COMPETENCE IS MY WATCHWORD:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
COMPETENCE AND CHARACTER IN THE ARMY

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ABSTRACT

COMPETENCE IS MY WATCHWORD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPETENCE AND CHARACTER IN THE ARMY, by Major Matthew D. Mercado, 62 pages.

This study explores the relationship between competence and character in Army organizational culture by identifying key underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts. Collectively, these levels of culture present three major observations about competence and character in Army culture. On the surface, these observations appear to demonstrate a bias of competence over character. Specifically, the Army actively evaluates competence and passively evaluates character. This approach, although practical, contributes greatly to the perceived competence bias. However, a more in-depth analysis shows that competence and character are vastly different concepts and direct comparison of the two is problematic. Significant academic debate about character and its evaluation further clouds the comparison. Regardless, the continual and active evaluation of character is critical for the Army to develop agile and adaptive leaders. Broadly, commissioning programs do a better job of actively evaluating character than IET. Further study of the character evaluation construct in these programs is recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACRONYMS

ADM   Admiral

AIT   Advanced Individual Training

APFT   Army Physical Fitness Test

BCT   Basic Combat Training

CGSC   Command and General Staff College

COL   Colonel

LRM   Leadership Requirements Model

LTC   Lieutenant Colonel

MMAS   Master of Military Art and Science

MOS   Military Occupational Specialty

NCO   Noncommissioned Officer

NCOES   Noncommissioned Officer Education System

NCOIC   Noncommissioned Officer in Charge

RAF   Regionally Aligned Forces

ROTC   Reserve Officers' Training Corps

SSG   Staff Sergeant

TRADOC   Training and Doctrine Command

US   United States

USMA   United States Military Academy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The purpose of this study is to identify and examine the Army's key underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts related to competence and character. Many examples exist of competent Amy leaders being relieved for character concerns, while the inverse occurs far less frequently. Additionally, senior Army leaders have voiced concerns that competence is allowed to override character within Army culture.

The following anecdote from a notional infantry company highlights the nature of the issue. The commander of Charlie Company, part of a Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) Basic Combat Training (BCT), receives a mission to deploy a squad to Africa for four weeks. This will be the first ever US Army deployment in this area and there is a great deal of pressure on the company to provide top-notch training. The tasking will require a single infantry squad, and the squad leader will be the senior member of the US Army in the country. The mission involves providing squad live fire training to local security forces and the squad will enjoy a great degree of autonomy.

The commander has two squad leaders from which to choose. Both are well liked, have similar deployment experience, similar time in grade and identical time in service. The first candidate, Staff Sergeant (SSG) Competence, is a graduate of Ranger school, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of the battalion's Expert Infantry Badge competition, and a perennial lock to score 300+ on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). Additionally, after winning back-to-back Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year awards, he has a reputation as the "go-to" NCO for any Soldier competing on a

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board. However, there is another side to SSG Competence. Although never arrested or in egregious violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, he has a reputation as a hard partier and for posting racially inappropriate comments on social media. His off-color remarks routinely create tension with his peers. Additionally, the commander has been fielding phone calls from an increasingly anxious Mrs. Competence in regards to allegations of marital infidelity. Again, while none of these issues has escalated to the point of no return, SSG Competence's behavior is clearly not nested with the Army Values.

SSG Character is a trusted member of the unit, who has spent most of his career on Strykers, eight-wheeled, armored fighting vehicles. His squad is routinely one of the best in the battalion and the brigade Command Sergeant Major recently selected him to facilitate a monthly professional development session on mentoring. Gifted with long arms and short legs, he trains twice a day to meet the battalion's 270 APFT goal for NCOs. SSG Character has a great reputation, and all accounts are that his judgement and integrity are beyond reproach. Off duty, he spends the majority of time with his twin boys and wife of eleven years.

Clearly, both of these leaders possess the baseline tactical and technical competence to accomplish this mission. It is less clear, however, if both leaders possess the requisite character to operate independently in Africa. So, whom does the company commander choose? Does he allow SSG Competence's edge in competence to override his potential character issues and choose him? Alternatively, does he follow the Army's espoused belief that trust, achieved by demonstrating sound character and living the Army Ethic, is the most important consideration?[1] The choice itself is less important,

however, than this question: Is the company commander "actively" making a decision based on the merits of this individual situation or is his decision simply the logical extension of a culture that values competence over character? In simpler terms, all things being equal, is Army culture set up with a bias towards competence?

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

Do observations drawn from an examination of the Army's underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts reflect a bias of competence over character?

Secondary Research Questions

What is the Army's underlying assumptions about competence and character?

What are the Army's espoused values and beliefs about competence and character?

What do Army artifacts reveal about competence and character?

Assumptions

In order to accept any findings as relevant this study assumes that Dr. Schein's model of organizational culture is applicable to the Army. This study assumes that an Army senior leader's publically espoused values are the espoused values of the organization they lead. That is, what Army senior leaders say and what the Army says are one and the same.

Additionally, due to this study's limited timeline and scope, it must assume that underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs, and artifacts uncovered in the study focus areas are largely representative of Army culture. Lastly, it is assumed that examining

levels of Army culture from the officer, enlisted, and NCO cohorts will result in a more accurate picture of Army culture.

Definition of Terms

This study will use a standard definition for several key terms. Whenever possible, the Army definition or Dr. Schein's definition of terms will be used. Army organizational doctrine draws heavily from Dr. Schein, so in many instances the terminology will be identical. The following are definitions of key Army terms[2]:

Army Ethic: The evolving set of laws, values, and beliefs, embedded within the Army culture of trust that motivates and guides the conduct of Army professionals bound together in common moral purpose.

Army Leader Phase: This phase begins when a Soldier arrives at his or her first unit. This phase ends when a Soldier leaves the service.

Army Profession: A unique vocation of experts certified in the ethical design, generation, support, and application of land power, serving under civilian authority and entrusted to defend the Constitution and the rights and interests of the American people.

Artifacts: Visible products of a group, such as architecture, language, technology, style, clothing, manners of address, myths, stories, published lists of values and observable rituals and ceremonies.

Character: Dedication and adherence to the Army Ethic, including Army Values, as consistently and faithfully demonstrated in decisions and actions.

Competence: Demonstrated ability to successfully perform duty with discipline and to standard.[3]

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Culture: A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Entry Training Phase: A Soldier enters this phase when they are contractually obligated to the Army and ends when they are awarded a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or officer basic branch qualification. This phase includes Basic Combat Training, Advanced Individual Training, Basic Officer Leadership Course, contracted ROTC cadets, and USMA cadets.

Espoused Beliefs or Values: Ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies, and rationalizations.[4]

Recruitment Phase: A Soldier enters this phase when identified as a future Soldier and ends when he or she becomes contractually obligated to the Army. This phase includes enlisted recruiting prospects, pre-contract ROTC students, and those seeking appointment to the United States Military Academy (USMA).[5]

The following are definitions of the examination phases for this study:

The following are Dr. Schein's key terms describing organizational culture:[6]

Underlying Assumptions: Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values.

Limitations

Several limitations exist with this study, the most significant of which is time. In a perfect world, there would time to crosswalk the underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs, and artifacts across the Army's subcultures. For instance, are the underlying assumptions about competence the same in the 82nd Airborne Division as they are at

William Beaumont Army Medical Center? Based on this limitation, this study focuses on examining Army culture on a broad level. To account for differences in subcultures, care should be taken in applying sweeping conclusions.

Second, it is beyond the limited time and resources of this study to definitively prove the existence of a competence bias regularly overriding character in Army culture. This study seeks simply to identify broad themes to show that favorable conditions do or do not exist, which could result in the conditions for bias. It is also possible that a bias is real, but its cause is not inherent in Schein's model of organizational culture. If applicable, this thesis will suggest alternative areas to search for bias.

Third, this study will not present any new interview or survey data. The relatively short research timeline for this project makes conducting original surveys or interviews impractical. The practical result of this is that the study will adhere to an analysis of what is already written on the subject. For example, in an analysis of Advanced Individual Training (AIT), the research will examine the applicable Army publications, regulations, checklists, etc. Informal methods of evaluating character outside of the Army's process will not be examined. However, if identified, an informal method may be presented in the form of a recommendation for further study. In short, anecdotal evidence derived from original interviews or surveys will not be captured.

Lastly, this author has listened to senior Army leaders express concern for competence overriding character within the Army on multiple occasions. The logical result of this dialogue is this author's belief that competence does in fact override character for unknown reasons. This thesis is an attempt to offer a potential explanation

for this phenomenon. This author will make every effort to account for potential confirmation bias.

Scope and Delimitations

As previously detailed, this study will focus on identifying the key underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs, and artifacts related to competence and character in three specific phases. These phases are the Recruitment Phase, Entry Training Phase, and Army Leader Phase. Focusing on specific levels of culture, by phase, allow inclusion of both officer and enlisted specific data. To the extent possible, the research focus will remain on identifying these specific levels by phase. However, situations will arise where information outside these phases will need to be introduced in order to provide context or increased understanding of key cultural levels.

Significance

Both Army and joint doctrine emphasize understanding the environment as a critical step in problem solving. Often, successful understanding is what separates mission accomplishment from failure. Therefore, regardless of findings, this study is intended to inspire professional discourse about Army culture, specifically, a professional discussion regarding the Army's underlying assumptions about competence and character, and how those assumptions relate to the decisions leaders make. Ultimately, this discourse will result in increased organizational culture awareness across the profession.

Summary

In short, this study will use a widely accepted organizational culture model to identify specific levels of Army culture. Once identified, these levels will be examined to determine if they combine in a manner that may unconsciously bias the decision making process. It is beyond the scope of this study to definitively determine the degree of bias. The desired outcome is to help facilitate a higher level of cultural awareness. This awareness will assist leaders to make deliberate decisions and not decisions that are simply reflective of underlying assumptions.

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[1] US Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 1, *The Army Profession* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 2015), 3-2.

[2] Ibid., Glossary-1.

[3] A note about competence in this thesis: "demonstrated ability to successfully perform duty . . . to standard" is contextual. For example, a basic training private's duty is to meet the requirements for continual progression through basic training. While nobody would argue that a basic training private is as competent as a seasoned platoon sergeant, the private still meets the Army definition of competence by successfully demonstrating his or her ability to accomplish their assigned duty to standard.

[4] For purposes of this thesis, the terms espoused beliefs and espoused values are interchangeable.

[5] For purposes of this study, a first or second year USMA cadet is considered contractually obligated to the Army.

[6] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 18-24.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to identify basic concepts, themes, and ideas about culture, competence, and character. Ultimately, these findings will be critical to determining if key levels of Army culture display an inherent bias towards competence or character. In order to organize the literature, this chapter is broken down into seven major areas. These areas are organizational culture, competence, and character in American culture, character in the Army, competence in the Army, the relationship between competence and character in the Army, and Army doctrine.

Organizational Culture

A great deal of organizational culture theory and research exists. So much, in fact, that it can be difficult to find a starting point. The short duration of this study dictates that a starting point for examining organizational culture must be rapidly identified. Due to this, Dr. Edgar Schein's model of organizational culture, taught by the US Army Command and General Staff College, has been selected.

Dr. Schein's research spans six decades, and he has produced fourteen major books and innumerable scholarly articles. His corporate consultation resume reads like a virtual who's who of major organizations. Apple, British Petroleum, Con Edison, Exxon, and others are among his clients.[1] Dr. Schein's book *Organizational Culture and Leadership* will provide the framework to analyze Army culture.

Dr. Schein's major concept is that organizational culture consists of three levels. These levels are basic assumptions, espoused values/beliefs, and artifacts. Schein proposes that these three levels, organized by their degree of visibility to an outside observer, combine to reveal culture.[2] Although definitions of each level are included in chapter 2, they will each be discussed conceptually at this time.

Artifacts make up the most outwardly visible level of culture, and are essentially the physical manifestation of the deeper levels.[3] These can be anything physical, to include language, creeds, myths, and stories. Schein offers one important caveat about artifacts. While they are indeed the most visible aspects of culture, they are also the most difficult to interpret. To illustrate the point, Schein uses the example of Mayan and Egyptian pyramids. While the pyramids themselves are easy to see, it is difficult to interpret their meaning within the two cultures by simply looking at them.[4]

Espoused beliefs reside one level below and are less visible than artifacts. Espoused beliefs can range from normative behavior guides and aspirational ideologies, to commonly accepted solutions to resolving problems.[5] For example, an organization that espouses the mantra "mission first, people always" has created a norm to guide its members in situations involving missions or its personnel.[6]

Basic Assumptions are the deepest level of culture. At their core, they are solutions to problems that have become so deeply grained that members of a culture cannot conceive of solving the problem in a different way.[7] To illustrate this level of culture, Schein draws from the engineering community. An engineer's basic assumption is that a structure should be designed safely. This basic assumption is so deeply ingrained that engineers could not conceive of purposefully designing an unsafe structure.[8] In this

instance, the original problem to engineers was something along the lines of "how do we design buildings so that they don't collapse?" The solution, of course, involved incorporating aspects of safety into building design, and the basic assumption was born.

Basic assumptions tend to be "non-debatable."[9] In the engineering example, the safe design assumption will remain unchallenged until something radical shows that it is no longer the best way to keep the building from falling down.[10]

There are two critically important notes about basic assumptions and espoused beliefs. First, basic assumptions do not necessarily remain valid. Recall that a basic assumption emerged as an original solution to problem.[11] As circumstances change, the original solution may no longer be valid. For example, travelers in the late 1800s faced the problem of how to cross a rapidly expanding United States. The railroad quickly emerged as the safest and fastest way to solve that problem. New Yorkers no longer had to debate between a dangerous wagon crossing and a lengthy ocean voyage. They just took rail travel for granted. Now, fast-forward one hundred-years. Imagine if New Yorkers still relied on the basic assumption that trains were the safest and fastest mode of cross-country travel. Taking a five-day trip instead of a five-hour flight seems silly, does it not? Unfortunately, not all examples of invalid basic assumptions are as clear as this example.

The second caveat is that there can be friction between basic assumptions and espoused beliefs within an organization. This disconnect between what is said and what is done can place great stress on an organization.[12] For example, if the Oakland Raiders say the cornerstone of their offense is running the football, yet throw the ball 73 percent of

the time, then there is a disconnect. This disconnect can produce frustrated personnel within the organization.

An additional piece of literature related to organizational culture emerged late in the research process and warrants inclusion in this literature review. The book is titled *Career Imprints: Creating Leaders Across an Industry*, by Dr. Monica Higgins. The book contains a forward by Dr. Schein, which affords Dr. Higgins instant credibility discussing organizational culture.

Dr. Higgins' major idea is that an individual's early organizational culture experience imprints them with a unique set of skills and attributes. Once imprinted, employees take this set of capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition with them for the remainder of their professional lives.[13] In particular, organizations with strong cultures, who develop collective identities and provide initial opportunities greatly exceeding an employee's previous experiences, create an environment conducive to imprinting.[14] Based on this criterion, the Army is uniquely positioned to benefit from or suffer the effects of career imprinting.

<u>Competence and Character in American Culture</u>

American culture is filled with stories of individuals achieving tremendous success in spite of poor character. To validate this observation, one can simply pick up a newspaper to see the most recent installment of a professional sports team overlooking abysmal character to sign a prized free agent. If that is not enough, a Google search for "bad business ethics" will return nearly 39 million results, while "Hollywood actor arrested" draws another 67 million. By comparison, a search for "golden retriever puppies" yields a mere 7 million.

So, why does the relationship between competence and character in American culture matter? The Army, at its core, is an American organization that reflects the values and principles of the United States.[15] This connection between Army culture and American culture was the genesis for examining what, if any, lessons may be drawn from looking at competence and character in this broader context.

With the stage set, it is time to discuss a book by Stephen McNamee and Robert Miller titled *The Meritocracy Myth*. In the broad sense, McNamee and Miller seek to reconcile what American culture says about success with what sociology actually shows. For example, while Americans tend to inherently believe that their individual characteristics will determine their financial status, in reality many more factors are at play.[16] While this idea is clearly intriguing, it is not directly applicable to this thesis. It is simply provided as a context for one of McNamee and Miller's secondary ideas that *does* apply.

In chapter 2, *The Meritocracy Myth* identifies several personal characteristics that are identified with American success. These factors are talent, hard work, attitude, and following rules.[17] The authors cross-reference these factors to determine their impact on where individuals end up in the socio-economic hierarchy. The results they present are staggering. Each of the factors has at least some correlation to success, *except* playing by the rules; in fact, rule-following may actually *hinder* success.[18] In other words, the factors directly related to competence (talent and hard work) overrode the factor directly related to character (following rules) in American culture. While this finding is eye opening, it is likely not surprising to anyone who closely follows events in the business, sports, or entertainment industries.

Character in the Army

A significant body of literature exists on the role of character in the Army. Before detailing specific examples, there are two interesting observations worth highlighting. First, nearly all literature on character is written institutionally, or by officers in the rank of Major or higher. Almost no literature on character comes from the enlisted or NCO cohort. Second, nearly all literature on character in the Army seeks to establish an exigence for increased focus on character. The most frequently cited reason is adoption of Mission Command with its central tenant of trust.

In addition to Army doctrine, there are three works central to understanding character in the Army. The first is a 2013 Army War College manuscript by Colonel (COL) Brian M. Michelson entitled *Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: A Laissez Faire Approach.* Prior to discussing the manuscript, it is important to point out that COL Michelson's project advisor was Dr. Don Snider. Dr. Snider is a Senior Fellow in the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic and a leader in the field of military ethics and character.[19] Dr. Snider's name lends tremendous credibility to this manuscript.

COL Michelson's primary idea is that the Army's approach to developing character in its leaders is not effective to meet the demands of Mission Command in an increasingly complex world.[20] Additionally, he identifies three major assumptions that Army doctrine makes about character development. To paraphrase, the three assumptions are as follows:[21]

1. Soldiers inherently know right from wrong and desire to live ethical lives.

2. Habitual ethical activity leads to good character.

3. As a Soldier progresses in rank, he will develop better character.

COL Michelson uses a variety of qualitative and quantitative analysis to show that these assumptions are questionable at best, and further analysis is clearly required.[22]

Lastly, he directly addresses the primary research question of this thesis when he offers an observation about senior leader character shortfalls. The observation is so revealing that it will be quoted directly:

> The number of senior leaders felled annually by unethical conduct requires us to at least consider whether the cause in each case was either a brief lapse in judgement, a change in the nature of an individual's character for the worse, or whether the leader's true character may have been hidden at lower ranks through pragmatic rule following at the expense of true character development . . . the individual was able to provide the appearance, or "presence" in terms of Army leadership doctrine, of character until such time as they were promoted to a higher level of responsibility than their character could handle.[23]

The second document requiring mention is a paper from the Admiral (ADM) James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership titled *The Four Stages of Moral Development in Military Leaders.* The author is Dr. Joseph J. Thomas, Distinguished Military Professor of Leadership at the United States Naval Academy. Dr. Thomas' primary idea is formal military education and training does not adequately develop moral leadership. In large part, this failure occurs because the military does not fully understand the four stages of moral development: compliance, moral understanding, moral maturity, and moral ambition.[24]

After presenting the above thesis, Dr. Thomas makes the case for fully progressing through the four stages. To illustrate the case, Thomas shares short anecdotes from the lives of George Washington, Robert E. Lee, and George Marshall. These brief stories assert that a fundamental reason these men had such a profound effect was due to their progression through all four stages, thus solidifying his case for the need to align military education with the stages.[25]

Two additional points from Dr. Thomas' description of the compliance stage are worth mentioning. First, any moral system accepting a new individual makes the basic assumption that behavior will need to be modified.[26] Initial military training falls into this category. Second, he asserts that some individuals are able to avoid compliance with the new moral system and still manage to succeed within the organization.[27] This is an important assertion because it directly supports COL Michelson's observation that individuals may successfully mask their true character as they progress through the Army.

The third piece of literature is a 2014 article from *Military Review*, entitled *Developing Trustworthy Commissioned Officers: Transcending the Honor Codes and Concepts.* The article's big idea is that the honor codes adopted by commissioning sources, specifically the United States Military Academy (USMA), are inappropriately narrow.[28]

The assertion of honor codes as too narrow rests on two concepts. First, the honor codes do not correlate to the service values. For example, a USMA cadet can violate the Army Values in many ways that do not involve lying, cheating, or stealing.[29] In other words, there is a disconnect between what the Army says it wants in a future officer (Army Values) and the honor code it values in its service academy (do not lie, cheat, steal). Second, being trustworthy is about much more than what the USMA honor code calls for. Demonstrating character, a key component of trust, is multi-dimensional and requires a less narrow approach.[30]

Lastly, this article makes a powerful observation that will figure prominently in this thesis. In describing a basic assumption about the USMA honor code, the authors

state that many individuals "may be comfortable with the view that avoiding an honor violation is prima facie evidence that one has been honorable."[31] This reasoning is a type of fallacy known as "affirming the consequent."[32] Applied to the assumption, the fallacy works like this: people who have good character do not display poor character. Cadet Smith did not display poor character; therefore, Cadet Smith has good character. Herein lies the fallacy. The absence of an indicator of poor character is not evidence of good character. It is simply the lack of an indicator of poor character. Demonstrating good character is something entirely different. As the other foundational literature above has shown, it is entirely possibly to mask poor character.

One additional piece of literature, the *Study on Military Professionalism*, must be mentioned when discussing the role of character within the Army. In direct response to the *Peers Report on the My Lai Massacre* in March 1970, Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland called for a comprehensive study on military professionalism. The study, conducted by the Army War College, was intended to examine the professional climate of the Army in order to identify major problems and provide recommendations.[33] Specifically, the study was charged to assess the professional climate, determine the cause of existing discrepancies in the climate, and develop solutions.[34]

This study represents a significant effort by the Army to identify perceptions about ethics, morality, competence, and professionalism in the post-My Lai Officer Corps.[35] In all, four hundred and fifteen officers provided written data, and two hundred and fifty of those participated in seminar discussions. These four hundred and fifteen officers were high-performing officers from a variety of basic branches.[36] Four major

observations from an examination of this study necessitate mention in this literature review.

First, the Officer Corps in 1970 reported a significant disconnect between the espoused values of the Army and what the professional climate actually values. In the study, the Officer Corps agrees that the expression "Duty-Honor-Country" is the broad description of the Army's espoused values for the Officer Corps.[37] Somewhat vague and aspirational, these values are commonly accepted across all grades as an ideal value set.

After identifying the ideal value set, the *Study on Military Professionalism* presents the findings of a 1969 study that detailed the actual values driving collective officer behavior. As a whole, these values are less positive and inspirational than the ideal value set.[38] These values, identified through a study of thirty-four general officers, eighty-two lieutenant colonels, seventy-three captains, and forty-six ROTC cadets, paint a climate that emphasizes measurable and pragmatic values over moral and ethical values.[39] The actual values driving the Officer Corps are:

1. High Productivity

2. Organizational Efficiency

3. Ability

4. Ambition

5. Achievement

6. My Boss

7. Success[40]

The difference between these two sets of values is striking. Clearly, it is difficult to find a solid connection between the ideal values of Duty-Honor-Country and list of

actual values. Even more striking, however, is the following observation from the study describing an officer's professional dilemma: "There is a conflict between what he has been taught to believe is important and what he sees to be important in his accepted environment."[41] Lastly, it is worth noting that the study also showed that the greater the officer's rank, the less the officer perceived a difference between the Army's ideal and actual values.[42]

The second major observation from the *Study on Military Professionalism* is that the Officer Corps in 1970 perceived an overemphasis on measurements in a zero defect culture. This observation becomes most clear when examining the representative remarks presented from the four hundred and fifteen officer questionnaires. Repeatedly, the sixteen sets of remarks presented in the study findings identify an officer's struggle with statistical measurement and zero defects. In fact, the themes of zero defects and/or overemphasis of measurable statistics represent the substantive comments ten of the sixteen officers whose remarks are presented in the study.[43]

The third thing from the *Study on Military Professionalism* that bears mentioning is a brief rundown of the study's overall conclusions. In total, the study makes fifteen conclusions about military professionalism in 1970. Five of these conclusions are so significant that they are worth noting:[44]

> Conclusion 2: There are widespread and often significant differences between the idea ethical/moral/professional standards of the Army—as epitomized by Duty-Honor-Country—and the prevailing standards.

> Conclusion 6: There was no significant evidence that contemporary sociological pressures—which are ever present—were primary causes of the differences between the ideal and the actual professional climate in the Army; the problems for the most part are internally generated.

Conclusion 8: The Army rewards system focuses on the accomplishment of short-term, measurable, and often trivial tasks, and neglects the development of those ethical standards, which are essential to a healthy profession.

Conclusion 12: The present climate is not conducive to retaining junior officers who place strong emphasis on principle rather than expediency.

Conclusion 13: Variance between ideal and actual standards are condoned, if not engendered, by certain Army policies regarding officer evaluation, selection for promotion, career concepts and assignment policies, and information reporting systems.

In short, a significant disconnect exists between what the Army says it values, and what it actually values. This disconnect, deeply rooted in a climate focused on measurable factors, is actively advanced by official Army policies in spite of espoused organizational values to the contrary.

Lastly, the *Study on Military Professionalism's* recommendations warrants a brief discussion and analysis. The study presented its recommendations in three forms. These were recommendations for immediate implementation, trial implementation, and further study.[45] In broad terms, the recommendations sought to soften the Army's reliance on statistical competition and develop a more well-rounded picture of an officer's character. The following paragraphs highlight some of these recommendations.

The recommendations for immediate implementation seek to implement a series of relatively uncontroversial solutions. These recommendations include the addition of ethics instruction to service schools, increased action against unethical behavior, and the creation of an Officer's Creed.[46] While the Officer's Creed did not take hold, it is clear from today's service school curriculum that the institutional Army took these immediate recommendations seriously.

The *Study on Military Professionalism's* recommendations for trial

implementation took on the general theme of soliciting feedback on officer promotions

from outside the normal rating chain. The first recommendation, soliciting peer

evaluations to supplement officer efficiency reports, seeks to create a more holistic

picture of the rated officer.[47] In theory, this would provide selection boards with insights

into a rated officer's moral and ethical framework, which might not be readily available

to supervisors. This recommendation is noteworthy, because it represents one of the

earliest attempts to incorporate peer feedback into the officer promotion process.

A second recommendation for trial implementation took peer evaluations a step

further, calling for subordinate feedback. Under this recommendation, the list of colonels

competing for promotion to Brigadier General would be submitted to the United States

Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and United States Army War

College (USAWC). The officers attending those institutions would be able to

anonymously make a selection on a sliding scale for each colonel. The responses on the

scale ranged from "I know this colonel and he would make a superb general officer" to "I

know this colonel and he should never be promoted to general officer."[48] The results of

these surveys would then be compiled and provided to the brigadier general selection

board.

Both of these recommendations, soliciting peer and subordinate feedback,

represented an effort on the part of the study to better identify an officer's entire personal

make-up. It is far easier to manipulate individual reporting data than it is to manipulate

the peers and subordinates who have known the rated officer for years. Ultimately, the

challenges associated with exactly how to incorporate peer and subordinate feedback

would prove too great, so neither of these recommendations were implemented on a wide scale.

Lastly, the *Study on Military Professionalism* laid out a series of recommendations for further study. These recommendations focused on changes to the organizational climate and on the long-term development of officers. Specific recommendations include transitioning from statistical competition to pass/fail, increased rigor at service schools, additional focus on developing branch expertise, and a wholesale examination of the basic assumptions of the officer evaluation system.[49]

All in all, the *Study on Military Professionalism* is important because it contains a vast amount of data concerning challenges facing the Army while it conducted major combat operations. Many of these challenges, such as how to gain greater fidelity on an officer's character, are both still valid today and directly applicable to this study.

<u>Competence in the Army</u>

The vast majority of literature written about competence in the Army deals specifically with the core competencies identified in the Leadership Requirements Model (LRM). Nearly nothing is written about the role of competence, as defined in this thesis, within Army culture. Interestingly, the piece of literature most directly related to this thesis seeks to determine if the Army places *enough* emphasis on competence.

The aforementioned document, *Competence as a Professional Imperative: Does the Army Promote Competence in its Officers?*, is a 2013 Master of Military Art and Science thesis by MAJ Melanie S. Kirchhoff. MAJ Kirchhoff, who also boasts Dr. Don Snider as a committee member, examines whether Army culture promotes competence.

Her findings, drawn from a thorough doctrine review and original survey data, indicate an emphasis on competence within Army culture.[50]

<center>Relationship between Competence and Character in the Army</center>

Next, this thesis wants to explore the body of knowledge about the relationship between competence and character in the Army. A sizeable amount of literature exists on this topic, and it is in almost total agreement that the relationship is one of balance. A 2009 *Military Review* article, titled *Competency vs. Character? It Must Be Both!,* captures the essence of this body of literature. In the article, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Joe Doty makes three important assertions.

First, the amount of emphasis on competence and character is out of proportion. He supports this claim by offering data from a recent Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) study showing that 90 percent of the ROTC curriculum focuses on developing competency, and less than 10 percent focuses on developing character.[51] Additionally, 95 percent of Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) coursework directly develops competence, while only 5 percent focuses on character and leadership.[52] Lastly, he challenges the reader to recall the last time that an ethics instructor had to redo a class, which is a common occurrence when working to achieve a level of tactical competence.[53]

Second, the Army's approach to developing character is fundamentally flawed. LTC Doty asserts that the Army's PowerPoint-based approach to character development amounts to a check the block-training event.[54] Not only does this approach fail to account for the nuances of character development, it may actually be counterproductive.[55]

<center>23</center>

Third, LTC Doty presents themes from interviews with twelve former brigade commanders in Iraq or Afghanistan. Three themes emerged from these interviews:[56]

1. The Army does a poor job of developing character.[57]

2. Competence and character are of equal importance for the Army.

3. If offered a do-over, the officers would devote more time to character development.

These observations clearly lend themselves to LTC Doty's overarching theme that the Army's current approach to character requires additional study.

Army Doctrine

One major piece of Army doctrine contributes directly to an analysis of the relationship between competence and character within the organizational culture of the Army and must be highlighted. This foundational text is *ADRP 6-22, Army Leadership*. This publication is critical because it represents the Army's foundational viewpoints on competence and character.

ADRP 6-22 broadly describes the ideal Army leader attributes and introduces several important concepts, which warrant a brief description. First, ADRP 6-22 introduces the Army Leadership Requirements Model, known colloquially as the "LRM." Early in ADRP 6-22, the Army clearly identifies values-based leadership, impeccable character, and professional competence as the cornerstones of Army leadership at all levels.[58]

Conceptually, the LRM is an attempt to depict the core attributes and competencies required to meet the three cornerstones of Army leadership. A graphic representation of the core attributes and competencies allows the Army to show the

interrelated nature of all components in the model.[59] As shown in figure 1, the LRM identifies the three core attributes as character, presence, and intellect; these attributes broadly describe the ideal Army leader.
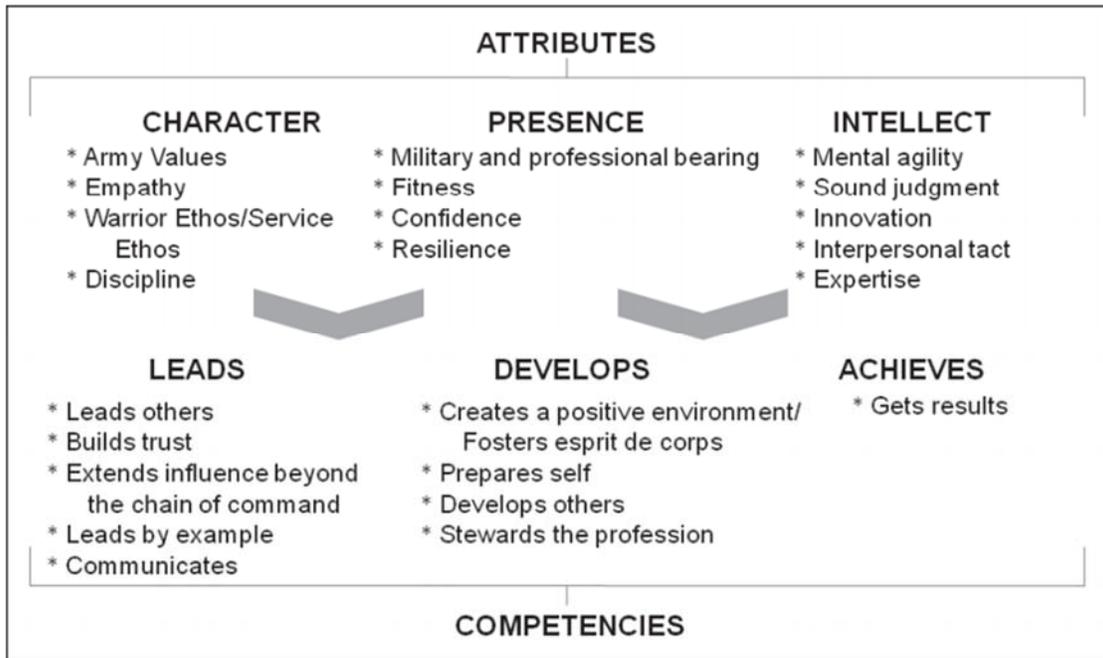
Figure 1.   Leadership Requirements Model

Source: US Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012, 1-5.

According to ADRP 6-22, character represents the basic values and make-up of a leader. Presence describes how a leader is perceived by others, and intellect pertains to the mental and social skills applied during the act of leading. These three core attributes are what enables a leader to develop and master the core competencies.[60]

The LRM competencies are presented as a clear set of expectations for what a successful Army leader "does." The LRM competencies can be developed and Army

leaders begin mastering them as direct level leaders. As leaders progress in rank, these competencies provide the foundation for leading through change, smoothing the transition from direct to organizational and strategic leadership. Through reflection and self-development, leaders continue to refine and extend their influence across the competencies.[61] This process of continual leader development is central to the idea of the core competencies.

The second important theme in ADRP 6-22 is an in-depth discussion on the foundations of Army leader character. ADRP 6-22 identifies four elements that are central to an Army leader's character. These four elements are the Army Values, Empathy, the Warrior Ethos, and Discipline.[62] Additionally, ADRP 6-22 acknowledges that people enter the Army with a values system shaped by their upbringing and previous experiences.[63] Any fundamental differences between these two frameworks, pre-Army character and ideal Army character, must be reconciled to fully inculcate an individual to Army culture. Identifying and instilling a clearly defined set of values is critical to creating shared understanding and a common framework for ethical decision-making.[64]

Unfortunately, the Army cannot simply have Soldiers make a checklist of their character, and then cross-reference it with the four major elements outlined in ADRP 6-22.[65] Instead, doctrine says that developing good character is a life-long endeavor where individuals are largely responsible for their own development. To assist, Army leaders are charged with creating an environment conducive to experience, reflection, and feedback.[66] In this environment, Soldiers are expected to close the gap between their character and the four core elements found in figure 2.

Table 1.   Summary of the Four Core Elements of Army Character

Factors internal and central to a leader that constitute an individual's core.	
Army Values	• Values are principles, standards, or qualities considered essential for successful leaders. • Values are fundamental to help people discern right from wrong in any situation. • The Army has seven values to develop in all Army individuals: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.
Empathy	• The propensity to experience something from another person's point of view. • The ability to identify with and enter into another person's feelings and emotions. • The desire to care for and take care of Soldiers and others.
Warrior Ethos/ Service Ethos	• The internal shared attitudes and beliefs that embody the spirit of the Army profession for Soldiers and Army Civilians alike.
Discipline	• Control of one's own behavior according to Army Values; mindset to obey and enforce good orderly practices in administrative, organizational, training, and operational duties.

Source: US Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012, 3-5.

In summary, ADRP 6-22 does an excellent job in presenting the broad fundamental ideals that are central to Army leadership. It also describes in detail, the four central components of Army character. In doing so, doctrine acknowledges the potential disconnect between the character a person brings to the Army and the character the Army requires. However, ADRP 6-22 largely ignores exactly how this difference will be reconciled, other than to delineate basic responsibilities (individual responsibility in a conducive, leader-created environment).

Conclusion

A significant body of literature exists in six of the seven primary research areas. However, to this researcher's knowledge, no literature directly addresses the primary research question of this thesis. For this reason alone, this project is worthwhile. At a minimum, this thesis will add to the body of knowledge and identify areas for future study.

While simply contributing to the body of knowledge is valuable, a more important reason for this study exists. Previous researchers, particularly COL Michelson, seem to be gravitating toward a broad theme. This theme has two significant points. First, several of the Army's basic assumptions about character are seriously in question. Second, not only is it possible to survive in the Army by displaying competence and masking character, but it may actually be a recipe for promotion. Clearly, respected researchers independently suggesting similar themes is exigence for further study.

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[1] Schein, xvi.

[2] Ibid., 23.

[3] Ibid., 23-24.

[4] Ibid., 25.

[5] Ibid., 27.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 28.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 26.

[12] Ibid., 27.

[13] Monica C. Higgins, *Career Imprints: Creating Leaders Across an Industry* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 8-10.

[14] Ibid., 58-68.

[15] ADRP 1, 2-2.

[16] Stephen J. McNamee and Robert K. Miller, Jr., *The Meritocracy Myth* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 16.

[17] Ibid., 16.

[18] Ibid., 45.

[19] Strategic Studies Institute, "Dr. Don Snider," US Army War College, accessed 7 November 2015, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=53.

[20] Brian M. Michelson, *Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: A Laissez Faire Approach* (n.p.: Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2013), 19.

[21] Ibid., 6-7.

[22] Ibid., 20.

[23] Ibid., 16.

[24] Joseph J. Thomas, *The Four Stages of Moral Development in Military Leaders*, (n.p.: US Naval Academy, n.d.), 1-3.

[25] Ibid., 10.

[26] Ibid., 3.

[27] Ibid., 4.

[28] David B. Cushen, Joseph Doty, and Patrick A. Toffler, "Developing Trustworthy Commissioned Officers: Transcending the Honor Codes and Concepts." *Military Review* 92 (March-April 2014): 17.

[29] Ibid., 17.

[30] Ibid., 19.

[31] Ibid., 17.

[32] Fallacy Files, "Affirming the Consequent," accessed 7 November 2015, http://www.fallacyfiles.org/afthecon.html.

[33] William M. Donnelly, *Study on Military Professionalism*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 30 June 1970), 1.

[34] Donnelly, *Study on Military Professionalism*, B-1.

[35] Ibid., i.

[36] Ibid., 8.

[37] Ibid., B-3.

[38] Ibid., B-6.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., B-7.

[42] Ibid., B-9.

[43] Ibid., 14-17.

[44] Ibid., 30-31.

[45] Ibid., 38.

[46] Ibid., 38-45.

[47] Ibid., 43.

[48] Ibid., 44-45.

[49] Ibid., 38-15.

[50] Melanie S. Kirchhoff, "Competence as a Professional Imperative: Does the Army Promote Competence in its Officers?" (MMAS thesis, USA CGSC, 2013), iv.

[51] Joseph Doty, "Competency vs. Character? It Must Be Both!," *Military Review* 89 (November-December 2009): 70.

[52] Cushen, Doty, and Toffler, 70.

[53] Ibid., 70.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 70-71.

[56] Ibid., 71.

[57] In the original article, this theme is separated into two themes. First, that the Army does a poor job developing character, and second, that classroom training is particularly ineffective. Since the Army develops and implements the classroom training, these are combined into a single theme.

[58] US Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012, 1-4.

[59] Ibid., 1-5.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 1-6.

[62] Ibid., 3-1.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 3-5.

[66] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The broad purpose of this research is to identify basic concepts, themes, and ideas about culture, competence, and character. Ultimately, these findings will be critical to determining if key levels of Army culture display an inherent bias towards competence or character. In order to describe the research methodology, this chapter is broken down into three sections. These sections are a description of the methodology for addressing research questions, the feasibility of the methodology, and the selection of research material.

Research Methodology

There are two components to addressing the primary and secondary research questions. These components are the research framework and the research process. First, this section will begin with a description of the two sub-components of the basic research framework.

The first sub-component of the research framework is Edgar Schein's model of organizational culture. The Schein model provides a proven and respected framework for analyzing organizational culture. However, because the Army is such a large organization, it is impractical for this thesis to apply the Schein model to all of Army culture. A second sub-component must be applied to limit the scope of study to the primary and secondary research questions.

The second subcomponent of the research framework is the phasing construct defined in chapter 1. These phases are the Recruitment Phase, Entry Training Phase, and Army Leader Phase. It is important to note that these phases are created to provide a logical focus point for applying Schein's model to this project. Using the Schein model, by phase, is a way to organize vast amounts of data into something that can be examined within a single research framework.

Now that the research framework has been identified, it is time to present the second component for addressing the research questions. This second component is the research process. The research process consists of four steps, aligned with the levels of organizational culture identified in the Schein model. The five steps are to examine the original problem, identify basic assumptions, determine espoused values/beliefs, examine relevant artifacts, and identify general observations.

The first step in the research process is to examine the original problem. Recall from chapter 2 that Dr. Schein's three levels of culture, organized by their degree of visibility to an outside observer, combine to paint an accurate picture of organizational culture.[1] Also, recall that the deepest level of culture and basic assumptions are solutions to an original problem faced by the organization. Because of the contiguous relationship between original problem and underlying assumption, an exploratory analysis of basic assumptions must begin with an examination of the original problem. Therefore, the first step in the research process will be to examine the Army's original problem as it relates to competence and character in each phase of the research framework.

The second step of the research process is to identify underlying basic assumptions. The basic assumption should be a solution to the original problem examined

in step one.[2] Once identified, these basic assumptions about competence and character will begin to paint a picture of Army culture within each of the three phases in the research framework.

The third step is to determine espoused values and beliefs. This step involves determining what the Army says about competence and character in each of the three phases. This step will rely heavily on published Army references in each of the three phases.

The fourth step is examining relevant artifacts. Although these artifacts are the most visible level of culture, they are the most difficult to interpret. Based on this limitation, it is critical that the first three steps have been conducted prior to examining artifacts in step four.

The fifth step is to draw general observations. Rather than simply listing the all of the data identified in the first four steps, the data will be examined holistically to identify observations about the relationship of competence and character across all three phases in the research framework.

The two major components of the methodology, the research framework and research process, provide a logical way to organize and conduct the research. Additionally, identifying the research framework in advance will inject a greater degree of objectivity into analyzing the data. Now that the research methodology has been described, this chapter will present a short discussion on the feasibility of the methodology.

Research Feasibility

Two concerns must be addressed to validate the feasibility of this methodology. These concerns are the identification of an original problem, and the availability of material. Both of these concerns are critical to the methodology and warrant brief discussion.

Identifying an original problem is the biggest challenge in the methodology. This is because achieving an understanding of the inter-relationships between Dr. Schein's levels of organizational culture is critical to producing an accurate description of culture. A short example highlights the importance of this inter-relationship. You meet a young man in a Kansas City Royals shirt on the street. Naturally, you can take the artifact (Royals shirt) at face value, assume he is a lifelong baseball fan, and end your analysis there. But just how important are the Royals to him? How do they affect the decisions he makes? Does he just like the color blue? Converting this general assumption about him into an accurate description requires a bit more digging. In this narrow example, his original problem could be which baseball team to root for, or simply which blue shirt to purchase. In this instance, examining all levels of culture is both prudent and necessary to make the most accurate interpretation of the artifact. However, because the example has a limited scope, it is relatively simple to identify the original problem. Like the example, limiting the scope of this project to the framework described earlier in this chapter will make identifying an original problem feasible.

The second major concern with this project's feasibility is the availability of data. Paradoxically, there appears to be both too much and too little data to analyze Army culture. Entire libraries full of espoused beliefs exist in the form of Army doctrine,

regulations, and studies. At the same time, no definitive database of Army organizational culture exists to easily analyze competence and character. Again, the limited framework of this project provides the solution to feasibility.

Selection of Research Material

As discussed in chapter 1, the analysis of espoused beliefs and values will only use Army doctrine, regulations, public statements, and publications. This body of data, readily available on a variety of databases, provides enough material to analyze espoused beliefs and values by phase. Lastly, this thesis will also examine numerous digital artifacts available to public, such as the Army's recruiting homepage and the United States Military Academy homepage.

Conclusion

The research methodology, feasibility, and selection of material are appropriate for the relatively short duration of this study. The methodology, as described in this chapter, will be able to identify basic concepts, themes, and ideas about competence, and character in Army organizational culture. Once identified, the data can be examined holistically to determine major observations about the relationship between competence and character across the research framework. The study's framework and process are broad enough to allow for sound research, but scoped enough to allow for project completion.

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[1] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 23.

[2] Since the three phases in the research framework are an original creation, it is possible that research will show an original problem, which is enduring across multiple phases.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to examine key aspects of Army organizational

culture to determine if an inherent bias exists in favor of competence over character. This

chapter will present research findings by addressing the primary and secondary research

questions.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question of this thesis is, do observations drawn from an

examination of the Army's underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts reflect

a bias of competence over character? To address this question, this section will present

three observations drawn from an examination of Army organizational culture.

Collectively, these observations present a picture of the relationship between competence

and character in the Army.

Observation 1: The Army is Serious in its Quest
for High Character

The Army has devoted a significant amount of time and energy to espouse the

belief that character is a cornerstone of Army leadership.[1] While this attention to

character is not entirely new, the frequency and volume has clearly increased.[2] For

example, in the summer of 2015, the Army published its first ever Leader Development

Field Manual (FM), a significant portion of which is directly related to character. This is

noteworthy because the Army chose to add an entirely new 188-page FM at the same time it was actively working to reduce the total number of FMs from over 550 to 50.[3]

The thirty-ninth Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Mark Milley, espoused a commitment to character in his initial message to the Army.[4] The first paragraph of that message has been featured prominently in the high-demand center of the Army Leaders' Front Page since it was released.[5] In the message, the CSA mentions "character" in the sentence prior to mentioning "commitment." Naturally, it is possible that placing "character" before "competence" is just chance. However, given the significant staffing process for an *Initial Message to the Army*, it is a stretch to believe any of the espoused beliefs contained in it are not deliberate.

While new doctrine, revised evaluation reports, senior leader statements, etc., are all indicative of an espoused commitment to character, nothing is more illustrative of this commitment than the amount of effort devoted to the Army's 2011 Profession of Arms Campaign.[6] In 2010, the Secretary of the Army and CSA directed TRADOC to lead a review of the Army Profession. This review focused on three central questions with the goal to "take a hard look at ourselves to ensure we understand what we have been through over the past nine years, how we have changed, and how we must adapt."[7] The result of this review was the yearlong Profession of Arms Campaign, which addressed the following questions:[8]

> 1. What does it mean for the Army to be a Profession of Arms?
>
> 2. What does it mean to be a professional Soldier?
>
> 3. After nine years of war, how are we as individual professionals and as a profession meeting these aspirations?

In 2011, the entire Army experienced at least some part of the Profession of Arms Campaign. Generally, this participation took the form of two-way dialogue with senior leaders about the three questions. These group sessions required significant investments of senior leader's most valuable commodity, time. In simple terms, while fighting two wars, facing fiscal uncertainty, and uncountable competing requirements, the Army chose to devote its most finite resource to a 12-month reflection period. This decision is significant to these research findings for two reasons.

First, the Profession of Arms Campaign was essentially a yearlong character stand-down. The campaign centered on the Army Ethic, Warrior Ethos, and Army Values.[9] Now, recall that ADRP 6-22 espouses ideal Army character as possessing empathy, demonstrating the Warrior Ethos, and living the Army Values. Additionally, it states, "living the Army Values and the Warrior Ethos best displays character."[10] Therefore, at its core, the Profession of Arms Campaign was a campaign about character. Clearly, the resources devoted to this campaign are concrete evidence of the value the Army places on character.

Second, the Profession of Arms Campaign identified the Army Ethic as the "heart" of Army Culture.[11] When prompted, the most lethal and technologically advanced army in history, while simultaneously fighting two wars, identifies its ethic as its center of gravity; not tanks, attack helicopters, physical fitness, fighting prowess, or weapons proficiency, but the Army Ethic. Again, this is undisputable evidence that the Army espouses the importance of character.

Observation 2: Competence is Actively Evaluated
and Character Is Passively Evaluated

When examining all three phases of this study, a consistent theme emerges. Soldiers are repeatedly required to actively demonstrate competence. This active evaluation occurs through aptitude testing, physical fitness testing, professional military education, and many other venues too numerous to list. However, there is no similar requirement to actively demonstrate character. In fact, the requirement is actually the opposite. In most instances, a Soldier needs only to not demonstrate poor character. In other words, the burden of proof lies on the Soldier to regularly and actively prove they belong in the organization. However, the same Soldier faces no such requirement to actively prove their character is in line with ADRP 6-22.

The implications of this are massive. As suggested by COL Michelson in his manuscript, it appears highly probable that a Soldier with poor character may continue to progress in rank by not displaying poor character.[12] Even more distressing, it is also possible that a Soldier will continue to progress in rank, or at least gain entry into the profession, without actively displaying any character.

While this observation is common across cohorts, the best example can be seen when examining the five phases of Initial Entry Training (IET).[13] The espoused end state of IET is to "provide the Army with Soldiers of Character who are competent and committed to serving our Nation honorably."[14] This, along with the framework of the phases and criteria for progression in TRADOC 350-6, paints a clear vision for IET. As detailed in Observation 1, it is clear that the Army is genuinely seeking to develop individuals of character who are competent and committed. However, the actual evaluation process does not appear to support that vision.

During phase I, IET attempts to develop character by introducing Soldiers to cornerstones of the profession, such as the Army Values and Army Ethic. This, combined with a focus on developing physical fitness and resiliency, is intended to facilitate achievement of the phase objective. This objective, or "focus" as it is called in TRADOC 350-6, is on "developing character and enhanced performance."[15]

Based on the espoused focus, it is reasonable to assume that the progression requirements from phase I to phase II should include active evaluations of both character and physical fitness. However, only physical fitness, which is a demonstrated competency, is actively mentioned as evaluation criteria. TRADOC 350-6 states in part, "To progress to phase II, Soldiers must demonstrate a level of functional fitness."[16] While it is entirely plausible, even likely, that the Army is developing character of Soldiers progressing to phase II, there is no specific requirement for them to actively demonstrate it. Upon completion of phase I, Soldiers are rewarded for actively demonstrating competence with their first artifact, the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) Army Star Logo patch.[17]

In phase II, the focus of IET shifts from introducing Soldiers to the profession and building resilience to learning the individual Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills (WTBDs) necessary for battlefield success.[18] This phase includes qualification with an assigned weapon, which is one of eleven specified requirements for graduation from Basic Combat Training (BCT).[19] To progress to phase III, Soldiers must complete an end of phase test that actively measures their proficiency of the WTBDs. Upon completion of the phase, the active demonstration of competence is rewarded with a second artifact, the marksmanship badge.[20]

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Phase III is the capstone phase and the final step in a Soldier's BCT experience. The focus of this phase is on using the skills developed during the first two phases as part of a high performing team. To progress to phase IV and successfully complete BCT, Soldiers must actively demonstrate competence by passing an end of cycle test and passing the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT).[21] In total, there are eleven specified tasks required in the first three phases. Upon completion of phase III, Soldiers are awarded their third artifact for competence demonstration, the black beret. The specified tasks to complete BCT are:

1. Pass the APFT

2. Zero and qualify with assigned weapon and optic

3. Pass the end of cycle "hands on" test to demonstrate WTBD proficiency

4. Qualify on hand grenade course and throw one live grenade

5. Pass the Land Navigation Course

6. Complete a 16 kilometer foot march

7. Demonstrate basic First Aid proficiency

8. Complete a Buddy Team Live Fire

9. Negotiate Confidence Course, Obstacle Course, and Confidence Tower

10. Complete combatives training

With BCT complete, Soldiers then progress to IET phase IV-V, Advanced Individual Training (AIT). During AIT, Soldiers learn the basic entry-level skills for their individual Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). The duration of AIT varies by MOS, but can take anywhere from eight weeks to a year or longer. To successfully complete AIT, Soldiers must complete an eight-hour personal finance course, actively demonstrate

competence by passing MOS-specific course testing, and pass the APFT with 60 points in each event.[22] Upon successful completion of these requirements, Soldiers depart the IET environment to report to their first duty or follow-on training assignment.

This description of IET shows that transitioning civilians from the beginning of phase I to become "Soldiers of Character who are competent and committed to serving our Nation honorably" is a significant undertaking. [23] Clearly, such a large process requires a multitude of evaluative criteria, both specified and implied. In addition to the eleven specified requirements, TRADOC 350-6 also charges IET cadre to develop and conduct continual evaluations of Soldier progress through IET. These evaluations, combined with a cadre whose actions perpetually demonstrate Army standards, are the primary behavioral learning method in IET.[24]

There are two major concerns with this approach. First, as COL Michelson has identified, this approach relies on the assumption that individuals develop strong character simply by being in the IET environment and observing strong cadre.[25] While this may indeed be true, it leads directly to the second concern: where are the requirements to actively demonstrate good character? While TRADOC 350-6 talks a lot about instilling character during IET, it is largely silent about how those efforts are measured. Clearly, some Soldiers will self-identify for removal from the Army by actively demonstrating poor character. However, these are typically Soldier-initiated actions (e.g., theft), which are passively detected by IET cadre and handled accordingly.

Now, contrast the two concerns above with any concerns about measuring competence during IET. When a Soldier arrives at his first unit, his gaining commander can be confident that the Soldier has actively demonstrated competence in physical

fitness, marksmanship, WTBDs, and entry level MOS proficiency. Based on those active

demonstrations of competence, the gaining commander can be confident that if the

Soldier was unable to meet basic levels of proficiency that they would not be arriving at

his organization. However, what active demonstration of character during IET gives the

commander the same degree of confidence in terms of character?

In short, to complete IET, a Soldier must actively demonstrate competence, while

at the same time simply avoid do something egregiously bad. Based on TRADOC 350-6,

failing to demonstrate competence is a showstopper. Failing to demonstrate good

character, or worse, masking poor character, is not. [26] Unfortunately, failing to validate

character in members, calls into question the very foundation of the Army as a

profession.[27]

<center>Observation 3: The Army Recruits for Competence
and Assumes Risk on Character</center>

Recruiting represents the Army's first competence and character touchpoint with

an individual. Clearly, to survive the rigors of West Point, ROTC, or IET prospective

Soldiers must be able to meet some minimum requirements.

These basic requirements act as screening criteria for entry into the organization

and serve several functions. First, these requirements are a method to reasonably ensure

that prospective Soldiers can survive in a physically demanding environment. Second,

they set baseline standards for the cognitive and physical abilities of Soldiers across

occupational specialties. Third, these criteria provide the Army with the flexibility to

"right-size" the organization.

While these minimum requirements pertain to both competence and character, the Army largely identifies and screens prospective Soldiers based on competence, while assuming a degree of risk with regard to character. In other words, prospective Soldiers must demonstrate competence, such as achieving a certain Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) score to gain admission into the Army.[28] There is no such requirement to actively demonstrate character. Instead, the Army relies primarily on a clean background check to validate character. This model, particularly for enlisted recruiting, is problematic for two reasons.

The first problem relates to the age of prospective recruits. The average enlisted Army recruit is 20-years old.[29] In truth, how accurately does a background check reflect the character of an individual of that age? How much weight should such a limited investigation carry? Is a determination that evidence of poor character has not yet surfaced enough to prove the recruit has good character?

The second problem with the enlisted recruiting model is the underlying assumption that character will be identified and evaluated during IET. In essence, the Army mitigates the risk of a limited background check by assuming that character will be actively evaluated and developed during IET. In other words, it is ok if the background check does not holistically capture character because the Drill Sergeants will.

However, as this thesis has shown, the Army does a poor job actively evaluating character during IET. Instead, it largely relies on passive character evaluation and the assumption that Soldiers are developing ideal character by default.[30] In doing so, the Army's investment of $22,300 per recruit is based on an assumption, about a highly questionable assumption, about a fallacy.[31] $22,300 sounds insignificant, but when

multiplied by the Regular Army accession goal of 69,000, a much larger figure emerges.[32]

Luckily, this observation is largely confined to the enlisted recruiting realm. Both major commissioning programs (ROTC and USMA) do a much better job of actively evaluating the character of their recruits. This is largely a function of the USMA admissions process and increased evaluation opportunities presented to uncontracted ROTC cadets, although both programs still heavily weigh active displays of competence, such as the Cadet Fitness Assessment (CFA).[33]

Secondary Research Questions

What is the Army's underlying assumptions about competence and character?

The Army has three underlying assumptions about character that are critical to this study. All three identified assumptions have previously been discussed in detail during this chapter; however, for clarity the assumptions are detailed as follows:

1. The absence of an indicator of poor character is evidence of good character.

2. Soldiers develop good character by being exposed to good character.[34]

3. Character is actively evaluated and developed during IET.[35]

Recall from chapter 2 that basic underlying assumptions are solutions to an original problem that have been adopted by the organization over time.[36] In this instance, the original problems facing the Army were how to screen individuals for entry into the organization, and how to validate and develop their character upon entry.

The Army's basic underlying assumption about competence is that the task-condition-standard model is the best way to achieve and demonstrate competence. This approach to training and measuring competence has its roots in the post-Vietnam era

Army. In practice, this model is simple. The task to be trained is presented, the conditions under which the task is performed are detailed, and the standard by which competence is demonstrated is given. Thus, if a Soldier can perform a task under the given conditions to the established standard, then their competence is validated.

The American Army emerged from Vietnam as a dysfunctional organization. The need for large quantities of draftees caused the Army to lower its recruitment and training standards. As a partial result of these policies, rampant crime and insubordination were the norm, painting the Army in an extremely negative light.[37] Predictably, the Army faced serious questions about its ability to fight and win the nation's wars.

Due to these circumstances, the Army faced its original problem of how to turn a poorly trained and poorly led bureaucracy back into a fully competent military organization. When TRADOC was established in 1973 with training reform as its primary goal, the solution of the task-condition-standard model was born.[38] From that point on, the requirement to actively demonstrate competence on assigned tasks became a tenant of the American Army. This black and white approach to measuring competence (you are either competent or you are not) is a significant facet of Army organizational culture.

What Are the Army's Espoused Values and Beliefs about Competence and Character?

At their core, the Army's espoused beliefs about competence and character are closely related. As expected, these espoused beliefs are unanimous in the value they place on highly competent, high character Soldiers. As discussed in detail earlier in this

chapter, senior leader statements, doctrine, and professional publications all espouse a desire for leaders to possess high levels of competence, character, and commitment.

What Do Army Artifacts Reveal About Competence and Character?

In terms of sheer volume, Army artifacts are equally representative of both competence and character. However, the most revered artifacts are largely competence-based. As a result, Army artifacts reflect a slight competence bias. Broadly, Army artifacts can be divided into three categories: uniform artifacts, installation artifacts, and values artifacts.

Uniform artifacts, such as badges, tabs, and berets, are the most visible artifacts. This category contains many of the Army's most revered artifacts, such as the Ranger and Special Forces tabs. Nearly all of these revered artifacts are competence based.[39] For example, the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) exists to recognize Soldiers "who have demonstrated a mastery of critical tasks."[40] The Army's stated intent for this artifact is to "add prestige" to a Soldier who is able to successfully demonstrate unique infantry competence.[41] Lastly, it is worth recalling that the first artifact to be earned, the rifle marksmanship badge, is awarded solely based on competence.

The second category is installation artifacts. Installation artifacts are also very visible and consist of the names and likenesses of individuals on installations, buildings, streets, and statutes. These artifacts are largely reflective of character. By choosing to name a building after an individual, the Army embraced the character of that individual through an artifact.

For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a US Army installation devoid of an Eisenhower street, hall, or auditorium. These artifacts reflect the importance of General Eisenhower in Army culture. While Eisenhower was clearly competent, it is his character attributes that have placed him among installation artifacts. While powerful, installation artifacts are largely backdrop phenomena, with little aspirational value. While it is common to hear Soldiers aspire to achieve the Ranger tab, it is less common to hear aspirations about having an office in Eisenhower Hall. These character-based artifacts simply do not carry the same weight as competence based artifacts.

The third category is values artifacts. These come in many forms, and are largely reflective of both competence and character within Army culture. Examples of values artifacts include the Soldier's Creed, NCO Creed, Warrior Ethos, Oath of Office, unit mottos, etc.

The NCO Creed is the best example of this type of artifact. Since its inception in 1973, it has enjoyed nearly universal recognition and respect in Army culture.[42] Although the word "competence" specifically appears in the creed, while the word "character" does not, the artifact strikes an excellent balance between the two ideals. An abundance of character-centric leadership attributes is balanced with the powerful declaration that "competence is my watch-word."[43] As shown below, competence and character are clearly on equal footing in the NCO Creed.

Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer

*N*o one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of Soldiers. As a Noncommissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "the Backbone of the Army." I am proud of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the military service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit or personal safety.

*C*ompetence is my watch-word. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind – accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a Noncommissioned Officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

*O*fficers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!

Figure 2.   Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer

Source: US Army, Training Circular (TC) 7-22.7, *Noncommissioned Officer Guide,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2015, 1-8.

Conclusion

If compared directly, there is clearly a bias in favor of competence over character in Army organizational culture. The practice of actively evaluating competence and passively evaluating character is a recurring theme across Army culture, varying only in the degree to which it occurs. This practice, intentional or not, paints a picture of career success that is largely based on mastering tactical and technical skills while carefully avoiding any behavior that is so egregious, it cannot be passively overlooked.

Additionally, the most revered artifacts, like the EIB, are largely a physical manifestation of competence. Artifacts reflecting competence are largely stand-alone, while character-centric artifacts are mostly intertwined with competence artifacts. There are no common, stand-alone, character uniform artifacts.[44] In other words, there is no Character Badge with Army Ethic Device.

While there is clearly a bias in linear terms, a direct comparison between competence and character is problematic. They are two very different concepts, which are demonstrated and evaluated in unique ways. Competence lends itself well to concrete analysis, which character does not. It would be difficult to develop a task-condition-standard approach to evaluating empathy in the same manner that the Army evaluates physical fitness.

[1] US Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development,* Washington, DC:

Government Printing Office, June 2015, 5-1.

[2] Philip Lewis, Karl Kuhnert, and Robert Maginnis, "Defining Military Character," *Parameters* (Summer 1987): 33.

[3] Jennifer Mattsion, "Doctrine Strategy," Army.Mil, 16 May 2012, accessed 16 February 2016, http://www.army.mil/article/79962/Doctrine_Strategy/.

[4] Mark A. Milley, "39th Chief of Staff Initial Message to the Army," Army.Mil, last modified 5 February 2016, accessed 16 February 2016, http://www.army.mil/e2/rv5_downloads/leaders/csa/Initial_Message_39th_CSA.pdf.

[5] Army.Mil, "Leaders Front Page," last modified 5 February 2016, accessed 17 February 2016, http://www.army.mil/leaders/csa.

[6] Both the Officer Evaluation Report and Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report have been revised in the last twenty-four months to more accurately reflect attributes and competencies at different grades.

[7] US Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), "Profession of Arms White Paper," 2 December 2010, accessed 21 February 2016, http://cape.army.mil/repository/white-papers/profession-of-arms-white-paper.pdf.

[8] US Army, TRADOC, "Profession of Arms White Paper," 1.

[9] As an artifact, the Warrior Ethos consists of the four statements in the Soldier's Creed: "I will always place the mission first, I will never leave a fallen comrade, I will never quit, I will never accept defeat;" US Army, "Profession of Arms White Paper," 2-6.

[10] ADRP 6-22, 6-10.

[11] US Army, "Profession of Arms White Paper," 11.

[12] Michelson, *Character Development*, 16.

[13] The five phases of IET are distinct from the three phases listed in the research methodology of this study. All five phases of IET occur within phase II of this study methodology.

[14] US Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Regulation 350-6, *Enlisted Initial Entry Training Policies and Administration,* Fort Eustis, VA: September 2015, 9.

[15] Ibid., 19.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 20.

[20] Ibid., 19.

[21] Ibid. Upon completion of IET phase III, Soldiers must pass the APFT with a minimum of fifty points in each event, not the standard sixty points.

[22] Ibid., 20-21.

[23] Ibid., 9.

[24] Ibid., 18.

[25] Michelson, *Character Development*, 15.

[26] Recall that the vision for IET begins with "Provide the Army Soldiers of Character."

[27] Don M. Snider and Alexander P. Shine, "*A Soldier's Morality, Religion, and our Professional Ethic: Does the Army's Culture Facilitate Integration, Character Development, and Trust in the Profession?*" (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2014), 18.

[28] US Army, United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) Manual 3-01, *Recruiter Handbook,* Fort Knox, KY: November 2011, 12-2.

[29] US Army Recruiting Command, "Frequently Asked Questions about Recruiting: What is the Average Enlistment Age?" 4 December 2013, accessed 24 February 2016, http://www.usarec.army.mil/support/faqs.htm#age.

[30] Michelson, *Character Development*, 15.

[31] US Army Recruiting Command, "Frequently Asked Questions about Recruiting: What is the Cost per Accession?" 4 December 2013, http://www.usarec.army.mil/support/faqs.htm#costper, accessed 24 February 2016 .Mitigating limited background check risk by actively evaluating character in IET. "We'll catch it later;" Soldiers develop good character by being around good character. "After we catch it, we'll change it;" Affirming the Consequent. The absence of an indicator of poor character is evidence of good character. "If they haven't done anything bad, they must be good."

[32] US Army Recruiting Command, "Cost per Accession."

[33] US Military Academy, "Candidate Fitness Assessment Instructions," accessed 24 February 2016, http://www.usma.edu/admissions/shared%20documents/cfa_instructions.pdf.

[34] Michelson, 15.

[35] Ibid., 15.

[36] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 28.

[37] Robert H. Scales, "Certain Victory: The US Army in the Gulf War," *H300 Book of Readings* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USACGSC, 1993), 272.

[38] Ibid., 276.

[39] Clearly, there is a character component involved with earning these artifacts. However, in most instances an active demonstration of competence is the major factor, with character playing a supporting role.

[40] US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE), "Expert Infantryman Badge: Purpose of EIB Testing," 19 January 2016, accessed 4 March 2016, http://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/eib/Purpose.

[41] US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE), "Expert Infantryman Badge: History of the Expert Infantryman Badge," 27 January 2016, accessed 4 March 2016, http://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/eib/History.html.

[42] The same period of change that produced TRADOC and the task-condition-standard solution to the Army's competence problem; US Army, TC 7-22.7, *Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1-8.

[43] US Army, Training Circular (TC) 7-22.7, *Noncommissioned Officer Guide,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2015, 1-8.

[44] An artifact like the Soldier's Medal could potentially fall into this category, but it is excluded from this analysis based on its rarity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research is an analysis of the relationship between competence and character in Army organizational culture. This analysis, conducted using Dr. Schein's elements of underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs, and artifacts, sought to identify competence or character bias within Army culture. Chapter 4 presented the findings of this research by identifying three major themes about competence and character in Army organizational culture. This chapter will analyze those findings by discussing the results, implications, and unexpected findings of the research. Lastly, this chapter will provide recommendations for further study.

Interpretation of Findings

This section will briefly summarize the results of the research, implications of those results, and highlight several unexpected findings. First, this research found that a direct comparison of competence and character to determine bias is extremely difficult. Two things are largely responsible for this. The cohort system and the ambiguity of character evaluation make any definitive findings unlikely.

The cohort system, while necessary, results in distinct recruiting, training, and operational models for enlisted Soldiers, officers, warrant officers, and civilians. The differences in these systems make the direct comparison across cohorts of individual attributes (e.g., character) problematic.

For example, the research clearly shows that officer-commissioning programs do a much better job of actively evaluating character than IET. However, this is largely a result of the length of time available to the commissioning programs. Commissioning programs have access to cadets for a period of years, while IET has access for a period of weeks.

In the realm of competence and the task-condition-standard approach, time period differences are largely irrelevant. Across cohorts, the evaluation of competence is straightforward, with tasks to be mastered and clear standards for success. Either a Soldier did fifty-four push-ups or he did not. Extending IET to two years would not help the Army gain additional insight on if a Soldier completed fifty-four push-ups or not.

Character, on the other hand, does not follow this model. There are significant insights about character that are likely to be determined over greater lengths of time. It is much easier to mask poor character for weeks than a period of years. The different approaches used across the cohorts make it difficult to determine overall bias.

In truth, it is likely that the individual cohort approaches to evaluating competence and character are appropriate for achieving the end state for each cohort. An Army Private for example, is expected to arrive at his unit fully competent in his entry-level tasks. Naturally, the Army would also like him to arrive at his first unit with great character, but there is minimal risk compared to an officer who immediately fills a leadership role.[1] The commissioning programs, on the other hand, focus more on character because the Army can accept less character risk on Day One with an officer.

The second major factor that makes determining bias difficult is the ambiguity of character evaluation. While the Army broadly defines the desired character of its

personnel, methods of evaluation against that standard are unclear. Across the social sciences, there are differing approaches to what character is, when it develops, and how it is evaluated. The practical application of this is that character is difficult to actively evaluate in the same way as competence. Aspects of character are seldom "go/no-go" propositions.

Due to the difficulty in evaluation, the best approach is to maximize the amount of time that Soldiers must spend actively demonstrating their character. It is not enough for a Soldier to passively exist as a member of a platoon, only emerging to actively demonstrate enough competence to progress in the organization. Soldiers must be placed in situations that require them to demonstrate character early and often in their career, beginning with IET. These requirements need to be codified in TRADOC 350-6, and need to be on the same level with the other eleven requirements for graduation.

Next, as identified by COL Michelson and highlighted numerous times in this thesis, the Army needs to examine its basic underlying assumptions about character. Specifically, the organization needs to acknowledge that the absence of an indicator of poor character is exactly that, and not evidence of good character. Acknowledgement of this and a more active character evaluation scheme will go a long way to mitigate some of the risks involved with admitting new members into the organization.

Re-examining underlying assumptions does not mean the Army must make major changes to its recruiting and training approach. Given the sheer size of the Army recruiting effort, using a relatively inexpensive background check to screen prospective recruits is a simple and practical solution. However, the organization needs to ensure that

the assumptions it makes about how character shortfalls are identified and corrected are accurate.

In summary, this research has not shown that the Army deliberately values competence over character. What it has shown is that competence is easy to define, easy to measure, and falls largely in line with the task-condition-standard approach that is at the heart of Army organizational culture. It is easy to determine an APFT score. In contrast, character is ambiguous, difficult to describe, and even more difficult to measure. Character is not comprised of measurable numbers.

When faced with a choice between ambiguous and quantifiable, it is human nature to gravitate toward measurable data. This bias towards definitive measurement is what gives the appearance of competence bias. After all, a Soldier is either competent or not. Character, on the other hand, is not black and white. It is the tremendous differences in these concepts that make direct comparison invalid.

Next, this chapter will discuss the implications of this research. The major implication of these findings is that the Army will continue to wrestle with the concept of evaluating character. In fact, there may not be a correct solution, only good solutions. The task-condition-standard approach to competence was a "good" solution for the Army. Other approaches might have produced higher levels of competence, but task-condition-standard struck an appropriate balance between time, resources, and risk. While the methodology would be different, the Army would do well to seek out a comparable "good" solution to character evaluation. The current methodology, which is largely one of assuming away risk, is not sufficient.

Next, this chapter will address unexpected findings discovered during the study. There were three unexpected findings. First, the amount of emphasis the Army has placed on character is staggering. Organizations like the Center for Army Leadership and Center for the Army Profession and Ethic are host to a wealth of professional articles, papers, videos, and publications directly relating to character. Army senior leaders routinely talk about character, and respected professional journals devote significant space to the topic. The sheer volume of information was surprising.

Second, the difficulties of directly comparing competence and character were unexpected. On the surface, it would seem easy to determine bias between the two. After all, there are no instances where a Soldier can mask competence and remain successful with the task-condition-standard approach. However, there are many instances where a Soldier can mask character and continue to progress in the organization. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the comparison is not that simple. Directly comparing a concrete concept to an abstract one is difficult.

Third, it is surprising that with all the attention given to character, some of the Army's basic underlying assumptions are questionable. Again, COL Michelson's (and by extension, his advisor Dr. Snider) analysis figured prominently in this unexpected finding. It may simply be an instance where the Army is willing to accept risk on their assumptions until a significant event occurs that it can no longer avoid.

Recommendations for Further Study

Lastly, this chapter will provide recommendations for further study and identify elements of the research that could have been approached differently. The following are recommendations for further study:

1. Do other militaries evaluate character actively or passively? What can the US Army learn from this?

2. How do outside organizations like business, law enforcement, medicine, and professional sports evaluate competence and character? What can the Army learn from this?

3. How can key elements of character evaluation found in commissioning programs be applied to IET?

4. What are the advantages/disadvantages of ideal Army character in multi-national, cross-cultural operations?

5. Is the Army cognizant of the impacts of career imprinting? Can this concept be leveraged to produce high character officers?

6. Is there a relatively simple, cost-effective method of actively evaluating character?

7. If actively evaluating character is too resource-intensive to implement Army-wide, is there an opportunity for limited implementation at a specific rank?

8. Are there opportunities for the Army to leverage the field of psychoanalysis to better evaluate character?

In retrospect, attempting to focus this research on multiple cohorts proved difficult. The intent was to examine a more holistic picture of Army organizational culture by looking across the cohorts. In practice, however, examination of a single cohort would have been more appropriate in the time-constrained environment of this project.

Conclusion

Charlie Company Revisited

Recall from the introduction of chapter 1 that the commander of an infantry company faces an important decision. On his computer is a draft email to the battalion commander nominating one of his NCOs to lead the important RAF mission. The company commander knows the stakes are high, and his decision has international implications. Sitting outside his office are SSG Competence and SSG Character, each waiting on news for their next assignment.

On the surface, SSG Competence seems like the obvious choice, as he possesses the Army's most revered artifacts like the EIB and Ranger tab. In his mind, however, the commander is aware that many of SSG Competence's achievements are based largely on an active evaluation of competence and a passive evaluation of character. This is why he has repeatedly placed SSG Competence in positions requiring him to actively demonstrate his character.

The commander knows the attributes and competencies of the LRM, and how they develop leaders of character. He knows the Army is serious about character, and how the philosophy of Mission Command is centered on trust. He knows that poor character could erode trust, placing the RAF mission at great risk.

In absolute terms, there is no correct decision in choosing between the two NCOs. However, the commander knows he has made a good, deliberate decision. He knows his decision was not biased by artifacts, based on questionable assumptions, or colored by a statistical comparison of the two NCOs. It was an act of holistic professional judgment,

based on knowledge and experience. After a final moment of reflection, the commander

breathes a sigh of relief, happy with the decision as he submits his recommendation.

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[1] Relatively minimal. In the age of decentralized reporting and social media there is great risk associated with even an individual act of poor character.

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