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Ethics and Army Leadership: Climate Matters

Charles D. Allen

ABSTRACT: As US news and media reports continue to expose unethical behavior within the American profession of arms, it is important to explore how Army leaders—and their organizations—have lapsed into questionable ethical conduct. This article addresses the tension between competence and character within the Army's culture, offers lessons from the business world on ethical behavior and leadership, and critiques current Department of Defense (DoD) and Army approaches to assessing ethical climates.¹

US news and media reports continue to expose unethical behavior within the American profession of arms. Some observers may claim this exposure is nothing new. Recently, however, the Army revealed 129 commanders of brigades and battalions have been relieved since 2003.² Of that number, 25 were relieved in combat zones. More troubling (and paradoxically reassuring) is the Army's disclosure that seven general officers were relieved and two court-martialed. In 2005, for instance, the four-star commander of US Army Training and Doctrine Command, General Kevin Byrnes, was relieved for disobeying a lawful order from the Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker. In addition, "since 2001, the Army vice chief of staff has issued 100 memoranda of reprimand, 147 memoranda of concern and conducted 45 verbal counselings of general officers" for myriad behaviors contrary to good order and discipline in the Army.³

This article explores how Army leaders and their organizations have lapsed into questionable ethical conduct. Among other things, such an examination enables one to discern lessons for senior leaders and stewards of the Army profession. Rather than offering tabloid exposés (there are plenty), the following analysis focuses on systemic organizational assessments and solutions to ethical situations, not on the details of any specific recent case. This article concludes with two recommendations for Army leadership: 1) develop evidence-based developmental programs on individual character and moral development, and 2) develop empirically validated research instruments to assess ethical climates as part of the DoD or separate Army organizational climate survey. Strong ethical foundations are essential for the Army profession and the nation it serves.

While the number of reported occurrences of unethical behavior is relatively small compared to a large DoD population of nearly 3 million

1 This manuscript was initially prepared for and presented at a conference for the International Society for Military Ethics (ISME), October 12-15, 2014, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana.

2 Ray Locker, "Pentagon Keeps Covering Up Officers' Dirty Laundry," *USA Today*, August 8, 2013; and Michelle Tan, "129 Army Battalion, Brigade Commanders Fired Since 2003," *Army Times*, February 2, 2015.

3 Ibid.

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active, reserve, and civilian members, even isolated cases receive a high degree of media attention and undermine public trust in the profession. As one reads the reports of investigations and courts martial, the root causes of such behavior are invariably attributed to individual failings—the senior leader’s lack of character and the lack of moral courage of those around the leader to challenge questionable behavior. However, these assessments rarely consider differing levels of analysis: individual, organizational, and institutional.

Concerns about the Profession

In some cases, relieving high-level military officers was part of the civil-military relations exchange, which often requires a delicate balancing act between civilian officials and uniformed officers. Striking examples during the Global War on Terror are the cases of Commander of US Central Command Admiral William “Fox” Fallon, Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley, and Commander of US Forces and International Security Forces Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, in their clashes with senior civilian leaders—the president and defense secretary.⁴ Of greater concern are those cases in which behavior contrary to professional ethics is the issue. There have been high-profile investigations of senior officers for violations of Joint Travel and Joint Ethics Regulations like US Africa Command’s General William “Kip” Ward (substantiated), and US European Command’s Admiral James Stavridis (unsubstantiated). The media also took particular interest in the extramarital affair of retired General David Petraeus, the former commander of US Central Command and later of International Security Forces Afghanistan, as well as the court-martial charges for sexual assault by Army Brigadier General Jeffrey Sinclair.

Accordingly, at the end of 2012, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta initiated a review of general officer ethics. It included a survey of compliance with standards put forth in several Department of Defense policies such as the Joint Federal Travel Regulation, Joint Ethics Regulation, Financial Management Regulation, other DoD Instructions, and certainly the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. In December 2013, his successor, Chuck Hagel, ordered a second review to be completed and briefed within sixty days. These perfunctory assessments of non-compliance and violations by individual general officers and their staffs did not reveal the deeper causes of these problems; thus, further actions were needed.

To underscore the importance of understanding and resolving such problems, in March 2014, Hagel appointed Rear Admiral Margaret “Peg” Klein as his Special Advisor for Military Professionalism to report directly to him on “issues related to military ethics, character, and leadership.”⁵ Hagel charged Klein to “coordinate the actions of the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, and each of the military services...on

4 Specific cases are addressed in Don Drechsler and Charles D. Allen, “Why Senior Military Leaders Fail: And What We Can Learn from Their Mistakes,” *Armed Forces Journal* (July/August 2009): 34-37, 44-45; Marybeth P. Ulrich, “The General McChrystal Affair: A Case Study in Civil-Military Relations,” *Parameters* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 86-100; and Charles D. Allen, “Lessons Not Learned: Civil-Military Disconnect in Afghanistan,” *Armed Forces Journal* (September 2011): 30-33.

5 “Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel Announcing His Senior Advisor for Military Professionalism,” US Department of Defense, March 25, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/Releases/Release.aspx?ReleaseID=16599>

DoD's focus on ethics, character, and competence in all activities at all levels of command...[as] a top priority for DoD's senior leadership."⁶

Professional Competency or Character?

After more than a dozen years in Afghanistan and Iraq, DoD senior leaders are concerned with the perception the competence of our senior leaders is valued over their character—especially with the ongoing series of senior officer misconduct—hence, the appointment of Klein. The reported misbehavior ranges from a combination of illegal, immoral, and unethical actions across services and components.⁷ In alignment with Hagel, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey stressed “the military must pay as much attention to character as it does to competence.”⁸ In his June 2013 graduation address to the National War College, Dempsey cautioned, “As with Vietnam, negative impressions about our character [during the Global War on Terror] eclipsed the courage and sacrifices of the many men and women who served honorably.”⁹ To document the nature and scope of the problem throughout the uniformed and civilian ranks, the Department of Defense published its *Encyclopedia of Ethical Failures*.¹⁰ One would expect the Army has its own compendium of ethical misconduct cases spanning the operating and generating forces in deployed and home-station environments.

Donald M. Snider, an expert on the nature and role of the Army profession, argues military leaders improperly focus “on developing individual and unit military competence, when it should have been all along more equally divided between developing their moral character and their military competence.”¹¹ Journalists and government civilians alike have speculated “the military valued ‘competence over character’ during wartime, and that it needs to place a higher priority on personal rectitude.”¹² Three criteria – competence and character combined with commitment — emerged from the Army Profession of Arms campaign as official doctrine, which specified the broad developmental goals essential for its members to be professional.

Initial Assessment and Remedy

In response to a 2012 Secretary of Defense directive, the Army conducted a review of senior-leader training with two objectives: 1) Review the current state of senior leadership training, particularly ethics training and character development, and 2) Consider the impact(s) of power and the dilemmas that arise from increasing levels of responsibility,

6 Ibid.

7 Mark F. Light, “The Navy’s Moral Compass: Commanding Officers and Personal Misconduct,” *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 136-152; Craig Whitlock, “Military Brass, Behaving Badly: Files Detail a Spate of Misconduct Dogging Armed Forces,” *Washington Post*, January 26, 2014,

8 Jim Garamone, “Hagel, Dempsey Stress Leader’s Role in Ethical Issues,” *DoD News*, March 26, 2014, www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121905.

9 Amaani Lyle, “Chairman Champions Character in Graduation Address,” *DoD News*, June 13, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120281>.

10 Office of General Consul, *Encyclopedia of Ethical Failures* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2012).

11 Don M. Snider, “The Moral Corrosion Within Our Military Professions,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, November 27, 2012, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/articles//The-Moral-Corrosion-within-Our-Military-Professions/2012/11/27>.

12 Amaani Lyle, “Chairman Champions Character in Graduation Address.”

authority, and control.¹³ The Army’s findings claimed “Senior Leader character is not lacking...not a systemic problem” and there was not a “widely held negative perception of Army Senior Leaders based on interviews and focus groups.”¹⁴ These findings seem, however, to ignore other sources of information.

Assessments claiming there was no “systemic problem” or “widely held negative perception” lead one to conclude these ethical lapses have been no more than individual failings. Thus, the assertion that “Checks and balances are key—include front office staff, spouses, and IG [Inspector General], SJA [Staff Judge Advocate], CH [Chaplain]” to prevent incidents that could be seen as unethical behavior by senior leaders.¹⁵ The findings attribute as least part of the blame to those around the leaders. Accordingly, the review’s recommendations proposed three lines of effort: training the staffs of senior leaders, mentorship of senior leaders, and programs of assessment and feedback for senior leaders. Of these pillars, the Army has once again focused on training programs for individuals—not on education and self-development. That focus is problematic since training does not usually mean gaining new knowledge and exercising the reflection essential to development.

Assumptions Regarding Individual Character Development

The process, findings, and recommendations of the Army’s review of senior-leader training validate COL Brian Michelson’s concerns in his assessment of the Army approach to character development. Michelson, author of “Character Development of US Army Leaders,” examined Army leadership doctrine for its definition of character—“the sum total of an individual’s moral and ethical qualities”—and its expectation of leaders to be the “ethical standard bearer[s] [who] set a proper ethical climate.”¹⁶ Hence, Army doctrine implies an individual’s lack of character leads to ethical failings; accordingly, corrective actions should be focused on individual leaders. Michelson cautions against such a simple fix. Instead, he identifies and then questions three underlying assumptions for the Army’s institutional strategy:

- Army soldiers and leaders *inherently* know what is right and want to live ethically.
- Consistent ethical conduct develops strong character.
- Leaders will develop personal character commensurate with their increasing responsibilities through self-guided study, reflection, experience, and feedback.¹⁷

Michelson extracts data from the 2010 and 2011 Center for Army Leadership’s Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) reports, as well as from its report on Toxic Leadership, to effectively challenge each assumption. He then arrives at four conclusions, two of which inform this analysis:

13 “Review of Current Senior Leadership Training,” Briefing Slides, Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, March 2013.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 Brian M. Michelson, “Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: The Laissez-Faire Approach,” *Military Review* 93, no. 5 (September/October 2013): 31, 38.

17 *Ibid.*, 31.

- The Army's three primary assumptions about the development of personal character are questionable at best, are potentially seriously flawed, and should be immediately reexamined.
- The Army does not know, and cannot know with confidence, if the current method of character development will achieve its desired institutional goals.¹⁸

If the underlying assumptions in Army doctrine regarding individual behaviors cannot be validated, then developing strategies and plans on them is imprudent. Perhaps an examination of organizational factors is more appropriate. Such factors are organizational culture, organizational climate, and ethical climate, which can be used to gain a better understanding of the ethical issues within the Army. That understanding can be gained from findings in scholarly research in ethics, behavioral ethics, and ethical leadership.

The Call for an Army Ethic

Since the Army Profession campaign commenced in December 2010, there have been several calls for a statement of The Army Ethic.¹⁹ Army senior leaders have been aggressively acting on the recommendations from this yearlong study through several initiatives and programs. In the final report of the Profession of Arms campaign, now captured in doctrine, the Army Ethic encompasses the “evolving set of laws, values, and beliefs, deeply embedded within the core of the Army and practiced by all members of the Army Profession to motivate and guide the appropriate conduct of individual members bound together in common moral purpose.”²⁰

In July 2014, Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno released “The Army Ethic White Paper.” It declares the “foundation of our profession is centered on trust...it will take every measure of competence and commitment to forge ahead and above all it will take character.”²¹ A one-page draft Ethic charges Army professionals to fulfill three roles, serve as “Honorable Servants of the Nation – Professionals of Character, [Army] Experts – Competent Professionals, [and] Stewards of the Army Profession – Committed Professionals.”²²

Ethical Leadership: Learning from Business

General Dempsey's release of “America's Military—A Profession of Arms” to the joint force preceded the Army's White Paper by nearly eighteen months. In it the Chairman asserted: “Our profession is defined by our values, ethics, standards, code of conduct, skills, and

18 Ibid., 37.

19 Clark C. Barrett, *Finding 'The Right Way' Toward an Army Ethic*, Carlisle Papers (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2012); IBM Institute for Business Value, *Capitalizing on Complexity: Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officers Study* (Somers, NY: IBM Institute for Business Value, 2010); Don M. Snider, “To Renew the Power of the Army's Professional Ethic,” *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (Winter 2014-2015): 7-11.

20 US Department of the Army, *The Army Profession*, Army Doctrine Reference Publication No.1 (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, June 14, 2013).

21 Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, *The Army Ethic White Paper* (West Point, NY: Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, July 14, 2014).

22 Ibid., 11. “Army Experts” replaced “Military Experts” during the Secretary of the Army Symposium held in Fall 2014.

attributes;” furthermore, he designated “Leaders as the Foundation [to] Strengthening our Profession of Arms.”²³

Thus, both the Army Chief of Staff and the Chairman have included leader development among their top priorities. Appropriately, leaders in the grades of colonels and flag officers—and their civilian equivalents—are designated the senior stewards of the profession. They have special responsibilities: command of units, staff headquarters, and running the institution. They are also susceptible to what has been well-documented in organizational research: “Older and longer tenured managers had lower moral judgment than did younger and less experienced employees.”²⁴ Although current professional military education programs for field grade and senior officers provide instruction on the philosophies of ethics (teleology, deontology, and consequentialism) and moral reasoning, business and behavioral ethics scholars have introduced concepts such as “ethical fading” and “moral blindspots” into the military’s awareness.²⁵ Ethical fading occurs when lawyers “become inured to problems such as corruption in the justice system, and their ethical enthusiasm slowly dies.”²⁶

Before service members dismiss such findings from business organizations by citing stress and cultural value placed on mission accomplishment, they should attentively consider why moral reasoning has also been found to be “lower when individuals respond to work-related dilemmas compared to non-work dilemmas.”²⁷ Equally applicable to the military profession, a 2005 Business Ethics Survey cited the following five factors most likely to compromise ethical behavior:

1. Pressure to meet unrealistic business objectives/deadlines
2. Desire to further one’s career
3. Desire to protect one’s livelihood
4. Working in an environment with cynicism or diminished morale
5. Ignores that the act was unethical²⁸

Each of these factors could plausibly affect Army leaders’ ethical obligations to their organizations: “Protection of brand and reputation; The right thing to do; Customer trust and loyalty; Investor confidence, and Public acceptance/recognition.”²⁹ In 2013, *Military Review* published a special issue exploring threats to the Army Profession that would betray the trust of its constituents, clients, and stakeholders. In one of the articles, authors identified four components of trust from their literature review: “Credibility of *competence*, *benevolence* of motives, *integrity* with a

23 Martin E. Dempsey, *America’s Military—A Profession of Arms White Paper* (Washington, DC: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 12, 2012), 4.

24 Linda K. Trevino, Gary R. Weaver, and Scott J. Reynolds, “Behavioral Ethics in Organizations: A Review,” *Journal of Management* 32, no. 6 (2006): 956.

25 Max H. Bazerman, and Anne E. Tenbrunsel, *Blind Spots: Why We Fail To Do What’s Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 61-76.

26 Ping Jiang cited in Roderick O’Brien, “Ethical Numbness: Glimpses of Some Lawyer Across Asia and the South Pacific,” *Journal of International Business Ethics* 5, no. 1 (2012): 41.

27 *Ibid.*, 956.

28 Jay J. Hamrog and James W. Forcade, *The Ethical Enterprise: Doing the Right Things in the Right Ways. Today and Tomorrow: A Global Study of Business Ethics* (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2006).

29 *Ibid.*

sense of fairness and honesty, [and] *predictability* of behavior.”³⁰ These components are inextricably linked to the character, competence, and commitment the Army expects of its leaders. While the senior stewards of the profession, Generals Dempsey and Odierno, recognize the value and need for ethics as an integral part of the culture of the profession of arms, it is imperative leaders also consider the lessons from business. The ethical challenges and obligations identified in the corporate domain are wholly applicable to our military’s obligation to sustain the trust vested in its profession.

Institutional Culture of the Army

As senior leaders seek to develop effective approaches to redress ethical misbehavior, voices of junior officers are joining the discourse on the Army profession.³¹ At the conclusion of Solarium 7 – a gathering of one hundred captains at Fort Leavenworth – company-grade officers contributed to a change in the recently published Army Ethic White Paper. Rather than being “Trustworthy,” they aspire to be “Trusted Army Professionals.” As younger professionals, they experience firsthand the influences of Army’s culture captured in the annual surveys of the force.

Organizational scholar Edgar Schein defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems...that 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.”³² While the Army culture espouses commitment to the Seven Army Values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage) the perception within the force is that not all members are faithful adherents. The Center for Army Leadership recently reported integrity was the most frequently cited of the Army’s Values in assessing leader effectiveness. This finding is consistent with the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) results which found integrity and inspirational as the most universally desirable leadership characteristics among fifty-eight countries.³³ Many of the organizational values in the business world apply across industries and national cultures. In this case, the same values are reflective of the Army culture and thus applicable to its leadership.

Expectations for Ethical Leadership

Clearly, as found in the GLOBE and IBM CEO studies, leaders of integrity are consistently sought and valued.³⁴ While often conflated with moral and principle-centered leadership, ethical leadership is defined as

30 Charles D. Allen and William G. Braun, “Trust: Implications for the Army Profession,” *Military Review* 93, no. 5 (September/October 2013): 73-85; see also Roger C. Mayer, James. H. Davis, and F. David Shoorman, “An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (1995): 709-734.

31 Kevin Lilley, “The Solarium: Proposals from Young Army Leaders,” *Army Times*, August 3, 2014, <http://www.armytimes.com/article/20140803/CAREERS/307280052/>.

32 Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 373-374.

33 Michael H. Hoppe and Regina Eckert, *Leader Effectiveness and Culture: The GLOBE Study* (Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 2012).

34 IBM Institute for Business Value, *Capitalizing on Complexity: Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officers Study*, 24.

the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.”³⁵ Organizational scholars have found “employees’ perceptions of their supervisors’ ethical leadership were associated with followers’ willingness to report problems to management.”³⁶ For the Army, this finding means the influence of its culture must drive self-monitoring and self-regulation of the Army profession. Thus, Army leaders should be models of ethical conduct, and service members should hold each other accountable.

The Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (2013) provides data about the willingness to report problems within the Army. Among uniformed officer and enlisted members, 81 percent rated leaders as effective in leading by example and building trust, while 8 percent disagreed. Of note, civilians rated 72 percent of their immediate civilian leaders as “effective in setting standards for integrity and character.”³⁷ Center for Army Leadership researchers found this factor was “positively related to competency, leads by example, and demonstrating Army Values.”³⁸ Some readers may be encouraged to learn that 78 percent rated civilian supervisors as effective in upholding ethical standards, while only 8 percent disagreed. Likewise, active duty uniformed members rated 85 percent of supervisors as effective with 5 percent disagreeing.³⁹

The cultural gap between civilian and uniformed members’ perceptions of leadership is revealed in the Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership findings. Among civilians, 75 percent agreed if they reported an ethical violation their senior would act to address it, while 12 percent disagreed. For uniformed members, 85 and 81 percent of active and reserve components responded positively, with 6 and 9 percent responding negatively.⁴⁰ While any negative response is problematic, around 10 percent seems reasonable, if not acceptable.

In aggregate, the Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership provides indicators of the influences of the Army’s current culture. Further, it shows organizational culture is one of the antecedents to organizational climate, along with environmental factors and individual values.⁴¹ The data from uniformed and civilian members capture their perceptions of the ethical behavior of Army leaders. If leaders are seen as ineffectual in setting and upholding ethical standards, it is easy to understand why members of the profession would

35 M. Brown, L. K. Trevino, and D. Harrison, “Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing,” cited in Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds, “Behavioral Ethics in Organizations: A Review,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 32, no. 6 (December 2006): 967.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Center for Army Leadership, 2013 *Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Army Civilian Leaders*, Technical Report 2014-02 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Leadership, 2014), 14.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, 22.

40 Center for Army Leadership, 2013 *Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Main Findings*, Technical Report 2014-01 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Leadership, 2014), 31.

41 Steven M. Jones, *Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative* (Carlisle PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2003).

be reluctant to report ethical violations. Such a culture would have an undeniable influence on behavior of leaders within Army organizations.

Organizational Climates within the Army

One consistent Army commentator on organizational climate has been LTG (retired) Walt Ulmer. In a 1987 article, he surmised the most probable source of unhealthy command climates to be “simply the lack of finely honed skills among senior leaders in diagnosing, creating, and maintaining the necessary climate for sustained excellence.”⁴² Concerning ethics, Ulmer suggested junior officers “expect and are prepared to support high ethical standards but are sometimes confused, frustrated, and disappointed by what they see as unethical behavior on the part of some of their seniors.”⁴³

Given the emphasis the Army places on being a values-based institution, its leaders must remain aware of how those values are manifest in the day-to-day experiences of junior professionals. Rather than focusing primarily on individual senior leaders, assessing the collective view of ethics within Army units and activities is instructive. More appropriate is the focus on an ethical climate as “a shared perception among organizational members regarding the criteria...of ethical reasoning within an organization.”⁴⁴

In the past, specific focus on ethics as a component of command climate was limited to actions of Army company-level commanders within the first 90 days of assumption of command. Then a follow-on survey assessed effectiveness of action plans to address identified issues. As the Army sought to resolve challenges of leadership and unit morale during the drawdown of the 1990s, it introduced the Ethical Climate Assessment Survey (ECAS) in 1997, and then included it as an appendix to Field Manual 22-100 *Army Leadership*. Developed by the Army, it has four components with associated questions: Individual Character—*Who are we?*; Unit/Workplace Policies & Practices—*What do we do?*; Unit Leader Actions—*What do I do?*; and Environmental/Mission Factors—*What surrounds us?*⁴⁵ Clearly, this survey focused on the company commander as the standard setter within the unit. Its questions are pertinent. Unfortunately, the ECAS is not valid as a research instrument: it was not rigorous in measuring what it was intended to measure.⁴⁶ Rather, it offers a first-look “freebie” assessment for junior unit leaders and the Army of a given unit’s ethical climate.

Not surprisingly, as General Walter Ulmer noted in 1998, the Army was behind in measuring organizational climate. He suggested its senior leaders embrace the optional ECAS. Ulmer noted “[had] a climate survey been routinely administered, many of the derogatory headlines of 1997 might have been avoided, or the severity of the problems attenuated by

42. Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., “The Army’s New Leadership Doctrine,” *Parameters* 17, no. 4 (December 1987): 13.

43. *Ibid.*, 15.

44. *Ibid.*

45. US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Department of the Army, 1997).

46. In other words, “instrument validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to.” See Susan Carroll, “Instrument Validity,” *Dissertation-Statistics*, <http://www.dissertation-statistics.com/instrument-validity.html>.

timely command intervention.⁴⁷ His advice rings true for the Army of today—especially since established and validated assessment instruments have been available for the Army.

One such instrument is the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) developed by Bart Victor and John Cullen.⁴⁸ Their initial research sought to identify the types of ethical climates in organizations. They identified five types:

- Instrumental: Decisions based on selfish interests (individual/group)
- Caring: Emphasis on care and concern for others
- Law and Order: Adherence to external criteria—professional codes
- Rules: Governed by policies, rules, procedures developed within organization
- Independence: Members have wide latitude to make own decisions⁴⁹

While the original research focused on organizational categories, subsequent analysis discerned these as five dimensions of ethical climate capable of being assessed independently. More recent research has identified five different ethical climate type groups or clusters. This new grouping combines Law and Order with Rules and adds Efficiency as “the degree to which employees are expected to place efficiency above all other issues.”⁵⁰ In one study, researchers found that a climate characterized by high scores in Instrumental and low scores in Law & Rules, Caring, and Efficiency was correlated with increased likelihood of ethical dilemmas and ethical non-compliance.⁵¹ Likewise, researchers also identified climate types that were correlated with positive outcomes, such as either correspondingly high assessments in Law & Rules and Caring combined with low assessments in Instrumental and Independence, or high assessments in Independence and Efficiency.⁵² Climate researchers have noted that patterns of relevant dimensions will differ with types of organizations, even within a particular industry.⁵³ Given its import, it is unfathomable that neither the Army nor Department of Defense have valid assessment tools for ethical climates.

DoD Approach to Ethics Issues

During the DoD review of ethical training programs, it became clear each armed service has its own approach to climate assessment, relying on various instruments, processes, and requirements. In December 2013, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel mandated all commands above company grade and across the armed services conduct an

47 Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., “Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another ‘Bridge Too Far?’” *Parameters* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 13.

48 Bart Victor and John B. Cullen, “A Theory and Measure of Ethical Climate in Organizations,” *Research in Corporate Social Performance and Policy* 9 (1987): 51-71; and Bart Victor and John B. Cullen, “The Organizational Bases for Ethical Work Climates,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 33 (1988): 101-125.

49 Joan B. Cullen, Bart Victor, and James W. Bronson, “The Ethical Climate Questionnaire: An Assessment of its Development and Validity,” *Psychological Reports* 73 (1993): 667-674.

50 Arthur Shacklock, Mark Manning, and Linda Hort, “Ethical Climate Type, Self-Efficacy, and Capacity to Deliver Ethical Outcome in Public Sector Human Resource Management,” *Journal of New Business Ideas & Trends* 9, no. 2 (2011): 36-37.

51 *Ibid.*, 47.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*, 36-37.

organizational climate survey.⁵⁴ Subsequently, DoD suggested the use of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS). Like the ECAS, the DEOCS has four components reflecting specific areas of interest: Military Equal Opportunity (EO), Civilian Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Organizational Effectiveness (OE), and Perceptions of Discrimination/Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention & Response (SAPR).⁵⁵

The DEOCS also gives organizations the opportunity to add a section to address local concerns. Unlike the ECAS, it is not a purely developmental instrument provided to individual leaders for their self-management and improvement. Its results are briefed to the rater of the commander or activity leader. Appropriately, the DEOCS data will be aggregated for trend analysis within services. While it has the advantages of a readily available and standardized assessment tool capable of providing a common baseline, it does not specifically address ethical climates within the US military. It appears DoD has once again succumbed to seizing what is known and readily available, rather than seeking the most appropriate tool for the task. Given the current scrutiny of senior leader ethics within DoD, it would be prudent to include an instrument like the ECQ as an ethical component of the DEOCS.

Army Approach to Ethics Issues

To their credit, Army senior leaders have persisted as stewards of the Army Profession with the establishment of the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE), the implementation of the Army Profession Campaign, and the publication of first-time doctrine for the profession in ADRP-1. The CAPE Master Army Profession and Ethics Training (MAPET) program to “train-the-trainers” has been well received within the operational and functional force. CAPE is also charged with developing, refining, and publishing The Army Ethic for the June 2015 edition of ADRP-1. The Army Chief of Staff’s use of Solarium 7 with junior officers and the Army Profession Symposium with general officers and their sergeants majors demonstrates the Chief’s focus on socializing and embedding these efforts within the Army culture. Army Secretary John McHugh hosted a similar symposium last fall for over one hundred civilian leaders in the Senior Executive Service. A review of recent articles in *Military Review* and *Parameters*, as well as US Army War College research papers, shows renewed interest in character and moral development for Army members—both uniformed and civilian. For example, analysis of the “Values-to-Virtue” gap has been offered to better align virtuous behavior with espoused Army Values. Emerging themes focus on building moral courage through developmental programs that enable members to “ethically accomplish the mission despite adversity, obstacles and challenges.”⁵⁶

54 Jessica L. Wright, “Command Climate Assessments,” Memorandum (Washington, DC: Under Secretary of Defense, July 25, 2013). See also John McHugh, “Army Command Climate Assessments. Army Directive 2013-29,” Memorandum (Washington, DC: Secretary of the Army, December 23, 2013).

55 US Department of Defense, “DEOMI Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS),” Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, January 1, 2014, http://www.deocs.net/DocDownloads/Question_FactorBreakout_2014Jan.pdf.

56 “The Army Profession: Keeping the Service on the Right Path,” *Soldiers*, June 27, 2013, <http://soldiers.dodlive.mil/tag/gen-ray-odierno/>.

However, Army leaders must also consider the untested assumptions challenged by COL Michelson as well as his conclusions. At the core of the Army's current approach is the inference that ethical failures are the results of individual shortcomings, so more training will fix the problem. Research from the field of behavioral ethics provides substantial evidence to the contrary. Consider that "Organizational culture and practices also can normalize unethical behavior, so that organizational members' unethical acts are committed thoughtlessly. In such situations...considerations of ethics never enter into the cognitive, affective, and behavioral process leading up to unethical acts."⁵⁷ As Schein notes, it is important to understand that culture is neither right nor wrong, but it may be misaligned with the environment and stated organizational principles. And misalignment leads to poor and unacceptable performance by individuals and the collective. Critically important, culture influences the day-to-day behavior of individuals in their organizational context.

Given that organizational climate is localized and linked to leaders, the ethical climate set by leaders "in which they convey ethical expectation, implications, and consequences" does "help employees make sense of behaviors that are morally equitable and morally inequitable."⁵⁸ Thus, ethical climates should be routinely monitored to strengthen the organization, including the profession. Snider clarifies the profession's quest: "Ultimately, virtuous behavior that is self-motivated and policed by the individual and the institution is the goal."⁵⁹ Strategic leaders establish and influence culture, so they should understand specific organizational climates, especially the ethical climate within Army organizations. When ethical leadership is demonstrated as the norm among organizational members, the conditions for a positive ethical climate have been set. Use of the ECQ within the Army to determine the ethical climate type and accompanying outcomes (positive and negative) would enable senior leaders to be proactive rather than reactive to ethical incidents.

In its doctrine, the Army recognizes the value to be gained from the social and behavioral sciences. Its Human Dimension Concept calls for the "Use [of] cognitive, physical, and social assessments that measure abilities," to enhance individual and organizational development along those specified components.⁶⁰ Given the Army's inherently lethal capabilities, building ethical resilience "to cope with and overcome adversity in optimally ethical ways" is of paramount importance for the profession of arms.⁶¹

57 Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds, "Behavioral Ethics in Organizations: A Review," 968.

58 Christian J. Resick, Michael B. Hargis, Ping Shao, and Scott B. Dust, "Ethical Leadership, Moral Judgments, and Discretionary Workplace Behavior," *Human Relations* 66, no. 7 (2013): 18.

59 Don M. Snider, "Addressing the Army's Values-to-Virtues Gap," *ARMY* (June 2014): 36.

60 US Department of the Army, *The US Army Concept for the Human Dimension in Full Spectrum Operations – 2015-2024*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-7 (Fort Monroe, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, Army Capabilities Integration Center, Human Dimension Concept, June 11, 2008), <http://www.arcic.army.mil/Concepts/human-dimension.aspx>.

61 Alan C. Tjeltveit and Michael C. Gottlieb, "Avoiding the Road to Ethical Disaster: Overcoming Vulnerabilities and Developing Resilience," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 47, no. 1 (March 2010): 101.

Training is Not Enough

Without doubt, the Army knows how to train. Training programs, however, are necessary but not sufficient to address the current challenges. Ethical climates provide leading indicators of potential problems, but unfortunately they are not assessed in the Army. Despite the central roles of honor codes in cadets' lives, US service academies' training in morals and values have not precluded periodic scandals within those esteemed institutions. Rather than identifying purely individual failures, post-mortem analyses have identified organizational cultures and climates from which ethical dilemmas have emerged. The final report on the West Point cheating scandal in 1976 cited "unrestrained growth of the 'cool-on-honor' subculture at the Academy, the widespread violations of the Honor Code, the gross inadequacies in the Honor System, the failure of the Academy to act decisively with respect to known honor problems, and the other Academy shortcomings."⁶² In effect, cadets and their leaders had become "numb" and "blind" to espoused ethical principles. Nearly forty years later, it appears the findings of the Borman Commission are still applicable to the larger Army and the other services.

Regardless of the drive to inculcate core military values of honor and integrity, other service academies have not been spared from ethical scandals over the succeeding decades. The United States Naval Academy endured its own honor scandal in 1994 with the revelation that 134 midshipman cheated on a take-home exam. In 2012, the United States Air Force Academy reported nearly 80 of its cadets cheated on an online test. Clearly training is not enough. Special Advisor for Military Professionalism Admiral Klein asserted "Training is about five to 10 percent of we how develop our character" as she addressed the Navy's Recruiting Training Command on ethics and professionalism.⁶³

Unethical behavior extends well beyond academic cheating to the mistreatment of others by sexual harassment and assault. As the 2005 report of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault & Violence at the Military Service Academies concludes:

...the leadership, staff, faculty, cadets and midshipmen must model behaviors that reflect and positively convey the value of women in the military. In addition we recommend the Academies use modern survey and management tools on a permanent basis to provide information to oversight bodies."⁶⁴

A decade later, this conclusion compellingly affirms the implicit principles of leadership, values, ethical behavior as well as the need to assess and monitor climate and culture of military organizations, however elite.

A Way Ahead for the Profession

Army strategic leaders are the senior stewards of the profession—those entrusted with an invaluable national asset. Accordingly, they shape and influence culture as well as set direction for the force by establishing

⁶² Frank Borman, *Report of the Special Commission to the Secretary of the Army on the United States Military Academy* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, December 15, 1976), <http://www.west-point.org/users/usma1983/40768/docs/borman.pdf>.

⁶³ Sue Krawczyk, "Rear Adm. Klein Discusses Ethics, Professionalism During RTC Tour," *America's Navy*, December 15, 2014, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=84878.

⁶⁴ G. L. Hoewing, and Deliah Rumburg, *Report of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault & Violence at Military Service Academies* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, June 2006), ES-1.

priorities aligned with the Army's ethical principles. These principles are captured explicitly in *The Army Ethic*. Senior leaders should direct two actions:

First, collaborate with and use research from social and behavioral sciences to develop evidence-based developmental (training and educational) programs with measures of effectiveness for individual character and moral development.

Second, incorporate or develop empirically validated research instruments to assess ethical climates and include them as part of the DoD or separate Army organizational climate survey. Accordingly, the Center for Army Leadership (CAL) and the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) should adopt current climate methodology to its assessment of the Army's organizational climate and its ethical climate. The Army has a categorical obligation to develop and use valid techniques and instruments, making it imperative that valid assessment instruments are developed and administered throughout the force.

Currently, the services are using the DEOCS, which is designed to address particular areas for which the secretary of defense is responsible to provide reports to the Commander-in-Chief and Congress: the current area of focus is Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR). As the DEOCS has evolved, each service will have a service-specific component of the survey of up to 25 questions (currently at 16 questions). Understandably, OSD would like to maintain consistency in data collection and reporting—however, the short-term focus precludes inclusion of other important areas like the assessment of ethical climates within the service. The survey of ethical climates will provide leading and reinforcing indicators of the four DEOCS components of EO, EEO, OE, and SAPR.

As OSD designated DEOMI as its proponent to administer service climate surveys, an executive agent should be assigned to research and develop ethical climate assessment instruments that are valid within the services and across the Department of Defense. This may entail taking existing instruments, such as the ECQ, and testing their validity and applicability to service populations. If existing assessment instruments are not generalizable to the service, then research efforts must be undertaken to develop either service-specific or DoD-wide instruments. Each service has its own research activities—for example, ARI—that could be directed to develop a research-based assessment. Once the instruments are developed, OSD must provide new or modify existing policy for its administration within the operational force and across the services. Within the Army, its Commanding General, Training and Doctrine Command (CG, TRADOC) has designated CAL as the proponent for surveys like the CASAL.

Conclusion—Leaders as Stewards of the Army Profession

Senior leaders do matter. They play a critical role in every organization, especially the Army. Only the senior stewards of the profession can design and implement the changes needed to meet the US military's ethical challenges. For the today's military profession, the 2005 Defense

Task Force conclusions should be modified to provide direction and guidance.

The Army's organizations should have leaders at all levels who understand the strength of the Army's culture; they should redress the unbalanced focus on competence that is contributing to a weakening of the trust the Army needs from its members and the society it serves. Effective assessments and programs aimed at developing ethical climates will enable leaders to take the necessary actions to make the Army the trusted profession our nation needs.

