2022-06

EMBEDDING CULTURE IN RELATION TO THE SHOTGUN AT THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

Bailey, Rachel; Leahy, Sean R.

Monterey, CA; Naval Postgraduate School

http://hdl.handle.net/10945/70626

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**EMBEDDING CULTURE IN RELATION
TO THE SHOTGUN AT THE UNITED STATES
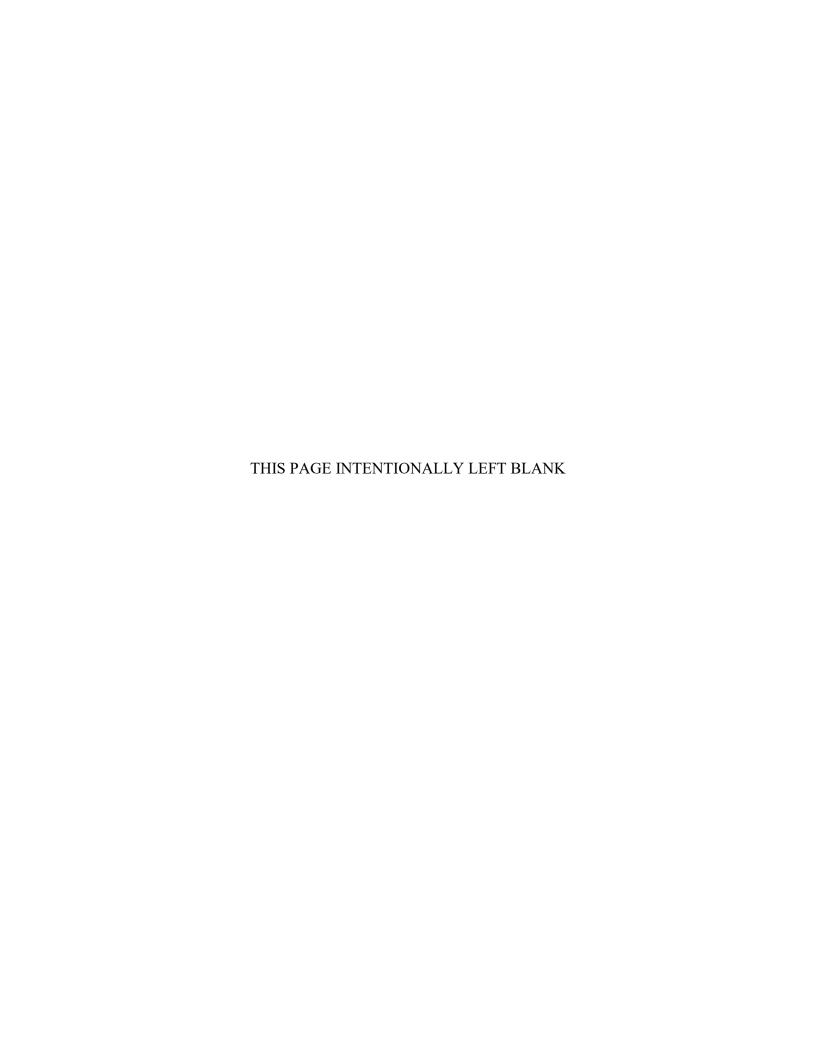NAVAL ACADEMY**

by

Rachel Bailey and Sean R. Leahy

June 2022

Co-Advisors: Edward H. Powley IV
Celeste Luning,
United States Naval Academy

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE June 2022	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE EMBEDDING CULTURE IN RELATION TO THE SHOTGUN AT THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY	5. FUNDING NUMBERS
6. AUTHOR(S) Rachel Bailey and Sean R. Leahy	

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A	10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

The objective of this study was to determine if the randomization of members in an organization can result in a new organizational culture. This study was conducted following the 2021 shotgun of the Brigade of Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy, where 75 percent of Midshipmen were redistributed into new companies. Different aspects of organizational culture were researched, including the way cultures form, transformational leadership, different configuration models, and Schein's embedding mechanisms. Focus groups were held for the Midshipmen and their leadership to discuss how the shotgun impacted their company's culture, if at all. Despite the wide variety of experiences from the Midshipmen, three common themes emerged. Embedding a new culture requires a cohesive environment to create a change, a promulgation of a clear set of goals is needed to align the personnel with the organization, and that establishing a sense of accountability is critical. It was also discovered that a culture would establish itself regardless of the intentionality presented by its members. Limitations of this study included no pre-shotgun data, the voluntary nature of the focus groups, and the sheer amount of data synthesizing required. Recommendations for further attempts of this shotgun should include more oversight to ensure current issues are corrected beforehand, and that new cultures align with the larger organization.

14. SUBJECT TERMS culture, changing culture, United States Naval Academy	15. NUMBER OF PAGES 51
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

**EMBEDDING CULTURE IN RELATION TO THE SHOTGUN
AT THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY**

Rachel Bailey
Lieutenant, United States Navy
BS, United States Naval Academy, 2016

Sean R. Leahy
Lieutenant, United States Navy
BS, United States Naval Academy, 2016

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**PROFESSIONAL MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
IN LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2022**

Approved by: Edward H. Powley IV
Co-Advisor

Celeste Luning
Co-Advisor

Nicholas Dew
Academic Associate, Department of Defense Management

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to determine if the randomization of members in an organization can result in a new organizational culture. This study was conducted following the 2021 shotgun of the Brigade of Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy, where 75 percent of Midshipmen were redistributed into new companies. Different aspects of organizational culture were researched, including the way cultures form, transformational leadership, different configuration models, and Schein's embedding mechanisms. Focus groups were held for the Midshipmen and their leadership to discuss how the shotgun impacted their company's culture, if at all. Despite the wide variety of experiences from the Midshipmen, three common themes emerged. Embedding a new culture requires a cohesive environment to create a change, a promulgation of a clear set of goals is needed to align the personnel with the organization, and that establishing a sense of accountability is critical. It was also discovered that a culture would establish itself regardless of the intentionality presented by its members. Limitations of this study included no pre-shotgun data, the voluntary nature of the focus groups, and the sheer amount of data synthesizing required. Recommendations for further attempts of this shotgun should include more oversight to ensure current issues are corrected beforehand, and that new cultures align with the larger organization.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOM	Academic Order of Merit
AYxx	Academic Year
CO	Company Officer
MIDN	Midshipmen / Midshipman
MOM	Military Order of Merit
PRT	Physical Readiness Test
SEL	Senior Enlisted Leader
UA	Unaccounted For / Missing from delegated place of duty
USNA	United States Naval Academy

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had worldwide implications in all facets of life for the last two years. The military has not been exempt from these challenges, and the virus and its required response have created mountainous hurdles that had to be overcome in order to maintain the required level of operations expected by our national defense organizations. The United States Naval Academy is one such place where COVID-19 was at the forefront of situational-based change in 2020 and 2021. A mass movement of Midshipmen within the Brigade of Midshipmen was deemed necessary to combat a stagnation of organizational culture and decline in performance partly created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its side-effects. The byproducts of a virtual and isolated experience at an institution that demands rigorous and in-person accountability for action had become substantial enough for one of the first mass reorganizations of the Brigade of Midshipmen in several years.

On 7 April 2021, the Commandant of Midshipmen, then CAPT T.R. Buchanan, USN, announced to the Officers and Senior Enlisted Leadership of all companies that a "shotgunning" of personnel—specifically the rising 3/C (Class of 2023) and the rising 2/C (Class of 2022)—would occur immediately upon reform of the Brigade in August of 2021.[1] This news was then disseminated by the Company Officers (COs) and Senior Enlisted Leaders (SELs) to their respective companies the next day on 8 April 2021 via direct interaction.[2] The class movement notification was the first step in the reorganization of the Brigade of Midshipmen.

By 15 April, a working group designated Task Force Shotgun was stood up to facilitate the logistical interpretation of randomizing the Brigade.[3] This working group was composed of one leadership volunteer (either a CO or SEL) from each of the six battalions,

---

[1] CAPT T. R. Buchanan, USN, email message to author with attached PowerPoint, 07 April 2021. In this instance, a shotgun is the randomization and redistribution of Midshipmen, where each individual would be sent to a different company within the Brigade of Midshipmen.

[2] LT C. S. Joewono, USN, email message to author, 07 April 2021.

[3] Maj. R. Campbell, USMC, email message to author with attached PowerPoint, 14 April 2021.

supplemented by the Commandant's Staff Director, as well as CDR Andrew Ledford, USN, a faculty member of the Luce Hall leadership education team.[4] Other technical positions were added to further assist in the algorithmic distribution process of the Midshipmen in administrative aspects. Over the next several weeks, Task Force Shotgun narrowed down the methodology to be used in reassigning the rising 3/C and 2/C Midshipmen based on a distribution of desired quantitative constraints used in the admissions process for original assignment to companies upon entering the Naval Academy. Target metrics for distribution included gender, race, academic order of merit (AOM), military order of merit (MOM), academic year 2021 (AY21) physical readiness test (PRT) scores, the composition and number of varsity athletes, and the composition and number of prior enlisted and Naval Academy Preparatory School graduates.[5] Additional planning factors were considered to allow leadership the flexibility to keep specific Midshipmen within a company or battalion should a situation warrant that response.

The planning specifics were only one subset of the functions Task Force Shotgun was created to surmount. The other large assignment was the phased approach to understanding and facilitating a successful organizational change through four phases of approach. Phase 1 dealt with ensuring closure within the current Midshipmen companies was appropriate, and that the task at hand was understood in a larger context. Phase 2 dealt with training the trainer, and focused on a tailored Organizational Change Workshop directed at the rising Midshipmen leadership of the Class of 2022; it was chaired and led by the Luce Hall leadership team and CDR Andrew Ledford, USN.[6] Phase 3 and Phase 4 were focus of effort and execution stages respectively, ensuring that the shotgunned classes and their new company Midshipmen leadership had the opportunity to utilize culture outcomes from the workshops to effectively navigate the organizational change before the actual execution of the shotgun randomization in August of 2021.[7] With the logistical and

---

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

administrative burden of personnel randomization managed, the priority for Task Force Shotgun fell to a supporting role for the remaining phases of the process.

The Organizational Change Workshop described in the second phase of the shotgun plan was designed to cultivate positive culture building events for both the new leadership of the companies, as well as a mentoring and guidance opportunity for the Company Officers and the Senior Enlisted Leaders during the formation of a unique organizational culture to any specific company. The rising company staff was given documentation and worksheets to codify their visions for a successful company culture and leadership philosophy, which were then used in discussion with their Class of 2022 classmates to garner ideas and solutions to problems based on each company's cemented values and goals for the shotgunned personnel that would be joining them in the fall semester.[8] The first iteration of this workshop was solely for the company-level Midshipmen leadership to build influencing factors capable of impacting change. The later workshop would involve whole battalions, where large organization culture change would be addressed.[9]

The new company rosters were announced on 13 May 2021, followed by the company culture workshops on 17 May. The Midshipmen then departed on a summer of training. On 19 August 2021, the Brigade of Midshipmen reformed in the new company layouts for the fall semester of the academic year.[10] This was the first time in nearly twenty years where more than one class had been shotgunned simultaneously. The previous iterations of this event varied significantly from a shuffle of specific classes of Midshipmen from one company to another, shotgunning one class after a designated point in the four-year process, or a recurring event that encapsulated either a shuffling or shotgun of Midshipmen on a regular basis.

A study on the effects of these strategies for introducing change into the Brigade of Midshipmen was conducted by LT David A. Portner, USN, in 1988 at the direction of CAPT E. K. Kristensen, USN, Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen. The purpose of the

---

[8] CDR A. Ledford, USN, email message to the author, 14 May 2021.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Maj. R. Campbell, USMC, email message to author with attached PowerPoint, 14 April 2021

study was to determine the historical significance of different methods of redistributing classes, and what results, if any, the redistribution obtained.[11] Although redistributions were not uncommon and had occurred several times in the decades preceding the study, no written evaluation on their effectiveness or the impacts they had on the Midshipmen or staff leadership had ever been garnered.

The task of documenting previous experiences regarding Midshipmen distributions and discovering a new distribution method of Midshipmen for 1988 was met with several challenges. The greatest setback was a lack of formalized and consistent tracking of such endeavors.[12] LT Portner eventually uncovered archived documents and files detailing the redistributions from 1972 to 1984, and memorandums from the Commandant's and Superintendent's Offices for years post-1984 covering the Class of 1987 and Class of 1988 initial redistributions. Concerning the years prior to 1972 and the data collection required to understand those years thoroughly, LT Portner indicated that "For an adequate historical perspective, I traced redistribution back forty years to 1945. The reasons and results, when indicated, prior to 1972 are based solely on conversations with prior Commandants and Superintendents, as there was no written data available to recreate."[13]

LT Portner's study revealed that in the 43 years since 1945, 21 of the entering classes had completed four years in the same company, 18 classes were redistributed only once, three classes were redistributed twice, and one class was redistributed a total of three times. Of the 43 class years reviewed, 20 years had seen an alteration to a Midshipmen's original arriving class.[14] Moreover, the methodology of the shifting saw "six years of shifting 3/C by company, five years shifting 4/C by individual, three years shifting 4/C by company, three years shifting 4/C between two or more companies, two years shifting 2/C by company, and one year shifting 3/C between two or more companies."[15]

---

[11] "Historical Study on the Redistribution of Midshipmen," by LT D. A. Portner, USN (unpublished study, 1988), RG405.3.1, Entry 151b, Box 3, Folder 39, Office of the Commandant / General Records: Commandant's Office Files, Special Collections and Archives Department, Nimitz Library, United States Naval Academy.

[12] Ibid., 3.

[13] Ibid., 4.

[14] Ibid., 5.

[15] Ibid., 6.

The importance of LT Portner's study and historical data cannot be understated in relation to the relevance of this current organizational culture investigation. First, Portner uncovered that change in personnel accounted for approximately 50 percent of the years reviewed, indicating that change in this organization has been a constant and in-line with the expectations of fleet service. However, his findings did not show that more than one class underwent a randomization by individual, indicating that the 2021 precedent would have been an outlier in comparison. Second, while his study ultimately used very generalized quantitative metrics of Midshipmen performance of three classes in the 1980s to determine the success of the personnel randomizations and shifts, it failed to capture lessons learned in the qualitative realm, or touch on the dynamic shift in company culture as a result of replacing up-to or in-excess of 75 percent of its members.[16] This historic study reinforces the need to understand how culture is embedded following a personnel shift, as the intended result may be nullified if the proper messaging and effort is not applied to the organization and its personnel before, during, and after such a dynamic shift.

---

[16] Ibid., 10.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational culture is the established norms, patterns of behavior, assumptions, beliefs, and artifacts that outline how members of an organization interact with each other within the given organization. The way these organizational cultures establish themselves can be understood by learning how they function as a whole, how various aspects within them function, and how they can be changed over time.

In order to understand the purpose and objectives of individual organizational cultures, they must be evaluated based on the competing values framework. This framework characterizes cultures based on a spectrum of internal versus external focus, and flexible versus stable structures. Organizations can demonstrate fluidity between four common categories, but usually fit into one culture type. Similarly, individual subgroups of an organization can have different culture types based on the objectives of the subgroup. This can differ from the larger organization's culture type. The four common categories are clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market.[17]

The clan culture values collaboration. This internally focused culture has a flexible structure. Clan cultures pride themselves on teamwork and involvement. Commitment to others within the organization breeds loyalty and high cohesion. The clan culture celebrates team accomplishments over individual one's successes.

The adhocracy culture values creation and creativity. Its external focus and flexible structure give its members the freedom to experiment and take bold risks. This type of culture is dynamic and able to adapt to changing circumstances. Adhocracy culture values individuality among its members but often lacks centralized authority.

The hierarchy culture values control and stability. As a stable, internally focused culture, the hierarchy culture can be viewed as impersonal, as its bureaucratic and

---

[17] Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, "Chapter 3: The Competing Values Framework," in *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Wiley, 2011), 35–51.

formalized systems provide significant oversight to the organization's members. The traits of uniformity and specialization of roles are highly valued.

The market culture values competition. This stable structure is externally focused. Emphasis in this culture is placed on winning. Many aspects of market culture are transactional, and members are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities that give them a competitive edge.[18]

There are multiple frameworks for discussing the different factors of organizational culture. Dauber, Fink, and Yolles recognize the models dictated by Schein, Hatch, Homburg and Pflesser, and Allaire and Firsirotu, and that these models build upon each other.[19]

Schein's model is based on the triad components of underlying values, espoused values, and artifacts.[20] Artifacts include all of the visible structures, processes and behaviors within an organization. Items such as myths and stories, symbols, rituals, and language, are also considered artifacts. Espoused values include group norms, ideologies and goals. Basic underlying assumptions are the unconscious beliefs and values of the members. These three components interact with each other through observable and unobservable behaviors. The "visible behavior influences and is influenced by observable assumptions through rules, standards, and prohibitions." [21]

Hatch's model is similar to Schein's, but separates symbols from artifacts. The values, assumptions, symbols, and artifacts interact in a circular pattern through the process of manifestation, interpretation, symbolization, and realization.

Both Schein's and Hatch's models focus on the development of the internal environment of the organization. These models seek to explain how the organization functions within itself, without outside influence. The Homburg and Pflesser model

---

[18] Ibid., 35–51.

[19] Daniel Dauber, Gerhard Fink, and Maurice Yolles. "A Configuration Model of Organizational Culture," *SAGE Open 2*, no. 1 (2012). https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2158244012441482 (accessed 20 February 2022).

[20] Ibid., 3

[21] Ibid., 4–5.

examines the relationship between organizational culture and performance outcomes via the external environment. This is known as force market dynamism, which is influenced by outside forces, such as larger macro cultures, government policies, or societal pressures. This model moves linearly between the internal organizational culture, based on Schein's model, and performance outcomes. The combination of internal organizational culture and the market dynamism creates the performance outcomes. However, there is no room for feedback in this model, and the performance outcome directly influences the internal culture.

The Allaire and Firsirotu model is more robust and distinguishes between internal and external environments. It identifies how society and history impacts an organization's culture system of myths, values, and ideologies, and their socio-structural systems of strategies, policies, and procedures. Both of these systems impact the norms and roles of the organization, which in turn impacts individual members of the organization. This cycle either reinforces or erodes the culture.[22]

Once an organizational culture is established, it can be difficult to change. It requires a large amount of time and effort from all of the members. Schein, Pascale and Sternin, and Bass and Avolio, provide different methods to embed and change culture that has already been engrained.

In situations where organizational culture is established, Schein provides different mechanisms for embedding a new culture.[23] The first step is to recognize that the new culture should nest within the existing macro culture. The behaviors and ideologies of the micro culture should fit within the bounds of the macro culture to allow for easier adoption by the organization. Schein also outlines primary and secondary embedding mechanisms. Primary embedding mechanisms teach members how to behave, think, and feel. Secondary embedding mechanisms, or stabilizing mechanisms, are artifacts of the culture that enforce the primary elements.

---

[22] Ibid., 10.

[23] Edgar H. Schein and Peter Schein. "Chapter 10: How Leaders Embed and Transmit Culture," in *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2016) https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/organizational-culture-and/9781119212041/c10.xhtml (accessed 04 February 2022).

The primary embedding mechanisms can reinforce the espoused values of the organization if they are consistent. These mechanisms focus on a leader's interaction with other members rather than any artifact in particular. The most powerful mechanism is what the leader prioritizes, measures, and controls on a regular basis. A fundamental aspect of this mechanism is systematic and consistent attention to what the leader wants, and ensuring it is reinforced. Schein notes that consistency of the focus is more powerful than the intensity of that focus. Continually shifting priorities will cause members to pay less attention to what the leader wants, and instead use their own judgment to determine what actually matters. This leads to more diverse assumptions. Members of an organization will tailor their actions and behaviors based on how leaders respond to critical incidents and crises. The leader's reaction then highlights the underlying assumptions. Organizations that experience emotionally intense experiences take their learnings from those experiences and apply them to their culture. Members also recognize what is actually important to the leaders by seeing what actions are rewarded and punished, and what items of interest get resources devoted to them. If these actions are consistent with the underlying assumptions, the culture embeds itself further within the organization. If not, internal conflict arises, and the emerging subculture will clash with the larger organizational culture. If this occurs, it becomes more difficult for the organization to get buy-in from its members.

Secondary embedding mechanisms are the artifacts of the organization. The organization's design and structure, the guiding systems and procedures, the rites and rituals, the stories and myths, and the physical environment are all considered secondary embedding mechanisms. These work similarly to primary embedding mechanisms in their effectiveness if they are consistent. Similar conflict arises with dissonance between the secondary and primary mechanisms. As an example, if daily face-to-face interaction is highlighted in Midshipmen life, but members are spread out over multiple locations, conflict may arise.

When it comes to changing organizational culture, Pascale and Sternin recognized that applying change requires a great deal of engagement from its members.[24] They

---

[24] Richard Tanner Pascale and Jerry Sternin, "Your Company's Secret Change Agents," *Harvard Business Review*, May 2005, 73–81.

recommend a positive deviance approach composed of six steps. The first step is to make the group the guru. This step is used to identify the problem, and then take ownership of that problem. Any changes made are more effective when they come from within the group. Additionally, placing ownership on the group allows for buy-in from other members and side steps shifting of blame to outside sources. The second step is to reframe the facts. This requires the group to think outside the box to identify the exact area of change required. Pascale and Sternin warn about using clichés and "pseudo-challenges." These do not precisely identify where breakdowns within the organization are occurring, and instead encourage focused attention on exceptions to group norms. They often highlight what is succeeding rather than what is failing. The third step is to make the space safe to learn. This is about creating psychological safety, where members don't feel exposed or ridiculed. This psychological safety protects members from retaliation, either from being implicated as part of an issue, or from acknowledging it. The fourth step is to make the problem concrete. Many unwritten social conventions may keep members from speaking about problems, especially if they don't have a viable option. A solution is direct communications and the avoidance of vague assumptions. The fifth step is to leverage social proof. As members work on problems, it can be difficult to stay motivated as they become inundated with daily tasks and are not reminded of the bigger picture. The final step is to confound the immune defense response. Negative reactions can come in avoidance, resistance, and exceptionalism. Overall, this approach requires humility from leaders in the organization. Instead of being the expert, leaders become facilitators and followers. The positive deviance approach focuses on changing the attitude rather than changing the knowledge. The change in culture becomes more likely when members can act on a new way of thinking rather than think on a new way of acting.

Bass and Avolio focus their discussion on organizational culture through the focus on the leader's influence.[25] They hold four transformational leader components: idealized influences, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders help shape culture through the reinforcement of norms and

---

[25] Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, "Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture," *Public Administration Quarterly* (Spring 1993): 112–121.

boundaries. Members of the organization will model their actions around the leader. The members actions will in turn shape how the leader acts, creating a cyclic culture of influence.

The evolutionary process is the process by organizations and its members to periodically question its assumptions. When the organizations decide they want to change its assumptions, Bass and Avolio recommend the leaders "understand and respect the past."[26] By breaking from old behaviors and presenting a clean slate, norms presented by leadership are able to be reinforced more easily.

In identifying different types of organizational cultures, Bass and Avolio created the organizational description questionnaire, which identifies cultures along a grid of transactional and transformational culture. Transactional culture focuses on implicit and explicit relationships, where action is transactional. This type of culture is more individually focused, provided the members work independently. Transformational cultures create a sense of purpose and feeling of comradery among their members. Members typically go beyond self-interest or expected rewards and focus more on their impact to the greater good. Moderately transformational organizations have high scores for transformational culture, and low to mid-level transactional scores. These types of organizations are flexible, adaptive, creative, and informal. There is a large amount of trust placed in both the members and the organization. High contrast organizations have both high transactional and transformational scores. This type of organizational culture can lead to conflict amongst its leaders on how to accomplish tasks. Coasting organizational cultures have mid-level transformational and transactional scores with moderate management. These cultures are more focused on maintaining their current position rather than creating any type of large change. Moderate contractual organizations have high transactional scores and low to mid-level transformational scores. These cultures are self-interested, often with rigid and stable organizational structures. Focus is placed on controls, directions, and the creation of standard operating procedures. Pedestrian organizations have moderate amounts of transactional culture with little to no transformational aspects. This culture is

---

[26] Ibid., 115.

risk averse and demonstrates little commitment to tasks and its members. The final organizational culture is the garbage can organization. This culture has little to no transformational or transactional aspects, no clear purpose, and little cooperation between its members.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III.   METHODS

A.   INTRODUCTION

The Brigade of Midshipmen reformed in August of 2021 in their newly redistributed companies. The creation of a research question and subsequent transition from research design analysis to a functional working group with the necessary requirements for collecting data did not occur until late October of 2021. The delay between reform of the Brigade and project initiation was not intentional. However, this delay allowed for a clarity in decisive research design characteristics on how to best gather information displaying organizational culture embedded in groups after a randomization of its personnel.

B.   RESEARCH DESIGN

This research project was designed to provide qualitative responses to proctored questions regarding ways in which culture was embedded in a company of Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy following the 2021 shotgun redistribution. The random redistribution lead to a 75 percent turnover of Midshipmen within any given company. The concept of interpretivism was the foundation for data collection due to the nature of the responses expected, and the intent of the research question in determining how culture was embedded in an organization. This data would then be analyzed to see if it aligned with pre-existing cultural assessment models.

The research question proposed lends itself to a deductive study. Models credited to Schein and his counterparts established a baseline for questioning and inquisitive demands needed throughout the research phase in the presence of a target audience. With this established, it was determined that qualitative research would be the ideal way to extract the candid sentiments of the Midshipmen who were affected by the shotgun randomization and how culture was embedded at their level in a variety of situations. The qualitative nature demanded of the research question in this study is much different from the questioning and quantitative data used in the Portner study of 1988, largely due to the fact that metric effectiveness is not the information desired for this current study.

With the desire to gain candid responses a primary goal of qualitative research, the decision to use focus groups as the primary method of data collection was galvanized early in the research process. Dr. Luning's previous experience in this field and her input on the ability to gather useful information from a wide audience in a conversational, yet efficient manner, was critical. The focus group concept was chosen due to the opportunity for human interaction from the interviewer, and flexibility of questioning delivered to probe appropriate lines of reasoning dependent on the environment and individuals. The group environment model also produced the added benefit of allowing participants to lower their inhibitions and answer questions they otherwise may not have participated in, keeping the information flow moving at the pace of the interviewer's discretion.

The scope of the focus group was one of the key elements in this study. Originally the battalion, a larger size unit, was intended to be the primary target. However, the lack of feasibility did not lend itself to quality results in the form of data collection. Since companies compose a battalion and are easier to facilitate during sessions, the unit scale for focus group study was decreased to the company size. Over the course of one battalion of companies, it was determined data saturation at an appropriate level would occur. Despite this, the focus groups were held for three battalions of Midshipmen, or 15 companies. The research question does not focus on specific units or their size for culture embedding, but due to the nature of the United States Naval Academy and other military organizations, individual units can have a large delta in organizational culture compared to similar units even within the same parent organization.

In order to garner the appropriate qualitative data, very specific questions had to be asked. Time constraints for interviews necessitated that concise and pointed questioning be utilized, yet allow for enough breadth and depth in answers to provide useful information that would later be analyzed and interpreted to support the research question. For research questions utilized in the focus groups, see Appendix.

The questions chosen for asking were formulated with the target audience in mind, along with the responsibilities of the interviewer to follow on with probing secondary questions if the conversation was in-line with the original discussion. The major themes of the focus group questions were describing a company's culture and if it has shifted as a

result of the shotgun, marked traditions within the company and if they remained or had been altered due to an influx of new personnel, core values of the company and its leadership and how they were communicated, and the overall sentiment of close-knit nature within the company. Depending on the rank and class of Midshipmen that were participating, the questions were altered to delve into historical viewpoints of their old company, or what the company unity and group cohesion was like before 75 percent of its personnel were introduced.

C.   RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this research study were volunteer Midshipmen of the United States Naval Academy. Several criteria were placed upon the study to remove attributable information of the participants, as well as keep the focus groups an entirely volunteer opportunity to assist in understanding how culture change was embedded in the Brigade of Midshipmen following the shotgun. A survey was sent to the Brigade to gauge interest in the focus groups. From this initial data point, the logistics were prepared. Informed consent forms were created to document the volunteer nature of the study and its focus groups. These forms would be distributed to the Midshipmen and leadership personnel on the day of participation.

Due to the volunteer basis for participation, a proper demographic and numeric correlation between companies could not be obtained. It was common for one class out of one company to have three or four individuals arrive to participate, whereas another class down the hall from the same company could have 15 to 20 participants eager to provide input. The demands placed on Midshipmen during the post-lunch period of time is high, and the focus groups were competing for prioritization.

D.   RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The focus group procedure followed a very similar routine once the initial trial run for a test company was completed in December 2021. A battalion would be scheduled after communicating with the battalion leadership and all of the Company Officers and Senior Enlisted Leaders. The COs and SELs would advertise the opportunity to their respective companies though the Midshipmen leadership chain of command. The messaging was

always broadcast as a voluntary opportunity, and only encouragement to attend was authorized. No rewards or incentives were promised or solicited to any Midshipmen.

The Midshipmen of that day's scheduled company would arrive in Luce Hall for the focus groups, where undue influence and distractions from Bancroft Hall would not be present.[27] Each class of Midshipmen was in a separate room with a different interviewer and scribe. The company leadership—Company Officer, Senior Enlisted Leader, Company Commander, and Company Executive Officer—would be in a separate room for leadership, and would have their own interviewer and focus group panel. Upon entering the room, the interviewer would advise the Midshipmen or company leadership to fill out the informed consent form and mentally note their participant ID number. The participant ID was used to maintain anonymity on the voice recordings and written transcripts, and allowed those who participated to speak freely without worry of post-study retribution for what was mentioned.

Before the recording process and questions would begin, the interviewer would ask to have verbal confirmation from each participant that they were at least 18 years of age and consented to being recorded. All participating individuals were further advised that they could depart the room at any time for any reason and no longer participate, and were reminded to state their participant ID before speaking in order to track what was said. With the consent and reminders complete, the interviewer would begin the recording using dual voice recorders, and start the focus group question document. The notetaker for the room, if available, would take notes separate from the interviewer, looking for unintentional evidence such as body language, demeanor, and the way a question was answered using inflection.

Upon the conclusion of the focus group questions, the interviewer would remind the participants that the transcripts would remain in ID format and all copies deleted upon conclusion of the study and its project, and that they should not discuss the content of the meeting once they left the assigned focus group room.

---

[27] Luce Hall is an academic building with a variety of classrooms, whereas Bancroft Hall is the sole dormitory building for USNA.

The debriefing process immediately following the focus groups was used to discuss sentiments and common themes that came out of each of the class sessions and leadership meetings. It was an informal gathering of the interviewers and researchers working on this project, and the collaborative aspect of the discussions led to the discovery of many initial thematic ties and helped refine further iterations of the focus group questions based on feedback from sessions already completed. This feedback and discussion meeting was a critical portion of the research procedure. It ensured that observations during the focus groups from the interviewer perspective manifested into lessons learned and did not become lessons observed. Each of the focus group sessions completed one company simultaneously, and all researchers and interviewers had to be cognizant of the information desired when compared to the time allotted for retrieving data from participants.

E. DATA ANALYSIS

Post-focus group data analysis was completed using transcribed audio recordings that were printed and reviewed. Each class from the individual companies was completed first, and then the company was compared as a whole to establish organizational culture traits for that unit level. This process was repeated for each company in 4th Battalion. The transcripts were annotated by coding the reoccurring highlights and notable elements that appeared during the focus groups. Over the course of the target battalion, several codes became more frequent than others. The repeat codes were tallied and grouped with similar thought processes and ideas that surfaced from the transcripts. This condensing of data led to the creation of themes based on the coding process results, allowing meaningful data discussion on how culture is embedded via these emergent themes to occur. Despite the variety of individuals in the companies and tremendous disparity in experiences at the United States Naval Academy, the coding process and theme creation still reached a saturation point with overarching concepts within the five companies reviewed.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

IV. FINDINGS

After completing all of the focus groups for the 4th Battalion companies, the audio files from the session were transcribed into readable format, and the recordings then destroyed to maintain participant anonymity in accordance with the IRB.[28] The interviews were analyzed to reveal commonalities between classes, companies, and leadership teams within the battalion. Through the coding process, the following major concepts were discovered with a frequency much higher than others presented during the focus groups.

The word family was mentioned at least five times per interview by class, most often appearing in response to the 'describe your current company culture' and 'describe your company's core values' questions. Family was seen as a common core value across the companies, a mindset emphasized by company leadership, and an idyllic goal for what many Midshipmen believed a company culture should include.

Codes similar to family included relationships, bonds, the establishment of close-knit teams, people-oriented leadership styles, and caring about others. As noted by Subject 1, a 1/C Midshipman from 17th company:

> Our culture is pretty much the family, which we stress a lot. And coming in within the company, I feel like we really care more about including people, making sure people feel included and not necessarily outside, especially for the new people. We try to do events, try to let them know how it works pretty much. But we're definitely not too hard on taking things on people out. We just make sure everyone's kind of like the same.[29]

Some subjects discussed how they were struggling to form these bonds, or that company mates were struggling to do the same, as indicated by Subject 54, a 4/C Midshipman from 17th company: "I guess there's a lot of infighting in between them. You'll hear the 3/C talk really bad and bang up on other 3/C within the company. I've seen

---

[28] Mr Erin Johnson, USNA HRPP to Dr. Celeste Luning, Leadership, Ethics, and Law Department, January 19, 2022, U.S. Naval Academy Human Research Protection Program, "Approval of Amendment to Human Subject Research," HRPP Approval # USNA.2021.0033-AM02-EP7-A.

[29] Subject No. 1, 17th Company 1/C Midshipmen focus group, 01 Dec 2021.

that happen at least two particular members of that class and I was like, Whoa, that's kind of not the family thing." [30]

Unit cohesion and the ability to find commonality with a group of individuals was also a major talking point. On the topic of cohesion, many participants pointed out the importance of having gone through difficult struggles together as the driving factor to generating group cohesion. Specific examples cited were the tribulations encountered during the formative times of Plebe Summer and Plebe Year. Many saw these shared struggles as the foundation for their interactions for the remainder of their time at USNA with a given class of individuals. It also acted as bonding schema for interactions in the future. Subject 22, a 3/C Midshipman from 20th company stated the following in response to a question about class cohesion post-shotgun:

> Sounds like pretty envious of the bond that the firsties have. Like this four-year bond, especially going through plebe summer. They've been through everything through the good times and the bad times, and it's a little scary to sometimes think of if you'll ever have that with the new company that you're in and it's just something to think about. Like if that can happen.[31]

Participants also discussed the differences in cohesion not only between their own classmates and peer groups, but also between the classes within the company as well. Subject 34, a 3/C Midshipman from 19th company stated, "I would like to say that I agree that our class is pretty tight, but I feel like there's definitely a division between the classes in our new company for sure." [32] This led to follow-on discussions of purpose and buy-in to the new company values, and the pre-determined course for command culture as delineated by the company leadership.

The idea of love was mentioned several times, especially in 17th company where it was a tenant philosophy from the Company Officer and embraced in some form all the way down to the 4/C Midshipmen. The Company Officer of 17th company noted:

---

[30] Subject No. 54, 17th Company 4/C Midshipmen focus group, 01 Dec 2021.

[31] Subject No. 22, 20th Company 3/C Midshipmen focus group, 09 Dec 2021.

[32] Subject No. 34, 19th Company 3/C Midshipmen focus group, 07 Dec 2021.

I think it's important to note and what these guys are talking about with family is I think we emphasize correctly that there are good families and there are bad families and it can be misinterpreted sometimes as some corrosive loyalty if we're being loyal to the wrong thing when it comes to that. And so I think we stress a lot this idea of love as our core value and that really has to be a decision every day to demonstrate care and develop confidence for exactly what XO was saying and understanding that our most valuable resources could be the men and women that they are going to need in the future and that needs to be a conscious decision daily to strive in their development to be ready for that.[33]

Another frequent code mentioned by participants across the companies was a profound lack of goals for their specific class development. Midshipmen frequently stated that the entire company lacked any defined goals to work towards. However, a unifying trend among all companies were the goals centered around the training of the 4/C Midshipmen, or Plebes. Unfortunately, numerous participants stated that unless they were directly involved in that training opportunity, there was no common goal outside of the macro culture of the Naval Academy's larger purpose driven mission to train Midshipmen and develop future leaders.

Similar to cohesion, many Midshipmen participants talked about inclusivity and being welcomed into their new company, as well as how they themselves welcomed their new company mates following the shotgun. Participants gave split responses about their willingness to show vulnerability with their new company mates for fear of ruining early relationship building opportunities or appearing to fit a mold that they did not actually believe was indicative of their true character or personality. Some participants struggled in this area, while others pointed out that the ability to show vulnerability was bringing them together as a new unit. Subject 36, a 3/C Midshipman from 19th company commented:

That kind of goes back to the word to describe us, like hesitant. I think something that we've struggled with is like getting total company unity. I see a lot of the same faces at company parties and tailgates and what not. So it's just hard, I think, to see some of those people who stay more hidden. It's like hard to get to know everybody. So I'd say there's probably like a handful of people I could say that probably wouldn't even know anything about me in the company and I don't know anything about them. And it's

---

[33] 17th Company Officer, 17th Company Leadership focus group, 01 Dec 2021.

like none of us are making an effort. It's just like we're okay living with strangers, I think. I don't know. I could just name a few people that I wish I had the opportunity to get to know, but I haven't and partly due to my fault. But we just never got the opportunity to bond like plebe summer or just plebe year, even with the upper class. So it's hard, I'd say, just having that total unity.[34]

Accountability and the stigma surrounding it surfaced as another code, often brought out for conversation by the questions of 'what does company leadership emphasize' and 'what struggles is your company facing now.' Multiple participants emphasized the importance of having a discussion with individuals who transgressed any written standards or cultural norms vice using the Naval Academy's conduct system to hold them accountable. The Midshipmen sought to gain an understanding of the contextual reasoning behind the transgressions, and attempted to apply counseling corrections at the lowest level of leadership. A majority of participants viewed any formal conduct action via the conduct system very negatively, and most had contempt for basic reprimand when it came to failure to uphold standards. Subject 14, a 4/C Midshipmen from 18th company digressed that, "This is not like a word, but in company leadership, not just peer leadership, but if they can handle it on the in-company level, they will. For example, I got on the dinq list. It happened, but I didn't get fried. And that was an important thing that I thought was my takeaway." [35]

This could be in part to an often-discussed desire for a 'relaxed atmosphere,' a sentiment shared across multiple focus groups. While the desire to handle things at the lowest level can provide opportunities for leadership growth, most of the participating Midshipmen failed to realize the concept of lowest *appropriate* level, and leaned toward and informal counseling as a means to keep the atmosphere and command structure more relaxed and friendlier. This concept of "handling things at the lowest level" is described by Subject 33, a 2/C Midshipmen from 18th company:

I would say we look out for each other like we try and handle things at the lowest level possible and making sure that if something went wrong, we understand why they did it, if there's something going on in their life,

---

[34] Subject No. 36, 19th Company 3/C Midshipmen focus group, 07 Dec 2021.

[35] Subject No. 14, 18th Company 4/C Midshipmen focus group, 10 Dec 2021.

because that may have pushed them to do that. So we try and handle that first rather than the action and make sure everyone's okay and then kind of go from there rather than just like, oh, you're gone, UA, you're going to be fried or whatnot?[36]

The desire of maintaining this relaxed atmosphere, complemented by the fear of formally documenting negative behavior due to perceived retribution and career choice impacts, led some Midshipmen to disregard their own policies regarding accountability. Subject 18, a 2/C Midshipmen from 17th company said:

I also have the authority to give negative form ones. I think just about anyone at a billet does, although we try to stay away from those unless it's necessary and deemed necessary is by the people in the billet positions. I know company standard is three UA's is a negative form one. I've only had one person reach that point, and one of the UAs was very not their fault. So I decided that I would give one more chance before that because it was just very situational just didn't feel right to give them that paperwork for that situation. But that person understands like, hey, if you decide not to come again, you will get the negative form one, and then it'll start becoming a bigger problem. Besides that, I've never had people miss more than one, sometimes two formations over the whole semester. I do keep track of that and I'm pretty sure the other people do as well. Okay. And that's just with UAs, but I think everything else is handled more or less that way.[37]

In discussions regarding traditions within companies that would embed a desired culture, many participants struggled to identify anything concrete or regular. Some companies spoke of events they would like to establish as traditions, having initiated them this year for the first time, but had no way forward for continued execution. Most Midshipmen participants instead identified social events that had no clear purpose, and were advertised as 'getting to know you' to decrease the cross-class relationship barriers companies were facing in the initial phase of the post-shotgun integration. These events were often seen as forced, and weren't always attended. In describing the pressure of event prioritization, Subject 22, a 2/C Midshipman from 16th company stated:

We were trying to, as the wardroom…we were trying to push people to like, hey, come even though we know it's your Liberty. And sometimes a lot of people would, sometimes they wouldn't. So it was really like back and forth

---

[36] Subject No. 33, 18th Company 2/C Midshipmen focus group, 10 Dec 2021.

[37] Subject No. 18, 17th Company 2/C Midshipmen focus group, 01 Dec 2021.

whether people would show up. So it wasn't really reliable to get people together in that setting. So going into the next semester, it would be cool if we could find a tradition to create that whole company aspect rather than just like our class doing something or the plebes doing stuff together.[38]

However, some companies had more positive views of these events. Subject 34, a 3/C Midshipmen from 16th company noted the following in regards to company tailgates and their ties to the company's desired culture as a whole:

> Our tailgates at the football games are actually like a really good time. I think the culture on tailgate is kind of just like people either just don't go or they just show face and then they leave right away. Our company does a really good job of having things there and a lot of food. Like it's somewhere you actually want to stay for a little bit instead of just leaving right away.[39]

A final, frequently occurring code, was that of physical proximity and interaction as it related to developing and embedding a culture at the company level. The cause of this code and its frequency is partially affected by the current living situation in Bancroft Hall. The Brigade of Midshipmen has been consolidated in the living dormitory such that enough space on one deck in one wing of Bancroft Hall can be utilized as an isolation ward for COVID-19 situations. Due to the consolidated nature of utilizing every available bed, this yielded some Midshipmen living on different decks than the rest of their company mates. Participants discussed how the physical space of their company area directly affected their culture and ability to intact meaningfully with classmates. Most Midshipmen added positive context, as this situation did not affect all companies. Some Midshipmen participants that were affected relayed positives in combating the separation by holding events in central locations. Other Midshipmen focused on the negative aspect of physical separation, such as Subject 43, a 2/C Midshipmen from 18th company, commenting that "…our class is the only class that does not live on the same deck... our class got put everywhere... I feel close with the people nearby… I feel close with the people nearby me, but people that live farther away, it's definitely a disadvantage." [40]

---

[38] Subject No. 22, 16th Company 1/C Midshipmen focus group, 30 Nov 2021.

[39] Subject No. 34, 16th Company 3/C Midshipmen focus group, 30 Nov 2021.

[40] Subject No. 43, 18th Company 2/C Midshipmen focus group, 10 Dec 2021.

V.   DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

From the findings, three major themes emerged in how culture can be embedded within an organization given it has undergone a randomization of its personnel. The first theme in embedding culture is that a cohesive environment is required to facilitate change. Building this environment first requires the building of relationships between the individuals in the organization, in this case Midshipmen. Moreover, it involves developing a bond within the class years of a company, as well as a unit bond that bridges age and class year gaps to bring the command culture together in a positive way. The building of these interpersonal bonds and relationships was highly valued by the Midshipmen. The importance of caring for others and perceived inclusivity highlighted the Midshipmen desire to create a clan/collaborate culture in most every relationship.[41] A primary goal of each company interviewed was fostering an environment of teamwork and establishing loyalty and trust within the unit in order to accomplish the mission of Midshipman life. However, as the findings indicate, this loyalty often found itself supporting a horizontal structure of company loyalty and unit cohesion over the vertical loyalty and organizational expectations required by the USNA mission for Midshipmen development.

Companies also desired a transformational culture, one that supported feelings of purpose and general belonging within the smaller organizational unit, regardless of how significant the purpose or magnitude of belonging.[42] This is supported by the social events, either formal and informal, planned or spontaneous, that assisted in building cohesive relationships, despite the fact that the event was usually neither permanent in nature, nor significantly meaningful in its creation or intended purpose. Companies that encouraged and held these events were more successful in creating this cohesion over time, though it often yielded surface level platonic relationships that bred horizontal loyalties to the company. Companies that held no events, or events with little to no distinct purpose, reported being more distant with each other.

---

[41] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing*, 35–51.
[42] Bass and Avolio, *Public Administration*, 112–121.

The second major theme to embedding culture is the promulgation of a clear set of goals. The external environment of the United States Naval Academy establishes a set of goals organically through its mission to graduate competent commissioned officers into the United States Navy and Marine Corps. According to Allaire and Firsirotu, the Naval Academy's goals should influence the goals generated within the companies, driving Midshipmen and staff leadership to align themselves to the larger organization and its principled mission.[43] However, when asked, many of the Midshipmen did not identify with these goals. They accepted them as part of the Naval Academy's basic underlying assumptions, but did not value their nature as institutional goals enough to base company level culture and goals off of this pre-established foundation.[44] This lack of purpose and alignment with the larger organization made it significantly more difficult for the companies to establish a new identity that all Midshipmen—those who desire organizationally aligned goals as well as those who favored horizontal loyalty—to rally behind and grow into as the company came together.

The third theme that emerged from the coding process was the concept of accountable action of the organization's members as it relates to developing and engraining command culture. This theme is directly linked to Schein's primary embedding mechanisms.[45] Midshipmen that handled accountability among each other at the peer level or utilized the "handled at the lowest level" concept would illuminate their underlying assumptions, rewarding and punishing what was viewed as important while simultaneously preserving the relationships and defending the horizontal loyalties that were preconceived before the shotgun occurred. This was seen in most interviews when Midshipmen dialogued about standards and holding each other accountable, where the evidence noted was from previous years or already engrained as an acceptable behavior. What was initially suspected to be a malleable culture trait viable for changing with a personnel randomization, turned out to be a deeply engrained and pervasive issue. Despite the overarching Naval Academy's and Naval Service's values on accountability, Midshipmen

---

[43] Dauber, Fink, and Yolles, *SAGE Open*.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Schein and Schein, *Organizational* Culture.

at the company level did not want to comply in a manner parallel to the larger culture. They valued informal actions, such as informal counseling, over any documented action for fear of peer reprisal. This was bolstered through their reactions to critical events, and indicative of where their focus and loyalties were placed.

Following the analysis of the focus group material and the synthesizing of the findings, it was evident that culture will be embedded within an organization whether or not the members are focused on creating it. Specifically, if companies took a more positive approach by taking group action and ownership of the shotgun, and then embracing the event and aligning prospective culture to USNA goals, then the outcome was satisfactory. Conversely, if the company leadership took a more hands-off approach, and members merely coexisted in the same space with little done to align to the larger organization, culture was still embedded within those groups, though not necessarily the ideal construct or quality.[46]

In order for the shotgun to be standardized and purpose oriented in its desire for the type of culture that is embedded at the company level, there needs to be a more thorough approach leading up to the randomization of the personnel to ensure that pre-existing culture issues are either addressed or corrected if they are deeply engrained. Additionally, there must also be a significant amount of oversight during, and following, the randomization to ensure that the creation and embedding of the desired culture is in fact positively aligned with the larger organization's goals. The shotgun as executed in 2021 heavily relied on Schein's secondary embedding mechanism of changing up the organization's artifacts, which ultimately led to a roughhewn template of cultural change through the Brigade of Midshipmen. The shotgun and its ancillary functional support needed to center on the primary embedding mechanisms that focused on the espoused values and basic underlying assumptions of the larger organization and how they can be deeply instilled at the company level.[47]

---

[46] Pascale and Sternin, *Harvard*, 73–81.

[47] Schein and Schein, *Organizational* Culture.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

VI. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study was completed following a major shift in personnel at the United States Naval Academy. Despite the drastic amount of information required to be collected and processed for a thorough result, there were substantial limitations to the outcome of this study and resulting focus group execution. First, there was no pre-shotgun documentation of any kind that could delineate the quality or type of culture that existed within a company or its parent battalion. This pre-randomization data would have been extremely beneficial in the formulation of a more advanced strategy to create a positive culture change in line with USNA goals and values. It would have also led to a more refined version of questions for the focus groups based on the existing environment and culture already engrained at the company level, but also at USNA as a whole. Instead, much of this aforementioned desired data was loosely filled in by the CO and SEL leadership team if they had been present for any length of time prior to the shift, as well as the 1/C Midshipmen who remained in company for this iteration of the shotgun, though their input was consistently biased.

Another limitation was the completely voluntary nature of the focus groups. The voluntary basis led many Midshipmen to prioritize other engagements over the focus groups during the planned execution time, in some instances yielding three participants in a group where the class total for that company may have been near 40 individuals. This inherently limits the quality of the data and can heavily skew the resulting information to the thoughts and concepts of those few individuals, which may not, and likely are not, representative of their entire class.

Further limiting the study was the sheer amount of data collected. It was decided early on that data saturation would occur at a battalion of companies, though more than one battalion was interviewed for process sake and due to a larger project running concurrently to this thesis research. To transcribe and further process all of the remaining data using the coding and thematic tie-in process would involve a substantial amount of time and effort. The time frame for this thesis and resultant research project did not afford such ambiguous timelines, and therefore the battalion was decided on as the target data

collection level, as mentioned in the methods section. By opening the focus group data and expanding the project to encompass the entire Brigade of Midshipmen with focus groups conducted in the same manner as this iteration, in addition to the pre-randomization data, a thoroughly conclusive result could be obtained.

For future versions of this project, the following recommendations are suggested in order to assist in defining the proper research question and gathering conclusive evidence that will support the data and findings provided herein. The most significant recommendation is to shift the desired research question to one that encompasses the idea of creating purpose driven culture, and how this culture is then deliberately embedded in an organization. As noted in the discussion section, the culture embedding progress as seen during this most recent shotgun was similar to the infamous trolley problem, wherein even if no course of action is taken, a decision has still been made. The same remains true for the shotgun and its byproducts of culture, which for some companies is far less in line with the USNA ideals than is seen in other companies throughout the Brigade. By shifting the targeted research question and subsequent investigation process in relation to the execution of another shotgun, while also highlighting a purpose built and positively reinforced culture shift, drastically different results from this research project may surface.

Another recommendation is to replicate this study at other service academies to see if similar issues in culture embedding are encountered following a randomization of their personnel. This could potentially highlight additional concerns regarding the process-oriented execution of the 2021 shotgun, and if it can be improved upon given the lessons learned from other similar institutions with the same capability for mass personnel change.

A final recommendation for future studies in this field of information would be to narrow down the type of embedding methods which are most effective at successfully engraining positive and organizationally aligned culture within the Brigade of Midshipmen. Specifically, which of Schein's methods, primary or secondary, have the most effect following a personnel randomization. This recommendation would best be executed in addition to the first recommendation for a more directed approach to the type of culture desired for embedding, and how closely the final product should resemble and typify the goals of the United States Naval Academy.

APPENDIX

Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe your current company culture?
   a. 1/C, how would you describe your company culture prior to the shotgunning?
      i. What are some positive effects from the shotgunning?
      ii. What are some negative effects from the shotgunning?
2. What traditions do you have in your company?
   a. How have those changed from prior years? (May need to adjust wording to how do you perceive those have changed from prior years if with 2/C, 3/C, or 4/C)
3. Describe your company's core values? (Focus on 3 to 5 key values)
   a. What does company leadership emphasize?
   b. Who do you consider to be your company leadership? (CO/SEL or CC/XO)
   c. How has company leadership communicated their vision for the company?
4. What is something that your company is struggling with this semester?
   a. What steps are you taking to get through that struggle?
   b. How is company leadership supporting you in working through that struggle?
   c. How do you support one another in working through those challenges?
5. How close knit is your company?
6. How is competition fostered within the company?
   a. Describe examples of healthy competition within your company.
   b. Describe examples of unhealthy competition within your company.
7. What is your company's overarching goal?
8. What is your perception of how the company functions as a whole?
   a. How does leadership contribute to your perception of this functionality?

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

Bass, Bernard M., and Bruce J. Avolio, "Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture." *Public Administration Quarterly* (Spring 1993): 112–121.

Cameron, Kim S., and Robert E. Quinn, "Chapter 3: The Competing Values Framework," In *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 3rd ed., 35–51. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Wiley, 2011.

Dauber, Daniel, Gerhard Fink, and Maurice Yolles. "A Configuration Model of Organizational Culture." *SAGE Open 2*, no. 1 (2012). https://doi.org/ 10.1177%2F2158244012441482).

Pascale, Richard T., and Jerry Sternin, "Your Company's Secret Change Agents." *Harvard Business Review*, May 2005, 73–81.

Portner, D. A. LT, USN. Office of the Commandant / General Records: Commandant's Office Files. Special Collections and Archives Department, Nimitz Library, United States Naval Academy. Unpublished study, 1988.

Schein, Edgar H., and Peter Schein. "Chapter 10: How Leaders Embed and Transmit Culture," In *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2016. https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/ organizational-culture-and/9781119212041/c10.xhtml (accessed 04 February 2022).

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2. Dudley Knox Library
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California