

Strategy Research Project

Fostering the Army Ethic

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Abstract

The Army's professional identity is critically important to maintain its legitimacy with the American people and to operate effectively in today's morally ambiguous operational environment. In 2010 the Army embarked on a Campaign of Learning to assess the health and understanding of the Army Profession among its members after nearly a decade of conflict. While the renewed emphasis on the Army Profession raised overall awareness, implementation activities to date have failed to reach the audience and echelon most effective at fostering a professional identity and enduring commitment to the Army Ethic among Army Profession practitioners. Rather than continuing to develop more programs and activities at the strategic level the Army needs to focus on the organizational level, specifically the battalion command teams, as the best source to foster the Army Ethic in Army professionals.

Fostering the Army Ethic

In 2010 the Army embarked on a campaign of learning to assess the health and understanding of the Army Profession among its members after nearly a decade of conflict. While the renewed emphasis on the Army Profession raised overall awareness, implementation activities to date have failed to reach the audience and echelon most effective at fostering a professional identity and enduring commitment to the Army Ethic among Army Profession practitioners. Rather than continuing to develop more programs and activities at the strategic level the Army needs to focus on the organizational level, specifically the battalion command teams, as the best source to foster the Army Ethic in Army professionals. This requires more than strategic leaders continually talking to them about the importance of trust or a review of how the organizational leaders build cohesive command climates focused on tactical mission success. Rather, it encompasses how organizational leaders deliberately develop the organization and its individuals integrating the moral-ethical principles espoused by the Army Ethic within all aspects of the organizational culture leading to its internalization and application by committed Army professionals.

The paper reviews the Army Profession campaign of learning and implementation actions to date. Using social identity, learning, and organizational development theories it demonstrates why those activities have not fully achieved some of the campaign's desired effects. It evaluates the Army's doctrinal leadership levels to assess which level is best suited to inculcate the Army Ethic and offers recommendations for future implementation activities.

Why the Army Profession and Ethic Matter

The Army is not a profession simply because its members make assertions to that end.¹ The Army's professional identity, both within the society it serves and among its members, is critically important for several reasons.

Sociologist Max Weber noted that a defining characteristic of the nation-state is its monopoly on the use of violent, coercive force to compel others' obedience.² Despite the founding fathers' hesitance to retain a standing army, the Republic's near defeat during the War of 1812 forced them to reevaluate that position. Upon establishing the standing Army, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun declared that its purpose "was to prepare for war, to stand in readiness to defend the republic."³ The diffusion of authority between the executive and legislative branches, combined with the requirement for officers to swear an oath to "support and defend the Constitution" as opposed to one individual, laid the foundation of trust between the Army and the American people.⁴ The Army's purpose to employ landpower force to defend the Nation's sovereignty and ideals provides legitimacy and thus "separates it morally from other organizations that practice collective violence without moral justification."⁵

The Army also receives legitimacy from the American people by adhering to standards and codes of ethical behavior when fulfilling its purpose. However, today's operational environment and the one in the foreseeable future increasingly sees US adversaries pushing recognized legal and moral boundaries designed to limit human suffering during conflict. Seeking to off-set US military advantages, state and non-state actors pursue tactics, strategies, and weapons that blur the lines between acceptable and unacceptable practices.⁶ The inability or unwillingness of other international actors to stop such behavior condones and continues to expand it. Further, the US's growing

reliance on international partners and allies whose cultural values may not align with ours, but whose assistance is vital to addressing global security threats, adds to the moral ambiguity Soldiers face today. These realities “will have an effect on the moral and ethical development and climate of our Army” and our domestic and international standing.⁷

The Army’s national defense purpose, combined with US global interests and the associated responsibilities, requires a steady manpower flow provided by America’s sons and daughters to meet those needs. However, in the course of fulfilling its role defending American society against both foreign and domestic threats a likelihood exists that some will die. This fact imposes an extremely high moral context on when and how the Army exercises its professional expertise. Civilian authority, as outlined in the Constitution, determines when the Army employs landpower. On the other hand, how the Army executes its responsibilities lies within the Army leadership’s purview only so long as the American people believe such actions remain consistent with national values and norms of conduct.⁸ Should the American people perceive that Army leaders are wantonly wasting provided resources, most notably the lives of their children, the Army will lose legitimacy, support, and subsequently its lifeblood.

Fortunately, history shows that “time and again under intense pressure” the majority of the US military acts morally and ethically in these circumstances.⁹ Nevertheless, events such as the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal, Staff Sergeant Robert Bales’ admission to murdering 16 Afghans, and the errant airstrike of a Doctors without Borders Hospital resulting in 42 deaths often have lasting effects long after they occur.

Because of the Army's long history of dedicated and largely professional behavior, many Army practitioners wonder whether a need exists to formally define a Professional Military Ethic or if it could even be done.¹⁰ Professions espouse an ethic to "provide guidance for action" among practitioners by "[enriching] the profession's understanding of its moral obligations."¹¹ Further, the ethic unites understanding among all practitioners of the profession's purpose and how its members act to fulfil their moral obligation to the society they serve. Lastly, the ethic serves as a starting point to foster moral growth within the profession's members.¹²

Thus we see that the Army's professional standing in the eyes of the American people and civilian authority is vitally important to its ability to fulfill its purpose to defend the nation. Army professionals enhance the profession's standing and legitimacy by maintaining the social trustee relationship with the society they serve through their allegiance to the Constitution, adhering to ethical standards of conduct as articulated in a formal professional ethic, and the proper use of resources afforded them in the conduct of their professional practice. If the Army strays from its purpose to ethically apply landpower in defense of the Nation, or more importantly, if the American people perceive that such a drift occurred, the Army would immediately lose its legitimacy. Today's morally ambiguous operational environment requires Army professionals grounded in a recognized professional ethic. Only by reinforcing the Army Profession's ethical standards throughout the force can we hope to maintain legitimacy and ensure mission success.

Identifying a Potential Lapse and Path Forward

On 7 June 2010, Operation Enduring Freedom became America's longest war surpassing the Vietnam War's 103 months of combat operations.¹³ At that time,

reflecting on their own experiences as junior officers during and immediately following the Vietnam War, the Army's most senior leaders became concerned about the state of the Army Profession after nearly a decade of war.

Not wanting to repeat previous professional shortcomings which saw the US military "[suffering] from an evident malaise" during the 1970s, they decided a reexamination was in order.¹⁴ In 2007 then U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George W. Casey, Jr., commented that "If you walked around the Army and asked people what the Professional Military Ethic is, you would get a lot of different answers."¹⁵ Later, General Ray Odierno, one of Casey's successors as Army Chief of Staff remarked, "we might have lost focus on this issue" while Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Martin Dempsey noted the war did not cause the concern as much as "our failure to understand...we were neglecting the tools that manage us as a profession over time."¹⁶ Areas of concern included: growing suicide rates, large segments of the force engaging in high risk behavior, the 'Lost Art of Leadership in Garrison,' a rise of senior leader professional misconduct, increasing incidents of sexual assault, lowering of enlistment standards and increased promotion rates to meet manpower demands, and widespread stress across the force on Soldiers, equipment, and Families due to repeated deployments.¹⁷

Of equal concern was the growing public tension between senior military officers and civilian leadership over the conduct of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan brought to light in the April 2006 "Revolt of the Generals" and again in 2010's "The Runaway General."¹⁸ As President Obama remarked after General McChrystal's resignation, such incidents "[undermine] the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic

system. And it erodes the trust that's necessary for our team to work together to achieve our objectives."¹⁹ A great deal of public and private debate ensued regarding the role retired military officers play after leaving active duty service as well as how uniformed leaders provide their 'best military advice' – including dissent - to civilian policy makers.²⁰

An even larger worry involved the potential morality gap between the U.S. military and the society it serves. Opinion polls since the turn of the 21st century indicated that American society may be shifting further away from traditional values to more pragmatic and relativistic ones contrary to the military's more morally conservative values. A May 2000 poll found that while long championing the spirit of individualism as a national value, Americans were becoming more autonomous in their beliefs, less trusting of institutions, and more "unwilling to follow anyone's party line about what morality ought to be."²¹ Concurrently, in a 2001 study, Duke University researchers found that US military members "are prone to view [American] society as troubled and in need of reform" and that such reform could only occur if "military values were more widely accepted."²² In a 2005 *Military Review* article British Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster asserted that the US military possessed, "a strong sense of moral authority" and "moral righteousness" regarding their roles and responsibilities.²³ A 2007 RAND study examining the potential civil-military gap in American society determined that US military exhibited a "much more conservative position" than their civilian counterparts on "social or moral issues."²⁴ Concerned about a potential perception of moral superiority within the armed forces over their fellow Americans not in uniform, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told cadets at the United States Military Academy, "it is off-

putting to hear...comments that suggest that military is to some degree separate and even superior from the society, the country, it is sworn to protect.”²⁵ If military practitioners perceive themselves as morally superior to their client - the American people - real danger exists in their continued professional status in the service of the nation’s values.

Amid these concerns senior Army leaders began an open dialogue about the need to reexamine the state of the Army Profession.²⁶ In January 2011 the US Army launched the Profession of Arms campaign of learning with the ultimate goal “ensure that we understand and are living up to the principles that define us as a profession.”²⁷

The campaign’s initial focus areas concerned three critical questions:

- What does it mean for the Army to be a Profession of Arms?
- What does it mean to be a Professional Soldier?
- After nine years of war, how are we as individual professionals and as a profession meeting these aspirations?

To facilitate the campaign’s objectives the newly re-named and re-aligned Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) released *The Profession of Arms White Paper*, an associated information pamphlet, and a promotional video.²⁸ Further, CAPE convened a community of practice to examine the Army’s professional heritage, facilitate focus groups throughout the Army, and guide the overall project. Additionally, the Army Research Institute developed a series of surveys for Soldiers to provide their feedback.²⁹

On 02 April 2012, TRADOC released its first annual report assessing the Army Profession. Overall, the campaign found, “at its core, the Army’s professional health

remains solid. Unlike the post-Vietnam era, the ‘pride, soul, and heart’ of the Army remains strong.”³⁰ However, it also identified seven broad key focus areas requiring further effort: institutionalizing Army Profession concepts, building and sustaining trust relations, improving standards and discipline, certifying Army professionals, investing in leader development for the Army of 2020, strengthening the Army’s culture, and integrating and synchronizing human development. While more than 97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were members of the Army Profession, less than 50% felt their leaders were actively involved in helping them develop their professional self-concept.³¹

Much has been done at the strategic level since the 2012 initial assessment report. Almost immediately, senior leaders across the Army began highlighting the importance of trust between Soldiers, Leaders, and the Army in their interactions with subordinates. The Army published Army Doctrinal Publication 1, *The Army*, in September 2012 followed quickly by a revision in November 2012 and release of Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 1, *The Army Profession*, in June 2013.³² On 02 January 2013 the CAPE launched an extensive training support program developing and promoting numerous materials under the *America’s Army–Our Profession Education and Training* (AA-OP) and subsequent *America’s Army-Our Profession Stand Strong* programs. Among the plethora of articles written about the Army Profession, *Military Review* published another special edition directly related to the topic in September 2013.³³

Another significant change occurred in 2015 as the Army recognized that the G.I. Bill, “the Army’s silver bullet in recruiting,” had lost much of its luster in recent years due

to alternative ways to pay for college education and the erosion across American society regarding the value of being a veteran.³⁴ The Army turned away from a marketing campaign that focused on ‘what the Army can do for you’ to one centered on “joining a team that makes a difference” challenging potential recruits with “Can you make the cut?”³⁵ This shift away from promoting the gain of individual benefits to one centered on becoming part of a team that serves something greater than oneself realigns aspiring military professionals’ self-concept with the Army’s professional service culture. Also, it converges with author Daniel Pink’s assertion about individual motivation in the 21st century, “the most deeply motivated people – not to mention those who are most productive and satisfied – hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves.”³⁶ Professions require committed, intrinsically motivated practitioners to fulfil their obligation to the society they serve.

Most importantly, while the 2013 version of ADRP 1 offered a definition and outlined a framework for the Army Ethic, it did not “fully describe the Army Ethic so that it is accessible, commonly understood, and universally applicable.”³⁷ In advocating for a formal definition CAPE noted, “we remain without a doctrine that clearly expresses *why* and *how* the Army Ethic motivates and inspires *Honorable Service* as reflected in our decisions and actions [emphasis included in original].”³⁸ The 2015 revision of ADRP 1 provided the formal articulation of the Army Ethic.³⁹

The intellectual energy and actions taken at the strategic level since 2010 to examine and define the Army Profession, codify its tenants and moral obligations in doctrine, realign the recruiting message, and develop an overarching training and education program established a framework to cultivate a professional identity among

future, aspiring, and serving Army professionals. The Army must now evaluate how to best to foster the Army Ethic within Army professionals. Whatever actions the Army takes, we must ensure that we do not once again fall prey to a flaw Goldman noted in 1998:

[The] propensity to create new, isolated initiatives to address varied human relations... has been the fundamental failure in the way the US military has addressed character development since the Eisenhower administration. We continually assume that secluded enterprises addressing ethics, morals or values are consequential just because they give the impression that 'we are doing something.'⁴⁰

A one-size fits all, mandatory training requirement levied from a strategic level headquarters is not answer. Such an approach leads to a perception of a merely another 'check the block' bureaucratic requirement that undercuts rather than promotes internalization of the Army Ethic and identification as an Army professional. Instead, the Army needs an integrated approach focused at the organizational level tailored to individual and unit needs.

Individual Choice to Become an Army Professional

Former Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams once remarked, "Soldiers are not in the Army. Soldiers are the Army."⁴¹ While Soldiers all wear a common uniform and stand in the same formations, they are still individuals. Despite the importance, initiatives, and focus on the Army Profession at the strategic level, in the end, internalizing the Army Ethic and inculcating its moral principles starts and ends with an individual's personal choice. Identity theory and social identity theory provide greater insight into this relationship and how Army leaders can capitalize on their impact to better foster the Army Ethic in future, aspiring, and serving professionals.

Several factors shape an individual's personal identity or self-concept. Experiences from childhood through emerging adulthood play the dominant ingredient in an individual's physical, cognitive, psychological and moral-ethical development based on the *role* he believes he holds within the context of the world around him.⁴² A person's self-concept, worldview, value set, and psychological coping strategies are further reinforced as he develops workable solutions to encountered problems.⁴³ Over time, these beliefs and behaviors become more deeply engrained, strongly held, and staunchly defended.⁴⁴ If the individual's role changes, he will experience cognitive dissonance and have to revisit his self-concept and potentially shift attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors according to the new circumstances.⁴⁵ Failure to do so results in role confusion and resulting discontent and angst.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, "most people prefer to stay with the behaviors that have made them successful in the past, even if the conditions of the past no longer apply."⁴⁷

Humans are social creatures. As such, our individual identities are also shaped in the context of the social groups we find ourselves a part of either voluntarily or involuntarily. Social identity theory observes that individuals within a particular social group evaluate the aspects of their self-concept against the group's normative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. If the individual perceives alignment exists between her self-concept with the group's norms, she considers herself part of the 'in-group' and anyone who holds conflicting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors part of the 'out-group.' On the other hand, if she believes her self-concept does not align with group norms, she considers herself part of the 'out-group.' Additionally, individuals compare their own self-enhancement desires against group's normative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. If the

individual believes group membership enhances her sense of self-worth, she readily identifies with the group; conversely if the individual does not see her self-esteem increasing, she will reject the group.⁴⁸

Ideally, upon voluntary group entry, the individual finds his self-concept aligned with the group's and his self-worth is improved as a result of group membership. In such circumstances the individual often flourishes. However, it is equally likely, that upon entry the individual will find that neither his self-concept aligns with, nor is his self-esteem enhanced by, the group. In such case, the individual departs from the group if he can.

Two alternatives also exist related to social identity's impact on individual beliefs and behaviors. First, if the individual finds that his self-concept does not align with the group's, but he feels that his self-image improves as a result of continued group membership, the tension will cause enough cognitive dissonance to force a change of individual beliefs and associated behaviors to conform to those held by the group. Over time, the individual will come to internalize the beliefs as his own becoming committed to the group's continued prosperity and well-being because it is explicitly linked to his own.⁴⁹

Alternatively, if the individual feels that her self-concept does not align with the group's, but she is unable to voluntarily depart from group membership, her behavior will likely conform to group norms in order to avoid punishment or public rebuke, but her belief system will remain unchanged. Potential examples of this circumstance include ethnic or cultural groups and incarcerated individuals. As an out-group member incapable of departing the group or adopting its beliefs, her self-worth will continue to

degrade despite her compliance as she sees herself increasingly disenfranchised from what the group values and promotes. In fact, her continued involuntary group participation may lead to knowingly subverting group prosperity and well-being due to knowledge of gaps where she can exert her individuality while remaining relatively unnoticed or discovered.⁵⁰ In the most extreme circumstances, individuals with low self-worth and incapable of departing their social context experience hopelessness which left unchecked can lead to suicide.

Each individual Soldier must choose to align his or her self-concept with the Army Ethic and its professional culture.⁵¹ If individuals do not make this transformation, they cannot become Army professionals as espoused by the Army Ethic, no matter how long they remain in uniform as a member of the Army Profession.⁵² No amount of institutional reform, programs, doctrine, or statements made by strategic leaders will change this fact. The individual Soldier may demonstrate professional characteristics – professional competence; commitment and loyalty to superiors, peers and subordinates; effective leadership; and mission accomplishment – but the underlying belief system, their character, remains misaligned.⁵³ However, the Army Ethic can help shape the transformation process. Figure 1 depicts the essence of this cognitive transformation process incorporating the Army's time honored "Be, Know, Do" moniker.

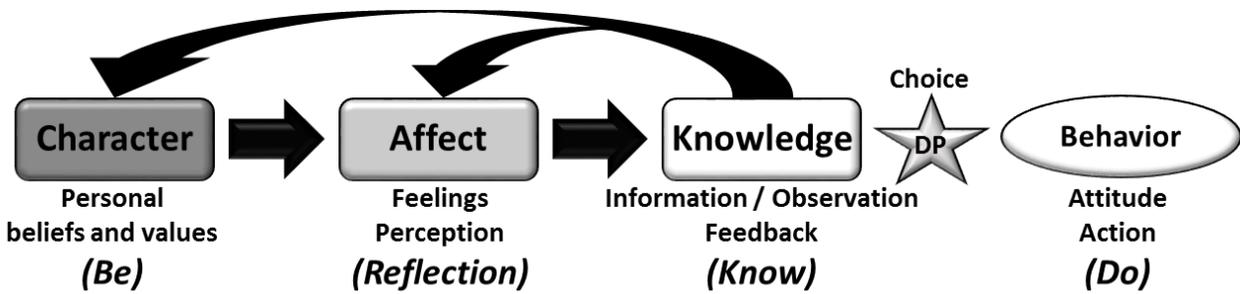


Figure 1. The Essence of Transformation

Over time Army professionals gain the deeper understanding of the profession’s attributes that enables them to make educated decisions about the Army Profession and their individual role within it. This is especially true of the emerging adult 18-25 year old demographic that encompasses 45% of the Active Duty force.⁵⁴

Arnett describes the emerging adulthood period as, “not simply a brief period of transition into adult roles, but a distinct period of the life course, characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions.”⁵⁵ Emerging adults predominately view choices made and roles assumed during this period as transitory as they pursue multiple options seeing what ‘fits’ and settle on a given life course. Most significantly, “changing worldviews” or attitudes, “are often a central part of cognitive development during emerging adulthood” presenting the Army Profession with a near unprecedented opportunity given the psychological unwillingness of most individuals to change their beliefs and behaviors at other life points noted earlier.⁵⁶

The emerging adults that comprise the largest demographic within the Army Profession are in a developmental period of innumerable possibilities unlike any other time in their lives. Relatively independent from the social structures that controlled their childhood and adolescence and unconstrained by the lasting responsibilities of full adulthood, they are reevaluating their personal identity and self-worth within the context

of a new social group - the Army Profession.⁵⁷ The alignment of personal values with the moral principles espoused in the Army Ethic, combined with improved self-worth as a result of group membership, increases commitment to the Army Profession and drives subsequent behavior. Conversely, identity misalignment or decreased self-worth leads to decreased commitment and undesired behavior. Better understanding of the individual and social factors that influence behavior allows Army leaders to capitalize on the prospect presented to them. Unfortunately, thus far in the Army Profession campaign, the Army has not made the most of this opportunity because it has not focused efforts at the right leadership level.

Influencing an Identity Transformation

Change is hard. Individual and organizational identity change is exceptionally difficult because at its core, such an alteration requires abandonment of the very beliefs, attitudes, and associated behaviors that we've come to rely on to make sense of, survive, and succeed in the world around us.⁵⁸ However, change is an inevitable necessity when faced with new circumstances. At the individual level, change represents growth and development as a human being and as a part of society. At the organizational level, failure to adapt to changing environmental conditions risks irrelevance at best or failure and extinction at worst.⁵⁹ As the Army continues to implement the AA-OP Education and Training Program, we now examine how best to achieve a lasting belief transformation in individual Army professionals and where the Army should focus its efforts for the greatest impact.

Educational psychologist Robert Gagne asserts, "One of the most dependable sets of events that has been found to produce changes in attitudes is the phenomenon of human modeling."⁶⁰ He rejects other behavior modification approaches such as

classical conditioning championed by Pavlov and operant conditioning's reinforcement mechanisms due to the rigid rule based structure, the transactional relationship, the need for an external actor, and lack of emphasis on changing the underlying beliefs that drive desired behavior. Instead, he promotes the provision of a consistent message relayed over time by a credible role model in a variety of circumstances as the best method to ensure a lasting belief and subsequent behavior change.⁶¹ As mentioned previously, the social context also influences the likelihood, willingness, and pace of attitude and identity change an individual is willing to make as he maximizes his self-worth. Logically, it follows then, that the greater number of credible role models within a given social context increases the rate of change.

As Figure 1 demonstrates, individuals gain knowledge through information, observation, and feedback. This in turn shapes their personal beliefs and feelings either solidifying them based on a positive response to new knowledge or requiring a change based on a negative response. By choosing to align personal beliefs and associated behavior with that of group role models, the individual increases group acceptance and receives more positive feedback which further solidifies group beliefs and group identity.

Role modeling, leadership by example in Army lexicon, has a long history as the basis of the Army Profession's leadership doctrine. However, at times and in certain contexts, Army professionals have not provided the right role model of professionally espoused beliefs and behavior. Largely, this stems from their own individual understanding of what it means to be an Army professional within the context of the Army Ethic, misplaced loyalties within the Army Profession, or an individual refusal to comply with expected professional norms and behavior for personal gain. To clarify, as

noted at the start of the Army Profession campaign of learning, despite occasional outliers, the force overall exhibits the moral-ethical behavior expected of Army professionals. However, it is those times that individual Soldiers and Army leaders deviate from the Army Ethic's moral principles that crack the very trust foundation between Soldiers, their leaders, and the society we serve.

Effective role modeling depends on the development of a relationship that relies on personal rather than positional power. Klann defines power as "the capacity to influence others and implement change" and influence as "the application of power." Personal power differs from positional power in that the subordinate willingly gives the superior authority based on the level of trust, admiration, and respect that exists between the two whereas positional power is derived based on the superior's position and rank. The stronger the relationship between superior and subordinate the more personal power the superior holds. More importantly, as related to subordinate behavior and beliefs, Klann shows that positional power "is excellent in gaining compliance" but also "undermines long-term commitment." Conversely, the referent example the leader sets as a role model based on strong personal power, gains greater subordinate commitment.⁶²

The Strategic Level

The preliminary focus of the Army Profession's campaign of learning and the subsequent implementation activities completed at the strategic level to date were critical to initiate action. The Army's professional health would not be where it is today without emphasis at that level first. Some advocate that the Army Profession's focus should continue to reside at the strategic level with the Army's Generals, Colonels, Sergeants Major, and the civilian counterparts because of their continued importance

and impact across the entire force. Proponents for this position point to the strategic leaders' control of the Army's major internal jurisdiction processes.⁶³ One could also argue that strategic leaders serve as the epitome of a professional role model because their rank and position demonstrate success within the Army Profession. However, both these arguments will not produce lasting transformational belief change.

Improving management systems' efficiency is critically important in an era of declining resources. However, too much emphasis on efficiency can easily lead to more bureaucratic, compliance related tendencies rather than those that promote commitment to the Army Ethic as individuals seek positions, promotions, or activities that ensure recognition and advancement while avoiding rebuke.

Likewise, a wide generational gap exists between the Army's strategic leaders and the majority of the force that has a significant impact on their interactions.⁶⁴ Due to the nature of their responsibilities and the size of the organizations they lead, strategic leaders at the brigade command team level and above are too far removed from the average Army professional resulting in infrequent or no individual personal contact with the majority of their personnel. As such, they rely on indirect influence and positional rather than personal power sources. As mentioned previously, reliance on indirect influence and position power does not generate the necessary relationship needed to establish an aspirational role model attachment between the leader and the subordinate. Instead, these methods primarily generate compliance behavior at best and don't necessarily impact the underlying belief system.

Strategic leaders can positively influence transformational belief change across the force in two areas. First, they can influence the instructional content within the

Institutional Development Domain related to the Army Profession and how to establish effective leader development programs. Increasing the depth of content related to the Army Profession in Professional Military Education (PME) opportunities and prerequisite Pre-Command Courses beyond merely regurgitating the seven Army Values, highlighting the importance of trust, or defining the other four essential characteristics of the Army Profession, requires organizational and direct level leaders to reflect on their own beliefs and understanding prior to assuming a greater leadership role. Further, by exploring how leaders create integrated unit leader development programs rather than simply stating they are important arms the leaders with tools they can effectively employ.⁶⁵ Second, just as they did after the initial campaign of learning assessment concerning the importance of trust, strategic leaders can add the Army Ethic as part of their talking points when speaking to groups of Army professionals. Because the Army Ethic was only recently introduced into Army doctrine, now is the time for strategic leaders to highlight its importance to the force and the Army Profession as a whole.

While senior leaders have important roles to play regarding the Army Profession, the strategic level is not the best suited to foster the Army Ethic in Army professionals across the force. Their control of the Army's bureaucratic management systems, actual and perceived generational differences between Strategic Leaders and the majority of the force, and a reliance on positional power sources and indirect leadership will not produce lasting commitment to the Army Ethic.

The Direct Level

Direct level leaders serve as the Army's first line leadership. Given the near constant contact between leaders and subordinates at the direct leadership level, our junior leaders – the Army's Noncommissioned Officers, Lieutenants, and Captains –

would seem the most obvious focal point for the next phase of the Army Profession campaign of learning's efforts. Due to the amount of face to face contact between leaders and subordinates they are best placed to develop strong interpersonal relationships with their Soldiers enabling the use of referent and expert personal power sources to influence change. Personally responsible for their subordinates' development, direct level leaders serve as critical enablers to foster the Army Ethic within Army professionals.⁶⁶ However, there are also moderate and significant risks to the Army's professional ethos that reside at the direct leadership level.

Developmentally, the vast majority of the Army's direct level leaders are emerging adults themselves who may not have internalized the Army Ethic as committed professionals, but are rather demonstrating compliance-related behavior as they explore new roles and beliefs that may or may not 'stick.'⁶⁷ The direct level leader with a professionally misaligned self-concept poses a significant risk for the Army Profession's ability to inculcate the Army Ethic in new members. The actions such a leader takes to socialize Army professionals as they enter the organization shapes how those Soldiers view the Army Profession as a whole. The integration and socialization activities a misaligned direct level leader takes could alienate rather than incorporate Soldiers into the Army's professional culture, this is especially true for aspiring and newly transitioned serving professionals.⁶⁸

A more common reality, is that direct level leaders are the most junior leadership cohort within the Army with the least amount of leadership experience and knowledge across the Army's expert knowledge areas. The direct level leadership position they occupy may be their first leadership opportunity. They may still be learning their own

leadership style, gaining perspective on leadership presence, or lack sufficient influence skills beyond relying on coercive power and hard influence tactics.⁶⁹ The 2014 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leaders (CASAL) also shows that subordinates lack the level of trust in their direct level leaders compared to other leaders.⁷⁰ These shortfalls limit the direct level leaders' ability as a role model to exercise personal power with their subordinates that influences an attitudinal shift toward the Army Ethic.

Direct level leaders are critical to their subordinates' internalization of the Army Ethic, but they should not be the focal point of the next phase of the AA-OP campaign. Most direct level leaders are emerging adults deciding whether or not to internalize the Army Ethic and may not be fully committed members of the profession themselves. Further, they often lack the experience and skills to effectively influence others because they tend to rely on hard influence techniques and positional power sources. As with strategic leaders, continued reliance on these methods does not influence belief change over time.

The Organizational Level

The organizational level leaders at the battalion command team level are best suited to foster the Army Ethic in their subordinates. Due to their centralized selection to an organizational level command team, these individuals are recognized by more senior practitioners as expert Army professionals. Through years of professional practice routinely exercising discretionary judgment in their roles and responsibilities, they have acquired and demonstrated the requisite leadership competencies and attributes to lead large organizations in complex environments. Most importantly, subordinates place

greater trust in their battalion command team than their direct level leaders which facilitates greater influence opportunities at the organizational level.⁷¹

In 2004 Wong noted that junior officers, and by extension their Soldiers as well, deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom encountered “crucible experiences” in which they “experienced at least one intense, transformational experience...a defining moment that unleashes abilities, forces crucial choices, and sharpens focus [teaching] a person who he or she is.”⁷² He further added, “most...showed an astute understanding of leadership in the future environment...are not afraid to lead in ambiguous conditions [and] can execute a mission with minimal guidance.”⁷³ The junior officers that Wong observed twelve years ago are the Army’s battalion command teams today and for the foreseeable future. They have extensive operational and leadership experience due to continued deployments over the entirety of their service experience. One would be hard pressed to find an Army leadership cohort with greater military-technical expertise. Such expertise affords them increased personal power compared to more junior leaders.

Returning briefly to generational differences, some of the Army’s strategic leaders acknowledge the E-9/O-5 cohort’s operational experience but instead highlight their lack of garrison environment experience. The argument contends that due to the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) OPTEMPO units faced over the last fifteen years, commanders at the brigade level and below largely discounted and sometimes ignored Army regulatory policies, procedures, activities, and standards as they scrambled to reconstitute, retrain, and return to the fight. Such focus resulted in generation of leaders “lost” in the art of garrison leadership.⁷⁴ This argument epitomizes the tension between the Army’s desired professional identity and the bureaucratic reality

large organizations contend with daily. Faced with a “suffocating amount of mandatory requirements imposed upon units and commanders” that increase at each successive layer of command, subordinate leaders exercise their discretionary judgment to use the limited time available to focus on unit operational effectiveness rather than activities largely perceived as nonessential bureaucratic minutia.⁷⁵ Acknowledged as a problem as early as 2001 and despite the recent efforts by the Mandatory Training Task Force, the Army continues to struggle with reducing the administrative and training burden on subordinates.⁷⁶ Contrary to the argument, as organizational leaders, the battalion command teams are best positioned and equipped within the Army’s institutional hierarchy to contend with this inherent tension.

Organizational level leaders establish policy, organize resources, and establish a positive organizational climate over a time horizon of two to ten years. While the organizations they lead include hundreds to thousands of Soldiers, they are not so large as to exclude frequent face to face interaction and the development of strong interpersonal relationships with nearly all the command’s direct level leaders. Effective organizational leaders recognize the importance of extending their influence throughout the organization and do so by repeated visits to subordinate units.⁷⁷ Arguably, the battalion command team’s personalities still influence individual Soldiers in the organization because of these interpersonal relationships that enhance their personal power.⁷⁸ The relationships they build enables the use of personal as well as positional power to provide *sense making* through their priorities, words, and actions when tensions arise regarding Army-wide policies and programs.

Organizational leaders personalize the Army Profession's theoretical concepts by prioritizing and integrating them as tangible activities. They use their education, experience, and personal reflection to shape the organizational culture and climate in ways that strategic and direct level leaders cannot. A 1984 study examining excellence in Army units confirms this assertion, "[the battalion commanders] realized that their actions [expressed] their priorities, and not their words. In the excellent battalions, the commanders show the way by leading and setting the example."⁷⁹

One of the most important ways organizational leaders reinforce desired climate and cultural aspects is to make them part of the organizationally espoused values. They are consistently included in the formal and informal communication methods used throughout the organization to "overcommunicate clarity."⁸⁰ Further, when positive examples of the desired ethical beliefs and behavior occur, the organizational leader publically reinforces them. Likewise, when transgressions occur, organizational leaders hold those responsible accountable.⁸¹

Within an Army context for example, the lieutenant who makes the tough call to hold a peer or other leader with supervisory responsibility accountable for a lost or damaged item when the evidence supports it as opposed to a junior Soldier during a Financial Liability Investigation for Property Loss (FLIPL) should be encouraged for her ethical decision. Conversely, when the investigating officer (IO) recommends relief of liability despite the evidence presented, rather than merely non-concurring with the IO's findings and processing the DD Form 200, the organizational leader takes the developmental opportunity, without exerting undue command influence, to have a conversation with the subordinate to determine the factors that drove the IO's decision

and point out where his logic might deviate from ethical, moral, or regulatory standards. These actions not only reinforce the Army Ethic throughout the command, they increase the organizational leader's ethical leadership reputation and personal power. Organizational leaders who remain silent or fail to act when ethical lapses occur have a corrosive impact on the organizational climate and culture over time.⁸²

The organizational leaders' influence over the unit's training schedule and resources ensures that dedicated, integrated leader development activities can occur frequently and with a high probability that they will be executed. This stands in contrast to the direct level where such events are typically under resourced and the first things removed from the calendar when a scheduling conflict occurs. Further, because they oversee larger formations than direct level leaders, organizational leaders can tap into greater resources and expertise enabling a better learning environment.

Organizational leaders are best postured to assess and develop the Army's future talent. They, more than any Department of the Army policy or program, shape the future force through the evaluations and developmental assignments of their subordinate leaders. Because the Army currently lacks a character assessment metric, organizational leaders must evaluate their subordinate leaders' internalization of the Army Ethic under various circumstances over time. This assessment feeds into the subordinate leader's evaluation report in which the organizational leader is either the rater, senior rater, or reviewer allowing him to ensure that the evaluation accurately depicts the subordinate's performance as well as underlying attitudes that drive demonstrated behavior. Organizational leaders have the direct knowledge of their

subordinate leaders, experience, and maturity needed to make the tough call regarding stratification.

While organizational leaders are best postured to foster the Army Ethic in Army professionals, there are some moderate risks that may adversely impact this effort. Defined as the Bathsheba Syndrome, Ludwig and Longnecker caution successful leaders against becoming complacent by losing sight of where they are supposed to be and what they are supposed to be doing; using the information and resources available to them due to their leadership position for personal advantage; and holding an overinflated belief in their ability to control outcomes.⁸³ One could argue convincingly that much of the Army's senior leader misconduct over the last decade can be traced back to Bathsheba Syndrome traits resident within the leader.

The greater area of potential concern is the Army's collective inability to actually practice what it preaches with regard to unit level Leader Development programs. Since 2008 when the Army began assessing leaders' ability to "Develop Others" the competency has ranked the lowest of all measured areas and never more than 63% effective. More damaging, however, are the 60% of Army leaders who view formal unit development programs such as Officer or NCO Professional Development (OPD / NCOPD) and Sergeant's Time as having at best a "Moderate" impact on their individual development.⁸⁴ This point was further reinforced during the Campaign of Learn findings which determined that less than 50% of Army leaders helped their subordinates develop a professional self-concept.⁸⁵ Organizational leaders appear to be failing at designing and executing developmental programs at the unit level perceived as meaningful

experiences for their subordinates. If the battalion command teams are truly the best role model to foster the Army Ethic in their subordinates, this trend must change.

Individuals choose to align their personal beliefs and subsequent behavior with the Army Ethic based on their perceived self-concept and increased self-worth within the Army Profession's social context. Role models provide the most significant impact to achieve a lasting attitudinal shift toward the Army Ethic because they provide an aspirational example that others want to achieve. Role models effectively utilize their personal power, gained through positive relationships, to gain commitment from others resulting in transformational beliefs and behaviors over time. Leaders at all levels exercise some level personal and positional power over subordinates, but the Army's organizational leaders at the battalion command team level are best suited to serve as aspirational role models to foster the Army Ethic in others. Their frequent contact with large segments of Army professionals enables the ability to build the relationships necessary to enable greater personal power producing commitment over compliance. Further, their control over resources allows them to prioritize and operationalize Army Profession concepts in ways unavailable to strategic and direct level leaders.

Recommendations

Much work has been done in the five and a half years since Army senior leaders recognized a potential problem within the Army's professional ethos. The intellectual energy dedicated to the examination of the Army's professional identity and that of individual practitioners has greatly increased its awareness and importance across the force. The emphasis placed on the Army Profession and its Ethic has deepened individual understanding. To continue the progress made thus far, the Army needs to shift the focus from the strategic level to the organizational level which is best postured

and suited to operationalize Army Profession concepts and put a human role model to the Army Ethic.

1. Battalion Command Teams must reflect on and record what the Army Ethic and being an Army professional means to them personally. Conceptualizing individual thoughts and formally articulating them in a document, requires the leader to do more than merely pay lip service to these deeply important ideas. Further, it allows him to compare his individual thoughts to those expressed in doctrine and other academic works. Once complete, the leader can then share those views with his chain of command during initial counseling for further validation. Incorporating the central ideas into the support form that the leader provides to seniors and subordinates alike holds him accountable to those ideals.

2. More so than any other leadership level, the battalion command team must role model the behavior espoused by the Army Ethic in all aspects of their life at the unit, at social functions, and while at home. Further, they must incorporate aspects of the Army Profession, areas of professional expertise, the essential characteristics of the Army Profession, and the Army Ethic into personal and organizational communications. By actively overcommunicating an ethically and values based message consistent with personally role modeled behavior, the leader deliberately reinforces her example providing additional context beyond what is merely observable.

3. Battalion Command teams must recognize and embrace the key role they play in fostering the Army Ethic in their subordinates and ensuring that the organization has a deliberate, integrated development plan that encompasses more than merely review of the unit Mission Essential Tasks or completion of other developmental tasks (i.e.

Range Officer, FLIPL Officer, Staff Duty). Complete individual counseling that expands beyond performance or career enhancing topics to ones that include reflection on the Army Ethic and organizational values. Like the organizational leader's personal reflection recommended above, this action requires subordinates to actually think about what they believe and articulate it in a coherent manner to a superior. Doing so opens the door for a deeper level of dialogue and subsequent development.

4. Organizational leaders must develop the bond with their command team partner where they can speak candidly with one another and be willing to hold each other accountable thus preventing Bathsheba Syndrome-like tendencies. As the senior member of the command team, the battalion commander is responsible for setting the tone of this relationship by being willing to demonstrate openness regarding personal weaknesses, mistakes, and vulnerabilities to the command sergeant major.⁸⁶ Too often leaders let their own ego get in the way of establishing a personal relationship with a peer or subordinate that will help hold them accountable for fear of demonstrating a flaw or limitation that they perceive will weaken their positional power. On the contrary, building strong interpersonal relationships enables the leader to utilize other influence techniques that engender commitment rather than mere compliance.

5. Publicly recognize those Soldiers in the organization who display behavior aligned with the Army Ethic. Far too frequently, leaders fail to recognize those Soldiers who consistently 'do the right thing' as opposed to those who display tactical competence. Likewise, ensure that ethical lapses are effectively addressed.

6. Routinely incorporate moral-ethical challenges as part of collective training scenarios that require Soldiers and direct level leaders to demonstrate behavior consistent with the Army Ethic.

7. Consider incorporating a professional reading program that includes books on moral – ethical topics and a group discussion.

8. Actively participate in subordinate unit professional development sessions, not to usurp the subordinate leader’s authority, but rather demonstrate to the organization’s members that the sessions, their content, and their execution are important.

Regardless of the analysis and recommendations laid out in this monograph, leaders at all levels across the Army Profession must take care to ensure that whatever actions they take to foster the Army Ethic are truly value added and not merely another ‘check the block’ bureaucratic, mandatory training requirement levied from some higher headquarters. If such a perception occurs, the action undercuts rather than promotes subordinate internalization of the Army Ethic and identification as an Army professional. Failure to focus at the organizational level for the next phase of the America’s Army – Our Profession Campaign risks turning the effort into another Army-wide mandatory training initiative that reinforces the Army’s bureaucratic nature at the expense of its desired professional character.

Endnotes

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⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁵⁷ Arnett associates such things as residential status independent from parents, finishing education, career choice, marriage, parenthood, financial independence, accepting responsibility, and independent decision making as marks of adulthood. Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," 469, 472-473.

⁵⁸ For an outstanding overview of the identity crisis faced by officers and the Army in the 1990's see George B. Forsythe, et al., "Making Sense of Officership: Developing a Professional Identity for 21st Century Army Officers," in Don M. Snider and Gayle L. Watkins, *The Future of the Army Profession* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), 357-378; Don M. Snider, John A. Nagl, and Tony Pfaff, *Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, December 1999).

⁵⁹ When embarking on the Army's transformation effort in the late 1990's the Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki famously told the force, "If you don't like change, you are going to like irrelevance even less."

⁶⁰ Robert M. Gagne, *The Conditions of Learning and the Theory of Instruction*, 4th ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc, 1985), 232.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 230-236.

⁶² Gene Klann, *The Application of Power and Influence in Organizational Leadership*, L100: Developing Organizations and Leaders Course Reading Material (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2010), 64-67.

⁶³ Proponents for this position point specifically to the budgetary, personnel management, promotion, and leader development systems implying that system effectiveness enhances the profession's standing in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders. Don M. Snider, *Once Again, The Challenge To The U.S. Army During A Defense Reduction: To Remain A Military Profession* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, February 2012), 30; Leonard Wong and Don Snider, "Strategic Leadership of the Army Profession," in *The Future of the Army Profession*, ed. Lloyd J. Matthews, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2005), 601-623.

⁶⁴ At the time of Wong's work in 2000 the Army consisted primarily of "Baby Boomers" and "Generation Xers." Today, the Army's population also includes the "Millennials" whose generational development experiences are even further removed from the "Boomers." As a point of reference for generational differences, for the Millennials entering the Army Profession today, the September 11th, 2001 attacks serve as a defining moment of their lives, unlike Strategic Leaders who view 9/11 simply as a pivotal point in their professional careers. Leonard Wong, *Generations Apart: Xers and Boomers in the Officer Corps* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, October 2000); David Dixon, "Millennials: Understanding This Generation and the Military," *Army*, 66, no. 3 (March 2016): 21-22; Bryan B. Battaglia, "Bridging the Basics," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 68 (1st Quarter 2013): 6.

⁶⁵ The author acknowledges that the CAPE and the Center for Army Leadership (CAL) have numerous ready-made materials for organizational and direct level leaders to utilize. However, within both PME and pre-command courses, these materials are infrequently examined as dedicated parts of the curriculum. Instead they are mentioned in passing as something the leader can review if it is of interest. Dedicating time within the structured curriculum affords attendees the opportunity to examine them in depth, practice their use, and receive feedback

from the instructor on their performance in a relatively benign environment. Leaders can then use this feedback to improve their own understanding or their unit level development programs.

⁶⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22, change 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 10, 2012), 2-4.

⁶⁷ Notable exceptions to this assertion include unit First Sergeants, senior Sergeants First Class, and prior service officers who are all outside the emerging adulthood demographics Arnett advocates.

⁶⁸ In the worst case scenario the misaligned direct level leader co-opts the new subordinate to adopt his belief system creating a divergent sub-culture within the unit that if left unchecked can poison the entire unit over time. The actions of “The Kill Team” in Afghanistan and the “Blackhearts Platoon” in Iraq provide relevant examples of this occurrence. Mark Boal, “The Kill Team: How U.S. Soldiers in Afghanistan Murdered Innocent Civilians,” *Rolling Stone Online*, March 27, 2011, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-kill-team-20110327> (accessed February 24, 2016); Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Descent into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death* (New York: Crown, 2010).

⁶⁹ According to O’Leary Professor of Management and Psychology at Albany State University Gary Yukl, leaders who rely on coercive power will most likely receive resistance from subordinates. Likewise hard influence tactics rely on coalition tactics such as ‘ganging up’ on individuals, using rank and authority to make legitimate requests perceived as ‘pulling rank,’ or pressure through threats, warnings, and micromanagement. The 2014 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leaders (CASAL) found that direct level leaders relied on compliance related influence techniques between 20 – 24% of the time compared to Field Grade Officers who reported employing such methods only 14% of the time. Specifically, junior NCOs saw the greatest use of compliance related influence techniques, predominately resorting to legitimate requests based on their rank and duty position. Company grade officers reported using a mix of compliance and commitment related influence techniques. Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 3rd ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1994), 201-202; Gene Klann, “The Application of Power and Influence in Organizational Leadership,” 67; U.S. Department of the Army, *2014 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings*, Technical Report 2015-01 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Center for Army Leadership, June 2015), 64-67.

⁷⁰ Perceptions of trust as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ for direct level leaders (SSG – CPT) ranged from 48% - 67% with SSGs ranking lowest and CPTs ranking highest. Alternatively, CSMs and LTCs ranked 76%. U.S. Department of the Army, *2014 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings*, 52.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Leonard Wong, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, July 2004), 2.

⁷³ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Health Promotion Risk Reduction Suicide Prevention Report 2010*, 36.

⁷⁵ Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, February 2015), 5, 20, 30-32.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, 2-5.

⁷⁸ David Alan Hoopengardner, Jerry Alan Simonsen, and Herbert Louis Frandsen, *Excellence in the Combat Arms* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, December 1984), 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸⁰ Organizational and Executive Leadership consultant Patrick Lencioni advocates that organizational leaders “overcommunicate clarity” by placing and highlighting espoused values in all formal and informal communications and then repeat them at least seven times as a critical means to improving organizational health (climate and culture). Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 141-153.

⁸¹ Linda K. Treviño and Katherine A. Nelson, “Developing Ethical Organizations: Ethics as Organizational Culture,” in *Managing Business Ethics: Straight Talk About How to Do It Right* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 232.

⁸² Erik N. Anderson, “Ethics and the Armed Forces Leader,” *Reading L105RA, L100: Developing Organizations and Leaders Course Reading Material* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2011), 10.

⁸³ Dean C. Ludwig and Clinton O. Longnecker, “The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, 12 (1993): 265-273.

⁸⁴ According to the CASAL since 2008, “the percentage of AC leaders rated effective or very effective in developing subordinates has ranged from 59% to 63% (about three in five) while the percentage of leaders rated ineffective has ranged from 18% to 21% (about one in five). U.S. Department of the Army, *2014 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings*, 74.

⁸⁵ Allen, “Assessing the Army Profession,” 79-80.

⁸⁶ For an outstanding discussion on the leader’s willingness to ‘go first’ expressing personal vulnerability and the impact it has on team building see Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).