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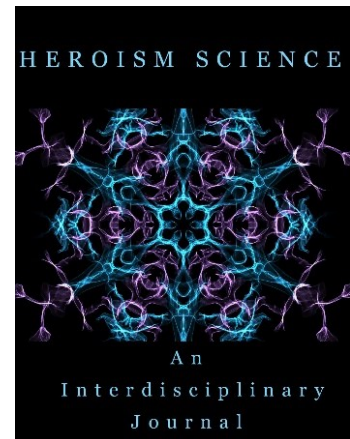
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The Flying Ace as a Hero: The 4F Model and Representations of Douglas Bader and Erich Hartmann



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ABSTRACT: This study develops a four-factor framework (4F model) based on fear, suffering, values, and characteristics for analyzing depictions of physical-risk martial heroism. Specifically, this framework is applied to assess representations of two World War II flying aces, the Royal Air Force pilot Douglas Bader and his German contemporary from the Luftwaffe, Erich Hartmann. On investigation, it is revealed that Bader and Hartmann are either described as fearless or capable of continuing their heroic journey despite their fears. Moreover, the literature contends that both these pilots experienced immense suffering but eventually overcame them. Regarding values, Bader is portrayed as a conservative patriot, whereas Hartmann is said to be a romantic and chivalrous hero. In terms of their characteristics, the depictions of Bader highlight both his positive and negative traits, whereas the darker sides of the hero are virtually absent in the rosy representations of Hartmann.

1 INTRODUCTION

The word hero is derived from Greek and means protector or defender. Although heroes have been portrayed and discussed since the dawn of civilization, theoretical or data-driven scholarly inquiry into heroism only seriously emerged in the 1980s. The insights generated from these studies have resulted in fine-grained distinctions between physical-risk heroism and social heroism. Physical-risk heroism refers to cases where individuals “take physical risks on behalf of one or more people, despite the possibility of suffering serious consequences, including death” (Franco et al. 2018, 387). These acts may be conducted by military personnel (martial heroism) or civilians (civil heroism). In contrast, social heroism involves conserving threatened values and behaviors or creating new values and behaviors that are presently not widely embraced in society. Whistle-blowers, scientific discoverers, and odds-beaters fall within this category (Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou 2018, 4).

The current investigation focuses on physical-risk martial heroism and formulates a new four-factor framework (4F model) comprising fear, suffering, values, and characteristics for this purpose. This framework is employed to explore heroic narratives concerning the British Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot Douglas Bader and the German Luftwaffe pilot Erich Hartmann. Both these military pilots attained the status of a flying ace during the Second World War, a title reserved for military pilots that have shot down several opponents in aerial combat, usually five or more (Polmar and Allen 2012, 60). Bader was credited with 22 aerial victories during this war, and Hartmann with 352 (United States Air Force Academy 1988, 30). That makes Hartmann the most lethal fighter ace in the history of aerial warfare and the ace of aces.

Assessing the depictions of Bader and Hartmann through the 4F framework is critical since flying aces have played a prominent role in war propaganda and popular culture and deserve more attention since they have hardly been addressed in heroism studies (Robertson,

2003). Examining two flying aces who fought on the winning (Bader) and losing (Hartmann) side of World War II enables a more balanced comparative investigation during a pivotal historical moment. That is useful since existing research has highlighted that conceptions of heroism change over time and space (Allison and Goethals 2011; Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo 2011). Biographies and other textual material where Bader and Hartmann are depicted as heroes will be utilized to shed light on narratives concerning fear, suffering, values, and characteristics through the 4F framework (Lucas 1981; Burns 1998; Brickhill 1973; Turner 2001; Toliver and Constable 1986). The analysis of these publications is helpful as that is one of the main ways in which heroic representations of these military pilots have been disseminated (On the construction of heroes, see, Goethals et al. 2019).

The overarching research question that this examination seeks to address is thus: how can the heroic depictions of Bader and Hartmann as flying aces be understood through the 4F framework in terms of fear, suffering, values, and characteristics? Upon investigation, it is revealed that both of these military pilots are generally depicted as fearless and fearful encounters do not stand in the way of their life projects. According to the examined sources, their suffering is central in the narratives, but they do not succumb but manage to rise above their conditions. In terms of values, Bader is portrayed as a conservative patriot and Hartmann as a chivalrous romantic. The descriptions of their characters highlight the most significant difference in the portrayals of these flying aces. Bader's negative traits are mentioned far more extensively than Hartmann's, who is presented in an almost exclusively positive light.

These points are developed at greater length in the remainder of this article. The first section develops the 4F framework based on existing conceptions of heroes. In the following four sections, this model is adopted against the portrayals of Bader and Hartmann in terms of fear, suffering, values, and characteristics. A summary of the preceding points and

suggestions for future research brings this article to an end. At this point, it is incumbent to take a closer look at prevailing notions of a hero and the 4F framework that will inform this inquiry.

2 THE CONCEPTION OF HEROES AND THE 4F FRAMEWORK

The contemporary usage of hero has been described as “radically ambiguous” (Gill 1996, 96), and there is no complete scholarly consensus regarding its conception. That is expected as heroes possess a complex range of behaviors, motivations, values, and attitudes (Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou 2015, 115). These differing perspectives are apparent as some publications emphasize the hero's propensity for risk-taking and self-sacrificial prosocial behavior, whereas others highlight their profound morality, humility, or tendency to experience radical transformation (Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo 2011; Worthington and Allison 2018; Comerford 2018; Campbell 1949).

Likewise, empirical studies on heroic traits have yielded somewhat different results, even though overlaps exist. The first study on lay definitions of heroism identified eight traits of heroes that are supposed to be intelligent, strong, inspiring, resilient, caring, charismatic, selfless, and reliable (Allison and Goethals 2011). Another investigation found 13 central and an equal number of peripheral characteristics. The central characteristics are bravery, moral integrity, conviction, courage, self-sacrifice, protection of the weak, selflessness, determination, helpfulness, saving others, providing inspiration, and honesty. The peripheral characteristics were dubbed as proactive, humble, strong, risk-taker, fearless, caring, powerful, compassionate, personable, leadership skills, exceptional, talented, and intelligent (Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou 2015).

The 4F model developed here emphasizes heroic traits pertaining to fear, suffering, values, and characteristics. 'Fearlessness,' or the hero's willingness to act despite being

fearful, is considered a peripheral trait in the study referred to above (Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou 2015, 117). However, it is included in the 4F framework as fear animates descriptions of central heroic traits such as bravery and courage. Bravery is conceived as the ability to confront danger or pain without fear, and courage is the capacity to confront challenges despite overwhelming fear (Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou 2018, 2–4). For these reasons, fear is included in the 4F model.

Suffering refers to the hero's ability to endure physical and mental pain. It can lead to emotional, spiritual, and behavioral well-being that may, in turn, result in self-improvement and a desire to make positive contributions to one's group, community, or nation. Specifically, it has been argued that suffering has at least six potential benefits. It "(1) has redemptive qualities, (2) signifies important developmental milestones, (3) fosters humility, (4) elevates compassion, (5) encourages social union and action, and (6) provides meaning and purpose" (Allison and Setterberg 2016, 198). As such, suffering is considered an instrumental part of the hero's journey as it enables him or her to become their best self (Campbell 1949; Allison et al. 2019). In the 4F framework, the hero is expected to continue with his or her life project and not give in when suffering.

Values pertain to the hero's principles or standards of behavior. It reflects what they consider vital, worthy, or useful. In the literature, heroes are conceived as defenders of cherished values and are supposed to uphold them even if it comes at great personal risk and cost (Condren 2020, 2). Hence, the reason values are a part of the 4F model.

Lastly, characteristics are the features, qualities, or traits that heroes possess. In existing publications, the character depictions of heroes have generally been overwhelmingly positive, prompting a call for more investigations on the darker sides of heroes (Beggan 2019; Frisk 2019, 96–100). Iron Man and Deadpool do, for instance, display negative traits such as narcissism but still qualify as superheroes since they help produce positive societal outcomes

(Allison, Beggan, and Efthimiou 2022, 13). That is why there is room for both positive and negative characteristics in the 4F model.

In the coming sections, the 4F framework will be utilized to examine the heroic representations of Bader and Hartmann, starting with depictions of fear.

3 THE 4F FRAMEWORK: BADER, HARTMANN, AND FEAR

As we have seen, the hero is supposed to be fearless or capable of acting despite fear, according to the 4F model. Bader is sometimes depicted as fearless in the literature (Mackenzie 2010, 64; Turner 2001, 204). Nevertheless, these works do not expand on this issue and clarify whether he was born fearless or if it is a quality Bader acquired by confronting his fears.

In contrast, Paul Brickhill (1973, 183) describes an event that supposedly familiarized Bader with “the sickness of fear.” On this occasion, cannon shells slammed into Bader's Hurricane aircraft and jolted it. For a moment, Bader reportedly experienced fear's horrible, paralyzing effect as he froze for a brief period. Brickhill (1973, 183) contends that Bader eventually regained his composure and was “furious at having been frightened” afterward. That could be due to his failure to conform to his heroic self-image where there is no room for such fears (on heroic self-image, see, for example, Shahar, Bauminger, and Itamar 2021). In another passage of his book, Brickhill identifies the fear of loneliness as the only thing that scares Bader. “He has beaten everything else, but that he will never conquer” (Brickhill 1973, 335). Nevertheless, even Brickhill's (1973, 335–336) depiction suggests that Bader did not succumb to his fears but continued to fight heroically.

Like Bader, Hartmann is occasionally portrayed as fearless in the examined literature (Spick 2011, 202). In one passage, he is called “the bravest and most fearless fighter pilot in the Luftwaffe” (Constable and Toliver 1968, 347). Hartmann's fearlessness is also

highlighted in his encounter with Adolph Hitler. According to the narrative, Hartman was supposed to undergo a thorough body search before he met with Hitler to receive the Diamond for his Knight's Cross, the highest award in the military and paramilitary forces of Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Hartmann reportedly told the guard “that he should tell Hitler I didn't want the Diamonds if he had no faith in his front-line officers” (Constable and Toliver 1968, 130). After Hartmann’s ultimatum, Hitler’s Luftwaffe adjutant reportedly ensured that Hartmann could pass without being searched and enter the meeting room equipped with his pistol (Constable and Toliver 1968, 131). Again, the text does not specify whether Hartmann’s fearlessness was an inborn characteristic or something he had to conquer.

Other segments of the literature claim that Hartmann is not immune to fear. One of these instances is evident in the portrayal of Hartmann’s first combat mission on 14 October 1942 (for other references to Hartmann's fears, see Toliver and Constable 1986, 44, 68, 156, 210, 214). During this mission, Hartmann was reportedly so desperate to attain his first victory that he separated from his comrades to engage an enemy fighter. Yet, things did not work as Hartmann planned. Instead of shooting down the opponent's aircraft, he nearly collided with it. Eventually, Hartmann also ran out of fuel and had to crash land. According to this narrative, Hartmann violated almost all rules of air-to-air combat and was sentenced to three days of work with the ground crew as punishment (Feist and McGuirl 2014, 71–72; On the deviant nature of heroes, see, Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo 2011). Mike Spick posits that Hartmann experienced great fear during this mission, where everything seemingly went wrong. Spick (2011, 202) goes on to suggest that “this humbling experience taught [Hartmann] to control his fear.” That is a necessary component of the hero’s journey as they grow and develop (Keck et al. 2017, 2).

As these discussions indicate, the representations of Bader or Hartmann concerning fear are consistent with the 4F model. Either they are depicted as fearless, or they continue to act despite their fears, as in Hartmann's crash-landing incident. The stories regarding these two flying aces' sufferings are discussed in relation to the 4F model in the upcoming section.

4 THE 4F FRAMEWORK: BADER, HARTMANN, AND SUFFERING

As previously discussed, this framework expects the hero to carry on his or her journey despite suffering. Bader's airplane crash on 14 December 1931, where he lost his right leg above the knee, and the left below, is frequently mentioned in the literature as an episode involving immense suffering (Saunders 2007, 9; Burns 1998, 26; Bader 2008, chapter 1). One of Bader's biographers, Laddie Lucas, describes this episode in the following terms. "What Douglas suffered in the aftermath of disaster took him to the precipice of human endurance. There were times when his mother prayed that the Almighty, in His infinite kindness, might spare her younger son his torment and agony and bear his soul quietly away. Only his exceptional fitness and superhuman courage gave him the strength and the will to resist the last fatal step into oblivion" (Lucas 1981, 54).

These stories of superhuman courage, strength, and will, reiterate common heroic traits (Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou 2015). Moreover, the literature shows that Bader's suffering did not stop him from continuing his life project as a pilot. Indeed, he was reinstated at the RAF during World War II and eventually attained the status of a flying ace (Bishop 2010). In this regard, the portrayal of Bader is compatible with the 4F framework as he continues on his path despite these tremendous setbacks instead of falling victim.

Another major struggle regarding Bader covered in the literature is his time as a prisoner of war in Germany from 1941 to 1945 (Pitt 2008, 33). Turner (2001, 111, 116) describes Bader's captivity at Colditz Castle as miserable, with cage-like camps, terrible food of low

rations, and a horrible commandant. Despite his suffering, Turner (2001, 112) maintains that Bader continued to resist the enemy by making “life as unpleasant as possible for them” and escaping “to continue the struggle”. Turner maintains that for Bader, life was a struggle to survive, and he perhaps followed his 'resist or escape' precept to continue his leadership and prove himself (Turner 2001, 112). Again, his handling of the situation and continuation of his life project mirrors that of the hero as stipulated by the 4F model.

Similarly, Hartmann's time as a prisoner of war in the hands of the Russian secret police (NKVD) is described as a struggle in the literature (Kurowski 2004, 191). According to the narrative, Hartmann refused to cooperate with the Soviets and spy on fellow officers. That cost him ten days of solitary confinement, where he had to sleep on the concrete floor and survive on bread and water. Even when the USSR threatened to kidnap and murder his wife, he reportedly refused to oblige. Physical abuse did allegedly not work on Hartmann either. When he was hit with a cane during an interrogation, Hartmann responded by slamming his chair on the head of the assailant and thereby knocking him out, according to the biography. Soft measures used to make Hartmann cooperative were purportedly unsuccessful (Toliver and Constable 1986, 5). His biographers conclude that “rarely in history, and never under modern conditions, has a war hero been subjected to such protracted efforts at his [Hartmann] degradation.” His survival from such an ordeal better verifies his heroic qualities than his decorations (Toliver and Constable 1986, 5).

The narrative suggests that Hartmann's struggles continued after the end of his imprisonment as well. Upon his return to Germany, Hartmann found out that his wife had given birth to his son during his captivity and died at the age of three, without Hartmann ever getting to see him. To make things worse, Hartmann was informed about the loss of his beloved father. According to the story, these personal tragedies were insufficient to break him. That is because “to the marrow of his bones, [Hartmann] is a fighter, also in terms of

meeting all life's challenges head-on" (Toliver and Constable 1986, 5). The literature also makes clear that Hartmann continued with his career in the West German Air Force despite the struggles he had to endure (Mitcham and Mueller 2012, 199). Moreover, the text suggests that he "enjoys life hugely" and has continued his life project despite his struggles (Toliver and Constable 1986, 9).

In sum, the portrayals of Bader and Hartmann's struggles are heroic as they continue to pursue their life project in the face of their hardships. In Bader's case, his loss of legs did not stop him from attaining the status of a flying ace. Regarding Hartmann, his time as a prisoner of war is even said to overshadow his accomplishment as the most lethal military pilot in history. He could continue to live life enjoyably despite these torments instead of falling victim. These depictions are thus consistent with the 4F model. The coming section considers the purported values of these flying aces through the developed framework.

5 THE 4F FRAMEWORK: BADER, HARTMANN, AND VALUES

As noted, heroes are defenders of cherished values and are expected to adhere to them even if it involves great personal risk and cost, according to the 4F model. Bader is presented as an adherent of traditional conservative values in the literature. One source contends that Bader's friends in the Conservative Party wanted him to stand for parliament. According to the source, Bader turned down these requests as he felt he could not freely speak his mind as an MP (Mackenzie 2010, 160–161). Furthermore, in an interview, Douglas purportedly stated that if he were in charge, he would "(2) Stop immigration into Britain immediately 'until the situation has been thoroughly examined. (3) Reintroduce capital punishment for all forms of murder. (4) Strengthen the police force ... (5) Ban betting shops and gambling places ... (6) Cut Government expenditure" (Turner 2001, 213–232). These views are fully compatible

with conservative values where tradition, hierarchy, and authority are central principles (Cole 2012, 94–95).

Another principal value of Bader is said to be patriotism. Whereas Mackenzie (2010, 166) describes Bader as an “old-fashioned patriot,” Turner (2001, 134) calls him a “great patriot.” Lucas (1981, 20) claims that Bader would not shy away “from expressing his pungent and intensely patriotic views” to world leaders. As an example of Bader’s patriotism, Mackenzie (2010, 166) refers to a reunion of Luftwaffe pilots that Bader reluctantly attended in Munich, where he reportedly openly declared: “My God, I had no idea we left so many of the bastards alive” (Mackenzie 2010, 166). In German prison camps, Bader was allegedly willing to “risk life and limb” to escape. He supposedly reasoned that even “if you get recaptured twenty times, you’re helping the war effort by making the Germans spend time, money, and manpower in organized manhunts” (Mackenzie 2010, 134). According to this portrayal, Bader is thus willing to stand by his patriotic values even if it might cost him his life, as is expected of a hero in the 4F framework.

In contrast, Hartmann is rendered as “perennially romantic” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 12). Indeed, his biographers contend that Hartmann would not have attained greatness or survived Soviet captivity without the love for his wife Ursula, whom he called ‘Usch’ (Toliver and Constable 1986, 4). Another testimony of Hartmann’s supposed romanticism is exemplified in accounts that suggest that he would paint a bleeding heart on his aircraft inscribed with the name ‘Usch’ to symbolize his anguish during separation from his beloved wife (Constable and Toliver 1968, 120; Spick 2011, 205).

Another fundamental value in the characterization of Hartmann is chivalry. It is noted that air heroes “were not only a new breed of warrior native to the twentieth century but also the only soldiers not immersed in the inhuman mass effects of modern warfare. Fighter aces were able to keep alive for a few brief decades, albeit in tenuous form, the now archaic concept of

a fair fight. Man-to-man encounters in which individual martial skill and fighting spirit could affect the outcome disappeared from land and naval battles even as they became the central elements of aerial combat. Chivalry thus found a modern echo among air fighters” (Toliver and Constable 1986, xiii).

Another passage suggests that “for German fighter pilots, it was unthinkable to strafe an enemy pilot hanging in his parachute. They regarded that not as war and fighting between soldiers but as murder. This chivalrous tradition may have seemed out of place in total war, but the Luftwaffe lived by this code to the end” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 169). Hence, the title of Hartmann’s biography is *The Blond Knight of Germany*. In general, Hartmann's biographers insist that Hartmann would not do anything that goes against his values, which he considers wrong “regardless of the cost to himself” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 6).

After this inquiry, it is apparent that Bader and Hartmann are presented as having different values that guide their heroism. In the case of Bader, he is characterized as a conservative patriot, whereas Hartmann is portrayed as romantic and chivalrous. The common denominator is that both are depicted as willing to adhere to their values even if it comes at great personal risk and cost, as the 4F model of heroism anticipates. In the next section, Bader’s and Hartmann’s supposed characteristics are evaluated in light of this framework.

6 THE 4F FRAMEWORK: BADER, HARTMANN, AND CHARACTERISTICS

As stated, the character of heroes is overwhelmingly positive, but they may also have negative traits in the 4F model. That is why the present investigation will also look for any potential character flaws in the representations of Bader and Hartmann.

In the case of Bader, the literature is full of praise regarding his positive characteristics. Michael Burns (1998, 6) describes him as “an outstanding air combat tactician, inspired leader ... gifted teacher” and a great warrior. In the foreword of his biography, Bader’s

second wife, Lady Joan Bader, posits that he had the “astonishing ability ... to view things with clarity and to put them into perspective” (Bader 2008, foreword). Brickhill (1973, 335) suggests that Bader showed “humanity new horizons of courage”. Lucas (1981, 19) succinctly summarizes his high regard for Bader by arguing that he is “everything that an Englishman wants to be ... but knows he hasn't either the nerve or the capacity to be”.

The literature is not as vocal regarding the darker sides of Bader. Brickhill (1973, 335) hints at these traits when he writes that Bader is “still as much a man of extremes as ever, blowing hot or cold in enthusiasms, an intensely loyal friend, an uncompromising foe.” Turner (2001, 1) is blunter when he contends that Bader “could be dogmatic, intransigent, even rude; but always he was infinitely courageous and caring.” Mackenzie is the author who is most explicit about Bader's negative traits while also highlighting his virtues. He starts by quoting Patrick 'Paddy' Barthropp, who reportedly claimed that Bader “could be a right bastard at times, but we all loved him” (Mackenzie 2010, 173).

Mackenzie (2010, 173) continues by establishing that while “Bader was a great man ... he had major flaws ... [and] that his great character strengths - the need to succeed, the refusal to admit doubt, the desire to dominate and lead - could sometimes be his worst character weaknesses.” Furthermore, Bader “could inspire admiration, confidence, and loyalty among many of those who knew him. On the other hand, he could generate feelings amongst others with whom he came in contact that might border on outright loathing” (Mackenzie 2010, 173). Finally, Mackenzie (2010, 173) acknowledges that while Bader “could be very relaxed and funny,” at times, he was also “breathhtakingly aggressive and rude.”

Likewise, the positive traits of Hartmann are frequently lauded in the literature. In one volume, Hartmann is said to typify “the breed of which he is the all-time world champion” (Constable and Toliver 1968, 118–119). In another monograph, Hartmann's virtues are expanded upon. Specifically, it is claimed that Hartmann has “special qualities of mind and

heart” coupled with a “tigerish energy” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 1, 286). Moreover, he is described as “one of the strongest men under the Soviet heel” and belongs to “an elite group of natural leaders” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 4). In addition, it is argued that Hartmann “has a will almost fierce in its drive to prevail and conquer” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 5). He is presented as “a social lion,” “an incorrigible individualist,” and a fighter that confronts “all life's challenges head-on” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 5, 9). In short, Hartmann is said to represent “the best of German manhood in terms of character, willpower, and endurance” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 4).

These depictions of Hartmann mirror the extraordinary positive traits that heroes are supposed to possess. What about the negative dispositions that heroes might have? Do they appear in the representations of Hartmann as well? To be sure, Hartmann's other nickname besides 'the blonde knight' is 'the black devil' and is often referred to in the literature. That could have been used as a springboard to illustrate the dark sides of Hartmann (Coonts 2003, 228; Zabecki 2014, 587).

However, that is different from how Hartmann is depicted, as his biographers gloss over the negatives. For example, they contend that Hartmann is “a heroic man whose faults” are, in reality, “manifestations of a surpassingly positive personality” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 286). When Hartmann was involved in disputes with his superiors in the West German Air Force, the authors singlehandedly blame the “small men in big jobs” who envied Hartmann and tried “to injure his career and status” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 13–14). Indeed, they write that qualities that made Hartmann a liability in this toxic military environment could have made Hartmann a tycoon in the business world (Toliver and Constable 1986, 12). In their story, Hartmann is, after all, a hero who has “ennobled his life with an inborn sense of fairness, justice, and honesty” (Toliver and Constable 1986, 286).

After this examination, it stands clear that presentations of Bader and Hartmann's exceedingly positive traits are consistent with the 4F model's heroic notion. Whereas Bader is depicted as the exemplary Englishman, Hartmann is portrayed as the outstanding German. The major difference between the descriptions of these flying aces is that Bader's darker sides are covered more extensively than Hartmann's character flaws. In this sense, the descriptions of Bader are not as one-sided as the rosy accounts of Hartmann. These depictions are in line with the 4F model as well.

7 CONCLUSION

The present article has assessed the representations of the flying aces, Bader and Hartmann, through the heroic lenses of the 4F framework comprising fear, suffering, values, and characteristics. The investigation revealed that Bader and Hartmann are either depicted as fearless or capable of acting despite their fear, as the 4F model expects. Bader is described as incapable of escaping his fear of loneliness and unable to accept that he momentarily experienced this negative emotion when his aircraft jolted during an encounter during the Second World War. An episode where Hartmann crash-lands is said to have taught him how to control his fears.

Both the flying aces' sufferings are covered in the literature as well. Bader's suffering centers on the loss of his legs and his time as a prisoner of war. Nevertheless, the story posits that Bader continues his life project despite suffering. Hartmann's suffering is attributed to his time in Soviet captivity and the realization that he had lost both his son and father during his imprisonment. The literature identifies loneliness in Soviet prisons as a cause of Hartmann's suffering and reassures the reader that he persisted with his life project instead of falling victim. These portrayals are consistent with the 4F framework, which persist that heroes do not give in to their sufferings.

The values of Bader and Hartmann are made clear in the literature. In the case of Bader, he is described as a conservative patriot. Hartmann is portrayed as a romantic knight. The representations contend that Bader was willing to risk life and limb for his values, whereas Hartmann does so irrespective of the costs. They are thus portrayed as heroes that stand by their prized values even if it involves great personal risk and cost, as the 4F framework expects.

Finally, the literature praises Bader and Hartmann's extraordinary positive traits. However, they are less vocal concerning the darker sides of their characters, especially in the case of Hartmann, where even his negative traits are claimed to be manifestations of his positive personality. Bader's negative characteristics are supposedly aggressiveness and rudeness, which could make others regard him as a bastard and invoke feelings of hatred against him. These accounts should not be interpreted in anti-heroic terms as he is explicitly portrayed as a fallible hero (Saunders 2007, 118). These portrayals are in line with the 4F model as it contends that heroes might possess negative characteristics as long as they do not overshadow their positive heroic sides.

As this inquiry has demonstrated the utility of studying flying aces that have largely been ignored in heroism studies, future research should adopt the 4F framework to examine other military pilots within this category. The Ghost of Kyiv is a case to the point. This fabricated superhero legend was said to have shot down as many as 40 enemy aircraft during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War. This flying ace was allegedly created to raise Ukrainian morale. Exploring this topic may shed new light on how the heroic status of flying aces may be exploited for war propaganda. The fictional flying ace Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell, with the leading role in the Top Gun movies, is also worthy of scholarly attention as he has become a cultural phenomenon that has helped promote the pilot profession.

It might also be fruitful to adopt the 4F framework to study other cases of physical-risk martial heroism as it is explicitly designed with this category of heroes in mind. A more demanding task would be to apply the model in studies of physical-risk civil heroism to see how useful the model is outside of the military world. Should one be interested in subjecting the 4F model to an even tougher test, evaluating its utility in accounting for social heroes such as whistle-blowers and scientific discoverers is appropriate. Social heroism does, after all, stand even further from the type of heroes the 4F framework was originally devised for.

Finally, the values of conservatism, patriotism, romanticism, and chivalry, along with negative characteristics of aggressiveness and rudeness that were found in the portrayals of Bader and Hartmann, are also worthy of further examination. These values and characteristics have largely been ignored in heroism studies. Research on these topics may thus help provide a more complex and nuanced understanding of the hero that might enrich the field.

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10 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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