

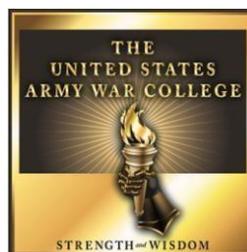
Strategy Research Project

Character Development: Building Leaders of Character through the Operational Force

by

Lieutenant Colonel Keith Richard Jarolimek
United States Army

Under the Direction of:
Dr. Don M. Snider



United States Army War College
Class of 2016

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A

Approved for Public Release
Distribution is Unlimited

The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

| REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE | | | | Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
|--|-------------------|---|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS. | | | | | |
| 1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2016 | | 2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT | | 3. DATES COVERED (From - To) | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Character Development: Building Leaders of Character through the Operational Force | | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Keith Richard Jarolimek United States Army | | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. Don M. Snider | | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013 | | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | |
| | | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited. Please consider submitting to DTIC for worldwide availability? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (student check one) Project Adviser recommends DTIC submission? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (PA check one) | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 6426 | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT Current Army doctrine for character development falls short of what the Army needs to develop leaders of character. This paper demonstrates an approach to improve character development for junior leaders. Impressions gained by junior leaders in their first operational assignment are formative for the rest of their service in the profession of arms. Battalion commanders and Command Sergeants Major play the most important role in character development as they are the moral exemplars and developers of junior officers and non-commissioned officers during this influential time. The character development portion of a battalion's leader development program should include five components: an understanding of Army character attributes; appreciation of the origins and content of the Army Ethic; individual character assessment and feedback; training and feedback in moral dilemmas; and modeling of moral, ethical behavior. To support this character development strategy, the Army needs to adopt or develop a character assessment tool and update leader development doctrine. | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS Leader Development, Morality, Social Identity Theory, Authentic Leadership, Character Attributes | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 33 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT UU | b. ABSTRACT UU | c. THIS PAGE UU | | | 19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code) |

Character Development: Building Leaders of Character through the Operational Force

(6426 words)

Abstract

Current Army doctrine for character development falls short of what the Army needs to develop leaders of character. This paper demonstrates an approach to improve character development for junior leaders. Impressions gained by junior leaders in their first operational assignment are formative for the rest of their service in the profession of arms. Battalion commanders and Command Sergeants Major play the most important role in character development as they are the moral exemplars and developers of junior officers and non-commissioned officers during this influential time. The character development portion of a battalion's leader development program should include five components: an understanding of Army character attributes; appreciation of the origins and content of the Army Ethic; individual character assessment and feedback; training and feedback in moral dilemmas; and modeling of moral, ethical behavior. To support this character development strategy, the Army needs to adopt or develop a character assessment tool and update leader development doctrine.

Character Development: Building Leaders of Character through the Operational Force

The office which Army professionals enter upon taking their oath is not a physical workspace; it is a moral workspace.

–Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 1¹

This quote from *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 1, The Army Profession* (ADRP 1), eloquently describes why the Army requires leaders of character. The moral workspace named in the quote is larger and more complex than in the past. These factors require junior leaders of character to make difficult moral, ethical decisions in a timely manner.

Current doctrine for character development falls short of what we need to develop leaders of character. In the words of one U.S. Army Colonel, the Army takes a “*laissez-faire*” approach to character development.² A search in Army doctrine for character development would give credence to this argument as doctrine only dedicates 524 words to the subject.³

The Army uses a three legged concept to develop leaders – institutional, operational, and self-development. According to Army doctrine, character development is primarily a self-development task, although leaders bear some responsibility by setting a clear ethical example, “encouraging, supporting and assessing” self-development, and counseling.⁴ There is no doubt that self-development in character is important as it does develop moral agency, the ownership of one’s own moral experiences, enhancing character development.⁵ But, this approach falls short of what is required to develop leaders with the strength of character the Army now requires. The operational environment and the recent moral missteps of leaders of all ranks demands an improvement on how the U.S. Army develops character in its junior leaders.

Where is the best place to develop character? Leaders can receive lectures when attending training in the institutional Army, but they are not present in the training base long enough to truly develop their character. Self-development is vital to an individual's character development as discussed, but how does the individual leader know what the right character attributes are or even if they have a list, do they know how best to apply them while leading Soldiers.

This leave us with the operational force, which I will argue is the best place to develop character in leaders. As Lieutenant General Robert Brown has said, "Leader development happens most in the operational force."⁶ This is where our junior leaders spend their formative time, developing themselves as leaders of competence, commitment, and character. It is in the operational force that they see examples of right and wrong (or at least what they perceive as right and wrong) from their battalion commanders and command sergeants major (CSM). This environment is a powerful developmental experience, and if harnessed, can provide the U.S. Army with leaders of character who will lead the Army of 2025 to gain the trust of their Soldiers and our nation.

But do we have the right regimen in our battalions to harness this formative time to develop leaders of character? Do our leaders, as one author has described it, know "being a certain kind of person is just as important to moral leadership as knowing consequences, rules, and principles"?⁷ Have we outfitted our commanders and CSMs with the knowledge and tools for them to develop the character of Sergeants, Staff Sergeants, Lieutenants, and junior Captains?

In my experience battalion commanders and CSMs can enhance character development of junior leaders by integration of character development in the battalion's leader development program. If the Army requires leaders of competence, commitment, and character, then we must have a strategy at the battalion level to accomplish all three of these developmental tasks. The character development portion of a battalion's leader development program should include five components: an understanding of Army character attributes; appreciation of the origins and content of the Army Ethic; individual character assessment and feedback; training and feedback in moral dilemmas; and modeling of moral, ethical behavior. Ultimately, this will create leaders of Army 2025 with enhanced moral character that leads to trust among leaders and subordinates, which in my judgement is the bedrock of mission command.

This paper reviews literature and research on each of the five components described above and provides recommendations on implementation of character development at the battalion level. First we will discuss character attributes, surveying the literature from Aristotle to the present, including U.S. Army doctrine, on attributes needed by military leaders. Next, we will discuss the importance of a leader's appreciation of the origin and foundation of the Army Ethic. Third, the paper discusses the importance of individual character assessment and feedback as well as reviews available character assessment tools to provide that feedback. Fourth, I discuss the importance of training and feedback on moral dilemmas for junior leaders. Then, using social identity theory and authentic leadership theory, we discuss the importance of battalion commanders and CSMs modeling ethical, moral behavior. Finally, the paper closes with recommendations on steps the Army can take as an institution to assist

battalion commanders and CSMs in the character development portion of their leader development programs.

Understanding Army Character Attributes

A leader of character “is more concerned with being the kind of person who does the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, and is not as concerned with the act itself.”⁸ In the fast paced world of combat, the leader of character must resolve moral conflicts in mere minutes or seconds. What attributes, virtues, or character strengths do Army leaders need to become this ideal leader, the leader who can resolve the moral conflict in a minimum amount of time, simultaneously upholding the honor of the Army Profession?

Character Attributes

The Western tradition has used ancient philosophers to establish the bedrock of our current morals, virtues, and values. Aristotle believed a good person manifested courage, temperance, liberality, proper pride, good temper, ready wit, modesty and justice; Plato wrote about prudence, courage, temperance, and justice; Thomas Aquinas augmented Plato’s list with faith, hope, and love.⁹

Tony Pfaff, in *The Future of the Army Profession*, describes five virtues associated with officership: selflessness, courage, prudence, caring, and integrity.¹⁰ He also insightfully (and rightly) points out that not one virtue is as important as another, that “virtuous people act in such a way that they remain true to all of the relevant virtues.”¹¹

Anthony Hartle discusses seven moral principles required by military leaders in his writing on cadet training at the United States Military Academy. He describes loyalty, selfless service, obedience, duty, courage, integrity, and respect as basic elements of

the military ethic, requirements of a military professional to lead their subordinates in combat and peacetime.¹²

In an analysis of Medal of Honor citations and their associated narratives, a researcher found bravery, self-regulation, persistence, leadership, teamwork, humility, and selfless service as the character strengths demonstrated by these heroic military members.¹³

In 2004, psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman proposed 24 character strengths that were common across all cultures.¹⁴ They categorized the 24 character strengths into six moral virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.¹⁵ Table 1 provides a further breakout of the virtues and strengths.

Table 1. Character Strengths¹⁶

| Virtue | Character Strength |
|----------------------|---|
| Wisdom and Knowledge | Creativity Curiosity Judgement Love of learning Perspective |
| Courage | Bravery Persistence Integrity Vitality |
| Humanity | Capacity to love Kindness Social intelligence |
| Justice | Teamwork Fairness Leadership |
| Temperance | Forgiveness Modesty Prudence Self-regulation |
| Transcendence | Appreciation of beauty Gratitude |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Hope/optimism Humor Spirituality |
|--|--|

From these identified character strengths, Michael Matthews identified five important for junior leaders in combat through a survey of recently returned company grade officers from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan: teamwork, bravery, capacity to love, persistence, and bravery.¹⁷ He admits these are not the most common character traits, but the most used in combat.¹⁸

U.S. Army Doctrine on Character Attributes

Now that we have some background on character attributes, let's examine Army doctrine to determine if it describes the virtues, morals, values, and attributes Army leaders need to be successful. The Army specifically defines character as "Dedication and adherence to the Army Ethic, including Army Values, as consistently and faithfully demonstrated in decisions and actions."¹⁹ This definition describes character in an operational sense.²⁰ The Army also describes character intrinsically, as "one's true nature including identity, sense of purpose, values, virtues, morals, and conscience."²¹ For leaders, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22, Army Leadership (ADRP 6-22)*, states character is:

...comprised of a person's moral and ethical qualities, helps determine what is right and gives a leader motivation to do what is appropriate, regardless of the circumstances or consequences...It determines who people are, how they act, helps determine right from wrong, and choose what is right.²²

In other words, character is both the constitution of the Soldier and how he or she acts. It is how a leader or Soldier applies the Army Ethic and Army Values when making decisions and taking action, especially in the complex and ambiguous nature of combat.

It is important to note that the Army concedes when Soldiers enter the Army they come with the values they learned in childhood but expect when a Soldier takes the Oath of Enlistment or Oath of Office, they integrate the Army Values into their character.²³

A further examination of Army doctrine provides a more complete understanding of character attributes required for Army leaders. ADRP 6-22 specifically addresses four things that inform a leader’s individual character – the Army Values, empathy, the Warrior Ethos/Service Ethos, and discipline.²⁴ The Army Values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.²⁵ Table 2 provides a description of each Army Value.

Table 2. Description of the Army Values²⁶

| Army Value | Description |
|------------------|---|
| Loyalty | Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers |
| Duty | Fulfill your obligations |
| Respect | Treat people as they should be treated. |
| Selfless Service | Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own |
| Honor | Live up to Army Values |
| Integrity | Do what is right, legally and morally |
| Personal Courage | Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical and moral) |

Empathy is defined by the Army in three statements: 1) “The propensity to experience something from another person’s point of view;” 2) “The ability to identify with and enter into another person’s feelings and emotions;” and 3) “The desire to care for and take care of Soldiers and others.”²⁷ The Warrior Ethos/Service Ethos is the “internal shared attitudes and beliefs that embody the spirit of the Army profession for Soldiers and Army Civilians alike.”²⁸ Finally, discipline is the “control of one’s own

behavior according to Army Values, mindset to obey and enforce good orderly practices in administrative, organizational, training, and operational duties.”²⁹

One thing doctrine does not discuss is the importance of emotional intelligence in the character of our leaders or Soldiers. Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence as “how leaders handle themselves and their relationships.”³⁰ He breaks the concept down into two basic competencies: personal competence and social competence.³¹ The Army doctrine does a pretty good job of addressing the social competence as it describes how people interact with other people and lead subordinates. But, understanding the capability of self-awareness and self-management described by Goleman can go a long way in building leaders of character.

From the above discussion we can discern the moral exemplar for the Army is a leader who lives the Army Values, shows empathy for their Soldiers and other people, shares the same attitudes and beliefs as their fellow professionals, and discharges all their duties with discipline. Philip Lewis, Karl Kuhnert and Robert Maginnis may best describe the moral exemplar in their description of the self-defining leader – one who is “defined by his personal commitment to certain internalized values and ideals.”³² Despite personal risks and pressure from superiors, peers, or subordinates, the self-defining leader follows their conscience, subordinating “human impulses” to their “internalized sense of right and wrong.”³³ This internalization of values is the endstate of character development. A leader who has internalized the Army character attributes is one who will make the best decision in a timely manner despite the circumstances.

In my experience, the explanation to our junior leaders of the attributes is an important part of leader development. This education is important to ensure a shared

understanding of the Army Values. More critical is the integration of the Army Values into their character development as they mature as people and leaders. Using historical vignettes of Army leaders who epitomized these values builds on the junior leaders understanding of each attribute. It also assists in inculcating the culture of the Army in these leaders through the demonstration of beliefs, values, and artifacts, hopefully for emulation.

Origins of the Army Ethic

To truly understand our roles as leaders in the US Army, a basic understanding of where the standards of our ethical behavior lies is important. The customs and traditions of the nation are the foundation of the Army Ethic. The Army Ethic is the leader’s lawful and moral obligations to their Soldiers, the mission, and the Nation. Assisting our junior leaders to learn these foundations (see Table 3) will help them understand the moral reasoning behind their duty as Army professionals. As an example, does a leader rightly know why they are obligated to live and operate by the Geneva conventions, that when they swear to support and defend the Constitution, that it states treaties are the law of the land.

Table 3. Foundations of the Army Ethic³⁴

| The Framework of the Army Ethic | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Legal Foundations | Moral Foundations |
| Army as a Profession | <u>Legal-Institutional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U.S. Constitution • Titles 5, 10, 32, US Code • Treaties • Status-of-Forces Agreements • Law of War | <u>Moral-Institutional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Declaration of Independence • Just war tradition • Trust relationships of the profession |
| Individual as a Professional | <u>Legal-Individual</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oaths - Enlistment and Commission | <u>Moral-Individual</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Norms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Rights • Golden Rule |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Code standards of exemplary conduct • Uniform Code of Military Justice • Rules of Engagement • Soldier's Rules | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values, Creeds, and Mottos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Duty, Honor, Country" • NCO Creed • Army Values • The Soldier's Creed, Warrior Ethos |
|--|--|--|

A leader development session on the foundations of the Army Ethic will help junior leaders understand why the profession of arms is different than other professions and why it is so important to discharge their duties faithfully. An example would be to discuss the "Requirements of Exemplary Conduct" in Title 10 of the United States Code:

All commanding officers and others in authority in the Army are required:

- (1) To show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination;
- (2) To be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command;
- (3) To guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Army, all persons who are guilty of them;
- (4) To take all proper and necessary measures, under laws, regulations, and customs of the Army, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.³⁵

As Dr. Don Snider points out this is "not a complete ethical prescription," but it is a good starting point for officers to understand where their responsibility for moral conduct originates.³⁶

Assessment and Feedback on Character

As with all learning, it is difficult for a person to know where to go if they do not know where they stand. The only starting point in the journey to grow into a leader of character is to understand how they currently view their world.³⁷ Competence is easy to

quantify as it has standard metrics we can use to measure an individual's level relative to their duty title, warrior skills, etc. Admittedly character is harder to assess, but in my judgement the ability is available. Leaders can always observe subordinate leaders decisions, actions, and attitudes and provide feedback. Additionally there are a number of survey instruments available to assess individual character.

Individual assessment tools provide two benefits. First, they encourage individual moral reflection.³⁸ A junior leader who receives feedback from both a self-assessment survey instrument as well as observations from their leadership obtains knowledge about themselves they can use to grow. Second, the knowledge from the assessment can increase moral ownership.³⁹

In this section we will explore four available assessment tools, three produced by researchers and one produced by the author. After describing each assessment tool, the section discusses the importance of feedback and provides a recommendation on a way to incorporate assessment and feedback in a battalion's leader development program.

Assessment Tools

VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS)

The VIA-IS measures 24 character traits valued and permeating throughout world cultures from a 120 question assessment instrument.⁴⁰ The VIA-IS groups the 24 character traits into six virtues – wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. The developers chose these six virtues for their value by moral and religious thinkers across world cultures and time.⁴¹ The VIA-IS was developed based on the work of Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson discussed earlier in the section

on character attributes. Research has shown the VIA-IS to be a reliable instrument to correctly determine individual character strengths.⁴²

In theory, a person taking the VIA-IS identifies their character strengths, the 24 positive character traits defined in the VIA Classification. The individual immediately receives a rank ordered listing of the 24 character strengths, from their strongest to weakest. With the results, the individual can then focus on their character strengths, which supposedly provides a more productive, fulfilling life. The individual can download a more detailed report with the rank ordered character traits, information on each character trait, and recommendations to continue to develop your character strengths.

An analysis showing how the 24 character traits in the VIA-IS compare to Army character attributes desired for Army leaders is found in Table 4. Thirteen of the twenty-four traits were similar to one of the Army character attributes. Of the eleven traits that were not compatible, the VIA-IS character traits from the virtues of wisdom and transcendence was the largest group that did not have a direct comparative Army character attribute.

Table 4. Comparison of Army Character Attributes and VIA-IS Character Traits

| Army Character Attribute | VIA-IS Character Strength |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Loyalty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to love • Teamwork |
| Duty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence • Teamwork • Leadership • Prudence • Capacity to love |
| Respect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness • Social intelligence • Capacity to love |
| Selfless Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence • Teamwork • Leadership |

| | |
|--|--|
| Honor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgement • Integrity |
| Integrity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity • Judgement |
| Personal Courage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bravery • Persistence • Integrity • Vitality |
| Empathy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social intelligence • Perspective |
| Ethos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgement • Self-regulation • Teamwork |
| Discipline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-regulation • Leadership |
| Unrelated to an Army character attribute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity • Humor • Appreciation of beauty • Gratitude • Hope/optimism • Spirituality • Curiosity • Love of learning • Modesty • Kindness • Forgiveness |

The main advantage of the VIA-IS is its cost and ease of use. The VIA-IS is free for individual use.⁴³ While the person completing the instrument does not obtain a full report, they do receive a rank order of their character strengths. The junior leader could use the rank order in a counseling session with the battalion commander or CSM to acquire feedback and coaching on specific character traits (we will discuss more on feedback later). Additionally, the VIA-IS has been used in military settings. Psychologist Dr. Michael Matthews used the VIA-IS to successfully predict cadet performance at the United States Military Academy.⁴⁴ The major disadvantage to the VIA-IS is only half of the character traits have a direct comparison to an Army character attribute.

Grit Scale

The Grit scale measures a person's level of persistence in obtaining difficult, long-term goals.⁴⁵ The Grit scale grew out of research conducted by Dr. Angela Duckworth who noticed during her academic studies that while all of her fellow students were highly intelligent, they did not all exhibit the same level of drive and refusal to quit when presented with obstacles on the way to their goals.

The Grit scale presents a respondent with twelve statements in which they answer how the statement represents them on a five point scale from "very much like me" to "not like me at all."⁴⁶ After assigning values to the answers, the respondent receives a score. The higher the score, the grittier (more persistent) the person. The Grit has been an accurate predictor of success in completing military training.⁴⁷ The value of the Grit for junior leaders is the feedback on their persistence to complete difficult, long-term goals and tasks. While that correlates to the Army's character attributes of duty, personal courage, discipline, and arguably parts of the Warrior Ethos, it does not provide feedback on other attributes such as loyalty, respect, integrity, and empathy.

Defining Issues Test (DIT)

The DIT is a survey instrument to determine a person's level of moral judgement. It uses five to six moral dilemmas with each moral dilemma given a choice of actions to solve the dilemma and a set of questions on what was important in deciding on a particular action.⁴⁸ A participant reads the dilemma, chooses an action, rates a number of questions from high to low importance on why they chose that particular action, and then ranks the top four of those questions that were important in making their decision.⁴⁹

From the rating and ranking, the DIT provides a classification among three moral schemas – personal interest, maintain norms, and post-conventional reasoning.⁵⁰

The DIT activates a person's moral schema. Schemas are “general knowledge structures residing in long term memory” (such as expectations) that are activated by an event that looks similar to a prior experience.⁵¹ According to the social science behind the DIT, a person then uses the schema to make a judgement for a decision.⁵²

A person using a schema of personal interest makes a decision based on self-interest, how the decision provides advantages to them such as enhancement of relationships, winning approval, or trading favors.⁵³ Abiding to established norms, rules, and established practices characterizes the schema of maintaining norms. Here a person accepts the norms of society or their profession “without question and as authoritative.”⁵⁴ The postconventional schema is similar to the schema of maintaining norms with one major difference. While the person accepts the need for established norms, rules, and laws, they do not accept those as unchallenged and final.⁵⁵ In essence, a person using a postconventional schema accepts that laws, rules, and practices do not cover every conceivable situation, that they must exercise judgement in every situation to ensure that the established practice applies to that situation.⁵⁶

While it is difficult to match the three schemas – personal interest, maintaining norms, and postconventional – to the Army's character attributes⁵⁷, we can determine what schema we want an Army leader to personify. Obviously, the schema of personal interest is not compatible with Army values as it produces self-centered behavior. The schema of maintaining norms is much closer to a leader of character, as the leader will follow prescribed regulations and practices, but regulations do not cover all situations,

especially in the ambiguous and complex environment of today and the future. Army leaders should personify the postconventional schema, the ability to use moral judgement in making decisions in difficult moral dilemmas or situations. As stated in *Field Manual 6-22, Leader Development*, “junior leaders need to be capable of independent decisions using sound discretionary judgements founded in moral character.”⁵⁸ Essentially the self-defined leader we discussed earlier.

As we want leaders who can make quick moral and ethical decisions in today’s ambiguous and complex environment, the DIT provides a good assessment of how a leader will make decisions. Researchers and military leaders have used the DIT to assess character in military settings.⁵⁹ It is a reliable instrument and gives the individual and their mentor a starting point.

Proposed Character Assessment Tool

Research has scientifically validated these three assessment tools, providing a Soldier and his/her leader a character assessment. The difficulty with each tool is it does not match exactly to the Army’s desired character attributes. So, table 5 displays a proposed character assessment tool that a battalion commander and/or CSM could use to assist junior officers and NCOs in assessing their character. The tool is simple, it lists the character attribute and asks the junior leader to rate themselves on the attribute on a scale of 1-5. The battalion commander also rates the attribute on a scale from 1-5. A battalion could also add a peer or subordinate assessment to provide additional feedback. The junior leader is able to capture their perceived strengths and weaknesses for each attribute. The junior leader and battalion commander use the tool to focus their dialogue during counseling and develop a plan of action to improve the junior leader’s

character. The scale uses the definitions of the Army Values from ADRP 1 and the leader attribute framing model in FM 6-22.⁶⁰

Table 5. Leader Character Assessment Tool

| Character Attribute | Standard | Self-Rating (1-5) | Battalion Commander Rating (1-5) | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Loyalty | Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers. Bearing true faith and allegiance is a matter of believing in and devoting yourself to something or someone. A loyal Soldier is one who supports the leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers. | | | | |
| Duty | Fulfill your obligations. Duty means being able to accomplish tasks as part of a team. You fulfill your obligations as a part of your unit every time you resist the temptation to take “shortcuts” that might undermine the integrity of the final product. | | | | |
| Respect | Treat people as they should be treated. | | | | |
| Selfless Service | Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own. The basic building block of selfless service is the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort. | | | | |
| Honor | Live up to Army Values | | | | |
| Integrity | Do what’s right, legally and morally. | | | | |
| Personal Courage | Face fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral). Stand up | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| | for and act upon the things that you know are honorable. | | | | |
| Empathy | Demonstrates an understanding of another person's point of view. Identifies with others' feelings and emotions. Displays a desire to care for Soldiers, Army Civilians, and others. | | | | |
| Ethos | Demonstrates the spirit of the profession of arms and commitment to the mission, to never accept defeat, to persevere through difficulties, and to always support fellow Soldiers. | | | | |
| Discipline | Demonstrates control of one's own behavior according to Army Values and adheres to the orderly practice of completing duties of an administrative, organizational, training, or operational nature. | | | | |

Feedback through Counseling

Whether the battalion leadership uses one of the above assessment tools or develops one of their own, feedback and continued dialogue with the junior leader is critical to development! While there is a financial cost, I recommend using the DIT and the proposed assessment tool together. The DIT provides an assessment of the leader's current schema and the proposed tool provides an assessment of the Army's character attributes. Using these two tools together provides greater insights into the current state of the junior leader's character and where they can improve to become a moral exemplar for their subordinates, peers, and superiors. The no cost option is use of the proposed assessment tool. This option can still generate learning for the junior leader, but I believe the inclusion of the DIT schemas operationalizes the character

attributes and better facilitates discussion during the counseling sessions. Yes, each of these options are a large investment in time, but an investment that will pay large dividends in the future of both the battalion and the Army!

Training and Feedback on Moral Dilemmas

While what we have discussed is important for our junior leaders to understand the attributes of character and where they stand in relation to the Army's character attributes, we must go further to give our junior leaders the tools they need to make decisions in a morally complex world. We must enhance the junior leader's ability to deal with moral complexity. Moral complexity is "the ability of the leader to attend to, store, retrieve, process, and, most important, make meaning of moral information."⁶¹ In thinking through moral issues, our education and experience limits our thinking.⁶² Therefore a successful integration of character development in our leader development program must include situational training exercises. These training exercises can be real or virtual as the goal is to train the leader in a controlled environment.

The Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) provides a range of tools for integration into battalion leader development programs. The tools include training support packages, case studies (videos with accompanied facilitator guides), and virtual simulations with a search tool for the level of the audience (initial, mid-grade, intermediate, or strategic) and the type of product (case study, virtual simulation, etc.). Using the product search function, battalion commanders and CSMs can choose the right tools for integration into the leader development program.

In my judgement the video case studies with associated facilitator program and the virtual simulation are excellent venues for education of moral complexity. As an example, picture yourself in a classroom with the lieutenants in the battalion and the

battalion commander leading the session. The commander plays the video, pauses it, and then asks questions of the lieutenants using questions from the facilitator program or perhaps questions they determined based on their experiences. The virtual simulation provides an even better learning tool as the audience makes choices on what decision the leader should take in a given situation. These choices then have consequences which play out in the simulation. The battalion commander can ask specific officers to choose an action or determine a group action. The commander can explore why people chose certain actions, referring back to character attributes and other aspects of Army doctrine. Imagine the rich discussion among leaders confronting hard problems!

The training itself is important, but the feedback the junior leaders receive about their choices is critical. The feedback allows the leader to think through how he/she arrived at the decision, why they chose a particular course of action, and most importantly allows them to place into their memory different solutions to the imperfect problem. Research has shown a dramatic increase in effectiveness with such training when used in a group setting as more participants provide better feedback to the individual.⁶³

Modeling Ethical, Moral Behavior

Battalion commanders and CSMs have a huge influence on the future actions of their junior leaders. Every leader can share a story of how the actions of their battalion commander or CSM impressed them, good or bad, and shaped their leadership philosophy. Junior leaders believe the example of their battalion commander and CSM is what right looks like and they will emulate that behavior, both today and in the future when they are leading battalions. Research demonstrates the ethical conduct of an

organization's leaders positively influences individual moral efficacy of the organization's members.⁶⁴

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory can help us understand how our actions influence those of our subordinates. Social identity theory posits that people try to reduce uncertainty about the social world they live in and their place within it by displaying behaviors of the group in which they belong.⁶⁵ The group has certain prototypical behaviors (real and perceived) that people look to emulate to increase their standing within the group which reduces their uncertainty and raises their self-esteem.⁶⁶ In other words, people strive to display the perceived norms of the group they are a member. The need is greater the more important the group is to individual members.⁶⁷ According to social identity theorists, a member of the group who does not meet the perceived prototypical behavior (or demonstrates marginal prototypical behavior) of the group are considered deviants.⁶⁸ In groups with high solidarity, the group rejects deviants, especially if the deviant's behavior does not increase the positive standing of the group.⁶⁹

A junior leader is a member of many groups simultaneously: the Army, assigned branch or military occupation specialty (MOS), platoon, company, battalion, and social groups to name a few. Which group the junior leader holds as more important reflects their feeling of solidarity in each particular organization. The challenge, indeed imperative, for battalion commanders and CSMs is to make the Army and the battalion to have higher solidarity in the mind of the junior leader, especially the moral characteristics of the profession, than their other groups!

Based on the social identity theory discussed above, the unit's ethical climate will guide the behavior of the junior leader because he wants to emulate what he perceives

as the group norms to better fit into the group and raise his self-esteem. The climate the battalion commander sets for the junior officers and the CSM sets for the junior NCOs will have an outsized effect on the leadership development of the particular junior leader. If the battalion commander tolerates or accepts the fudging of numbers to increase statistics for an upcoming command and staff, the junior leader learns a new behavior, one he believes is a group norm. While that particular company or battalion acts in that way, the junior leader applies the behavior to the entire Army (as their only experience) and will internalize it for future use as a prototypical behavior for leaders to maintain their status in the group. Another example would be a colorful joke about women told by the battalion commander to a group of his junior officers. He tells this joke for a short term gain of relating to the junior officers, but he creates a group norm because of his status as group leader. The junior officers may emulate this behavior until provided a more favored action by the group.

Understanding social identity theory shows the power of groups and the effect of norms on individual members. Research has shown that leaders who identify with the group prototypical behavior positively influence individual behavior.⁷⁰ In a hierarchical organization like the Army, the battalion commander has outsized influence on the group and has the ability to change the norms of the unit.

Authentic Leadership

In my experience, the one thing Soldiers dislike the most in leaders is hypocrisy. There is no perfect person, we all make mistakes. But by becoming authentic leaders, Soldiers will forgive mistakes as genuine and continue to trust the direction provided by the battalion leadership.

In his book, *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*, Robert Terry defines authenticity as “genuineness and refusal to engage in self-deception.”⁷¹ Authors Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones describe three critical elements for authentic leaders. First, authentic leaders exhibit a “consistency between words and deeds,” they practice what they preach.⁷² Second, despite having to perform many different roles, they have a “coherence in role performances” by consistently communicating their real self to their organizations.⁷³ Finally, authentic leaders have a self-comfort that they draw on for their consistency and coherence.⁷⁴

For Army leaders, I believe the authentic leader has internalized the Army’s character attributes, including the Army Ethic, and makes moral and ethical decisions through judgement contingent on the situation. The authentic leader is not afraid to make mistakes, or tell their Soldiers the truth. The authentic leader lives in a transparent world. In my experience, this assembled authenticity builds trust with subordinates, one of the key foundations of leadership.

In the character sphere, Sean Hannah and Patrick Sweeney point out that “authentic moral leaders bolster their followers’ moral development through modeling, persuasion, and establishing a moral and ethical culture in the organization.”⁷⁵ Applying this quote to social identity theory we discussed earlier, junior leaders emulate what they perceive as prototypical behavior. Through their example, battalion commanders and CSMs who are authentic moral leaders develop subordinates into leaders of character.

Rewarding Moral-Ethical Behavior

The final point for modeling moral, ethical behavior is rewards and recognition. Commanders and CSMs should look for ways to reward moral-ethical behavior formally

and informally. As Sweeney and Hannah point out, “Followers can gain inspiration by observing exemplary leaders being rewarded in terms of praise and respect for behaving in a moral-ethical manner.”⁷⁶ Junior leaders with both low and high moral development can benefit from the recognition of other leader’s ethical acts through the observation that moral, ethical behavior leads to rewards or reinforcement of their own beliefs and actions.⁷⁷

The battalion leadership that rewards actions such as the NCO who volunteers with the local driving under the influence (DUI) prevention program, the lieutenant who volunteers with a local non-profit, or the junior leader correcting sexually explicit language in the workplace can provide positive illustrations of moral, ethical behavior. An excellent example is the presentation of the Army Commendation Medal to First Sergeant Katrina Moerk. First Sergeant Moerk received the award for the correction of a group of Soldiers use of sexual explicit language to describe female Soldiers on social media.⁷⁸ Her act epitomized honor, integrity, and moral courage and no doubt has inspired junior leaders to fight unethical behavior in their units. Even a word of praise at a battalion formation or meeting provides the necessary positive reinforcement of these acts if the action does not meet the criteria a formal award.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed literature and research on character and provided a five component strategy of character development integration into a battalion’s leader development program. The paper included research and thought on character attributes, significance of understanding the Army Ethic, need for a character assessment tool and feedback, importance of training in moral dilemmas, and finally the

consequence of battalion leadership modeling moral, ethical behavior. From that discussion, I offer the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Battalion commanders and CSMs integrate a five component character development strategy into their leader development program – an understanding of the Army's character attributes; appreciation of the origins and content of the Army Ethic; individual character assessment and feedback; training and feedback in moral dilemmas; and modeling of moral, ethical behavior (including rewards and recognition).

Recommendation 2: The U.S. Army update the character development doctrine to put additional emphasis on battalion level commanders in development of leaders of character in the operational force. This is where our junior leaders spend their formative time and truly learn; this is where they serve most of their career. Additionally, explore the use of schemas in doctrine to describe the moral exemplar the Army requires.

Recommendation 3: The Army consider institutionalizing the DIT or develop another research-based character assessment tool for leaders. After development and validation, place the tool on the CAPE website for easy access.

Recommendation 4: CAPE continue to publicize character development tools on their website and through regular briefings at pre-command courses.

I have argued battalion commanders and CSMs play the most important role in character development as they are the moral exemplars and developers for junior officers and NCOs during their formative years of service. Junior leader experiences through observation and personal action determine their character development and how they will develop their subordinates in the future. By integrating character

development in a battalion's leader development program, the Army will exponentially create leaders of character to confidently operate in the complex environment of today and the future.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June 14, 2015), 6-2.

² Brian M. Michelson, "Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: The Laissez-Faire Approach," *Military Review* 93, no. 5 (September-October 2013): 31, http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20131031_art007.pdf (accessed September 20, 2015).

³ This number was obtained through review of three U.S. Army publications. See U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, 4-1; U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 10, 2012), 3-5; U.S. Department of the Army, *Leader Development*, Field Manual 6-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June 30, 2015), 5-1.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *Leader Development*, 5-1.

⁵ Sean T. Hannah and Patrick J. Sweeney, "Frameworks of Moral Development and the West Point Experience: Building Leaders of Character for the Army and the Nation," in *The Warriors Character: Leadership Wisdom from West Point's Cadet Prayer*, ed. Dr. Don M. Snider (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), 118.

⁶ "ILW Contemporary Military Forum #3: Developing Future Leaders," October 12, 2015, *Defense Video and Imagery Distribution Service*, video file, <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/428012/ilw-contemporary-military-forum-3-developing-future-leaders#.VtOCPY-cHIV> (accessed February 28, 2016).

⁷ Tony Pfaff, "The Officer as a Leader of Character: Leadership, Character, and Ethical Decision-Making," in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed., ed. Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 153

⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁹ Charles A. Pfaff, "Officership: Character, Leadership, and Ethical Decisionmaking," *Military Review* 83, no. 2 (March/April 2003): 68.

¹⁰ Pfaff, "The Officer as a Leader of Character," 156.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹² Anthony Hartle, "Moral Principles and Moral Reasoning in the Ethics of Leadership," in *The Warriors Character: Leadership Wisdom from West Point's Cadet Prayer*, 206.

¹³ Michael D. Matthews, *Headstrong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, 3-2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-3.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, 3-1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-2, 3-3. For a more in-depth description of Army Values see ADRP 6-22, 3-2 and 3-3 as well as ADRP 1, B-5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Daniel Goleman, *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2002), 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

³² Philip Lewis, Karl Kuhnert, and Robert Maginnis, "Defining Military Character," *Parameters* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 38, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/1987/1987%20lewis%20kuhnert%20maginnis.pdf> (accessed October 4, 2015).

³³ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, 2-3

³⁵ *United States Code*, Title 10USC, Title 10, 1732.

³⁶ Don M. Snider, "Developing Leaders of Character at West Point," in *The Warriors Character: Leadership Wisdom from West Point's Cadet Prayer*, 28.

³⁷ Lewis, Kuhnert and Maginnis, "Defining Military Character," 38.

³⁸ Patrick J. Sweeney, Matthew W. Imboden, Sean T. Hannah, "Building Moral Strength: Bridging the Moral Judgement-Action Gap," *New Directions for Student Leadership* 2015, no. 146 (Summer 2015): 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ R.M. Niemiec, "VIA Character Strengths: Research and Practice (The First Ten Years)," in *Well-being and Cultures: Perspectives on Positive Psychology*, ed. H.H. Knop and A. Delle Fave (New York: Springer, 2013), 11, <https://www.viacharacter.org/www/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=GogggR0GNQQ%3D&portalid=0> (accessed January 9, 2016).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴² Matthews, *Headstrong*, 27; Niemiec, "VIA Character Strengths," 3.

⁴³ The VIA-IS can be found at www.viacharater.org.

⁴⁴ Michael D. Matthews, "Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Factors in Soldier Performance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Military Psychology Handbook*, ed. Janice H. Laurence and Michael D. Matthews (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 210-211.

⁴⁵ Matthews, *Headstrong*, 20.

⁴⁶ Angela Duckworth, "12 Item Grit Scale," <https://upenn.app.box.com/s/et30heyb2e7keq4t2w8b7c65l230pscn> (accessed January 9, 2016).

⁴⁷ Matthews, "Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Factors in Soldier Performance," 208.

⁴⁸ The University of Alabama Center for Ethical Development, "DIT and DIT-2," <http://ethicaldevelopment.ua.edu/dit-and-dit-2/> (accessed on January 9, 2016).

⁴⁹ Clinton A. Culp, "Character Education: TBS and Beyond," *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 11 (November 2012): 73.

⁵⁰ Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Kenneth R. Williams, "An Assessment of Moral and Character Education in Initial Entry Training (IET)," *Journal of Military Ethics* 9, no. 1 (February 2010): 43, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15027570903523107> (accessed January 10, 2016).

⁵¹ James Rest et al., "A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach: The DIT and Schema Theory," *Educational Psychology Review* 11, no. 4 (1999): 297.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Williams, "An Assessment of Moral and Character Education in Initial Entry Training (IET)," 43; Michael S. Pritchard, *Professional Integrity: Thinking Ethically* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 157.

⁵⁴ Pritchard, *Professional Integrity*, 157.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ This is an additional weakness in Army doctrine on character. An explanation of the schemas in doctrine could be useful for junior leaders as they develop their character and leadership skills.

⁵⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Leader Development*, 5-1.

⁵⁹ Culp, "Character Education: TBS and Beyond," 73; Williams, "An Assessment of Moral and Character Education in Initial Entry Training (IET)," 43.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, B-5; U.S. Department of the Army, *Leader Development*, 6-3.

⁶¹ Hannah and Sweeney, "Frameworks of Moral Development and the West Point Experience," 108.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁴ Sweeney, Imboden, and Hannah, "Building Moral Strength," 22.

⁶⁵ Michael A. Hogg, "Social Identity Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, vol. 4, ed. George R. Goethals, Georgia J. Sorenson, and James MacGregor Burns (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 1458.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Michael A. Hogg, "A Social Identity Theory of Leadership," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 5, no. 3 (August 2001): 188.

⁶⁸ Michael A. Hogg and Deborah J. Terry, "Social Identity and Self-Categorization Process in Organizational Contexts," *The Academy of Management Review* 25, no. 1 (January 2000): 127.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷⁰ Janelle E. Wells and Thomas J. Aicher, "Follow the Leader: A Relational Demography, Similarity Attraction, and Social Identity Theory of Leadership Approach of a Team's Performance," *Gender Issues* 30, no.1-4 (December 2013): 6.

⁷¹ Robert W. Terry, *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993), 128.

⁷² Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, *Why Should Anyone Be Led by You? What it Takes to Be an Authentic Leader* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), 16.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Patrick J. Sweeney and Sean T. Hannah, "High-Impact Military Leadership: The Positive Effects of Authentic Moral Leadership on Followers," in *The Warriors Character: Leadership Wisdom from West Point's Cadet Prayer*, 160.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 164.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Kyle Jahner, "First Sergeant Earns ARCOM for Calling Out Online Antics," *Army Times Online*, January 5, 2015, <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/2014/12/31/moerk-commendation-award-trolling/21103073/> (accessed February 28, 2016).