

2009-05

# Character Development Education — A Proposal for New Curriculum at the US Air Force Academy

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Master's Thesis

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION –  
A PROPOSAL FOR NEW CURRICULUM  
AT THE US AIR FORCE ACADEMY

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

2009

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## Introduction

During the Iraq War there have been some examples of abusive behavior of US military members towards Iraqi insurgents. The torture at Abu Ghraib and shooting of captured insurgents are examples of military members who had not internalized a moral behavior in warfare. There have also been reports in the media of US military members desecrating the Koran. I believe that warfare is an inherently amoral activity. By amoral, I mean that there are rules for how to conduct war. This means that the morality of an action can be determined as moral or not depending on whether those rules are followed or not. There are many examples of atrocities that are committed in warfare, but there are also examples of self sacrifice. I don't believe that it is warfare itself that makes people behave one way or the other, but rather the moral and ethical sensitivities of the warriors involved. My research has also showed me that these moral and ethical sensitivities can be taught to people throughout life. The purpose of this paper is to describe how these sensitivities can be taught to today's Airmen<sup>1</sup>. This education will be based primarily on the moral development theories of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan.

It is important for societies to develop children into moral adults, people whose behavior is socially acceptable. Althof and Berkowitz (2006) point out that

It is not enough for a society to be populated with benign hedonists, as a truly civil society needs citizens to care about the general welfare and those who cannot advocate for themselves. Human beings need to understand that they 'share a common humanity' and that respect must

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the Air Force are referred to as Airmen, no matter what rank or gender they have. It is also accepted practice to capitalize the word, just as the Marine Corps does when it refers to Marines.

extend ‘from particular persons to society in general. Nor is it adequate to have a strong and clear legal system to proscribe immoral and prescribe moral behavior; we have all heard the dictum: ‘you can’t legislate morality.’ No law is people-proof: ill-intended people will find a way around the law. For a society to truly thrive and endure, it needs citizens who are intrinsically and actively pro-social. Human societies require education for pro-social development, or, as we have called it more generally, positive youth development. (Althof and Berkowitz 2006, 496)

Throughout the histories of philosophy and psychology, attempts have been made to understand the essence of morality and to explain what it means to live a moral life. There has been much progress along the way. “The questions concerning moral life to which answers are sought are much clearer; weaknesses in early philosophical and psychological theories seeking to explain moral life have been revealed. And there is an accumulating store of information about human nature that can inform efforts to understand the moral domain (Hart 1997, 165)”. Carr noted that there were several early 20<sup>th</sup> century theories of people’s moral development and education.

- (1) [Emile] Durkheim’s claim that autonomous obedience to some consensual conception of common social good is needed to sustain civil cohesion in post-religious or secular societies;
- (2) Freudian and other psychoanalytic location of the origins of moral conscience in early psychological conflicts and the mechanisms of repression;
- (3) Behaviorist efforts to conceive moral formation in terms of (socially) conditioned responses to stimuli;
- (4) Jean Piaget’s groundbreaking attempt to provide a cognitive-developmental account of moral reason and judgment. (Carr 2007, 389)

The social and political turmoil of the 1960 led to new interest in the question of morality and moral values. New approaches to socializing youth were proposed in response to societal questioning of moral values. Three of these responses were moral education, values clarification, and character education (Althof and Berkowitz 2006, 497-498).

I don't think that there is any doubt that it is important that we develop moral individuals. The question that remains is what it means to be a moral individual. Not only is it important to determine how we develop moral individuals, i.e. people who mostly make moral decisions, we must also identify what constitutes moral thinking and behavior.

This paper will propose that the Center for Character and Leadership Development at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) can contribute to the field of moral development by creating a longitudinal study on moral thinking. This study will on two questions, namely from where people learn morality and what the connection is between moral knowledge and moral action. The author has an assumption that the Air Force consists of a cross section of the American population as a whole, concentrated on the ages between 18 and 30. They are also concentrated in relatively few bases, which would make it relatively easy and cheap to interview a large amount of people. Even if such a study is done, that alone would not be enough to further the character education of our Airmen. We cannot wait to develop our Airmen's character education until this study is completed. Thus, in the meantime, this paper further suggests that the cadets discuss Kohlberg's moral dilemmas. However, these dilemmas need to be tailored to their situation. They need to reflect situations which young officers might encounter. This way we further the moral thinking of the Airmen using tools that are available and that have a proven value. At the same time we also prepare more effective tools that can developed in the future based on knowledge that we acquire by

researching the moral influences on our Airmen and the process in which they convert that knowledge in to practice.

### **Moral Development**

Although there is much research on how people develop morally, the process is not well understood. According to (Power 1997) there are two steps involved in moral development. First there is a cognitive process, where children develop their moral knowledge. Then there is a motivational process where children feel responsible for acting on their knowledge and give a priority to moral concerns over immediate needs and interests (Power 1997, 202). The question how people internalize this process remains. What is the process in which we act on our moral knowledge? That question does not seem to be well understood.

In the military, morality is often defined as “doing the right thing when no one is looking.” I feel that doing the right thing when no one is looking is the easy part. It seems to me that it is harder to do the right thing when there is peer pressure to do the wrong thing. For example, it is easier not to take drugs when one is all alone. It is much harder to do the same when I am in a room full of people who will tell me that I am not “cool” for not doing drugs together with them. Or in military terms, it is easy to mistreat prisoners when we call Iraqi insurgents “Jihadis<sup>2</sup>.” This is especially true when groups of prison guards encourage one another in these behaviors. In these cases it takes much

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<sup>2</sup> Insurgents and other fundamentalist Muslims are often called Jihadis by US military members in an attempt to dehumanize them. My purpose in using this term is to describe the term as used by some military members. The author does not share this view and does not want to imply any denigration of any Iraqis or Muslims.

courage to do the right thing. In other words, we need to develop Airmen who will do the right thing when everyone is looking.

Most USAFA cadets are suited for moral development because of the rigorous entrance requirements for admission to the school. The Academy has a unique application process. In order to apply one has to get a letter of recommendation from a member of the US House of Representatives, a senator, or from the US President. This means that most of the applicants are either children of military members, outstanding students or active in civil causes. Hart (1997) reports a study where he compared the moral development of adolescents of Camden, NJ, who had demonstrated sustained commitments to care for others with adolescents who had not. He chose Camden for his study because it is one of the poorest communities in the US and because it has a large number of youth. The ratio of child to adult there is nearly 1 to 2 as opposed to the 1 to 3 ratio in the neighboring suburbs (Hart 1997, 175). Fifteen adolescents were chosen for intensive study among those nominated. He then compared them with comparison adolescents of the same age, gender, ethnicity, and neighborhood. He reported that there were three main factors that determined if the adolescents were going to make commitments to others. These factors were attributing more moral characteristics to their ideal selves, incorporating more of their maternal images in themselves, and perceiving more self-continuity over time (Hart 1997, 178). He found that moral features “were more central to the identities of the care exemplars than to the identities of the comparison adolescents (Hart 1997, 176). His research indicated that the “self-descriptions to descriptions of mothers was greater among care exemplars than it was

among the comparison adolescents (Hart 1997, 177), indicating that mothers are more significant within their identities. In addition, he noticed that the exemplar adolescents had a perception of greater continuity and coherence in their lives than did the comparisons. He writes that

We calculated the average resemblance of the current self to five temporal selves described by each participant: the self of 5 years ago; the self of 2 years ago; the self 2 years in the future; the self of 5 years in the future; and the self in adulthood. On average, the care exemplars perceived greater similarity between their current selves and their selves of the past and the future than did the comparison adolescents. This suggests that the exemplars perceived greater continuity and coherence in their identity than did the comparison adolescents. (Hart 1997, 176-177)

Power (1997) also mentions the importance of self worth in terms of moral behavior. He writes:

Insofar as inherent self-worth derives from a moral insight into the basic worth of and respect due to all persons, it implies an awareness of one's responsibility to live out what Kant calls one's *sublime moral vocation*. The insight into one's inherent self-worth derives from the 'golden rule' of mutual respect (Power 1997, 233).

These are significant findings. There is no doubt that parents, teachers, and other role models are important for moral development (Hart 1997; Berkowitz 1999). In addition, the self-image piece is also important. Hart (1997) reports that the care exemplars "were not more sophisticated than the comparison adolescents in terms of their moral judgment, at least as measured by the Kohlberg scale (Hart 1997, 177)." This means that there is no inherent difference in moral thinking between the exemplar adolescents and the control group. Does this mean that moral behavior is partly a question of self-perception, and not only moral development? It seems logical that there should be a connection. One would think that a person who sees himself or herself as a

moral individual, and who thinks that moral behavior is important, would act that way more often than one who does not. On the other hand, it seems logical that a person who is not concerned about moral behavior would not show high moral actions. If this is indeed true, the question becomes how we can foster this self-image in our young Airmen. How can we encourage them to internalize that moral behavior is important is an important question for future research.

Part of the answer lies in the importance of role models as we have seen. Thus, one of the answers to the question of how we can help young people internalize moral behavior is by creating effective role models whom they can emulate. This can be done either formally, through moral education, or informally, by making parents and teachers more aware of the impact they have on others. This, however, is not the entire answer to our question because there are people who have positive role models in their lives, yet behave in activities that we all would not consider proper moral behavior. As we will see below, we don't understand the process of how we internalize our role models' behavior in to our own lives, which again leads us to the conclusion that more research is needed in this area.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

#### Lawrence Kohlberg and moral development

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory revolutionized thinking on how humans develop morally. He provided "a new way to look at morality beyond that of virtues and traits (Narvaez 1997, 119)". Kuhmerker (1991) writes that

Until the middle of the twentieth century it was generally assumed that morality was a consequence of cultural transmission, an accumulation of ‘inputs’ that hopefully, eventually, would lead to moral behavior.” Psychoanalysis identified the kind of impediments that could distort moral development; other traditions viewed moral development as a process of maturation in which the environment provided the necessary nourishment for the natural and gradual unfolding of the organism. (Kuhmerker (1991, 1)

Kohlberg, on the other hand developed a theory which describes various stages of moral behavior. Originally, his theory was based on a longitudinal study of American males. Later he tested it cross-culturally by interviewing people from several countries such as s, Taiwan, Japan and India. He tested them by telling them a moral dilemma which the subjects had to answer. He then compared the answers and found that the moral reasoning was consistent across cultures. Kohlberg points out in Kuhmerker (1991) that “By now (1985), over fifty cross-cultural studies on moral stage development have been done. To summarize the findings in one sentence: the first four stages are found in almost all cultures, the fifth stage in all complex urban cultures and elaborated systems of education like Taiwan, Japan, and India (Kuhmerker 1991, 16).

The most famous of his moral stories, perhaps, is the Heinz story. It is about a woman who is near death from a special kind of cancer. There is one drug that might save her life, a form of radium that a druggist in her town just discovered. The druggist paid \$400 for the radium and charged \$4000 for a small dose of the drug. The husband asked his friends and acquaintances if they could lend him the money. In addition, he tried to get the money in any other legal way. He was able to gather about \$2000. He told the druggist about his wife’s situation and asked the druggist if he could sell it cheaper or if Heinz could pay him the rest later. But the druggist refused to sell it

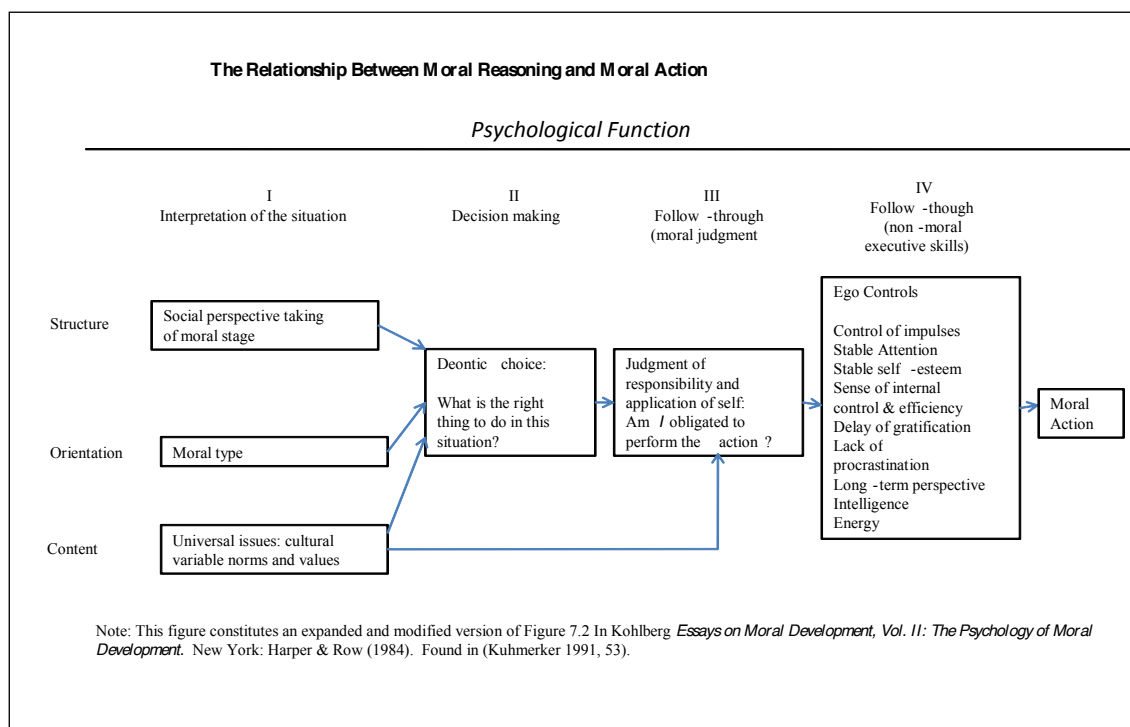
cheaper because he felt that he had a right to make money off the drug. Heinz, getting desperate, considers breaking in to the druggist's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz steal the drug? Why or why not? (Kuhmerker 1991, 20) Kohlberg is not really interested in the "yes" or "no" answer. Instead he focuses on the reasoning why a person answers "yes" or "no," since the reasoning tells the researcher what level of thinking the person demonstrates.

Kohlberg does not concentrate on moral behavior. In other words, his focus is not the individual action, but rather on the cognitive process that leads to the action. Thus, one could say that he is more interested in the internal process that leads to the moral decision making, rather on the behavior itself. A mature adult and a young child may both resist stealing, demonstrating the same behavior. But their reasons for not stealing may be different. One would assume that the adult has a more sophisticated reason for his or her behavior than the child. The child might not steal because he or she might get caught and punished. The adult, on the other hand, might resist it because society could not function if people stole. Kohlberg's research demonstrated that a person's behavior might not indicate a difference in his or her moral maturity. What does differ, however, is the person's reason for the behavior (Duska and Whelan 1975, 43).

This focus on cognition does not mean that moral behavior does not matter. Kohlberg believes that a higher level of moral thinking will lead to moral behavior. They are linked together in a four-step sequence that "leads from the person's interpretation of the sociomoral situation (What is going on here? What moral claims do the persons involved have?), to a follow-up judgment of responsibility (Am I the person who is

obligated to perform this action?), to a consideration of non-moral executive skills and ego controls. These controls include stable attention, an internal sense of efficacy, self-esteem, the ability to control impulses, delay gratification and avoid procrastination, a long-term perspective, physical and mental energy, and intelligence (See Fig. 1) (Kuhmerker 1991, 52).

Figure 1:



Kohlberg's research led him to postulate six stages, which he divided into three levels; the Preconventional Level, covering stages one and two; the Conventional Level, covering stages three and four; and the Postconventional, Autonomous, or Principled Level, covering stages five and six. Each stage is characterized by a distinctive type of moral reasoning, common to that stage. The reasoning involves the consideration of the choices, values, and sanctions that an individual must attend to in order to make a moral

decision. For the person at the preconventional level egocentric desires, either to please others or to avoid punishment is the motivator of moral choice. At the conventional level, it is social restraints that constitute the basis for a moral decision. Once a person reaches the postconventional level, decisions are derived from an orientation to universal moral principles such as respect for the sanctity of life. As the moral reasoning of the individual develops through each stage, the moral reasoning becomes more complex, more comprehensive, more integrated, and more differentiated than the reasoning of the earlier stages, reflecting the qualitative differences between the stages (Sapp 1986, 272-273).

It should be noted at this point, that Kohlberg's stages do not proceed by age level. Unlike other developmental theories like those of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson, which are tied to biological maturation, Kohlberg's stages are tied to moral growth. Thus, an adult could be reasoning at stage one. Usually, however, adults tend to have at least reached stage 3 or 4.

The first level is called the "Preconventional Level" and this is when a person responds to cultural rules and labels such as right or wrong, good and bad. However he or she interprets them in terms of either the physical or hedonistic consequences of an action such as punishment, reward or exchange of favors, or in terms of the physical power of those who articulate the rules and labels. This level consists of two stages; "Punishment and obedience orientation" and "Instrumental relativist orientation." At the first stage, the physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness without any regards of the meaning or value of those consequences. There is also a value

in avoiding punishment and an unquestioning deference to power. These values are based on egocentric perception and are not connected to any underlying moral order which is supported by punishment or authority. This connection between a person's action and an underlying moral order occurs first in stage four. The second stage, "Instrumental relativist orientation," is achieved when the child realizes that a correct action is one which satisfies the child's own needs, and sometimes also the needs of others. There are elements of fairness, reciprocity, and equal sharing present, but these elements are always understood in a physical and pragmatic way. Reciprocity is not about loyalty, gratitude, or justice, but rather, of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours (Munsey 1980, 91)."

By the second level, the "Conventional Level" a child realizes that there is a value in its own right in maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation, regardless of any immediate or obvious consequences. There is a loyalty in maintaining, supporting, and justifying the social order, not only conforming to personal expectations of the order. In addition, the child identifies with the persons or group involved with it. This level also consists of two stages, namely the "Interpersonal concordance or 'good boy-nice girl' orientation," and the "'Law and order' orientation. During the third stage good behavior is defined as something that pleases or helps others and which is approved by them. At this point, there is conformity to stereotypical images of what is considered majority or "natural" behavior. Intentions become important at this point. One earns approval by being "nice" and the concept "She means well" is important for the first time. The fourth stage, the "'Law and order' orientation," moves

the person toward authority, fixed rules and maintaining the social order. The person shows right behavior by doing one's duty, showing proper respect for authority, and by maintaining the given social order for its own sake (Munsey 1980, 91-92).

The third and final level, the "Postconventional, Autonomous, or Principles Level" is reached when there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity and application separate from the authority of the groups or persons who hold these same values and apart from the person's own identification with these groups. Here too, there are two stages, namely "social-contract legalistic orientation," and "universal ethical-principle orientation." The fifth stage, "Social-contract legalistic orientation," usually has utilitarian overtones. Right action is usually defined in terms of general individual rights as well as in terms of critically examined standards that have been agreed upon by the entire society. There is also a clear understanding of the relativism of personal opinions and values as well as a corresponding stress on procedural rules for achieving consensus. Right is also a matter of personal "values" and "opinion" aside from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon. As a result, there is an emphasis on the "legal point of view." However, there is also an emphasis of the possibility that the law can be changed in terms of rational considerations of social utility. Outside the legal realm, contract and free agreement is the binding element of obligation. In the sixth and final stage, right is defined by the decision of conscience. This conscience is in accord with self-chosen ethical principles that appeal to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are, however, abstract and ethical, they are not concrete moral rules. They are, thus, more like "the

Golden Rule” than the “Ten Commandments.” These principles are the universal ones of justice, of the reciprocity, and equality of human rights. At the same time they also respect the dignity of human beings as individual persons (Munsey 1980, 92-93)

Kohlberg contended that when people of different ages were presented with hypothetical moral conflicts they reasoned at different levels of sophistication and functioned from different moral perspectives. However, the construct underlying their levels of moral development was the ethic of justice (Sapp 1986, 260).

Kohlberg also described four general principles for his theory, namely that (1) the stage development is invariant, (2) that people cannot comprehend moral reasoning more than one stage above their own, (3) that people are cognitively attracted to reasoning one stage above their own, and (4) that movement through the stages is effected when cognitive disequilibrium is created. These 4 qualities of stage development can be described as follows:

1. *Stage development is invariant.* One must progress through the stages in order, and one cannot get to a higher stage without passing through the stage immediately preceding it. Thus, one cannot get to stage four without passing through stages one, two and three respectively. Moral development is growth and, like all growth, takes place according to a pre-determined sequence. To expect someone to grow into high moral maturity overnight would be like expecting someone to walk before he crawls.

2. *In stage development, subjects cannot comprehend moral reasoning at a stage more than one stage beyond their own.* Thus a person at stage two, who discriminates good and bad based on his own pleasure and reciprocity with another,

cannot comprehend reasoning at stage four which appeals to fixed duties which might not offer any promise of reward or pleasure. Since stage four reasoning requires an orientation quite different from stage two reasoning, a series of cognitive readjustments must be made in order for stage four reasoning to be comprehended.

3. *In stage development subjects are cognitively attracted to reasoning one level above their own predominant level.* A stage one person will be attracted by stage two reasoning, a stage two person by stage three reasoning, and so on. Reasoning at higher stages is cognitively more desirable than reasoning at lower stages. Thus it resolves problems and dilemmas in a more satisfactory way. Reasoning at one stage higher is more attractive because it makes more sense and resolves more difficulties.

4. *In stage development, movement through the stage is effected when cognitive disequilibrium is created.* If a person's cognitive outlook is not able to cope with a given moral dilemma, a person will look for more adequate ways of dealing with it. In that case, the cognitive organism adjusts to a frame work that solves the dilemma. Thus, if a person's orientation is not disturbed (there is no cognitive disequilibrium) there is no reason to expect any development. (Duska and Whelan 1975, 47-49).

#### Criticism of Kohlberg

There have been some significant criticisms of Kohlberg's theory. Narvaez (1997) describes nine critical contentions against Kohlberg. The first criticism is that "*Kohlberg focuses on one small piece of morality in terms of important psychological processes.*" As we have shown earlier, the key to moral development in Kohlberg lies in moral judgment based on cognition. Thus, if you can identify the stage of the person's moral

judgment, then you have a window into his or her motivations, sensitivities, and potential for action. The problem is that many scientists feel that moral judgment is too narrow a focus for moral psychology (Narvaez 1997, 120-121). People are more complicated than Kohlberg seems to indicate.

The second criticism is that *Kohlberg focuses only on one piece of morality in terms of justice*. The difficulty is that Kohlberg focuses on justice rather than caring. Once again the problem is that Kohlberg's focus is too narrow. People do not only think of morality in terms of justice. The problem is that Kohlberg does not consider the needs of others and responsibility for one's actions, which are also motivators for moral reasoning and moral action.

The third criticism is that "*Kohlberg overextended Piaget's operations to moral thinking*." Kohlberg intended to logically build his moral stage development in a similarly manner as Piaget did with logical operations. However, his attempt has been described as inadequate (Narvaez 1997, 121-122)

The fourth problem that other researchers have had with Kohlberg's theory is that *Kohlberg's hard-stage model is too strict*. Moral research data have rarely, if ever, supported a hard-stage model where a person's functioning can be defined by one stage. Even Piaget maintained a softer view of this issue (Narvaez 1997, 122) Once again it seems that Kohlberg's theory is simplistic because people can be in more than one stage at any one time.

The fifth criticism of Kohlberg is that his *method is overly dependent on verbal expressiveness*. People know more than they are able to express in words. The newer

moral development tests, such as the DIT<sup>3</sup>, tests recognition memory as opposed to interviews which usually reward verbal articulation with higher scores (Narvaez 1997, 122).

The sixth trouble that researchers have with this theory is that *in Kohlberg's interview studies there is little evidence for stages 5 and 6 thinking*. The problem here is that the results of some moral development tests depend on the way that the researcher gathers his or her information. If the researcher uses an interview methodology where the respondent has to articulate philosophical argumentation in order to get a high moral judgment score, it is rare to find someone who reaches the highest stages. However, if the researcher uses a newer test such as the DIT, then there is more evidence of postconventional thinking (Narvaez 1997, 122).

The seventh critique that has been made of against Kohlberg's theory is that he *underestimates children's moral capabilities*. Both Piaget and Kohlberg made high demands for evidence of moral development on child subjects. Later research has shown that children have more capacities for moral development than is evidenced through Kohlbergian and neo-Kohlbergian research. However, many of the tests used in moral development such as the DIT are tailored to adolescents and adults and do not tell us much about children's moral development (Narvaez 1997, 122).

The eighth criticism is that *Kohlberg confuses two domains: convention and morality*. Even though Kohlberg connects these two concepts, there is a view that

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<sup>3</sup> DIT (Defining Issues Test) is a tool for measuring moral judgment. It consists of "several dilemmas and sets of considerations for respondents to rate and rank according how important they are for making a decision about the dilemma (Narvaez 1997, 120)."

morality and convention should be separated from each other because they follow different tracks. Unfortunately, research does not bear out this criticism. Narvaez does mention that domain theory studies does show that people often distinguish one kind of action from another. However, there is no evidence that they make this distinction on moral grounds. He quotes other researchers by stating that “From the subjects’ perspectives..., the two classes of actions may be differentiated and yet be seen as equally moral, in the same way that adults differentiate altruism and honesty within the domain of morality (Narvaez 1997, 123).” He therefore argues that this is a developmental matter. Rather than separating convention from morality, Narvaez agrees with Kohlberg that moral development is about moving people from preconventional, through conventional, to postconventional thinking. During adolescence, when the most important growth of moral development occurs, convention and moral thinking is seen as equal. However, during the college years, the two become separate as a person moves to postconventional thinking (Narvaez 1997, 122-123).

The final issue mentioned by Narvaez (1997) is that *culture overwhelms developmental differences in morality*. Some researchers have argued that culture tells us more about people’s moral development than the individual person’s development. Other research, however, has shown that there is a higher variability within cultures than between them. Narvaez answers the critics when he states that

The data indicate developmental differences worldwide in terms of the preconventional and conventional types of moral thinking, so culture does not overwhelm justice moral thinking as currently measured. Development in tacit postconventional moral thinking, as measured by the DIT, is evident worldwide as well but is dependent on an education system that fosters critical thinking. Explicit postconventional reasoning

is exhibited largely only among those who participate in deliberative, focused study (Narvaez 1997, 123-124).

In spite of this criticism and taking them into account, Kohlberg's theories can still provide a good framework for strengthening the moral awareness of cadets attending USAFA. There are several reasons why Kohlberg's theory of development provides a good framework for the purposes of this study. First of all, it is important to focus on moral development, because of its importance in warfare. As mentioned earlier, warfare itself does not make a person behave morally or in an immoral manner. The choice comes down to the warfighter himself or herself. The hope is, therefore, that internalizing moral development thinking will lead to members of our armed forces to make better moral decisions. The second reason why Kohlberg's theory is relevant to the Airmen is that they are all American men and women. There is a minority of military members who are not American citizens, but they too work and live as Americans and in our culture. Since I am focusing on American men and women over the age of 18, it does not matter for my purposes if Kohlberg's theories do not apply to children and non-westerners. Finally, even if Kohlberg is too tied to his stages, and even if it is hard to reach the higher ones, his theory is useful for my purposes because it is quantifiable. Discussing moral dilemmas can help sort out the Airmen's moral thinking process. At the same time Kohlberg's model can show how the Airmen's moral thinking progresses.

There are, however, weakness with this approach as well that should not be overlooked. The largest issue is the question if moral awareness indeed leads to moral action. Many of Narvaez' (1997) criticisms indicate that there are many people would score highly when questioned about their moral thinking, but who do not necessarily act

morally in their everyday life. It is possible that this weakness could be overcome through repetition. The hope is that the cadets' behavior will reflect their moral thinking by making them think through several moral dilemmas. By repeating various dilemmas several times, they will hopefully internalize their moral thinking, leading them to act in accordance with their moral thinking. Then when they encounter difficult situations in a war-time environment, they will act in an acceptable level automatically.

In February USAFA hosted its annual National Character and Leadership Symposium. Dr. Marvin Berkowitz, who is a student of Kohlberg, was one of the presenters. He mentioned that there is a need for further research in two basic areas. The first of these is the question of where people learn morality. The second issue is between moral knowledge and moral action, an issue that we have already noticed. His point was that when asked, people will often tell researchers that their moral thinking comes from role models such as parents and teachers. It is logical to assume that there are other factors besides those two that determine an individual's moral development. What about an individual's personal experiences, other impacting factors on a person's life such as friends, social or religious pressures, or influences that occur beyond childhood and adolescence when people are away from parental influence. There is definitely room for a further understanding of this area. We have already seen questions about the relationship between moral knowledge and moral action. Once again we need a greater understanding of this connection.

### Carol Gilligan

Carol Gilligan studied under Kohlberg and later became his colleague at Harvard. She noticed that women tended to get stuck in level three under Kohlberg's system of moral development. She also found that women tend to think differently than men. The reason for this is that Kohlberg uses justice as his basis for advanced moral reasoning and that this penalized those who focus on interpersonal relationships, like women tend to do (Gump, Baker, and Roll 2000, 68). This means that not only is women's moral development different from men's, but also that their development has been judged using a model which is masculine in nature (Woods 1996, 376-377). She argues that women tend to reason about moral dilemmas in different ways than men in that, because of their acculturation, they prefer to consider the "web of interpersonal relationships rather than hierarchies and rules (Sneed, et al. 2006, 788)." Thus Gilligan is mostly concerned with relationships, letting people be heard for who they are, and with listening for moral language in dilemmas that are embedded in their lives. Therefore she avoids abstractions that are a prerequisite for Kohlberg's hard and simple stages (Jorgensen 2006, 189).

Gilligan criticized two main bases for Kohlberg's theory, namely his claim that the stages are universal and that his point that most female traits have low status in Kohlberg's model (Woods 1996, 377). The first of these criticisms is based on the fact that his theory was based on longitudinal studies of only male subjects. She also questions whether Kohlberg's theory is universal when it comes to men as well. She seems to be similar to Erik Erikson in the sense that she feels that conflicts and issues present themselves throughout life. She states that

You can't talk about development apart from culture and history. And you could see all of my work as, what happens when you put a woman's life, or women's lives, into a history that hasn't carried those lives, and how it changes. It affects the lives of when you have no resonance coming back that reflects your experience ... And then I say, not only women, but also people of colour (Sic.), people of all those sexualities that we call different. And it suddenly becomes very clear, it certainly became very clear to me, that what was being called development, was a very particular slice through ... you know ... development. And that this was being held up as the ideal. (Jorgensen 2006, 186)

Similarly, Woods (1996) argues that one universal model of morality might not even exist and that morality could be described by what is found to be meaningful in a specific culture (Woods 1996, 379).

In regards to women, Gilligan argued that women's knowledge of the importance of intimacy, relationships, and care, has traditionally been seen as intuition, not development. She notes that, ironically, men seem to discover the value of this knowledge in mid-life, which could be seen as very late moral development by Gilligan's standards. In addition, she also argues that women define themselves in their ability to care in addition to through the intimacy of their human relationships (Woods 1996, 378). Gilligan points out that attachment, connectedness, intimacy, and empathy might be more important in women's personality development, than in men's. This is consistent with research that has indicated that masculinity tends to be associated with a high level of instrumentality (i.e. being assertive, independent, and decisive), while femininity is connected with affection, expressiveness, caring, and warmth. In a society which emphasizes autonomous, independent functioning, traditionally feminine low instrumentality may be viewed as indicating a developmental deficit. This tendency may become so pervasive that low instrumentality may even be expressed negatively in

psychological and psychiatric literature. This is true even if it is associated with such positive traits as interpersonal affiliation, prosocial behavior, and cooperation (Sneed, et al. 2006, 788).

In response to Kohlberg, Gilligan undertook research with women out of which she proposed an alternate theory for the development of female's moral reasoning based on the degree of compassion and connection between self and others which is manifested in the peace and harmony in relationships. In her new theory, she identified three stages. She viewed "women as progressing from initial selfishness (first level) to caring primarily for others (second level) and finally to an integration of concern for the needs of both self and others (third level) (Gump, Baker, and Roll 2000, 68)."

According to Gilligan, one explanation of the gender differences between men and women is that they are socialized in different manners throughout their childhood and adolescence. This different socialization could lead to basic differences in identity formation among men and women. In general, women's identity formation originates in the context of relationships because girls tend to identify with their mothers who themselves are relationally oriented. Men, on the other hand, tend to form their identity in a context of separation because they tend to identify with their fathers who often are more distant and unavailable. Girls' relationships are often characterized by intimate friendships and cooperation, while boys' tend to interact in groups that are characterized by competitiveness and rough play. This means that women tend to value family affiliation and closeness to a higher degree than men and often see their parents as being a more important source of emotional support than men. Another consequence is that

parental attachment has been found to play a more important role in identity formation among women than among men. It also means that close family relationships tend to be more strongly associated with psychological welfare among women than men, especially during adolescence and early childhood (Sneed, et al. 2006, 788).

It would be a mistake to think that Gilligan and Kohlberg are mutually exclusive. Even Gilligan herself believes that all people operate out of both concerns for care and justice. She argued that women were more prone to caring and men to justice (Jorgensen 2006, 188). There are several examples showing that both men and women function in both realms, namely justice as well as care. Sneed, et al. (2006) demonstrates that family contact tends to decrease for both men and women as they emerge into adulthood, although it did decrease faster for men than for women. Secondly, both romance, a care factor, and finance instrumentality, a justice factor, increased for both genders at the same rate. Thirdly, the age-changing relationship between instrumentality and family contact was negative for both men and women even though the negative association decreased with age in gender-specific ways (Sneed, et. al. 2006, 794). In addition, there are times when both men and women find it necessary to become detached from emotions and apply reason in specific cases, as men seem culturally equipped to do. Similarly, there are occasions where one has to focus less on issues regarding rights and fairness and more on connecting with other human beings, as women seem better able at doing. However, usually the two approaches of care and justice play together in a seamless stream of moral reasoning in real-life dilemmas. Gilligan herself summarized this when she stated the following:

The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpolation rather than to present a generalization about either sex. (Jorgensen 2006, 189-190)

Both Kohlberg and Gilligan's models can have positive consequences for the men and women who serve in the US Armed Forces. Although most of the military tend to stay in the male domains, the aspect of relationships and caring are important as well. It is well known that infantry brigades and other front-line units try to maintain strong unit cohesion, which means that each person in the unit have the obligation to look out for the welfare of all the other members. This sense of camaraderie is stressed during basic military education, including at USAFA, because of its great importance. At the same time high instrumentality is vital for waging a successful military campaign. Thus, one could perhaps justifiably claim that the military combines both aspects at the same time.

Both care and justice might also be important to Airmen because they combine two challenges that many military members currently face, namely how to combine the high instrumentality of modern warfare with the low instrumentality of decompressing when returning home. Over the past five years there have been reports of military members returning home who have abused their families and who have committed suicide after returning home. One could perhaps speculate that there is an internal conflict between justice and care domain for these people. Also the strains caused by continuous deployments all too often disconnect military members from their families. It is important that the future officers who attend USAFA are aware of both care and justice

and are taught to respect both of them. It might therefore be beneficial if a future moral development curriculum address both domains and teaches the cadets to become aware of them. That way they can help their Airmen to both become effective warfighters during war situations and connect more intimately with their families as they return home.

### **Moral Development vs Moral Education**

President Theodore Roosevelt once said that “to educate someone in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society (Ellenwood 2007, 21). However, educating morality is difficult for many reasons. Kristjánsson (2006) describes three problems in character education. The first is the empirical problem which states that young people need moral role models while they are at an impressionable age and that the moral quality of such role models has supposedly lately deteriorated. He calls the second issue, the methodological problem. This is based on the idea that if you present someone a model for emulation, the students will somehow find his or her behavior attractive and will then emulate it by latching on to it and then copy it. The problem here is that moral educators simply want to replace copycat vice with copycat virtue. They seem to present an unsophisticated, undemanding and uncritical model that they want emulated. Ultimately, however, this model is practically devoid of cognitive content. The third issue is the substantive moral problem. This means that sometimes the character educator looks for the emulation or imitation of *persons* rather than the *qualities* that the person displays. Or in other words, one could hold up people for emulation even though one cannot explain what it is about them which is worthy of emulation and without being able to

state exactly what quality we want the students to acquire. All we tell the students is that they should have *this* quality that the person/hero/leader has (Kristjánsson 2006, 39-41).

The answer according to Kristjánsson is to develop role models. He describes Aristotle's basic virtues and explains that four components are required to be considered a virtue. The following are needed:

- (1) The emotion of distress at the relative absence amongst ourselves of desired, honoured goods which someone else possesses;
- (2) the zeal to make efforts to deservingly acquire similar goods without taking them away from the emulated other;
- (3) true self-understanding and rational self-persuasion, which directs us towards goods that are attainable for us and, thus, towards future honours of which we can realistically become worthy;
- and (4) a striving for goods that are 'appropriate attributes of the good' (Kristjánsson 2006, 44)

He explains that these virtues have affective, conative, cognitive, and behavioral elements included in them, which are all useful in the context of role-model education. There, the affective element would "be a kind of pain at my relative lack of a desired quality, possessed by the role model." The conative element would be "the motivation to acquire such a quality (without, of course, taking anything away from the role model)"; the cognitive element would "consists of the development of an understanding of why this quality, displayed to a pronounced degree by the role model, is something that I deem morally worthy of being valued by me, and what reasonable ways there are for me to transform myself in order to acquire it." Finally, the behavioral element "would involve the actual striving for this quality (Kristjánsson 2006, 45)." Kristjánsson explains that the goal for his model is two fold. First he hopes that it will highlight moral content, which are the reasons why the specific quality to be emulated is morally commendable

and how it contributes to human well-being. Secondly, he hopes that it will encourage the learner to create a demand for self-transformation.

This idea of using role models should be expanded in the military. Over the past ten years, the Air Force has had several official mentoring programs in place. The point of these programs is to allow young enlisted and officers to learn from their superiors. At some locations the commanding officer has insisted on a formal program and at others it has worked on an informal basis. The results have been mixed, depending on how much the commanding officer has emphasized the program and on the relationship between the senior and junior members. The idea, however, is a good one. It just needs to be reformulated to become more effective. A program does not become effective because it becomes mandatory. That only happens when the program becomes meaningful, particularly to the junior members, because senior people tend to be interested in developing those below them. At least in the author's experience, many senior members whether officers or enlisted, tend to be interested in making sure that tomorrow's leaders are as prepared, or hopefully better equipped for leadership as they. So how, then, do we make mentoring programs more effective? The program needs to deal with questions that face the junior partner. Instead of focusing on a list of things that people in the Pentagon think are important, it needs to relate to questions in the field. It is also preferred that the mentoring program is done on a voluntary level. The way to encourage people to join is to create an expectation that they do some kind of mentoring. This mentoring would be tailored to the person's rank and career field. Unfortunately, most mentoring programs rank the moral development of the junior members lowly. But there

is still a way to make moral development relevant. All supervisors currently get special supervisory training. Moral development should become part of that training. One of the Air Force's core values is "Integrity first." It is hard to have integrity without moral awareness. Thus, the supervisors should be given encouragement to develop the moral awareness of the supervisees. This development of the junior member's moral awareness should be done before any military member deploys, when there is a bigger chance that the Airman will face difficult moral dilemmas. If this program becomes successful, a similar program should be developed at USAFA for the cadets.

Cooley (2008) suggests that the focus in schools should be on "improving social progress through the actions of young citizens, especially in conjunction with each other. We must stress the social nature of ethics and morality (Cooley 2008, 202)." He stresses the social nature of ethics and morality, connecting character and civics to right personal action. We live in a society that is very individualistic where everyone is expected to look out for ourselves. The truth is that we are social beings and we live in social groups. Thus, our behavior is in relationship with others. This social interaction should be the basis for moral and ethical education. This idea fits well with Kohlberg's theory in the sense that higher level thinking will lead to building a stronger society. At the same time, it also connects to Gilligan's care concept.

The military can also encourage moral development through increased volunteerism among its members. Many young people are idealistic. We can go back to the 1960's as an example of this. Or we can see the same phenomenon at college campuses where students get involved in a variety of causes. This idealism occurs in the

military as well. Many squadrons encourage their members to clean up roads, or build houses through Habitat for Humanity.” These programs develop the social connection between the military and the local community. They also build camaraderie between the military members. As an added benefit, they also create leadership opportunities for people who do not usually get them due to their low rank. Military members could volunteer in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and big brother – big sister programs, just to mention a few examples. It is also possible that an 18 year old will become more aware of his or her ethical behavior if he or she mentors a 10 year old. By doing this, the military will also be able to improve its standing in society and increase recruitment. Having young men and women in uniform help those most vulnerable in our society would be a better recruiting tool than any 30 second advertisement on television. At the same time, community involvement would also create connections and good will among the civilian population. This could become a win-win situation for everybody.

Although there may be a difference between moral education and character education, in practice they seem to be the same. Althof and Berkowitz (2006) point out that “moral education focuses on the development of justice reasoning, and ... reasoning about interpersonal care. Character education, because it takes a very broad approach, often blurs the line between moral concepts and other non-moral but related concepts (Althof and Berkowitz 2006, 499). I feel that the two are really different sides of the same issue. I don’t know how one could teach moral reasoning without touching character issues. At the same time, character education seems empty if one does not at the same time focus on moral behavior.

## **The USAFA Center for Character & Leadership Development**

The mission statement of the USAFA Center for Character & Leadership Development (CCLD<sup>4</sup>) states that the purpose of the Center is to “Advance the understanding, practice, and integration of character and leadership development in preparation for service to the nation in the profession of arms (CCLD 2008, 1).” Its vision is to be “The Air Force’s premier Center for integrating the development of character and leadership; the Academy’s catalyst for achieving USAFA’s highest purpose.” CCLD (2008) defines the following terms as follows:

**Character:** One’s moral compass; the sum of those qualities of moral excellence which move a person to do the right thing despite pressures to the contrary.

**Leader:** A person of influence who is responsible for the care of followers while accomplishing a common mission.

**Leader of Character:** A professional whose embodiment of the Core Values (Integrity, Service, and Excellence<sup>5</sup>) motivates others to do the right thing, for the right reasons, and who fosters the continuous development of his/her own and others’ individual and collective capabilities...

**Relationship between character and leadership:** Good character is essential to being a good leader; character is fundamental to all aspects of life (leader, follower, spouse, parent, citizen, etc.) (CCLD 2008, 3)

The CCLD also set up 5 Character and Leadership Strategic Goals. They are as follows:

1. Inspire cadets to embrace the Core Values as the foundation of their lifelong development as leaders of character.
2. Elevate and integrate character and leadership development opportunities into every program and leadership development

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<sup>4</sup> The Center is in the process of changing its name from the “Center for Character Development (CCD)” to the “Center for Character & Leadership Development (CCLD).” The two terms are used interchangeably in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> The Core Values of the Air Force are Integrity first, Service before self, and Excellence in all we do.

opportunities into every program and Mission Element that comprise the entire USAFA experience.

3. Provide experiences and tools that enrich the character and leadership qualities of Academy cadets and faculty/staff in support of cadet and cadet candidate development.
4. Establish the CCLD with sufficient facilities and capabilities for excellent leader of character development.
5. Secure, manage and sustain Center resources including attracting developing, and retaining quality character and leadership educators, trainers, and researchers. (CCLD 2008, 4)

In addition, CCLD (2008) also states the following:

The Air Force Academy's #1 goal is to focus on character and leadership development. To this point, the Academy established the Center for Character Development (CCD) in 1993 to facilitate character development programs and activities throughout all aspects of the Academy experience. While the current Center is strong, it lacks the resources and facilities needed to fully achieve its potential to develop leaders of character. More specifically, the CCD does not possess the scholarly capabilities to conduct cutting-edge academic research and assessment, it is not staffed to provide the orientation and tools needed by the faculty and staff to maximize their ability to develop cadets, nor does it possess the facilities needed for optimal education and training. (CCLD 2008, 4)

When I visited the Center, I was introduced to about 20 people. About half of those were reservists, meaning that they work part-time for the military. As reservists, they serve anywhere from 28 days a year to a full year. Those I met worked between 28 days and 9 months, mostly at the lower end of the spectrum. According to the CCLD (2008), there are about 19 full-time staff, both military and civilian employed at the Center (CCLD 2008, 7). This means that there are not many people at the Center supporting over 4,000 cadets. In addition, most of the active duty Airmen working there came from other career fields, such as pilots, navigators, personnel, or finance. Thus, they have little academic knowledge of character development issues. There were only a

few people there who had a strong academic background in this field, and I am due to replace one of them. The other person that I met, besides me who has the academic knowledge, Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col.) Joseph Sanders, has great hopes for the center. Lt. Col. Sanders is the academic expert at the CCD in character development. He is the person who provides the theoretical and academic background for CCD's programming. He intends to start a journal on character development that is based out of the CCD. I told him of my ideas in this paper and he got very excited because he is looking for ways to make the Center more researched based in order to better serve the cadets. In fact, there are plans to increase the staffing at the Center to 34 full-time personnel. This addition will include people who are a "highly professional scholarship staff to conduct rigorous research in the realms of character and leadership, and apply the results to more effective cadet experiences....Because continuity is important, the core of this staff will be civilian, insulated from the cyclical nature of the Air Force budget process and the rotation of military personnel (CCLD 2008, 7)." Increasing the staff at the center once again shows the importance of character development and education to the Air Force leadership, especially as the total number of Airmen is not likely to rise soon.

It is also positive that the bulk of the new staffing is to be civilian personnel as opposed to Airmen. The maximum number of Airmen is set by the US Congress in its yearly military appropriation bill. This number is increased or decreased depending on the military needs determined by congress. Civilians, on the other hand, are considered part of the civil service. This means that there is more long-term stability in this workforce. The other reason why a civilian work force provides more stability is that

military officers move every three to four years. The Air Force moves its officers so that they have opportunities to grow through new experiences. As I mentioned earlier, many of the officers working at the center come from other career fields. They are at the center to give them opportunities to broaden their knowledge. In the end, however, they are expected to return to their career fields. This shows, once again the benefit of having mostly a civilian workforce at the Center.

Character development and character education is important to the AF and especially to USAFA. This can be seen in the fact that the USAFA superintendent, Lieutenant General (Lt. Gen.) John F. Regni has allocated space and money to build a new building that is meant to house the Center in the future. This is significant because the Air Force leadership decided several years ago that the budget priorities were to fight the War on Terrorism and to recapitalize its aircraft and equipment. The result of this decision was that anything that did not directly support those two aims had their funding cut. Under the new Chief of Staff, Gen. Norton Schwartz, there has been some funding for other things, but money is still tight for items not directly related to the War on Terrorism and recapitalization. Therefore, the fact that Lt. Gen. Regni has been able to find funding for a new Center shows how important character development and education is for the Air Force.

Currently the CCLD's programming consists mostly of classes with the cadets and a major symposium. They have small group sessions where they discuss moral issues. I am not exactly sure what goes on in those sessions because I was not able to talk with any of those who conducted those sessions. However, I think that they use some

kind of Kohlbergian dilemmas. The other program is the annual “National Character and Leadership Symposium.” There is different theme each year, occurring sometime in February, with this year’s theme being “Answering the Nation’s Call...Our legacy in the making.” All of the cadets as well as interested outsiders are invited, with over 4,000 people attending at least one of the sessions. There are usually some well-known speakers at the symposium; this year for example, the journalist Kimberly Dozier who was injured covering the Iraq War, Dr. Tom Osborne the congressman and Nebraska University coach, and David Williams who is the Make-A-Wish Foundation President and CEO gave addresses. There were also several less known speakers who either had founded non-profit organizations or who had overcome personally challenging situations.

One important aspect of the conference is that gives the cadets and the outside visitors a chance to learn how others have shown character. Ellenwood (2007) mentions that

During the Theodore Roosevelt era, Ella Lyman Cabot wisely explained how ‘ethics must be seen to be believed.’ Good teaching clearly entails far more from teachers and students than a set of decision-making skills. It requires logical analysis, humane judgment, a sense of nuance and detail, an understanding of the discipline involved in holding to principles under pressure, and experience judging between long range and short-range consequences of actions. (Ellenwood 2007, 38)

Several speakers spoke about how to show ethical judgment under difficult situations.

Commander Scott Waddle, USN (Retired), was the commanding officer of USS

Greenville, a submarine which collided with the Japanese fishing vessel “Ehime Maru.”

The collision sank the “Ehime Maru,” killing nine onboard. He took sole responsibility for his and his crew’s actions. I did not personally hear his speech, but I was told that he

spoke about personal failure and how to recover from it. I believe that this is a particularly important lesson for college-age students to hear because they will probably all experience personal failure at some point in their lives.

Mr. Gene Kranz gave another important lecture about consequences of one's actions. He was the Director of Mission Operations with responsibilities for all aspects of mission design, testing, planning, training, and spaceflight operations at the space center in Houston during the Apollo 13 mission. There were a series of failures during the mission which endangered the lives of the crew. Mr. Kranz described the various steps that his team had to take in order to save the crew. Unfortunately, many of the problems did not have solutions that conformed to the time requirement because the crew was running out of oxygen. The people in Houston worked around the clock solving problems. Several times they were able to solve certain problems, only to find that new ones popped up. It was absolutely fascinating hearing how the people at the space center were able to work as a team, returning the astronauts safely to earth.

There were other speakers whose lives embodied moral and ethical character, and whose experience served as role models to the people attending. They showed the importance of teamwork and of acting in a moral manner. However, there was another benefit as well. Although the staff at the CCLD organized the speaker and most of the conference, a lot of the practical matters were managed by cadets who volunteered to help. Once again this is an example of character education in action, since it demonstrates the importance of teamwork and gives the cadets leadership opportunities, skills that they will without any doubt use as future Air Force officers.

## **The Way Forward**

I propose two ideas for future development of the CCLD's activities. I want to increase Kohlbergian moral dilemmas that deal with situations that other officers have found themselves in and also starting a major project on understanding the process how people move from moral knowledge to moral action. The reason for using the moral dilemmas is that first of all, it is a proven strategy. Despite the flaws of Kohlbergian dilemmas that we have seen, we have also noticed that there is research proving their validity.

Secondly, by forming dilemmas that are relevant to situations that officers might see, we teach them to think about those circumstances. Third, I hope that repeatedly going over moral dilemmas will help develop moral thinking to the point where the cadets will do the right thing instinctively once they become Air Force officers. This hope is based on the principle that repetition is a vital part of an educational process.

It should be noted at this point that these following dilemmas are written by the author of this paper. There are, admittedly, several flaws in them and they are not necessarily to be seen as a final product. Instead they are starting points for discussion which surely need refinement. The dilemmas are based on two principles. The first is that they are taken from war-time situations that other officers have experienced. This means that it is possible, even though admittedly unlikely, that the cadets will one day face similar circumstances. Secondly, they are loosely based on dilemmas that are already being used by the CCD when educating the cadets on moral behavior.

### **Moral dilemma 1 – Iraqi insurgent**

The first moral dilemma that I propose is one that deals with prisoners of war.

You are leading four security forces troops when you are shot at. It turns out that three insurgents, also derogatively called Jihadis, have ambushed you. During the fire fight, you kill two of the three Jihadis and injure the third lightly. You are able to disarm the insurgent and capture him. One of your troops was killed as well. The killed security forces troop who was killed was an excellent Airman who had been very involved with improving the base community at home and who was well-liked by you and the rest of the squadron. You are angry at his death and feel strong hatred towards the captured Jihadi and feel that he deserves to be hurt for killing your troop. You also know that the Jihadis might be able to give you some important information about other insurgent activities as well as about captured American troops. You know that you are supposed to bring him back to base for interrogation. However, the only way to bring him back to the base is through the streets of Baghdad where your squad might be a target for other attacks. There have been regular attacks on the streets between you and the base with many casualties. You don't know if the jihadi will make sure to attract attention to your group, which might, in turn, risk the lives of the rest of your squad members. You know that it is wrong to kill him, but you have a reasonable fear that one of your troops might be killed if you take him with you to the base. In addition, you also know that the chance that anyone would find out about the dead Jihadi is very small and that no one is most likely to care enough about him to investigate the matter. However, you also know that getting caught would likely kill your career. What do you do and why?

This is a realistic scenario and many officers have faced it. The problem here is that there are many competing interests. Basically, there are two choices. The person being tested could either choose to bring back the insurgent or not. This is a moral dilemma because there are positives and negatives on both sides. On the one hand, you could choose to take the prisoner back to the base. According to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), that is the correct thing to do. However, doing so might get one of your troops killed or injured because the insurgent could slow down the trip back and make himself known to other insurgents. In addition, bringing him back could give other insurgents

time to hide and find new hiding places for their captured American troops. Getting the information as fast as possible could save American lives.

On the other hand you could hurt him to get information out of him or even kill him. That could help save lives, both those of your troops and American prisoners of war (POWs). However, doing so has a cost as well. It is against the law. It could impact your career if you are caught. On the other hand, the chances that you get caught are fairly small.

This dilemma is similar to the Heinz story in many ways. Both cases involve breaking the law in order to save someone's life. In the Heinz story the man needed medicine to save his wife's life. In this case you as a commander can save people's lives by getting information now. In the Heinz story stealing is wrong, while in this situation, hurting the insurgent is wrong. In both cases the question is how far you are willing to go to save a life. In addition, this dilemma probably speaks more to someone in the military than to civilians. In the military, and especially in combat units, "taking care of your buddy" and "not leaving anyone behind" are important concepts and mean a lot to the units' members. It is not unheard of that military members will risk their own lives to save their comrades. Thus, it is not much of a stretch to think that someone would be willing to break the law to save a unit member's life. This is especially true if you are the commander and, thus, responsible for the safety of your troops.

It is also different to the Heinz story in some ways as well. The idea of the husband saving his wife's life by stealing the medicine is more attractive than hurting an insurgent to save someone's life. Stealing medicine sounds better than hurting someone.

One could also argue that one is a positive, stealing medicine which will directly save someone's life, while hurting someone is a negative that might only save a life.

However, to someone in the military, saving your buddies life may be much more important than caring for the injured insurgent.

There are admittedly some problems with this scenario. One inherent problem is that it hard to recreate the emotions that a military member feels in a combat situation in the class room. Thus it is easy to give "the right answer," in the sense that the Airman or cadet in the study might feel that he or she "should" say that he or she will bring the insurgent back to base. One way to combat this problem would be to show a video before the exercise that depicts this kind of situation. Nevertheless, it is still artificial because the real emotions are not present. On the other hand, it does not really matter what answer is given. I am more interested in the argument than in the answer. The Airman or cadet being asked will give me the reason for the answer. This reason will then be analyzed based on Kohlberg's scale. So even if the Airman or cadet feels that there is "a correct answer," there really is none.

### **Moral dilemma 2 – Airman refusing to follow orders**

The second moral dilemma deals with a soldier who refuses to capture a hill.

You are leading a squadron whose task it is to capture a hill held by enemy troops. One of your troops, Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Smith, refuses to go. He explains that taking the hill could get him killed and that his wife is pregnant with their first child. His wife has had a problem getting pregnant and SSgt Smith really wants to be able to see his child. You order him to charge, yet he still refuses. He tells you that he would rather go to jail as a deserter than to risk dying. You can't leave him in place nor are you able to bring him back to the base. One of your troops, Technical

Sergeant (TSgt)<sup>6</sup> Brown, says, LT, shoot him. He is risking our lives and the success of our operation. You answer TSgt Brown by telling him that you can't do that. It is wrong and it is against military law. At this point other Airmen tell you that they support TSgt Brown's idea. They ask you if SSgt Smith is really more important than their lives. They are willing to carry out the mission, but they feel that SSgt Smith's hesitation is more dangerous than the mission. You know that surprise and the speed of operation is vital to the mission's success. By letting SSgt Smith delay us, you are risking our lives. Finally, SSgt Jones suggests that you leave one person to guard SSgt Smith. You know that doing that could endanger your operation. How would you proceed and why?

This dilemma is a little different than the other, but it still deals with a dilemma that military people might encounter. Desertion is a serious crime according to the UCMJ. SSgt Smith is committing desertion by not wanting to take the hill. In addition, he<sup>7</sup> is also endangering the mission and the lives of the other members of the unit. On the other hand, one can understand his hesitance to join the others. It is not only about cowardice, but also about seeing his new child, a normal emotion. All of your options have potential pitfalls. You could leave SSgt Smith alone, which could endanger his life and also forces you to pick him up. He could also escape, which could make you have to find him. Another option would be to leave one of your troops to guard SSgt Smith. That has a negative as well. It could cost me an Airman that I need to take the hill. Using fewer troops could endanger the others. Killing him would be an extreme answer, but would solve your problems in the sense that you don't have to risk anyone else's life. However, the point is not how the person being interviewed answers the question. The point is why he or she would make that choice. This scenario might still need some work, but the

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<sup>6</sup> In the Air Force TSgt is one rank higher than SSgt.

<sup>7</sup> I am using the male only here because as of May 2009 women are not allowed to lead troops in combat.

basic situation could give information on his or her moral thinking. That information is after all the whole reason for the study.

I envision discussing these and other scenarios in medium sized groups several times while the cadets are at USAFA. The ideal would be to discuss the scenarios in small groups, where everybody would have a chance to participate in the discussion. In the past when I have worked with youth, I have often found that there are a few participants who sit quietly in larger groups and that a few participate intensively. However, more of the participants participate in smaller groups. The problem with this is that there are many cadets who have a lot of demands on their time so I cannot count on having much time with each cadet. Thus, I assume that these discussions will take place in larger groups, putting more pressure on the group leaders to draw as many cadets as possible in to the discussions. I don't expect two or possibly three sessions to make the cadets' moral actions automatic, but at least it may make them more aware of their moral choices. I feel that these groups are at least something while more research is done on how people internalize moral thinking. This research, in turn, may lead to new and innovative programs that hopefully can reach the cadets more effectively.

My final recommendation is to conduct a longitudinal study of how people internalize moral thinking. We have already seen that people who are involved in communal actions and who have parental and teacher influences in their lives have a larger chance of displaying moral thinking. I have also mentioned that the process of how these influences impact people's moral behavior is not well known. I feel that some of this research can be done in the Air Force. There are over 4,000 college age cadets at

USAFAs. There are thousands more at the enlisted basic training base at Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) in San Antonio, TX, as well as at other training bases Keesler AFB in Biloxi, MS, and Shepherd AFB in Wichita Falls, TX. In addition, the students at the training bases are only there for 3-6 months, meaning that there is a lot of turnover at those bases. This means that it should be relatively easy to get input from 10,000 people within a reasonably short time and without spending a lot of money. Also, since young people from many geographical locations and from all ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups in the US, we can get a good cross-section of Americans between the ages of 18 and 25. I propose to gather the students in groups of about 10-15 people and discuss where they got their moral values. In order to make the workload more reasonable, I hope to get about 5 people from the CCLD to work on this as a group. We would also discuss with them how often they act against what they know is the right thing and how often they act according to their values. Then we would ask them why they did or did not act according to their values. I anticipate that this study will give us a lot of data on why people do or do not act according to their moral values. I also hope that it will give us enough data to figure out where more research is needed and help make the CCLD's program more effective. This suggestion would do two things. First of all, it would help with the question that Dr. Berkowitz asked me at the symposium. Secondly, it would also help establish the CCLD's journal, under the leadership of Lt. Col. Sanders. Most importantly, however, I hope that it will lead to more effective ways of reaching the cadets.

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