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Ethics and the Twenty-First-Century Military Professional

Timothy J. Demy

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THE JOHN A. VAN BEUREN STUDIES IN
LEADERSHIP AND ETHICS

TWO THOUSAND EIGHTEEN • NUMBER 2

Ethics and
the Twenty-First-Century
Military Professional

Timothy J. Demy
General Editor

Selected articles from the Naval War College Press

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FOREWORD

We enter into military service with the belief that joining the profession of arms means being part of something greater than ourselves. Being part of something greater requires each member of the profession to grow individually, improving every day to be better. This pattern of seeking growth is at the very core of the most successful professionals, including their contributions to the profession of arms.

When we join our first unit, we learn the basic and necessary skills required of us to contribute immediately to the team. This is not only important for our teammates, who count on us, but critical to our intrinsic desire as individuals to believe we are contributing to something greater. As our journey continues, we evolve into full members of the profession of arms, to the point at which we must take responsibility not only for our own continued growth but, more importantly, for the growth of others as well. We do this as leaders who mentor and coach, not just by our ideas and words but, critically, by our deeds.

Commanders must go a step further and develop a framework for the growth and development of their subordinates, in addition to continuing to lead by example. That is to say, commanders must set the conditions for the team to learn. Commanders use mistakes as teaching tools, and they must set conditions for learning that foster risk taking (within appropriate bounds) to promote innovation.

We often approach our physical development this way, by practicing reps and sets, working to failure, and achieving new personal records. Like physical muscle, moral muscle must be built, and it can deteriorate if not exercised. But that moral muscle must never atrophy, because the values of the profession represent one way to look at the character of its professionals. At the most strategic level, I would say that the American people expect us to fight to win—and to win the fight ethically.

Each Service has its own unique core values, but there is some overlap among them; what the Services truly have in common is trust as the coin of the realm. Doing the right thing is one way we earn trust from our subordinates, peers, and leaders. We place such a paramount emphasis on trust because members of the profession of arms are truly most effective within high-trust organizations. The actions of the professionals who earn the trust of their fellow servicemembers are the way we outwardly display our organizational values, while the character of our professionals in earning that trust is the way we measure whether those professionals have evolved and internalized the values of the profession—or are behaving only because they are being observed.

The earning of trust and the demonstrating of character are important internally, within the profession, but are most important externally, in earning the trust of the American people, which our profession desperately needs if we are to be effective and sustaining. We need the trust of the American people to fill our ranks; we want parents to feel proud and confident sending their sons and daughters to join us.

All of this points to how critical the relationship is between a profession and its practitioners in the hearts and minds of its people, and with that comes an understanding that members of a profession must be loyal to their profession. We readily see evidence of this relationship in combat and in times of adversity, so we naturally understand that relationship. But we also must ask what the profession owes its professionals.

The profession owes development through growth, challenge, and support. For development to occur, we must develop a common language to use in thinking about our roles in, and our relationship with, the profession of arms. A common language can help strengthen and build the linkages that people make to connect with and understand others, and that understanding leads to trust.

This collection of articles helps to serve as a platform to develop our common language, and to think deeply about ethics in this young century. I sincerely hope it helps you think about what you will write and share that contributes to the advancement of the profession—because that is the right thing to do.

Rear Admiral Peg Klein, USN (Ret.)
Dean of the College of Leadership and Ethics
U.S. Naval War College

INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade there has been a concerted effort in the United States Navy and at the Naval War College to strengthen the Navy and the profession of arms. In 2017, the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations released the Navy Leader Development Framework to provide a Navy-wide structure to support comprehensive and enduring leader development. In commitment to the improvement of individual and team competence and character, each community within the Navy was tasked with developing a plan for implementation within that community.

The College has pursued this strengthening of the profession via directed studies, curriculum revisions, conferences, the establishment of the College of Operational and Strategic Leadership (and now the College of Leadership and Ethics), and publications. This volume constitutes part of the last-named effort.

Except for one essay (“Ethics in the U.S. Navy”), the individual writings were published originally as articles in the *Naval War College Review*. They are gathered here to enable readers to access them in a single volume. (They are presented in their original form, so the authors’ identifications do not reflect current military rank or service status.)

Values have consequences. This is true in one’s personal life, and it is true in one’s professional life as well. The chapters in this book reflect the renewed emphasis on professional ethics that has arisen and taken hold across the branches of the U.S. military in the twenty-first century, and notably in the Navy. They provide readers a strong presentation on military ethics. They show that, as with every profession, there are standards that must be upheld—and questions that must be asked and answered afresh—whenever new policies are implemented and new technologies introduced.

Uniquely, the profession of arms recognizes that its members never can rest on the laurels of previous leaders or the victories of prior wars. The nineteenth-century Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz noted in his classic text *Vom Kriege (On War)* that “theory becomes infinitely more difficult as soon as it touches the realm of moral values.” Yet it is precisely when that realm intersects with the experience of actual warfare that military professionals are called on to maintain the high level of trust given to them by the citizens of their nations. They must be as ethical as they are

competent. America's citizens expect members of the military profession to lead and operate with a strong ethical compass. When they do so, they strengthen the nation; when they fail to do so, they steer their profession and themselves toward rocks and shoals.

Timothy J. Demy, PhD
Professor of Military Ethics

MORAL, ETHICAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF SOLDIERS AND UNITS FOR COMBAT

Brigadier General H. R. McMaster, U.S. Army

I want to begin by thanking you for volunteering to serve our nation and humankind in time of war. We are engaged, as previous generations were engaged, against enemies who pose a great threat to all civilized peoples. As those generations defeated Nazi fascism, Japanese imperialism, and communist totalitarianism, we will defeat these enemies, who cynically use a perverted interpretation of religion to incite hatred and violence.

The murder of more than three thousand of our fellow Americans on September 11, 2001, is etched indelibly in all of our memories. Since those attacks, our nation has been at war with those who believe that there are no innocent Americans. It is those of you who have volunteered for military service in time of war who will continue to stand between terrorists who murder innocents—including children—as they do almost every day in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen—and those whom those terrorists would victimize.

As the recent attempt to commit mass murder on a flight bound for Detroit reminds us, battlegrounds overseas are inexorably connected to our own security. Our enemies seek to enlist masses of ignorant, disaffected young people with a sophisticated campaign of propaganda and disinformation. They work within and across borders.

And our fight against this networked movement is unprecedented, for several reasons. It is a new kind of threat because of the enemy's ability to communicate and mobilize resources globally. Moreover, the enemy employs mass murder of innocent civilians as its principal tactic. We recognize that if these terrorists and murderers were to gain access to weapons of mass destruction, attacks such as those on September 11th and those against innocents elsewhere would pale in comparison.

As President Obama observed in Oslo on 10 December 2009, "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognition of history; the

imperfections of man and the limits of reason.” He observed that “a non-violent movement could not have stopped Hitler’s armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda’s leaders to lay down their arms.” America, he observed, has used its military power in places like the Balkans and today in Haiti “because we seek a better future for our children and grandchildren, and we believe that their lives will be better if other peoples’ children and grandchildren can live in freedom and prosperity.”¹ I firmly believe that the servicemen and -women here today are both warriors and humanitarians.

The Army’s recently published *Capstone Concept* is a document that describes the Army’s vision of future armed conflict. It identifies a continuing need for “cohesive teams and resilient soldiers who are capable of overcoming the enduring psychological and moral challenges of combat.”²

I would like to focus my remarks on military leaders’ connected responsibilities of ensuring moral and ethical conduct in war while also preparing our soldiers psychologically for the extraordinary demands of combat. It is likely that you will be called on to advise your commanders in that connection, and I thought that I might share some thoughts on the moral and ethical preparation of soldiers and units for the challenges they are likely to face in combat.

Prior to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, much of the debate over the nature of future armed conflict focused on the importance of emerging technologies. Many believed that these technologies would completely transform war. They called this a “revolution in military affairs.” New communications, information, surveillance, and precision-strike technologies would permit technologically advanced military forces to wage war rapidly, decisively, and efficiently. We were seduced by technology.

Yet this ahistorical definition of armed conflict divorced war from its political nature. It tried to simplify the problem of future war to a targeting effort. All we had to do was target the enemies’ conventional forces—which, conveniently, looked just like ours. This approach did little to prepare us for the challenges we subsequently faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely of the British army observed,

for many military professionals, warfare—the practice of war, and warfighting—combat, were synonymous, thereby misleading themselves that there was no more to the practice of war than combat. True, some armed forces found themselves involved in other operations. . . . But these missions were largely considered by many military establishments to be aberrations—Operations Other Than War, as they came to be known in British and American doctrine—distractions from the “real thing”: large scale, hi-tech, inter-state conflict.³

The lack of intellectual preparation limited military effectiveness and made it harder for our leaders and forces to adapt to the reality of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. But our military is a learning institution, and we adapted to the demands of the conflicts after the removal of the Taliban and Hussein regimes. The U.S. military undertook a range of adaptations, from improving our military education and training to refining our tactics, to investigating abuses and other failures. These adaptations derived, in part, from a better appreciation for the political complexity of the wars we were in—and the

complexity of war in general. Many of these lessons were formalized in the December 2006 publication of a counterinsurgency manual. This manual was meant to provide the doctrinal foundation for education, training, and operations.⁴ Our forces *have* adapted, and leaders *have* ensured ethical conduct. Every day, our soldiers take risks and make sacrifices to protect innocents.

The orthodoxy of the revolution in military affairs had conflated warfare and warfighting. It had dehumanized our understanding of war, ignored critical continuities in warfare, and exaggerated the effect of technology on the nature of armed conflict. As John Keegan observed in *The Face of Battle*, his classic 1976 study of combat across five centuries, the human dimension of war exhibits a high degree of continuity:

What battles have in common is human: the behaviour of men struggling to reconcile their instinct for self-preservation, their sense of honour and the achievement of some aim over which other men are ready to kill them. The study of battle is therefore always a study of fear and usually of courage, always of leadership, usually of obedience; always of compulsion, sometimes of insubordination; always of anxiety, sometimes of elation or catharsis; always of uncertainty and doubt, misinformation and misapprehension, usually also of faith and sometimes of vision; always of violence, sometimes also of cruelty, self-sacrifice, compassion; above all, it is always a study of solidarity and usually also of disintegration—for it is toward the disintegration of human groups that battle is directed.⁵

Keegan was obviously sensitive to the social and psychological dimensions of combat, but he argued against turning the study of war over to sociologists or psychologists. Keegan contended that understanding war and warriors required an interdisciplinary approach and a “long historical perspective.”

If you take away one thing from our discussion tonight, I ask you to embrace your duty to study, as a complement to your expertise in the law of war and operational law, the history, literature, psychology, and philosophy of war and warfare, as well as memoirs and accounts of combat experiences. It is our duty as leaders to develop our own understandings of our profession and the character of armed conflict. But I would also like to talk with you about how you might help your commanders ensure your troopers’ ethical conduct in war and steel your units against the disintegration that Keegan observes can occur under the extraordinary physical and psychological strains of combat.

Because our enemy is unscrupulous, some argue for a relaxation of ethical and moral standards and the use of force with *less* discrimination, because the ends—the defeat of the enemy—justify the means employed.⁶ To think this way would be a grave mistake. The war in which we are engaged demands that we retain the moral high ground despite the depravity of our enemies.

Ensuring ethical conduct goes beyond the law of war and must include a consideration of our values—our ethos. Prior to the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan, ethical training in preparation for combat was centered on the law of war. The law of war codifies the principal tenets of just-war theory, especially *jus in bello* principles of discrimination and proportionality. Training covered the Geneva Conventions and the relevant articles of the U.S. military’s Uniform Code of Military Justice. As Christopher

Coker observes in *The Warrior Ethos*, however, individual and institutional values are more important than legal constraints on immoral behavior; legal contracts are often observed only as long as others honor them or as long as they are enforced.⁷ Experience in Afghanistan and Iraq inspired the U.S. military to emphasize values training as the principal means of ensuring moral and ethical conduct in combat.

Utilitarianism and the thinking of philosopher John Stuart Mill would have us focus on achieving good consequences in this conflict. As the Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency (COIN) manual points out, the insurgent often hopes to provoke the excessive or indiscriminate use of force.⁸ We are fighting this war on two battle-grounds—intelligence and perception. We must—locally in Afghanistan and Iraq, and broadly in the war on terror—be able to separate terrorists and insurgents from the population. This means treating people with respect and building relationships with people that lead to trust. And this trust leads to intelligence about the enemy. We have to counter what is a very sophisticated enemy propaganda and disinformation campaign and clarify our true intentions—not just with words but with our deeds. This is particularly difficult because the enemy seeks to place the onus of indiscriminate warfare on us by provoking overreactions, denying us positive contact with the population, and blaming his own murderous attacks on us. You know the line: if Americans were not in Iraq or Afghanistan, we would not have detonated this car bomb at this funeral, in the marketplace, at the mosque, etc.

Immanuel Kant would say that it is your duty to ensure ethical and moral conduct in this war. Kant would have us treat people as ends, not means—the essence of the ethics of respect. Indeed, today's wars are contests for the trust and allegiance of the people. Moral and ethical conduct despite the brutality of this enemy will permit us to defeat enemies whose primary sources of strength are coercion and the stoking of hatreds based on ignorance.

This might sound a bit theoretical to you, so I would like to talk to you about your specific components of ensuring moral and ethical conduct despite the uncertain, complex, and dangerous environments in which our forces are operating.

Breakdowns in discipline that result in immoral or unethical conduct in war can often be traced to four factors. (If you are looking for a case study that illuminates these factors, I recommend that you read Jim Frederick's recently published *Black Hearts*).⁹

- *Ignorance*—concerning the mission or the environment or a failure to understand or internalize the warrior ethos or professional military ethic. This results in the breaking of the covenant, the sacred trust that binds soldiers to our society and to each other.
- *Uncertainty*. Ignorance causes uncertainty, and uncertainty can lead to mistakes, mistakes that can harm civilians unnecessarily. Warfare will always remain firmly in the realm of uncertainty, but leaders must strive to reduce uncertainty for their troopers and units.
- *Fear*. Uncertainty combines with the persistent danger inherent in combat to instill fear in individuals and units. Leaders must strive not only to reduce uncertainty for their troopers but also to build confident units. Confidence serves as a bulwark against fear and fear's corrosive effect on morale, discipline, and combat effectiveness.

- *Combat trauma.* Rage is often a result of combat trauma. Fear experienced over time or in a traumatic experience can lead to combat trauma, and combat trauma often manifests itself in rage and actions that compromise the mission.

The counterinsurgency manual recognizes that ensuring moral conduct during counterinsurgency operations is particularly difficult, because “the environment that fosters insurgency is characterized by violence, immorality, distrust, and deceit.” The COIN manual directs leaders to “work proactively to establish and maintain the proper ethical climate of their organizations” and to “ensure that the trying counterinsurgency environment does not undermine the values of their Soldiers and Marines.” Soldiers and marines “must remain faithful to basic American, Army, and Marine Corps standards of proper behavior and respect for the sanctity of life.”¹⁰ To inoculate soldiers and units against the four aforementioned causes of moral and ethical breakdowns, leaders should make a concerted effort in four areas:

- Applied ethics or values-based instruction
- Training that replicates as closely as possible situations that soldiers are likely to encounter
- Education about cultures and historical experiences of the peoples among whom the wars are being fought
- Leadership that strives to set the example, keep soldiers informed, and manage combat stress.

Applied Ethics and Values-Based Instruction

Our Army’s values aim, in part, to inform soldiers about the covenant between them, our institution, and society.¹¹ The service’s seven values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage are consistent with Aristotelian virtue as well as the ancient philosophy of Cicero and the modern philosophy of Immanuel Kant. It is easy, for example, to identify the similarity between the Army’s definition of respect as beginning “with a fundamental understanding that all people possess worth as human beings” and Cicero’s exhortation in *On Duties* that “we must exercise a respectfulness towards men, both towards the best of them and also towards the rest.”¹² The U.S. Army’s values have obvious implications for moral conduct in counterinsurgency, especially in connection with the treatment of civilians and captured enemy.

Applied ethics indoctrination for new soldiers is perhaps even more important today than in the past, because of the need to differentiate between societal and military professional views on the use of violence. In much of the media to which young soldiers are exposed—such as action films, video games, and “gangsta rap” music—violence appears justifiable as a means of advancing personal interests or demonstrating individual prowess.¹³ In contrast, the law of war, like the military’s code of honor, justifies violence only against combatants.

A way to offset or counter this societal pressure is found in the collective nature of Army ethics training. This is immensely important. Soldiers must understand

that our Army and their fellow soldiers expect them to exhibit a higher sense of honor than that to which they are exposed in popular culture. As Christopher Coker observed, “In a world of honor the individual discovers his true identity in his roles and [that] to turn away from the roles is to turn away from oneself.”¹⁴ Particularly important is the soldier’s recognition that he or she is expected to take risks and make sacrifices to accomplish the mission, protect fellow soldiers, or safeguard innocents. Use of force that reduces risk to the soldier but places either the mission or innocents at risk must be seen as inconsistent with the military’s code of honor and professional ethic.¹⁵

Values education can ring hollow unless it is pursued in a way that provides context and demonstrates relevance. While we emphasize ethical behavior as an end, we must also stress the utilitarian basis for sustaining the highest moral standards. Showing soldiers the enemy’s propaganda helps emphasize the importance of ethical behavior in countering disinformation. Respectful treatment, addressing grievances, and building trust with the population ought to be viewed as essential means toward achieving success in counterinsurgency operations.

Historical examples and case studies of how excesses or abuse in the pursuit of tactical expediency have corrupted the moral character of units and undermined strategic objectives are particularly poignant. You might consider using films like *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) to inspire discussions on topics such as torture, insurgent strategy, terrorist tactics, and propaganda.

Training

Applied ethics education, however, cannot steel soldiers and units against the disintegration that can occur under the stress of combat. Training our new troopers and integrating them into cohesive, confident teams must be your first priority as leaders. Tough realistic training builds confidence and cohesion that serve as “psychological protection” and bulwarks against fear and psychological stress in battle. As Keegan observed, much of the stress that soldiers experience in combat stems from “uncertainty and doubt.” Training endeavors to replicate the conditions of combat as closely as possible and to reduce thereby soldiers’ uncertainty about the situations they are likely to encounter.

Units experiencing the confusion and intensity of battle for the first time in actual combat are susceptible to fear. Fear can cause inaction or, in a counterinsurgency environment, might lead to an overreaction that harms innocents and undermines the counterinsurgent’s mission. In her book *Stoic Warriors*, Nancy Sherman quotes Seneca to emphasize the importance of training as a form of “bulletproofing” soldiers against the debilitating effects of fear and combat stress: “A large part of the evil consists in its novelty,” but “if evil has been pondered beforehand the blow is gentle when it comes.”¹⁶ We must base training scenarios directly on recent experiences of units in Afghanistan or Iraq and conduct training consistent with Aristotle’s observation that virtues are formed by repetition. Repetitive training under challenging and realistic conditions prepares units to respond immediately and together to encounters with the enemy, using

battle drills—rehearsed responses to a predictable set of circumstances. Demonstrating their ability to fight and operate together as a team will build the confidence and cohesion necessary to suppress fear and help soldiers and units cope with combat stress while preserving their professionalism and moral character.

Soldiers trained exclusively for conventional combat operations may be predisposed toward responding with all available firepower upon contact with the enemy. Such a reaction in a counterinsurgency environment, however, might result in the unnecessary loss of innocent life and run counter to the overall aim of operations. In training, we should still evaluate units on their ability to overwhelm the enemy but also evaluate them on how well they protect innocents and apply firepower with discipline and discrimination.

Our training should include civilian role-players to replicate as closely as possible the ethnic, religious, and tribal landscapes of the areas in which units will operate. As in Iraq and Afghanistan, the enemy in these exercises blends into the population. When role players are not available, cultural experts should train soldiers to play the role of civilians while their fellow soldiers are trained and evaluated. Using soldiers as civilian role-players has a secondary benefit: it is very useful for soldiers to view their own force from the perspective of the civilian population. Exercises that include civilian role-players help soldiers understand better the importance of restraint and respectful, professional conduct. Role players and soldiers come together at the end of the exercise for an “after-action review” to identify lessons and consider how the unit might apply those lessons to future training and operations.

Cultural and Historical Training

Because unfamiliarity with cultures can compound the stress associated with physical danger, ensuring that soldiers are familiar with the history and culture of the region in which they are operating is critical for sustaining combat effectiveness and promoting respectful treatment of the population. Use professional reading programs; discuss books and articles with your soldiers. Use lectures and film. Excellent documentaries are available on the history of Islam, as well as on the history of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Cultural training has practical applications. An understanding of ethnic, cultural, and tribal dynamics allows soldiers to evaluate sources of information and anticipate potential consequences of their actions. Leaders who have a basic understanding of history and culture can also recognize and counter the enemy’s misrepresentation of history for propaganda purposes.

Perhaps most important, education and training that include history and culture promote moral conduct by generating empathy for the population. The COIN manual describes “genuine compassion and empathy for the populace” as an “effective weapon against insurgents.”¹⁷ If soldiers understand the population’s experience, feelings of confusion and frustration might be supplanted by concern and compassion. As Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius observed, “Respect becomes concrete through empathy.” Cicero reminds us that a soldier’s respect must extend to the enemy and civilians: “We ought to revere, to guard and to preserve the common affection and fellowship of the whole of humankind.”

Leaders must also learn history to evaluate themselves and place contemporary operations in the context of previous experience. Examining previous counterinsurgency experiences allows leaders to ask questions about contemporary missions, avoid some of the mistakes of the past, recognize opportunities, and identify effective techniques.

A critical examination of history also allows soldiers to understand the fundamentals of counterinsurgency theory and thereby equips them to make better decisions in what are highly decentralized operations. Soldiers need to recognize that the population must be the focus of the counterinsurgent's effort and that the population's perceptions—of their government, the counterinsurgent forces, and the insurgents—are of paramount importance. This highlights the need for soldiers to treat the population respectfully and to clarify their intentions through their deeds and conduct.

While it is important that all soldiers possess basic cultural knowledge, it is also important that leaders and units have access to cultural expertise. Soldiers often share what they learn with other members of their team. So sending even just a few soldiers from each platoon or company to language or cultural training can have a broad positive effect on the organization. In a counterinsurgency environment, cultural expertise, such as “human terrain teams,” can help units distinguish between reconcilable and irreconcilable groups through an analysis of each group's fears and aspirations.¹⁸

Ultimately, the counterinsurgent hopes to reduce violence and achieve enduring security by mediating between factions that are willing to resolve differences through politics rather than violence.¹⁹ Cultural expertise contributes to the ethical conduct of war by helping soldiers and units understand their environment. This richer understanding can help them determine how to apply force discriminately and to identify opportunities to resolve conflict, short of force.

Combat Stress

Education or indoctrination in professional military ethics and tough, realistic training are important. However, they are insufficient to preserve moral character under the intense emotional and psychological pressures of combat. Soldiers and units must also be prepared to cope with the stress of continuous operations in a counterinsurgency environment; combat stress often leads to unprofessional or immoral behavior.²⁰

Counterinsurgency operations can be even more stressful than more conventional wars. Control of stress is a command responsibility. Leaders must be familiar with grief counseling and “grief work.” Grieving our losses must be valued, not stigmatized. Understand how to “communalize” grief so units can get through difficult times together.

Watch soldier behavior carefully to identify warning signs. These include social disconnection, distractibility, suspiciousness toward friends, irrationality, and inconsistency. If units experience losses, get them combat-stress counseling. Watch for soldiers who become “revenge driven,” as they can break down the discipline of the unit and do significant damage to the mission and their fellow troopers. Commitment to fellow troopers and mission must be the motivating factor in battle—not rage.

Additionally, soldiers' knowledge that they have behaved in a professional, disciplined, moral manner when confronting the enemy is one of the most important factors in preventing post-traumatic stress and various dysfunctions that come with it. Developing and maintaining unit cohesion is critical in preventing disorders associated with combat stress and combat trauma. As Jonathan Shay notes, "What a returning soldier needs most when leaving war is not a mental health professional but a living community to whom his experience matters."

Military education is thin on the psychological dynamics of combat, perhaps because its importance becomes obvious only in wartime. You might read and discuss such books as J. Glenn Gray's *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Bison Books, 1998), Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (Simon and Schuster, 1995), and David Grossman and Loren Christensen's *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace* (Warrior Science, 3rd ed., 2008).

Leadership

Common to all of these efforts to preserve the moral character of soldiers and units is leadership. Lack of effective leadership has often caused combat trauma. Sun Tzu had it right 2,500 years ago, in his classic *The Art of War*—"Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and sternness." Humaneness in the face of the ambiguous and difficult situations we are facing today and will face tomorrow will permit soldiers to remain psychologically ready, and it must be an area that our leaders focus on. Sternness involves ensuring that leaders are in positions of leadership. Emphasize leader development but do not hesitate to remove those who do not enjoy the trust or confidence of their troopers.

Effective communication is vital. Explain to troopers the importance of their mission (the stakes) and make sure that they understand the higher commander's intent and concept for defeating the enemy and accomplishing the mission. A key part of the psychological well-being of soldiers is a sense of agency, or control; preserving discipline and moral conduct in combat depends in large measure on it.²¹ It is vital that troopers understand how the risks they take and sacrifices they make contribute to the achievement of objectives worthy of those risks and sacrifices. Ultimately, positive feedback in the form of success in combat reinforces ethical and moral conduct.

Senior commanders must establish the right climate and send a simple, clear message continuously to their troopers: "Every time you treat a civilian disrespectfully, you are working for the enemy." It is, however, junior officers and noncommissioned officers who will enforce standards of moral conduct. Preparing leaders at the squad, platoon, and company levels for that responsibility is vitally important.

In *Black Hearts*, a headquarters company commander commenting on the cause of the horrible rape and murder of civilians south of Baghdad said the following: "Clearly a lot of what happened can be attributed to a leadership failure. And I'm not talking about just at the platoon level. I'm talking about platoon, company, battalion. Even I feel in some way indirectly responsible for what happened out there. I mean, we were all part of

the team. We just let it go. And we let it go, and go, and go. . . . We failed those guys by letting them be out there like that without a plan.”

It is the warrior ethos that permits soldiers to see themselves “as part of an ongoing historical community,” a community that sustains itself through “sacred trust” and a covenant that binds them to one another and to the society they serve. The warrior ethos forms the basis for this covenant. It is composed of such values as honor, duty, courage, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. The warrior ethos is important because it makes military units effective and because it makes war “less inhumane.”

As our commander in chief observed in Oslo, “Make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world.” Your advice and leadership will help our forces remain true to our values as we fight brutal and murderous enemies who pose a grave threat to all civilized people. I am proud to serve alongside you. My thanks to you and your families for your invaluable service to our nation in time of war.

Notes

Address delivered on 14 May 2010 at the Naval War College Spring Ethics Conference by Brigadier General H. R. McMaster, U.S. Army.

1. “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize,” *The White House: President Barack Obama*, www.whitehouse.gov.
2. U.S. Army Dept., *The Army Capstone Concept*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0 (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Training and Doctrine Command, 21 December 2009), available at www.tradoc.army.mil.
3. John Kiszely, *Post-modern Challenges for Modern Warriors*, Shrivenham Paper 5 (Shrivenham, U.K.: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, December 2007), p. 6, available at www.da.mod.uk.
4. U.S. Army Dept./U.S. Navy Dept., *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center/Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, December 2006) [hereafter COIN manual], available at www.fas.org/.
5. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking, 1976), p. 83.
6. For example, some French army officers made this argument during the War of Algerian Independence. See Lou DiMarco, “Losing the Moral Compass: Torture and *Guerre Revolutionnaire* in the Algerian War,” *Parameters* (Summer 2006), pp. 70–72, available at www.carlisle.army.mil/.
7. Christopher Coker, *The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 135–38.
8. COIN manual, p. 7-5.
9. Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon’s Descent into Madness in Iraq’s Triangle of Death* (New York: Harmony Books, 2010).
10. COIN manual, p. 7-1.
11. For the Army values, see “Soldier Life: Being a Soldier,” Goarmy.com. For comprehensive analyses of the Army profession and military ethics, see Don Snider and Lloyd Mathews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed., rev. and exp. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005). The counterinsurgency manual states that “the Nation’s and the profession’s values are not negotiable,” also that “violations of them are not just mistakes; they are failures in meeting the fundamental standards of the profession of arms.” COIN manual, p. 7-1.
12. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. and trans. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 39.
13. Coker, *The Warrior Ethos*, p. 92.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

15. Don M. Snider, John A. Nagl, and Tony Pfaff, *Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, December 1999), available at www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/.
16. Nancy Sherman, *Stoic Warriors: The Ancient Philosophy behind the Military Mind* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 117.
17. COIN manual, p. 7-2.
18. Teams of regional experts, linguists, and area-studies specialists, such as anthropologists (military and civilian), embedded at the brigade level to advise the command. See *Human Terrain System*, hts.army.mil/.
19. Education in negotiation and mediation techniques represents a gap in leaders' education that can be filled with self-study until the military begins to incorporate this instruction into its formal education programs. For relevant work conducted in this area by the Harvard Negotiation Project, see *Program of Negotiation at Harvard Law School*, www.pon.harvard.edu/. For a book useful in connection with preparing for negotiation and mediation in a counterinsurgency environment, see Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro, *Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate* (New York: Viking, 2005).
20. Evidence for this conclusion comes from the business world. A 1997 survey on the "Sources and Consequences of Workplace Pressure," for instance, found that workers responded to workplace pressure by resorting to unethical behavior—for instance, "cutting corners on quality control, engaging in insider trading, falsifying reports, accepting kickbacks, and having an affair with a business associate." Edward S. Petry, Amanda E. Mujica, and Dianne M. Vickery, "Sources and Consequences of Workplace Pressure: Increasing the Risk of Unethical and Illegal Business Practices," *Business and Society Review* 99, no. 1 (2003), p. 26.
21. Sherman, *Stoic Warriors*, p. 126.

THE NAVY'S MORAL COMPASS

Commanding Officers and Personal Misconduct

Captain Mark F. Light, U.S. Navy

The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible.

Dwight David Eisenhower

The U.S. Navy has an integrity problem in the ranks of its commanding officers (COs). Consider these headlines: “Cruiser CO Relieved for ‘Cruelty.’”¹ “CO Fired, Charged with Solicitation.”² “CO of Attack Sub Fired for ‘Drunkenness.’”³ These are just a few cases in a recent deluge of early reliefs of “skippers.” In 2010, twenty-three Navy COs were relieved of command and “detached for cause,” an enormous increase over previous years. The trend continues: twenty-one commanding officers were fired in 2011 as of the end of October.⁴ Even more worrisome is the fact that a large and increasing percentage of those dismissals are due to personal misconduct, such as sexual harassment, drunkenness, and fraternization. Although (as far as we can tell) over 97 percent of the Navy’s commanding officers conduct themselves honorably, the increasing number of those who do not raises concerns that the Navy must address. Alarms should be sounding at the highest levels of Navy leadership, but a review of recent literature reveals only a trickle of discussion on the subject of personal misconduct by military commanders. Instead of calling the service to action, a Navy spokesman said in January 2011 that there was “no indication that the reliefs are the result of any systemic problem.”⁵

The premise of this article is that this *is* a systemic problem, that although the number of offenders is low, it is too high. The excessive (and increasing) number of COs fired for personal misconduct is symptomatic of cultural issues within the Navy and of a confusing ethical context in society, combined with a failure to set effectively and uphold

an ethical standard within the service. The Navy needs to make adjustments in priority, policy, training, and personnel processes in order to stem the tide of personal misconduct by leaders. As a new Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) ends the first year of his tour of command, this article opens the door for debate and reexamination of the Navy's policies, standards for command, and ethical foundations.

While the percentage of misconduct seems small, the impact is of such a magnitude that this issue absolutely must be addressed, and the Navy has demonstrated that it can remedy this type of problem. Consider that in 2003 the Navy's aviation mishap rate was 1.89 mishaps per hundred thousand hours flown and had hovered around that value for several years after decades of steady improvement. At that time the secretary of defense directed that we reduce the mishap rate by 50 percent, because even that small figure included numerous costly mishaps that could and should have been prevented.⁶ At the secretary's direction, Navy leadership undertook a fundamental effort to improve aviation safety. By 2010 the priority and emphasis given by the leadership had dropped the rate to 0.94 mishaps per hundred thousand flight hours, saving millions of dollars and dozens of lives.⁷ Similarly, today the number of COs fired for personal misconduct is too high, and we can and must do better—but doing so will require that Navy leadership makes it a priority.

The Data: Background

This article is based on data provided to the author by the Career Progression Division of the Naval Personnel Command. The data included administrative information and causes for dismissal of all commanding officers who were relieved while in command from 1999 through 2010 and for whom "detachment for cause" (DFC) procedures had been initiated and approved. Because of the administrative burden of the DFC process, senior leaders may choose not to implement it after a CO has been fired, if the situation does not require the specific funding and personnel adjustments for which formal detachment for cause provides.⁸ The actual number of COs fired, then, is significantly larger than the DFC numbers cited here, but no comprehensive records exist of firings for which DFCs are not processed. The data also listed several officers in command positions with ranks of lieutenant commander (O-4) and below, which are excluded from this analysis. This article is intended to address character failures in more senior leaders who have had sufficient time in service to understand clearly the standards of command and in whom the Navy had opportunity to identify the potential for these failures of character before their consideration for command.

There exists a significant gap in the data concerning causes for dismissal. The summary information provided to the author indicated causes for dismissal by the categories used by the Navy's *Military Personnel Manual*: misconduct, a significant event, unsatisfactory performance over time, or loss of confidence in the officer's ability to command.⁹ In the 101 DFCs evaluated, every submission cited either "loss of confidence" or a "significant event," with not one case citing misconduct or poor performance over time. In some cases an explanation amplified the category assignment; open-source information

provided clarification in additional cases.¹⁰ Ultimately the causes for approximately 20 percent of the dismissals for cause cannot be effectively determined from the data and are omitted from the analysis, but the trends are clear enough that valid conclusions may be drawn notwithstanding.

Although published literature on the subject is scarce, as noted, this is not the first study. In 2004, the Naval Inspector General (IG) conducted an in-depth review of COs fired between 1999 and 2004. The IG team had access to and analyzed information concerning all COs fired in that period, whether DFCs had been processed or not, and so produced a more statistically complete picture of the situation over that period.¹¹ That study is valuable today as a source of amplifying information and is used below as a basis for comparison.

The Data: Numerical Analysis

Figure 1 presents the total number of DFCs from 1999 through 2010, “broken out” between professional causes (e.g., ship groundings or failed inspections) and personal misconduct (such as fraternization or alcohol incidents). For the purpose of this analysis, such ethical violations as cruelty and abusive leadership were grouped with the personal-misconduct causes, whereas more generalized leadership failures, such as poor command climate or ineffective leadership, were classified as professional. The superimposed linear-regression trend lines make clear that while the rate of CO dismissals for cause for professional reasons is rising only slightly, there is a marked and increasing trend in the number of reliefs for personal and ethical causes.

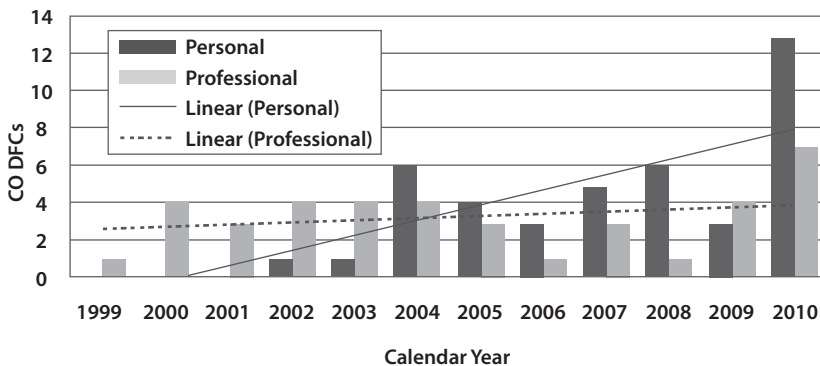


Figure 1. CO DFCs by Cause: Personal and Professional

Figure 2 breaks out dismissals for cause of commanding officers due to personal misconduct by community within the Navy: surface, aviation, submarine, and other (including special warfare, Medical or Supply Corps, human resources, etc.). Each case is categorized by the community of the officer, as opposed to that of the command from which he or she was fired. For instance, an aviator serving as CO of a ship when relieved was grouped with the aviation community.

For context, officers from the aviation and surface communities each hold about 25 percent of the total number of O-5 and O-6 (commander and captain) commands in the Navy, submariners about half as many. The remaining 37 percent are held by officers of other communities. The data seem to indicate that the surface and submarine communities are largely responsible for the significant spike in 2010, when the number of surface DFCs for personal misconduct was nearly an order of magnitude above that for any previous year. As for the aviation community, although it does not show an obvious increasing trend, it is responsible for the largest total number of dismissals for cause and the largest percentage of commanding officers fired.

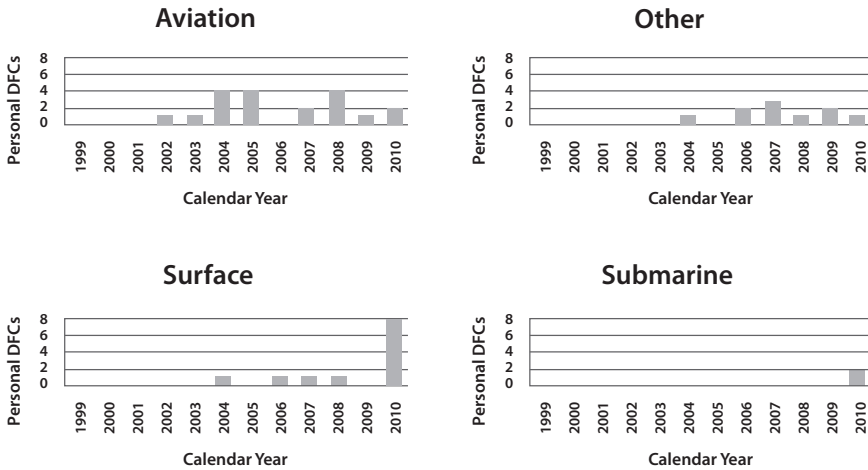


Figure 2. CO DFCs: Personal/Ethical Causes, by Community

Figure 3 presents commanding-officer DFCs for personal misconduct by rank. About 45 percent of Navy CO billets are for O-6s. Notably, the number of DFCs is as great for captains, who are generally in their second or third command tours, as for commanders, even though there are fewer billets in the higher rank.

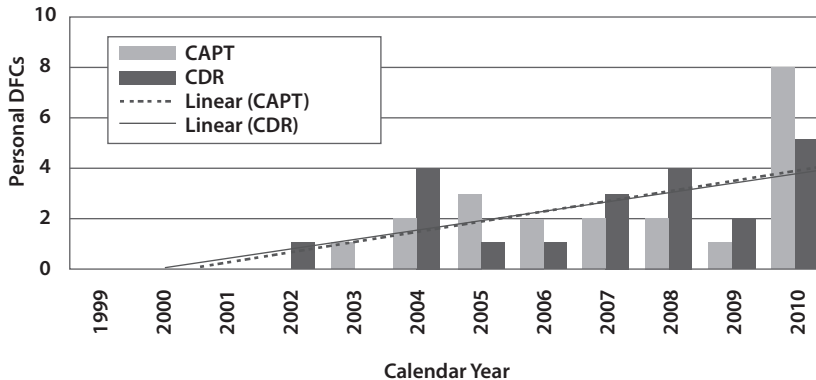


Figure 3. CO DFCs: Personal/Ethical Causes, by Rank

Figure 4 compares CO DFCs with respect to shore-duty and sea-duty billets. About 62 percent of Navy CO billets are shore duty, involving nondeploying commands based ashore. The sea commands are either deploying shore-based units or vessels. Both have similar trend lines and raw numbers. Since there are fewer sea-duty billets, the similar totals mean that the percentage of commanding officers fired from sea-duty billets for personal misconduct is higher than that for COs on shore duty.

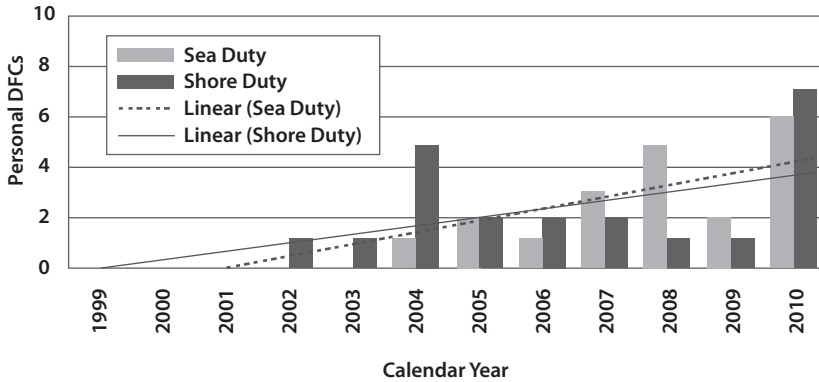


Figure 4. CO DFCs: Personal/Ethical Causes, by Duty Type

We have noted that not all commanding officers fired are administratively “dismissed for cause.” Before proceeding, it is worth discussing the actual relationship between the two numbers. The 2004 Naval IG study listed seventy-eight COs fired between 1999 and 2004;¹² the DFC data used for this article include only thirty-seven for that period. The difference is partly explained by the scopes of the studies—the IG study included O-3 (lieutenant) and O-4 commanding officers and officers in charge (typically of very small units), who were specifically excluded from this analysis. Beyond that, the difference between the study results reflects that between the number of fired COs and the number processed for DFC.

Despite the differences, this article points to trends that are consistent with the data from the earlier study. The Naval Inspector General reported that 36 percent of early reliefs occurred due to personal misconduct; this article records 42 percent of DFCs for the same reason, with an increase over the time span covered.¹³ Further, the studies are consistent with regard to the contribution of the various communities to early reliefs due to misconduct, with aviation being the most prolific and the submarine force the least. So while the numbers differ, a consistent and logical argument emerges that a significant and increasing number of COs in the Navy are being fired for personal and ethical failures.

Academic Analysis

It is fundamental to understand that the COs fired for misconduct knew their actions were out of line. The IG report states that in “nearly every case, the officers relieved for personal behavior clearly knew the rules.”¹⁴ Interviews with active and retired flag

officers reveal the same. Interviews likewise indicate that the COs who were fired did not feel that the rules did not apply to them. Instead, either they believed they would not be caught, that Navy leadership would not hold them accountable, or that their misconduct was worth risking their career, or they chose simply to ignore the consequences entirely. All of these logic trains are flawed, and that lack of judgment in our leaders is of concern in itself. But the basic issue is this: Why are detachments for cause due to misconduct by Navy leaders increasing, and how can we encourage future generations of leaders to reverse the unsettling trend?

One contributor to the barrage of incidents of CO misconduct is the fact that the personal and professional standards by which commanding officers are judged have become stricter in recent years. This fact was highlighted by Kevin Eyer, a retired Navy captain and former Surface Warfare Officer, who cites a litany of cases in the 1980s in which abusive use of power and even alcohol-related arrests were ignored as long as the officers involved were effective in terms of accomplishing the mission.¹⁵ Few familiar with the Navy over the past twenty years are likely to dispute the point that actions once overlooked are today grounds for DFC.

Is it right that the standards have changed? Yes, because the mission of today's Navy demands tighter standards. Captain Eyer notes that he drew his examples from the years of the Cold War;¹⁶ the mission of the Navy then was to be prepared to defeat the Soviets at sea and maintain freedom of navigation around the world. Today, the Navy's missions go far beyond those objectives in complexity, including engagement, partnership, security, and unprecedented levels of deterrence.¹⁷ Modern technology, instant communications, and a twenty-four-hour news day are among the tools the Navy uses to leverage its global presence in support of those missions. But that same technology vastly increases the potential strategic impact of lapses in integrity by our ship captains and squadron commanders.

Our credibility as a Navy and a nation suffers when our military leaders behave in ways contrary to the nation's interests. One of the enduring U.S. national interests is "respect for universal values at home and around the world."¹⁸ The most recent Barrett National Values Assessment for the United States identified honesty, compassion, respect, and responsibility/accountability as among the qualities most valued by Americans.¹⁹ Drunk driving, adultery, fraud, and cruelty are not in line with these interests or values, and such behavior jeopardizes our legitimacy as we endeavor to promote our values around the world. Thus misconduct by a commanding officer is a mission failure, and offending individuals are rightfully being held accountable.

As standards of behavior for COs have been raised, so has the likelihood of violators being caught. In years past, allegations of wrongdoing often remained mere allegations, because words alone are generally not sufficient to indict anyone, let alone a commanding officer. However, e-mails, security cameras, cell-phone cameras, electronic records of calls and texts, and "smart phones" with web access have changed the landscape dramatically. As Eyer points out, subordinates have a plethora of means to document and report perceived offenses of their skippers.²⁰ Furthermore, that same technology has made it increasingly difficult to deal with such transgressions quietly and privately; it is just as easy to post incriminating evidence on YouTube as to send it to the officer's superior. Commanding officers who violate the trust bestowed on them can expect technology to

allow them to be caught and held accountable, often in the public eye. So why do some take the risk?

Some psychologists contend that people's actions may be products of their environment, and their research focuses on the extent an individual's behavior can be linked to outside situations.²¹ Philip Zimbardo is among the camp that believes the environment can cause otherwise good people to become evil; he claims that the model explains the abuses of Abu Ghraib prisoners at the hands of American soldiers.²² Others cite the "Bathsheba Syndrome" (named for the object of biblical king David's affection whose husband David sent to the front lines to be killed so the king could have her as his own), which is receiving attention in academic and Navy circles for its lesson that many can be susceptible to the temptations that accompany power and authority.²³ Is there a link between the culture and environment of command in the Navy and undesirable behavior?

There are clearly cultural factors that work against the service's efforts to improve behavior, to raise and enforce standards of commanding-officer conduct. Historically, the captain of a Navy ship had to be strong and independent to maintain order among the crew in hostile environments and to execute missions far from home with only tenuous communications with superiors. Navy regulations state that "the responsibility of the commanding officer for his or her command is absolute" and that "the authority of the commanding officer is commensurate with his or her responsibility."²⁴ As Lord Acton said in the late nineteenth century, "All power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."²⁵ The absolute authority bestowed on commanding officers by regulation could conceivably breed toxic leadership traits and cruelty. The data indicate signs of abusive leadership—three DFCs between 1999 and 2010 were due to cruelty or abusive leadership by the commanding officer—but abuse of power falls well short of fully explaining the broader trend of increasing misconduct.

Tradition suggests other possible explanations. The culture of the Navy is steeped in tales of behavior that does not fit the model to which we aspire today: drunkenness, bar fights, gender biases, womanizing—the list goes on. Sailors were *expected* to "let off steam" when their ships came into port, and they did. If this article were being written in the 1980s, there would be a fair argument that our culture promotes the behavior for which skippers today are being fired. But in the decades that followed, standards of acceptable behavior Navy-wide changed, along with standards for COs. Alcohol was deglamorized, and alcohol-related incidents became career ending for officers. Hazing ceased to be acceptable; ceremonies that had involved humiliation, degradation, and discomfort (chief petty officer initiations, "Crossing the Line" ceremonies) were transformed into events that built esprit de corps without hurting bodies, emotions, or spirits. Aviation stunts and joyriding ("flat-hatting") were no longer acceptable. Commanding officers were held accountable for violations of the new standards in their units. But the behavioral standards now in place are in competition with long-standing cultural norms; they increase personal accountability without addressing the cultural or character deficiencies that underlie unacceptable behavior. Former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman exemplified this smoldering cultural legacy in his lament over the death of naval aviation culture.²⁶ Furthermore, the extensive social media feedback in support of his position from current naval officers demonstrates the power underlying his traditional

sentiments. The result is a small but steady tradition-fed stream of misconduct at all levels—misconduct that is more likely than it once was to be detected, more harmful to the Navy’s mission, and more likely to make headlines when it involves a CO.

Another relevant aspect of Navy culture is intolerance for mistakes. A recent article, noting that as a junior officer the celebrated Chester Nimitz ran a ship aground, postulated that the future fleet admiral would not have gone far in today’s Navy, with its risk aversion and intolerance for errors.²⁷ That writer obviously believes Navy leadership has gone too far recently in punishing errors, both professional and personal. Intolerance for professional mistakes is beyond the scope of this project, and we have already stated that personal misconduct on the part of Navy leaders must not be accepted. But the zero-defect mentality may cause behavioral problems in junior officers to be hidden or covered up, reducing the opportunity for correction, mentoring, development, and instruction in ethical standards.

In addition to the culture of the service as a whole, each community within the Navy has its own convictions and subculture. Aviators are perceived by others as cowboys, rule breakers, “Top Gun” officers’ club partiers, and flirts. The aviation community, as noted, has the highest number of CO DFCs for personal misconduct, on average 50 percent higher than for surface warriors. The averages fit the stereotype and culture of traditional naval aviation (as cited by former secretary Lehman and discussed above), but questions arise when the trends are examined. The aviation DFC rate has a virtually horizontal trend line, while the surface and submarine communities show recent spikes. One explanation is that the 1991 Tailhook debacle hit the aviation community much harder and closer to home than it did the others, meaning that “airdale” misconduct peaked years ago, before the period encompassed by our data. If this is true, then the very policies that Mr. Lehman rejected as stifling appear to have had a positive effect on aviation command. The ultimate cause of the absence of a significant increasing trend in the aviation community is not obvious in the present data, and further study is in order. However, the naval aviation culture, as glamorized in movies and naval history (and echoed by the former Secretary of the Navy) may continue to be attractive to people with adverse behavioral tendencies and may be conducive to unacceptable actions, despite the increased professionalism seen in the community in recent years.

On the other hand, surface officers are considered stoic and businesslike. Nonetheless, they are seen (at least by members of other communities) as high-strung and competitive—it is often said that the surface subculture “eats its young.” Cultural traits in the surface community include public degradation and bullying.²⁸ These factors could both reflect and produce abusive leadership, and such a stressful work environment might lead to alcohol abuse. But of the twelve surface CO dismissals for cause for personal or ethical reasons, only one was due to abusive leadership, and none cited alcohol-related incidents. Yet in 2010 the surface community exhibited the greatest increase in DFCs in the Navy. (The increase was largely in the category of sexual misconduct, which will be addressed shortly.) The argument that rising misconduct in the surface community is due to organizational culture or environment does not seem to hold much water.

The submarine community, finally, is quiet, intelligent, and secretive, and its officers mirror the platforms they operate. It is not surprising that little information can be gleaned from the data in this study. It may be a testimony to the submariner culture

that the causes of nearly half of the CO DFCs in the undersea community could not be determined.

Organizational culture notwithstanding, the most prevalent cause of DFCs of commanding officers in every community has been sexual misconduct, including inappropriate relationships, fraternization, and sexual harassment. Some have written that this phenomenon is a product of the Navy's environment, that such failures are to be expected in the seagoing community, where men and women are now confined in close quarters for months at a time.²⁹ Mixed-gender crews certainly present significant leadership challenges. Consider the commanding officer fired after nine chief petty officers aboard his ship were found to be having sexual relationships with junior sailors under their charge, although that CO did not know about the relationships.³⁰ But though fired for ineffective leadership, he personally maintained the higher moral ground and did not fall to the temptation of an inappropriate relationship of his own, which is why he is not numbered with the personal DFCs.

The problem is *not* mixed-gender crews. Of the forty-two personal CO DFCs in this study, twenty (48 percent) involved sexual misconduct. Fewer than half involved COs of shipboard commands. Of those, one involved a relationship between a submarine CO and an officer in the Army—clearly not a product of integrated crews. The propensity for sexual misconduct is obviously widespread, but not because men and women deploy together. Whether on a ship with a mixed crew or ashore, commanding officers must keep their relationships in line with the provisions of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the *Manual for Courts-Martial* prohibiting adultery and fraternization.³¹ Failure to do so (like any other misconduct) is a violation not only of the law but of the character that each commanding officer is entrusted with maintaining.

We should explore the concept of character further. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf highlighted the importance of character (but fell short of defining it) when he said, "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy."³² The Josephson Institute lists as "the six pillars of character" trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.³³ Closely related to character is ethics, the set of "standards of behavior that tell us how human beings ought to act in the many situations in which they find themselves."³⁴ Intuitively, one who exemplifies the pillars of character is likely to act in conformance with how a person "ought to act"—in other words, ethically. Ethics is not religion, nor is it adherence to law or cultural norms.³⁵ It is about doing the right thing.

Ethical decisions must be based on a standard of right and wrong, and finding consensus for such a standard is especially difficult in today's society.³⁶ A high-ranking officer in the Navy's chaplain community notes that while Navy standards have always been high, today's social ethical context is confusing. For example, the media glamorize wealth, fame, sexual promiscuity, and self-satisfaction, while the Navy is attempting to promote better behavior. News agencies jump on any hint of misconduct in leadership but just as fervently scream foul when an institution's standards seem too conservative or when they echo too closely religious tenets, of whatever faith. But in the midst of this confusion, the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics offers a simple question to test whether a given decision is ethical: "If I told someone I respect—or told a television audience—which option I have chosen, what would they say?"³⁷ The will to ask such a

question, to embody the pillars of character even (especially?) when nobody is watching, and to allow one's conduct to be driven by such ethical analysis is the foundation on which we want our leaders to be developed.

Elevating the Character of Naval Leadership

The Navy is holding commanding officers to a special behavioral standard, as well it should, but that alone will not solve the problem. Beyond merely holding COs accountable for misconduct, leadership needs, in order to improve the quality of our commanding officer corps and our service, to take positive action to develop each officer's moral compass and establish an ethical standard.

Step One: Establish a Sense of Urgency

Generating urgency has been called the first task in achieving transformational change in a large, complex organization.³⁸ In my view, it requires acknowledgment of the problem, identification of the impacts, and elevation of the priority of the issue on the basis of a full understanding of those impacts. On the first point, the Navy has made an effort to be transparent and open, but it has fallen short of fully acknowledging the problem. Personal misconduct by COs exists in all branches of the military, but the headlines seem to be predominantly Navy. Clearly, Navy leaders have committed themselves to holding commanding officers publicly accountable for their actions, which is vastly preferable to hiding them until a disgruntled subordinate posts a video online for the world to see. Unfortunately, beyond public firings, there has been no fundamental effort on the part of senior leadership to elevate the issue to a level that will produce meaningful change. This article, appearing as it does in the first year of the tenure of a new Chief of Naval Operations, is an effort to try to spark that sense of urgency.

Step Two: Set the Standard

The Deputy Secretary of Defense recently released a memo emphasizing the need for all Department of Defense personnel to act ethically. "Fundamental values like integrity, impartiality, fairness, and respect must drive our actions, and these values must be reinforced by holding ourselves and each other accountable."³⁹ In the same vein, the Army has published a pamphlet, *Army: Profession of Arms 2011*, that explicitly stresses the need for adherence to an unfailing service ethical standard. It argues the necessity for all officers, especially leaders, to take the high moral ground in their discretionary judgments. Furthermore, the *Army Operating Concept* of 2010 includes three pages of ethical and behavioral discussion and draws attention to the Army's core values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.⁴⁰

There is no similar proclamation of ethical standards in Navy policy literature, and there is no parallel discussion in the *Naval Operating Concept* of 2010. The Navy's core values—honor, courage, and commitment—are concise and easy to remember but make only implicit reference to ethical standards. If the Navy is to improve conduct from the top down, it must *explicitly* focus on the fundamental ethical standards that underlie the

behaviors it wants to promote. Unless we stress ethical standards, our efforts to change behavior will always fall short.

A retired four-star admiral, noting the reluctance of leaders to implement ethical standards specifically, suggested that there was concern that such efforts would be construed as religious. But ethics are not religion. Another camp argues that the fact that character and ethics are “implicit” in the stated core values of the Navy is enough; one admiral observes, “You can’t have honor without integrity.” But if they make only implicit reference to character, we can expect only implicit compliance. A treatise on ethics in the *Naval Operating Concept* is unlikely to change a given officer’s behavior. But as one element of a Navy-wide campaign to emphasize character and set ethical standards for the officer corps, it might help create a shift in the mind-set and the culture as a whole, precisely what our service requires. Such a change will not occur unless the top level of Navy leadership makes ethical behavior a clear priority.

Step Three: Improve the Metrics

The Bureau of Personnel’s Fitness Report and Counseling Record (NAVPERS 1610/2) is the Navy’s basic periodic evaluation—that is, the metric—for all officers in the grade of captain (O-6) and below. The effectiveness of the promotion and screening process is determined by whether the system correctly identifies officers worthy of selection—and perhaps more importantly, of nonselection. Our system needs improvement. Many of the COs fired for personal misconduct should never have been selected for command. Nine of the dismissals for cause cited in this study were due to alcohol-related incidents, and it is likely that previous supervisors of these officers were aware of their propensity to drink. At least sixteen DFCs were for inappropriate relationships, and while some of them may have been difficult to foresee, in many cases signs were likely present that should have been addressed. Behaviors such as cruelty, abuse of position for personal gain, solicitation of prostitution, and indecent exposure typically do not suddenly or without warning appear in an otherwise upstanding officer. Somebody knew, or should have known, but did not document the behavior adequately to prevent selection for command.

Part of the problem is the previously noted dearth of published policy on character and behavior in this era of ethical confusion. Further, there is almost a complete lack of focus on ethical training for naval officers. In twenty-two years of active Navy service, the only Navy training on ethics the author received was on fraud and financial abuse, and that used a very legalistic approach, with little actual discussion of ethics. The “standards of conduct” training for COs recently mandated by the CNO (in the wake of the firing of those involved in the “XO Movie Night” episode) is merely Scotch tape on the problem—a robust, durable, career-long emphasis is still not in place.⁴¹ Once an officer has been selected for command, it is too late to try to develop integrity and character. This absence of training for all officers to a set standard has led to a failure of leadership. Many commanding officers have shown misguided support to junior officers who display character flaws such as alcohol abuse or infidelity. “I did that when I was younger, so why should I punish them for doing the same thing?” seems to be the theme.

Ultimately, COs are charged with developing future COs. When character flaws become evident in the actions of their subordinates, commanding officers must actively engage the offenders. One of two responses is likely. If the junior officer admits fault, accepts responsibility, receives counseling, and makes corrections, the “teaching moment” will have been achieved. If, however, the officer disputes the details, argues, and deflects blame, there may be an intrinsic ethical void that must be documented. Rather than being friends or drinking buddies of the officers under their charge, COs must explicitly demand integrity from them—and mentor or document shortcomings appropriately. Otherwise they encourage the behavior we want to eliminate in those chosen for command, which ensures the cycle will continue.

Before throwing former supervisors under the bus for failing to document moral shortcomings that are doing such damage today, note that the fitness report does not facilitate such openness. The fitness-report system needs to be modified to measure explicitly what we want to see in future commanding officers. Some believe the system is completely broken and should be rebuilt from scratch. Some have recommended incorporating elements of a “360 degree” evaluation into the fitness report process—that is, feedback from the officer’s peers and subordinates in addition to evaluation by supervisors.⁴² Mending all of the report’s faults is beyond the scope of this article, but some discussion on the evaluation process is worthwhile.

Part of the fitness report’s problem is rooted in the zero-defect culture discussed earlier. Even a slightly less than glowing fitness-report narrative can be career ending. It is very difficult for reporting seniors to make the best stand out without killing the runners-up, and it is extremely difficult for selection boards to determine who is best. The 360-degree evaluation, however, is not the answer. Its value is in the self-awareness it provides to officers, allowing them to compare their own views of themselves to those of seniors, peers, and subordinates; in the context of this article, there is no indication that a 360-degree format would more effectively identify officers predisposed toward personal conduct prejudicial to command. None of the flag officers interviewed for this study supported wholesale changes to the fitness report system, and all believed that the reporting senior is the correct person—not peers or subordinates—to evaluate the suitability of officers for promotion and selection. However, something must be done in order to improve the fitness report’s utility in screening out adverse behavioral tendencies.

Fundamental problems with today’s fitness report system in identifying behavioral shortcomings are its lack of explicit evaluation with respect to ethical standards, the tendency of senior officers to reward mission accomplishment and performance regardless of personal failures, and the fact that all officers from ensign to captain are evaluated on the same criteria. The fitness report grades seven quantitative performance traits: “Professional Expertise,” “Command or Organizational Climate/Equal Opportunity,” “Military Bearing/Character,” “Teamwork,” “Mission Accomplishment and Initiative,” “Leadership,” and “Tactical Performance.” Military bearing is the trait widely considered to be the category for documenting issues concerning physical fitness and body composition (i.e., body-mass index), although by regulation (and as indicated on the form itself) it also includes character, appearance, demeanor, conduct, physical standards, and adherence to Navy core values.⁴³ The core values include honor, and honor (as the admiral quoted above noted) implies integrity. But should we have to dig three levels to

evaluate integrity, and should it be masked in the block regarded as concerning physical fitness? Not if we think it is important. In comparison, the Army's Officer Evaluation Report requires input on all seven of the service's core values as part of the character evaluation of the officer, including integrity and selfless service. Such specific evaluation of character is required to emphasize the priorities we desire in commanding officers.

Only a small percentage of commanding officers are being fired for personal misconduct, but the number is too high, and it continues to grow. Like the aviation mishap rate in the early 2000s, the magnitude of this problem can be significantly reduced, but only through elevation of this issue as a standing concern by the highest levels of leadership. While every flag officer interviewed for this article sees CO misconduct as an issue requiring attention, there does not seem to be consensus that it urgently demands transformational change. I think it does.

As noted, the Navy has taken some steps. Behavioral standards for COs are tighter than ever. The Chief of Naval Operations has issued a personal message to all commanding officers outlining standards of conduct.⁴⁴ A 360-degree evaluation has been included as part of the training process prior to assuming a command billet, as recommended by the 2004 Naval IG study.⁴⁵ Unit command-climate evaluation results are visible at higher echelons of leadership. Finally, each session of the Navy Command Leadership School, attended by officers ordered to command billets, is addressed by senior flag officers on ethical behavior. But instead of waiting for officers to be screened for command before setting and enforcing standards, we need a fundamental, enduring shift and meaningful, career-long training on integrity and character.

Several changes are recommended. First of all, leadership must elevate the priority of ethical behavior and emphasize the need for change—including the creation of a central database of every CO relieved of command owing to personal or professional failures (recording the specific cause for the dismissal as well as demographic data), to facilitate future tracking and analysis. Second, the Navy must undertake an explicit campaign to set standards of integrity and honorable behavior. Personal integrity should be at the forefront of the service's human-capital strategy and must be reflected in policy at the highest levels. Consideration should be given to expanding the Navy's core values to include explicit mention of character, or at least to a redoubling of efforts to develop the concept of honor in our service. "Honor, courage, commitment, and character" has a nice ring to it (though "integrity," "humility," "trustworthiness," and numerous other, similar terms could work in the place of "character"). This campaign should include regular, lively, and meaningful emphasis on ethical behavior for all Navy personnel.

Finally, the officer fitness report, a powerful tool for embedding an organizational culture, should be modified in format and in concept to measure explicitly what leaders want to see, specifically addressing character and integrity.⁴⁶ This change should be accompanied by training for reporting seniors on ethical expectations and on the need to include every aspect of individuals, including personal integrity, when determining who is qualified for command. With this proposal, let the debate begin on the merits of this study, on its conclusions and recommendations, and on alternative methods of raising the bar of commanding officer behavior, integrity, and moral character.

Notes

1. Philip Ewing, "Cruiser CO Relieved for 'Cruelty,'" *Navy Times*, 15 January 2010.
2. Andrew Tilghman, "SC CO Fired, Charged with Solicitation," *Navy Times*, 28 January 2010.
3. Philip Ewing, "CO of Attack Sub Fired for 'Drunkenness,'" *Navy Times*, 16 March 2010.
4. "MCM Crew's CO Is 21st Fired This Year," *Navy Times*, 28 October 2011.
5. Justin Cole [Lt., USN], Navy spokesman, quoted in Sam Fellman, "High-Profile Firings in the Navy on the Rise," *Navy Times*, 3 January 2011.
6. "History of the School of Aviation Safety," *Naval Aviation Schools Command*, www.netc.navy.mil/.
7. "How Goes It FY 10," *Naval Safety Center*, www.public.navy.mil/.
8. DFC (detachment for cause—not to be confused, of course, with the Distinguished Flying Cross) is an administrative procedure that releases funding to move personnel subsequent to the removal of naval officers from their current duty assignments for cause; it may not be required if suitable officers are available to relieve the officers who have been fired. See U.S. Navy Dept., *Military Personnel Manual* (Washington, D.C.: updated December 2010), chap. 1611-020, sec. 1, para. a.
9. *Ibid.*, sec. 3.
10. The author found news releases clarifying the causes of DFCs at the following news websites: *Navy Times* (www.navytimes.com), *Stars and Stripes* (www.stripes.com), *Virginian-Pilot* (www.pilotonline.com), and *San Diego Union Tribune* (www.signonsandiego.com).
11. U.S. Navy Dept., *Report on Commanding Officers Detached for Cause* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Inspector General, 15 November 2004) [hereafter Naval IG study], executive summary.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
15. Kevin Eyer, "How Are the Mighty Fallen?," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 137/1/1,295 (January 2011), p. 21.
16. *Ibid.*
17. U.S. Navy Dept., *Naval Operating Concept 2010* (Washington, D.C.: 2010), p. 9.
18. U.S. Defense Dept., *National Military Strategy of the United States 2011* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Staff, 2011), p. 4.
19. Barrett Values Centre, *America's Values: Results from the Barrett US National Values Assessment 2009 2010*, available at www.slideshare.net/.
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21. Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2007), pp. 7–8.
22. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
23. Dean C. Ludwig and Clinton O. Longenecker, "The Bathsheba Effect: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders," *Journal of Business Ethics* 12, no. 6 (1993), p. 265.
24. U.S. Navy Dept., *U.S. Navy Regulations* (Washington, D.C.: 1990), sec. 802, para. 1.
25. John Dalberg-Acton, 1st Baron Acton, *Essays on Freedom and Power* (Boston: Beacon, 1949), p. 364.
26. John Lehman, "Is Naval Aviation Culture Dead?," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 137/9/1,303 (September 2011), pp. 40–46.
27. Erik Slavin, "How Would Admiral Nimitz Have Been Dealt with in Today's Navy?," *Stars and Stripes*, 16 May 2010.
28. Donnie Horner, "A Failure of Leadership: Broken, Bullying Command Structure May Be behind Surface Fleet's Many Problems," *Navy Times*, 23 March 2009, pp. 38–39.
29. Eyer, "How Are the Mighty Fallen?," p. 24.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
31. Uniform Code of Military Justice, 64 Stat. 109, U.S. Code, Title 10, chap. 47, art. 134; *Manual for Courts-Martial, United States* (Washington, D.C.: 2008, as amended through 2011), para. 62, p. IV-114 (adultery), and para. 83, p. IV-127 (fraternization).
32. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, in *Quotes for the Air Force Logistician*, ed. James C. Rainey et al. (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air Force Logistic Management Agency, December 2006), vol. 1, p. 48, available at www.afma.hq.af.mil/.

33. Michael Josephson, "The Six Pillars of Character," in *Making Ethical Decisions* (Los Angeles: Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2001), available at josephsoninstitute.org/.
34. Manuel Velasquez et al., *A Framework for Thinking Ethically* (Santa Clara, Calif.: Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, 2009), available at www.scu.edu/.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business, 1996), p. 21.
39. William J. Lynn III, Deputy Secretary of Defense, memorandum, "Ethics, Integrity and Accountability," 21 December 2010, Washington, D.C.
40. U.S. Army Dept., *Army Operating Concept 2010* (Leavenworth, Kans.: 2010), pp. 34–37.
41. In 2006 and 2007, the executive officer (XO) of USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65) produced and broadcast over the ship's closed-circuit television videos with sexual and homophobic content and innuendo that many of the crew found offensive. These videos became the focus of a media uproar, by which time the officer had assumed command of *Enterprise*. He was relieved in January 2011 after a Navy investigation and board of inquiry.
42. Richard H. Rosene, "Naval Leadership Assessment and Development" (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Pa., 2005), p. 12.
43. U.S. Navy Dept., NAVPERS [Naval Personnel Command] Form 1610/2 (Rev. 8-10), "Fitness Report & Counseling Record (W2-O6)," available at www.public.navy.mil/. See block 35.
44. Sam Feldman, "CNO, Other Leaders Underline Command Conduct Standards," *Navy Times*, 18 July 2011.
45. Naval IG study, p. 18.
46. For discussion on embedding mechanisms and organizational culture, see Craig Bullis, "Self-awareness: Enhancing Strategic Leader Development," in *Strategic Leadership: The General's Art*, ed. Mark R. Grandstaff and Georgia Sorenson (Vienna, Va.: Management Concepts, 2009), p. 30.

REVISITING THE NAVY'S MORAL COMPASS

Has Commanding Officer Conduct Improved?

Captain Jason A. Vogt, U.S. Navy

Nobody trusts or has confidence in leaders who believe they cannot be held accountable for what they do.

Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., U.S. Navy

The U.S. Navy continues to suffer from poor decision making among a small number of commanding officers (COs), as demonstrated by continued headlines: “Squadron Commander Relieved of Duty after Alleged Drunk Driving Incident”;¹ “Amphib [amphibious force] CO Fired, Source Says Linked to Alleged Bribery Scheme”;² “Sub Commander Relieved of Duty after Woman Alleges He Faked Death to End Affair”;³ “Navy Investigates ex-Blue Angels Commander after Complaint He Allowed Sexual Harassment”;⁴ and “Navy Skipper Abdicated Command.”⁵ Since the publication in these pages in 2012 of Captain Mark F. Light’s “The Navy’s Moral Compass,” individual cases of Navy commanding officers making poor decisions of such kinds have continued to trouble Navy leadership.⁶ Considering that more than 2,350 Navy billets are designated as command positions, the infrequency of such events reflects the dedication of most commanding officers.⁷ In fact, as Vice Admiral Thomas Copeman, addressing the specifics of a misconduct event as Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, wrote in 2014, “In my experience [the violations] are beyond rare; they are . . . wholly unrepresentative of the supremely talented men and women filling positions of leadership.”⁸

While it involves overall a statistically low percentage of commanding officers, continued misbehavior reinforces Captain Light’s assessment that it is a potential integrity issue for the Navy. In the three years since the original article, substantial debate has occurred, and corrective actions have been taken by the Navy. Is it enough? Is it even

moving in the right direction? This article reviews Captain Light's findings and updates his analysis with subsequent data; explains and assesses actions taken by Navy leadership since 2011 to improve the quality of commanding officers; and explores additional variables in today's debate on commanding officer behavior. Finally, the article presents recommendations to reduce future personal indiscretions by commanding officers.

The Moral Compass and Inspector General's Report 2010

"The Navy's Moral Compass" reviewed and analyzed data provided by the Career Progression Division of the Naval Personnel Command (NPC) on CO "detachments for cause" (DFCs) from 1999 through 2010.⁹ These data sorted firings into two broad categories (as resulting from professional or personal-conduct reasons), then broke down the latter by community (air, surface, submarine, etc.), rank, and duty type. Captain Light academically analyzed that material and concluded that the Navy had to accomplish three tasks to elevate the quality of the commanding officer corps and the character of naval leadership.¹⁰

First, Navy leadership had to establish a sense of urgency, not just to deal with issues quickly (and publicly, to maintain transparency), but also to effect change that would preclude unscrupulous actions in the first place. Second, he argued, the Navy needed to set an ethical and moral standard (preferably in writing, as the Army did in *Army: Profession of Arms* and the *Army Operating Concept* of 2010) to help create a shift in the Navy mind-set and culture as a whole.¹¹ Finally, the Navy had to improve the metrics, specifically the documentation, in periodic evaluations under the Bureau of Personnel's Fitness Report and Counseling Record, of potential moral shortcomings. Captain Light concluded with three recommendations, first that Navy leadership elevate the priority of ethical behavior, establishing a central database of reliefs of COs owing to personal or professional failures to facilitate tracking and analysis. Additionally, he urged them to undertake a campaign to set standards of integrity and honorable behavior. Lastly, he argued, the officer fitness report ought to be modified in format and concept to address character and integrity specifically.¹²

Concurrently with the original publication of "The Navy's Moral Compass," the Navy Inspector General (IG) released a study on reliefs of commanding officers for cause.¹³ Focusing on firings between 1 January 2005 and 30 June 2010, the report determined the Navy's overall commanding officer DFC firing rate to be low—approximately 1 percent per year, with a small variance from year to year. It saw no correlation between CO DFCs and career paths, personality traits, accession sources, time in command, or year groups; however, it noted a preponderance of Navy-wide CO reliefs for personal misconduct.¹⁴ In personal misconduct instances, it appears, fired COs either lacked the insight into their own motives and weaknesses that might have prevented unacceptable behavior or felt they had the power to conceal the misconduct (the "Bathsheba Syndrome").¹⁵ Furthermore, the study had found that implementation of four recommendations of a 2004 Navy Inspector General DFC study had had no discernible impact on the DFC rate (though the recommendations themselves were valid and represented a solid foundation for long-term reduction).¹⁶ The 2010 report concluded with three further

recommendations. The first was to establish an officer leadership training continuum from accession through major command, a continuum under a single “owner,” to provide consistency in curriculum development and execution. Second, improved oversight by immediate superiors in command (ISICs) would better identify potential or ongoing issues earlier. Third, it recommended that the Navy enforce existing requirements for Command Climate Assessments and their executive summaries.¹⁷

Actions and Reactions

Whether in response to the two 2010 publications or, as a matter of coincidence, to continued (and sometimes very public) CO failures, Navy leadership began taking steps in early 2011 to address the trend. Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Commander, Fleet Forces Command, recognized that the majority of detachments for cause of COs during his tenure had been for personal misconduct, a fact that he confronted in a memorandum to his subordinates and through his official Navy blog.¹⁸ This public acknowledgment was the first of several initiatives by senior Navy officials to instill more honor and integrity in the position of commanding officer.

The “Charge of Command”

By June 2011 Admiral Gary Roughead, then Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), distributed a “Charge of Command”—a memorandum notifying current and prospective commanding officers of his expectation that each of them would meet the highest standards of personal and professional conduct while in command.¹⁹ Roughead’s memo addressed three essential principles he, as CNO, considered to constitute the heart and soul of command: authority, responsibility, and accountability. His document tied these principles both to the tradition of naval command and to Title 10 of the U.S. Code, which speaks to the standards of conduct by individuals in command.²⁰ His successor, Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, reissued and reinforced the Charge of Command, requiring serving and prospective commanding officers not only to review the memorandum but to sign it with their immediate superiors as a compact between Navy leadership and Navy commanders and commanding officers.²¹ This step created not only a counseling opportunity and mentoring tool but also a contract between the Navy and its commanding officers regarding personal conduct.

The Command Qualification Program

Admiral Greenert further codified the process of setting standards and identifying future commanding officers by introducing a Command Qualification Program.²² Released in June 2012 with an implementation deadline of 1 September 2012, the governing instruction plainly set out policy, procedures, and basic, minimum standards for the qualifying and screening of naval officers for command. Until then individual communities had determined for themselves how to go about selecting their future commanding officers. This autonomy had resulted in sometimes widely varying criteria. Now, for the first time, the Navy applied minimum standards across all officer “designators” (e.g., unrestricted

line, Supply Corps) and required, among other things, that potential commanding officers be screened by an administrative board. In support of the Command Qualification Program, the Command Leadership School's Command Course, required for prospective commanding officers, instituted a written test covering tenets of leadership, duties and responsibilities of commanding officers, and authorities as laid down in U.S. Navy Regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.²³

Admiral Greenert further approved a Navy Leader Development Strategy, to promote leader character development, emphasize ethics, and reinforce the service's "core values." The strategy called for a career-long continuum to develop leaders and for a focus on character development to help young officers prepare for command.²⁴ The strategy led to the evolution of the Command Leadership School into the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center (NLEC).²⁵ Aligned with the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island, NLEC now develops curriculum and performs assessment to instill the tenets of ethical leadership throughout the Navy; to develop and guide leaders with a strong sense of responsibility, authority, and accountability; and to impart commitment to the Navy's core values and ethos to sailors.²⁶ Vice Admiral Walter E. "Ted" Carter, Jr., now superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy but at the time a rear admiral and President of the Naval War College, described the establishment of NLEC as "an opportunity to take a more proactive approach in improving a culture of character development in conjunction with continued command leader education" with a goal of "improved leader development."²⁷ With a consistent qualification program and a focus at NLEC on ethical and character expectations, clear standards and expectations are now set for current and future commanding officers.

Command Climate Assessments

Recent events have brought renewed rigor to the Defense and Navy Departments' Equal Opportunity programs, specifically regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation and addressing issues ranging from hazing to harassment, assault, and fraternization. One measure of the program's effectiveness is the Command Climate Assessment, a survey that should occur within ninety days after a new CO assumes command, with annual follow-up assessments during the command tour.²⁸ The Navy's use of the Command Climate Assessment to support its equal opportunity program goes back many years, with little change in responsibilities defined for the ISIC and commanding officer.²⁹ Unfortunately, over the years many commands did not fully execute the program, typically using the results largely for "internal consumption" and not making a priority to forward results to ISICs. This resulted in inconsistent application of lessons learned. Two developments have refocused the Equal Opportunity program and renewed interest in the Command Climate Assessment: the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and increased scrutiny on the military's Sexual Assault Prevention & Response program. These issues have made the Command Climate Assessment a useful tool both within the unit and as a measure of that unit up the chain of command.

While the Command Climate Assessment cannot alone identify CO wrongdoing or personal misconduct, it can warn the ISIC to pay close attention to individual commanding officers who may need assistance, guidance, or stricter oversight. Such

thoroughness by the ISIC would match the 2010 Navy Inspector General's recommendation that existing requirements for Command Climate Assessments be enforced.³⁰ Unfortunately, for a period after publication of the report there were no assessments at all; contractual issues with the company responsible for maintaining the servers involved prevented surveys for approximately six months in late 2012 and early 2013.³¹ With the resumption of surveys has come renewed Navy leadership emphasis: commands now must use a "triangulation" method, utilizing multiple sources of information (e.g., the surveys themselves, records reviews, and focus groups, interviews, and observations by command assessment teams).³² Renewed emphasis on ISIC involvement, to include follow-up reports on actions taken in response to assessments, should make the Command Climate Assessment a more useful tool in the future.

Reactions and Response

A consequence of the increasing importance of social media and "viral" networks is nearly immediate discussion of changes or potential changes in the way business is conducted. This was the case with the Charge of Command; feedback varied from strong support to outright aversion. The Association of the United States Navy was quick to announce support: "Admiral Gary Roughead's legacy to the nation will be an inspiration to the officers and leaders that will follow him."³³ Some blogs condemned the document, one calling the Charge of Command "a pathetic response to the real problem we have with COs being fired. Only a fonctionnaire [*sic*] thinks that a bit of paper can substitute for solid leadership and a culture of honor and integrity—but that is the decision that has been made."³⁴ Military-interest publications such as *Navy Times* were quick to note each step to improve leadership, with requisite editorial comment. Meanwhile, each CO firing has continued to be a "front page" headline. Websites like SailorBob.com, a U.S. Naval Institute-sponsored professional forum for Surface Warfare Officers, now offer informal environments where members can discuss and argue about the directions taken by Navy leadership, debate the conclusions of various studies, and dissect each firing event.³⁵ In this and other, similar forums hosted by naval warfare communities, virtual peer pressure offers an additional deterrent to misconduct while individual events and issues are deliberated. However, debate and opinion pieces do not sufficiently measure success. Continued analysis of commanding officer firings will be necessary to determine whether the adjustments that have been made are meaningful.

2011–2013 Data and Trend Analysis

The intention for this article was to update Captain Light's data directly, by requesting DFC data for 2011 through 2013 from the source he used, the Career Progression Division of the Naval Personnel Command. However, owing to ongoing official investigations and the ever-increasing scrutiny of CO firings, the data were not forthcoming. But comparable statistics can be collected from other sources, including the Freedom of Information Act. Moreover, as the topic of COs being removed from command has high visibility, firing events have been documented by not only *Navy Times* but numerous websites, chat rooms, and blogs.³⁶

However, because not all firings result in formal detachments for cause, these data would be likely to identify more firings than are officially documented by the Navy, to which Captain Light's work confined itself.³⁷ It being understood that this difference in data sources leaves room for challenge, this research attempted to maintain consistency by retaining previously determined definitions and by considering all firings as potential DFCs. A list of fired commanding officers published by *Navy Times*, the most public data for 2011–13, was used as the baseline.³⁸ A known disparity exists in data sets (for example, *Navy Times* reports seventeen firings for 2010, NPC three), but to lessen its impact the analysis focused less on statistical specifics than on apparent trends potentially linked to Navy actions.³⁹

Figure 1 presents the total number of firings from 2010 through 2013. Firings occurring in 2010 were addressed in Captain Light's article; the 2010 data are provided here only as a starting point. This analysis focuses on firings occurring after the publication of the Charge of Command.

Using the definition of personal misconduct in the 2010 Inspector General report and previously established categories, removals were sorted by cause as "personal," "professional," or "unknown."⁴⁰ To make more specific the general caveats noted above, when NPC officially determines whether each removal in this data set is a detachment for cause, several, those not found to be DFCs, may be removed. Additionally, when all now-pending Freedom of Information Act requests are resolved, a number

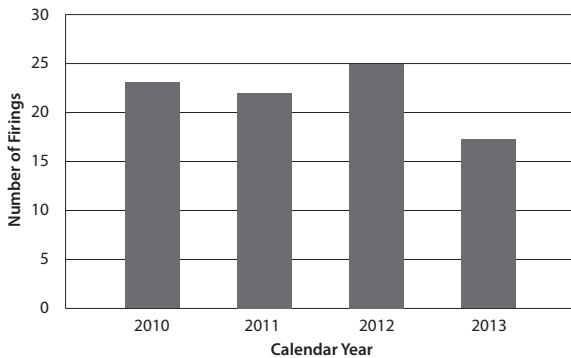


Figure 1. Total Commanding Officers Fired

will likely move from "unknown" to another category. Figure 2 breaks down firings for personal, professional, and unknown (or unpublished) reasons. It can be seen that the number of "unknowns" has increased in recent years. This is the result of a lack of detail provided in reasons for firing, often simply "loss of confidence [i.e.,

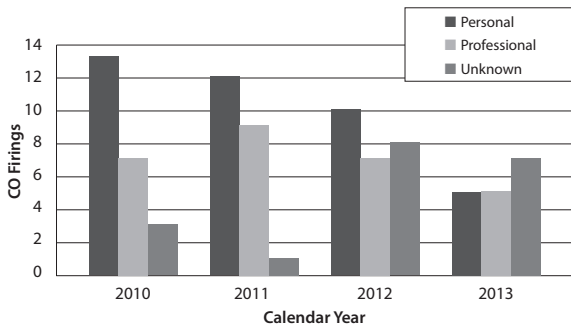


Figure 2. Firing by Type: Personal, Professional, Unknown

on the part of a superior] in ability to command." It might be assumed that many firings categorized as "unknown" for lack of published circumstances were actually for professional reasons, for which the "sensational" personal failings that might produce detailed media

accounts would be absent. However, for this analysis, cases without those details remain “unknown.”

Concentrating only on the firings for reasons identified as personal, the data trend downward from a high of thirteen in 2010 to only five in 2013. Six of the twelve firings during 2011 occurred after Admiral Roughead’s Charge of Command memorandum was published. Three of the six firings occurred within a month of publication, leaving room for debate whether offending actions had occurred before the Charge of Command was circulated. Breaking the data down by community (figure 3) does not reveal any trends or patterns, presumably because of the decreasing number of cases. As both Captain Light and the IG report found, no trends or patterns are apparent in occurrences after the Charge of Command with respect to rank of the individual or whether an operational (at-sea) or shore command is involved. In every case involving personal failings, the transgression (misconduct, inappropriate behavior, alcohol-related incident, etc.) was independent of professional requirements. Given the shrinking data set, therefore, it is necessary to investigate beyond community groups and explore individual cases for trends and linkages.

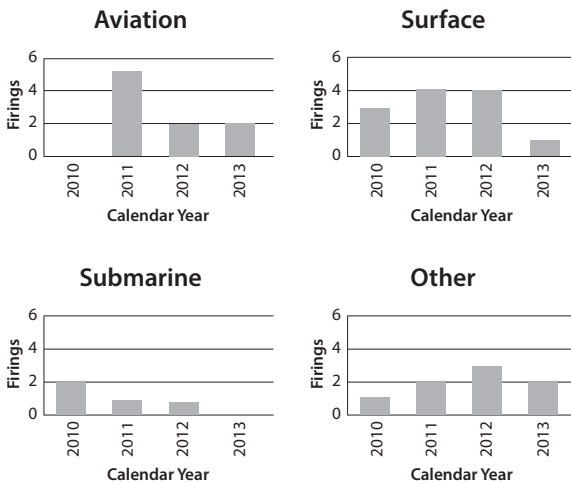


Figure 3. Firings by Community (Post-Charge of Command) for Personal Reasons

the Charge of Command was implemented. Why? This is a small number, considering the number of commands and commanding officers in the Navy, but the reasons why some individuals still do not “get it” merit further scrutiny.

Previous reports asserted that organizational culture plays no role in CO misconduct.⁴¹ Both the 2004 and 2010 Inspector General reports found no discernible correlations between career paths, personality traits, accession sources, time in command, or year groups (i.e., year of commissioning).⁴² However, in contrast to the shrinking overall number of firings per year and generally even distribution of firings across communities, one peak in recent data is worth noting as an outlier—the aviation electronic-warfare community, comprising Electronic Attack (VAQ) and

Since the Navy initiated steps to improve commanding officer accountability, the trend lines have appeared favorable in terms of the goal of reducing firings for personal misconduct. Though only a few years into the enterprise, the result is indicative of the effectiveness of giving prospective commanding officers the message regarding expectations of them while in command. Nevertheless, more than thirty Navy COs have been fired for personal misconduct since

Fleet Air Reconnaissance (VQ) squadrons. The VAQ and VQ subcommunities account for approximately 10 percent of the Navy's aviation squadrons.⁴³ Since implementation of the Charge of Command this subculture has been responsible for half the aviation COs fired for misconduct (five of ten), 17 percent of all misconduct CO reliefs between 2011 and 2013, and the first Navy CO fired for misconduct in 2014.⁴⁴

This anomaly could exist for any number of reasons. Given the relatively short time and small numbers involved Navy-wide, it may simply be an unfortunate coincidence. Or there may be a cultural divergence that either was not present or went unrecognized during previous studies, some tendency that has developed out of the culture, training, and ethos of a group that is stationed, when not deployed, at one location (the Navy's VAQ subcommunity and the VQ squadron where a firing occurred during the period reviewed are both based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, in Washington). Or possibly this is a niche that simply has not had enough time pass to absorb the new standards for commanding officers into its system. On the basis of standard patterns of rotations and promotions, the department heads who in 2011 witnessed their commanding officers signing (among the first to do so) the Charge of Command have not yet returned to be COs themselves. To know absolutely that every year group of every community understands and executes the Charge of Command may take between four and seven years—a period the Navy is just now entering.

An instance that more obviously counters previous reports that organizational culture plays no role is that of the Blue Angels. Although the officer recently investigated for misconduct had already completed his tour in the squadron and was in a subsequent noncommand billet when his reassignment occurred, the causal events, described as his promoting a hostile work environment and tolerating sexual harassment, had occurred during his tenure as CO.⁴⁵ The investigation determined that while the CO was responsible, the organizational culture had devolved into something from a bygone era. Pornography, lewd comments, and raunchy pranks were widely condoned and tolerated, just "boys being boys," all under the direct observation of the commanding officer.⁴⁶ The inquiry resulted in not only the firing of the CO but a restructuring of the Blue Angels organization.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, neither organizational culture nor rationalization by individual members can excuse actions that are clearly and plainly labeled inappropriate by the Navy. With the implementation of the Charge of Command, misconduct by a commanding officer comes down to a conscious decision. None of those fired were in any doubt about what was right and wrong, not only in terms of Navy regulations but also, in the vast majority of cases, according to law, a moral code, or both. Mechanisms are in place—training for prospective COs by the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center, the Command Qualification Program, the Charge of Command, clear statements of the expectations for commanding officers and their immediate superiors, and routine and standard Command Climate Assessments—to minimize commanding officer misconduct. But more can be done.

A True, Long-Term, and Sustainable Solution

To have no commanding officers relieved for cause would not be an achievable goal; professional mishaps will occur that warrant holding a CO accountable. But it is not unrealistic to strive to eliminate reliefs due to misconduct or individual ethical failure. The positive actions described here are good first steps. But consistent enforcement of these topics and follow-up initiatives are necessary to avoid a long-term appearance that the Navy's response was simply reactive, a "Band-Aid," not a true, long-term, and sustainable solution. To continue to build on the gains already achieved, the following recommendations are offered.

Be Transparent and Consistent, Navy

When the Navy attempts to move forward, it often proves its own worst enemy. Two consecutive CNOs have placed the integrity of commanding officers high on their priority lists and set standards of performance. Yet the public assumption is that "Big Navy" has something to hide—because commanding officers are relieved without official statement about whether the reasons were professional or personal. The ubiquitous "loss of confidence" leaves much to the imagination, particularly in a social-media and blog environment where the allegation of hiding details results in overall loss of confidence in the broader establishment. This lack of transparency is compounded each time a firing is not publicly acknowledged or officially tracked because it did not fit an administrative criterion (i.e., the financial parameters of a formal detachment for cause).

The 2010 Inspector General report acknowledged several cases of commanding officers relieved early that it could have considered but did not because the DFC process had not been initiated.⁴⁸ The IG investigation had no reliable way to determine how often COs had been detached early but quietly, as if their tours had been successful, when a DFC might have been more appropriate.⁴⁹ Most conspicuously, in 2003 when a reported twenty-six commanding officers were relieved, only seven were listed by the Naval Personnel Command as DFCs.⁵⁰ The combination of potentially inconsistent Navy data with Navy Personnel Command unwillingness to release a comprehensive list makes evident a lack of transparency concerning CO misconduct.

The way to rise above what does or does not constitute a DFC is to call it what it is—a firing is a firing. Restricting official concern to reliefs that cost the Navy money will, in the long run, erode trust in the service and bring its integrity into question. The removal of commanding officers prior to projected rotation dates should be addressed by ISICs whether they occur for operational reasons or not.⁵¹ If a "no-cost DFC" category is created, future studies will have a more comprehensive data set to analyze. The importance of dealing with all commanding officer firings was addressed in the 2004 IG report, though not in 2010. Such a complete listing might challenge the analysis of this article, but thereafter there would be a consistent basis for future analysis, discussion, and debate.

Compounding the appearance of a lack of transparency was the Navy's acceptance of the unavailability of Command Assessments for six months. Contractual and budget issues were allowed to disable a leadership tool. The 2010 Inspector General's

report had stated, “Command climate assessments would be a better tool for commands if there was a broader understanding throughout the fleet” of what assessments were and how to use them;⁵² not using them at all depreciated them in the eyes of the fleet. Additionally, the IG had found that in almost all the CO detachments for cause correct use of the assessments, especially accurate executive summaries, would have highlighted early for ISICs the behavior and command-climate problems.⁵³ To have been denied the assessment process so soon after it had been identified as necessary was a mixed signal.

Progress toward transparency would also be achieved by a more thorough tracking system. In an age where baseball sabermetrics can track the actual (and even predict potential) performance of individual players in specific situations, the Navy ought to be able to track more closely the development of potential commanding officers and performance of current ones. Correlating data not only of firings but also leading to and during command tours—such as who had worked for whom over the years and what had been said by and about individuals in “360-degree” evaluations—might uncover linkages or trends not yet considered. No record now follows how subordinates of COs relieved for misconduct fare in future positions or suggests whether there is any correlation to their own future misconduct. While developing such a capability would be a herculean task, it would be within the mission of the Navy’s Human Resources community, specifically its Core Competencies of management and development.⁵⁴ Until such analysis is established and employed, public speculation, suspicion, and scrutiny will continue.

Reexamine the Data

The Inspector General reports completed in 2004 and 2010 each took an objective look at the DFC process and came up with recommendations to address future commanding officer failings. For the reasons explained above, however, the picture the reports presented was incomplete. While it provided enough clarity for the CNO to determine that the Charge of Command, Command Qualification Program, and Command Climate Assessments were necessary, incompleteness of data may have the Navy chasing symptoms rather than a cure. It is time for another official Navy review of not just the DFC process but any and all removals of COs prior to their original rotation dates. A harder look at COs will produce a more complete understanding of the effectiveness of current and future initiatives to eliminate personal misconduct that results in firings.

Establish and Enforce Dissuasive (Monetary) Measures

Despite any amount of training, formal setting of personal and professional expectations, or examples of colleagues who are relieved for their own misconduct, the risks may not be high enough to deter those on the edge. When a commanding officer is relieved for individual failures, the topic quickly appears in articles, comment sections of periodicals, blogs, and chat rooms. In almost every case someone offers a variation on the statement “Commander X may no longer be the commanding officer, but he will still get to retire with his twenty years, receive his full pension, get a lucrative

position outside the Navy, and other than some fleeting embarrassment he will receive no real punishment.⁷

Command is the pinnacle of the military profession, and it is not a part-time job. It is not conducted only during business hours. As Admiral Roughead once said, commanders are duty bound to uphold strict behavioral standards, even when off duty.⁵⁵ Whether a commanding officer's misconduct is deliberate (driving under the influence of alcohol, bribery, fraternization, etc.) or results from failure to fulfill duties assigned or abdication of them (as occurred twice recently, with the Blue Angels and the guided-missile cruiser USS *Cowpens*), the commanding officer remains responsible.⁵⁶ As in other professions, a leader must be held accountable when performance results in failure. In most professions failure often results in removal of professional position and credentials, pecuniary penalties, or both. Doctors who do not perform adequately risk the loss of their licenses and punitive judgments for malpractice. Lawyers can be disbarred or sanctioned for demonstrated inability. Even midshipmen are held accountable for failure once midway through their training; they owe time in service or, if they cannot complete their training, must reimburse the Navy for the education received.⁵⁷ So what is the cost of the inability of a commanding officer to live up to the commitment he or she accepted by signing the Charge of Command? The Navy has often removed faltering leaders from authority but has not pursued financial compensation for the time, training, and trust invested in them.

It is time to debate the question. The Navy should create a postcommand screening board, charged with reviewing the details of individual firings. This board would be independent of the relieved individual's chain of command and unrelated to any pending action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice resulting from misconduct. This board should have the power to recoup bonuses from or impose other financial penalties on those who have made poor personal decisions while in command. This does not mean that every failed commanding officer would or should owe a financial debt to the Navy. For a purely professional failure, the balance might be restored by removal of the individual from the command; an objective review by this panel might find no further action necessary. But a personal failure, specifically misconduct, can be viewed as a breach of contract, an inability of the individual to abide by the Charge of Command. Many commanding officer positions are designated as meriting additional pay or bonuses; the financial penalty could be simply requiring the failed commander to return them.⁵⁸ Bonuses received in command (e.g., training or specialty bonuses or flight, sea, nuclear, medical specialty, command-responsibility, or other critical-skills pay) could be considered insurance against poor decisions—refundable security deposits by the Navy. Each firing would have to be reviewed individually, as each commanding officer represents a different level of investment by the Navy in getting him or her to and through command. And just as the Navy holds a midshipman responsible for failing to complete the course of instruction leading to commission, so should the Navy hold responsible its commanding officers who fail to complete their command tours. For the more than 99 percent of commanding officers who live within the Charge of Command and successfully complete their command tours the hazard is nonexistent. Individuals considering accepting the risk of misconduct may find in financial penalties the necessary motivation to choose better—motivation that previous initiatives have not supplied. And even

by preventing one firing, this option would take the Navy a step closer to eliminating misconduct among commanding officers.

Since publication of “The Navy’s Moral Compass” the Navy has made progress to reduce commanding officer misconduct. Progress has been achieved not only by implementing new initiatives but also by ensuring that previously established guidelines are properly executed, resulting in a solid basis for further reducing commanding officer firings for misconduct in the future. Holding commanding officers to a consistent and higher standard is necessary if they are to achieve long-term success in the position, and until the number of misconduct cases is zero, the pressure must be sustained. The Navy must continue to strive for a high standard, improve transparency regarding its standards, continuously review data trends, and scrutinize those entrusted with command. And it must improve the process that identifies and tracks allegations when they arise—and then hold individuals accountable.

Notes

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11. See U.S. Army Dept., *The United States Army Operating Concept, 2016–2028*, TRADOC Pam 525-3-1 (Fort Monroe, Va.: Training and Doctrine Command, 19 August 2010), available at www.tradoc.army.mil/, and *idem*, *Army: Profession of Arms—the Profession after 10 Years of Persistent Conflict* (West Point, N.Y.: Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, October 2010), available at cape.army.mil/.
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13. U.S. Navy Dept., *Commanding Officer Detach for Cause Study 2010* (Washington, D.C.: Navy Inspector General) [hereafter *Naval IG 2010*], executive summary.
14. *Ibid.* For the purposes of *Naval IG 2010*, “Personal Misconduct” included five subcategories: “Orders Violations,” “Computer Pornography,” “Falsifying Documents,” “Adultery/Inappropriate Relationships/Harassment/Sexual Assault,” and “Alcohol/DUI [driving under the influence of alcohol]” (executive summary).

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16. Naval IG 2010, p. 20.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.
18. McMichael, “Leadership Memo Cites *San Antonio* Fatality”; Adm. J. C. Harvey, Jr., “USS PONCE (LPD 15) CO/XO Relief” *Archived U.S. Fleet Forces Command Blog (2009–2012)*, 26 April 2011, usfleetforces.blogspot.com/.
19. Adm. G. Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, “The Charge of Command,” Memorandum for All Prospective Commanding Officers, 5370 ser. N00/100050, 9 June 2011, Washington, D.C., available at www.public.navy.mil/. See also Sam Fellman, “CNO Underlines Command Conduct Standards,” *Navy Times*, 18 July 2011.
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30. Naval IG 2010.
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35. *SailorBob 2.0: The Real SWO Gouge*, www.sailorbob.com.
36. There are several Internet locations where the Navy community has created opportunities online to discuss events or post opinions. Examples include *SailorBob 2.0: The Real SWO Gouge*, www.sailorbob.com; *Information Dissemination*, www.informationdissemination.net; *Cdr Salamander*, cdrsalamander.blogspot.com; *I Like the Cut of His Jib!!*, navycaptain-therealnavy.blogspot.com; and *The Stupid Shall Be Punished*, bubbleheads.blogspot.com.
37. As explained in “The Navy’s Moral Compass,” detachments for cause are administrative actions that release funding to move personnel subsequent to the removal for cause of naval officers from their current duty assignments; DFCs may not be required if suitable officers are immediately available

- to relieve the officers who have been fired, and such instances may not be documented. See U.S. Navy Dept., "MILPERSMAN 1611-020 CH-18: Officer Detachment for Cause," in *Military Personnel Manual* (Washington, D.C.: 30 March 2007), sec. 1.
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 41. Light, "Navy's Moral Compass."
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 44. Janis Reid, "NAS Whidbey Squadron Commanding Officer Fired for Racism, Other Misdeeds," *Whidbey News-Times*, 13 January 2014; "Whidbey Commander Relieved," *Whidbey News-Times*, 28 February 2012; Sam Fellman, "Report: Fling in Italy Sank Flagship CO's Career," *Navy Times*, 13 January 2014; "NAS Whidbey Squadron Commander Relieved of Duty"; "Growler Squadron CO Fired on Deployment," *Navy Times*, 19 July 2011.
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 49. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
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 51. Changes of command may occur before the incumbent's projected rotation date for such reasons as changing operational commitments or to accommodate an officer's career requirements and improve promotion eligibility. Such events should be well documented by the ISIC.
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 53. *Ibid.*
 54. "Navy Personnel Command, Human Resources Officer Homepage," *U.S. Navy*, www.public.navy.mil/.
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MENTORING IN THE U.S. NAVY

Experiences and Attitudes of Senior Navy Personnel

W. Brad Johnson and Gene R. Andersen

The first operational definition of mentoring in organizations—offered by Kathy Kram in 1985—proposed that mentoring relationships facilitate an individual's professional development through two distinct categories of “mentoring functions.”¹ Career functions included sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and provision of challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions included role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Considerable empirical evidence tends to support the importance of both career and psychosocial components to good mentorship.² Mentorships in any organizational environment tend to share the following characteristics: positive emotional valence, increasing mutuality, a range of career and psychosocial functions, an intentional focus on the development of the mentee's career and professional identity, and a generative interest on the part of the mentor in passing along a professional legacy.³ Excellent mentors are intentional about the mentor role. They select mentees thoughtfully, invest significant time and energy getting to know their mentees, and deliberately offer the career and support functions most relevant to their mentees' unique developmental needs.⁴

Deliberate mentorship features prominently in the Navy's recently released Leader Development Strategy, a common framework for leader development Navy-wide.⁵ The strategy recognizes that people constitute the Navy's most valuable strategic asset and that deliberate development of individual sailors and officers must become a top priority. Although mentoring is infused throughout the four core elements of the strategy (experience, education, training, and personal development), it is most explicit in the fourth element: “Personal development . . . includes performance evaluation, coaching, counseling, and mentoring.”⁶ The architects of this Leader Development Strategy make it clear that effective mentor-leaders focus attention on the individual development of junior personnel.

In a 2010 article in the *Naval War College Review*, we summarized the empirical evidence lending strong support to the benefits of mentoring relationships for junior persons fortunate enough to experience them in any organizational context.⁷ An updated review confirms that mentoring matters. Hundreds of rigorous studies, meta-analyses, and other quantitative reviews make it clear that those who report having been mentored accrue a number of reliable benefits in comparison with those not mentored.⁸ Across disciplines and organizations, mentoring is consistently associated with greater work satisfaction and performance, higher retention, better physical health and self-esteem, positive work relationships, stronger organizational commitment, career motivation, professional competence, and career recognition and success.⁹

Mentoring in the military is no exception.¹⁰ The few existing studies on the prevalence and efficacy of mentorship among active-duty personnel reveal that having a mentor while in uniform tends to bolster satisfaction with one's military career, provides a range of important career and psychosocial advantages, and heightens the probability that mentored service members will in turn mentor others themselves. In spite of these findings, the term "mentoring" tends to evoke a range of reactions among service members today. There are many factors at play here. These include miscommunications caused by conflicting definitions of mentoring, formal mentoring programs that are sometimes perceived as onerous administrative burdens (versus culturally accepted and integrated mechanisms for developing junior personnel), and lingering perceptions among some that mentoring connotes favoritism and unfair advantage.¹¹ There is also some evidence that although military personnel want and value mentorships, they resist any program that attempts to legislate or formalize relationships.¹²

It is easy to appreciate the Navy's quandary with regard to formal mentoring programs. On one hand, there is considerable evidence that *informal mentorships* (those that emerge naturally through mutual initiation and ongoing interaction, free of external intervention or planning) result in stronger outcomes for mentees than are found for mentees *formally assigned* to mentors.¹³ In most organizational contexts, both mentors and mentees appear to seek out mentorship matches on the basis of similarities, shared interests, and frequent positive interactions. Two scholars in this field, Belle Ragins and John Cotton, have nicely described the sometimes-unconscious process at work in senior personnel as they gravitate toward junior members of the organization: "Informal mentoring relationships develop on the basis of mutual identification and the fulfillment of career needs. Mentors select protégés who are viewed as younger versions of themselves, and the relationship provides mentors with a sense of generativity or contribution to future generations."¹⁴ Nonetheless, there appear to be problems associated with compelling people to participate in mentorships. In light of the well-documented success of informal mentoring in the business world, many organizations—including the U.S. military—have moved to formalize the process. Planned and instigated by organizations, formal mentoring programs involve some process for matching or assigning dyads as well as some level of subsequent oversight and evaluation.¹⁵ In contrast to informal mentorships, formalized relationships tend to be somewhat less emotionally intense, more visible within the organization, focused on specific developmental goals, and confined to predetermined periods of time.¹⁶

From these findings, it is easy to conclude that organizations should let nature take its course when it comes to mentoring, hoping that enough informal mentorships will

evolve to meet the needs of junior personnel. But here is the rub: when an organization relies exclusively on chemistry and the informal connections that may develop between junior and senior personnel, fewer mentorships develop. That is, organizations that create some structure for facilitating mentor-mentee matches have more junior members of the community getting mentored. Of course, the best structure for a specific organization may not include a broad mandatory program; at times, voluntary programs and initiatives to stimulate and reward good mentoring are the best fit.

In an earlier article, we highlighted several lingering questions about mentoring in the military. One of these is the question of the perceived value of both mentoring generally and formalized mentoring programs specifically among leaders in the fleet. Although the recent Leader Development Strategy indicates attention to mentorship at the highest levels of Navy leadership, we wondered how “deck plate” officers and senior enlisted perceive mentoring in the Navy.¹⁷

The Naval War College Mentoring Study

In light of the relatively sparse evidence illuminating mentoring in the U.S. Navy, and in an effort to assess the attitudes of officers and senior enlisted regarding formal mentoring programs, we conducted a multimethod study of mentoring among 149 Navy personnel attending senior leadership courses at the Naval War College (fifty-five officers, ninety-four senior enlisted). All study participants consented to taking part. Participants were enrolled, variously, in four professional development courses: the Command Master Chief / Chief of the Boat Course (CMC/COB, $n = 9$); the Senior Enlisted Academy course (SEA, $n = 85$); Command Leadership School (CLS, $n = 32$); or the Maritime Staff Operators Course (MSOC, $n = 23$). Participants responded to a brief, four-page survey requesting demographic data, experience relative to mentoring in the fleet, and perspectives on mentoring programs in the Navy. A smaller sample of participants was randomly selected for participation in four course-specific focus groups on the topic of mentoring in the Navy.

Among the 149 participants, twelve were women. The mean age was forty years, and the average length of naval service was twenty years. Self-reported ethnicities were 110 white (75.3 percent), nineteen black (13 percent), ten Hispanic (6.8 percent), and five Native American / Pacific Islander (3.4 percent). Eighty-five percent of enlisted participants were either E-8 or E-9 (that is, senior chief or master chief petty officer), while 89 percent of officers were of the pay grades O-4 to O-6 (lieutenant commander to captain). Using a five-point scale (1 = Extremely Dissatisfied, 5 = Extremely Satisfied), we asked the participants to rate their overall level of satisfaction with their Navy careers. The mean satisfaction rating was 4.6 (enlisted = 4.7, officer = 4.5).

A full 91 percent of our sample reported having had at least one significant mentor during their Navy careers (enlisted = 94.7 percent, officer = 85.5 percent). On average, participants reported 3.5 important mentors during their naval careers. By and large, mentors had been men (95 percent) and in nearly all cases had been older than participants (91.2 percent), by an average of nine years. Ninety-three percent of mentors had been senior naval officers, and a full 81 percent had been in participants' chains

of command. Strikingly, a full 55 percent of officer participants reported that their primary mentors had been their commanding officers; this was true for only 1.2 percent of enlisted participants. On average, participants reported that their primary mentorships in the Navy had lasted for 4.7 years.

One section of the survey inquired about who had initiated the mentorship, followed by a narrative question asking those participants who had had primary mentors to “describe how the mentor relationship began.” On the issue of relationship initiation, most indicated that the relationship had been initiated by the mentors (49.3 percent). Representative narrative responses include the following: “My mentor identified me as someone with potential and engaged in providing me advice and counseling. Once initiated, I felt comfortable seeking advice as I faced challenges”; “He asked me about my goals, gave me direction on a daily basis, let me know my strengths and weaknesses”; “My mentor took an interest in me. He saw potential and helped me to see it”; and “I was required to return to a different career field and this person took an interest in me. He formally trained me, took ownership, and followed up with calls and emails on a regular basis.”

In other cases, the relationship was mutually initiated (32.8 percent): “Ours was a senior/subordinate relationship involving mutual interests, career and personal goals”; and “I was the Captain’s aide and after a few weeks in that capacity, a mentorship developed. I still seek his advice 6 years after that job ended.”

In a smaller proportion of cases, mentorships were initiated primarily by the mentee (14.2 percent): “I recognized this person as an example of what I wanted to become. He displayed my goals. All I had to do at that point was ask him to be my mentor”; “I asked for guidance on how to broaden my horizons. I kept going to him when I no longer felt challenged and needed something new”; and “I sought him out through informal talking and asking selection board questions.”

Only 3.7 percent of our participants indicated that the mentor-mentee match had been formed in the context of a formal mentoring program. These findings suggest that in 82 percent of all mentorships reported by participants, the relationships had been initiated primarily as a result of the mentors’ interest in and attention to the mentees.

We asked our participants to rate their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) with the proposition that several specific mentoring functions had been evident in their primary mentorships. We list the functions in the table by strength of participant endorsement.

These results indicate that excellent mentors in the fleet are active and deliberate in the roles of advocate, teacher/trainer, and career adviser. Moreover, mentors are consistently viewed as providing the personal acceptance, support, and encouragement that bolster the professional self-esteem of mentees. The fact that helping mentees bypass bureaucracy or obtain choice assignments are the mentor functions least frequently endorsed suggests that the perception of mentoring as mere favoritism, creating unfair privilege for a few, is not prevalent in the Navy.

To amplify further the behaviors of effective mentors, we asked mentored participants to respond to the following question: “Please describe an *event* or *experience* from the mentoring relationship which best illustrates how you benefitted from being mentored.” Responses fell into several consistent categories, including imparting wisdom/

Mentor Function	Mean
Advocated on my behalf	4.57
Developed my military skills	4.55
Enhanced my military career development	4.46
Offered me acceptance, support, and encouragement	4.45
Provided direct training or instruction	4.17
Increased my self-esteem	4.15
Increased my visibility/exposure within the Navy	4.14
Enhanced my creativity and problem-solving skills	3.96
Developed my personal ethics and professional values	3.83
Provided emotional support/counseling	3.82
Assisted in establishing professional networks	3.77
Served to protect me	3.64
Provided me opportunities (choice assignments)	3.50
Helped me bypass bureaucracy	3.03

perspective, career advocacy / exposure / challenge, personal counsel, support during adversity, and provision of a model/exemplar.

Responses illustrating the value of a mentor imparting wisdom in the form of a long-term view of one's naval career included these: "My mentor helped me learn to think strategically regarding the development of my career. She guided me into a course of instruction to help ensure future success in the Navy"; "My mentor gave me a glimpse of the road or path that I needed to take to achieve my personal and professional goals"; "He discussed a future job that I was not interested in but my community had offered me. His long term view helped direct my course"; "My mentor took an active role in ensuring that I chose a follow-on assignment that was conducive to career development"; and "He assisted me by guiding me to college and definitely changed my decision-making process."

One of the most prevalent response categories highlighted the value of mentor advocacy, exposure, and challenge: "I didn't fully understand what I was capable of. My mentor assigned me to a job that was out of my area of expertise and challenged me to get out of my comfort zone. Through this experience I learned another critical component of my duties and it made me an expert outside my field—I still have that confidence to tackle the jobs that I haven't already mastered"; "My mentor gave me a chance to demonstrate what I could do, then put his money where his mouth was by writing a strong recommendation letter to the screening board that got me selected"; "He pushed me to take challenging job assignments. Some of the assignments were given to me without

me having to ask for them”; “He recognized my abilities, pushed for recognition of my achievements and was instrumental in getting me the jobs I needed for career progression”; “Multiple times, when a high visibility problem came up, he would pick me to go with him to fix it. The amount of experience and recognition he provided is unmeasurable”; and “My mentor exposed me to a network of senior leaders and encouraged me to pursue more senior positions and get out of my normal comfort zone.”

Personal counseling and support constituted a third category of participants’ reflection regarding their mentors’ most salient mentoring behaviors: “I had a hard time adjusting to the Navy because I had been discriminated against on a constant basis. He showed me how to adapt”; “My mentor spent numerous hours guiding me on handling personal issues, keeping perspective, and problem-solving work relationship issues”; “She offered me acceptance, support, and encouragement”; “When I was going through a personal crisis about my career, he took the time to listen and give me honest and thorough advice”; “He was there for me personally when I went through a tough divorce”; “He has a way of helping me work through an issue and eventually lead me to the answers I already had for myself”; and “My mentor taught me to control my emotions and self-reflect to be more aware of my surroundings and how to be a professional.”

Related to personal counsel was a category of responses specifically reflecting on the value of the mentor’s support and encouragement during moments of great professional difficulty: “I was passed over for promotion. Interaction with my mentor provided the support and recommendations needed to improve my chances for the next look, resulting in promotion”; and “When I wasn’t selected for O-5, my mentor provided the coaching and visibility needed to successfully select in the next cycle.”

A final category of participants’ responses to our query about salient examples of their mentors’ behavior in the mentoring role had to do with the value of a powerful role model and professional exemplar: “My mentor (the CO [commanding officer]) led by example. His work ethic and leadership were worthy of emulation”; “He used his prior mistakes and experiences to give me food for thought”; “I had the opportunity to accompany this officer as part of a small team conducting an investigation, during which I had an opportunity to observe and learn about his approach to leadership, ethics, and professionalism in a very concentrated manner”; “He taught me how to be a better sailor, I wanted to emulate him”; and “I was always yelling at subordinates. He sat me down and told me how to treat people, but more than that, he showed me by his example.”

When we asked our officers and senior enlisted personnel to provide overall assessments of how important their primary mentor relationships had been to them both professionally and personally, the results were striking. Using the same five-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree), mean ratings for professionally important (4.7) and personally important (4.4) were quite high and similar for officers and enlisted. Moreover, our participants strongly endorsed the value of mentoring for the Navy. When asked, “Overall, how important is effective mentoring to the development of future Navy leaders?” (1 = Not Important, 5 = Extremely Important), the mean rating for enlisted was 4.8 and for officers, 4.5.

We also asked our participants whether they had served as mentors to junior members of the naval service. A full 95 percent indicated they had mentored, on average, twenty individual mentees during their naval careers.

A final item included on our survey was this: “Many Navy commands now have formal mentor-protégé matching programs. In your experience, how successful are these programs?” On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Not Successful) to 5 (Extremely Successful), the mean rating was 2.5 (enlisted = 2.33, officer = 2.8), indicating that formal matching efforts tended to be viewed as somewhat unsuccessful. The survey then solicited narrative responses regarding why formal mentoring programs should or should not be incorporated into the Navy’s plan for the development and training of future leaders. Among officers, twenty-eight of fifty-two narrative responses were negative regarding the value of formal programs, while thirteen responses were positive; the rest were neutral in valence. Among enlisted participants, fifty-four of eighty-six narrative responses were negative, fifteen were positive, and the remainder were neutral. In light of the similarity of the comments, we combined the groups in the following categorization of narrative themes. Among the comparatively small number of positive comments, the following themes were salient.

Mentoring Prevents Junior Personnel from Getting Overlooked

“There are a lot of lost sailors, too many of them fall through the cracks because they did not get the proper mentoring”; “With today’s new recruits, they need to have the guidance to ensure they are directed in their careers; Sailors need a ‘sea daddy’ to keep them on track and let them know when they have gone off it!”; and “Formal programs are especially useful for junior enlisted personnel who might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten.”

Mentoring Is Critical for Career Development

“A formal program could ensure that others receive the same benefit that I received, I can honestly say that I would not be where I am today without the mentorship I received”; “These programs help sailors understand the long-term consequences of actions and inactions”; and “Formal programs will mostly help convince those who would not ordinarily seek out mentoring that they can benefit from it. A mentor can teach a sailor from his/her experiences therefore eliminating the trial and error aspect, allowing fewer mistakes and more efficient learning.”

Formal Programs Hold Leaders Accountable

“I think formal programs should be incorporated because it will hold senior leaders accountable for actions or lack thereof”; “Formal programs are necessary to jump start mentoring throughout the various Navy communities”; “It is probably good to have formal programs, but if leaders were doing their jobs well, mentoring would be inherent in the current process”; and “This should be force fed because some people won’t take care of their sailors.”

Mentoring Is Crucial for Retention

“One word, ‘retention!’”; “These programs offer a sound basis for developing better sailors for the future of the Navy”; “In order for us to maintain, sustain, and continue to be

the best, we must invest wisely in our future”; and “Mentorship is important for development of future leaders.”

The majority of narrative comments expressed strong concern about the rationale, utility, and long-term value of formally assigned mentorships. As in the case of the positive themes, we identified four salient negative themes in participants’ responses. We list the four themes below with a representative sample of participant comments.

Not All Senior Personnel Make Effective Mentors

“Quite frankly, some people should not be mentors and to force them into a mentorship is absolutely ludicrous”; “Formal programs would force officers unsuited for mentorship into that job”; “Mentoring programs are promising but not everyone is qualified to be a mentor”; and “Not everyone is or could be a mentor and they should be identified through a vetting process. Formal programs will make people mentors who do not even care. Assigning the wrong person deters sailors from seeking good mentoring matches in the future.”

Forcing Matches Undermines the Value of Mentoring

“A formal program is not required, if people aren’t inclined to mentor on their own, the value of the mentorship won’t be that high”; “The chain of command—when functioning properly—already provides formal mentoring”; “Like a forced marriage (formal) versus a traditional marriage (couple decides)”; “To force something on someone is rarely effective”; “You cannot fabricate a relationship between two people”; “If you make it an instruction, it loses the spirit and value of old fashioned mentoring”; “Forcing mentorship in any organization will result in poor quality”; and “Mentorship should be encouraged by leadership, initiated by seniors, but never forced on juniors. Some individuals do not want and will not benefit from a formal program.”

Quality Mentoring Hinges on the Perception of Choice

“A mentor chooses you or you choose a mentor, if you assign them you end up with pairs that have nothing in common or don’t even like each other”; “I should choose who I want to emulate, don’t choose for me!”; “Formal programs fail because it is difficult to match mentors and protégés of similar mind and temperament—often the relationship is more meaningful and lasts longer if they find each other naturally”; “Nothing beats finding a mentor you connect with personally”; “If there is a specific formula that successfully promotes mentoring, I don’t think it has been discovered—mentoring involves chemistry, not a formal assignment”; and “A mentor needs to be someone a particular sailor looks up to, respects, and admires.”

Formalizing Mentorship Creates an Onerous Administrative Burden

“Formal programs translate into more busy work without achieving the goal”; “I believe formal programs are disingenuous and often only a paper chase”; “A formal program would add an administrative burden and create a ‘not my job’ scenario because some senior people would then have the excuse, ‘I’m not his assigned mentor’ and blow off

their jobs as leaders, educators, and mentors”; “This program will be a paper tiger”; “Just because it’s on paper doesn’t mean that real mentoring is occurring”; “I am skeptical of a big Navy program to enforce something as personal as mentoring”; “Formal program = check-in-the-box mentality”; “Now, the program will be inspected during inspection visits and lead to gundecking [falsifying results]”; and “Two words—paper drill.”

To understand more fully the experiences of participants with formal mentoring programs in the Navy, we conducted four focus groups with volunteers from the four leadership training courses mentioned earlier. Focus groups ranged in size from eight to twenty-three, and the duration of sessions ranged from forty minutes to one hour. The primary question posed to each group was: “Are formal mentoring programs (programs that involve matching mentors with mentees) a good idea for the Navy? Why or why not?” In most cases, our participants reflected on this question through the prisms of their own experiences with formal mentoring programs in the fleet. One member of the interview team took verbatim notes of the interviews. Participant responses were later grouped according to theme. Once again, negative comments tended to outnumber by far comments affirming a formal program.

On the positive side, focus-group participants emphasized that they highly value the concept of mentorship (“The concept of mentoring is as popular and patriotic as motherhood and apple pie. Everyone likes it and understands in a fundamental way what it is”) and many believed that the Navy already has a culture that values mentorship (“We already do have some culture of mentoring . . . why not just improve that culture without coming up with an instruction?”). Some recommended that merely reinforcing excellent mentoring might be preferable to legislating it (“Drive it into the culture by rewarding and reinforcing it. Mention it on the fitrep [fitness report], ‘is a good mentor. Reemphasize it at various training and education waypoints along the way in one’s career”). Several were adamant that mentorship should be nested under the umbrella of leadership and the general leadership expectations of all officers and senior enlisted personnel. (“Chiefs have been mentoring for years—it’s leadership, not mentoring. When you make mentoring management and not leadership, you have problems”; “Mentoring is good, but mandatory mentoring is a crutch for commands with weak cultures of development”; “In my last command, we scrapped the formal mentorship program and made it the responsibility of the chiefs and division officers to get the deck plate leadership done”).

Finally, there was a perception by a few participants that formal mentoring programs were intended specifically for minority-group sailors: “The proposed instruction makes it sound like we should focus on minority groups, which suggests that this is another equal opportunity program”; and “This is never clearly addressed by any instruction but there is a strong implication that you should be mentoring minority sailors or women to enhance diversity.”

The majority of our focus-group participants acknowledged that any formalized mentoring program is likely to meet with resistance (“As soon as you say ‘mentoring’ you get a big sigh and resistance”; “If the Navy program is purely programmatic, not authentic, and if you force pairings, that is a recipe for disaster”; “Don’t create something that 95% of leadership disagrees with!”; “Nobody thinks mentoring should be formalized”). They

further emphasized that any formal program is quickly perceived as onerous in the fleet (“When folks in the fleet hear they are going to be held accountable for mentoring then it gets oppressive and people don’t do it for the right reasons”; “Oh gee whiz, another program, another three-ring binder, another report to generate that someone may or may not read”; “I was mentorship coordinator on a carrier, we had an actual form that both [mentor and mentee] had to sign that included the date and time we met each week. Nobody liked the mechanistic, mandatory aspect”).

As in the narrative survey responses, our focus-group participants were cognizant of the problem inherent in the assumption that anyone can mentor effectively (“Some make good mentors and some don’t have what it takes to be effective in this role. It’s the same with selecting sponsors in a command. You want your best reps to do that. We need to do the same with mentors, pick your very best people and put them in the mentor role”; “I’m sorry, but there are some folks I don’t want talking to our junior guys”). Several indicated that mentor training should be a paramount concern (“Lack of training for mentors is a real problem. People need to be prepared for mentoring, this is a barrier to effectiveness”; “We don’t understand the complexity of mentorship. We don’t take time to train people”). One area in which training deficits created problems was failure to balance one’s mentoring and gatekeeping or enforcement roles with mentees appropriately (“These programs can undermine trust when a ‘mentor’ reports significant concerns about a mentee up the chain of command. In my command, this resulted in separation from the Navy for one sailor”). Balancing multiple roles with mentees may require a specific skill set and training for competence in the mentor role.

Focus-group participants also identified the need for “big Navy” flexibility and tolerance for the unique incarnations of mentoring programs in specific communities: “The cookie-cutter approach won’t work with the different communities and ranks. Tailor the program so that each command can use its structure and strengths”; “The question is how can various commands go about mentoring informally so that everyone has the opportunity for mentoring”

A final theme had to do with concerns about assessing mentoring in the fleet. Some participants were concerned that the “need” for mentoring programs had not been established (“Why are we doing this? Is it really needed? Did anyone check to find out how much mentoring is going on without a formal program?”). Others noted the difficulty inherent in evaluating unique outcomes associated with mentoring programs (“Mentoring outcomes are hard to measure. Many things contribute to success, mentoring is just one element”).

Intentional and Proactive Mentors

This is the first empirical snapshot of mentoring in the U.S. Navy since the proliferation of compulsory matching programs nearly a decade ago. Within our sample of senior enlisted and midgrade officers, 91 percent reported having had at least one significant mentor during their careers in the Navy. On average, participants reported three significant mentorships. These numbers are consistent with data from retired flag officers.¹⁸ As in previous studies of mentoring in the Navy, participants in our study reported that

their primary mentors had been crucial for them both personally and professionally; they overwhelmingly endorsed quality mentoring as of critical importance for the future of the Navy. A full 95 percent of our participants were already active mentors themselves, counting on average twenty mentees during their careers thus far.

In the vast majority of mentor relationships, the mentor himself or herself had been instrumental in initiating the relationship. In approximately half of cases, the mentor had been the primary initiator, while an additional one-third of relationships had resulted from mutual interest and initiation. The fact that senior enlisted and commissioned mentors had been instrumental in launching 82 percent of the mentoring relationships reported by our participants is striking. With only 3.7 percent of mentorships born of formal mentoring programs, these data suggest that Navy leaders are intentional and proactive when it comes to reaching out to junior personnel and instigating meaningful mentoring relationships. It is particularly noteworthy that more than half of the officers in our sample reported that their own commanding officers had become their most significant career mentors.

What do effective mentors “do”? Participants in this study reported that strong advocacy, direct instruction and development of military skills, career guidance, acceptance, support, and encouragement all loomed large among the most important mentor functions. Reports of salient mentoring experiences confirmed these ratings. Participants recalled examples illustrating the value of imparting real-world wisdom, career advocacy, exposure and visibility within the community, personal counsel, challenge, and deliberate role modeling. In contrast, our mentees were least likely to report that protection, help in bypassing the normal channels, or preference for choice assignments had been important elements of the mentorship. This evidence seems to refute concerns that mentoring is equated with special privilege and unfair advantage in the military.¹⁹

The most important contribution of this study was a multimethod exploration of participants’ perceptions of the value of formalized mentoring programs in the fleet. Overall, both officers and senior enlisted participants were between neutral and somewhat negative in their assessments of formal mentor-mentee programs—particularly those that are mandatory. Both survey and focus-group responses consistently raised concerns about the practice of requiring all senior personnel to mentor. Experience suggests that not everyone has the interpersonal and technical competence to serve effectively in the mentor role. Moreover, our participants expressed concern that marginal or incompetent mentorship may do more harm than good. Forcing sailors to participate in assigned mentorships—particularly in the absence of a thoughtful and participatory matching process—was seen as quite misguided. Because perceptions of choice loom large in determining whether any relationship is likely to succeed, participants were concerned about haphazard or superficial approaches to the pairing of mentors and mentees. Finally, study participants were loud and clear in their objections to any directive that burdened commands with yet another paper chase to be scrutinized during inspections. As others have warned, mandatory formal programs run the risk of undermining the joy and motivation associated with giving to the next generation, through the art of mentorship.²⁰

On the basis of the foregoing results, we offer the following recommendations for consideration by Navy leaders. First, it is imperative that the Navy fully implement its

Leader Development Strategy, specifically core element number four, personal development. This element focuses attention on individual strengths and weaknesses, personal reflection, evaluation, and growth in the context of competent coaching and mentoring relationships with senior personnel. Judging from the results of this study, mentoring is already taking place in the fleet for many officers and enlisted personnel, and our sample rated mentoring as exceptionally important for the future of the Navy. The challenge in the future will be to increase attention to mentoring as a salient leader competence.

Second, we recommend that local commanding officers approach formal mentoring programs thoughtfully, always with attention to the desired outcomes and structures that best align with the current command culture. In our previous explorations of mentorship in the military, we have cautioned against programs for programs' sakes and instead have encouraged leaders to enhance the culture of mentoring and the preparedness and commitment of personnel to mentor.²¹ So, rather than formal programs with mandatory matching of mentors and protégés, leaders might explore voluntary traditional one-to-one matching programs, "team mentoring" structures in which a "master mentor" meets routinely with a small cohort of protégés, and "mentoring constellations" in which personnel are coached and mentored to create effective networks of career helpers—both inside and external to the command. The key is that some vision for what mentoring can and should achieve drive the development of a mentoring structure.

Third, members of our sample were quite clear in their assessment that not all senior Navy personnel are likely to be effective in the mentor role. This finding highlights the critical importance of preparation and training in the art and science of mentoring as Navy personnel progress through the leader pipeline. Because not all service members have positive mentor role models, and because relationship skills do not come easily for some, leaders must provide consistent and high-quality training for mentorship and, when formal mentoring programs exist, thoughtfully recruit master mentors with track records of excellence in the mentor role.

Finally, it is imperative that the Navy find ways to highlight and reinforce mentoring so that it is perceived as a crucial and valued leader activity. Such reinforcement should include ongoing attention to mentorship in communications from top leaders, local commanders, and warfare communities. Reinforcement strategies might also incorporate fleet-wide mentoring awards and the development of special designations ("master mentor") to recognize specialized training and exceptional performance in this role.

Notes

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4. See W. Brad Johnson and Charles R. Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, rev. ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

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15. Egan and Song, "Are Facilitated Mentoring Programs Beneficial?" See also Johnson, "Mentoring in Psychology Education and Training."
16. Chao, "Formal Mentoring," p. 314.
17. U.S. Navy Dept., *Navy Leader Development Strategy*.
18. See Johnson et al., "Does Mentoring Foster Success?"
19. See Johnson and Andersen, "Formal Mentoring in the U.S. Military," and Johnson and Andersen, "How to Make Mentoring Work."
20. See Johnson and Andersen, "Formal Mentoring in the U.S. Military"; Johnson and Andersen, "How to Make Mentoring Work"; and Chao, "Formal Mentoring."
21. See Johnson and Andersen, "Formal Mentoring in the U.S. Military," and Johnson and Andersen, "How to Make Mentoring Work."

CULTIVATING SAILOR ETHICAL FITNESS

Michael Hallett

The Navy's rollout of its Leader Development Strategy provides an opportunity to think about new approaches to sailor training and education on ethical behavior.¹ The current approaches are not entirely satisfactory, as they focus predominantly on sanctions for ethical failures, such as misallocation of funds and extramarital affairs. As former President of the Naval War College and then-rear admiral Walter E. Carter Jr. explained in his *Ethics in the U.S. Navy* in March 2014, "the current culture for Navy ethics is one based on obeying the rules in order to avoid punishment."² Admiral Carter called for a new approach to Navy ethics training and education, making six recommendations; the third was to "[b]uild a culture for Navy ethics beyond compliance."³ This article weaves multiple philosophical threads together into an ethical fitness concept as a contribution to practical implementation of this recommendation. It is designed for sailors engaged in combat, both at sea and on land.

This sketch of an ethical fitness concept aims to contribute to a strategic-level Navy ethics program that both avoids a legalistic focus on rule breaking and moves beyond exhortations to "act with integrity" to develop practical, actionable, ethical decision-making skills. The goal is a concept of ethical competence that is both operationally effective in time-constrained, dynamic environments, including combat, and useful for sailors performing their daily tasks. Part 1 argues that adding specific ethics training for warriors is required; relying solely on standard, academic, off-the-shelf ethics training will not meet program requirements. Part 2 introduces the concept of "ethical fitness" as a guiding metaphor, using the Marine Corps's creation of the Combat Fitness Test as a model for development of a sailor ethical fitness concept. Part 3 describes the advantages of the concept of ethical fitness as a way to move beyond compliance. Part 4 explores implementing the ethical fitness concept in part by employing senior leaders as coaches.

Part 1: Warriors Require a Warrior-Focused Ethics Training and Education Regimen

Before attempting to offer a concept for sailor-as-warrior ethical competency development, we must draw a preliminary distinction between sailors as bureaucrats and as professionals. As Rear Admiral P. Gardner Howe, President of the Naval War College, points out, “Our Navy has a dual character. On one hand, it is a military department organized as a bureaucracy. The bureaucratic dimension of our organization is unavoidable for any organization of our size and complexity. But on the other, it is an organization dedicated to supporting a military profession. It is this dual nature as both a bureaucracy and a profession that shapes our key challenge as Navy leaders.”⁴

Current Navy ethics training emerged from a legal compliance paradigm and often has focused on sailors as they operate within the bureaucratic dimension of the Navy. While necessary, such training lacks the content necessary to inspire sailors operating in complex, violent, uncertain environments. The Navy Code of Ethics provides a list of dos and don’ts and includes the following:

- Place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
- Act impartially to all groups, persons, and organizations.
- Give an honest effort in the performance of your duties.
- Protect and conserve Federal property.
- Disclose fraud, waste, and abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
- Fulfill in good faith your obligations as citizens, and pay your Federal, State, and local taxes.
- Comply with all laws providing equal opportunity to all persons, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.⁵

Regular civilian ethical decision making, such as that captured in the Navy Code of Ethics, is governed by the rules of what Nassim Taleb in his book *The Black Swan* describes as “Mediocristan.” The supreme law of Mediocristan is “When your sample is large, no single instance will significantly change the aggregate or the total.”⁶ In this world, traditional ethical guidance, such as Kant’s categorical imperative or utilitarian precepts, is often valid. The exceptional situation generating suboptimal outcomes (e.g., an ax-wielding madman kills an innocent person) is so rare as not to require special attention.

Yet the ethical behavior rules in normal society poorly prepare warriors for combat. As Karl Marlantes in his book *What It Is Like to Go to War* argues, “Our young warriors are raised in possibly the only culture on the planet that thinks death is [merely] an option. Given this, it is no surprise that not only they but many of their ostensible religious guides . . . enter the temple of Mars unprepared. Not only is such comfort too often delusional; it tends to numb one to spiritual reality and growth. Far worse, it has serious psychological and behavioral consequences.”⁷

Today a full range of tools is available to prevent or reduce the moral injuries to which sailors become subject while performing the ethical tasks associated with combat risks. If we do not use these tools to supplement the existing ethics training and education (which emphasize compliance), we fail to prepare our sailors effectively for what they will face.⁸ This is important, because warriors reside in what Taleb refers to as “Extremistan,” where the consequences of action are amplified beyond the normal range. Individual actions, taken or not taken, can generate consequences at levels ranging from the individual through the tactical to the grand strategic, and do so regularly as part of normal professional activity.⁹

The normal ethics training is not entirely adequate for comprehensively meeting the ethical training and education needs of the military professional dimension of the Navy, which includes the sailor as warrior. Sailors require an approach to ethics training and education tailored for naval professionals, who are, as Admiral Howe points out, professional warriors who also, but not exclusively, act in bureaucratic ways as part of performing their professional functions.

The foundation of warrior ethics is the awareness with which warriors take sides and accept the risks associated with that decision. They are cognizant of the risk-transference impacts of their actions, internalize the tensions in their decision making, and do not push the negative externalities onto others. As Marlantes puts it,

Choosing sides is the fundamental first choice that a warrior must make. . . . The second fundamental choice of the warrior is to be willing to use violence to protect someone against even intended or implied violence. This second fundamental choice engenders an additional choice, which is accepting the risk of death and maiming that usually results from the decision to use violence against violence. To become a warrior requires making these two fundamental choices and accepting the risks entailed. Doing the above eliminates any need to use the adjective “ethical” in front of the noun “warrior.” A warrior, by my definition, acts ethically.¹⁰

This tripartite decision bundle places warriors in a position that requires meta-ethical principles to guide their application of ethical principles. Ethical principles, while congruent parts of an overarching ethical system, are not always identical in formulation and application when applied to combat conditions versus ordinary life. Informed examination of the principles and how they operate in the various domains is necessary. In other words, combat demands a supplemental ethical operating system. Think of it as a turbocharger, which adds to an engine an additional physical capability for extreme situations. The supplemental ethical operating system enables effective ethical decision making across the full range of life experiences. Building this “turbocharger” requires additional efforts to facilitate the development of sailors’ ethical competence.

Therefore, the bulk of traditional academic, off-the-shelf ethical training—based on the Golden Rule and fundamental prohibitions such as “do not kill”—is not entirely adequate for the sailor-as-warrior. This training starts from the assumption that the subjects of the training are rational actors operating in accordance with what Nobel Prize-winning thinker Herbert Simon described in *Reason in Human Affairs* as the Single Expected Utility model of rationality, which is characterized by well-ordered conditions

and a set of tame, if perhaps complicated, problems.¹¹ Gary Klein, an expert on recognition-primed decision making, in his *Streetlights and Shadows*, refers to such conditions as “streetlight” situations.¹²

However, warriors must conduct ethical decision making not only under streetlights but in poorly illuminated ethical environments, characterized by chaotic situations in which individuals must deal with other impassioned individuals through the filters of their own passions. They must engage in activities considered unethical under normal circumstances. Therefore practical ethical decision making requires an understanding of what Benedict de Spinoza in his book *Ethics* designated “human bondage,” within which people are ruled by passions, not the clear exercise of reason.¹³ Warriors’ efforts to manage wicked, complex problems in dynamic, agonistic environments therefore demand decision-making techniques different from those provided by traditional, rational actor model-based ethics training.¹⁴

What qualifies as “common sense” under the streetlight does not apply comprehensively to the shadow situations of combat. Carl von Clausewitz, in the beginning of his book *On War*, states that a different ethical framework must be used when thinking about war. He writes, “Kind hearted people might of course think that there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that mistakes which come from kindness are the worst.”¹⁵ Within the traditional ethical perspectives, such as the Kantian, virtue ethics, or utilitarian, the idea that such things as “mistakes from kindness” exist is at first glance amoral and unethical.

However, as Socrates pointed out, the commonsense answer to a dilemma is often wrong. In book 1 of *The Republic*, Socrates, the combat veteran, points out that the simple ethical commands to give people what they are owed and never tell a lie are not automatically just. He says, “Everyone would surely agree that if a sane man lends weapons to a friend and then asks for them back when he is out of his mind, the friend shouldn’t return them, and wouldn’t be acting justly if he did. Nor should anyone be willing to tell the whole truth to someone who is out of his mind.”¹⁶ In his search for a definition of justice, Socrates goes on to reject the idea that whatever is done to members of the out-group (enemies) is automatically just. The ethical category applying to another person can shift in an instant (for example, from enemy combatant to injured prisoner), changing the appropriate set of ethical behaviors that apply to that person. Socrates thus articulates the complexity of the warrior’s ethical understanding, which includes awareness of the risks associated with both action and inaction, for self and others, and the central role that time and context play in the ethical treatment of people. This is not to say that ethics are relative, only that ethical behavior in Extremistan must attend to what Heraclitus referred to as the *concealed logos*, which in this context of ethical decision making can be understood as constituting the meta-level ethical principles governing when to apply specific ethical principles.¹⁷ Discerning, while in the shadows, the ethically appropriate action requires robust competency development.

This is not to say that the traditional approaches are invalid, only that they are not entirely sufficient for military professionals. As Klein explains in discussing the need for appropriate action in both the streetlights and the shadows, “The way we see in bright

light differs from the way we see in shadows. Neither is the ‘right’ way. We need both. This dual viewpoint of light and shadow affects how we make decisions and how we make sense of situations. It affects how we plan and how we manage risks and uncertainty. It guides how we develop expertise and how we use our intuition.”¹⁸ Bureaucrats operate under the streetlights; warriors often, but not always, in the shadows.

The warrior’s ethical decision making is different from the normal ethic of society. This is so not only because killing, for example, is permissible but because the warrior internalizes the full risk-management constellation. The warrior understands the risk of action and inaction, and takes more risk on him- or herself so as to reduce it for others. In other words, the warrior confronts the ax-wielding madman if necessary, instead of simply allowing that risk to pass him or her by; an example of the latter would be to follow the categorical imperative to tell the truth (“Which way did that kid go?!” “That way.”) as a means to avoid making an appropriate decision (“Put down the ax.”).

Thus, warriors require a specific ethics training and education program, in addition to but distinct from the conventional programs available. The “ethical fitness” concept constitutes a framework for this ethical competency development program.

Part 2: The Marine Corps Combat Fitness Approach as a Model for Cultivating Sailor Ethical Fitness

The Marine Corps approach to physical fitness offers a model for an approach to cultivating warrior ethical fitness. It demonstrates the necessity to add training, education, and assessment metrics in order to develop and assess specific combat-required capabilities. In 2008 the Marines added a Combat Fitness Test (CFT) to their existing Physical Fitness Test. As MCO 6100.13 explained, “As professional warrior-athletes, every Marine must be physically fit, regardless of age, grade, or duty assignment. . . . The Physical Fitness Test (PFT), Combat Fitness Test and Remedial Conditioning Program (RCP) are components of an effective organizational Combat Conditioning Program.”¹⁹ Why did the Marines add another *fitness*, not *wellness*, test to the existing PFT? Greg Glassman’s definition of fitness in his article “What Is Fitness?” provides an answer. Fitness is the positive pole of the health continuum demarcated by sickness, wellness, and fitness.²⁰ Thus, fitness represents a higher degree of health than wellness, and professional warrior-athletes must operate at the higher end of the fitness zone of the health continuum if they are to execute their missions effectively. Therefore, the Marines deemed a combat-specific test necessary because combat requires a bundle of physical competencies not cultivated by traditional athletic activity. It is possible to be an effective athlete—say, a runner or football player—and yet not possess the physical capabilities required for combat. As a result, normal physical fitness tests fail to evaluate these competencies adequately, not because the tests are flawed, but because they focus on noncombat-related measures of performance and effectiveness. Therefore, the Marines deemed necessary an additional set of competencies, training to cultivate those competencies, and an assessment mechanism to check both the effectiveness of the training and the individual possession of the competency.

Just as the Marines have two approaches to developing and testing physical fitness, the traditional PFT and the CFT, specific ethical competency development would benefit from a structured approach consisting of both the traditional and warrior-specific applications of traditional ethical systems. While conventional ethical training can and does meet many of the warrior ethical competency requirements, providing both principles and guidance for the application of those principles, it is insufficient. The addition of training and education on combat-focused application of principles, in accordance with the concept of ethical fitness for warriors, constitutes a necessary expansion to meet the ethical needs of twenty-first-century warriors.

Definition of Ethical Fitness

Borrowing the concept of “fitness” from the physical domain provides a model for thinking about enhancing sailor-warriors’ ethical competencies to inform their daily decision making in both combat and noncombat conditions. Ethical fitness consists of effective orientation, observation, decision, and action; with full cognizance of the risks; in accordance with Navy core values; applied in a violent, uncertain, extreme world.

Mapping ethics onto an ethical health bell curve, with depravity constituting the deficient condition, wellness the normal condition, and fitness the highest level of ethical competence, clarifies the distinction between the ethically well and the ethically fit. As shown in the figure, most people abide in the “ethically well” section, following rules and getting along under the normal conditions of everyday life. A few are depraved: intentionally harming others; constantly attempting to shift risk from themselves; and lying, cheating, and stealing as a normal part of their life practices. At the other pole are the ethically fit. The few people at this pole take risks on themselves to reduce the risk to others, while operating in extreme conditions such as combat.

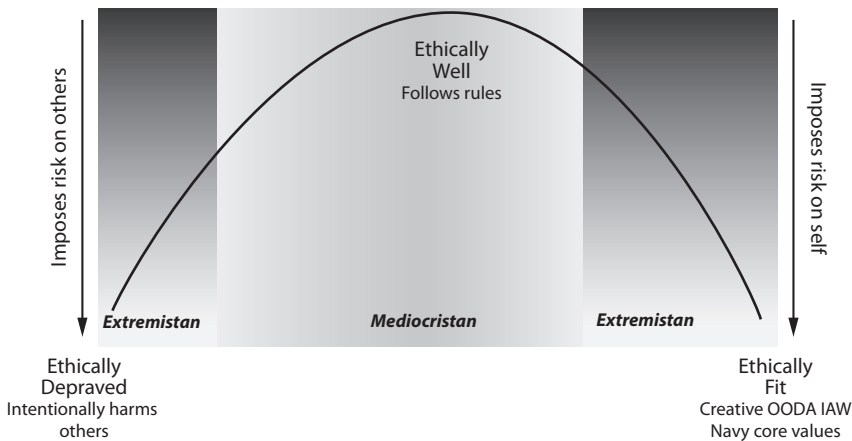


Figure 1. Ethical Health Bell Curve

Applying Ethical Fitness

John Boyd's presentation "The Essence of Winning and Losing" lays out the observation and orientation steps of his observe—orient—decide—act (OODA) loop. An individual warrior is ethically fit when he or she can apply these cognitive skills while operating in the dynamic conditions of Extremistan. Ethical fitness metaprinciples enable warriors to orient themselves appropriately in the context of engagement space, understand their own observations, and use them to inform their decisions and actions. Boyd explains that "[o]rientation is the *Schwerpunkt* [focus point]. It shapes the way we interact with the environment—hence orientation shapes the way we *observe*, the way we *decide*, the way we *act*. . . . Orientation shapes the character of present observation—orientation—decision—action loops—while these *present* loops shape the character of *future* orientation."²¹ Ethical principles structure this orientation, and the meta-ethical principles informing warrior orientation provide an additional layer of insight into their application that helps to make sense of observations and inform decisions and actions across all possible environments.

Part 3: Advantages of the Ethical Fitness Concept

The ethical fitness concept has three major advantages over current ethics training and education.

First, the ethical fitness concept provides an overarching training, education, and practice paradigm, thereby helping to implement Rear Admiral Carter's recommendation to move "beyond compliance" in ethics training and education.²² Framing ethics training and education as the cultivation of ethical fitness constitutes a positive approach to the sort of life-and-death decision making that is the specific task of warriors. It does so in a way that enables the flow of passion and enthusiasm to "do the right thing" that is the default setting for sailors. In contrast, the current Navy ethics guidance is a list of dos and don'ts for bureaucrats, not warriors. By avoiding a focus on the negative "don'ts" and "ought nots" from philosophers who have never faced combat, the ethical fitness concept provides a way for warriors to take the ethical initiative when they find themselves in a conflict. This enables sailors to perceive the ethical components of military decision making not as restraints (can't do) but as fertile constraints (must do) that enable long-term mission success.

Second, the ethical fitness concept provides a framework for the development of ethical decision-making habits. Ethical fitness, like physical fitness, arises from habitual exercise of the capability, appropriately guided through training and deliberative practice. As Aristotle said, "Thus the virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature, but we are by nature able to acquire them, and reach our complete perfections through habit."²³ Habitual (regular, repeated) application of the desired behavior is necessary for humans actually to possess a competency. Aristotle compared the process of acquiring ethical competency to the sort of hands-on training that builders receive. Aristotle explained, "Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by having previously activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must

produce when we have learned it, become builders, e.g., by building and harpists by playing the harp: so also, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions.”²⁴ Athletic habituation ingrains appropriate movement patterns, just as experience, including imaginative experience generated through training and education, ingrains ethically fit behavior.

Third, the ethical fitness concept provides a framework for ethical behavior in multiple contexts. Warriors engage in activities not obviously justifiable using the conventional ethical metrics of Mediocrism. As General James Mattis said in his 2004 William C. Stuntz Ethics Lecture at the U.S. Naval Academy, entitled “Ethical Challenges in Contemporary Conflict: The Afghanistan and Iraq Cases,” “Your job, my fine young men and women, is to find the enemy that wants to end this experiment and kill every one of them until they’re so sick of the killing that they leave us and our freedoms intact.”²⁵

However, a warrior is not engaged in killing all the time or in all places, or even indiscriminately in any one place or at any given time. Therefore, to act appropriately in multiple contexts, warriors must build, on the foundational ethical habits, what the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche referred to as “brief habits.” Nietzsche wrote, “I love brief habits and consider them an invaluable means for getting to know many things and states down to the bottom of their sweetness and bitterness; my nature is designed entirely for brief habits, even in the needs of its physical health and generally as far as I can see at all, from the lowest to the highest.”²⁶ By extending the range of human experience, and of expertise within that experience, brief ethical habits inform individual warrior decisions and actions and thus foster the advanced level of ethical development necessary for warriors and leaders. A life in which the same ethical habits are applied in all contingencies will fail to correspond appropriately to the demands of an Extremist ethical situation, just as performing the same set of exercises (even with good technique) without variation can lead to decreases in physical capability. Training and practice consisting of varied stimuli and responses are necessary for ethical growth, and challenges stimulate development.²⁷ The warrior requires multiple brief habits for ethical decision making to facilitate decision making across the full range of life activities.

Weapon Conditions	Weapon Status	Likelihood Weapon Use Required
Condition 1	Magazine inserted, round in chamber, slide forward, and decocking/safety lever on	High
Condition 2	Not applicable	Medium
Condition 3	Magazine inserted, chamber empty, slide forward, and decocking/safety lever on	Medium
Condition 4	Magazine removed, chamber empty, slide forward, and decocking/safety lever on	Low

Figure 2

The employment of the various ethical habit sets can be thought of as corresponding to weapons readiness levels.²⁸ Weapons status readiness levels describe the appropriate posture for weapons employment; similarly, the ethical habit set articulates the balance of risk (between self and other) and

the appropriate level of violence available to respond to adversary action. The ethical habit set for combat is different from that for an exercise, just as weapons readiness levels change with the situation. Hence, “mere” ethical wellness is insufficient for warriors; they require education, training, and practice to become ethically fit to enable them to shift rapidly among appropriate ethical habits.

The concept of brief habits has the advantage of opening space for forgiveness, respect for the enemy, treatment of the dead, etc. He who is an enemy in one moment can become a prisoner or a fellow human being whose life has ended in the next. In dynamic combat conditions, such a shift can occur faster than it can be articulated explicitly. The training task is therefore to infuse warriors’ intuition (their tacit understanding), and thus their decisions and actions, with the appropriate ethical operating system. Brief habits, as part of ethical fitness, provide a way to think through how to deal with these varying circumstances. The ethically fit individual will have ingrained the correct “movement patterns” and thus possess the “muscle memory” necessary to decide and act appropriately in every situation.

Part 4: Concept Implementation— Coaching the Ethical Fitness Workout

Implementation of the ethical fitness concept requires appropriate training and education—in other words, the development of an effective ethical habituation process. Indeed, the Navy as an institution has a responsibility to provide robust and effective ethics training. As General Mattis has said, “A tragedy is when one of your beloved young sailors or Marines, who will literally die to carry out your orders, does something, and now you have to court-martial him. That is the last thing you ever want to do, because you failed to talk your people through it, to illustrate for them what it’s going to be like.”²⁹ Ethics training for bureaucrats based on ethical habits developed for everyday life in Mediocristan will not avert the tragedies to which General Mattis refers.

Yet simply saying that we need more and better ethics training is an inappropriate response. Effective ethics training must overcome two challenges: the scarcity of attention resources and the rules-based compliance model. Ethical fitness provides a framework for developing an ethical training regime that meets both these challenges.

Scarcity of Attention

As Herbert Simon has pointed out, in a time of nearly unlimited information, the critical limiting factor is attention.³⁰ Even as the increasing complexity of Navy tasks demands additional training, attention resources available to focus on training decrease. As a result, the reliance on more training to solve organizational problems creates its own ethical challenges. As Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras point out in their *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession*, the well-intentioned effort to provide more training to deal with problems can have “detrimental effects on training management due to the suffocating amount of mandatory requirements imposed upon units and commanders.”³¹

Similar tensions exist in the Navy. Therefore the training dedicated to ethics must be sensitive to this attention-constrained environment instead of simply adding more training as the answer to every challenge. Effective training will provide the minimum effective dose of ethics training in a way warriors find useful. A list of dos and don'ts is unlikely to meet this need. While compliance with rules is essential, it is not sufficient. Thus, warrior ethics training must go beyond a compliance-based set of rules on what to do and not do. It must provide principles that not only explicitly guide action but intuitively inform the moral operating system that animates the orientation of decision making. This enables warriors to make value-based judgments that are always in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

The How-To

So how do we capture the warrior's attention and provide the minimum effective ethics training and education dose in time-constrained, complex environments?

Effectively capturing the warrior's attention requires that training and education be delivered not by an outsider but by a leader who is on the field of Mars with the warrior. Just as a team coach provides expert advice on techniques and training for the sport, so the military has coaches: senior leaders with expertise in navigating ethical situations. These coaches, serving as role models, provide positive tools to enhance the warrior's competency to move through the OODA loop ethically.

Coaches facilitate warrior ethical competencies by developing their ethical decision-making mental models through the pathways of life experience and education, similar to the development of physical competency through drills in the weight room and on the sports field. As Klein writes, "Mental models are developed through experience—individual experience, organizational experience, and cultural experience."³² By guiding reflection on experience and discussing imaginative experience gained through training and educational activities, coaches facilitate development of the ethical competencies that together constitute ethical fitness, just as a physical coach guides a workout. Coaches do not simply point out mistakes; they are sensitive to tacit knowledge derived from understanding the context of an action, and help to sensitize those they coach to the weak signals emerging from the shadows.

Coaching takes many forms, including "workouts" that cultivate ethical competency. Admiral Carter articulates possible coach-provided ethical training and education content:

[S]potlight examples of good ethical choices and behavior; as well as examples that favorably represent the naval profession. . . . [I]nstitutionally reward good decisions and actions that reinforce Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos. Tend to the moral development of our Sailors—i.e., helping them develop habits for making the right ethical choices and utilizing proper discretionary judgment. . . . [P]rovide opportunities for facilitated dialogues, peer discussions, and open roundtables around topics of motivation, reasoning, and processing of moral choices. Capitalize on existing training and education that present opportunities to instill ethics discussions and learning.³³ [italics in original]

Ethical fitness workouts can vary significantly in length and intensity. Examples include plan of the day (POD) notes requiring a minute to read;³⁴ complex, multiactor scenarios as capstone events in schools; asides in lectures; boxed texts in doctrinal manuals; and commentaries on recommended texts. Such material exists: Steven Pressfield's *The Warrior Ethos*, Karl Marlantes's already-mentioned *What It Is like to Go to War*, Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea*, E. D. Swinton's *Defense of Duffer's Drift*, and many others; it need only be placed in the appropriate package for sailor use. The lessons literature need not focus on mistakes; especially for those beginning their ethical fitness workouts, providing positive role models for making ethically fit decisions in complex, chaotic situations provides outstanding value. For example, Steven Pressfield's book *The Lion's Gate* offers multiple positive examples, such as the way Ran Ronen dealt with his mistake in combat during the Six-Day War: by taking more risk on himself and his squad by flying his plane under the other Mirage formations (so low, in fact, that he created a wake on the Mediterranean Sea below) so as to avoid transferring that risk onto others through failure to hit his targets at the assigned time.³⁵

Ethical fitness can be achieved only by engagement—by wrestling with ethical issues in a wide variety of environments. Its relationship to rules (rules are necessary but not sufficient and not always available) makes ethical fitness difficult, both for practitioners and for those working to train and educate warriors aspiring to ethical fitness. The ethically fit must decide and act both in compliance with explicit rules and dynamically in accordance with core values.

This article offers the ethical fitness concept as a contribution to implementing previous calls to enhance the Navy's approach to ethics training and education. The addition of an active growth and exercise component to ethics training and education, based on an analogy to the physical demands of combat (sprinting, climbing through warped hatches, lifting ammunition, etc.), provides a readily comprehensible, accessible, and actionable methodology for engaging in ethical decision making both in the extremes of combat and in everyday life. Ethical fitness therefore provides a way to think about ethics training and practice that goes beyond exhortations to "be good." The goal is to provide sailors with practical, actionable ethical decision-making skills. Importantly, the ethical fitness concept adds to the rich set of images, such as "moral compass," "golden rule," and "straight and narrow," that already shape ethics education and practice.³⁶

Notes

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1. U.S. Navy Dept., *The Navy Leader Development Strategy* (Washington, DC: 2013).
2. Walter E. Carter Jr. [Rear Adm., USN], *Ethics in the U.S. Navy* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2014), p. 11, available at www.usnwc.edu/.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
4. P. Gardner Howe III [Rear Adm., USN], "Rear Adm. Howe: Professionalism, Leader Development Key to Future," *U.S. Naval War College*, 19 May 2015, www.usnwc.edu/.
5. Secretary of the Navy, "Navy Code of Ethics," 2005, available at www.secnave.navy.mil/. The Navy Ethos is more suited to the sailor as bureaucrat.

6. Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 2010), p. 32.
7. Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (New York: Grove, 2011), p. 8.
8. Shira Maguen and Brett Litz, "Moral Injury in Veterans of War," *PTSD Research Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1–3. The bibliographic essay accompanying this work discusses major articles within the growing body of literature on moral injury.
9. Taleb, *The Black Swan*, p. 33.
10. Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War*, p. 222.
11. See Herbert A. Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1983), for a discussion of the rational actor model and its limitations.
12. Gary Klein, *Streetlights and Shadows: Searching for the Keys to Adaptive Decision Making* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), p. 7.
13. See Spinoza's discussion of human bondage in section 4 of the *Ethics*. He writes, "Man's lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects [passions] I call bondage." Benedict de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994).
14. The challenges that combat generates for the development of ethics competency are not new. For example, W. Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*, published in 1944, is about a veteran who is on a quest for an ethical system appropriate for a returned warrior. Maugham contextualizes the World War I veteran's struggle by having the character compare his struggles to those of Civil War veterans. "We all know how after the war between the states there were men who never did a stroke after they came back from it. They were a burden to their families and useless to the community." Also, "'The war did something to Larry. He didn't come back the same person that he went. . . . Something happened that changed his personality.'
"What sort of thing?' I asked. "I wouldn't know. He's very reticent about his war experiences.' Dr. Nelson turned to Mrs. Bradley, 'Has he ever talked to you about them, Louisa?'
"She shook her head.
"No. When he first came back we tried to get him to tell us some of his adventures, but he only laughed in that way of his and said there was nothing to tell'" (W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* [Philadelphia: Triangle Books, 1946], pp. 26–27).
The tensions inherent in the ethical implications of combat are recurring issues that require continuous engagement.
15. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 75.
16. John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), book 1, p. 331c.
17. On "concealed logos," Dr. Thomas Robinson explains, "And truth about the real can be known; for while it is no doubt the case that '<the world's(?)> real constitution has a tendency to hide itself' (fragment 123), it is none the less, with effort, ascertainable (fragments 1, 22), and this bears implications for conduct." Heraclitus, *Heraclitus: Fragments; A Text and Translation with a Commentary*, trans. T. M. Robinson (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 154.
18. Klein, *Streetlights and Shadows*, p. 6.
19. U.S. Navy Dept., *Marine Corps Physical Fitness Program*, MCO 6100.13 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 2008).
20. Greg Glassman, "What Is Fitness?," *CrossFit Journal* (October 2002), p. 3.
21. "The second O, orientation—as the repository of our genetic heritage, cultural tradition, and previous experiences—is the *most important part* of the O-O-D-A loop since it shapes the way we observe, the way we decide, the way we act." John R. Boyd, "Organic Design for Command and Control," *Defense and the National Interest*, 2005, slides 16, 26, www.dnipogo.org/.
22. Carter, *Ethics in the U.S. Navy*, p. 13.
23. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1985), book 2, sect. 1103a, lines 20–25.
24. *Ibid.*, lines 25–30.
25. Lieut. Gen. James N. Mattis, *Ethical Challenges in Contemporary Conflict: The Afghanistan and Iraq Cases* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Academy, 2001), p. 9.

26. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), p. 167.
27. The idea of brief habits can also provide insight into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD may be understood, in some cases, as a healthy, appropriate adaptation (or brief habit of living) to combat conditions, but an adaptation that later continues to inform observation, orientation, decision, and action even when translated into an environment in which other habits would be more appropriate. Thinking of the life of a warrior as requiring the development of many different brief habits, and the subsequent discarding of some of those habits in favor of others, can help conceptualize the transitions from training to predeployment preparations, to combat, and to the return home, followed by another cycle. Warriors can think of the skills they acquire (and that they need to survive in complex, violent environments) as brief habits, to be set aside upon return, then taken up again when necessary.
28. U.S. Marine Corps, *Pistol Marksmanship*, MCRP 3-01b (Washington, DC: 2003), available at www.marines.mil/.
29. Mattis, *Ethical Challenges in Contemporary Conflict*, p. 17.
30. See Herbert A. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 144.
31. Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2015), p. 5.
32. Klein, *Streetlights and Shadows*, p. 104.
33. Carter, *Ethics in the U.S. Navy*, p. 13. [The version of *Ethics in the U.S. Navy* printed in this volume varies slightly from that quoted by the author.—Ed.]
34. An example of such a POD note while under way: “During tonight’s showing of the movie *Gettysburg*, pay special attention to Chamberlain’s speech prior to the battle. What are the ethical foundations of the ideas he articulates?”
35. See Steven Pressfield, *The Lion’s Gate: On the Front Lines of the Six Day War* (New York: Penguin, 2014), pp. 144–49.
36. For example, see Adm. Jonathan Greenert’s *Proceedings* article “The Moral Component of Leadership” for its use of “moral compass.” The admiral also writes, “We keep ourselves ethically fit through contact with one another.” Adm. Jonathan Greenert, “The Moral Component of Leadership,” U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 141/9/1,351 (September 2015).

CAPTAINS OF THE SOUL

Stoic Philosophy and the Western Profession of Arms in the Twenty-First Century

Michael Evans

To meet life as a powerful conqueror,
No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful criticisms,
To these proud laws of the air, the water, and the ground,
Proving my interior soul impregnable,
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

Walt Whitman, "A Song of Joys" (1860)

In the new millennium Western militaries are spending a great deal of their resources on training and arming uniformed professionals for the instrumental rigors of operational service. Most modern armed forces equip their personnel with the latest body armor, the best protected vehicles, and the most sophisticated counterexplosive electronics, acquiring as well the most advanced medical services for those physically wounded or maimed. Much less time is devoted to providing military personnel with existential or inner armaments—with the mental armor and philosophical protection—that is necessary to confront an asymmetric enemy who abides by a different set of cultural rules. Much is also made in today's Western political and military circles about the need to relearn counterinsurgency, with its central tenet of winning "hearts and minds" among contested populations. Yet comparatively little is done to provide Western military professionals with sufficient moral philosophy to protect their own hearts and minds against the rigors of contemporary warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is true that all English-speaking Western militaries possess codes of behavior that govern the ethical conduct of their members. These codes tend to cover the law of

armed conflict, just-war theory, and the importance of upholding humanitarian values. However, such guides, while essential, tend to be rooted in social science, law, and psychology rather than in moral philosophy, with its grounding in the great humanities.¹ Moreover, while modern ethical codes emphasize institutional rules of behavior, moral philosophy puts in the foreground the development of personal character and the reconciliation of the individual to the social environment in which he or she operates. Ethics need, therefore, to be complemented by a stronger focus on philosophy that permits the professional military to become fully a self-conscious moral community committed to maintaining traditions essential to the integrity of its people and the discharge of its responsibilities.²

This article analyzes the importance of teaching Stoic moral philosophy within today's armed forces, covering three areas. First, the article examines the challenge to the warrior ethos emanating from the increasing postmodern instrumentalism of warfare. Second, it examines the case for upholding in the professional military a moral philosophy that is based on adapting what the British philosopher Bertrand Russell once called the virtues of "Stoic self-command."³ Third, the article discusses the extent to which philosophical values based on Stoicism might serve as moral guides to today's military professionals, by drawing on lessons and choices from Western literature, politics, and history.

The Challenge to the Western Military Ethos: Postmodernity, Technological Instrumentalism, and Honor

Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, the editors of an influential 2000 work, argued that advanced Western armed forces were undergoing an uneven, but clearly discernible, transition from modern to postmodern status.⁴ This transition, they suggested, was challenging to the professional military ethos, for two overarching reasons. First, a loosening of ties to both society and state was occurring, symbolized by the rise of a moral relativism in which "there is a shrinking consensus about what values constitute the public good, and little confidence that we know how, by the use of reason, to determine what the public good might be."⁵ Second, the rise of "revolution in military affairs" technologies based on the instrumental technology of precision and stealth pitted, they suggested, the ethos of professionalism against a growing occupational outlook.⁶ John Allen Williams, in his contribution to their volume, went so far as to conclude that "military culture is challenged by a relativistic civilian ethos from without and by the increasing civilianization of military functions and personnel orientation from within."⁷

Over the last decade, Christopher Coker, perhaps the world's leading philosopher of contemporary war, has in a series of important studies further analyzed the implications for the military profession of the onset of postmodernity.⁸ For Coker, much of the contemporary West today is dominated by what he calls an "ethics without morality," in which the existential and metaphysical ideals that have traditionally underpinned a life dedicated to military professionalism seem increasingly obsolescent.⁹ Despite the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Coker believes, postmodern trends in operational practice

and advanced technology are now so deeply entrenched in contemporary modes of warfare “that in the future there will be no place for the warrior ideal.”¹⁰ In a pessimistic tone he writes:

Even the professional soldier who volunteers to fight sees war increasingly as a trade rather than as a vocation, a job like any other, even if it differs from every other in the fear and anxiety it generates. Even if that is not true of every soldier (and we produce a few warriors still), war in the early twenty-first century does indeed seem to the rest of us rather barren, bereft of that [existential] dimension that made the warrior a human type as Hegel understood the term, a man who through war perceives his own humanity.¹¹

Other observers have written on how postmodern trends have led throughout contemporary society to an alleged decline of public honor that impacts upon the Western military’s professional ethos and its institutional notions of duty and sacrifice.¹² This development, it is contended, has had the effect of making Western militaries’ internal codes of honor less reflections of wider social beliefs than species of subculture. Writers such as Akbar S. Ahmed and James Bowman have charged that one of the major weaknesses in the contemporary West’s waging of wars is that its nations do so as “post-honor societies.”¹³ In their view, a gulf has grown between the honor codes of volunteer military professionals and parent societies, the latter of which are increasingly governed by the more relativist mores of postmodernity. This gulf, it is suggested, puts Western democracies at a disadvantage when fighting opponents who are impelled by absolutist cultural imperatives based on older codes of honor.¹⁴ As Coker reflects, “the West is engaged with an [Islamist] adversary that is the product of one of the world’s great unreconstructed and unreformed honour cultures at a time when the fortunes of the West’s own honour culture are at a low ebb.”¹⁵

Moral Philosophy for Military Professionals: The Case for Reviving Stoicism

How does one, then, counter the rise of an instrumental vision of war and with it the growth of occupational ideals that reflect Coker’s “ethics without morality”? If there is a growing incompatibility between the norms of an evolving, postmodern era based on instrumental rationality and the values of a professional military ethos based on existential meaning, we clearly need to reinforce the philosophical inner selves of men and women in the West’s armed forces.

This article argues that one of the most effective philosophical traditions for those in military uniform is that of Stoicism. The moral philosophy of the ancient Greek and Roman Stoics as taught by such great thinkers as Epictetus, Seneca, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius offers an effective path for those who seek to understand the existential character of the profession of arms. Yet Stoic philosophy runs against all postmodern philosophical trends and is thus unfashionable today. As Tad Brennan comments in a 2007 book, those who seek to adhere to Stoic philosophy are likely to be seen as out of touch

with their age, seeking only to cling to a jumbled-up “mixture of tough-guy bravado, hypocrisy and heartlessness [that is] neither personally compelling nor philosophically interesting.”¹⁶ Why should an ancient

As the ancient Stoic thinkers teach us, what truly counts is the nature of life itself as an unending form of warfare that must be confronted and mastered if one is to overcome fortune and fate.

Hellenistic philosophy noted for its harsh prescriptions and designed for life in preindustrial agrarian city-states be of any use to military professionals who have been reared in the social

and material sophistication of a postindustrial electronic age? The answer lies in the unchanging human dimension of the military profession, and it is this dimension—with its focus on strength of character—that links the Greek hoplites on the fields of Attica to today’s Western soldiers in the mountains of Afghanistan.

What is most attractive about the Stoic school of philosophy is its central notion that character is fate. The ideas of Stoicism infuse much of the edifice of Western civilization, and this debt is evident in the writings of such towering intellectual figures as Montaigne, Pascal, Spinoza, Descartes, Kant, and Hume. Moreover, Stoicism in some form infuses much of Christian theology, from St. Augustine through Thomas à Kempis to the Flemish philosopher Justus Lipsius, as symbolized by the famous Serenity Prayer: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Indeed, the philosopher Charles Taylor has written of how a Christianized Stoicism, or neo-Stoicism, developed by Lipsius in the sixteenth century influenced the evolution of modern Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Catholicism—with Calvin beginning his life of religious activism by publishing a study of Seneca.¹⁷ Prominent later adherents of Stoicism have included the great Prussian general Frederick the Great, the Holocaust philosopher Viktor E. Frankl, the Russian writer and dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and the South African statesman Nelson Mandela.¹⁸

It is often argued that members of the armed services are natural Stoics, capable of repelling the psychic shock of combat through ingrained mental toughness. Such a belief is highly misleading, as the frequent incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder in modern military establishments in recent years attests. As the American scholar Nancy Sherman emphasizes in a 2005 study, “catastrophic, external circumstance can derail the best-lived life.”¹⁹ In 2008 the RAND Corporation found that nearly 20 percent of U.S. military service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression—what it called the “invisible wounds of war.”²⁰ To what extent a philosophy of Stoicism can assist those in uniform to prevent or mitigate modern neuropsychiatric disorders remains a matter of debate. As RAND researchers have pointed out, there remain “fundamental gaps” in our knowledge of the causal links between individual educational backgrounds, collective military training, and operational deployment, and the incidence of mental health problems.²¹ Nonetheless, as one leading American soldier, Brigadier General H. R. McMaster, U.S. Army, has observed, cultivation of Stoic-like resilience and fortitude for self-control is likely to be of value in reducing combat stress. In McMaster’s words, “Soldiers must view war as a challenge and as their duty, not as trauma.”²² This view is shared by Coker, who writes that aspiring warriors must seek “to be true to what [Ralph Waldo] Emerson

calls ‘the great stoical doctrine—obey thyself. Nothing is more true of the warrior ethos than this doctrine.’²³

For the most part, contemporary military notions of Stoicism tend to be based on secondhand platitudes and common stereotypes about manliness, “stiff upper lips,” and “can do” willingness. Popular Stoic stereotypes include the emotionless Mr. Spock in the television series *Star Trek* and Russell Crowe’s “strength and honor” Roman soldier, Maximus, in the 1999 movie *Gladiator*. Of course, there is much more to Stoic philosophy than popular culture allows. Stoicism is a school of ancient philosophy founded by the fourth century BCE by the Greek thinker Zeno of Citium and systematized by his successors Cleanthes and Chrysippus in the third century BCE. Since Zeno’s original followers met in a public portico in Athens known as the “Painted Porch” (*Stoa Poikilē*), they came to be known as Stoics, or “men of the Porch.” The Stoic doctrines that have been bequeathed to the modern world represent a powerful method of reasoning involving the rigorous cultivation of self-command, self-reliance, and moral autonomy, a system in which an individual seeks to develop character on the basis of the four cardinal virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom.²⁴

Rigorously studied and properly applied, Stoic philosophy delivers profound insights into the challenges of military life. Peter Ryan, an Australian hero of the Second World War and author of the celebrated 1959 memoir *Fear Drive My Feet*, has written of the impact of the writings of Marcus Aurelius on his own military conduct. In it Ryan describes himself as, when coming under Japanese fire for the first time, “a shuddering mess of demoralised terror” until he recalls the teachings of Stoicism:

Then I thought of Marcus Aurelius. Hadn’t he taught me that, when Fate approached, there was no escape, but that a man would keep his grim appointment with dignity and calm? The effect was instant; certainly I still felt great fear, but I was no longer abject. It was this recovery of self-control and self-respect . . . that preserved me through all the testing months in the [New Guinea] bush that lay ahead in 1942 and 1943.²⁵

In recent years, the most prominent and systematic advocate of military Stoicism was the distinguished U.S. naval officer, Medal of Honor recipient, and 1992 vice presidential contender Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, who died in 2005. Stockdale’s 1995 book *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* is one of the finest introductions to Stoicism and its meaning for the profession of arms.²⁶ Stockdale’s personal embrace of Stoicism helped him to survive seven and a half years of systematic torture and solitary confinement, from 1965 until 1972, as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese in the dreaded “Hanoi Hilton.” In the late 1970s, as President of the U.S. Naval War College, Stockdale introduced at Newport an innovative course, “Foundations of Moral Obligation” (widely known as “the Stockdale Course”), which was heavily influenced by Stoic thought. More than any other warrior-scholar in the English-speaking West, Stockdale disseminated the value of Stoic philosophy within the American and allied military establishments, even influencing the work of such literary figures as Tom Wolfe.²⁷ In particular, Stockdale did much to elevate the writings of the Stoic slave-philosopher Epictetus over those of Marcus Aurelius, by revealing the former’s Stoic teachings in his *Enchiridion*

(Handbook) as what Stockdale called “a manual for combat officers.” As Stockdale puts it, in the pages of the *Enchiridion* “I had found the proper philosophy for the military arts as I practiced them. The Roman Stoics coined the formula *Vivere militare*—‘Life is being a soldier.’”²⁸ Stockdale’s writings remain highly relevant today; among the purposes of this article are to salute his legacy and extend it into the new millennium.

What are the central tenets of Stoicism, and how do they fit into the cosmology of the twenty-first-century military professional? As a philosophy, Stoicism teaches that life is unfair and that there is no moral economy in the human universe. Martyrs and honest men may die poor; swindlers and dishonest men may die rich. In this respect, the fate of both the Old Testament’s Job, God’s good servant, and of Shakespeare’s King Lear, the exemplary father, are reminders of what we must endure from a life that fits the Stoic creed. The spirit of Stoicism as an unrelenting struggle for virtuous character in a world devoid of fairness is hauntingly captured by the Greek playwright Aeschylus in his *Agamemnon*: “He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop on the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”²⁹

The absence of a moral economy outside of the workings of our inner selves means that in the Stoic catechism there is no such category as “victimhood.” Stoicism is thus about empowerment by perception—a cultivation of an invincibility of the will by minimizing personal vulnerability through a mixture of Socratic self-examination and control of the emotions. Stoicism teaches concentration on what individuals can control—what French scholar Pierre Hadot, in his study of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*, calls the cultivation of the “inner citadel” of the soul.³⁰ Stoicism’s four great teachings may be summarized as the quest for virtue, as representing the sole human good; the understanding that external goods do not equate to human happiness; the belief that a good life strives to control emotions to enhance reason; and the conviction that virtue consists in knowing what is in one’s control and what is not.³¹

The Quest for Virtue as the Sole Human Good

For the Stoic, character is formed by freedom of personal choice. Stoicism is thus a formula for maintaining self-respect and dignity through the conscious pursuit of virtue and the avoidance of vice, in times of either adversity or prosperity. The realities of poverty and wealth matter only insofar as they are used to shape the essential goodness of our character. As Epictetus puts it in the *Enchiridion*, true wealth stems from righteousness, honor, and decency, viewed collectively as absolute virtue. Such virtue is wholly indifferent to all matters of mere fortune, including health and illness, wealth and poverty, even life and death. It is a message of wisdom that has echoed across the centuries. In the twentieth century, the French philosopher Simone Weil echoed Epictetus when she wrote that authentic human greatness is always found in virtue and honor manifested in a “desire for the truth, ceaseless effort to achieve it, and obedience to one’s calling.”³² Stoics firmly reject the notion of collective or social guilt as a force in shaping virtue. For the Stoic, collective guilt is an impossible proposition, simply because guilt is always about individual choice and personal wrongdoing, “even in dreams, in drunkenness and in melancholy madness.”³³ No one can ever be guilty for the act of another,

and no society can be held accountable for the actions of individuals of a previous generation.

Externals Do Not Amount to Happiness

In his *Enchiridion*, Epictetus teaches us that every individual has a fundamental choice—whether to live by inner or outer values. This choice is summed up by his famous doctrine, “Of things some are in our power and others are not. In our power, are opinion, movement towards a thing [aim], desire, aversion (turning from a thing); and in a word, whatever are our own acts; not in our power are the body, property, reputation, offices (magisterial power) and, in a word, whatever are not our own acts.”³⁴

Epictetus goes on to warn that as long as a person occupies himself with externals, he will neglect the inner self. Since one cannot control external issues, they must become “indifferents”—that is, they are outside our will. As Epictetus puts it, “The things in our power are by nature free, not subject to restraint nor hindrance: but the things not in our power are weak, slavish, subject to restraint and in the power of others.” The Stoic pursues only that which is his own, within his power, and seeks a rational, self-sufficient existence motivated by the discipline of personal virtue.³⁵

Such an unrelenting concentration on the inner self at the expense of a life in society may strike some readers as a harsh doctrine. However, it is important to note that the Stoic philosophers never suggest that an individual should not partake of “the game of life,” the search for public success or worldly goods. They only warn that one should not become caught up in the game to the extent that it reduces individual freedom of choice and constrains the pursuit of virtue. Stoics are not unworldly. It must be remembered that two of the most important Roman Stoics, Cicero and Seneca, were wealthy politicians, while Marcus Aurelius was at once emperor, soldier, and philosopher.³⁶ A true Stoic is a participant in human affairs who understands the harsh realities of the world only too well. It is not for nothing that Epictetus compares the Stoic’s life to that of the discharge of military service to the highest standards: “Do you not know that life is a soldier’s service? . . . So too it is in the world; each man’s life is a campaign, and a long and varied one. It is for you to play the soldier’s part—do everything at the General’s bidding, divining his wishes, if it be possible.”³⁷

It is because of Stoics’ understanding of life that they will never be dismayed by happenings outside their spans of control; *Nil admirari* is their motto—“Be astonished at nothing.” In Stoic cosmology, true freedom lies in the form of how much autonomy can be gained by an individual in order to live a virtuous existence, despite the pressures of professional duties and social obligations.³⁸ One of the most fundamental of Stoic attitudes, then, is what Pierre Hadot, in his analysis of Marcus Aurelius’s thought, describes as “the delimitation of our own sphere of liberty as an impregnable islet of autonomy, in the midst of the vast river of events and of Destiny.”³⁹

Striving to Control Emotions Is the Essence of Rational Activity

The ancient Stoics believed that all moral purpose must be grounded in reason, not emotion. Consequently, emotions such as desire, pleasure, fear, and dejection must be transformed into acts of free will. For example, one suffers fear only if one *decides* to

fear—for as Epictetus observes, everything in life is connected to “what lies within our will,” or in Admiral Stockdale’s interpretation, “decisions of the will.”⁴⁰ For the Stoic, the unhappiest people are those preoccupied individuals who, as Seneca puts it, have the desires of immortals combined with the fears of mortals. Such unfortunates allow emotionally based fears concerning their bodies, worldly possessions, and relationships to assail and overcome them.⁴¹ Those who are unhappy are always “oblivious of the past, negligent of the present, [and] fearful of the future.” They exemplify the truth that “the least concern of the pre-occupied man is life; it is the hardest science of all.”⁴²

For Seneca, prosperity can come to the vulgar and to ordinary talents, but triumphing over the disasters and terrors of life takes a special prowess that is “the privilege of the great man.”⁴³ The Stoic must master the emotions of Fate, for “you do not shine outwardly because all your goods are turned inward. So does our [Stoic] world scorn what lies without and rejoice in the contemplation of itself. Your whole good I have bestowed within yourselves: *your good fortune is not to need good fortune.*”⁴⁴ The central ideal of the Stoic will is thus to master all conflicting emotions in favor of the power of reason and so create an inner self that is, in Cicero’s words, “safe, impregnable, fenced and fortified”—a harmony of mind and soul that is capable of functioning both in isolation and yet is also in comradeship with other virtuous minds.⁴⁵

Virtue Comes from Knowing What Is in One’s Control and What Is Not

As we have seen, in the inner citadel of the Stoic soul it is important to distinguish between the things that depend on human activity and the things that do not, for as Seneca notes, “it is in the power of any person to despise all things but in the power of no person to possess all things.”⁴⁶ The true meaning of personal freedom is summed up by Epictetus in the *Enchiridion*: “Whoever then wishes to be free, let him neither wish for anything nor avoid anything which depends on others: if he does not observe this rule, he must be a slave.”⁴⁷ Moreover, in order to maximize the realm of personal freedom, a Stoic competes with others only as a matter of moral choice, when virtue and self-knowledge are at stake. Epictetus warns against external appearances, since the nature of good is always within. As he puts it, “You can be invincible if you enter no contest in which it is not in your power to conquer.”⁴⁸

Ultimately, Stoicism, while challenging to modern military sensibilities, is not an impossible creed. As Nancy Sherman has argued, it should not be interpreted as a narrow philosophy aimed at creating a race of iron men, divorced from cosmopolitan concerns of fellowship and social community.⁴⁹ Rather, Stoicism is about fostering a spirit of invincibility only in the sense of a willingness to endure and overcome life’s inevitable challenges, difficulties, and tragedies. Moreover, the Stoic who seeks such invincible resolution should not be viewed as in search of moral perfection but rather as seeking constant moral progress within a social context. It is this interpretation of Stoicism—one defined by the Roman philosopher Panaetius of Rhodes as representing a “progression towards virtue”—that is most useful as a creed for twenty-first-century military professionals.⁵⁰

According to Cicero, this is a Stoicism that upholds public service undertaken in “a spirit of humanity and mutual consideration” as the supreme good. For Cicero, in his various writings, including *On Duties*, the exemplar of such service was the great soldier and

man of letters Scipio Africanus the Elder.⁵¹ In Cicero's "The Dream of Scipio," Africanus appears in a dream to his adoptive grandson Scipio Africanus the Younger and reveals to him the essence of public duty.⁵² The elder Africanus, conqueror of Hannibal and epitome of Roman grandeur, teaches the younger, "Every man who has preserved or helped his country, or has made its greatness even greater, is reserved a special place in heaven, where he may enjoy eternal happiness." The key to an honorable life is found not in private affairs but in public service: "The very best deeds are those which serve your country."⁵³

Viewed in terms of moral progression, then, the Stoic life is a profoundly human quest for knowledge and as such is a philosophical journey, never a destination—an archetype to be approximated, never an ideal to be achieved. The Stoic overcomes the playground of the Furies that life represents by developing an endurance marked by the cultivation of reason and the practice of willpower—both born out of a lifelong pursuit of good character.⁵⁴

Stoic Lessons and Choices for Twenty-First-Century Military Professionals

How can so demanding a personal philosophy work within the parameters of the twenty-first-century Western military profession? Eight moral lessons and seven moral choices that reflect the influence of Stoicism emerge from the annals of Western philosophy, literature, and history. They may assist uniformed military personnel in the arming of the inner selves as they pursue their journeys of professional development.

Eight Moral Lessons from Stoicism

A first lesson concerns the need to *develop an understanding of the meaning of a human life*, assailed from three directions—the body, the external world, and personal relationships. The writings of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius argue that life often resembles a storm-tossed sea, not a tranquil ocean, and that one should seek to navigate its shoals and currents according to a moral philosophy. As Seneca says in his letter "The Happy Life," the road to meaningful life lies not in the senses but in the pursuit of virtue and honor based on "self-sufficiency and abiding tranquillity." Together, these qualities produce a constancy that in turn confers "the gift of greatness of soul"—a gift that consummates everlasting good and transcends the brevity of human existence.⁵⁵

It is also useful to recall Marcus Aurelius's injunction in his *Meditations* on the need for a philosophy of life. The *Meditations*, composed as it was in campaign tents in innumerable frontier wars against Teutonic barbarians, has an obvious resonance for members of the profession of arms today:

Of man's life, his time is a point, his existence a flux, his sensation clouded, his body's entire composition corruptible, his vital spirit an eddy of breath, his fortune hard to predict, his fame uncertain. Briefly, all the things of the body, a river; all the things of the spirit, dream and delirium; his life is a warfare and a sojourn in a strange land, his after-fame oblivion. What then can be his escort through life? One thing and one thing only, Philosophy.⁵⁶

For many Stoics, meaningful living is further symbolized by Xenophon's story about Hercules's choice. On the eve of manhood, Hercules retires to the desert to reflect on his future. He is soon visited by two goddesses, Aretē (Virtue) and Hēdonē (Pleasure), who offer him different paths in life. Aretē offers Hercules an arduous path with much pain, labor, and tumult but also true meaning, moral purpose, and enduring honor. In contrast, Hēdonē offers him a pleasurable path of sensual ease, repose, and sumptuous living but without lasting significance. Hercules, with philosophical wisdom, chooses *aretē* and a life of struggle but one defined by righteous action, fidelity, honor, and decency.⁵⁷

A second lesson from the Stoic canon concerns the question of *how a military professional should face his day*, and again one can draw upon Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*. Marcus believed that "a man should stand upright, not be held upright."⁵⁸ A virtuous soul must always seek moral autonomy, because it is engaged in a personal journey to eternity. An individual's true power comes from the inner strength arising from a self-mastery that is honed to overcome the ebb and flow of frustration and failure. For the Roman soldier-emperor, then, daily moral life was about honorable action irrespective of the circumstances that an individual must face and to this end he offered the following sage advice:

Say to yourself in the early morning: I shall meet today inquisitive, ungrateful, violent, treacherous, envious, uncharitable men. All these things have come upon them through ignorance of real good and ill. But I, because I have seen that the nature of good is the right and of ill the wrong, and that the nature of the man himself who does wrong is akin to my own (not of the same blood and seed, but partaking with me in mind, that is in a portion of divinity), I can neither be harmed by any of them, for no man will involve me in wrong, nor can I be angry with my kinsman or hate him; for we have come into the world to live together.⁵⁹

For Marcus, those who behave badly do so because they lack Stoic character and value the external "indifferents" in life; theirs is a rationality that remains untutored by the quest for virtue. In contrast, the Stoic, aside from necessary cooperation with others for the common good, will always remain personally aloof from those who possess "ignorant and unlearned" souls.⁶⁰

A third lesson of great value imparts the central tenet of Stoicism, namely, *knowing what one can control and what one cannot control*. Here a military professional can take to heart Epictetus's advice in the *Enchiridion* to the effect that we always have a choice about the character of our inner lives and that trying to control or change what we cannot only results in anguish and torment. As Epictetus puts it, "If you desire any-

thing which is not in our power, you must be unfortunate; but of the things in our power, and which it is good to desire, nothing is yet before you";

therefore, "Pursue nothing that is outside us, nothing that is not our own."⁶¹ This tenet does not translate to mere passivity in the storm of events. On the contrary, the Stoic interior character can exert its own will in a duel with external events with the power with which a magnet draws iron.

A gulf has grown between the honor codes of volunteer military professionals and parent societies.

How an individual military professional exerts his will on an external situation is illuminated by Charles de Gaulle's pre-World War II reflections on philosophy and military self-reliance in the opening chapters of his 1932 book *The Edge of the Sword*. Influenced by Cicero's notion that character exhibits the supreme value of self-reliance and that "great men of action have always been of the meditative type," the French soldier and future statesman wrote that when faced with the challenge of events, the man of character has recourse to himself, for "it is character that supplies the essential element, the creative touch, the divine spark, in other words, the basic fact of initiative."⁶² The instinctive response of the man of character "is to leave his mark on action, to take responsibility for it, to make it *his own business*." Such an individual "*finds an especial attractiveness* in difficulty, since it is only by coming to grips with difficulty that he can realise his potentialities."⁶³ After France's disastrous defeat of 1940, de Gaulle lived these tenets first as leader in exile of the Free French and later, after 1958, as president of his country, in the cauldron of counterrevolutionary warfare in Algeria.

A powerful fourth lesson deals with how *happiness can be found only within*, and again a military professional can make use of Epictetus's and Marcus Aurelius's writings—this time in the form of their teaching that maximizing individual freedom is the only worthy goal in life. Happiness born out of such a sense of freedom depends on the interaction of three spheres of personal activity: the *discipline of desire* (control of emotions), the *discipline of assent* (the exercise of judgment based on reason), and the *discipline of action* (the pursuit of honorable service).⁶⁴ Here one can learn from the great seventeenth-century French thinker René Descartes, whose moral philosophy has been described as a form of neo-Stoicism.⁶⁵ In his "Discourse on Method," Descartes writes that the path to human happiness is to be found in the disciplines of Stoic thought. Descartes described the "third maxim" of his system of morals as follows:

My third maxim was always to *conquer myself rather than fortune*, and to alter my desires rather than change the order of the world, and generally to accustom myself to believe that there is nothing entirely within our power but our own thoughts: so that after we have done our best in regard to the things that are without us, our ill-success cannot possibly be failure on our part.⁶⁶

Although such an approach required great self-discipline and "long exercise and meditation often repeated," in it, concludes Descartes, "is to be found the secret of those philosophers who, in ancient times, were able to free themselves from the empire of fortune, or despite suffering or poverty, to rival their gods in their happiness."⁶⁷

The fifth lesson suggests that *events do not necessarily hurt us, but our views of them can*. In this respect, the Stoics urge the use of reason to ensure correct perception, since if we cannot always choose our external circumstances, we can always choose how we shall respond to them. The Stoic view of life as a valiant response to a fate that must be borne is immortalized in the poem "Invictus" (Invincible), written in 1875 by William Ernest Henley, an Englishman who endured a lifetime of debilitating illness and infirmity. Despite his great suffering, Henley chose to remain undiminished, and

the unconquerable spirit he represented is enshrined in the lines of what is regarded by many today as the personification of the Stoic creed:

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
 I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutches of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
 Under the bludgeonings of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the horror of the shade,
 And yet the menace of the years
 Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishment the scroll.
 I am the master of my fate:
 I am the captain of my soul.⁶⁸

Henley's Captain of the Soul is unflinching and unyielding, not least in the face of the ultimate adversity—death. Here, we should note the Stoic teaching that death is everyone's fate and should not be unduly feared. As Marcus Aurelius dryly observes, "An unscientific but none the less a helpful support to disdain of death is to review those who have clung tenaciously to life." Similarly, Seneca writes that because life is brief and perishable, "everything must therefore be borne with fortitude, because events do not, as we suppose, happen but arrive by appointment."⁶⁹

From a military perspective, perhaps the ultimate Stoic view of how to master the spectre of death can be found in the works of the former World War II combat infantryman and writer James Jones, the author of *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line*. Jones has been described as "the Tolstoy of the foot soldiers," a "mid-twentieth century American stoic, akin to Marcus Aurelius in his long apprenticeship to war, suffering, and the effort to bear it all."⁷⁰ Detesting those who, from afar, glorified war, Jones loved the American fighting man; his essay "Evolution of a Soldier," from his 1975 book *WW II*, is a bracing Stoic text for military professionals facing the test of combat. With searing honesty, Jones writes that the most successful combat soldier makes a "final full acceptance of the fact that his name is already written down in the rolls of the already dead":⁷¹

Every combat soldier, if he follows far enough along the path that began with his induction, must, I think, be led inexorably to that awareness. He must make a compact with himself or with Fate that he is lost. Only then can he function as he ought to function, under fire. He knows and accepts beforehand that he's dead. . . . That soldier

you have walking around there with this awareness in him is the final end product of the EVOLUTION OF A SOLDIER.⁷²

Jones admits that this is a grim and hard philosophy, but he argues that those who accept the status of the “living dead” paradoxically find their fatalism vibrant and life affirming, since “the acceptance and the giving up of hope create and reestablish hope in a kind of reverse-process photo-negative function.” In accepting a Stoic doctrine that “sufficient unto the day is the existence thereof,” many soldiers ironically increase their chances of battlefield effectiveness and personal survival. They learn to hate war and yet also to love the drama, excitement, and comradeship as aids in overcoming the dread of death in combat. Still others learn through experience to rationalize and master war’s harsh purpose and rigorous demands and make it their lives’ great professional calling.⁷³ Jones’s perceptive Stoical meditations on how a soldier can respond to the external circumstances of battle, which are beyond his personal control, are among the most realistic writings ever penned on modern war. They represent a timeless testament for all those in uniform who seek to be Henley’s Captains of the Soul.

A sixth lesson upholds the great Stoic truth that *character matters more than reputation*. Echoing Charles de Gaulle, General George C. Marshall once observed those who are called to lead men in battle must be judged less on technical ability than on character, on a reputation for fairness, patriotic purpose, and selfless determination.⁷⁴ A good way of reinforcing this message is to read Howard Spring’s 1940 novel *Fame Is the Spur*, the tale of the rise of an idealistic British working-class political leader, Hamer Radshaw, who in pursuit of high office becomes corrupted, renouncing every principle he ever espoused and every person who ever placed faith in him.⁷⁵ Making a cavalry sabre his honor symbol, he gradually allows its blade to lie unused. In a memorable scene in the 1947 film of Spring’s book, Radshaw at the end of his life, resplendent with accumulated honors and a peerage, tries to draw the sword, only to find that the blade has rusted in its scabbard. The scene is a metaphor of a career in which Radshaw’s soul has rusted in his body and his moral principles have withered in the face of unrelenting personal ambition.⁷⁶

A seventh lesson is that in the Stoic world, *effective leadership and good conduct are always dependent on a willingness to play the role that is assigned*. For those who aspire to be military Stoics, mastery of the “three disciplines” of desire, assent, and action is all-important.⁷⁷ At every stage of his military career, no matter what the personal discomfort, the professional officer must seek to behave correctly. As Epictetus puts it, life is like a play, and “it is your duty to act well the part that is given to you; but to select the part belongs to another.”⁷⁸

Particularly relevant to the military professional is the Stoic’s “discipline of action,” the need for honorable and “appropriate actions” when serving the greater good. A useful reminder of what can happen when such appropriate actions are ignored is James Kennaway’s *Tunes of Glory*, a concise and powerful 1956 study of military character.⁷⁹ Set in an unnamed peacetime Scottish Highland regiment in the early post-Second World War era, the novel explores what happens when an acting battalion commander refuses to give his loyalty to an appointed successor. The passed-over officer, the extrovert Major Jock Sinclair, is an up-from-the-ranks hero of El Alamein whose charismatic wartime

leadership and natural aggression have in peacetime conditions been reduced to a residue of professional soldiering bolstered by hard drinking and boorish behavior masquerading as manliness. Sinclair is replaced by a polar opposite, the cultivated but sensitive Lieutenant Colonel Basil Barrow, a graduate of Eton, Sandhurst, and Oxford, a former prisoner of war of the Japanese and “Special Duties” officer.

In a mixture of aggressive spirit, hurt pride, and class resentment, Sinclair refuses to accept his loss of command for the good of the regiment. The wily Sinclair constantly criticizes and undermines the new commanding officer, and his psychological and physical subversions confuse and divide the battalion’s officers and noncommissioned officers.⁸⁰ A court-martial brings a crisis that eventually implodes into a double tragedy in the form of Barrow’s suicide and Sinclair’s mental collapse from a belated sense of guilt for the lethal consequences of his coarse egocentrism. As a study of military character, *Tunes of Glory* is a compelling reminder of the need for Stoic self-discipline and of the demands of duty and obligation irrespective of individual feelings. As a study of character, the book can be usefully supplemented by the masterly British film made under the same title in 1960.⁸¹

An eighth and final Stoic lesson *concerns the question of suffering and where the line of goodness may be found in life*. For the military professional, suffering is an inescapable part of duty, and here one can do no better than study Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s reflections, in his monumental *The Gulag Archipelago*, on how the collision between “the soul and barbed wire” may yet become a transformative force for good. Solzhenitsyn’s chapter “The Ascent”—one of the greatest pieces of twentieth-century writing—is about nourishment of the soul in the midst of despair and hardship. The Russian dissident writes of how misfortune may become the raw material from which the soul “ripens from suffering.”⁸² In “The Ascent” Solzhenitsyn, despite years of dehumanization in the Soviet prison system, reaches a Stoic consciousness about the essential individual nature of good and evil and the power of personal revelation.⁸³ He accepts that while it is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, “it is possible to constrict it within each person” by an awakening of omniscience, from a self-knowledge of good that is born out of suffering.⁸⁴

It was only when I lay there on the rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not between states nor between classes nor between political parties but right through every human heart, through all human hearts. . . . Since then I have come to understand the truth of all the religions of the world: They struggle with the *evil inside a human being* (inside every human being).⁸⁵

Prison had nourished Solzhenitsyn’s soul in the pursuit of virtue, allowing him to write, “I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me. . . . *Bless you prison*, for having been in my life!”⁸⁶

Solzhenitsyn’s world is that inhabited earlier by other Stoics denied human freedom, including the great Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, America’s James Stockdale, and South Africa’s Nelson Mandela. All of these extraordinary figures underwent a form of Solzhenitsyn’s ascent of the soul and reached Stoic transcendence

through suffering. Their experiences and their subsequent lives echo Seneca's wise teaching that "disaster is virtue's opportunity," for true character can never be revealed without a struggle with adversity—just as "gold is tried by fire, brave men [are tested] by misfortune."⁸⁷

Seven Moral Choices from Stoicism

All members of the profession of arms face a career in which moral choices are inescapable. Stoicism may assist individuals in applying judgments born out of the cultivation of good character. The following seven moral choices, all drawn from Western literature and history, are offered as a framework for the moral decision making of military professionals.

The first of these choices—*deciding the kind of military professional you want to be*—is drawn from Anton Myrer's 1968 novel *Once an Eagle*, about the American profession of arms between the First World War and the beginnings of Vietnam. Although the setting of the book is firmly American in style and tone, Myrer's tale is a universal one.⁸⁸ In it two officer archetypes are contrasted. The first archetype is the dutiful and Stoic Sam Damon, a moral warrior and an exemplar of all that is best in the profession of arms. The second is the Epicurean and brilliantly cynical careerist Courtney Massengale, an officer of many social connections but whose moral compass is as corrupt as that of Lord Henry Wotton in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Damon and Massengale both rise to become generals, but their careers are in stark contrast. The Stoic Damon, a straight-talking "mustang" (i.e., up from the ranks) with a brilliant World War I combat record, is no match for the silken malice of Massengale, especially in the flick-knife political world of the U.S. Army staff in Washington. As a result, over the years Damon, the complete military professional, is perpetually outranked and outmaneuvered by Massengale's unscrupulous careerism—a careerism symbolized by insouciant charm and great verbal facility and propelled by an "astonishing intellectual prowess like some jeweled sword."⁸⁹

As Damon's superior officer during World War II in the Pacific and later in Southeast Asia, Massengale regards Damon's relentless honesty and single-minded military integrity not as operational assets but as obstacles to his own advancement. Massengale dismisses Damon's frequent professional protestations over his self-seeking command methods as naïve: "Like most strictly combat types he [Damon] lacks political savoir faire."⁹⁰ Myrer's sprawling saga becomes a powerful meditation on the moral choices involved in military officership and upon the eternal danger that the unscrupulous Massengales pose to the honest Damons. Indeed, both the title and tone of the book are taken from Aeschylus's famous lines:

So in the Libyan fable it is told
That once an eagle stricken with a dart,
Said, when he saw the fashion of the shaft,
"With our own feathers, not by others' hands,
Are we now smitten."⁹¹

The second moral choice that will confront many Western officers in particular is *the substance of officership as a choice between a quest for status and a search for real achievement*. Here a useful model is the tempestuous career of the brilliant U.S. Air Force colonel John Boyd—a man whom some observers have regarded as “the American Sun Tzu,” because of his espousal of maneuver warfare and the novel “OODA” (observe, orient, decide, act) decision cycle. Boyd was an irascible and outspoken intellectual maverick whose views were always at odds with the U.S. Air Force establishment. Consequently, his strategic ideas were unwelcome and remained little appreciated during his professional career.⁹²

Today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, those who opposed and impeded Boyd’s career are forgotten men, while Boyd’s influence permeates advanced military doctrine throughout the West. In retrospect, his dogged pursuit of strategic innovation can now be seen as a monument of moral courage, a tribute to imaginative professional perseverance, and a salutary reminder that professional militaries often neglect their finest minds. Boyd’s spirit of officership is conveyed in his Stoic-like “to be or to do, that is the question,” speech delivered to military colleagues and subordinates in the Pentagon in June 1974:

You have to make a choice about what kind of person you are going to be. There are two [military] career paths in front of you, and you have to choose which path you will follow. One path leads to promotions, titles and positions of distinctions. To achieve success down that path, you have to conduct yourself a certain way. You must go along with the system. . . . The other path leads to doing things that are truly significant for the Air Force, but you may have to cross swords with the party line on occasion. You can’t go down both paths, you have to choose. Do you want to *be* a man of distinction or do you want to *do* things that really influence the shape of the Air Force? To be or to do, that is the question.⁹³

A third moral choice facing military professionals involves *the need to resist the corrosive influence on the warrior spirit of bureaucratization*. As Charles de Gaulle once wrote, the true combat officer must always keep his intellect focused on the art of war and resist the intrusion of bureaucratic politics—for only through a dedicated pursuit of military philosophy “will an edge be given to the sword.”⁹⁴ A good example of this moral choice is exemplified by Emmanuel Wald’s 1992 book *The Decline of Israeli National Security since 1967*, in which the author analyzes the conceptual confusion and analytical failings of the Israeli officer corps—confusion and failings that arguably came to a head during the reverses suffered in the second Lebanon war, in 2006.⁹⁵

Wald’s book warns that during the 1970s and 1980s the Israeli Defense Force’s much-vaunted operational philosophy, honed in the 1948, 1956, and 1967 wars against the Arabs, became corroded by “a procedure of nonstrategy” based on bureaucratic compromise and conformity.⁹⁶ Wald quotes General Israel Tal’s speech at the Israeli National Defense College in April 1979 on how bureaucratic arrogance, intrigue, and mediocrity can combine to destroy the creative imagination that is fundamental to future generals:

[Israeli] officers at the rank of captain or major, naïve and full of youthful enthusiasm, believe they will be judged by their achievements. Lacking bureaucratic experience, they will try to exercise critical and original thought. . . . If these officers do not grasp that it is forbidden to damage bureaucratic harmony and coddling they will quickly be dropped from the IDF [Israeli Defense Force] system which does not tolerate deviants. If they are able to last in an organisation which, by its very nature, enslaves and constrains the thinker, then they will eventually, after many years of learning, reach the rank of general. By then, of course, not much can be expected from them in terms of creative thinking.⁹⁷

A fourth moral choice for those in uniform arises from the proposition that *no individual of character can remain neutral in a moral crisis*. Here much can be learned from the 1930s “wilderness years” of Winston Churchill, during which, in Stoic-like grandeur, he waged a lonely crusade to warn the British people about the mortal threat that growing Nazi power posed to Western civilization. In particular, Churchill’s 1948 *The Gathering Storm* is instructive, for in this volume of his monumental history of the Second World War the great statesman documents how the liberal democracies of the 1930s lacked essential elements of character, persistence, and conviction in matters of international security. Western policy toward Hitler’s Germany took the form of moral compromise, based on the policy of appeasement. Knowing that this failure of statesmanship was to create a war in which the worst “material ruin and moral havoc” in recorded history would be inflicted upon humanity, Churchill reflects:

It is my purpose as one who lived and acted in those days to show how easily the tragedy of the Second World War could have been prevented; how the malice of the wicked was reinforced by the weakness of the virtuous. . . . We shall see how the councils of prudence and restraint may become the prime agents of mortal danger; how the middle course adopted from desires for safety and a quiet life may be found to lead direct to the bull’s-eye of disaster.⁹⁸

Churchill’s book embodies his famous moral lesson: “In War: Resolution / In Defeat: Defiance / In Victory: Magnanimity / In Peace: Good Will.”⁹⁹

A fifth choice that reflects Stoic teaching revolves around *the necessity for a military professional always to make the best of adversity*. As Seneca argues, the individual of good character will always seek to turn adversity to advantage, for “the thing that matters is not *what* you bear but *how* you bear it.”¹⁰⁰ There are interesting connections between Stoicism and Christianity here, as evidenced in such works as St. Augustine’s *Confessions* and Thomas à Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ*.¹⁰¹ As mentioned earlier, a Christianized form of Stoicism was disseminated in the sixteenth century by Justus Lipsius, upholding Seneca’s teaching that “we are born into a kingdom; to obey God is to be free.” Indeed, the origins of the Western professional military ethic itself can be traced to Lipsius’s Christian neo-Stoicism and its influence over such early modern Western military reformers as Maurice of Nassau, Gustavus Adolphus, and Oliver Cromwell.¹⁰² Given these connections, the anonymous “Soldier’s Prayer” from the American Civil

War, found in a military prison in 1865 (and given below as reproduced by Admiral Stockdale), repays reading as both a Stoic and Christian testament:

We asked for strength that we might achieve,
 God made us weak that we might obey.
 We asked for health that we might do great things
 He gave us infirmity that we might do better things
 We asked for riches that we might be happy;
 We were given poverty that we might be wise.
 We asked for power that we might have the praise of men;
 We were given weakness that we might feel the need of God
 We asked for all things that we might enjoy life;
 We were given life that we might enjoy all things
 We received *nothing* that we asked for
 But all that we *hoped* for
 And our prayers were answered. We were most blessed.¹⁰³

The sixth moral choice that military professionals need to ponder is *whether they are willing to pay the terrible price that may be required when choosing to act out of conscience and principle*. Nowhere in recent military history is this better illustrated than by the German army officers who joined the abortive 20 July 1944 VALKYRIE plot to kill Adolf Hitler, as recounted by such eminent historians as Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, Peter Hoffmann, and Joachim Fest.¹⁰⁴ Much inspiration can be drawn from the actions of Brigadier General Henning von Tresckow and Colonel Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, who were the noblest spirits behind the 1944 conspiracy to rid Germany of a criminal regime. Both men came to view Hitler as the Antichrist, the archenemy of both Germany and Western civilization, whose death was a redemptive necessity “before the eyes of the world and of history.”¹⁰⁵

Immediately following the failure of the assassination attempt, von Tresckow prepared to commit suicide with a grenade in order to deny the SS the opportunity to torture him into revealing the names of other conspirators. As this young general and cultured German patriot left his Eastern Front headquarters on 21 July 1944 to take his own life in no-man’s-land, he turned to his adjutant, Captain Fabian von Schlabrendorff, and said with Stoic poignancy:

When, in a few hours, I go before God to account for what I have done and left undone, I know I will be able to justify in good conscience what I did in the struggle against Hitler. God promised Abraham that He would not destroy Sodom if just ten righteous men could be found and I hope God will not destroy Germany. None of us can bewail his own death; those who consented to join our circle put on the robe of Nessus. A human being’s moral integrity begins when he is prepared to sacrifice his life for his convictions.¹⁰⁶

Tresckow’s courageous participation in the doomed 1944 assassination plot embodies Seneca’s famous challenge: “What is the duty of the good man? To offer himself to Fate,” for “good men toil, spend and are spent, and willingly.”¹⁰⁷

A seventh and final moral choice for military professionals concerns the need *to submit oneself to the spirit of endurance*. Such a choice reflects the Stoic teaching that true courage represents steadfastness of soul, expressed in a decision to bear and forbear the storms of life over time and circumstance. In Seneca's words, "The demonstration of courage can never be gentle. Fortune scourges and rends us; we must endure it. It is not cruelty but a contest, and the oftener we submit to it the braver shall we be."¹⁰⁸

Here much wisdom can be gleaned from the writings of the philosophers Aristotle and Arthur Schopenhauer, from the Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor E. Frankl, from former British prime minister Gordon Brown, and from the American war correspondent and novelist Glendon Swarthout.¹⁰⁹ In his insightful reflections on the meaning of courage, Aristotle warns us that true courage differs from audacity.¹¹⁰ The latter is counterfeit courage; it is based on an "excess of intrepidity," on a physical impulsiveness that represents "a boastful species of bravery and the mere ape of manhood" and may conceal a fundamental moral cowardice. For Aristotle, real courage—particularly in its military manifestation—is based on a combination of confidence and caution, on the capacity for discriminating thought and clear judgment, and it prefers "the grace and beauty of a habitual fortitude."¹¹¹

Both Arthur Schopenhauer and Viktor Frankl arrive at a similar conclusion on courage as a form of fortitude. In his writing on ethics, Schopenhauer defines courage as "a kind of endurance."¹¹² Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning* echoes the work of Epictetus, in stating that the way one behaves in a situation depends more on personal decisions rather than on impersonal conditions.¹¹³ He holds that all faced by physical

Ethics need to be complemented by a stronger focus on philosophy that permits the professional military to become fully a self-conscious moral community.

danger and moral adversity have at their disposal a master key to pick the lock of courage, in the form of "the last of human freedoms—[the right] to choose one's attitude in any given

set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."¹¹⁴ More recently, in his *Courage: Eight Portraits*, Gordon Brown concentrates on courage in the Stoic spirit, not simply as physical audacity but as prolonged exposure to danger and risk in the form of "sustained altruism," exhibited by committed individuals as diverse as the British wartime nurse Edith Cavell, the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the Burmese political dissident Aung San Suu Kyi. Brown quotes approvingly Churchill's famous remark that "courage is the first of all human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all the others."¹¹⁵

Perhaps nowhere in twentieth-century American military literature are Aristotle's distinction between mere audacity and real courage, Frankl's "last of human freedoms," and Brown's notion of "sustained altruism" better illustrated than in Glendon Swarthout's Pulitzer Prize-nominated 1958 novel *They Came to Cordura*, one of the most insightful literary meditations ever composed on what constitutes courage under arms.¹¹⁶ Swarthout's novel is set during the U.S. Army's abortive 1916 punitive expedition into Mexico to chastise Pancho Villa and his revolutionaries. The central figure is Major Thomas Thorn, awards officer of the campaign, who is ordered to escort five cavalrymen cited for the Congressional Medal of Honor across the barren desert of Chihuahua to the town of Cordura and safety. As the patrol moves across the stark terrain, Thorn, a

middle-aged soldier tortured by the memory of his own sudden failure of nerve in a previous military engagement, ponders the qualities of the five heroes in his charge, whom he regards as members of Socrates's "golden race."¹¹⁷

The journey to Cordura—the town's name means "courage" in Spanish—becomes a dark metaphor by which Swarthout examines the character of courage in wartime. The patrol is ambushed by *Villistas* and tormented by heat, thirst, and adversity, and the golden mettle of Thorn's five "heroes" begins to betray base qualities. With the exception of Thorn, each man falters under the strain of prolonged exposure to danger and risk. Faced by the need to exhibit continuous courage, each of the five heroes chooses instead to become a moral coward. It becomes clear that the physical gallantry under fire that had been demonstrated by the five Medal of Honor candidates had been little more than Aristotle's "deformed courage" of audacity, momentary accidents in their otherwise undistinguished lives. In the end, Thorn, with classic Stoic fortitude, comes to Cordura—and thus to the meaning of courage—by delivering the flawed nominees to safety against all odds and, within sight of the town, at the sacrifice of his own life. His journey has seen him discover the reservoirs of an enduring bravery that he feared he did not possess—a realization that allows him to fulfil a sworn duty to five apparently courageous, but in reality morally unworthy, comrades.¹¹⁸

Life Is Being A Soldier

In contemporary Western culture, the teachings of ancient Stoicism may seem redundant, but it is not so. In twenty-first-century warfare the instrumental dimension of the scientific battle space may be important to success, but warfare remains a profoundly human experience that reflects existential meaning and reveals both moral agency and character. We must remember that human nature is unchanging and that it is hubristic of any generation to suggest that it can somehow escape the long shadow cast by history. We may not live in the past, but the past lives in the present, and we ignore its wisdom at our peril. There is a famous saying (attributed to Albert Einstein) that is especially pertinent to advanced Western militaries in the new millennium—"Not everything that counts can be counted; and not everything that can be counted, counts."

As the ancient Stoic thinkers teach us, what truly does count is the nature of life itself as an unending form of warfare that must be confronted and mastered if one is to overcome fortune and fate. While we can never insulate ourselves from misfortune, tragedy, or suffering, Stoicism, a philosophy of resolution that spans the ages, seeks to make its adherents Captains of the Soul, building inner citadels of character, rational thought, and moral values. The Stoic journey is one of rigor and self-discipline; it demands a regime of constant self-improvement. It does not promise a life of comfort or ease and one can expect to become only a reasonable archetype of the successful Stoic, since perfect wisdom and complete equanimity are unreachable ideals. In words that are not for the faint-hearted, Epictetus warns of the endurance required from the master Stoic: "Show me a man who though sick is happy, who though in danger is happy, who though dying is happy, who though condemned to exile is happy, and who though in disrepute is happy! Show him to me! By the gods, I would then see a Stoic!"¹¹⁹

Yet for all its ascetic challenges and arduous demands, a Stoic philosophy has much to offer today's Western uniformed professionals in their pursuit of *vivere militare*. Nowhere is this truer than in the Stoic teaching that real courage is in itself endurance of the human spirit. Such courage is based on a resilience in which individuality is embedded within a larger community of comradeship, a unity of self and society that upholds a balance between the principles of private excellence and public duty. For these reasons, the Stoic philosophy bequeathed to us by the Hellenistic Age will continue to find new adherents in the twenty-first century, not least among those who choose the lives of duty, honor, and sacrifice demanded by the military calling. As Epictetus also writes, "Great is the struggle [of the Stoic life] and divine the task. The prize is a kingdom, freedom, serenity and peace."¹²⁰ In many respects, the Stoic ideal recalls the famous injunction to the Ithacan wanderers in Tennyson's poem "Ulysses"—"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."¹²¹ In the Stoic creed, it is always our moral mastery of the testing journey of life that abides. In this sense, Stoicism's virtues are like the stars in the night sky: they shine high above us, and while we may not always reach them, we are ennobled both by their presence and by their promise.

Notes

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1. See the works of Christopher Paul, including *The Ethics of War and Peace: An Introduction to Legal and Moral Issues* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1941); also George R. Lucas, Jr., and Paul E. Roush, eds., *Ethics for Military Leaders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); Martin L. Cook, *The Moral Warrior: Ethics and Service in the US Military* (Albany: State Univ. of New York, 2005); and Timothy L. Challans, *Awakening Warrior: Revolution in the Ethics of Warfare* (Albany: State Univ. of New York, 2007).
2. Two useful studies that emphasize issues of moral character in war and that draw from classical literature are Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), and Shannon E. French, *The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
3. Quoted in John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2007), p. 153.
4. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, "Armed Forces after the Cold War," in *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*, ed. Moskos, Williams, and Segal (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), pp. 1–13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. John Allen Williams, "The Postmodern Military Reconsidered," in *Postmodern Military*, ed. Moskos, Williams, and Segal, p. 274.
8. Christopher Coker, *Humane Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2002), *Waging War without Warriors? The Changing Culture of Military Conflict* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002), *The Future of War: The Re-enchantment of War in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 2004), *The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror* (New York: Routledge, 2007), *Ethics and War in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2008), and *War in an Age of Risk* (London: Polity, 2009).
9. Coker, *Waging War without Warriors?* p. 2, and *Ethics and War in the 21st Century*, pp. 97, 137.
10. Coker, *Waging War without Warriors?* p. 160.
11. *Ibid.*
12. See Peter Berger, "On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor," in *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Alastair MacIntyre (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 172–81.

13. Professor Akbar S. Ahmed, lecture (Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C., 10 March 2003, reported in *Washington Post*, 11 March 2003); James Bowman, *Honor: A History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), esp. part 3, and “Decline of the Honor Culture,” *Policy Review*, no. 156 (August–September 2009), pp. 27–39.
14. Bowman, “Decline of the Honor Culture,” pp. 27–39.
15. Coker, *Ethics and War in the 21st Century*, p. 112.
16. Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties and Fate* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 8–9.
17. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2007), pp. 116, 119.
18. For the legacy of Greek and Roman Stoicism see Brad Inwood, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), esp. pp. 365–92; Sellars, *Stoicism*, chap. 6; and Frank McLynn, *Marcus Aurelius: A Life* (Philadelphia: Da Capo, 2009), chap. 19.
19. Nancy Sherman, *Stoic Warriors: The Ancient Philosophy behind the Military Mind* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 125.
20. Terri Tanieelian and Lisa H. Jaycox, eds., *Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Recovery* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2008).
21. *Ibid.*, pp. ix–xx.
22. H. R. McMaster, “Ancient Lessons for Today’s Soldiers,” *Survival* 50, no. 4 (August–September 2008), p. 187.
23. Coker, *Warrior Ethos*, p. 103.
24. See Sellars, *Stoicism*, pp. 1–31.
25. Peter Ryan, “Behind Enemy Lines with Marcus Aurelius,” *Quadrant* (April 2010), p. 128.
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EPICETUS VS. ARISTOTLE

What Is the Best Way to Frame the Military Virtues?

Mark N. Jensen

The virtue theoretic approach to ethics locates moral value primarily in the character of the agent rather than in the rules governing an act or the consequences that follow from it. Concerns about the character of the agent long have been a central preoccupation of military organizations. To be sure, modern military organizations in the United States and other Western, liberal, democratic states pay close attention to the rules governing acts and the consequences of these acts. Nevertheless, virtue ethics are of first importance, insofar as military organizations aim to cultivate soldiers, sailors, and airmen with specific sets of character traits, habits, and practices. This interest in moral development and moral virtue is especially evident in the missions and operations of service academies, officer training schools, and Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs. It also can be found in the programs for training enlisted personnel as well as the regular, annual training provided to operational forces.

When we consider virtue ethics as a moral theory, it is important to understand that there is no single account. Virtue ethics includes a family of theories with a rich and complex history, including ancient perspectives from the likes of Aristotle and the Stoics, as well as medieval perspectives such as that of Thomas Aquinas.¹ More recently, there has been a significant uptick of interest in virtue ethics, with notable yet very different approaches offered by Alasdair MacIntyre, Rosalind Hursthouse, Michael Slote, Robert Adams, Julia Annas, Nancy Sherman, Christine Swanton, Nancy Snow, and Daniel Russell, among many others.²

While military theory and practice have not been insulated from these contemporary developments, military thinkers have tended to be attracted to the Stoics. The leading voices here are James Stockdale, Nancy Sherman, and Michael Evans.³ The Stoics themselves do not speak with one voice, and the extant writings that we have from ancient

Stoic authors do not offer the same kind of substance and depth that we find in contributors such as Aristotle and Aquinas. Epictetus's *Handbook*, for example, is a series of loosely connected aphorisms and short reflections. The same can be said of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*. Nevertheless, a close reading of Stoic texts reveals a set of themes that together outline a distinct and different approach to virtue ethics. In brief, while the ultimate good for humans is happiness, the Stoics regard the social world in which we try to attain this good as opaque, unfair, and out of our control. As a result, happiness must be achieved entirely in the inner life, as it is the only realm we can control. Emotions, insofar as they are responses to external events, must be regulated tightly or eliminated. The virtues themselves are inner, rational dispositions that contribute to self-control. Public service is valuable not for the attainment of honors or external goods, but as an opportunity to practice the virtues. Social attachments are grounded in a cosmopolitan respect for shared humanity. In the military context, the Stoic approach is thought to resonate with the international nature of conflict; the chaos of warfare; and the need for order, discipline, and bravery on the battlefield.

It seems to me, however, that military organizations' attraction to the Stoic approach to virtue ethics is misplaced. In this article, I will argue that an approach to virtue ethics inspired by Aristotle provides a better theoretical and practical foundation for military organizations than the approach offered by the Stoics. It is not just that Aristotle offers a more sophisticated account of human flourishing and the attendant virtues; his approach has the added value of speaking to military organizations on and off the battlefield in ways that are especially relevant to the nature of modern Western militaries and their activities. I will not be arguing that the approach of the Stoics is false or dangerous; I will argue instead that Aristotle's is simply better. In particular, the Aristotelian approach (1) is a better match for the institutional nature of modern Western military service, (2) incorporates a higher degree of flexibility, which allows the account to be adjusted appropriately to the variety of circumstances in which modern militaries operate, and (3) is better able to contend with the kinds of tragedies that are at the heart of the military experience in war.

The article is organized as follows. I begin with a comparative sketch of Aristotle's approach and the Stoic approach. I then point out salient features of modern Western military practice, noting how they comport with the systems of Aristotle and the Stoics. At this stage I develop in detail the three areas in which I take Aristotle's account to be superior. I conclude with a comparative practical example: a brief sketch of how Aristotle's ethics might provide better resources for tackling the current challenge that modern Western militaries, especially the U.S. military, face in terms of eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Comparative Ethics: Aristotle

All virtue theoretic approaches begin with an account of the excellent person, especially the habits, traits, and practices that together constitute human excellence.⁴ This focus on excellence of character contrasts with other prominent theoretical approaches to ethics, such as consequentialism, which focuses on the good that we bring about through our

actions, and deontology, which focuses on the moral laws that we should obey. Among the virtue theoretic approaches, Aristotle's account is a complex affair with many moving parts. To frame a useful comparison with the Stoic account, I will focus on each account's answer to two questions. First, what is moral excellence? Second, what are the intrinsic limitations that we face in trying to achieve moral excellence? While there is much more that could be said, and indeed has been said, in defense of these two accounts in general, my argument here will focus narrowly on their comparative fitness for military professionals and their organizations. It is my view that our accounts' comparative answers to these two questions will be sufficient to determine which is better for the military context.

Moral Excellence according to Aristotle

Aristotle believed that moral excellence is found in a happy human community. By *happiness* we mean a life of "doing well" or "being well."⁵ Many commentators propose that the *happy life* is understood best as the *flourishing life*, to distinguish it from the various trivializations of "happiness" that seem to have taken over contemporary Western culture. The flourishing human life, in turn, is defined in terms of human function.⁶ In other words, just as we can determine what it means to be an excellent or flourishing dolphin if we have an account of the purposes, lives, and nature of dolphins, so we can determine what it means to be an excellent or flourishing human if we have an account of the purposes, lives, and nature of humans.⁷ On that score, we observe that a full account of human function will make reference to psychological and sociological contexts, as these are main contexts within which humans live.

Psychologically speaking, every human being is composed of rational and nonrational faculties, where the nonrational faculties include those that are capable of listening to reason (appetites and passions) and those that are not (involuntary bodily functions).⁸ According to Aristotle, moral excellence is found at the intersection of the rational faculties and the nonrational faculties that are capable of listening to reason.⁹ The morally excellent person uses her reason—or, more specifically, her deliberative and decision-making powers—to regulate her appetites and passions so she can fulfill those functions specific to the appetites and passions themselves. Aristotle is not suggesting that we suppress or eliminate our appetites and passions; instead he argues that, in a flourishing person, appetites and passions will be expressed in ways that accord with right reason. Simply put, the morally excellent person is the well-regulated person.

Moving from psychology to sociology, we note that the functions of our faculties of appetite and emotion often are connected to our social roles. At the same time, part of the human function is defined in terms of the various social and political roles that we fulfill in human community. For each of these discrete faculties and roles, Aristotle maintains that we can isolate a specific moral excellence in the mean between extremes. Consider three examples. Fear is an aspect of human emotion that serves as an indicator of and a response to a threat. As Aristotle puts it, when we are fearful at the right time, toward the right people, to the right degree, and so on, we achieve an excellence with respect to fear: bravery.¹⁰ If one is fearful in the wrong circumstances, one has an excess of fear: the vice of cowardliness. If one fails to be fearful when the circumstances require

it, one has a deficiency of fear: the vice of foolhardiness. Consider another example. In our everyday interactions with others, we find some people who are ingratiating: they never disagree and always offer praise. Others are quarrelsome: they object to everything and everyone. The mean between these extremes, according to Aristotle, is friendliness.¹¹ Finally, consider the hierarchical ordering of our various social and political roles. Given the contributions that we make in our families, communities, and businesses, we should expect an appropriate response, whether that be remuneration, recognition, or gratitude. In terms of extremes, those who seek out honors that do not befit their respective places in the community we call “honor loving,” while those who are deficient fail to enjoy the honor that is their due. Aristotle does not give us a clear name for the virtue, other than to call it the virtue concerned with small honors.¹²

Multiplied across our passions, appetites, and social roles, overall moral excellence can be captured in a catalog of the virtues. Aristotle’s own catalog names ten virtues of character; subsequent virtue theorists have provided different, often longer, lists. While Aristotle himself does not provide us with an explicit story of how we might determine which traits belong in our catalog and which do not, the theory behind his catalog suggests an account. Excellent character is a composite of excellences attached to our humanity, to our socioeconomic status, and to our social and political roles. In other words, the catalog of virtues is tied to one’s specific psychological, sociological, and political functions.

As a result, the list of virtues for each person will be slightly different. Where we share a function with everyone else, we will have common virtues. Where we do not share a function with others or share a function with only a subgroup, we will have special virtues. Common virtues, in other words, include those attached to our universally shared features. These include virtues tied to our emotional life (e.g., bravery), our appetites (e.g., temperance), and the inescapably social nature of our species (e.g., friendliness).

Special virtues are those determined by the specific circumstances of our social, economic, and political conditions. Magnificence, Aristotle’s virtue for generosity as it pertains to large gifts, will be relevant to me only if I have significant wealth. The virtue concerning small honors will be relevant to me only if I have no social and political potential for magnanimity, which is the virtue concerned with big honors. Outside of Aristotle’s catalog, we can conceive of a host of additional special virtues. The virtues associated with being the firstborn (perhaps including special responsibilities for younger siblings and for older parents) will apply only if one is in fact the firstborn. The virtues associated with democratic citizenship (e.g., being well-informed, capable of deliberating over public policy, and committed to democratic decision-making processes) will apply only if one happens to live in a democracy. And the virtues associated with officership in the military of a democracy (e.g., loyalty, honor, integrity, and courage) will be determined by one’s specific responsibilities and rank and the overall mission of the military institution.

Understood in this way, the catalog of virtues is derived from psychological and sociological facts about us. On the one hand, these grounds provide for a kind of universality and permanency in the catalog, insofar as our nature as human beings and the basic features of human life are unchanging. On the other hand, insofar as our roles

and functions are defined at least in part by the particulars of our social and political circumstances, the catalog will have variations across individuals in their various social, cultural, and political circumstances. There will be lots of ways in which the specific conditions of our lives imply different roles and functions, which in turn will specify modified, and possibly novel, virtues.

It will be helpful, then, to notice the way that Aristotle organizes our various roles and functions within the broader social and political context. Moral excellence is not an individual achievement but instead the achievement of a community. Every flourishing person, in virtue of her humanity, is part of a larger social and political project. We are, as he phrases it, “political animals.”¹³ Put another way, humans are members of a species that flourishes in a particular type of community. Just like the ant, bee, wolf, or lion, the character of the individual human being cannot be understood fully apart from an understanding of her particular role or function in the community to which she belongs.

For his part, Aristotle describes a nested set of three communities: family, village, and community.¹⁴ Our roles and functions in each of these communities imply an account of performing specific roles and functions excellently and, in turn, define part of the catalog of virtues that apply to us. In the family we might be a son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother, husband or wife. In the village we have roles in terms of our vocation, in terms of our property and neighbors, and in terms of our local institutions. In the community we are defined in terms of our citizenship in general as well as in terms of any specific role we might occupy in the institutions of the community (e.g., legislator, soldier, judge). With respect to each role that I occupy in my family, village, and community, we can specify what it means to flourish, and then in turn identify those virtues that contribute to, as well as constitute, my flourishing in that context. Some of these will be specialized versions of virtues of which I make use in other contexts; others will be unique to my particular roles. Insofar as our roles change over the course of our lives, our catalog will change as well. This does not mean that morality is relative; it means instead that moral excellence is context sensitive. Human life is not a static or uniform experience; any description of the excellences required for flourishing must be adjusted to fit our circumstances.

Despite the variety of catalogs of virtues that apply to individuals, Aristotle argues that we can identify an unchanging common good: the good of the community. The good of the community is the flourishing of the community qua community. This is the chief good, such that the goods of all the other components of the community are subordinate to it. We must be careful here, however: to say that the goods of the components of the community are subordinate is not to say that they simply are means to achieving the chief good. Nor are we saying that the chief good is simply the aggregate of all the goods of the components. Aristotle’s account here is more nuanced. The goods of the subordinate communities are ends in themselves as well as means to achieving the chief good. It is also correct to say that they are constituents of the chief good, although the chief good cannot be defined purely in terms of the achievement of its subordinate elements. Overall excellence or flourishing is achieved not merely by my excellence as a family member and a village member; it also requires my excellence as a citizen—a role that cannot be reduced to the others.

Moral Limitations according to Aristotle

The excellent or flourishing community, together with the morally excellent people who constitute it, is vulnerable on Aristotle's account. Some forms of attack or corruption will be sufficient to impair excellence and flourishing both for individuals and for the community as a whole. We can distinguish two kinds of challenges to the flourishing of the community: internal challenges and external.

Consider one form of internal challenge. The moral virtues are habits that must be cultivated through a program of education that includes apprenticeship under those who have a high degree of mastery of the virtues already. For example, one learns to be brave under the tutelage of brave people. But if a sociopolitical system lacks a program of education in the virtues or lacks exemplars, moral excellence becomes very difficult to achieve. A second form of internal challenge is associated with the intelligibility of the social world. Identifying the special virtues associated with one's various social roles presupposes a clearly defined set of social roles as well as a clear understanding of what one's social roles are. Otherwise, one's account of excellence in one's various functions will be incomplete, vague, or perhaps missing altogether. But in contemporary societies, especially the large, complex, and disorganized societies that characterize the West, we find just these kinds of challenges to the clarity of social roles and our understandings of our respective places.

External threats to the flourishing of an otherwise morally excellent community are often more straightforward. External threats such as war, natural disaster, or the scarcity of natural resources can undermine the ability of a community to achieve and maintain flourishing. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, circumstances that are completely out of our control can get the better of us.

Taken together, the vulnerabilities associated with these two types of challenges imply that a people can fail to achieve moral excellence and that, in many cases, this failure can happen through no fault of their own. In other words, moral tragedy is a real possibility in Aristotle's world; human excellence or flourishing is dependent on circumstances that are, at least in part, out of our control.

Comparative Ethics: Stoicism

Let us turn now to the Stoic account and consider the Stoic answers to these same questions. Of course, in one sense there is no single Stoic answer, insofar as Stoicism is a philosophical school with many adherents but no dominant voice. We also do not have a complete record of Stoic teachings. Nevertheless, we can detect themes that run throughout Stoic writings—themes that provide a sense of the Stoic account, and themes that have been picked up by military ethicists such as Sherman, Stockdale, and Evans. In fact, since these contemporary writers serve as the primary lens through which many military members and organizations have been introduced to Stoicism, it is their interpretation that provides the best target for our discussion here. Just as with Aristotle, we cannot hope to provide a comprehensive account, but we can present a contrasting picture that will be sufficient for discussing the relative merits of the Stoic perspective for contemporary military service.

Moral Excellence according to the Stoics

It is important to keep in mind that the Stoic approach to virtue ethics is deeply indebted to Aristotle. While virtue theory, broadly considered, is the central approach to ethics for most of the thinkers throughout the Greek and Roman world, Aristotle's account is among the most prominent, and philosophers who come after him presuppose aspects of his view even when they attempt to depart from it. Stoic philosophers, for their part, see themselves as developing or improving on earlier accounts. One way to exercise charity in reading the Stoics is to regard their comparative lack of theoretical sophistication as a reflection of a common philosophical background and a common set of assumptions. In other words, perhaps they are understood best as taking much of Greek philosophy, including Aristotle, for granted, and then focusing their own efforts on the few places where they believe the account should be updated.

Taking this approach, we can see a variety of ways in which the Stoics modify Aristotle's account of moral excellence. With Aristotle, we saw that my happiness is only partly under my control. Since I am a dependent and social creature, my own good is bound up with the good of others: if my community is not flourishing, then I am not flourishing. In other words, living a flourishing life depends, at least in part, on good moral luck. The Stoics find this approach entirely wrongheaded. As they see it, the excellent or flourishing life ought to be in my power, not arbitrarily subject to the choices of others. Aurelius writes, "[T]rue good fortune is what you make for yourself. Good fortune: good character, good intentions, and good actions."¹⁵ In other words, my happiness should be entirely up to me: if I can develop the right kind of character, I can control my own destiny. Evans provides a summary as follows:

In the Stoic catechism there is no such category as "victimhood" because there is no moral economy outside of the workings of our inner selves. Stoicism is thus about empowerment by perception—a cultivation of an invincibility of the will through minimizing personal vulnerability by a mixture of Socratic self-examination and an emphasis on control of the emotions. Stoicism teaches concentration on what individuals can control, what Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations* called the "inner citadel" of the soul.¹⁶

The Stoic focus on controlling our fate changes the nature of our moral life in many ways, but for the purpose of developing an argument with application to contemporary military service I will focus on just two: individualism and interiorization. By *individualism*, I mean the way in which Stoics focus on the ethics of the individual rather than the ethics of the community; by *interiorization*, I mean the way in which Stoics focus on the mental lives of individuals rather than their actions. Both of these modifications reflect Stoic objections to Aristotle's program.

Let us begin with individualism. Stoics agree that the flourishing person has excellent character, and excellent character is a matter of having a specific set of moral virtues.¹⁷ Stoic catalogs of the virtues are different from Aristotle's: sometimes they include virtues that appear to be broader in scope, such as righteousness, honor, and dignity; at other times, Stoics hint at virtues that reflect a disengaged or aesthetic life. Aurelius, for

example, lists honesty, gravity, endurance, austerity, resignation, abstinence, patience, sincerity, moderation, seriousness, and high-mindedness.¹⁸

The more important contrast, for our purposes, can be found in the different aims of the Stoic virtues. On the Stoic account, the cultivation and exercise of these virtues have value primarily for the development of the character of the individual, not for the sake of the community. Aurelius writes, “[P]eople are our proper occupation. Our job is to do them good and put up with them. But when they obstruct our proper tasks, they become irrelevant to us—like wind, sun, and animals. Our actions may be impeded by them, but there can be no impeding our intentions or dispositions.”¹⁹

Every action stands on its own as a measure of the character of the agent who performs it, independent of the value of the action for the community. I am not responsible for the actions of others, and they cannot be responsible for my own actions. After all, I cannot control them and they cannot control me. My own good is therefore my ultimate point of reference, as it is the only thing I truly can control. In this way, the Stoic approach to happiness is far more individualistic than the approach offered by Aristotle. Where Aristotle views the ethical life as a joint enterprise aimed at *building* our social and political world, the Stoics view the ethical life as an individual enterprise aimed at achieving excellence *despite* our social and political world.

This contrast should not be especially surprising. Aristotle’s starting point in his writing, as in his life, is the self-contained social and political unity of the Greek city-state. Stoic writers, in contrast, are lost in the vast, diverse, cosmopolitan expanse of the Roman Empire. Correspondingly, the Stoics view the social world as opaque, cruel, and arbitrary—utterly outside the control of the individual. To be sure, Stoics were not the kind of pessimists who aim at disengagement; they were not the Roman equivalent of modern doomsday preppers. Stoics call for service, kindness, and other forms of social engagement. Moreover, Stoics themselves were active for the good of their friends and their communities, whatever their stations and circumstances. Cicero and Seneca were Roman politicians; Marcus Aurelius was a soldier and emperor. But all these exercises of the social virtues reflect a much more detached approach to our social and political world, an approach centered on the character of the individual agent. At the same time, Stoic social and political engagement did not have as its primary objective the achievement of a common good or the construction of a flourishing community.

In the midst of this chaotic world, it seems fair to ask the Stoic whether moral excellence or flourishing is even possible. This brings us to the second point of contrast between the Stoic approach and the Aristotelian approach: the interiorization of the moral life. When Aristotle allows that tragedy can make an otherwise virtuous person unhappy, the Stoics recoil. They propose instead a system in which happiness is not at all dependent on one’s social, political, and physical circumstances. Aurelius writes as follows:

If you do the job in a principled way, with diligence, energy and patience, if you keep yourself free of distractions, and keep the spirit inside you undamaged, as if you might have to give it back at any moment—If you can embrace this without fear or expectation—can find fulfillment in what you’re doing now, as Nature intended, and in superhuman truthfulness (every word, every utterance)—then your life will be happy. No one can prevent that.²⁰

In other words, the happy life is a matter of internal rather than external fulfillment. Whatever the state of the world around me, it is still possible for me to have excellent character. I can accomplish this, the Stoics explain, provided that I achieve the following.

First, I must come to terms with the fact that happiness has nothing to do with external successes. Epictetus writes, “Do not seek to have events happen to you as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and your life will go well.”²¹ If happiness lies entirely within my control, and the only things over which I have complete control are my internal responses and my internal life, then I must learn to master my internal life and avoid seeking happiness in external goods. External goods of wealth, fame, and power are outside my control; it would be a mistake to put my happiness in them. To be sure, this does not mean that Stoics eschew these goods. Stoicism need not imply a monkish way of life; such a way of life itself could become an object of worship. Instead, the Stoic avoids emotional attachment to external goods. Epictetus explains somewhat graphically: “It shows lack of natural talent to spend time on what concerns the body, as in exercising a great deal, eating a great deal, drinking a great deal, moving one’s bowels or copulating a great deal. Instead you must do these things in passing, but turn your whole attention toward your faculty of judgment.”²² In other words, it is our attitude toward external goods that matters, not the goods themselves.

Second, I need to learn to be guided by reason alone. While our social and political world may be chaotic, the universe as a whole is guided by reason. There is a natural order or a law of nature that I discover and toward which I can orient my will. Again, Epictetus: “On every occasion you must have these thoughts ready: lead me, Zeus, and you too, Destiny, wherever I am assigned by you; I’ll follow and not hesitate, but even if I do not wish to, because I’m bad, I’ll follow anyway. Whoever has complied well with necessity is counted wise by us, and understands divine affairs.”²³

To do this, I must learn to control my emotions. In particular, I must recondition my emotional life so that I am not emotionally sensitive to the things that I see and the events that befall me, no matter how pleasurable or cruel they may be. Sherman explains the Stoic perspective here: “They hold that emotions, as most of us experience them, typically involve assent to false opinions. That is, the impressions we assent to have a propositional structure . . . and emotions typically involve false opinions of good and evil.”²⁴ It is not that Stoics eschew emotions altogether; what they claim instead is that our emotional responses must be keyed solely to our mental life. We can take pleasure in our virtuous intentions, but not in the results that come from actions that accord with those virtuous intentions. After all, the results of our actions, no matter how well intended they may be, are not in our control.

Third, and in keeping with the previous achievements, I must cultivate inner strength, especially fortitude, if I am to flourish in the midst of the cruel and harsh world in which we live. Not only is my social and political context outside my control; it actually tends to pose a threat to my physical, social, and political well-being. In this way, inner happiness is something that I must achieve despite my suffering. Suffering and death are inevitable. Aurelius’s *Meditations*, in particular, are preoccupied heavily with reminders of the shortness of life and the inevitability of death: “[K]now this: Human lives are brief and trivial. Yesterday a blob of semen; tomorrow embalming fluid, ash. To

pass through this brief life as nature demands. To give it up without complaint. Like an olive that ripens and falls. Praising its mother, thanking the tree it grew on.²⁵

Moral Limitations according to the Stoics

From the preceding discussion, it should be evident that if the Stoic life can be achieved, there will be no limits on my happiness. Insofar as I resist the temptations of worldly goods and worldly pleasures, I can create for myself an impenetrable mental fortress—a place where I am immune to the effects of tragedy, a place in which I can be happy, though the world may fall apart. As Sherman explains, for the Stoics, “[H]appiness must be a matter of virtue alone.”²⁶

This is not to say that Stoicism is easy. Reconditioning my emotional life according to the Stoic program is especially difficult, as my emotions seem to be naturally responsive to my experience in the world and not to the particulars of my character. Stoics recognize the challenges here. They remind followers that Stoic ideals are achieved to one degree or another; one need not achieve perfection to have made progress. Flourishing does not require the complete realization of the ideal; further achievement with respect to happiness is always possible. Whatever the world may throw at me, my happiness remains in my control, and I can take steps to achieve it all the more. Evans quotes Henley’s 1875 poem “Invictus” to make the point:

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
 I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutches of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
 Under the bludgeonings of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the horror of the shade,
 And yet the menace of the years
 Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishment the scroll.
 I am the master of my fate:
 I am the captain of my soul.²⁷

The Superiority of Aristotle in the Modern Military World

At first blush, one can see the attraction of the Stoic approach to the military context. Soldiers on the contemporary battlefield are expected to perform excellently when their lives are under constant threat, often in the midst of great suffering, and under strategic and tactical conditions that are nearly always out of their control. The fear of death can be psychologically paralyzing; the Stoic power to eliminate that fear and concentrate single-mindedly on the tasks at hand sounds like liberation for the soldier in combat. James Stockdale famously remembered thinking to himself, as he parachuted into a North Vietnamese village, that he was “entering the world of Epictetus.”²⁸ Stockdale believed the Stoic approach described above was vital to his survival as a prisoner of war (POW) in North Vietnam, and vital to his effective leadership there.

On the one hand, we should not dismiss Stockdale’s experiences, or those of other soldiers who have found resilience and liberation in Stoic philosophy, with a mere wave of the hand or a short piece of philosophical argument. Certainly under POW conditions, there is very little among our externalities that we can control, and any happiness that we find likely will be a matter of the inner character and strength that the Stoics describe. It may be that the Stoic approach to pain and suffering could be a helpful addition to certain parts of military training, especially those concerned with survival and capture.

On the other hand, the conditions in which Stoicism seems especially pertinent are not the experiences of the vast majority of soldiers in the modern military. Instead, soldiers in modern militaries are contributors to an enormous and complex social and political project, a project that requires creativity and flexibility, and a project that can and sometimes does go wrong. In my view, this is the world of Aristotle, not the world of Epictetus. In providing a detailed argument for the superiority of Aristotle’s approach, I will focus on three features: the institutional setting of modern Western military service, the need for higher degrees of flexibility, and the reality of tragedy.

In the first place, Aristotle’s account is better suited to the institutional conditions of contemporary military service. Unlike the Stoics, Aristotle does not view the social world as opaque and arbitrary. Aristotle’s theory is not concerned with explaining how we might flourish in spite of our institutions, but more optimistically provides a road map for the creation and development of excellent institutions in which we can flourish together. The fact is, modern Western military conditions and practices are well suited for this approach, especially in those aspects that extend beyond individual psychology. Each soldier has a specific role to play associated with her unit, and the description of this role implies an account of excellence. Each unit, in turn, is part of a larger unit in the military organization, where that military organization in turn plays a very specific role in the good of the state. Thus we have a set of elements analogous to the family, the village, and the community. The chief good for the soldier is found in the good of the state, while the military itself plays a specific role in sustaining that good. As with Aristotle’s other intermediate institutions, the good for the military is neither a mere means to nor a mere constituent of the good of the state. Soldiering is both an end in itself and a means to the achievement of other ends. At the same time, the achievement of the good for the military and its units is a necessary condition for the achievement of

the good for the state, but in the sense that the specific good for the military organization is an end itself, a means through which other aspects of the state can achieve their good, as well as a constituent element in the complex common good by which we assess the state as a whole.

This organizational structure is not merely thrust on soldiers in modern militaries; instead they construct and sustain it. Both officers and enlisted personnel are expected to take on leadership roles gradually, using their experience, together with the guidance of their superiors, to build and rebuild the organization in keeping with an account of its good that they are responsible for formulating and reformulating. In this way, the institution presupposes that its members will exercise control over it, despite the challenges of size and complexity. Notice that this account contrasts sharply with the Stoic approach to social and political institutions. While Stoics allow for public service and contributions to the good of the community, the Stoic must not take on the good of these institutions as her own. To do so would be to accept the existence of external goods and subject one's own happiness to the judgments and actions of others. Insofar as social trust is built on identity of interests, shared commitments, and common purpose, Stoically oriented soldiers will not be as trustworthy as Aristotelians in the project of building and sustaining modern military organizations.

In the second place, Aristotle's account allows for significantly more creativity and flexibility than the account we get from the Stoics. Aristotle's virtue of prudence is proactive: one evaluates the circumstances in which one finds oneself, identifies the goods relevant to one's circumstances and the circumstances of one's group, and then identifies practices and activities that will contribute to the accomplishment of those goods. Since the common good is always in view, Aristotle's soldiers never are preoccupied with their own individual happiness—after all, their own individual good is a constituent of and a means to accomplishing the common good, given the natures of their particular roles. By definition, the Aristotelian does not interiorize her ethical life—the common good is exterior, at least with respect to the others that compose her group.

War is, at least in one sense, a violent competition among groups with (at least) two different visions of the good. Stoics who distance themselves from the common good, and who view the external world as a place of temptation and cruelty, seem to be unattractive partners in the social and political project that is modern warfare. To be sure, it appears that Stoic detachment could be useful in a narrow range of circumstances in modern warfare, such as when captured by the enemy—Stockdale's experience. Nevertheless, it seems to me that proponents of Stoicism under these conditions miss the fact that Aristotle's virtue of prudence, with its context-sensitive adjustment to new circumstances, could prescribe an account of flourishing similar to that prescribed by the Stoics under conditions of capture. In other words, where the Stoics propose a rigid morality of detachment, Aristotle proposes a kind of adaptability that could recommend a degree of emotional detachment when circumstances call for it. When an Aristotelian finds himself in a social structure that is inimical to flourishing in the conventional way (e.g., family, village, community), he will look for ways to make the best of his circumstances. In fact, Stockdale's own experience as a POW had far more Aristotelian elements than he seems to have recognized. By accepting a leadership role among the other captured Americans, by promulgating principles for prisoner behavior, and by finding ways

to encourage others in the midst of their suffering, Stockdale remained committed to the good of the American prisoners, not just as individuals but as Americans committed to the good of the United States.²⁹

Finally, Aristotle's account has a better approach to error and tragedy. Where the Stoic is expected to be "astonished at nothing," Aristotle recognizes the possibility of genuine errors, mistakes, and tragedies in the context of military service and war. Not every social structure conforms to the ideal; warfare, quite obviously, is a nonideal social circumstance. Things have gone wrong, possibly quite badly, and this is a genuine tragedy for Aristotelians—the social structures that support a life lived according to the virtues and in pursuit of joint goods have broken down, thereby reducing the amount of happiness that is possible in the moment. The Stoic response would appear to be to chide the Aristotelian for looking for happiness outside herself; the Stoics insist that it can be found reliably only within. In this way, the Stoic detaches herself from the possibility of tragedy, from the very idea that our circumstances can be described as bad or good. However, it seems to me that if we do not recognize tragedy, we will have little motivation to work to prevent it in the future. Whatever the merits of the Stoic approach as it concerns the resilience of the individual, the fact is that modern soldiers in modern militaries strive for more. Military action often aims at stopping and responding to tragedy, and even learning from it so as to put in place measures to prevent it from recurring. Tragedy cannot be eliminated from warfare, insofar as good men and women always will suffer and die; however, our response should not be to structure our mental life so we are not affected by tragedy, but instead to rejoin more forcefully the challenge of building institutions, practices, and soldiers who are adept at minimizing internal and external harms. Modern institutions like the military aim to improve performance, achieve efficiencies, and accomplish very specific common ends. More generally, our political systems and political leaders should be striving to find peace and support flourishing nations and citizens. The Stoic ethic, with its much more limited focus on the good of the individual, does not seem to be as good a fit as the Aristotelian ethic, with its focus on building a flourishing set of nested institutions.

The Special Case of Sexual Harassment

In recent years, the U.S. military has become especially concerned with incidents of sexual assault and harassment inside the organization. Leaders are looking for better ways to catch and remove those who perpetrate these crimes, as well as ways to build a culture of zero tolerance. Both are goals of long standing, but they have proved elusive. Insofar as virtue theorists are concerned with cultivating individual and social moral excellence, and a culture of sexual harassment and sexual assault falls well short, they would seem to have something to contribute to the conversation.

Stoicism, with its virtues of righteousness and decency, offers an account of a moral soldier and a military culture consistent with the elimination of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The Stoic focus on cultivating resilience in the face of personal suffering also might prove useful to victims. However, there seem to be very few resources in Stoicism that might provide better guidance for solving the problem. As it stands, it is not as if the message

of treating one's fellow soldiers with decency is absent, nor is resilience missing from contemporary military training. Quite the opposite: in the annual sexual assault prevention and response training that members (including myself) of the U.S. Defense Department of all ranks receive, respect and resilience as ethical virtues are central themes. Yet sexual harassment and assault persist.

Aristotle provides a richer theoretical framework from which to start our reflections on how to make progress on this issue. We begin with the observation that the vast majority of the sexual assault and harassment incidents involve men assaulting or harassing women. Instead of focusing on individuals qua individuals and promoting general virtues such as respect and decency, Aristotle would begin by identifying the psychological, sociological, and political conditions that give rise to the trends we observe. In other words, if there is a problem that seems to be connected to a particular demographic, it makes sense to start at the level of sociological investigation to determine root causes across the population. Why do men tend to be the perpetrators; why do women tend to be the victims?

At the same time, Aristotle would begin to think about solutions from inside the sociological circumstances. What are the social norms and virtues that we expect men and women to cultivate in the context of their relationships, both to the military and to each other? Notice that, in answering this question, Aristotle would be concerned not only with preventing bad behavior but with cultivating good behavior. Remember, in Aristotle's virtue theoretic account, bad moral behavior occurs when a person tends toward the extreme of some feeling, appetite, or social role, rather than toward the mean. The cowardly person has too much fear, the brave person has the right amount; the overly social person is ingratiating, the friendly person is social to the right degree.

If sexual assault and harassment are actions attached to vices that are akin to cowardice, then what is the feeling, appetite, or social role that is in question? Suppose, insofar as sexuality is a psychological and sociological aspect of human beings, that there are virtues and vices associated with human sexuality. If sexual assault and sexual harassment are vices with respect to human sexuality, then it follows that there also must be virtues associated with sexual excellence and sexual flourishing. Moreover, since vices fall on the extremes and virtues fall in the mean between the extremes, any program to reduce vice is, for Aristotle, at the same time a program to improve virtue; we cannot help but cultivate bravery in the process of reducing cowardice.

In other words, an Aristotelian program for reducing or eliminating sexual assault and harassment must be, at the same time, a program aimed at cultivating sexual excellence and sexual flourishing. The important practical implication of this story, Aristotle would argue, is that we cannot institute programs to change the culture and practices that encourage sexual assault and harassment until we have a clear account of the culture and practices that cultivate sexual excellence and flourishing. This, of course, means that we need a robust account of sexual excellence and sexual flourishing in the first place. For Aristotelians, such an account cannot simply be a set of rules, e.g., all sex must be consensual. Although Aristotelians are happy to include laws, rules, and principles in their social and political schemes, they would not want their approach to be confused with or reduced to a deontological approach. Instead, Aristotelians will search for an account of how human sexuality contributes to the excellent functioning of human beings as individuals and in their relationships with others.

It is these two pieces of information—an account of sexual flourishing, together with an account of the social conditions that will cultivate and sustain it best—that we need if we are to make genuine progress in eliminating sexual assault and harassment from military organizations. On the one hand, the unfortunate fact is that at present we do not possess either of them. While the second piece of information is something we could investigate as a matter of psychology and sociology, the first is not. An account of sexual excellence and sexual flourishing is a matter of ethics, and therefore not a matter of conventional empirical research. Certainly, ethical research, together with common and historical experience, has resulted in agreement on important issues. We reject slavery, murder, and adultery, and we affirm the importance of equal treatment and opportunity across distinctions of race and gender. Nevertheless, the content of sexual ethics does not appear to be one of these areas of agreement. At present we do not have a social or political consensus sufficient to serve as the basis for a program of improvement.

Unfortunately, Aristotle's own views will not be of much help here. Among the things on which we do agree is that Aristotle's patriarchal approach to family relationships, grounded on his belief that women are inferior to men, is wrong. While he does not offer an explicit theory of sexual excellence or sexual flourishing, we safely can assume that any theory he would offer would be grounded on assumptions that we reject.

On the other hand, if we are in agreement that these two pieces of information are what we need if we are to make progress, we can devote our attention to acquiring them. This means, in the first place, that we need to have a serious discussion about human sexuality, with an eye toward developing an account of an excellent and flourishing sexual life. Perhaps we never will agree on all the particulars, and perhaps there are groups that always will insist on their own eccentric views. But we may find that there are areas of agreement that will be sufficient to establish a counterweight to the vices of sexual assault and sexual harassment, even if we cannot agree on a comprehensive account of the ideal. With these areas of agreement in hand, we then can turn to social science to make progress in determining what types of institutional and cultural changes will achieve these ends best. Together, these two pieces of information constitute the heart of an Aristotelian approach to solving the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault in military organizations.

Stockdale kept a copy of Epictetus's *Handbook* on his bedside table aboard ship during the Vietnam War. Admittedly, the *Handbook* may be better suited for bedtime reading in wartime; its short paragraphs and aphorisms are pithy, memorable, and challenging, and have the appearance of offering important and profound wisdom on how an individual might find happiness amid daily mortal threat and uncertainty.

In contrast, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and his *Politics* do not make for good bedtime reading. They offer complicated and open-ended arguments that require serious interpretive work to be relevant to our modern conditions. In this way, Aristotle is a bit like the road less traveled. And yet the implication of the argument I have made here is that our military forces and our character-education programs would be much better off following the Aristotelian than the Stoic path. While it might be more difficult, the payoff will be much better.

Notes

An earlier version of this work was presented as a paper at the annual meeting of the International Society for Military Ethics at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, October 13–16, 2013.

1. Key source material here includes Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1999); Epictetus, *Handbook (The Encheiridion)*, trans. Nicholas P. White (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983); and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations: A New Translation*, trans. Gregory Hays (New York: Random House, 2003). For Thomas Aquinas, see *Treatise on the Virtues*, trans. John A. Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984).
2. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2007); Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002); Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003); Robert M. Adams, *A Theory of Virtue* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009); Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011); Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* (New York: Clarendon, 1991); Nancy Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Daniel Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).
3. Jim Stockdale, *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1995); Nancy Sherman, *Stoic Warriors: The Ancient Philosophy behind the Military Mind* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005); Michael Evans, "Stoic Philosophy and the Profession of Arms," *Quadrant Online*, January 1, 2010, quadrant.org.au/; and Michael Evans, "Captains of the Soul: Stoic Philosophy and the Western Profession of Arms in the Twenty-First Century," *Naval War College Review* 64, no. 1 (Winter 2011), pp. 31–58.
4. This is not to claim that all accounts of virtue theory begin with happiness or *eudaimonia*. As we will see below, this is how Aristotle's account begins, but there are other contemporary approaches that develop an account of the virtues without a connection to *eudaimonia*.
5. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, chap. 4.
6. *Ibid.*, bk. 1, chap. 7.
7. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), chap. 7.
8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, chap. 13.
9. *Ibid.*, bk. 2, chap. 1.
10. *Ibid.*, bk. 3, chap. 7.
11. *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 6.
12. *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 5.
13. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), bk. 1, chap. 3.
14. Aristotle writes in terms of a city (i.e., a *polis*) rather than a community. Modern cities are quite different from what Aristotle has in mind; in the modern context, "community" implies the kind of small, unified, largely self-sufficient group that is Aristotle's focus.
15. Aurelius, *Meditations*, p. 64.
16. Evans, "Stoic Philosophy," pp. 1–2.
17. See Evans, "Captains of the Soul," pp. 33–40.
18. Aurelius, *Meditations*, p. 54.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
21. Epictetus, *Handbook*, p. 13.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
24. Sherman, *Stoic Warriors*, p. 9.
25. Aurelius, *Meditations*, p. 48.
26. Sherman, *Stoic Warriors*, p. 27.

27. Cited in Evans, "Captains of the Soul" pp. 43–44.
28. See James B. Stockdale [Vice Adm., USN (Ret.)], *Stockdale on Stoicism II: Master of My Fate*, Occasional Paper 2 (Annapolis, MD: Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics, n.d.), p. 5, available at www.usna.edu/.
29. See *ibid.*, pp. 8–12.

ETHICS IN THE U.S. NAVY

Walter E. Carter Jr.

Preface

From the outset, both officer and enlisted personnel share a common bond in the U.S. Navy—we took an oath and solemnly affirmed to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; [and that we would] bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” This oath binds us from the start; we’re in this Navy—this profession of arms—together.

While historically our professional skills are most associated with activities on, under, and above the maritime domain, they have evolved, extending to the realms of space and cyber, and are now global reaching. Our enduring ethical responsibilities, though, have never been bounded; they have remained with us permanently, described not by domains or temporal limits, but as a constant, a part of who we are.

Our profession is unique. As members of an armed service within our nation’s Department of Defense, we are trusted to be experts in the profession of arms. We operate with lethal force and are expected to prevail under conditions of extreme adversity—in peacetime, through crisis, and in war. We build winning teams to deliver on this expectation and believe “war fighting first” accurately captures our priorities. The missions we regularly are asked to perform, and must be ready to perform, together with the value of the lives of those we are charged to lead, demand a trust in our leadership to employ every means available to make the right decisions. These means include a strong ethical foundation.

War fighting, by definition, requires ultimate commitment: a willingness to lay our lives on the line, if required. That commitment is reinforced through discipline in our actions and trust. This is a realm where absolutes *do* apply, and it drives an imperative for adhering scrupulously to high standards and consistency in ethical behavior—at both the individual *and* institutional levels. Why? This behavior reinforces

trust; conversely, breaches and omissions in ethical behavior undermine it. In the end, trust is the single most important factor from which we derive our authority to lead. When an order is given in combat and we rely on the training, skill, and courage of our sailors (officer and enlisted) to execute it, their actions and commitment ultimately are founded on trust in their leaders, trust in their shipmates, and trust in our institution—the Navy. Everything we do in the execution of our duties either adds to or subtracts from this trust. This condition of commitment is enduring—there is no “on” or “off”—and it describes who we are and how we live 24×7×365.

This notion of commitment, combined with the logic connecting it to our duties in the naval profession and the central role of trust, is a truth we cannot take for granted. It must be discussed actively and promoted in our wardrooms and chiefs’ messes and on the deckplates. *Ethos, character, virtue, morality, and integrity* are not relics from the dusty shelves of the classroom; they are terms and concepts that dwell in the environment of trust—natural accompaniments to this most central element of our profession.

As we endeavor to build winning teams, we commit to making ourselves, and those we lead, better people. It is a matter of “all in”—all the time—all the way.

Remember: we took an oath.

Introduction: The U.S. Navy and the American People

[Enlisted] sailors surmise that Navy leadership expects them to adopt prescribed morals, standards, and rules of behavior without investing in the process required to instill, teach, develop, and mentor these standards on the deckplates.

Pacific Fleet (PACFLT)

Sailor Roundtables Report, December 17, 2013

The U.S. military is among the most trusted of American institutions.¹ The trust that the American people accord to the U.S. Navy derives from our status as members of the military profession. Only to the degree that the Navy is, and is perceived to be, trustworthy can we maintain our status as the naval profession in American society.

The American public we serve and some members of Congress recently have questioned the Department of Defense concerning a number of ethical lapses. This is the nexus where the central importance of ethics emerges for the Navy. It is the trust of the American people that grounds the ethical and behavioral expectations for all sailors at every level.² While only a small percentage of our people are caught engaging in *illegal* actions, what can we conclude about *ethical* behavior in our ranks? Does our culture discourage ethical actions in the name of mission accomplishment or career advancement? Does acceptance of low-level ethical failure lead to the sort of high-profile lawbreaking that undermines the trust of the American people in their Navy?³

Our war-fighting capability is diminished by the reality—and the perception—of illegal, unethical, and immoral behavior. Navy Core Values and moral and ethical conduct serve as the enablers to build trust, morale, unit cohesion, and, ultimately, our combat

readiness. Yet it is possible for sailors to matriculate from an accession source and serve an entire career to retirement without having had more than basic ethics training.

Our predominant approach to ethics is legalistic in content and often negative in tone. Ethics training is equated with the Code of Conduct, law, policy, and Judge Advocate General Corps guidance. We exhort our sailors to follow the rules or suffer the consequences, without making the corresponding effort to train and educate, to develop and mentor, and to create the systemic conditions for dealing positively with the ethical challenges and problems inherent in the profession of arms. At best, we employ a checklist of what *not* to do; at worst, ethical development of our people is a chore or burden that takes away from getting the job done. Too often in our current approach the intrinsic good assigned to ethical conduct—whether to service, to unit, or to self—is lost. We have a moral obligation to do better. We can and we must.

The Naval Profession and the Public Trust

In modern English, *professional* often means anything a person is paid to do. However, there is another, sociological sense of the term *profession*, one based on the notion of “social trust,” that is, the bond of trust between the profession and society. True social-trust professions (e.g., the body of those who practice medicine and the law, and the clergy) have a special bargain with the societies they serve. In exchange for the high regard and trust their societies place in them, they are (1) granted a high degree of collective autonomy; (2) allowed to control their own education, certification, promotion, and dismissal; and (3) given considerable discretion and latitude in how they apply the unique professional knowledge they possess. This status as a profession is allowed and maintained only insofar as the trust relationship with the client—in our case, the American people—is firm and intact. Whenever that trust is compromised, the society reduces or even eliminates professional autonomy through its legislative and executive branches.⁴

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The foundation of our naval profession is the oath of office or enlistment. Individuals come into the Navy from a diverse range of backgrounds on many dimensions—cultural, religious, ethi-

cal, socioeconomic, and so forth—but all sailors share central ethical obligations resulting from their oath to the Constitution, providing the foundation for common values. By taking the oath, Navy personnel explicitly adopt a shared commitment to service and sacrifice, and implicitly assume a shared identity as a member of the naval profession.

Furthermore, the unique professional knowledge that members of the naval profession develop and maintain leads to ethical expectations and requirements that establish the *professional military ethic*. The personal ethics that diverse individuals bring into the Navy are not necessarily identical to, or in perfect correlation with, the professional military ethic on the one hand, nor are they mutually exclusive on the other.

Implication 1

For our diverse Navy, the critically important takeaway is that the foundation for common values comes from shared membership in, and identity with, the *naval profession*. Shared identity as members of the naval profession helps to inculcate Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos throughout the force, engendering a more meaningful application of ethics for individual sailors. The strength of our shared identity must be built over time and continually reinforced.

Ethical Foundations: More Than Compliance

A fuller understanding of ethics beyond compliance models rests on the foundations of moral philosophy. Indeed, by his own accounting, the character, courage, and discipline that Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale displayed while in captivity in Vietnam were shaped by his study of philosophy and the humanities. Stockdale believed that an ethics course for military officers need not be organized directly around military ideas or military writings. Rather, he advocated the study of classical philosophers as a matter of personal and professional development, with the attendant consequence of molding better (and moral) human beings.⁵

Philosophical traditions on ethics provide a number of touchstones to guide Navy ethics education and training and foster a supportive culture for Navy ethics. Both classical and modern philosophical traditions direct our attention to multiple aspects of moral philosophy, including (1) self-discipline (Plato), (2) individual character (Aristotle), (3) sense of duty (Immanuel Kant), and (4) the collective good (John Stuart Mill). Together these philosophies point to the importance of both the individual and the institution in maintaining ethical standards.

When we compare Plato's moral philosophy with that of Aristotle, for instance, we learn the importance of, and some limitations to, ethics education and training centered on character and integrity. Plato espouses the virtues of self-discipline and personal restraint for a well-ordered society, particularly as applied to the "soldier" and developed through rigorous and repetitive military training. He argues that people's capacity for understanding both their own and the common good enables the inculcation of a persuasive ethos and cultural norms to guide good behavior. Aristotle espouses moral virtue ("excellence of character"), developed through formed habits. He contends that a stable character leads a person to do the right thing always—in the right way and at the right time.

An underlying assumption of Plato's philosophy is that "no one knowingly does

wrong." In other words, if people know and understand what is morally right, they can be relied on to act accordingly. This assumption, of course, is easily challenged, which points

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to the limitation of relying primarily on directives for ethical outcomes. At the same time, Aristotle's ideas of character have been shown to be only partially correct. While

integrity and good character are indeed important, research indicates that situational factors also have a great influence on actual behavior.⁶

Implication 2

What this means for our Navy's ethics efforts is that self-discipline, character, and integrity are indeed important for a well-ordered organization. However, we also must be mindful that we cannot presume a prescribed common meaning of moral integrity among all Navy personnel, and we must consider the potential effects of the situation and the environment (e.g., command climate and system-driven expectations) on ethical behavior. As many social scientists phrase it, we need to look at both "good apples" and "good barrels" (the latter understood as the environment, the tools, and the conditions that we create) if we are to do everything possible to facilitate ethical behavior and build ethical climates.

A comparison between Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill speaks to why individuals might act morally. Kant espouses the concept of moral obligation, distinguishing between *actions that are merely in accordance with duty* (i.e., the individual may have performed the right action, but for many possible reasons, including fear of punishment or hope for reward) and *action from duty* (in which the individual did the right action because of a dutiful allegiance to doing the right thing). The former reasoning speaks to compliance with the rules. In the latter reasoning, moral actions are derived from an intrinsic sense of duty (for example, an internally driven moral imperative to uphold the standards of the naval profession), resulting in more-resolute ethical behavior.

John Stuart Mill adopts a utilitarian perspective on moral actions, stressing the importance of acting in such a way that the outcome provides "the greatest good for the greatest number." This greatest-good motivation requires subordination of individuals' interests to those that best benefit the collective organization. In this way, members of the naval profession, for example, desire to act in a way that forgoes self-interested behavior in favor of moral actions that support Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos.

Implication 3

What we learn from Kant and Mill is that Navy ethics education and training must address internal motivations for ethical behavior, beyond the application of rules and policy. Comprehending the underlying impetus for ethical behavior and moral choice informs our approaches to instilling, training, and mentoring on ethical standards, as well as the policies and procedures intended to facilitate ethical behavior.

Taken together, these various perspectives of moral philosophy indicate that more than a one-size-fits-all approach is required to sustain ethical behavior and a culture for Navy ethics. As we reexamine our approach to ethics, our efforts must be comprehensive,

considering not only the individual sailor—his or her commitment, ethical understanding, and moral motivations—but, perhaps even more importantly, the systems and processes within our Navy that can facilitate ethical behavior.

Moral Choice: Domains for Ethical Decision-Making

Fundamentally, ethics is about choice. The decisions to adhere to core values, adopt prescribed morals, and act in accordance with ethical standards all revolve around personal choice. Our frame for understanding moral choice pivots on two widely separated but complementary perspectives: (1) a speech given by Lord Moulton, minister of munitions for Great Britain during World War I, published in 1924, and (2) a more recently published popular book by Dan Ariely, *The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty*.

Lord Moulton describes the domains of ethical choice, which he divides into three spheres of human action.⁷ The first is the sphere of *positive law*: actions in which individuals adhere to rigidly prescribed and dutifully enforced rules. The third he calls the sphere of *absolute freedom*, in which individuals enjoy complete free will regarding their behavior. In between he identifies the domain of *obedience to the unenforceable*, which he calls “doing what you should do although you are not obliged to do it.” In other words, this is the sphere in which individuals must exercise discretion and judgment, making decisions when the only enforcers are themselves (see figure 1). Obedience to the unenforceable relies on an internalized sense of responsibility and an intrinsically developed ethical core.

Implication 4

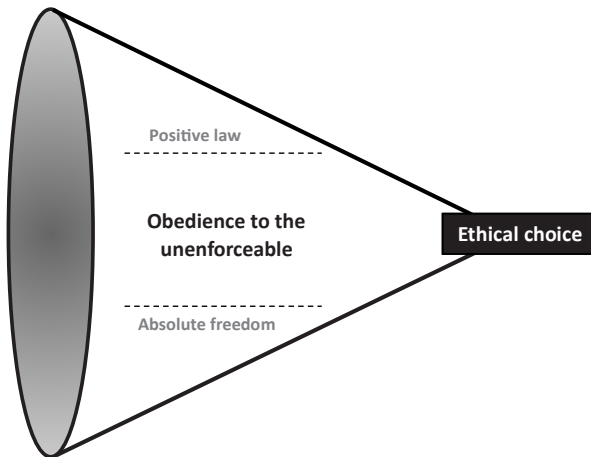


Figure 1. Lord Moulton's Domains for Humans

Again, for our Navy, this suggests that compliance is the moral minimum. Complying with rules and policies is but one—and, to some degree, a limiting—factor that contributes to ethical decision-making. Due attention, therefore, is needed to address the unenforceable domain of human action as well—specifically, discretion and moral judgment. Tending to the moral development of sailors, such that ethical choices

become routine, helps establish a culture for Navy ethics, and in essence transforms the unenforceable into the enforceable.

The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty notes that all individuals possess the human capacity for both honesty and dishonesty, whether exhibited in enforceable or unenforceable domains.⁸ In other words, every person is susceptible to this most human foible and less-than-optimal behavior. There are a host of forces that can lead individuals down the slippery slope of dishonesty, such as (1) the ability to rationalize, (2) conflicts of interest, (3) creative reasoning, (4) one immoral act, (5) being depleted—tired and overtaxed, (6) others benefiting from dishonesty, and (7) watching others behave dishonestly.⁹ Ultimately, these forces have been shown to shape moral choice.

One key lesson from Ariely's research is that a first act of dishonesty—even a seemingly innocuous one—might be particularly important in shaping an individual's subsequent ethical decision-making. Therefore, it is important to address poor moral choices early on, so as to be preventive (proactive) in addressing ethics behavior over time. Another key lesson from this examination of dishonesty is that highlighting acts of honesty is incredibly important for establishing the sense of social morality. By publicly promoting salient examples of commendable behavior, we improve what is viewed as acceptable behavior, and ultimately improve ethical decisions and actions.¹⁰

Implication 5

When our Navy attributes unethical behavior to just a few “bad apples,” the extent of potential ethical challenges throughout the naval force can be obscured. When it is addressed with a compliance-based approach aimed at maintaining high standards, the result is policies and rules that serve only to punish those “bad apples” who cross the “redline.” In contrast, when our Navy promotes commendable ethical decisions and behavior it fosters a culture for Navy ethics.

A Culture for Navy Ethics: Proactive versus Reactive

As we seek to develop and maintain a solid ethical foundation in all Navy personnel, it is important to consider how change comes about in large organizations, particularly with respect to organizational culture. It is within an organization's culture that expectations for ethical behavior are sourced and reinforced.

Organizational culture, defined by Edgar Schein as the “set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behavior,” constitutes the overarching organizational environment.¹¹ Culture encompasses the identity of the organization and its members (i.e., how they define “who we are” as an entity) and is a primary driver of the organization's outlook. Culture is enduring. While leaders, policies, and circumstances change, culture transcends organizational transformations (e.g., the Navy's culture of command). Schein proposed that culture can be understood and analyzed at three levels: (1) on the surface, (2) among espoused beliefs and values, and (3) within underlying assumptions.

At the surface level the most obvious indicators of an organization's culture are visible structures, processes, and rituals (e.g., platforms, operational regulations, change-of-command ceremonies). The organization's espoused beliefs and values form a deeper stratum of the culture and guide and justify behaviors and choices (e.g., "we believe in war fighting first"). At the deepest level are the underlying assumptions that are the true foundations of the organization's sense of itself (e.g., "this is how we do things here"). A challenge for many organizations is ensuring that espoused values align with the sometimes more forceful underlying assumptions, to avoid a "say-do" mismatch. In the case of ethics, the organization's culture defines what its members understand to be most important to their leaders, and dictates their actions as a result.

Implication 6

Organizational culture informs our understanding of the utility of the Navy's current ethics approach for shaping ethical behavior. Considering both the visible aspects of culture and the underlying assumptions, the Navy seems to have developed a "prohibitive" and "reactive" culture for ethics. The tendencies to spotlight individual ethical failures ("bad apples") and generally respond by firing the offenders, issuing new policies, and mandating more training—each occurring *after* ethical misconduct has occurred—send a pervasive signal of "just don't be that person!" The "don't do this" mentality then becomes deeply entrenched in the culture. Even the language of *ethics failure* or *lapse* emphasizes a negative culture for Navy ethics versus a positive approach. Thus, the current culture for Navy ethics is one based on obeying the rules to avoid punishment, rather than a proactive culture that fosters and inspires individuals to embody Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos, and to use their discretionary judgment professionally, making the right ethical decisions and taking the right ethical actions, even in the domain of the unenforceable.

A Way Forward

As our Navy reexamines its approach to comprehensive ethics development, education, and training at all levels while fostering a proactive culture for Navy ethics, Stockdale's wisdom is worthy of serious consideration. When and where in the development of Navy personnel does the kind of deep reading, thinking, and reflection that Stockdale advocated occur? When do we engage our people in serious conversation about their identity as members of the naval profession and the kinds of ethical responsibilities that flow from that identity? For most of a Navy career at present, ethics means a focus on legal compliance and general exhortations to be persons of good character. If we take Stockdale at his word, however, we should be thinking in terms of more-substantive engagement that would make not just better naval personnel and better citizens but a better war-fighting organization.

Grounding the Navy's ethics development, education, and training efforts in a shared understanding of the naval profession will instill in our sailors a cultural ethos to act for the good of the service, the unit, and themselves. In addition to focusing on

observable behavior, a common understanding of the naval profession helps to shape self-awareness, shared identity, and a more internalized application of ethics. From this vantage point, the broader scope of ethical development is inherently valuable. This is not, however, education for its own sake; rather, this is about improving our war-fighting readiness today, and maintaining the trust of our fellow citizens for the future.

Ethics Development: From the Bottom Up and the Top Down

The following recommendations derive from the implications listed in this article, as well as insights based on previous taskings and research related to Navy ethics. The orientation is both bottom up and top down, aiming to engage sailors from the deckplate level all the way through to the responsibilities of senior leadership. Establishing a culture for Navy ethics requires investment on the part of individuals *and* our Navy as an institution. Ultimately, recommitting to the naval profession—and maintaining the trust of the American people—serves as the driver for Navy ethics.

The following recommendations are in no way all-inclusive. They offer a broad view of necessary efforts to strengthen the culture of ethics for the Navy.

Recommendation 1: Inculcate Understanding of the “Naval Profession”

- We must have a common understanding of what it means to be a member of the naval profession. Presently, we represent eighteen distinct communities, and our community most often shapes our views and actions (e.g., “I am a fighter pilot”; “I am an enlisted surface warfare specialist”).
- Recognizing that we are first and foremost members of the naval profession (“I am a United States sailor”), and only then members of our respective communities, places greatest emphasis on our unifying Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos.
- The concept of the naval profession establishes why maintaining the trust of the American people through a culture of Navy ethics matters.

Recommendation 2: Construct “Good Barrels” and Cultivate “Good Apples”

- Examine policies and procedures, as well as system-driven expectations (e.g., perceived pressures to cheat), that may lead unintentionally to poor ethical choices.
 - *Example: examine existing or previous ethics challenges to study how policies, procedures, and expectations may have contributed to less-than-optimal decisions and behaviors, and adjust accordingly.*
 - *Example: consider where—along the continuum of leader development, or at which career milestones—to inject more-intensive ethics development, training, and education, recognizing that the scope of sailors’ ethical responsibilities grows as their experience levels increase and contexts shift.*

- Examine whether we are helping or hindering sailors in the execution of their mission through ethical leadership.
 - *Example: consider the impact on “good barrels” (i.e., the trust environment that leaders create) of endless “priority one” tasks.*
- Enforce existing and institute new policies that support the ethical development of our sailors.
 - *Example: enforce policies requiring completion of Navy professional military education, which includes a significant ethics component.*
- Invest in the ethical and leader development of our people. Consider again the statement from the PACFLT roundtables: “Sailors surmise that Navy leadership expects them to adopt prescribed morals, standards, and rules of behavior without investing in the process required to instill, teach, develop, and mentor these standards on the deckplates.” Our sailors desire to be better, and they *want* to be developed.
 - *Example: develop activities and processes that allow for regular feedback without consequence (i.e., no negative effect on evaluations).*
 - *Example: provide tools that will aid coaching, counseling, and mentoring of our sailors. (See also recommendation 6.)*
 - *Example: alter the view of development activities to see them as an investment rather than a cost.*

Recommendation 3: Build a Culture for Navy Ethics beyond Compliance

- Acknowledging that ethics means more than “just obey the rules” is a huge step in changing the way ethics is currently perceived and enacted within Navy culture.
 - *Example: spotlight examples of good ethical choices and behavior, as well as examples that favorably represent the naval profession.*
 - *Example: institutionally reward good decisions and actions that reinforce Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos.*
- Tend to the moral development of our sailors—that is, help them develop habits for making the right ethical choices and using proper discretionary judgment.
 - *Example: provide opportunities for facilitated dialogues, peer discussions, and open roundtables around topics of motivation, reasoning, and processing of moral choices.*
- Capitalize on existing training and education that present opportunities to instill ethics discussions and learning.

Recommendation 4: Engage the Command as Well as the Schoolhouse

- Ethics development goes beyond training and education. Deckplate leadership is still our most effective influence!
- Sailors at every level of the chain of command serve as positive influencers on ethical choices.

- One-on-one engagement among sailors, peers, and leaders enables effective coaching, counseling, and mentorship, providing opportunities to address ethical decision-making prior to, during, and after ethical challenges.
 - *Example: continue to engage the chiefs' mess ("the backbone of our Navy," with perhaps the most direct influence) in regular, informal ethics conversations with junior sailors.*
- The commander / commanding officer is the moral arbiter for the command and sets the standards of behavior and performance that contribute to esprit de corps, unit cohesion, mission accomplishment, and ethical climate.
 - *Example: foster a command climate that spotlights successes and rewards positive behavior (versus a command climate that spotlights failure and stresses punishment).*
- Encourage the application of ethics education and training on the deckplates.
 - *Example: set the command climate for bystander intervention; remind sailors of their responsibility to step in and intervene when a situation is not right.*
- Develop a view of assignment to the schoolhouse (including the service college) as an opportunity for personal and moral development.
 - *Example: build participation in and attendance at available training and educational opportunities into career progressions.*

Recommendation 5: Engage Both Ethics Training and Ethics Education

- We train for compliance (and competence); we educate for knowledge and understanding. By engaging in knowledge development, we better address the domains of the unenforceable and ethical gray areas that require moral thought.
- Together, training and education produce demonstrably greater allegiance to Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos than training (compliance) on its own.
 - *Example: use ethics training to reinforce compliance with legal rules and policy standards; provide ethics education that offers a broader understanding of ethics, self-awareness, and personal development.*

Recommendation 6: Intersect Ethics Development with Leader Development

- Stand up the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center (NLEC) around the existing functions of the Command Leadership School.
 - *NLEC will guide the development of leaders with a strong, abiding sense of their responsibility, authority, and accountability and who are committed to Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos.*
 - *NLEC will provide leadership education and training, curriculum support, leading-edge research, and assessment of leadership effectiveness across the Navy to ensure our leader-development activities remain current and relevant.*
- Conduct further study on how we measure the character and integrity of our people. If we measure these things and hold people accountable for the results, cultural change will follow rapidly.

- The attributes, behaviors, and skills expected of Navy leaders at all levels coincide with expected ethical standards. Leadership and ethics are inexorably intertwined.
- The Leader Development Outcomes (LDOs), which specify leader expectations for officers and enlisted, E-1 to O-10, provide a useful tool for both ethics and leader development.¹²
- When coupled with the other recommendations, application of the LDOs will influence both individual leader development and the overall culture for Navy leadership and ethics.

This article is intended to continue the dialogue, which will broaden our perspective and lead to actions necessary to improve ethics in our Navy. The overarching discussion drives us to a set of questions we must ask ourselves continually with regard to our culture for Navy ethics.

1. Are we doing what is required to maintain the American people's trust in us as the naval profession?
2. Are we investing in the development of our people to enable them both to decide and to act instinctively with character and integrity?
3. Are we providing the tools to enable our senior enlisted and command leaders to effectively coach, counsel, and mentor their sailors?
4. Are we creating ethical climates in which good moral choices are more salient than bad ones?
5. Are we providing the right opportunities at the right time for personal and moral development?
6. Are we appropriately using policies and procedures to anticipate rather than react, to improve ethical decision-making for our sailors?

In the “as is” state of ethics in our Navy today, the responses to these questions are not a binary yes or no, but rather points that fall somewhere along a continuum. However, the answer to the question, “Can we do better?” is an emphatic “Absolutely!” Our Navy Ethos charges us as follows: “We are patriots, forged by the Navy’s Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. In times of war and peace, our actions reflect our proud heritage and tradition.” Our goal, therefore, should be to establish a culture for Navy ethics such that we have confidence that every sailor, in every community, will fully embody, uphold, and operate from Navy Core Values and the Navy Ethos.

Fortunately, we have the opportunity to build on existing foundations and draw lessons and examples from various communities (e.g., SEALs). Other efforts, such as the *Navy Leader Development Strategy*, the *Navy Education Strategy 2025*, and 21st Century Sailor, all align to advance the Navy’s approach to ethics development, education, and training. Importantly, we must engage the positive influencers in the lives of our sailors—namely, the chain of command, mentors, and especially our families—to invest collectively in the character development of our people and build ethical behavior and commitment to the naval profession.

Notes

1. Elizabeth Mendes and Joy Wilke, “Americans’ Confidence in Congress Falls to Lowest on Record,” *Gallup*, June 13, 2013, news.gallup.com/.
2. Throughout this article the term *sailor* refers to both officers and enlisted personnel.
3. See, for example, Malcolm Gladwell’s treatment of the “broken windows” theory of crime in *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little, Brown, 2000), pp. 140–51.
4. See Don M. Snider and Lloyd Matthews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2005) for a collection of articles applying this concept of a *profession* to military organizations.
5. James B. Stockdale [Adm., USN], *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1995).
6. For an overview of this research, see Dan Ariely, *The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012).
7. Lord Moulton, “Law and Manners,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1924, available at www2.econ.iastate.edu/.
8. Ariely, *The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty*.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
11. Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (New York: Wiley, 2010), p. 1.
12. Approved by Vice Chief of Naval Operations, August 2013.

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