the development of leaders as it is for higher education more broadly.

When it comes to leadership the changes and pressures that Bok refers to have been variously summarized, including in the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) acronym popularised by the U.S. Army War College (Stiehm, 2002) and the description of leadership challenges as "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Back of these interpretations it is possible to discern three late modern trends, namely increasing connectivity, complexity, and precarity. Rapid advances in communication technologies and global travel have connected people and processes across borders in ways that cannot be reversed. Concerns are tied together in global trade, security, environmental policy, the internet, and evidently in public health. And these global connections have local impact. For example, a firm that is an important employer in a particular community is increasingly likely to be connected in its fortunes to global supply chains and fiscal policy. Connection is thus tied to complexity, as leaders have to account for a far greater number of variables, potential risks, and stakeholder interests. There are new opportunities, to be sure, but there are also new challenges of working within complex systems. The

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idea of precarity captures this dynamic—global supply chains bring new opportunities for local businesses, but they can be unexpectedly halted by a ship running aground in the Suez Canal. The opportunities of global travel come with the risks of global transmission, as in the COVID-19 pandemic. And the potential for movements to spread virally can fuel democratic renewal but it can also fuel destructive populist radicalism. The same dynamics that have advanced democracy and opportunity around the world now threaten division, disorientation, and distrust. The instability of the status quo can easily leave leaders in a perpetual mode of response to the latest crisis, unable to build intentionally and constructively for the long term. The leaders we need in the 21st century are those who are able to make the most of the opportunities and

build resilience to mitigate the challenges. As I will go on to argue, this requires attention to competence and to character—what leaders do and who leaders are.

## Developing Leader(ship) Competencies

In recent years, an increasingly prominent approach to leadership education in organizations has focused on the development of specific "competencies"—knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that are manifested in behaviors required for effective performance (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; Boyatzis, 2008; Washington & Griffiths, 2015; Cumberland et al., 2016). An important strength of this behavioralist approach is the way in which visible behaviors are understood as rooted in hidden attitudes, motives, and intentions in an integrated model of human personality developed by Richard Boyatzis (1982) from the work of David McClelland (1951). This has allowed a more holistic focus to emerge in leadership development, incorporating aspects of social and emotional intelligence and personal values, attitudes, and motivation that lie beneath the surface of human action (Washington & Griffiths, 2015). It has also provided important consistency for organizations, allowing them to set clear expectations around the practices and standards required, and implement structured approaches to leadership development.

Recent work by Gosling and Grodecki (2020) evaluates this focus on leadership competencies in view of failures in organizational leadership and the prominent social and environmental challenges, discussed above. A survey of initiatives seeking to advance social responsibility, sustainable development, and responsible business identified four clusters of ideal leadership competencies: (1) "Act ethically and virtuously," (2) "Work inclusively (because we value human dignity)," (3) "Engage stakeholders (to understand the concerns and impact on others)," (4) "Achieve change (to make the world a better place)" (Gosling & Grodecki, 2020, pp. 248-251). If this

ideal picture emphasizes both leader competence and character, a subsequent review of the competency frameworks of 22 U.K. organizations in the private and public sectors was not so encouraging:

> The clear focus for most organisations is on developing leaders that are skilled at working with their teams and others around them, and can get things done. There is little recognition of the need for managers to engage stakeholders or concern themselves with "others" (especially others beyond customers, such as the environment, future generations, society at large). If there is a concern for virtue, it is usually implicit (Gosling & Grodecki, 2020, p. 251).

Insofar as competency-based approaches to leadership development hold value, this research suggests that an important step is for organizations to align their frameworks beyond profit to positive social purpose. However, while this would be very welcome, limitations inherent in competency models point toward the need for a longer journey. Bolden and Gosling (2006) compiled five commonly cited weaknesses, arguing that competency-based approaches tend to be fragmentary, generic, focused on current rather than future requirements, overly concerned with measurable outcomes, and mechanistic. The final point seems to cut to the heart of these criticisms, expressing an underlying concern that the approach is insufficiently human. In particular, it fails to take sufficient account of human individuality, identity, and relationality.

Firstly, leadership competency frameworks are insufficiently flexible to situational and personal variables. While such frameworks can provide clarity, they do so by way of standardization, listing the specific attributes and actions that will generally enable leaders to perform ethically and effectively. As a result, competencies can fail to take account of

human individuality and the personal judgment that accords with the practice of leadership as an art and not simply a science (Grint, 2004). Secondly, the prevalent competency-based approach, while more holistic than a simple focus on outward behaviors, is ultimately rooted in the physiology of neural circuits and patterns of hormonal cause and effect (Boyatzis, 2008). Recent neuroscientific insights are important for theories of personal development, supporting the ongoing potential for deep and lasting character development into adulthood (Williams, in press). However, human identity is more than brain chemistry, human action gains coherence within the drama of narrative in which human beings are moral agents, guided by deep commitments, meaning and purpose, which go beyond neural circuitry and measurable hormones. Thirdly, focusing on leadership competencies can place the focus on individuals, overlooking human relationality and the importance of social interaction and organizational design. It is all very well developing a competency framework that emphasises collaboration, for example, but if incentives such as financial rewards and role recognition are strongly individualistic, or if office architecture or workplace practices limit inter-departmental mixing then collaborative action will be undermined.

It is in view of these challenges with prevalent competency-based approaches to leadership development that we turn to character, which provides a paradigm for leadership development that deepens an emphasis on coded behaviors by drawing on resources from current work in virtue ethics and moral psychology.

## The Contribution of Character

In his recent book, *Value(s): Building a Better World For All*, Mark Carney (2021) argues that successfully responding to major challenges faced by society in the 21st century requires focused attention on what we value and what our values are. Carney's case material is

three global crises—the financial crash, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the environmental crisis that threatens to undermine the finely balanced stability of the planet unless urgent action is taken. A renewal of values-based leadership is crucial, he argues, in order to rebuild the trust required for collective action. At the heart of this renewal is the cultivation of virtues—not simply what leaders do but who leaders are. This focus on leader character has come to the fore during the pandemic as leaders have been celebrated or castigated based on such fundamental qualities as their humanity toward others in need, their humility in the face of complex challenges and conflicting evidence, and their hope in maintaining a focus on the good and inspiring others to persevere through difficulty.

Of course, the idea of character as central to leadership is an ancient one, dating back to the classical writings of Plato and Aristotle in the West and Confucius in the East (Hackett & Wang, 2012). At its core it represents a focus on the human person— who leaders are grounding how they lead—but it has been variously interpreted. For example, the language of character has been associated with individualistic "great man" and static "trait" theories of leadership, giving it historical resonances that some find hard to move beyond. However, it has become prominent in a new way in the turn to transformational leadership, which emphasizes the importance of leaders moving beyond managerial efficiency to ethical empowerment. Here, the contribution of character is as a concept that brings clarity to both the moral foundations of authentic transformational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999), and the commitment to truth that is required for the rebuilding of trust. In this regard it is important to recognize that personal character isn't simply a moral category but also has an intellectual dimension (Aristotle, 1999; Baehr, 2011), encompassing care for truth, evidence, and rationality as well as open-mindedness, curiosity, and intellectual humility. In Aristotelian accounts of character these

moral and intellectual dimensions are held together by practical wisdom, a central character quality or "meta-virtue" that combines deliberation of relevant features of contexts and discernment of the good in a way that integrates ethical and effective practice and guides action through the challenges of complex dilemmas.

The contention as we turn to character here is two-fold: firstly, that the concept of character can helpfully extend prevalent competency-based approaches to leadership by engaging the aspects of human personhood—individuality, judgment, identity and relationality—identified above; secondly, that by taking a more deeply person-centred approach the cultivation of character can help leaders to successfully engage the opportunities and challenges of leadership in our complex and uncertain times. In order to

*Qualities of character can be cultivated (and corrupted), as we will consider below, but they are not easily altered, persisting over time and across different situations.*

ground these claims in the practice of leadership development, we will focus on the work of the Oxford Character Project (OCP), an interdisciplinary initiative at the University of Oxford dedicated to furthering a new generation of wise thinkers and good leaders. Founded in 2014, the OCP seeks to advance empirical and conceptual research on character and leadership development in universities and commercial organizations, joining insights from the humanities with the latest developments in social and behavioural science. This research is applied in the design, delivery and evaluation of practical programs for emerging leaders. Taking the approach of the OCP as a case study, we will consider three important issues: what character is, its contribution to leadership in the 21st century, and how it can be developed.

## What is Character?

To understand what a focus on character contributes to leadership, we need to clarify what is meant by character. This specificity is particularly important for two reasons: to distinguish the idea of character and character education from problematic uses in the past (Sayer, 2020), and to discern between different understandings and emphases that are part of a welcome increase in attention to character in organizational and leadership studies in the present.

Historically, hegemonic models of character formation have been taken up on both the political left and right, aimed at the "reproduction of compliant or socially acceptable human beings" (Arthur, 2020, p. 18). Such approaches have used the concept of character to reinforce social hierarchy, limit self-expression, and diminish diversity. The recent turn to character in moral philosophy and positive psychology and its practical outworking in character education is strongly distinct, emphasizing at its core the classical connection between virtues (excellences) of character and eudaimonic well-being or human flourishing. The OCP sits in the philosophical stream of this turn to character that draws on contemporary work in neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and moral psychology (Snow, 2020; Miller, 2021). On this understanding, character comprises a constellation of dispositions that are at the heart of human personality and shape how we characteristically think, perceive, feel, and act (Annas, 2011; Aristotle, ca. 340 B.C.E/1999; Kristjánsson, 2017; Miller, 2014; Snow, 2010). Character has a motivational component (the "heart" of character) and a skill component (the "art" of character), involving not only aspiration but successful action, especially under pressure. Qualities of character can be cultivated (and corrupted), as we will consider below, but they are not easily altered, persisting over time and across different situations. They can be variously categorised but two

fundamental distinctions are (1) between moral character qualities (e.g., justice, courage, generosity, hope, and love) and intellectual character qualities (e.g., open-mindedness, curiosity, intellectual humility, and rationality); and (2) between positive character qualities, or "virtues" (including all those listed so far) and negative ones, or "vices" (e.g., greed, hubris, envy, presumption, insouciance, and apathy).

Character virtues are human excellences, which, guided by practical wisdom, dispose people to think, feel and act in a way that avoids vices of deficiency and excess, but follows a "mean" or intermediate path that is appropriate to the context—"at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way" (Aristotle, ca. 340 B.C.E/1999, 1106b22-23). By contrast, vices are by nature out of balance and at odds with what is right and good (Cassam, 2019; DeYoung, 2009). An important benefit of focusing on character virtues in relationship to leadership is the resultant sensitivity to the particularities of individual circumstance and adaptability to specific contexts. When it comes to identifying certain virtues as a focus for leaders, their practical importance is context dependent, which allows them to be listed according to different domains, such as citizenship, athletics, education, and business. While some virtues, such as humanity, humility, and hope (Carney, 2021, p. 381), may be relevant for leadership across sectors, others may be more or less important depending on the particular context. The idea of a comprehensive model of "leadership virtues" with a set of virtues for leadership in all contexts may be elusive and practically less important than closer consideration of domains and identification of virtues that are most salient for leaders within them. However, in thinking about the virtues needed for specific sectors or roles, two fundamental categories are key: intellectual virtues are what we need for good thinking across situations, and moral virtues are at the heart of a well-lived life. Together, they are central to what it means for people to flourish, living in accord with their full human potential.

Contrary to hegemonic, static, and individualistic notions of character, on the account presented here, character is complex, comprising a mosaic of different qualities in a way that is unique to each individual. It is plural, rather than unitary; dynamic in that it can be developed (and diminished) over time; rational, combining thought and habitual action; social, shaped in relationship with others in specific cultural contexts; and mixed, with most people being neither virtuous nor vicious but possessing local character qualities that are restricted to specific situations, and global traits that combine positive and negative dispositions (Miller, 2020).

The recovery of character as a productive concept in moral philosophy, psychology, and education in the latter part of the 20th century has led to a variety of understandings making their way into leadership discourse. The pioneering work of Peterson and Seligman in positive psychology, represented in the VIA classification of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) has been taken up in positive organizational scholarship and virtuous leadership (Cameron, 2011; Rego et al., 2012). Others have remained more closely aligned with philosophical virtue ethics (Hackett & Wang, 2012; Newstead et al., 2019; Sison, 2006). There have also been proposals to integrate approaches (e.g., Bright et al., 2014) and helpful practice-oriented schemas that have focused less on theories of character than the practical application of virtues in leadership, leadership development, and assessment (Seijts et al., 2015; Crossan et al., 2016). There are strengths in each of these approaches, but the distinctions are not immaterial, and different conceptual understandings shape practical emphases and approaches when it comes to character and leadership development.

### *What Does (Good) Character Contribute to Leadership?*

The importance of good character for leadership is a historic debate that pitches Aristotle and Confucius on the one side against Machiavelli on the other. In a number of countries around the world it is a live, and often heated, discussion in relation to contemporary leaders. While there are certainly leaders who lack good character and get much done, the cultivation of virtues has a particular importance for leaders today.

Firstly, many of the widescale social and environmental challenges facing society in the twenty-first century highlight the importance of the character of leaders as a contributing factor in their origin or ongoing impact (Brooks et al., 2021). Greed, hubris, dishonesty, dogmatism, close-mindedness, and presumption—to name only some prominent leadership vices—have played a part in the cause and ongoing impact of such events as the global financial crisis, turmoil in the Middle East, the COVID pandemic, and climate change. If we are to learn from these crises and better engage them and other like challenges that will emerge in the future, our learning needs to go beyond matters of process and procedure to take account of the underlying human dynamics. In the Nolan Principles (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 1995), the UK has seven values of public life that are fitting for leaders across contexts: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Resisting leadership vices by way of an active focus on cultivating these principles as virtues in leadership education would—if done effectively—contribute to the mitigation and management of such challenges into the future and begin to engage the documented deficit in trust.

Secondly, a focus on character can support the growing emphasis on values and purpose in organizations and leadership that was already present but has come even more strongly to the fore through the COVID pandemic. The principles identified by the UK Committee on Standards in Public Life have for some years been matched by like statements of values in organizations across sectors and an emphasis on leaders as role models. There is an increasing focus on the importance of these values for leaders, with research-backed advocacy of generosity (Grant, 2013), creativity (Hill et al., 2014), psychological safety (Edmonson, 2019); courage (Brown, 2018); and kindness (Haskins et al., 2018). These emphases are welcome and bring with them examples and ideas of how these values or qualities might be enacted in practice. What a turn to character provides is a way of understanding these separate leadership qualities as part of a coherent whole and a way to develop them personally and organizationally, moving from aspirational values to stable practices. If we take character as a nexus of the two components of aspiration (motivation) and action (skill/success), and the idea of character virtues as developed through practice until they are stable over time and across situations, virtues can act as the intellectual and moral muscles that enable values to live. On their own, values and principles are inert, depending on relevant motivation and application. Cultivating character presents a path to the integration and practical application of leadership values in a way that is stable over time and—by way of practical wisdom—sensitive to specific leadership contexts.

Thirdly, character offers promise in relation to the wider dynamics of connection, complexity, and precarity that dominate the leadership landscape as persistent features of late modern life. While different constellations of virtues may be needed to lead well in different sectors or domains, these broader societal dynamics will require leaders to exhibit pro-social and intellectual virtues as well as the virtue of hope. To navigate a connected world, leaders will need pro-social virtues such as empathy, compassion, and service, in order to work well with others and play their part in a bigger picture as collaborative "system changers"

(Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). Intellectual virtues such as open-mindedness, judgment, and practical wisdom will enable leaders to engage positively with complexity. And the virtue of hope—a middle path between presumption and despair—will be essential in the face of precarity, joining realism with the resilience needed to work through difficulty toward the future good.

What should be clear, even from this outline of the contribution of character to leadership in the 21st century is that the cultivation of virtue has both a fundamental intrinsic worth and an important performance benefit. Kim Cameron highlights the practical benefit of virtue in terms of coping with change and increasing performance (Cameron, 2011). When it comes to the latter, virtuous leadership amplifies team performance and buffers against dysfunction (Cameron & Caza, 2002). In commercial terms, engagement and so output is increased, and risk is diminished. In human terms, leading with character furthers the flourishing of leaders and those they lead, which in turn contributes to flourishing organizations and societies.

### How Can the Character of Leaders be Developed?

The arguments presented concerning the importance of character virtues for good leadership have assumed that it is possible for leaders to grow in character and permissible to consider this development as an important part of leadership education. Since its inception, the OCP has made central to its research the hypothesis that it is indeed possible and permissible, focusing on higher education and commercial organizations. There are valid concerns and objections, of course, central amongst which is the danger of infringing personal autonomy. It can be answered by the plain reality that all institutions, and particularly educational institutions inevitably *do* shape the character of those whose life is led in relation to their structures, processes, values, and practices. This being

the case, institutions surely *should* consider how they can support the development of good character and promote human flourishing, helping people to grow in a self-guided way, strengthening powers of perception, deliberation, motivation, and action (Brooks et al., in press).

Moving from the permissibility to the possibility of character development, it is a conviction of Aristotelian moral psychology, supported by contemporary neuroscience (Williams, in press) that character is not set in stone but develops over a lifespan. The stability of character, which once developed is like second nature, and reliance on supportive contexts, means that it is not easy to acquire character virtues. However, controlled, longitudinal, mixed methods research studies, including those undertaken by the OCP, show that character can be developed in ways relevant to good leadership through leadership development programs (Brooks et al., 2019; Brant et al., 2020, Brooks et al., 2021).

The development of effective pedagogical methods for character development that can be integrated into leadership development, and the measurement of their efficacy is central to our ongoing research. A first phase of work identified and implemented seven research-based methods:

1) Habituation through practice,
2) reflection on personal experience,
3) engagement with virtuous exemplars,
4) dialogue that increases virtue literacy,
5) awareness of situational variables,
6) moral reminders,
7) friendships of mutual accountability (Lamb et al., in press).

These pedagogical methods outline a path of personal formation that takes time and ongoing attention. It is both deeper and more integrated than competency-

based approaches, but it will take commitment and patience to introduce in organizational contexts since character is both difficult to cultivate and difficult to measure. The work of the OCP is based on the conviction that the person, organizational and societal importance of the character of leaders means that this difficulty should not deter us from trying. Our current research builds on these methods of personal formation with a focus on the situational and contextual factors which impact the character of leaders in commercial organizations. These factors constitute the moral and intellectual ecosystem of an organization, going beyond culture narrowly understood to encompass all the aspects of organizational life, which contribute to the way people feel, think, and act. Central to this institutional emphasis is the conviction that focusing on character in leadership development is not about "fixing" individuals but about helping people to grow in a self-guided way, strengthening powers of perception, deliberation, motivation, and action. The cultivation of character needs to go beyond personal formation to organizations so that they support the cultivation of character virtues relevant to their values and purpose and those of their people rather than obstruct or undermine values and purpose coming into their own.

## Conclusion

COVID-19 has forced a re-evaluation of priorities and purpose. Hard questions have been raised regarding what we value in society, and while leadership failures and wider self-interest have been part of the story, fundamental values of solidarity, compassion, and hope have come to the fore. As the future beyond COVID-19 begins to come into view, the present offers a window of opportunity to determine how we will go forward. The need for a new generation of leaders who will further the flourishing of society and the planet, placing the public good above personal gain, is apparent. This paper has argued that attention to character is essential for leaders to successfully face the complex challenges that lie before us. The present emphasis on values and

purpose in leadership and organizations is welcome, but there is a need to integrate action with aspiration. There is much promise to be found in turning to character, focusing on organizational design along with personal formation, and aiming leadership development toward the cultivation of virtues as the moral and intellectual muscles that can power a flourishing future.

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# Purposeful Engagement: Practical Wisdom for Leadership Development

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## The Problem

Our aim is to provide a fresh, practical perspective for leader development. To hit this target, we offer a framework that should be of shared interest to leaders and to those who have roles and responsibilities to develop leaders. Most readers likely appreciate that an organization's capacity to perform relies in part upon leader development. In nearly every circumstance, however, it is not safe to assume that development occurs naturally. Development requires intentionality across a range of activities. We call this activity purposeful engagement. Our proposal provides a practical developmental philosophy that informs a roadmap to achieve it. Purposeful engagement rests upon two foundational components: leader fundamentals and theories of adult learning. Knowing what leaders do and how leaders learn are prerequisites to planning meaningful leadership opportunities, accomplishing meaningful assessment, and evaluating the effectiveness of developmental interventions.

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To address and overcome rapidly evolving challenges, most organizations need people who are highly engaged and constantly learning. Yet, our observations suggest that few organizations are well-structured to propagate leader talent. In part, this explains why leadership development persists as a multibillion-dollar industry (Kellerman, 2018; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Fullmer & Vicere, 1996). The size and expanding scope of the leadership industry suggest that organizations have an appetite for preparing leaders to address a wide range of organizational challenges, including primary, psychological, and achievement-oriented needs. There are many good reasons for individuals and organizations to rely on expert coaches and consultants. Coaches and consultants are critical to guiding and informing developmental work, but the burden of development ultimately belongs to the individual and the organization. Purposeful engagement informs how individuals and organizations can begin to address this burden.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define three terms central to our purpose— *leadership*, development, and culture. Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) define leadership as "a solution to the problem of the collective effort--the problem of bringing people together and combining their efforts to promote success and survival" (Kaiser et al., 2008, p. 96). We adopt this leadership definition because it describes what leaders do without presuming that there is a specific or right way to lead. This definition allows individuals and organizations to integrate ideas and concepts about leadership that best fit their unique culture and values. With this apparent freedom, we recommend selecting and adopting leadership practices that are robust and associated with evidence of success. Instead of asking questions about outcomes like how to increase revenue, improve safety, or enhance resilience, leader developers need to be asking, "How can we best develop $x$ in our leaders?" where $x$ represents an essential leadership dimension and is a valid predictor of a desired outcome. Consequently, how a leader leads becomes the primary evidence of developmental efforts. Our definition of leadership also supports a process-oriented leadership perspective that involves the interaction of leader, follower, and situation (Hughes et al., 2012).

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Leadership is not a job or position, but a process. Our definition of leadership allows diverse individuals, teams, and organizations to employ a broad range of leadership theories, models, and concepts that have meaning and relevance to dynamic conditions.

Next, *development* is an individual growth trajectory that depends upon defined and measurable conditions (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Development is inherently longitudinal. Most people are familiar with cross sectional research. Cross sectional research works exceptionally well to take a snapshot at a set time point. For example, cross sectional research might be used to determine if students with higher ACT or SAT scores perform better in higher education. However, cross sectional designs are almost always the wrong tool to assess leader development. Longitudinal research methods are necessary to thoroughly understand and track the effectiveness of developmental interventions at the individual (e.g., how an individual leader has advanced in a specific skill or competency over time) and organizational levels (e.g., average changes in a workforce over time). Measuring development requires assessments that are sensitive to developmental change (Raudenbush, 2001) and do not necessarily assume linear change (Wang et al., 2017). Additionally, longitudinal models account for the initial state of a condition (e.g., the level of proficiency with a specific leadership skill upon starting developmental efforts) to understand what subsequent measures actually represent. Absent objective measurement and the right methodologies, it is impossible to fully appreciate if and how developmental investments are paying off. Studying and modeling development is complicated, but necessary to produce useful evidence of developmental change and efforts.

Finally, *culture* is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that organizational members learn, validate, and teach other organizational members about the correct way to think, feel, and act in response to organizational events (Schein & Schein, 2017). Culture is not just a hypothetical organizational characteristic or a given condition that has to be accepted. Culture is established, maintained, and adjusted by organizational leaders and members alike.

Organizations need leaders who are adept at a wide range of skills and high levels of proficiency. Routine work experiences, where leaders can experience development in the context of doing real work, are a potential gold mine for growth to occur. Unfortunately, gold nuggets rarely sit on the surface waiting to be picked up. Gold mining involves careful prospecting, the right resources, and hard work. In the same manner, leadership development requires intentionality, design, resources, execution, and assessment. In the following two sections, we offer a perspective on leader fundamentals and adult learning that provides a basis for continuous, life-long leadership development to meet this need. Purposeful engagement involves interdependence between what leaders know and how they apply it to bring people together and achieve collective outcomes.

## Leader Fundamentals: The "What" of Purposeful Engagement

Leader fundamentals are "what" an effective leader embodies—these qualities are the learning objectives. For the sake of focus, we introduce three primary objectives for leader development: knowledge, skills, and character. There are certainly other consequential fundamentals (e.g., abilities and personality) that are germane to development and are worthy of further exploration. However, these are beyond the scope of this paper. Our intent is to draw attention to what leaders can learn by providing a bottom-up perspective on what leaders need to do (i.e., knowledge), how to do it (i.e., skills), and consistently acting upon values despite inducements to act otherwise (i.e., character). Knowledge, skills, and character are the on-ramp for engaging leaders in development.

### Knowledge

Models of performance (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1993) routinely specify knowledge as a determinant of performance. Building upon this perspective, leadership knowledge (e.g., the facts and ideas a person holds about theories and models of leadership) serves to address naively held conceptions of leadership (Offerman et al., 1995) that might otherwise impede development. In simple language, knowledge of effective leadership practices is a precondition for developing leadership capacity.

More than one student of leadership has declared, "You can't learn leadership in a classroom." We agree. There is a lot more to leadership than what you know. Yet, learners who assert that leadership cannot be learned in a classroom reveal an implicit bias that stands in the way of development. Student pilots complete academic training on aeronautics and the rules of aviation before sitting at aircraft controls. Surgeons study human anatomy and disease processes before taking a scalpel in hand. Likewise, leaders must

> *Cultivating basic leadership knowledge is essential to preparing leaders to practice relevant skills and proficiencies associated with leading effectively.*

possess a sound understanding of what is involved in leading others to achieve successful outcomes. Knowledge is indispensable to development; without it many leaders have lost their way. Cultivating basic leadership knowledge is essential to preparing leaders to practice relevant skills and proficiencies associated with leading effectively.

Foundational considerations for leader knowledge include precise definitions of leadership and performance. Leadership is fundamentally a bipartite

phenomenon. Completing tasks and attending to relational activities are fundamental to what leaders do (Bales, 1950; Fleishman, 1957; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Hackman, 2002; Judge et al., 2004; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig's definition of leadership reflects these fundamental qualities where leadership involves achieving results (e.g., success and survival) and interpersonal processes (e.g., bringing people together and combining their efforts). Consequently, leader performance is also bipartite. To understand leader effectiveness requires assessment of what leaders accomplish (e.g., tasks and objective achievement) as well as relational elements (e.g., interpersonal processes) to fully appreciate a leader's developmental potential.

### Skills

In addition to knowledge, models of performance also specify procedural knowledge and skills (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1993) as predictive of performance. Procedural knowledge and skills are acquired proficiencies that involve implementing knowledge or "know how." An example of procedural knowledge that can be held by a leader are the steps involved in recognizing and rewarding the contributions others make. An example of specific leadership skill is listening. Comparable procedural knowledge and skills work in combination to form competency dimensions like working with people (Bartram, 2005). Including working with people, Bartram's research identifies a total of twenty competency dimensions that further combine to produce eight broad competencies. Bartram's "Great Eight" includes leading and deciding, supporting and cooperating, interacting and presenting, analyzing and interpreting, creating and conceptualizing, organizing and executing, adapting and coping, and enterprising and performing. Bartram's broad competency factors provide a universal framework for leaders and organizations to explore leadership performance.

While the Great Eight (Bartram, 2005) represents a universal framework to explore leadership performance and development in all manners of organizations and settings, caution is urged. Selecting and designing developmental efforts requires an appreciation for the top-down influences on the importance and relevance of leader skills. Bartram's work provides a comprehensive framework for understanding leader behavior, but it does not prescribe how important individual behaviors are or how frequently they are needed. Between organizations, elements like structure, culture, and strategy affect the significance and relevance of skills and competencies (Pearlman & Sanchez, 2010; Williams & Dobson, 1997; Snow & Snell, 1993). Within organizations, consideration of a leader's current and projected assignments introduces the need for additional tailoring of developmental approaches.

As leaders develop and encounter increasingly complex challenges, leaders must demonstrate progressive mastery and integration of leadership skills. Like a CrossFit exercise program, leadership development involves practicing various leadership activities repetitively and across diverse contexts. Mastering a specific exercise is a worthy accomplishment but is an inaccurate representation of overall physical fitness. In the same manner, leader development involves informed and intentional experimentation to develop a comprehensive suite of leadership skills that complement the maturation of developing leaders.

### Character

Performance also requires effort (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1993). Given the consequential nature of leadership, however, we favor the quality of the effort as the third fundamental predictor of leader performance. As a central quality of a leader's effort, character is essential to understanding the effects leaders have upon others in pursuit of objective results (Pless et al., 2012). Collapses in leader character are of profound consequence and have spurred a growing

body of literature (Kellerman, 2004; Kellerman, 2020). Researchers have investigated the effects of character through a range of perspectives including authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardener, 2005), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), social learning (Brown et al., 2005), and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). Taken together, the research indicates that leaders must behave ethically because they are responsible for guiding others while serving as an essential source of ethical information for organizational members.

Foundational considerations for character development include the leader's inclination to act upon moral and ethical judgments. Key areas include leaders who pursue personal development, seek the development of others, and undertake such efforts to realize collective and noble benefits for the organizations and broader society in which they live and serve (Basik et al., 2011; Silveria, 2018). Additional research provides important insights on how the capacity for character can be expanded (Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Hannah et al., 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Crossan et al., 2013; Sturm, Vera, & Crossan, 2017; Ogunfowora et al., 2021).

A final note on character involves acting in ways that are aligned with foundational values and are appropriate given the needs of others and the situation. Leading ethically implicitly involves respecting diverse beliefs and dignity while upholding integrity for organizationally espoused values—conditions that can lead to conflict. Leadership character requires an appropriate subdual of personal interest when that interest comes at the expense of others' needs. A leader may be inclined to act in ways that are not inherently wrong, but such inclinations might be opposed to what a situation requires. Character strength represents a final dimension of capacity for leaders to act on moral and ethical judgments (Hannah & Avolio, 2010). Character represents the discipline of natural tendencies.

## Learning Modes: The "How" of Purposeful Engagement

In addition to understanding *what* is involved in holistic and well-rounded development, it is necessary to understand *how* adults learn. Adult learning scholars observe five basic orientations of adult learning--cognitivist, behaviorist, humanist, social cognitive, and constructivist (Merriam et al., 2007). Each learning orientation has a rich history of theorists, specific views of the learning process, the purpose of the learning, instructional strategies, and evaluation methodologies. Likewise, each orientation has strengths and limitations depending on developmental objectives. The five orientations (i.e., modes) provide critical insights into the design and implementation of personal as well as programmatic efforts. Learning experiences that explore each domain serve to prepare individuals to comprehensively navigate the inherent challenges of leading others across complex contexts.

### Mode 1: Cognitivist Perspective

The cognitivist orientation (e.g., Bruner, 1965; Gagne et al., 1992; Lewin, 1951) focuses mainly on the learner's mind—what they know and how they think. For example, pilots have to know the functions of various controls, switches, and indicators and why they are critical to flight. Similarly, a surgeon has expert knowledge of the human body's systems and functions, expert knowledge of surgical techniques, and knows how to use operating room tools and equipment. In leader development, the individual must have a solid understanding of leadership theory (e.g., Bass, 1985), research (e.g., Bass & Bass, 2009), and the mental processes (e.g., Lord & Hall, 2005) necessary to think through a given situation based on their knowledge of the literature. Instructional strategies often include interventions such as lecture, reading, audio books, or self-paced learning. Topics may consist of general leadership theory or specific frameworks like negotiation, problem-solving, and building effective teams. Learning is often evaluated via formal exam or case analysis. The cognitivist orientation is critical because it provides learners with domain specific declarative knowledge required to function effectively.

### Mode 2: Behaviorist Learning

The behaviorist orientation (e.g., Hull, 1952; Skinner, 1974; Thorndike, 1931) is concerned with behavioral change and skill development. The learner meets behavioral objectives that demonstrate proficiency in the specific domain of learning. For instance, pilots routinely practice touch-and-go landings to efficiently build habits concerning checklist use, aircraft configuration, and aircraft operation (e.g., instrumentation, pitch, and power settings). Repetition of these skills serves to develop and demonstrate mastery of landing an aircraft in a range of flying conditions. Similarly, the surgeon can remove an appendix with observable skill. In the domain of leader development, the learner displays proficiency in activities associated with effective leadership. They not only understand the topic cognitively but also perform skills to objective standards. Because of the broad nature of leadership, the leader is required to display mastery in many areas (e.g., supervision, project management, ethical decision-making, navigating difficult conversations, public speaking, negotiation, teaming, and visioning/setting strategy). Instructional methods used to facilitate learning from the behaviorist orientation include assessment centers (Arthur et al., 2003), individual coaching (Killburg, 2000), observation/feedback (Conger, 1992), deliberate practice (Ericsson & Pool, 2016) and simulators (Brousard, 2008). Evaluation of the behaviorist orientation occurs via specific benchmarking, skill sheets, checklists, rubrics like behaviorally anchored rating scales, and expert evaluation. The behaviorist orientation is critical because it provides learners with domain specific procedural knowledge required to perform certain tasks associated with leadership.

### Mode 3: Humanistic Learning

The humanistic orientation (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1969) focuses on psychological growth and

development. In essence, the humanistic approach is concerned with ensuring that the individual is self-aware and a person of character. As leadership scholar Bernard Bass might say, the leader has their "shop" in order (1985). Similar to a leader, an individual serving as a pilot or surgeon will be better positioned for success when they have a strong sense of self, are open to feedback, and understand the value that others contribute. Because of the chronic stress and demanding nature of being a leader, a developmentally mature individual who has a strong sense of their values and is committed to continual self-exploration and growth is theoretically better prepared to serve others (Eigel & Kuhnert, 2016). Instructional strategies appropriate for the humanistic domain include individual/group reflection (Avolio, 2005), one-on-one coaching (Theeboom et al., 2014), personal development plans (Taylor & Edge, 1997), and multi-rater feedback (Brett & Atwater, 2001). Curricular topics may consist of personal goals/motivations, personal values, personal reactions to stress, mindset, identity development, and perceptions of others. Evaluation of this domain relies heavily on qualitative approaches, and expert assessment is the primary approach. The humanistic orientation is critical because it grounds a leader in the personal work they will need to weather the many challenges inherent in leading others (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

### Mode 4: Social Cognitive Learning

The social cognitive orientation (Bandura, 1971) suggests that interaction with others is a source of learning. Interactions with mentors and others who model competence, organizational norms, and values set standards for the leader to emulate. In essence, leaders have role models in context who exemplify and guide their growth. In medical education, more experienced surgeons train and guide the learning of less experienced individuals. Pilots benefit from a similar model whereby pilots with advanced qualifications and experience pass along lessons and stories to less-experienced pilots. In this mode, less experienced

individuals have an opportunity to evaluate themselves as they observe and learn from others with more seniority. In the context of leadership, role models provide learners with mental representations of what "ideal" looks like in practice. This domain is perhaps the most elusive as well. Many learners in the leadership domain do not have ideal role models or have skewed perceptions of "good" leadership that depend on unchallenged implicit beliefs or organizational culture that might contrast with espoused corporate values. Instructional strategies for the social-cognitive domain include mentoring programs (Higgins & Kram, 2001), networking with senior leaders (Giber, Carter, & Goldsmith, 2000), shadowing (Lalleman et al., 2017) and apprenticeship-type experiences (Talbert et al., 2009). Of course, these types of learning experiences are challenging to measure/evaluate. They may rely heavily on a learner's ability to "connect the dots," make sense of experiences, and organize their learning. However, one cannot under-estimate the importance of role models and mentors in a learner's environment. The social cognitive orientation arms learners with critical cultural knowledge required to succeed in the context.

### Mode 5: Constructivist Learning

The constructivist orientation (Dewey, 1933) holds that learners are active creators of knowledge. With roots in the Socratic Method, the idea is that learners actively construct and make meaning through dynamic learning processes in exchange with others. The constructivist orientation relies on the presentation of questions that stimulate cooperative dialogue and critical thought. In military pilot training, student pilots navigate hypothetical aircraft emergencies by actively engaging the instructor with their questions to thoroughly analyze the situation and take appropriate actions that safeguard the aircraft and its occupants. When student pilots make mistakes in these scenarios, there are limited but real consequences that might include removal from a scheduled flight to make room for remedial, individualized training. In healthcare,

resident physicians make daily rounds with senior physicians where each case is discussed at the bedside. The resident's understanding of the working diagnosis and plan of care are critiqued, and senior physicians

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share insight from past experiences. In the context of leadership, these are the lessons from experience where learners engage with the work and take the time to capture the learning through activities such as "after-action reviews" or other individual/group sensemaking activities designed to inform future practice (Ellis & Davidi, 2005; DeRue et al., 2012). Instructional strategies may include experiential learning activities (Kolb, 1984), action learning (Zuber-Skeritt, 2002) stretch/developmental assignments (McCauley et al., 2014), or communities of practice (Smith Kempster, & Wenger-Trayner, 2019). Evaluating the constructivist orientation can be a challenging endeavor. In some instances, it could be a record of failures and successes (e.g.., objective results from the previous pilot training example) or improved quality scores in the context of healthcare. The constructivist orientation provides learners with the experience and upon critical reflection, the practical wisdom necessary to understand the "art" of leading others.

### Integrating all Five Modes

In the essay, "Advancing Leadership Education and Development: Integrating Adult Learning Theory" (Allen et al., in press) the authors assert that leader development programming that addresses all five modes of development will yield a more well-rounded and prepared leader. The complementary modes facilitate development of leaders who have the essential knowledge, skills, self-awareness, mentors, and experiences. In purposeful engagement, learning is appropriately scaffolded, occurs over time, and incorporates learning strategies from each of the five modes. As Allen, Rosch, and Riggio (in press) suggest, many program architects and learners believe they are developing leaders but unknowingly default to only developing one or two modes. For instance, colleges of business heavily rely on cognitivism which is important, but not holistic.

With careful consideration and thoughtful alignment we have an opportunity to experience and provide leadership learning opportunities that more holistically meet the needs of learners and set them up for developmental success.

### A Note on Organizations: The "Context" of Purposeful Engagement

To have leaders who are fully capable of meeting organizational needs, an organization must have a structure and culture that nurtures, encourages, and rewards leadership development. Learning needs to align with organizational processes (Allen, 2008). Leader fundamentals inform what organizations might assess to understand leader development and performance but offer an incomplete picture of the developmental context. Developmental culture must emanate from the very top of the organization, making clear how leaders should lead and what support is available to develop. Critical features of developmental culture include support that continues throughout an individual's career, embracing a variety of leadership styles, and developmental resources that are available to all organizational members. A key benefit of

establishing development as a part of corporate culture is the materialization of individual and mutual accountability where organizational members reinforce development independently. By leveraging day-to-day experiences, the desired developmental outcomes can be achieved.

In contrast, stand-alone interventions (e.g., workshops and training) in response to emerging challenges take people away from real work, regularly fail to produce lasting change, and are often only made available to select organizational members. In the authors' experience, standalone interventions are prone to overstated outcomes, fail to adequately consider alternative interventions, and often ignore how the content of a proposed solution relates to the organizational context. These are just a few conditions that undermine the return on investment where standalone solutions fail to consider adverse, unwanted, and unintended consequences (Kerr, 1995).

Culture starts with intentional decisions by senior leaders (Schein & Schein, 2017). Much like significant capital investment, initiating a developmental culture requires more than intent or expectations—it also directs support in the forms of money, time, and resources. As such, top leaders must be willing to make long-term investments that may take years to yield dividends. While somewhat difficult to quantify, an actual leadership return-on-investment contributes to organizational health and results in significant competitive advantages. Unless senior leaders invest, development will be delayed, restricted, or completely inhibited. In addition, individuals throughout the organization watch senior leadership behavior to determine which behaviors facilitate advancement. When senior leaders provide lip service to leadership development, it will quickly fall to the wayside.

Leadership development must be omnipresent. Leaders at all levels, including the most senior executives, need regular, formalized, and tailored development. As leaders mature, their developmental needs change concerning situational and didactic qualities (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Coaching can be a valuable tool to increase self-awareness and overcome blind spots because no leader is good at every task (Lamb, 2018). Coaching, feedback, and continuous training help leaders reinforce positive qualities while improving and addressing limitations and blind spots. This approach parallels professional athlete development. The most accomplished athletes have multiple coaches who watch their every move and constantly give feedback on areas and ways to improve, and performance is increasingly recognized as involving athletes' psychological skills, motivational factors, and support structures outside of the sport (Reed et al., 2016).

A common tendency among senior leaders is to develop and embrace leadership styles and tendencies that reflect their strengths and styles. While natural and sometimes valuable, leadership is a highly individualized skill set. One size does not fit all, and organizations must have a "leadership bench" of leaders with diverse leadership styles. Consider a young field-grade officer in the military tasked to develop a battalion of young soldiers into an effective fighting unit. The styles and techniques required differ substantially from a field-grade officer assigned to a unit responsible for developing cybersecurity programs. If organizations miscalculate what their leaders need to do, opportunities will be lost, and organizational performance suffers. Historically, General George Marshall and General George Patton were both pivotal to the success of World War II. Each leader had a markedly different approach to leadership. General Marshall's diplomacy, administration, and organization skills were indispensable in leading the Allied war effort and ultimately, the invasion of Europe. By contrast, General Patton's decidedly authoritarian, confrontational, and task-oriented approach worked mightily against the Axis in Africa and Europe. Diverse

leadership styles are essential within an organization to meet various leadership challenges.

## Considerations for Practice

Up to this point we have explored the importance of clear definitions, the importance of knowledge, skills, and character (what), and the need to design comprehensive leadership learning experiences (how). We also underscored the importance of an organizational context that facilitates development by setting expectations, aligning values and practice, and focusing on results of importance to the organization.

In this section we offer statements and exploratory questions for readers to consider as they commence and revise developmental efforts. For some readers, this content will reinforce and validate ongoing efforts. For others, these questions may provide new insights to help you as you start or seek to strengthen your efforts. Every reader is encouraged to first evaluate themselves. Once explored, consider how these statements might also apply to a specific person that you are helping to develop or a program you are designing or implementing. Regardless of the perspective taken, the intent of the exercise is to help readers discover richness in developmental experiences that might otherwise be overlooked.

1. I have a solid understanding of leadership theory, research, and the mental processes necessary to think through a given leadership challenge.
   - What do I know about leadership?
   - What questions arise when I interact with others across diverse situations that suggest areas for further exploration?
2. I have led people and have practiced skills required for leadership such as listening, giving feedback, setting reasonable goals and objectives and hiring/firing employees.
   - What leadership skills and competencies do you currently have?

   - How do they relate to performance in day-to-day work and fit with anticipated future challenges?
3. I have a strong sense of my strengths and weaknesses, I am open to feedback, and I value what others contribute.
   - What efforts are needed to enhance your sense of self and the value that others contribute?
   - How do you balance attending to objective performance and interpersonal processes?
   - How could you incorporate the perspectives of others to validate or challenge your perspective?
4. I have role models and mentors who demonstrate leadership talent and help me grow.
   - Who or what do you look to as the epitome of leadership and why?
   - How are you serving as an exemplar to others?
   - In what areas could continued growth help you reach your ideals?
5. I frequently take time to discuss leadership experiences with my supervisors and other colleagues and look for ways to capture wisdom for the future.
   - What habits are you actively practicing to make meaning of leadership experiences?
   - Who else can you employ in your efforts to make meaning of these experiences?
6. Consider your answers to the preceding questions.
   - How do you need to change the way you are practicing development for yourself, for others, and for your organization?

## Conclusion

Leadership development is essential for organizations to be competitive and successful. To develop leaders, individuals at all levels need to intentionally engage in activities that provide the knowledge, skills, and

character needed to lead. These qualities need to be brought to leaders in ways that respect the theories of adult learning and the needs of the learner. Our hope is that this paper will serve as a blueprint for leaders young and old, and for the organizations with the opportunity to enable others to pursue life-long leadership development.

The daily demands in modern organizations set the stage for leadership development to be pushed to the side and neglected. Any leadership development program can quickly devolve into casual efforts with no formalized structure, objectives, plan, or accountability. Imagine a young football player trying to develop athletic skills without a formalized practice schedule, coaching, and a record of progress. Leadership is no different. To this end, purposeful engagement represents basic requirements where leaders and the organization pursue leader fundamentals by practicing diverse learning modes.

As a note of caution, organizations invested in developing highly qualified workers often focus on technical competency. Technical competency is not a replacement for developing leaders and leadership capacity. More than twenty years ago, Senge (2000) critiqued the academic community for pursuing individualistic aims that missed opportunities to produce a highly qualified workforce. The persistent problem is that many organizations remain motivated to respond to technological advances and dynamic contexts (e.g., the knowledge and skills associated with a particular field or emerging challenge) and miss opportunities to develop leaders in ways essential to enhancing organizational performance.

We offer purposeful engagement as a practical and scalable framework so that any organization can undertake informed, evidence-based efforts to develop leadership talent in the context of day-to-day work settings. Advancing the recommendations

of Reimer, Bremer, and Larsen (2021), we proposed purposeful engagement as a process to create and sustain conditions through efforts involving leading people, connecting learning to the organization's purpose, and leading with culture to create favorable conditions for development. In doing so, people at every organizational level are empowered to share efforts to develop themselves and others as leaders.

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# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: Why Does it Matter to Leadership Development?

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As the new Chief, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), I am often asked why diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) matter. More specifically, I have been asked "Why does DEI matter to USAFA/U.S. Air Force (USAF)/U.S. Space Force (USSF)?" Having served 27 years on active duty, as a social scientist, and as the former USAFA Behavioral Sciences and Leadership Department Head, I can tell you, they matter a great deal. The reasons they matter are many, but for the purposes of this article, I will discuss their importance within the context of three lines of USAFA strategic DEI efforts: Recruitment, Retention/Success, and Development.

Let's begin with definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-7001, Diversity & Inclusion, broadly defines *diversity* as:

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...a composite of individual characteristics, experiences, and abilities consistent with the Air Force Core Values and the Air Force Mission. Air Force diversity includes, but is not limited to: personal life experiences, geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural knowledge, educational background, work experience, language abilities, physical abilities, philosophical and spiritual perspectives, age, race, ethnicity, and gender. (U.S. Air Force, 2019, p. 3)

Simply stated, diversity is the representation of individuals from a diverse range of demographic and social identity backgrounds. In the Executive Order on "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," equity is defined as:

> ...the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality." (United States Office of the President, 2021)

Equity is often confused with equality. In its simplest form, equality is giving everyone the same (regardless of their unique needs, capabilities, resources, etc.). In contrast, equity seeks to give people what they need to be successful, recognizing that people have unique needs, capabilities, resources, etc. Equity can also

be described as the recognition and elimination of system barriers that produce disparate experiences of belongingness (Nishii, 2021). Finally, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-7001, Diversity & Inclusion, defines *inclusion* as "The process of creating a culture where all members of an organization are free to make their fullest contributions to the success of the group, and where there are no unnecessary barriers to success" (U.S. Air Force, 2019, p. 3). Inclusion involves an organizational environment that enables individuals to simultaneously experience belonging and feel valued for their unique competencies and perspectives (Nishii, 2021). Having defined our terms of reference, let's discuss the concepts of DEI within three strategic lines of effort for USAFA: recruitment, retention/success and development.

## USAFA DEI Line of Effort #1: Recruit students, faculty & staff representative of the diverse talent pool.

Our first line of strategic DEI effort involves recruiting students, faculty and Airmen representative of the diversity of the talent pool. One may ask, "Why is it important to have a diverse Cadet Wing?" The first reason is that USAFA is in a fierce competition for talent and that talent is increasingly diverse. USAFA is competing with businesses and other universities for the best and brightest our country has to offer. This talent pool of young adults is growing more diverse every year and we will not know if we have attracted our fair share of talent, unless we reflect the diversity of that talent pool. Our nation's talent is growing increasingly diverse, across race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation/gender identity. With respect to race/ethnicity, of the children born in the United States this year, the racial minority has become the majority (Frey, 2018). In other words, of the children born in the U.S. this year, the number

of newborns of color (African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, etc.) is greater than the number of newborns identified as Caucasian or White. In fact, this tipping point of the racial minority becoming the majority among newborns actually occurred six years ago in 2015 (Frey, 2018). Additionally, based on projections from the Census Bureau, children of color will become the majority for the entire U.S. population below age 18 by 2021 (Frey, 2018). Also, based on similar projections for the population between ages 18-24 (our prime accessions age range for USAFA), young adults of color will become the majority in only a few short years in 2025 (Frey, 2018). Similarly, our future talent pool will be increasingly diverse in terms of gender. While the U.S. population is projected to be relatively stable across gender percentages into the future, USAFA should expect greater gender diversity in our talent pool for a number of reasons. First, within the U.S., women are attending and graduating college at higher rates than men, and this has been true for over 20 years (Matias, 2019). For example, among 2017 college graduates, 57% were women, as compared to only 43% for men (Matias, 2019). Secondly, as of 2016, many more operational military career fields are open to women (Losey, 2016). These factors will very likely result in larger numbers of women in our talent pool. In terms of religious identity, the U.S. population is growing increasingly diverse. Currently, 75.5% of the population identifies as "Christian," while 18.6% identifies as Atheist/Agnostic and 5.9% identifies as non-Christian (e.g., Jewish-American, Muslim-American, etc.) (Pew, 2021). Based on projections from Pew-Templeton, by 2040, the Atheist/Agnostic and non-Christian groups are expected to increase significantly (up to 23.6% and 7.3%, respectively) (Pew, 2021). Additionally, the Muslim-American population is expected to replace the Jewish-American population as the second largest religious identity group in the

U.S. by 2040 (Pew, 2021). Finally, our talent pool will be increasing diverse in relation to sexual orientation/ gender identity. Based on research by Gallup, 5.8% of U.S. millennials identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ+) individuals in 2012 (Gates, 2017). In a follow-up poll in 2016, 7.3% of U.S. millennials identified as LGBT individuals (Gates, 2017). Gallup surmised that the increase was likely due to a greater willingness and openness of millennials to publicly identify as LGBTQ+ than previous generations. Also, the Department of Defense recently decided to remove the ban on service by transgender individuals, which will likely increase the number of transgender people in our talent pool (DoD, 2021). In summary, the talent pool for USAFA is growing increasingly diverse, and unless we reflect the diversity of those young citizens, we risk losing in the competition for our nation's best and brightest.

The second reason having a diverse Cadet Wing is important is because diversity enhances the educational benefits for all students. The U.S. Supreme Court, in the case Fisher vs. University of Texas, outlined "The educational benefits that flow from student body diversity..." including a "robust exchange of ideas; exposure to differing cultures; preparation for the challenges of an increasingly diverse workforce; and acquisition of competencies required of future leaders." (Fisher v. UOT, 2013). As noted by this important case, having a diverse Cadet Wing will enable a "robust exchange of ideas," as well as "exposure [of our cadets] to differing cultures." In her book *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education*, Dr. Daryl Smith outlines the research supporting the benefits of student body diversity on student outcomes. "The research, with a special focus on experiences that engage diversity or where students from different groups interact, consistently shows benefits in terms of student

satisfaction, increased openness to diverse ideas, intellectual engagement, critical thinking, greater tolerance, and personal development" (Smith, 2020, p. 234). Smith goes on to summarize the research on student cognitive complexity, which is enhanced by interactions with "diverse others." The research showed that experiences with diverse others, because they are difficult and tough, disturbed usual thinking patterns, which is likely to lead to greater cognitive complexity and innovation (Smith, 2020).

While we have demonstrated that diversity in the USAFA student body is important, some may ask, "Why is it important to have a diverse faculty and staff at USAFA?" Similar to the benefits of student diversity, staff/faculty diversity is important because USAFA is in competition for talent among this population — a diverse staff/faculty enhances educational benefits for all students and the need for student role models is vitally important. Similar to the student talent pool, the faculty/staff talent pool is growing increasingly diverse. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, the percentage of racial or ethnic minorities in postsecondary faculty positions rose from 14% to 24% from 1997 to 2017 (Davis & Fry, 2019). Similarly, the percent of women in postsecondary faculty positions increased from 40.7% to 49.6% during the same time (NCES, 2018). These facts, combined with the trends mentioned above, namely the increasing racial/ethnic diversity of the nation's youth, as well as the fact that women are graduating college at higher rates than men, indicate that the faculty/staff talent pool will continue to grow increasingly diverse. Unless USAFA reflects the changing demographics of this talent pool, we cannot be certain we have competed well for the rich talent available. Secondly, and similar to a diverse Cadet Wing, a diverse faculty/staff enhances the educational benefits for all students. Smith notes:

...the consistent findings from numerous studies demonstrate the role of underrepresented minority faculty and White women, in particular, in bringing diversity themes to scholarship, increasing diversity in the curriculum and introducing more and different patterns of pedagogy, including increasing the engagement of students in the community." (Smith, 2020, p. 156)

Finally, a diverse faculty/staff is important for the purposes of mentorship and role modeling. Research has found that minority students who have educators of the same race or ethnicity are more likely to look to those teachers as role models and to report greater effort in school and higher college goals (Egalite & Kisida, 2018). A study looking at community college classrooms found that performance gaps of minority students can be closed by 20% to 50% if faculty more closely resemble students (Fairlie et al., 2014). As the USAF seeks to improve the diversity in rated career fields, as well as within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines, having diverse faculty/staff role models in these disciplines is critical to these efforts.

## Line of Effort #2: Equitably retain and provide opportunities for success for students, faculty and staff across identities (race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ+, religion, etc.).

One might ask why it is important to equitably retain and provide opportunities for success across identities? Equity in retention and success across identities is important because disparities may help identify unintended barriers, lack of equity drives down performance, and exploring disparities often leads to innovation. Exploring disparities across identity groups might help identify unintended barriers to success and retention, which in turn may be impacting all identity

groups. When I worked DEI at the USAF headquarters, we were studying officer retention rates. Since high attrition rates are very costly for an organization (e.g., talent drain, high replacement training costs, etc.), we wanted to better understand how we might retain our best and brightest. When we examined the retention data for all officers, there we no concerning trends. When we examined retention data for men and women separately, we discovered an alarming finding, namely that female officers were departing the USAF at twice the rate of male officers between four to seven years of service, and which is a significant talent drain for the institution. While this trend is similar within the larger U.S. workforce, the rate of women's attrition from the USAF was significantly higher than the national average. Follow-up surveys were conducted to better understand the different reasons why male and female officers depart the USAF, and led to new policies that significantly improved the quality of life for women as well as greatly benefited men. The USAF recently embarked on a number of disparity reviews across identities, which has indeed uncovered some pronounced differences in success/failure indicators (DoD, 2020). The next step will be to accomplish a root cause analysis to get at the "why" of these disparities, which will undoubtedly lead to systemic improvements for all Airmen (e.g., removing barriers, improving processes, addressing potential bias, etc.).

Real or perceived inequity in an organization drives down team performance. Research demonstrates that employees' perception of fairness and equitable treatment is an important factor in retention, performance, and engagement. In fact, just the perception that treatment is unfair can have demoralizing effects on the organization because

it: "... Creates a climate of distrust and hostility; Erodes performance and employee commitment to the organization; Increases counter-productive work behavior; Reduces the willingness of employees to help each other; and increases voluntary turnover and absenteeism" (Ceplenski, 2013). As stated in the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) Action Orders, USAF leaders need to "ensure the way we place our Airmen in specific jobs offering opportunities for advancement fosters a diverse and inclusive culture promoting dignity and fairness" (Brown, 2020, p. 2).

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Exploring disparities in retention and success across identities often leads to important organizational innovations. It is important to thoughtfully consider how an organization explains the apparent gaps in retention and success for different identity groups, because these explanations will either drive innovations to close the gaps or lead to inaction. For instance, if a gap in student success for one identity is simply attributed to lack of preparation (e.g., test scores used as indicators of academic qualifications) then the solution might simply be to focus on recruiting students within an identity group who demonstrate preparedness. While preparation might be one factor explaining a success gap, only considering this explanation relieves

the organization of any responsibility to innovate in an attempt to close the gap. Alternatively, considering the unique challenges students face within certain identity groups, and seeking to reduce those challenges, might lead to innovation. For instance, stereotype threat is a "socially premised psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). Numerous studies indicate that when a stereotype is evoked in a classroom setting, groups that are susceptible to that stereotype underperform (Smith, 2020). Other studies have demonstrated that underperformance can be eliminated when the stereotype threat was removed (Smith, 2020). If an organizational achievement gap is explained, at least in part by stereotype threat, then the organization can take concrete steps to mitigate that threat, thereby enhancing performance. As another example, much of the research on institutions that are successful with first-generation and low-income students underscores the importance of making clear the paths to success (Smith, 2020). As higher-income, or multigenerational, college students have greater access to resources and experiences, they likely receive more advice and knowledge about paths to academic success. The achievement gap is not framed in respect to the ability of the students, but is framed simply by a lack of awareness. By providing more explicit, clear mentorship on paths to success, institutions are potentially able to close achievement gaps for first-generation and low-income students. Notice, in the two examples above, no expectations or standards for student performance were lowered. Instead, challenges and barriers were identified and mitigated by innovation, which led to enhanced performance. In fact, research indicates that "high expectations," coupled with "belief and support, are three staples of an approach to learning" (Smith, 2020, p. 242).

## Line of Effort #3: Develop all students, faculty and Airmen across the base to have the knowledge and skills to value diversity & lead inclusively at USAFA and in the USAF.

Having established the importance of diversity to USAFA recruiting and retention/success, we turn to development. One might ask, "Why is it important to develop our students/faculty/staff to value diversity and lead inclusively?" For our students as future USAF leaders, this critical knowledge and skill set is essential because inclusivity and diversity are military necessities, are crucial components of the USAFA Leader of Character Framework[1], and they enhance team/organizational performance. According to the USAF Strategic Diversity Roadmap:

> "Diversity is a military necessity. Air Force decision-making and operational capabilities are enhanced by diversity among its Airmen, uniformed and civilian, helping make the Air Force more agile, innovative and effective. It opens the door to creative solutions to complex problems and provides our Air Force a competitive edge in air, space and cyberspace" (2013, p. 4).

Therefore, the USAF Academy must actively seek to develop leaders with the skills to leverage diverse teams, in order to enhance decision-making and operational capabilities. Similarly, the roadmap makes the case that "diversity is critical for successful operations in the international community. With a force interacting with people around the globe, cross-culturally competent Airmen (and those proficient in foreign languages) are critical to building partnerships and conducting the full range of military operations" (2013, p. 4). This

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1 For more information on the Leader of Character Framework, please reference https://jcli.scholasticahq.com/article/13606-developing-leaders-of-character

highlights a final educational need, to develop leaders who are cross-culturally competent, which is critical to building international partnerships and conducting operations across the globe.

Second, it is essential for our students to value diversity, and lead inclusively, because these skills are vital elements of our Leader of Character Framework. The framework defines a "leader of character" as someone who: "Lives honorably by consistently practicing the virtues embodied in the Core Values; Lifts others to their best possible selves; and, Elevates performance toward a common and noble purpose" (USAFA 2021). According to the model, to "live honorably" as a leader involves practicing many virtues, including honesty, courage, humility, etc. Two of these virtues include "Respect for Human Dignity" and "Fairness." From a diversity perspective, it is impossible to "Respect Human Dignity" as a leader if you fail to value a follower's identity (e.g. cultural, religious, racial, etc.). Because these identities are often central to a follower's experience, self-esteem, or sense of worth, etc., failing to value these identities puts a leader at risk of not "Respecting Human Dignity," and consequently, driving down performance. As noted previously, our nation's talent is becoming increasingly diverse across race, ethnicity, gender, etc.. These diverse, talented young adults are the very Airmen our cadets will someday lead. Are our future leaders ready? Are they able to identify and value the diversity of their future Airmen, who are increasingly diverse? From an inclusion perspective, it is difficult for a leader to live out the virtue of being "Fair," if the leader does not actively and intentionally create an inclusive environment (e.g., listening to underrepresented voices; understanding how their own potential biases around

identity shape their behavior; encouraging alternative viewpoints, etc.). Do our future leaders have the skills to lead inclusively? The next component of the Leader of Character Framework includes the ability to "Lift others to their best possible selves." How does a leader "lift others" if they don't have a deep understanding of their follower's uniqueness, identities, history, experiences, etc.? Similarly, a part of helping followers be their "best possible selves," is to help followers "bring their whole selves to work" and not feel as if they must hide parts of their identity for fear of being an outsider. Diversity and inclusive leadership result in a sense of

> *While diversity is often a prerequisite for enhanced performance, diversity alone is often insufficient for improving performance. What is required instead is an inclusive leadership approach that promotes greater inclusion of employees.*

belonging, which is essential to lifting "others to their best possible selves." As stated in our CSAF Action Orders, USAF leaders need to "Permeate diversity, inclusion, and belonging actions with this AO (Action Order) to cultivate and sustain both a USAF culture and environment of excellence in which all Airmen and families can reach their full potential" (Brown, 2020, p. 6). The final component of the Leader of Character Framework involves elevating "performance toward a common and noble purpose." As we will demonstrate in the next section, diversity and inclusive leadership elevate team/organizational performance.

Finally, it is essential for our students to learn these skills, because diversity and inclusive leadership have been shown to enhance team/organizational

performance.  A recent McKinsey report on 366 companies found that those companies in the upper quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have returns above the industry mean, and those in the upper quartile for racial and ethnic diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean (Hunt et al., 2015). One might ask, "Why do diverse teams/organizations outperform others?"  In *Why Diverse Teams Are Smarter*, the authors review the research and suggest diverse teams outperform others because they tend to focus more on the facts, process these facts more carefully, and are simply more innovative (Rock & Grant, 2016).  While diversity is often a prerequisite for enhanced performance, diversity alone is often insufficient for improving performance.  What is required instead is an inclusive leadership approach that promotes greater inclusion of employees.  In a study conducted among public managers in Texas, results showed that improving organizational performance required leadership dedicated to fostering inclusion (Sabharwal, 2014).  To further illustrate the importance of inclusive leadership in leveraging the potential power of diversity, a research team conducted a meta-analysis of 108 empirical studies on processes and performance in 10,632 teams (Stahl & Maznevski, 2021).  They found that cultural diversity leads to process losses through task conflict and decreased social integration, but to process gains through increased creativity and satisfaction.  In other words, diverse teams, if not lead inclusively, can experience decreased performance because of task conflict and low social integration.  Alternatively, if a diverse team is led inclusively, the team will experience increased creativity and satisfaction.  Therefore, diversity is important, but not sufficient, for enhanced team performance, it often comes down to good, inclusive leadership.

In conclusion, DEI is absolutely vital to USAFA's mission of developing leaders of character.  Competing for talent, enhancing team/organizational performance, and preparing future officers to lead diverse Airmen, a focus on DEI improves USAFA's ability to develop future leaders for the USAF and USSF.

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## FEATURE ARTICLES

# My Journey

Fred Gregory, General (Ret), USAF

**Interviewed By: Douglas Lindsay**

**Lindsay:** Would you mind taking a few minutes and walk us through your journey from the Academy through your experiences as helicopter pilot, test pilot, time with NASA and key in on some of the leadership lessons you learned along the way?

**Gregory:** I'm glad you used the word journey. A journey is something that I have always focused on that has no particular ending or destination. It is a series of adventures. In most cases, that adventure you just experienced prepares you for the next adventure. For example, a lot of people think that we should go to Mars. I look at Mars as a waypoint, an enabler, for the next adventure. When I went to the Academy, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I did know that flying appeared to be exciting. I will be quite honest with you, I went to the Academy believing it was a flying school and was definitely disappointed when I showed up and there was no airport anywhere near. I was just a young kid. Even though I had a couple of years of college prior to my acceptance and attendance, I really was a young kid and immature. So, my welcome at the Academy by a gentleman, an upperclassman, who believed that I was hard of hearing and could not see him seemed to be rationale for him getting right in front of my face, nose to nose and screaming. That was a wakeup call that convinced me that I was not in an ordinary university. That I was not preparing for a normal civilian career and that this was serious.

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**Colonel (ret) Frederick D. Gregory** '64 is currently the managing director of the Aerospace and Defense practice at Lohfeld Consulting Group. Prior to joining Lohfeld, Colonel Gregory was the Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). He also served as the Associate Administrator for Space Flight and was responsible for overseeing the management of the International Space Station, Space Shuttle operations and other space programs. Gregory has extensive experience as an astronaut, test pilot, and manager of flight safety programs and launch support operations. As an astronaut, he logged 455 hours in space: as pilot for the Orbiter Challenger (STS-51B) in 1985, as spacecraft commander aboard Discovery (STS-33) in 1989, and as spacecraft commander aboard Atlantis (STS-44) in 1991. He retired as a Colonel in the United States Air Force after logging 7,000 hours in more than 50 types of aircraft, including 550 combat missions in Vietnam. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the Air Force Academy and a Master's degree in Information Systems from George Washington University. Among other honors, he is a recipient of the Academy's Distinguished Graduate Award. https://www.afacademyfoundation.org/s/1885/rd19/interior.aspx?sid=1885&gid=2&pgid=552

As a as a freshman, a Doolie, you are gathering your thoughts together. I look back at the Academy experience in that first year, and I look at the breadth and depth of the courses that we took. At that earliest point I did not understand the importance of each of those specific areas. It wasn't until years later that I realized that the Academy was smart. It already knew what a great leader or a leader needed to have in his or her portfolio to be successful. I wasn't smart enough to realize that, and I think even in my senior year I was still struggling with what was I going to do when I grew up? I did, however, determine in my senior year that what I would not be doing what everybody else was doing. One of the attributes or traits that I gained from the Academy was to go off on your own. Think about things in perhaps a different way. Do things that others haven't done before. Accept the risk, mitigate the risk, eliminate it if necessary, but the big thing was no matter what you did, have fun doing it.

I think another thing I learned in the Academy was that even though this was a very disciplined facility that had very strict rules, you could still enjoy the experience. You could still enjoy the experience by laughing at things and joking about yourself and gaining the friendships that were available to you. The Academy gave me that multidisciplined approach to things of science and engineering, but also the liberal arts of economics, law, history, English, and political science. Maybe at that moment I didn't recognize or realize how important they were. I did realize several years after graduation though with a core in engineering and science and to be able to converse and communicate with lawyers and understand political science, international affairs, public relations, branding and things like that. I came out with an educational background that prepared me, I think better than I would have been if I had gone to a strict liberal arts university. I had gone to two of those actually before it came to the Academy. So, I had a better understanding of what the difference was between a military school such as the Academy and civilian institutions.

I chose helicopters because very few chose them. I was intrigued with rotorcraft. There weren't many of us who decided to go that path, maybe 8 or 9% of our class. I think though, if you ask those of us who went to helicopters, they will tell you that it was exciting and it was fun. I will tell you to this day, if you ask me my favorite aircraft, I will tell you it was a helicopter mainly because we didn't have a lot of rules. Most of it was guidelines and it was fun to go off on your own and fly with a mission and your attempt to be successful at it. The Academy prepared me for those kinds of decisions. The Academy prepared me by giving me the ability to write and to talk. The Academy prepared me as I moved up into the ranks in the Air Force and in NASA of understanding what a program manager was as opposed to a project manager. It taught me the difference and the importance of being a team player and also being the captain of the team. Being able to move freely and comfortably from one role to another.

**Dr. Douglas Lindsay** is the Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Character and Leadership Development (JCLD)*. Prior to assuming his current role, he was a Professor and the founding Director of the Masters of Professional Studies Program in the Psychology of Leadership at Pennsylvania State University. He also served in the United States Air Force where he retired after a 22-year career, serving in a multitude of roles, including research psychologist, occupational analyst, inspector general, deputy squadron commander, senior military professor, Full Professor, deputy department head and research center director. He has over well over 100 publications and presentations on the topic of leadership and leadership development. He received a Bachelor's Degree from the United States Air Force Academy (class of 1992), a Master's Degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and a Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Pennsylvania State University.

The Academy gave me friends, friends for life not only my classmates but those around us and even some of the academic instructors. So, the Academy gave me an awful lot. I think really, it kind of set me up for that journey that I would take. Not knowing where I was going, but I knew I was making good time and having fun.

I went to a helicopter school, and I began volunteering for Vietnam as soon as I graduated from chopper school. I was privileged to go to Vietnam as a rescue helicopter pilot 1966 through 1967. I always went to sleep with a smile on my face because every day we had a role that successfully recovered a down flyer, a Marine squad that had been overcome with heat exhaustion, or a rescue or to support something important. Every day was an adventure but every day gave you self-satisfaction that you had done something for the good of the nation, and certainly for the good of the families of the people that we had recovered. I came back as a helicopter pilot leaving the H-43, the Pedro, and went into the Huey for missile support at Whiteman Air Force Base. We carried the missile crews, cooks, security, and had other miscellaneous roles in support of the Minuteman missile. It was a great place if you wanted flying time. I was flying 70 to 75 hours a month back and forth to these missile sites and other miscellaneous missions. After about a year of it, and I was doing exactly what I loved, which was flying, but every day I got up, I went to work, I briefed, I flew, I came back, I debriefed and went home every day, after day, after day. It was about that time that I realized that when you are in a role like that where you're doing the same thing over and over again with no advancement, you are in a rut. It was at that point I decided that for my career, my goals would be to have fun and make a contribution, which then opened up anything that I wanted to do from that point on. It wouldn't be something specific like wanting to be a Thunderbird pilot or wanting to be a medical doctor. Whatever it was, I had to have fun doing it and make a contribution. When you are in a rut, the fun begins

to wane and that's when I decided I needed to look to something else and try to decide what I wanted to be when I grew up.

I went through a catalog of courses and schools that the Air Force offered. I saw an advertisement for test pilot and I thought, well that's something to do. I applied for test pilot school only because I was getting bored flying every day doing the same thing. The Air Force somehow, and I never quite understood this, came to me and to the other helicopter pilots, and said we're taking you out of helicopters and we are putting you in fixed wing. You get to choose your airplane and your base of assignment. If you chose not to pursue that, then you would leave the Air Force. That was the most amazing offer I had ever had in my life. It took me about a second to decide. Yes, I was going to do this. And two, I was going to go into fighters, which was my original intent when I came to the Academy. I wanted to be a Thunderbird pilot and obviously the helicopter was not in that line. I said I want to go fly fighters. I want to fly F-4s. The Air Force immediately said okay. So, I quickly signed out of Whiteman AFB and we went down to Randolph AFB for transition to fixed wing flying the T-38. We were in a pipeline that was about six months long. Those who were in my class were the same ones who I had been in Basic Helicopter School with several years earlier. We accomplished the requirements of that six month program very quickly.

When I left Randolph AFB, I was assigned to the RTU at Davis Monthan AFB since they were the training unit for F-4s and I went right to the front seat of the F-4. I was there with many of my classmates who had started in the back as a WSO or GIB and were now upgrading to the front seat. It was very clear that I had flown low speed rotary, but I did very successfully get through that course and actually had an assignment back to Vietnam for a second tour. But, about a week before graduation, I was called by the Military Personnel Center and I was informed that I had been selected to go to test pilot school and it was mine to

turn down. Then, they added, and you are going to go on exchange to the Navy school at Patuxent Naval Air Station. They also added as a helicopter pilot. Up to that last point, I was very excited. I said, "I need a couple of days to think about this." I went and met with the DO of the flying unit. I told him the dilemma that I had. He said, well, why don't you fly to Pax River (which is in Maryland) from Tucson (where Davis Monthan was) and talk to them and see if you can work out something. I knew talking to the Military Personnel Center wasn't going to help so, I checked out an F-4, did a cross country to Pax River in Lexington Park Maryland and walked into the skipper's office. I remember the conversation fairly clearly. I said, "Do you see the F-4 out there?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I flew it." He said, "I know." I said, "I've been selected to come here." He said, "I know, as a helicopter pilot." I said, "Can we talk about this?" I explained to him that I was no longer a helicopter pilot. I was now an F-4 pilot, and I was on my way back to Vietnam, and asked if I could I go through the fixed wing school in addition to the helicopter school? He thought it was funny and he started laughing. He said, "No one has done it before." I said, "Can I?" He said, "Well, if you are stupid enough to do it, then sure." That was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life. There were not enough hours in the day.

The Navy School was somewhat different from the Air Force School in that any airplane was available for you to fly. I think at the Edwards you were limited to two aircraft. The Navy School, however, maybe had 15 to 18 airplanes. You never knew what you were going to fly when you came in to work that day. In my case, it could be an A-4 or it could be a Bell H-13. You just never ever knew what you were going to fly. I finished the course and I had an assignment to Edwards AFB. They had put me in the STOL group out there and I was going to fly U-2s. We went on a post-graduation field trip, and when I came back, my assignment was changed to Wright-Patterson AFB. I would be in cargo operations flying helicopters and C-131s, which

is similar to the old T-29 navigator trainer. In this case, it had been converted to be an aircraft that carried a lot of electronics inside for evaluation. I was very disappointed, to say the least.

When I got to Wright-Patterson AFB, I was flying C-131s and in many cases what I was doing was just transporting people from Wright-Patterson AFB down to Dobbins AFB where they were working on the C-5. It was just a transport. I was also flying racetrack patterns over Indianapolis late at night as the wizards in the back did their electronic things. Some of the helicopter flying was fun, but I went over to fighter operations and I said, "If I am able to transfer to you, can I come?" Lt Col Lowell looked at my documents and what I had done at this point, and he said, "Certainly, if you are able to come over." I went back to my Commander for cargo operations and I proposed me moving to fighter operations. I don't think he was in the mood for that. I actually went in with a letter of resignation. I think that possibly my approach wasn't appropriate. It may have appeared to have been an ultimatum, but I didn't intend it that way. He threw me out of the office. At about 11:30 or 12:00 o'clock that night, he called me back and he said, he reconsidered. If I could maintain my helicopter proficiency, I could go to fighter operations. By 7:00 am the next morning I had moved everything from cargo to fighters. From that point on, I was in fighter operations but also flying helicopters. In fighter operations, we had F-4s, pace chase T-37s, and some other dogs and cats aircraft. In cargo operations, we had an H-3 helicopter and a Huey. I became the chief flight examiner for the F-4, the T-37 and the Huey and the Standardization/Evaluation (Stan/Eval) for the H-3. That meant when the Inspector General (IG) came or Stan/Eval came, I was a target of opportunity.

I had fantastic commanders, Bud Lowell was my commander in fighter ops, and Colonel Jim Abramson was the Wing Commander. Abe and I became good friends and remained good friends for a long, long

time. When we were flying, I would swear that Abe was always trying to kill me. He assigned me to the National Severe Storms Laboratory at one point flying out of Oklahoma City and Tinker AFB. My purpose was to, in a fully instrumented airplane, fly into the worst thunderstorms you could imagine and be the guinea pig to evaluate and certify the ground-based Doppler radar that was also looking at these particular clouds to determine if this type of Doppler could discern turbulence levels and reflectivity, meaning the amount of moisture or hail. I was the validator of the data. I flew approximately 60 or 65 penetrations into some of the worst storms I had ever seen in my life. That was one of the things. Another one was we had a cone attached to the front of an F-4 and we were looking at Reynolds numbers. I had to fly Mach one at essentially sea level as we evaluated this cone. What we were trying to do was determine whether wind tunnel data accurately reflected reality. In our look at Reynolds numbers, we had this long cone and there was a sensing hypodermic needle sort of thing that would transit the cone and gather data within the boundary layer. Now, we're supposed to do it at Mach one, and we were supposed to do it as low as we thought possible. Well, being a helicopter pilot, the nape of the earth is low. So, we did. We would take off, myself and a guy named Larry Roberts the flight engineer, from Wright-Patterson and we would fly to the bottom of Lake Huron and I would fly at about 50 feet at Mach one. What we discovered was that the horizon is not really that far out. As we were making one of these very high speed passes, a tanker or freighter appeared over the horizon. We went by it at supersonic speed, and I know to this day the captain of that ship is still wondering what the heck just went by because I know he had to have had a pressure wave of some sort. But I never heard any reports so I don't think he ever wanted to report what he saw.

I did a lot of things like that during my time at Wright Patterson. One day, Colonel Abramson called me and he said NASA is looking for a test pilot current in both rotary and fighters. They had none. NASA asked us if the Air Force had any, and you were the only person on the list. He said, "Would you like to go?" Which I realized wasn't a question. "Would you like to be detailed to NASA as a test pilot? I have a T-39 outside and we're going to fly you to Langley AFB to visit the NASA Langley Research Center," which was across the runway from Tactical Air Command (TAC) at that time, Air Combat Command (ACC) now. We flew there and I met Jim Patton, who was the Director of Aircraft Operations. He said, "Let me take you into the hangar." I went into the hangar and there were 20 aircraft in there. I was staring at them and I said, "Which one do I get to fly?" He said, "All of them." It included a B-57, a Canberra, 737, T-38, it was just a pilot's dream!

**Lindsay:** Sounds like a toy store.

**Gregory:** It was a toy store. I flew back to Wright Patterson and said, "Colonel, I'll do that." He said it was just for 2 years. Colonel Abramson had just been promoted to Brigadier General and he was going to Air Force Systems Command Headquarters at Andrews AFB as the IG. So, I headed on down to Langley. I was just having an absolute ball, but I'm still thinking two years. This happened in 1974 when I went down to Langley. The war had wound down, but I was hoping to get into a normal fighter squadron, which I had not had an opportunity to do. Jim Patton apparently asked that I remain one more year, so that took me to three years. I was flying everything they had, but I was the principal demonstration pilot for many activities on the 737. They sent me down to Piedmont Airlines to get a type rating on that aircraft. I didn't get the type rating, but I did go through the ground school in the simulation and things like that. I was flying the 737 from an aft cockpit and we were looking at ergonomics, flight control systems and displays. This airplane basically was the forerunner of future Boeing aircraft. The assignment continued to go on and then I got selected for Intermediate Service School (ISS)

and instead of sending me to Maxwell AFB, they sent me the Armed Forces Staff College which was in Norfolk and it was just a commute across the James River. While I was there, I would get an assignment to someplace after that.

About that time, the astronaut thing came up. As a test pilot I was doing everything every day, but I got into a rut again because everything I was doing was making a contribution, but I was essentially doing the same thing and didn't see any advancement. It was fun, but I was doing the same thing and it was a rut. During that time, I saw an advertisement and it said apply to the astronaut program and be an astronaut. I looked at it and I hadn't thought anything about that before, but I looked at it and said, well shoot, that's something to do. At that time, a friend of my parents called me, General Ben Davis Jr. who was the leader of the Tuskegee Airmen. I had known him since I was five since he was a friend of my parents. My mother and his wife had been in social clubs together but I had known him as just Ben Davis. I had no idea who he was. That was the tradition in the family to call all the men by their first name and last name and the women would all be Aunt and their first name. That's how I knew him. Well, he called me and by this time I knew that he was a three star general. He said I needed to apply for the astronaut program for myself personally and the Tuskegee Airmen. This must have been 1976 and I said, "Who are the Tuskegee Airmen?" I had never heard of it before this. He told me about the Tuskegee group, the experiment, and the success of it. I was believing I was the first one and now I'm finding out the torch had been given to me by the Airmen before me. Eugene Bullet and Bessie Coleman had given them the torch before that. I was just one in a long string of flyers doing it because it was a lot of fun.

There was also a young lady Nichelle Nichols, who was on the show Star Trek. I hadn't known at the time, but looking back, all the previous astronauts were white, European, male and that there had been

no women or minorities in the program. So, Nichelle took it upon herself to visit NASA and say, let me help you recruit a more diverse group, and NASA agreed. In February 1977, Nichelle was contracted by NASA as part of a company called Women in Motion, which she was the leader of. She went on a recruiting campaign that was only four months because the deadline was June 1977 for the application. At that point, they had only about 1000 applicants. When she finished, there were more than 8000. There had been no women or no minorities who had applied before she started. When she completed she had a phenomenal number of minorities and women interested who had applied for the program. I remember seeing her on TV during her campaign. She was in a blue flight suit pointing at me saying, "I want you to apply for the astronaut program." It was clear that she was talking directly to me. Between Gen Ben Davis and Nichelle, I applied. It was a huge application. I thought to myself, I had never been to Edwards AFB and since I didn't go to school there and since I was at Wright Patterson instead Edwards, nobody at Edwards would know who I was. I thought I can apply as a military officer but, if I were on the selection committee, I wouldn't choose me because I didn't know me. I decided I would apply also as a civilian with a resignation letter. So, I sent in the two applications. As I anticipated, the Air Force selection board did not pick me, but in August of 1977, I got a call. I was at NASA Langley. I got a call from General Tom Stafford who was the Division Commander at Edwards. He said, "Who the hell are you?" I was standing at attention. I said, "I am such and such," and explained who I was. He said, "Well, what are you doing?" I said, "I was a test pilot at Wright Patterson under General Abramson, and I was requested to be detailed to Langley, so I'm a test pilot at NASA Langley." He said John Young, who was the astronaut office commander, had called him because he and Tom Stafford were astronauts together. He said, "Who is this military guy applying as a civilian to the astronaut program?" Tom Stafford said he had no idea, so that's why he called me. I told him and he said,

"That's all I need," and he hung up.  This was in August, and I headed to Armed Forces Staff College.

In November, I was called.  I was still in school and they said, could you come to an interview for the astronaut program?  I hadn't heard anything since August.  I said, let me check with the chain of command and I was given permission to go down for the interview.  I went down and interviewed and I believe I was in the last group to interview.  The interview was one week and then I was back to Staff College.  We were graduating in mid-January.  I came into school one morning and we had little cubby holes with messages and there was a little message in there that said call Mr. Abbey.  He was the flight crew operations director above John Young.

> *I think NASA was looking for somebody who was not risk averse and looking forward to a space adventure.  I don't think any of us were the top in any category, but I think that we were like chunks of coal and with the right pressure and time, we would become diamonds.*

I called him, expecting something like, Fred, thank you so much, but you weren't selected.  Instead, he said, "Major Gregory, are you still interested in this job down here?  You have been selected as an astronaut." My thought was, as a civilian or as a military guy? But, I didn't ask the question.  Then later that day, there was a press release from the Air Force listing me as an Air Force test pilot selected for the astronaut program.  So, that's how I found out that I was apparently accepted, or at least got through the front door by the civilian application, but the Air Force decided to maintain me on their ranks.  There were 35 of us who went down to that program.  20 were brilliant scientists and engineers and 15 were stupid pilots like me.  That's how I got into the program.

We all met in Houston in the end of January 1978.  That's when we were introduced to the world.  All of us were kind of looking at each other, wondering, I have no idea how I made it here.  How did you make it here? That was interesting because I think everybody there said they had no idea how they got there because we could all think of 10 or 15 people much more qualified.  I think though as we began to talk, we realized that we were certainly technically qualified.  I think what they were looking for, as we talked though, were people who were broader.  Who had other interests.  I was also a major water skier at the time and was a racquetball player and handball player.  There were technical climbers there.  In our conversations, we didn't talk about solar physics or anything like that. We talked about the fun that we had doing other things and what I also found was there wasn't an ego in the group.  Type A's, yes.  But the ego wasn't here.  Some of these folks hadn't flown much and this was their first airplane flight when they came down for the interview, but they thought it was exciting.  I think NASA was looking for somebody who was not risk averse and looking forward to a space adventure.  I don't think any of us were the top in any category, but I think that we were like chunks of coal and with the right pressure and time, we would become diamonds.  We had a great time.  It was just a lot of fun. That's how I got into the astronaut program.

**Lindsay:** Why did you leave the astronaut program?

**Gregory:** The third time I flew, I realized, and that would have been my second command, that my next assignment would be to command another mission and I was I was getting a little bored doing it.  So, I remember telling my family because we were all in this together that I made a decision that I was going to leave the astronaut program.  I broke it to the family at our dinner table expecting great pushback.  My wife, I remember, looked up and said, "Well, that's nice, could

you take the trash out?" I had been wound so tightly in this role that I didn't know that there were trees or butterflies or birds. I didn't know we had a swimming pool. The whole world changed. I thought I needed some event to occur before retirement. I looked at my flying time and it was very close to 7000 hours. I said okay I'll fly until I get to 7000 hours. On the 30th of May, 1992, I was in a T-38 with Kathy Sullivan, who was also an astronaut, and we flew up to Whiteman AFB from Houston for lunch. Whiteman was my first assignment after Vietnam. We then flew back to Ellington and did touch and go's and at 7000 hours, I did a full stop, taxied in, left everything in the aircraft including my, helmet, gloves, beanie, checklist, clipboard, and bag. I left everything in the airplane and walked away. I never flew another airplane in my life from that point on. Never. Years later they sent my helmet to me. I don't know where it is to this day. It was a part of my life and I just ended it.

If you look at my career it was starts and stops. Hard stops with a new career beginning. I never looked back and never regretted leaving the astronaut program. People have asked me if I were to redo my career, would I do anything different? I sit and I think, if I hadn't gone to the Academy, I wouldn't have had this opportunity. If I hadn't gone to helicopters, I would never have been able to go through both courses at Pax River. If I hadn't been a fighter/helicopter guy would never been able to be loaned to NASA. If I hadn't done the independent application, I would never have gotten into the into the astronaut program. I look back and I say honestly nothing I did I would undo or do it a different way, because my career would have gone someplace else. But, I tell you, in my career I had fun and I made a contribution. That I can say for sure.

After the astronaut program, I thought I was finished and I was looking for what I was going to do next. NASA headquarters or someone up there called and I went to NASA Headquarters in DC and the new administrator, Dan Golden, came out

and George Abbey was there with him. Dan Golden looked me in the eye and he said, "I'm going to offer you a job you will not turn down," which was very clear. So, I took over the safety and mission assurance associate administrator for the Agency. I had never been a safety officer before. So, I called out to the Naval Post Graduate School and talked my way into a Commander Safety Program out there. I visited many different safety organizations and aviation organizations to learn what it was that I was supposed to do, because I really didn't know what I was supposed to do. From the traditional point of view, the role of the safety guy was one who stood at the door and stopped things. I didn't think like a safety person. I thought the safety person would have been part of a toolbox that a program, a project commander, a project leader or program leader would use in addition to other tools. It was believed in those days that mechanical things were the primary reason for failure and that they assumed that the reliability factor of the human and of software was one, so they disregarded those elements. Well, I didn't think that way at all. So, I kind of upended the safety program within NASA and included the human and computers as fallible parts of a complex system essential for the success and safety of any program. The satellites, ground support equipment, everything. For those eight years or so, we had no major accidents or incidents and we shook up the world a little bit. The engineers, the traditional legacy engineers, didn't understand this new approach and in some ways kind of discarded it. But we persevered and did good. Following my stint running safety for NASA I was then selected to lead the human spaceflight program. It was supposed to be a temporary thing, but that ended up being permanent. This was at the beginning of the International Space Station operations. Our partners were the space agencies in Japan, Canada, the European Space Agency, and Russia.

Then, one day, my secretary came to me and said the President would like to talk to you. I was thinking the President of what?, because I hung out with the

President of Boeing, Lockheed and others. My secretary said, "Get on the phone, it's THE President." So, I got on the phone and the President says "I'm considering you to be the Deputy Administrator of NASA. Would you consider it?" That that was another thing I realized was not really a question. The problem was to do that, I would be President nominated and Senate confirmed and it meant then that I would have to get rid of all of these things that had anything to do with money raising. At that time, I was a Board member of the Associate of Graduates (AOG) and I would have to give it up. I continued as the principal U.S. negotiator for the International Space Station and assumed all others jobs assigned as the agency COO. Sean O'Keefe was the administrator at that time. When he left to become chancellor of LSU, I became acting administrator of NASA. I was the acting administrator for three months until the new Administrator, Michael Griffin came in. At that point, I was just kind of, you know, tired of all of this. So, I attempted to resign and I was told that since the President hired me, the President was the one who would need to agree. I followed the process and I would send in my Letter of Resignation and they would send it back saying, "That's good, but you need to change this part." I'd send it back, and it would come back again. I had to go through the office that was responsible for hiring and firing those who are appointed by the President. Since I kept going through there and that is where it kept getting stopped, I wrote directly to the President at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. That's not exactly the way it went, but it came in another way instead of through that office. It was agreed that I would be able to resign when the new Deputy had been appointed. I was already an SES (Senior Executive Service), and when you are Presidential nominated and Senate confirmed, you can still maintain the SES. As such, you could only leave after a pay period. So, I ended up resigning the first week in December 2005.

Something funny that happened earlier, when I left the astronaut program, and since the Air Force was detailed to NASA, when I left the Air Force, I immediately became an SES running the safety program. I had put in my application for retirement and then we realized we had to delay it a month, so they sent a supplemental form in to delay retirement. I began going to my retirement briefings and a Master Sergeant came up to me and he says, "Colonel, you actually retired three days ago." I said, "What do you mean? I'm not supposed to retire until the end of January." He said, "No Sir, you're retired. You really can't be in these classes now because you have already retired." So, I never got out briefed. I never did the Veteran's Administration thing. I didn't do all of those things that I was supposed to do in that last month, and so I was just retired.

**Lindsay:** That was another hard stop, like you had mentioned earlier.

**Gregory:** Exactly. That would have been December 1992 and I thought I was retiring in 1993. So that's the history. It was fun. It really was fun. I did many other things at the same time. I will tell you, my honest wish was to be a history professor. History is my love. At Wright Patterson I began a military history program at the University of Dayton toward a Master's Degree. I completed about 3 courses and at one point, I called the Academy. I said I am such and such and I am working on my masters in military history and I am a test pilot now and just assigned, but I'd love to come up as a professor of history. I had already done the numbers and I would have been able to finish the Masters and PhD in 18 months, if they would just send me to the University of Colorado. The Captain I talked to sounded excited about this. About 3 minutes later the phone rings and it was the Chair of the Department. He says, "Captain Gregory, the Air Force just finished spending $175,000 to teach you to be a test pilot, there is no way in hell, they are going to let you go." So, that didn't happen.

It's been a fantastic career and I have enjoyed it. Changing topics a bit, I think what our Air Force Chief of Staff General Brown did when he when he changed the mantra of the Air Force to "airpower anytime, anywhere", I love it. I just think this is the most exciting thing that I have heard in the last few months. I'm excited about what I see the Air Force moving toward. It's back to the fun again.

**Lindsay:** It is and it's not so much of a pivot, but it's more of a clarification in the focus. He's really focused on the core competency of what we do as an Air Force.

**Gregory:** I think there's a different understanding of what the Air Force stands for now. So, I do see it as a pivot. We are not Stanford or Harvard or Morehouse. We are war fighters and that is what we do. Anything that we do, makes it so. You could be an economist, but you're an economist warfighter. You are a warrior in all of the things that you are doing now. Putting in all of the innuendos and qualifiers, I thought, was really taking us down a road of confused focus. I don't know if I had mentioned this to you before, but my philosophy is keep it simple stupid. As a young potential cadet, a basic, when you get off the bus and look up at the ramp, "Bring Me Warriors" is what I would put up there. I don't want it to be complicated. I want them to understand immediately what it is that they are signing into. I think that the Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do is critically important, but it is much more complex. It's too theoretical. I think this has to be in the cadet's mind as soon as they get there, exactly what it is that they are training to be. I want to go right to it. As part of it, there are certain things that we consider important, essential to being an excellent leader. One of them is integrity. We demonstrate the integrity initially with the Honor Code that we have. We will not lie, cheat, or steal nor tolerate among us

those who do. Your character, your leadership, and your integrity are going to be paramount. Anything you do, you've got to be passionate about it. You have to be able to explain and describe why it is important that you do all of these things. People put all these lists out about what a good leader does and I say it's very simple. The leader understands the goal, the importance of it, the rationale of it, and somehow that is transmitted to those who follow. That person also has to demonstrate that you can trust me. As I look back in my career, the people who I followed were those who excited me about everything I did. You could sense the passion and you could trust them. My sense is that is exactly what General Brown is talking about. I would say Bring Me Warriors at the beginning of the ramp and I would have the Honor Code stamped at every entrance off the Terrazzo in every stairwell so there is no doubt in any cadet's mind exactly what is expected. The core values

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are discussion things. Maybe as you walk into Mitchell Hall, you have those core values posted there so that at the table you could have a discussion where you could talk about these core values. I can be a warrior and an economics guy, but I'm the best economics warrior you have ever seen in your life.

**Lindsay:** Thank you for walking us through that journey and those perspectives. As we think about

preparing leaders for the future, it's not so much that list of attributes and checking them off a list, it is much more core to our identity of who we are as a person with that idea of integrity. It is how I'm showing up, that integrity, what I am excited about, that passion, those very core fundamental things are what we need to make sure we keep in mind so that when leaders go out and face new and novel situations they are grounded. They know where they are at, they are trustworthy, they have integrity, and they may be in a situation they've never seen before, but they know how they're going to be because I know who they are.

**Gregory:** Yes. So, we can talk about core values, but basically we are looking for somebody who has integrity. What I have found is that if you go into a group and say this is what we're going to do, they can sense that not only this is what we're going to do, but he or she believes in it. Then, the next thing you say is, "Answer the question, why?" A lot of people don't know why they're doing something. They've just been told to do it. What I discovered in the space program was that we had a bunch of requirements, but you could indiscriminately change the requirements. So, it was never really requirement, it was more like guidelines. After Challenger, we realized that our whole system had been compromised by different groups of people believing that they were doing the right thing. But in many cases nobody else knew about it. So, for every rule, we created rationale for the rule. If you were going to change the rule, you are really challenging the rationale. Therefore, you couldn't change a rule without changing the rationale. We established a review process that, was not burdensome at all, but the review says you want to change the rule, but the rule follows the rationale. Are you wanting to change the rationale? You start with the rationale, and then you go to the rule. Things became much more stable and people then began to understand why. This is important.

For the military process that we have, it would be good to discuss why it is that we do the things we do at the Academy. Why it is important. Why do we have an Honor Code? Not just that we have an Honor Code, but why we have an Honor Code. Why we do this? Why we do that? And I think that would give the cadets a better understanding of why they are there. They may think they know why they are there, but they may not really know why they are there. One of the things that we had, and I'm not saying go back to legacy, but during the summer we all went into F-1 and we watched these movies. They were called growth and development of the Air Force. They talked about the history of the Air Force and these were all classic movies and documentary movies. But when you left, you began to see exactly what it is that the Air Force does and how I am now a part of that. I asked my grandson Scott '11, and my granddaughter Caitlin '12 when they were there, did you have Air Force history discussions during the summer? They said that they didn't or couldn't remember having them. My granddaughter was a trainer in one of her assignments, and I brought in 12 of my classmates and they talked to the Doolies about the Air Force that they knew. It was interesting because it was just for Doolies, but then third-classmen, second-classmen, and first-classmen began showing up just standing around the room. Caitlin told me that at the last presentation that she had when she was the Training Officer, there were 61 people in the Day Room listening to the stories. They loved it. It was really the only exposure the Doolies had to the legacy of the Air Force.

**Lindsay:** That is really important because if I understand the why and the importance of the legacy, I can now understand my role and how I fit in. If I don't understand that legacy, I may feel like I'm going to be an engineer or I'm going to be a pilot. But to your point, I'm not. I'm a warrior who is a pilot. I spent 22 years in the Air Force and I was a Behavioral Scientist as a function, but a warrior in purpose. So, it is that

legacy that provides that purpose. If I have the purpose, I can see where I fit into that. Otherwise, I may feel like an independent actor out here at the whim of the Air Force, but it is so much more than that when we think about how I fit in.

**Gregory:** It really is. You could have gotten the education at the Colorado School of Mines and it would have been a great education. I think it is really important that when the Basic Cadet steps off the bus, they are immediately told, this is why you are here. This is why you are not at some other liberal arts institution or engineering school. This is why you're here. Everything you do here will make you a warrior in the Air Force.

**Lindsay:** It is really about that warrior mentality. Thinking about warrior identity and the first 60 seconds off the bus we have the opportunity to lay a 60+ year thought process on an individual that can influence them down the road.

**Gregory:** Of course. And when the bus pulls up, the basic cadet's exit and as they stand on the footprints, they should immediately see the statues and the sign above the ramp. The statues are of our Air Force Academy heroes and the words above the ramp should say "Bring Me Warriors". Then, the basic cadet process can begin. They really need to get their mind focused on what it is I'm here for before you begin the indoctrination. As I think about what General Brown said, this might be the time for a pivot in a sense of what we think is essential to create these great leaders in the future.

## FEATURE ARTICLES

# Developing Leaders for the Future: A Courageous Leadership Framework

J.R. Flatter, Flatter Inc.

My development as a leader began the day I went to Marine Corps boot camp in 1981. And I have journaled that journey ever since. As a result, I can now look back on 21-year-old J.R. to see what he was thinking on any given day; and 30-year-old J.R.; and 59-year-old J.R. And guess what? And guess what? I can literally see my leadership mature across the different phases of my life and career. From Private to Staff Sergeant to Lieutenant to Major; and then from new father to entrepreneur to Chief Executive Officer to Chief Learning Officer.

As my own leadership matured, my thinking on leadership development similarly matured. For, in addition to my practical 40+ years of leadership experience, I have also formally studied and taught leadership for over 20 years. Over that time, the *Courageous Leadership Framework* (Figure 1) emerged from the combination of my practical experience leading, my scholarly study of leadership, and my delivery methods to achieve enduring leadership development.

Leadership development happens best over time as it takes time to infuse new leadership behaviors (habits) into our lives (DePaul, 2021). As such, the Courageous Leadership framework this article describes is set across

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a timeline to provide sufficient time for the leadership competencies to soak in and set for long-term "muscle-memory" actions. Likewise, contemporary leadership studies identify the development of competencies as the best means of cultivating critical leadership knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences (Brownell, 2006). As such, the framework is competency-focused – delivering education, training, and experiential assignments to develop important leadership competencies.

While there are numerous leadership competencies from which to choose, the 10 competencies in the model are leadership's "meta-competencies." They are aggregated from across not only the leadership literature, but also from decades of leadership experiences.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Courageous Leadership framework—and thus this article—is about developing leadership knowledge, skills, willingness, abilities, and experiences for your service as leaders now and into the future. This article presents a developmental framework, which offers a re-invention of the way a leader can think, behave, communicate, and lead.

## Your Own House of Courageous Leadership

I use the metaphor of "Building Your House of Leadership" to describe each person's lifelong leadership journey. As you work through the suggested developmental activities, you will literally build or remodel a new wing of your own House of Leadership. Within the requirements of their work positions;

**Figure 1:**

*Courageous Leadership Framework*
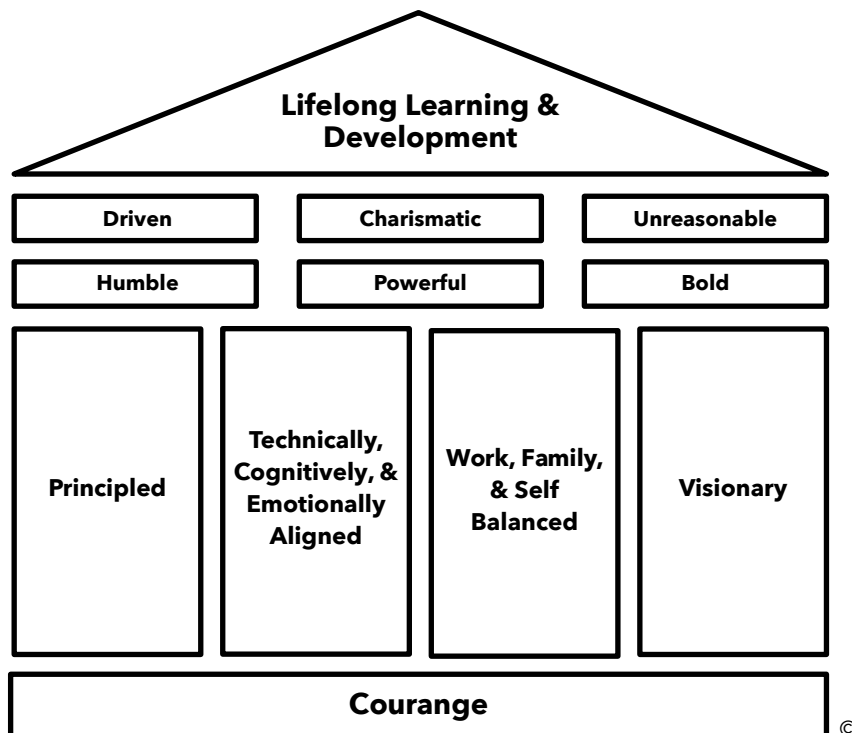
within their responsibilities at home; and within the guidelines of the organizations you choose to align yourself, every person gets to build their own house – choosing their principles, finding their work-family-self balance, crafting their own vision, etc. As leaders, it is our responsibility to respect everyone's house – as we will ask them to respect ours.

## Courage as the Foundation

"Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point" (Lewis, 1952, ch. 29).

C.S. Lewis

The renowned scholar and author C.S. Lewis accurately captures in his quote above that courage is the foundation upon which all other leadership beliefs and actions stand. For our purposes, courageous leadership is the demonstrated willingness & ability to communicate and accomplish specific goals and objectives for self, others, and organizations through adhering to a unique combination of technical, cognitive, and emotional courage characteristics.

Courage is purposefully placed as the foundation of leadership because any competency a leader may choose to demonstrate first requires the leader summon the courage to demonstrate the competency. Likewise, whenever your leadership is challenged – and it will be – courage is required to stand your ground. Finally, crafting a vision and asking others to come along with you on the journey required to fulfill the vision requires great courage.

## The Courageous Leadership Competencies

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence" (Lombardi).

Vince Lombardi

Much like Lombardi's quest for perfection on the football field, our life-long pursuit of courageous leadership mastery is equally elusive, yet nonetheless remains a noble and worthy ideal to pursue. As we identify and discuss the 10 courageous leadership characteristics in the next several sections, we must not lose sight of that fact.

## Principled

"My opinions and principles are subjects of just criticism. I put myself before the public willingly." (Woodhull).

Victoria Woodhull

As Victoria Woodhull led American women toward the right to vote, she certainly displayed a strong set of principles to guide her words and actions—often accompanied by significant criticisms. With courage as the foundation upon which leadership stands, principles are the guiding beacons upon which courageous leaders conduct their lives. As courageous leaders, we must identify and communicate our principles "before the public" as did Woodhull in her life-long fight to gain voting privileges for women in the United States.

Dictionary.com defines a principle as "a personal or specific basis of conduct or management…" (Dictionary.com, 2021). Being principled is not only the first courageous characteristic but it is also a foundational characteristic. Your principles are how you personally choose to bound and perform your personal and professional conduct. It is how you set your parameters between right and wrong. Concurrently, your principles simultaneously require you to exhibit certain behaviors while preventing you from exhibiting other behaviors.

When you are identifying your principles, you must first identify what actions you wish to demonstrate

going forward. Likewise, when you are developing the other courageous characteristics, you can only measure your development through your increased performance of each. Your principles will assist in filling in the white spaces between unknowns to consistently inform what decisions you should make.

## Technically, Cognitively, and Emotionally (T•C•E) Aligned

> "I started my life with a single absolute; that the world was mine to shape in the image of my highest values and never to be given up to a lesser standard, no matter how long or hard the struggle" (Rand & Salter, 1957).

> Ayn Rand

Per Rand's suggestion, as we perform leadership activities, we should appropriately shape our world using three broad categories of intelligence: 1) technical, 2) cognitive, and 3) emotional.

*Technical (T) intelligence* is the collection of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to function within your chosen profession. Technical actions are largely transactional in that you engage in a specific activity to produce a specific output. There is usually one way to perform the action to achieve the result. Once the transaction is completed, you then move on to another activity to produce another output. Likewise, technical activities are largely linear in that you progress in a straight line from predetermined action to anticipated product.

*Cognitive (C) intelligence* is your ability to problem solve through gathering data, conducting analysis, making decisions, and then writing execution plans. As there are likely established decision-making protocols and accepted research methods within your organization, cognitive intelligence is also largely

transactional. Cognitive intelligence is used principally for determining how to best manage things such as raw materials, office space, or time in an ongoing effort to minimize costs while maximizing value outputs.

*Emotional (E) intelligence* is your willingness and ability to create and strengthen relationships with people to gain and increase their enthusiasm to support and achieve the goals and objectives. As each person is different, with varied personalities and preferences, the methods of emotionally engaging them are equally as varied which are limited only by your willingness and abilities. Emotional intelligence is very transformational as it forever changes the relationships and mutual actions between participants moving forward toward the purpose of creating value beyond that which was possible beforehand.

Generally, there is a migration from T→C→E actions as we progress in our lives and careers but, ultimately that maturation is as varied as are people with no right or wrong path. The movement from one to another, or lack thereof, is a product of both willingness and ability. Likewise, regardless of position, there are times (hours, days, and even, years) when it is appropriate for each of us to be aligned in one or the other. However, the primary point is that if you are willing then you are likely able, but you must first understand and then strive toward the ideal T•C•E Alignment.

## Work, Family, & Self Balanced (W•F•S)

> "I shall be telling with a sigh
> Somewhere ages and ages hence:
> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
> I took the one less travelled by,
> And that has made all the difference" (Frost et al., 1991).

> Robert Frost

As Frost correctly points out, choosing the right path for you and your life's goals is essential to achieving them. When my first child was born, and as I looked into his newborn face, I swore a secret oath to myself that I would do whatever it took to provide a better life for this tiny, new baby. As you can quickly surmise, such a promise required significant work on my behalf to achieve. So, my wife and I purposefully created a W•F•S balance that provided both the needed work hours and the family time.

Like many ideals, W•F•S balance is an objective worthy of pursuit, but most often actually achieved in short glimpses. The gigantic W seems ever-present, sucking all-available oxygen from our other life priorities. We yearn for more F time, but often feel compelled to W, W, W to provide for our families or significant others. The tiny S seems mostly ignored. However, those demonstrated facts do not absolve us from displaying the needed courage every minute of every day to achieve the appropriate W•F•S balance.

No one category of W•F•S should be absolute, nor should any be non-existent. In the short term, one category may legitimately push aside the other two. However, you must have the courage to evaluate on a regular basis if the short-term necessity still exists and not procrastinate getting back in balance. Life is a journey—not a destination. Thus, we must consciously avoid using "necessity" as an excuse to work for a lack of investment in family and self. Almost without fail, if you are going to achieve success in life, then you are going to have to work long hours, but not to the point of absolutely ignoring family and self.

One simple tool I use to achieve W•F•S balance is to color-code my calendar with a different color for each type of activity. Work at my headquarters is dark blue,

work on travel is orange, community service is silver, exercise is red, family activities are dark green and so on. With this method, I can quickly glance at my calendar to see my week-by-week or monthly balance.

## Visionary

"All dream, but not equally.
Those who dream in the dusty recesses of their mind awake to find that it was vanity.
But the dreamers of day are dangerous, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes to make them possible" (Lawrence et al., 2004).

T.E. Lawrence

Courageous leaders are those visionary dreamers of day—as they dream with their eyes open to make their dreams reality. Within the leadership academic literature, vision is the most frequently cited characteristic of leaders. In practice, being a visionary courageous leader first requires the willingness and ability to think many years into the future and then take actions today and every day to make those visions a reality.

By definition, goals are the broadly generalized statements of your desired future (strong on clarity but short on details) that boldly imagine a new "realm of the possible." Where do you want to be in 30 years? Are you retired and living in the Caribbean? Are you the CEO of a Fortune 500 company? Are you a philanthropist? There are no right or wrong answers, for each of us gets to envision our own futures.

Don't be intimidated by the blank page if you haven't yet thought much about what you want for dinner tonight, let alone what you want to achieve in your time on earth. But now is the time to start thinking and writing about just that, regardless of your age or

position. Begin to sketch out your visionary goals in broad terms. Don't worry too much about the details as the details will come later.

Ultimately, vision is the characteristic that separates leaders from managers. Managers act on things using highly reliable processes and mostly predictable outcomes—risk for them is often measurable. Leaders, on the other hand, tell visionary stories to people and convince these people to join them on their fanciful voyages to far off distant places.

Acting on vision is the part where courage quickly becomes especially relevant, as you will, probably for the first time, express to someone other than yourself what you are all about. I will never forget the first time I dropped my life's vision on my wife, and I will certainly never forget the look on her face as we sat at lunch, with our new baby beside us. But once shared it was much harder to renege than my vain dreams of night.

### Humble

> "In my walks, everyone I meet is my superior in some way, in that I learn from them" (Emerson).
>
> Ralph Waldo Emerson

Courageous leaders purposefully develop and sustain a genuine humility within themselves, their teams, and their organizations that truly recognizes the valuable contributions of all with whom they interact. They do in fact learn from everyone they meet because they are humble enough to open their hearts and minds to everyone they meet. This humility is grounded in their recognition that they are the exception, gifted with the seeds of willingness and ability to lead. When leading, these humble leaders execute their responsibilities with empathy, calmness, and grace. They must regularly be willing to be second best, purposefully surrounding

themselves with people more technically, cognitively, and emotionally capable.

Of course, we can all easily recall leaders from history and from our own experiences that do not fit this humble description. The kinds of egotistical, arrogant people who almost everyone dislikes but who, nonetheless, realize outward success due to their achievements. In the definition of courageous leadership, such tyrannical activities are not leadership. Stated in another way, courageous leadership and tyranny are mutually exclusive, as they cannot exist in the same place at the same time. The fine line in the sand between tyranny and leadership comes down to humility.

### Powerful

> "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing" (Burke).
>
> Edmund Burke

Under the scientific principal of entropy, left to its own design, the world tends toward disorder. Weeds encroach your yard without proper attention, ships rust without constant chipping and painting, and evil fills any vacuum left void of good. As power is the means through which leaders can enact their vision, courageous leaders must voluntarily create, collect, and use power to control entropy and create value.

*Power* is defined as the willingness & ability to influence the actions of self, teams, and organizations. It is generally created, collected, and used in seven ways:

- Positional – your position suggests that others should adhere to your intent
- Expertise – you have valuable knowledge, skills, or abilities

- Information – you possess scarce, valuable insights
- Coercive – you can inflict pain, harm, or death
- Reward – you can reward with money, gifts, etc.
- Connection – you can introduce people to other's they want to know
- Referent – others admire your leadership characteristics and want to follow you; referent power is the ideal means through which courageous leaders strive to lead.

Regardless of the type of power, all seven are, by default, assigned to the leader. Members of the team either do or do not respect the hierarchy of the organization, respect your expertise, desire your potential rewards, etc. Establishing a courageous vision requires that you influence others to pursue that vision with you. Given the ideal of referent power, courageous leadership is therefore, voluntary in both directions – as you must be willing to lead, and your team must be willing to follow.

Regarding ability, you must constantly hone your T•C•E alignment to ensure you are using the right power at the right time—always with an eye on maturing to referent power as your primary power. As you examine the types of power, you will notice they span the T•C•E gamut with referent almost entirely within the realm of emotional intelligence.

## Bold

"It is not the critic who counts; not the one who points out how the strong... stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the one who is actually in the arena..." (Roosevelt & Thomsen, 2003).

Theodore Roosevelt

Courageous leadership requires that you regularly step out of your comfort zone and take bold action. Not by exception, but as the rule. Of course, you might be criticized for what others will call arrogance. You might be questioned for what others will call haste. But you will be the one boldly striving in the arena, thus your critics' comments will be muted by your successes. Acting boldly is done with informed risk taking. Courageous leaders must be comfortable making bold decisions with informed leaps of faith. With sufficient data gathered, risk adequately understood, and a course of action selected, these decisions are then executed with bold enthusiasm. An okay action plan executed with boldness is infinitely better than a perfect plan that never materializes. Additionally, courageous leaders boldly delegate critical tasks to trusted associates.

You must select goals that frighten you. If your goals are comfortable, then you are not being bold. If your goals are predictable, then you are not being bold. Only when your goals are on the edge of achievability are you exhibiting the boldness that you and your team deserve.

## Driven

"The woods are lovely dark and deep;
But I have promises to keep;
And miles to go before I sleep;
And miles to go before I sleep" (Frost, 1969).

Robert Frost

We gain knowledge and wisdom over time and experience, but the synapses are popping at their maximum speed when we emerge from the womb. Of course, some people are born smarter than others as they can solve problems easier, they can memorize better, they can learn languages quicker, and/or their IQs qualify them for Mensa. But that smartness will not provide break-out value unless it is accompanied with a sufficient level of drive.

Drive is what most-often separates the exceptional from the average. Average levels of action will give you, at best, average results. It is logical then to assume that if you want to achieve above-average outcomes, you must contribute above-average inputs. But to achieve break-out outcomes worthy of your life-long commitment to courageous leadership, you must contribute sustained inputs that are consistently multiple times greater than merely the average—you must be driven!

Courageous leaders possess a self-motivated drive that compels them to achieve. Just as the absence of courage is not cowardice, the absence of drive is not a negative, rather, it is normalcy. Normal people do not have trouble sleeping because they are brainstorming the third-level effects of their five-year strategic plan and normal people do not initiate action today in fulfillment of a vision 30years in the future.

In order to maximize their value contributions, driven leaders must ensure they are dedicating their sustained time and energy to those actions that will create the greatest outputs. Thus, they must continually align their T•C•E intelligence to ensure they are optimizing their opportunity costs.

## Charismatic

> "There can be no power without mystery. There must always be a "something" which others cannot altogether fathom, which puzzles them, and rivets their attention..." (de Gaulle, 1960).
>
> Charles de Gaulle

The English Oxford dictionary defines charisma as "...a compelling attractiveness that inspires devotion in others..." Teams and organizations want and need courageous charismatic leadership. Throughout time, human beings have painted images on cave walls, told stories about, and written about such memorable leaders. This kind of "compelling attractiveness" can, and should be, purposefully developed as another significant arrow in your courageous leadership quiver.

Ultimately, charisma is the unspoken recognition of your demonstrated admiration and respect (even love) for the individual members of your teams and organizations. When charisma is seemingly immediate, as is often the case with movie stars and politicians, it is the hope for this admiration and respect the giver projects onto the charismatic recipient. However, when charisma is genuine and sustained over time, it is the fulfillment of that hope through your delivery of admiration and respect as a courageous leader. Over time, as your power shifts from positional to referent, charisma will be central to the admiration and respect your teams and organizations will naturally associate to you and your leadership.

Your challenge is to recognize charisma's legitimacy, accept the role, and purposefully utilize this charismatic characteristic with the same vigor with which you accept your other courageous leadership responsibilities. You, your teams, and your organizations deserve nothing less.

## Unreasonable

> "Reasonable people adapt themselves to the world. Unreasonable people attempt to adapt the world to themselves. All progress, therefore, depends on unreasonable people" (Shaw, 1903).
>
> George Bernard Shaw

Often, a principled leader will be considered unreasonable by others. To align T•C•E and balance W•F•S—unreasonable. To live visionary, humble, powerful, bold, driven, and charismatic lives—

unreasonable. Embrace it. Cherish it. For you have chosen, in your pursuit of courageous leadership, to live a life of exception.

David Goggins tells us that the average person becomes exhausted at just 40% of their body's actual capacity (Goggins, 2018). Knowing this, he "unreasonably" expect himself to perform far beyond the *reasonable* levels of exhaustion. Your understanding of this fact presents the possibility of significantly greater performance, if you are simply willing to be regularly unreasonable. Of course, one must be careful, for these levels of performance are unsustainable over time and 100% exhaustion equals death.

Unreasonable courageous leaders recognize that change comes only from doing things differently. The primary component of vision is to identify a different reality at some point in the future and begin its creation. Doing so, by definition, requires you to unreasonably break from currently accepted routines. While being regularly unreasonable, the courageous leader accepts the inherent criticism that comes from coloring outside the lines.

## LIFELONG LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step (Tzu).

Lao Tzu

Lao Tzu, recognized as the father of Taoism, correctly captures the requirement to begin a life-long path to mastering courageous leadership. With these courageous characteristics, you can take action starting today to build your own customized house of courageous leadership.

### Development Sequence

There is no perfect sequence in which to develop these characteristics, as they are so interwoven and interdependent. However, as courage is the foundation of leadership, I suggest approaching that characteristic first. Your principles are discussed next as they inform who you are and what is important to you. Technical, cognitive, and emotional intelligence are discussed next as they determine where you wish to align along the continuum of knowledge. W•F•S Balance comes next as it identifies how you need to balance your life. Vision is then discussed to identify the goals & objectives you wish to accomplish – both personally and professionally – during the next 30-years of your life. Once drafted, these four pillars are massaged, shaped, and adjusted until they agree and support one another standing solidly upon your foundation of courage and prepared to support each other and the remaining enabling characteristics.

### Journaling

As a matter of personal and professional development, courageous leaders should journal daily for somewhere between 15 and 30 minutes. In a quiet setting, this time includes contemplating the day's events and then capturing them in writing. The intent is that in doing so it will become a life-long practice. As you journal, take particular care to capture the emotions, surprises, and new insights you experience and gain.

### Semi-Structured Conversations

Semi-structured conversations are a means of gathering information through focused discussions. In addition to regularly holding conversations with yourself in your journal, it is also recommend having these types of conversations with:

- Significant-Others: To ensure the courageous leadership path you are charting is agreeable

with your life-partners, it is suggested that you have conversations at every step of the way with the "significant others" in your life.

- Other Courageous Leaders: As you work through the focus areas, I challenge you to find a courageous leader who exemplifies the characteristic you are working on. Stretch yourself on asking leaders you might not otherwise have the courage to ask. I am confident the leader you ask will be complimented by your request, and eager to help.

Prior to these conversations, you should write out a few semi-structured questions to help guide the dialogue while not overly restricting the potential scope of the discussion.

### Mentor Engagements

It is likely that somewhere in your circle of current personal and professional activities, is a leader you admire. Ask that leader to be your mentor for your courageous leadership journey. A mentor can be a valuable confidant along your developmental journey providing insights, information, and recommendations.

### Individual Mission Statement (IMS)

An Individual Mission Statement (IMS) is a document that collects and communicates information regarding what you intend to do with your life (i.e., What is your life's mission?). This document serves as the guiding text upon which you choose to live your life from this point forward. Don't over-complicate it but also give it the magnitude of attention it deserves. Questions your IMS might include are:

- Who am I?
- What is important to me?
- What do I believe in?

- What are my deepest passions?
- Who do I aspire to be?

The answers to these questions will inform your courageous leadership journey as you define your principles, codify your technical, cognitive and emotional alignment, perform your work, family, and self-balance, and craft your vision. When in doubt about a simple or complex decision, refer to this document and it will inform your decision. Revisit and update your IMS on a regular basis as life happens and your leadership matures.

### Individual Development Plan (IDP)

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is the document that tells you what developmental actions are needed in order to achieve your individual mission statement. It is usually phased at appropriate intervals to capture near, mid, and far-term developmental requirements. Likewise, as it transitions fuzzy goals into finite objectives, the IDP contains clear milestones that identify developmental completion points. The IDP is not a complicated document but will clearly define the question of "What's next?" in your lifelong development. As with your IMS, revisit and update it often as life happens and your leadership matures.

### Your Lifelong Journey Begins Here

Leadership Development is necessarily a lifelong journey as Marshall Goldsmith so eloquently points out in his famous book *"What Got You Here Won't Get You There"* (2007). So, if you desire to get somewhere other than where you are today, start investing time and energy in your own courageous leadership today!

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# A Review of Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win

Jocko Willink and Leif Babin, New York: St. Martin's Press (2015)

Review by: Ecatarina M. Garcia, SMSgt, USAF

What do the combat operations of two battle-tested Navy SEALS have to do with leadership best practices? As it turns out, the connection is quite remarkable and relevant to any leadership context. *Extreme Ownership* is a well-organized and thought-provoking piece that applies leadership lessons learned on the battlefield to everyday accounts of leaders in the private sector. The authors take the reader on a journey through intense battle scenes exploring each of their combat-tested leadership principles in extreme scenarios. Those principles are then translated to an industry setting heightening the relevance and drawing clear connections to day-to-day leadership challenges.

Jocko Willink and Leif Babin are former Navy SEAL officers who served together on Task Force (TF) Bruiser in 2006. Their time together on TF Bruiser saw some of the deadliest and harshest rigors of war while conducting sustained urban operations in Iraq, including the infamous battle for Ar Ramadi. Upon leaving the Iraqi battlespace, the authors developed a leadership training course targeting the development of Navy SEAL officers in line to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq. Understanding the transferability of their combat leadership lessons, they now lead Echelon Front teaching leadership principles to businesses across industry.

While *Extreme Ownership* does contain exciting and powerful war stories, it is, in fact, a leadership book. The foundational principle that lies as the groundwork for all the lessons in the book is ownership. The authors conclude that all leaders must own everything in their battlespace, whether their teams are large or small. In this sense, the leader is responsible for all the team's issues, challenges, and mistakes. Regardless of the context, the blame falls squarely on the leader; thus, leaders must take ownership—extreme ownership.

Willink and Babin structure their work into three main parts. Part 1, "Winning the War Within," centers around the necessary mindset to lead winning teams. The foundational principle dictates that "the leader must own everything in his or her world" (p. 30). In this respect, the leader is accountable for the performance and failures of the team. While understanding this basic premise is simple, the authors argue that it is not easy. Another mindset principle explores accountability through the mantra "it's not what you preach, it's what you tolerate."

(p. 54 ). Perhaps a semi-controversial phrase, Willink and Babin contend that there are no bad teams, only bad leaders. The core of this argument reverts to the idea of extreme ownership. If the unit is failing, then it is a failure of the leader. The leader must develop a culture of ownership from the highest of echelons to the lowest. Moreover, the leader must be a true believer in the mission. To inspire the team, the leaders must align their habits of thoughts and actions to the vision in which they genuinely believe. The final principle, and arguably one of the most salient, is the concept of seeing beyond one's ego. This is the age-old adage of humility in leadership, yet to read the tale from some of the military's most well-trained and effective operators truly puts this concept into context.

Part 2 of the piece moves from mindset to the section titled "Laws of Combat." These simple but often overlooked principles include cover and move, simplicity, prioritize and execute, and decentralized command. These principles are the pseudo recipe for achieving success within teams. When listed out as a string of terms, they appear to be reminiscent of stagnant military doctrine far below the threshold for what one would consider revolutionary. However, in the authors' application, there is something profound and authentic in this simplicity.

Part 3, "Sustaining Victory," does something that other leadership books often fail to address. It acknowledges the dichotomy of leadership and describes the delicate balancing act leaders must perform to sustain success. From detailed planning to executing decisions through ambiguity to balancing when to toe the line, the authors speak the plights of many leaders.

Each principle is first described through a battlefield story. Then the principle itself is explained and dissected. Finally, it is applied to a business setting. This structured breakdown of each principle moves the reader from feeling, to understanding, to application. These leadership philosophies are rooted in the authors' dissection of their experiences and the trial and error of each principle in combat operations as practitioners. In other words, these lessons are backed by experience and tested in both combat and non-combat environments.

There are very few dull moments in this work. Beyond the intense stories, the logical structure makes this a manual of sorts. Of course, leadership inherently operates in the gray, but the foundational principles in *Extreme Ownership* are, as the authors would argue, applicable to any leader of teams both large and small.

# A Review of Unauthorized Progress, Leading from the Middle: Stories & Proven Strategies for Making Meaningful Impacts

Captain Geoff Abbott, US Coast Guard (Retired), Burke, VA: Self Published (2020)

Review by: John J. Abbatiello, PhD

Geoff Abbott spent 33 years as a U.S. Coast Guard officer, where he commanded at various levels and led his service's Performance Excellence Program and Commandant's Innovation Council. He currently serves on the faculty of the Securities and Exchange Commission's College of Leadership Development. These experiences prepared him well in developing techniques for creating positive change in organizations. In *Unauthorized Progress*, Abbott provides concrete advice and effective tools for leading innovation.

*Unauthorized Progress* is not about breaking rules, but instead focuses on "taking action on the many excellent ideas people have to help achieve goals the organization may not yet recognize, or lags in implementing." (p. 7) Although the book's title refers to "leading from the middle," Abbott's insights really apply to any level of leadership and any position. In essence, Abbott's book provides the reader with a systematic guide about how to create, communicate, and implement innovation in any type of organization.

The first section of the book details methodologies for defining a leader's skill set in creating change and then for deciding which new ideas have the greatest chance for success. Abbott employs Albert Humphrey's tried and true

"Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats" analysis method as well as an "Importance vs. Urgency" matrix to predict success of the new idea. He then explains evaluation criteria that senior leaders use in evaluating proposals for change and provides suggestions for using this information to build your own case. Discussions about risk considerations and understanding the key players in your organization —"don't minimize the impact of nay-sayers; understand their concerns and issues" (p.50)—round out the second section.

Section three offers advice on implementing new ideas, likely the most valuable section of the book. Here, Abbott addresses potential areas of implementation failure, focusing on how innovators can avoid these possible setbacks. Innovators need to be experts in their new initiatives, skillfully market their concept, and understand competing ideas and risks. If failure occurs during the initial implementation of a new idea, innovators need to rapidly react to mitigate negative effects, and the author provides those mitigation strategies clearly and effectively. I loved his suggestion to use Toyota's "Five Whys" approach to getting to the essence of failure causality; keep asking why successively until you find the underlying reason for failure. (p. 101) This section closes out with a discussion of measuring performance and using metrics to make improvements.

Throughout the book, Abbott provides real-world examples from his many years of working with the U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Department of Homeland Security. These vignettes clearly illustrate the main concepts throughout the text. He also brings in less familiar methodologies from other sources, such as the "Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequence" model from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that he adapts to leading change. Here, Abbott turns the DHS risk model on its head to create an "Opportunity Model," which considers total potential benefit and probability of success, with the latter based on intent and capability. (p. 60)

There is no index or bibliography in *Unauthorized Progress*, but Abbott mentions several leadership and management scholars in the text. This is not, after all, an academic work but an extremely readable guide to creating positive change in organizations. Excellent tables and figures assist the reader with visualizing many of Abbott's important concepts.

There is a strong demand for studying and implementing innovation across all domains, whether in business, defense, sports, or academia. Air Force Chief of Staff General C.Q. Brown's call to "accelerate change or lose" is but one example. Innovators should take a close look at Abbott's *Unauthorized Progress* to deepen their thinking about how to implement change successfully.

# Professional Perseverance: Changing Service Culture the Ben Davis Way

John Farquhar

Recently celebrated for his outstanding airmanship and combat leadership in two feature films, Red Tails (2012) and The *Tuskeegee Airmen* (2002), General Benjamin O Davis, Jr. also deserves recognition as an agent of change for United States Air Force service culture.  Building upon his World War II exploits as commander of the 99th Pursuit Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group, Davis earned the reputation of a model leader who balanced strict military discipline with an understanding of the social, cultural, and psychological needs of his troops.  Displaying professionalism, perseverance, and fortitude in all his actions, Davis proved an exemplary, genuine "lead by example" role model worth studying.

Following World War II, then Lieutenant Colonel Davis advanced through assignments at Air University and as a staff officer in the Fighter Directorate of the Air Staff — where he established the world-renowned Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team. Later in his career, he served as an overseas deployment commander of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing at Suwon Air Base, South Korea, where the unit earned accolades from the Air Force Inspector General.  Unlike his command of all African-American units in the pre-1948 segregated Air Force, Davis' later career demonstrated excellence in leading racially integrated units in the still-early days of desegregation.  Recognizing his success, the Air Force promoted Davis to Brigadier General on October 27, 1954, (USAF Biography, 2021) becoming the first African-American to earn Air Force General Officer rank and continuing his father's legacy with the senior Davis being the first African-American to rise to general in the U.S. Army.

In July 1955, Davis was appointed Vice Commander of the 13th Air Force, headquartered at Clark Air Base, Philippines and concurrently, Commander of Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) posted to Taipei, Republic of China (ROC), now known as Taiwan, where he served until April 1957.  Far from a routine or backwater position, General Davis entered arguably the hottest zone of the Cold War at this time.  Along with Berlin, the Taiwan Straits represented both a flashpoint for a major war with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and an ideological inflection point for the Cold War in Asia.  This largely overlooked assignment required considerable political, diplomatic, social, and managerial talents that demonstrated Davis's acumen.  It also served as a case study of Davis as a change agent for Air Force service culture.

With the Korean armistice only two years old, Americans understood the dangers of either a resurgence of Korean fighting or a broader war with "Red" China. Unlike Berlin, where the risk of World War III was real, but theoretical; many Americans had recently battled the People's Liberation Army along the 38th Parallel. Without doubt, the Taiwan Straits represented a grave military and political challenge.

Placing General Davis' assignment in context, Mao Tse-tung's Chinese Communists established the People's Republic of China (PRC), and commonly referred to as Communist China or Red China at the time, in 1949, following a twenty-two year civil war.[1] [The PRC had forced Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces to Taiwan and a string of offshore islands. Mao viewed Taiwan as an integral part of China, and believed that the Chinese Revolution would not be complete without its subjugation. On the other hand, Chiang did not accept Mao's 1949 triumph as final and hoped to use Formosa (as Taiwan/Taipei was known at the time) and two off-shore islands, Quemoy and Matsu, to rally anti-Communist forces and for launching a Nationalist return to the mainland. Initially hesitant, the Truman Administration provided Chiang limited military and diplomatic support, but the Eisenhower Administration viewed the Republic of China as a bastion of freedom on a continent "going Red" and a test of loyalty to a valued World War II ally. Influenced by Christian missionaries and the influential, English-speaking Madame Chiang Kai-shek, many Americans viewed Nationalist China with affection. Hence, the "China Lobby" within the US Congress emerged as a major player in American domestic politics.

On the ideological plane, the Taiwan Straits crisis (1954) proved an inflection point in the East-West struggle for Asia. In 1954-55, Chinese Communist propaganda pointed to the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam as proof of communism's rise, the decline of the West, and portrayed the PRC as an ally of anti-colonial, anti-capitalist forces in Asia. Both the Soviets and Chinese Communists considered Asian and African nationalism a unique Cold War opportunity. As an example, the PRC, highlighted American racial inequity and racist attitudes toward people of color as an ideological weapon in its propaganda (Bradley, 2007; Kort, 1998; Jian (2001).

Militarily, the PRC viewed US-ROC mutual defense treaty talks as a threat and mobilized forces along the coast across from Nationalist-controlled islands. On September 3, 1954, the People's Liberation Army bombarded Quemoy and Matsu with 5,000 artillery shells. Two days later, President Eisenhower sent three aircraft carriers to defend the Taiwan Straits, while the ROC Air Force attacked Communist positions using American-supplied F-84 fighters. After three tense weeks, the situation subsided to an extent. The U.S. did not find any military value in Nationalist control of islands immediately offshore from the Chinese mainland and tried to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to withdraw forces to less vulnerable positions. Reluctantly, Chiang withdrew garrisons from the Tachen islands, which Communist forces quickly seized, but remained adamant for possession of Quemoy and Matsu. On December 2, 1954, the U.S. signed a Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of China and by January 28, 1955, the U.S. Congress and Senate passed the Taiwan Straits Resolution authorizing the President to employ U.S. forces if necessary to protect Nationalist China (Bradley, 2007; Futrell, 1989.

Into this geopolitical maelstrom entered Brigadier General Davis. When he arrived in Taipei, he learned that Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) (ATF 13) consisted of two officers and seven airmen (Davis, 1991). In his memoir, Davis succinctly described the peril:

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1 The PRC's *pin yin* transliteration system uses Mao Zedong and Jiang Jieshi respectively. Taiwan uses the older Wade-Giles system that also matches the sources of the 1950s. For consistency, I have used the Wade-Giles spellings.]

The situation in 1955 also held the potential for disaster, but for reasons known to the Communist Chinese we were permitted to develop our strength to the point that we could defend the island. When I assumed command the enemy had the initiative and the air capability to seriously threaten our ability to defend Taiwan. We needed to take several actions immediately . . . (Davis, 1991, p. 217; Bradley, 2007, p. 90)

Formally, Davis faced a sophisticated three-part mission:

1. Maintain assigned or attached forces and facilities in a state of readiness permitting immediate offensive or defensive tactical operations in defense of Taiwan and the Pescadores.

2. Assume operational control of designated Air Force units and coordinate . . . administrative and logistic support.

3. Organize, train, and maintain on Taiwan, ATF 13 [a command and control function] capable of employing designated operational forces immediately...capable of independent action... (History, 1955, pp. 11-12; Bradley, 2007, p. 100)

Informally, ATF 13 acted as a joint force coordinating with the U.S. Army and Navy, as well as a combined or coalition force responsible for training Republic of China Air Fore units and combined Chinese-American training, and as a warfighting command and a de facto diplomatic representative of the U.S. government to Nationalist China. Facing Davis' fledgling command, PLA Army Air Force units numbered over two thousand MiG jet fighters, several hundred IL-28 light jet bombers, and approximately 200 Tu-4s (the Soviet equivalent of the U.S. B-29 bomber) with five new airfields across the Taiwan Straits (Davis, 1991; Bradley, 2007).

How did Davis manage these seemingly insurmountable tasks? With perseverance, with professionalism, and with humility. Unlike many American attachés or defense liaisons of his era, Davis considered his Nationalist Chinese counterparts as valuable allies with valid perspectives and significant resources. He immediately worked to establish close personal ties with leading Chinese authorities. Specifically, Davis paid courtesy calls and followed up with appropriate meetings with Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo — Chiang's son and later president of Nationalist China, General Wan Shu-ming (known as "Tiger" Wang) and Commanding General of the ROC Air Force, and General Huang Jen-ling, Commanding General of the Chinese Combined Services Forces, along with other officials of the ROC's Foreign Affairs Service Division (Bradley, 2007; Davis, 1991; Gropman, 1987). Equally important, Davis developed extensive ties with the mayors of Taiwanese cities, civil leaders, and cultural organizations. In all discussions, he listened and treated the Chinese leaders as equals, avoiding the all too common "Ugly American" attitude of the time.

Throughout his autobiography, Davis described the impressive efforts of his wife Agatha, who forged ties to Taiwanese schools, hospitals, orphanages, and civic groups. In many ways, she served as an effective ambassador for the United States. Through these many personal and professional associations, Davis learned to understand China's culture and perspective. Most of all, he learned patience. His willingness to work with the Nationalist Chinese and to maintain long-term friendships paid great dividends. Upon completion of Davis's mission, Gen Laurence S. Kuter, Commander of Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) observed that Davis possessed the ability to "tactfully criticize at the right time and places," and to say no to the Chinese when their requests did not match U.S. interests, but in a respectful, culturally acceptable way (Gropman, 1987, p. 249).

During his tour, the ATF 13 built a genuine warfighting capability. USAF aircraft and units rotated through Chinese air bases; the Air Force established a Joint Operations Center; U.S. personnel trained Chinese airmen in flight operations and maintenance; and planned and executed a number of coalition training exercises. Additionally, Davis' command established both formal training and operational plans. Although he viewed the Chinese Air Defense System as still flawed due to shortages of qualified communications and radar technicians, Davis acknowledged great strides in Nationalist Chinese capability (Bradley, 2007). By the end of his tour in early 1957, ATF 13 also featured pre-positioned stocks of USAF equipment and the creation of Ching Chuan Kang (CCK) Air Base (Moody & Trest, 1997).

The test of Davis' effectiveness emerged in the Second Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958. In August 1958, the People's Republic of China resumed massive shelling of Quemoy and Matsu, assembled significant land and air forces, and announced the imminent invasion of these important Nationalist outposts. Although no longer personally commanded by Davis, the command and control structure, air defense network, and USAF-trained Nationalist Chinese pilots performed brilliantly. Six U.S. Navy carriers, 53 supporting ships, and 100 top-line USAF F-100 and F-104 fighters deployed to augment the ROC Air Force. Three days of aerial battles resulted in 33 Communist aircraft shot down at a cost of only four Nationalist planes. The effectiveness of the US-ROC coalition efforts made an impact. The PRC backed down.

In sum, persistence, professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and leadership marked the career of Davis. During World War II, Davis earned respect as a skilled combat aviator and leader. In the Taiwan Straits crises, Davis gained additional praise as a politician, diplomat, administrator, planner, and innovator. Without calling attention to race, Davis' actions, performance, and professionalism defeated regressive, negative forces through sheer competency and excellence. In doing so, he acted as an agent of change and shaped a new and improved Air Force service culture. Davis led by example in word and deed. Moreover, in a genuine Cold War crisis in Asia, Davis answered the military, diplomatic, and ideological challenge of the Communists with aplomb. His presence and competence countered communist racist propaganda in a subtle, effective way. Perhaps the most impressive accolade occurred many years later when General Bryce Poe visited the Republic of China, Nationalist Chinese officers stated simply that assigning Davis to Taiwan was the "smartest thing the United States could have done" (Gropman, 1987, p. 249).

Finally, returning to the title of this article, what do we mean by change the "Ben Davis way"? Five elements emerge:

1. Be genuine. Say what you mean, be what you say; but do it in a tactful, culturally sensitive way.
2. Be aware. Know who you are and know your people. Explore cultures not your own. Respect and learn about others, especially when overseas.
3. Be excellent. Set high standards and learn from them, personally and professionally. Excellent transcends cultural obstacles.
4. Be a team player. Davis' most important friend, confidant, sounding board, and ambassador was his wife Agatha, who improved the Davis and by association, the American team.
5. Be an American. Davis loved our country and the ideals it stands for . . . his lifelong quest was to rectify the cultural attitudes where some white citizens did not treat people of color as Americans. Stand up for the values embodied in our flag.

To close, students of history will recognize two passages from one of the most famous speeches in history, Pericles' funeral oration, where the ancient Greek leader lauds what it means to be an Athenian citizen:

> "Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free and freedom depends on being courageous."

> "When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard (Thucydides, 1972, pp. 149-150)."

Substitute "American" in those phrases and you capture the essence of General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a patriot in the true sense of the word and a defender of the higher standard. In the Taiwan Straits crisis, Davis answered the military and political challenges of a perilous time. His professional perseverance also set an example for cultural sensitivity that improved U.S.-Taiwanese relations. Finally, Davis proved a genuine "lead by example" role model who improved Air Force service culture.

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# JCLD Submission Guidelines

The Journal of Character and Leadership Development (JCLD) examines the scholarly and applied understanding of character and leadership development. Its purpose is to illuminate these two critical fields – character development and leadership development – as interdependent areas of study, whose integrated understanding and coherent application is highly relevant to preparation for leadership in today's complex world. Consequently, the JCLD applies high standards to guide the publication of scholarly work, through an intensive review process by recognized experts across the character and leadership development spectrum, while also welcoming thoughtful and well-articulated practical perspectives relevant to that same discussion. To accomplish this, we focus on three primary areas:

- **Integration**: Knowledge for application. How does what we know/learn impact how we develop leaders of character across different domains? How do we use this knowledge to impact our education, training and development programs?

- **Scholarship**: Theoretical and/or empirical examination of a relevant construct, program, approach, etc., related to character and/or leadership development.

- **Assessment**: How do we know what we are doing with respect to character and leadership development is working? What evidence can we gather to assess the efficacy of the efforts?

Ideal submissions will include discussions of both character and leadership development. Since the purpose of the journal is on examining the development (short and long term) of leaders of character, we are keenly interested at the intersection of these two domains. While we will consider manuscripts for publication that address each of these in isolation, clear linkages between the domains of interest will have more relevance to the JCLD.

**Categories for Submission:**

- **Conversations**: This category is designed for transcribed conversations with senior leaders/practitioners/ academics/etc. focused on a topic that is related to the purpose of the JCLD. If you are interested in conducting a conversation for submission to the JCLD, please contact the Editor in Chief to make sure that it fits the scope of the Journal.

- **Integration**: This submission category focuses on how topics related to character and leadership are integrated within an organization, team, or other functional unit. The key factor for this category is that we are looking for how both character and leadership can be integrated and not simply studied in isolation.

- **Scholarship**: These submissions will focus on the theoretical and/or empirical analysis of a construct, program, approach, etc. related to leadership and/or character.

- **Assessment**: These submissions will focus on an assessment technique or assessment strategy related to character and/or leadership development.

- **Reflections from the Field:** This submission category will be for leaders who have a relevant perspective to share based on their experience in leadership positions. It is not intended to be used to simply advocate a certain approach (i.e., do what I did, 10 things to do to be a better leader, etc.), but designed to be a forum for meaningful reflections of leadership situations and a thoughtful analysis of what worked/ didn't work. It can also be used to identify trends that a leader sees regarding different domains (e.g., what do future leaders need to be aware of in different domains like the profession of arms?).

**Integration**, **Scholarship**, and **Assessment** submissions should be submitted in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Manuscripts should be electronically submitted in standard American Psychological Association (APA, 7th Edition) to include proper headings, subtitles, and citations in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with page numbers and running headers.

- Manuscripts should not exceed 25 pages in length to include attachments, charts, and other supporting material.

- Author(s) guarantee that manuscripts submitted to the JCLD for consideration are exclusive to the submission and is not currently under review for another publication.

- Authors guarantee that they have followed their appropriate institutional guidelines (e.g., Institutional Review Boards, policies, data collection, etc.) and have appropriate clearance (if organizationally required) to submit their work to the JCLD for consideration. USAFA authors will need to get their publications cleared before submission to the JCLD.

- All submissions should include an abstract of no more than 200 words.

**Interview** and **Reflections** submissions should be submitted in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Manuscripts should be electronically submitted in standard American Psychological Association (APA, 7th Edition) to include proper headings, subtitles, and citations in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with page numbers and running headers.

- Manuscripts should not exceed 15 pages in length.

- Author(s) guarantee that manuscripts submitted to the JCLD for consideration are exclusive to the submission and is not currently under review for another publication.

- Authors guarantee that they have followed their appropriate institutional guidelines and have appropriate clearance (if organizationally required) to submit their work to the JCLD for consideration. USAFA authors will need to get their publications cleared before submission to the JCLD.

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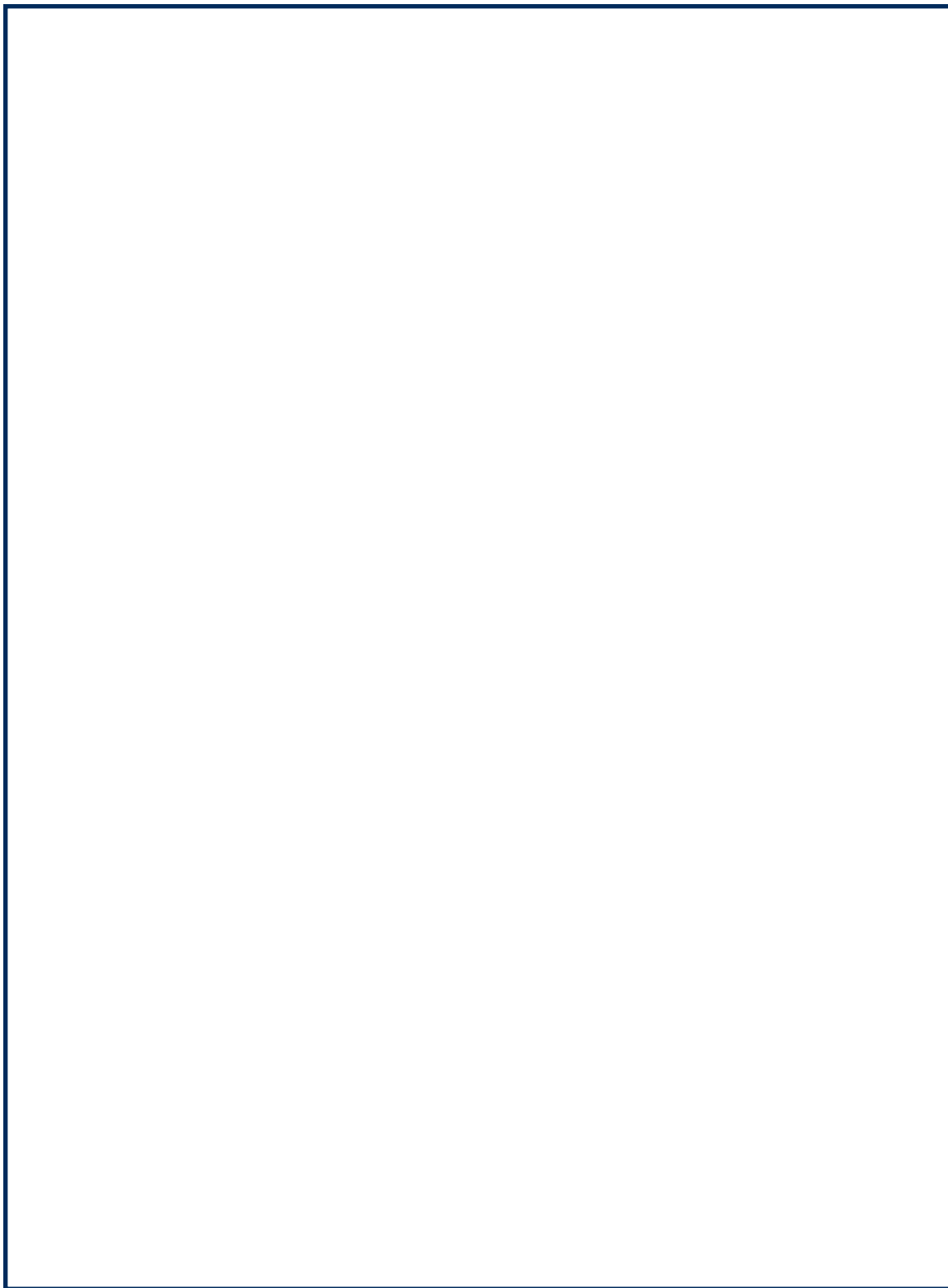
## JOURNAL OF CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Journal of Character and Leadership Development (JCLD) is dedicated to bringing together the expert views of scholars and leaders who care about both character and leadership, and to the integration of these vitally-important concepts.

JCLD is produced at the U.S. Air Force Academy. It is motivated by, but not exclusively concerned with, preparation of cadets to lead as officers of character in service to our Nation.

Combining quality, peer-reviewed scholarship and the experiential perspectives of leaders at all levels, JCLD aims to enhance intellectual understanding and empower real-world development of the effective, character-based leadership that both individuals and organizations need to succeed in a complex and demanding world.

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