

**The Tug of War: The Intertwined Nature of
Cooperation, Competition, And Crucible Experiences
at the United States Military Academy**

A dissertation submitted by

Chaveso L. Cook

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Child Studies and Human Development

Tufts University

May 2021

Committee Members:

Richard M. Lerner, Ph.D. (chair)

Jayanthi Mistry, Ph.D.

Diane M. Ryan, Ph.D.

Angela L. Duckworth, Ph.D.

Abstract

The development of character is the key goal of the training cadets receive at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. During their 47-month experience at USMA, cadets receive academic, military, and physical training to prepare them for a commission as an officer in the U.S. Army, specifically as *commissioned leaders of character*. The purpose of this dissertation was to further investigate, define, and determine what the development of a commissioned leader of character means to cadets, staff, and faculty at USMA. Using qualitative data from *Project Arete*, a collaborative mixed-methods longitudinal research study between Tufts and USMA, as well as my own personal experiences attending and teaching at USMA, I undertook a phenomenological analysis of focus groups and interviews with senior leaders, faculty, and cadets in order to explore the dynamics of cadet peer relationships as they relate to character development at USMA.

Using a transcendental/psychological approach, my goal was to present the essence of the character development experience at USMA, rather than conveying the more literal experiences through the words of those interviewed. Analyses of the transcripts and statements from the focus groups and interviews identified a core category of peer relations. Further analyses showed that peer relations are manifested at USMA through two distinct but interrelated and complementary categories, namely competition and cooperation. These subcategories coalesced around six specific interpretive themes, namely: (a) *peers must relate*, (b) *cooperate and graduate*, (c) *be discreet when you compete*, (d) *one must fully experience 'the crucible,'* (e) *all the strands are intertwined*, and (f) *building commissioned leaders of character*. The thematic areas and overall results identify the ways in which cadets work together and compete with one another, in order to be successful at USMA and beyond. Policy, theory, and other

recommendations are considered. Suggested future directions for research and application regarding the use of RDS-based theories, mixed-methods approaches, generalizability, and developmental research regarding cooperation, competition, and crucible events focused on increasing opportunities for the understanding and empirical alignment of theory and practice regarding character development strategies are also discussed.

Key words: character, competition, cooperation, crucible experiences, United States Military Academy cadets

Acknowledgements

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” – Sir Isaac Newton

Earning a Ph.D. seems to be the ultimate credential or some sort of a universal key, recognized globally. I have come to believe, however, that one does not **earn** a Ph.D. as much as the title and the associative academic underpinnings are **bestowed** upon the person completing the journey. As a budding developmentalist, there is no doubt that the mutually beneficial individual ⇔ context relations I experienced have exponentially altered my ideographic pathway. As such, there are many giants to thank for allowing me to stand on the shoulders or find respite in their shadows.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my God for granting me the opportunity to pursue a terminal degree and ensuring I had knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes needed to complete it. Philippians 4:13 states that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I readily recognize that I could not be where I am without my faith and His eternal guiding hand.

Next, I need to acknowledge the love, care, support, and strength that Ashley, London, and Lola gave me throughout my doctoral journey and will continue to do so afterward. My wife and I are high school sweethearts and as a spousal warrior she has sacrificed greatly throughout my military career. Ashley pushed me to pursue a Ph.D. when I told her I would never go to school again as a master’s student and has always believed in me (and kicked me in the rear) when I did not believe in myself. My first-born London shared an office with me throughout this process, appeared in multiple classes as a co-presenter or a guest of honor, starred on an episode of *Arthur*, and was a fixture in the lab. London also creatively and fittingly called this dissertation work my “disorientation” the first week I started writing it. We added Baby Lola to #TeamCook in the middle of my first semester of classes just to spice things up a bit, and she has

been a welcome distraction by tugging at my pants leg every time I stood at my computer to type, research, or read. We joked at times that I was going to night school since I learned to read, research, and write after she went to bed.

My Ph.D. cohort mates as well as the members of the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development deserve a hat tip for never making me feel like an old guy or an outsider as an Army officer on a non-traditional and truncated doctoral path. In particular, Elise Murray (now Dykhuis) and Brian Burkhard had the patience of a battleship when explaining concepts and steering me in the right direction – they would both certainly be fine military officers if they ever put on a uniform and I am elated that Elise will work at West Point. I would also like to thank Andrew Farina for his consummate professionalism, sincere camaraderie, and unending collegiality at every point along the way during the rare instance of two Army officers navigating the same doctoral program in the same department, on the same project, with the same primary advisor, with the eventuality of returning to teach at the same institution. He was also brave enough to have a baby during his final semester of classes to guarantee we had comparable experiences. And without a doubt Lori Campbell is owed a huge hug and high five for being the welder on a plane that everyone in the lab is seemingly always building in flight.

Words cannot completely capture how I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Richard Lerner, Dr. Jayanthi Mistry, Dr. Diane Ryan, and Dr. Angela Duckworth for their guidance and direction in the process of crafting this dissertation. Rich interviewed me while I was deployed to the Sahara Desert and has shown his unwavering support since, even when I ultimately made the decision to take him into the foreign land of a qualitatively based dissertation. Besides his utter brilliance in the lab and the classroom, he always made my family feel and I like we were a part of his own. Jayanthi opened my eyes to the fact that I was more

attuned to qualitative research during her amazing class and never wavered from ensuring my work was done with both rigor and the right analyses. Diane is the godmother to Lola and has been a professional colleague and an extended family member for the better part of a decade. She provided a home away from home often and made sure I was sane at all times. Even after I did not attend UPenn, Angela asked me to stay in contact, always responded to my notes, shared great ideas, and then took the time out of her very busy schedule to push me to the finish line of this work. An extension of the lab and my academic team for *Project Arete* was Dr. William Damon and Dr. Anne Colby, who contributed greatly to this research with particular support in planning and implementing the qualitative methodology that brings a richness to the study of character at West Point.

There are many other friends, family, peers, and leaders that I would like to thank as well, but I will do so through my continued service, scholarship, and leadership that is hopefully worthy of their investment in me. Finally, I must acknowledge all the cadets, scholars, classmates, and leaders at West Point who not only participated in this research directly or indirectly, but who also originally forged and continue to refine my core being as an active duty Army officer. The West Point crest puts the helmet before the sword, but a passing glance makes them seem like they are one. I have come to believe that they are inextricably linked, the sharpest of minds being the ultimate weapon. The sword begins as molten steel in a forge. It is iteratively laid against an anvil and hammered upon until it takes the proper shape, and even then, a whet stone is required for it to be made sharp. Whereas to some the process of crafting this document may seem dulling, it certainly has been the most shaping, sharpening, and refining developmental processes I have experienced. Here's to continually sharpening the sword... and undoubtedly, the mind.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	4
List of figures.....	8
CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	10
CHAPTER 2: Method.....	45
CHAPTER 3: Results.....	63
CHAPTER 4: Discussion.....	93
References.....	108
Figures.....	138
Appendix A: Codebook Examples.....	143
Appendix B: Interview Protocols.....	149

List of Figures

Figure 1: *WPLDS Model*

Figure 2: *The Leader Growth Model*

Figure 3: *Peer relations contexts in the USMA experience*

Figure 4: *USMA's theory of change regarding character development*

Figure 5: *USMA's developmental experiences*

*One who faces and who fears
the right things and from the right motive,
in the right way at the right time,
possesses character worthy of our trust and admiration.*

- Aristotle

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Divorced from ethics, leadership is reduced to management and politics to mere technique.

- James McGregor Burns

The success and failure of modern society is driven by leadership. Therefore, leaders and their leadership are cornerstones of the human endeavor (Wood & Dibben, 2015). Regardless of what side of the “born leaders versus made leaders” debate scholars may find themselves on, many would agree that leadership is not an easy undertaking and for some is a crucible (Cook et al., 2020). Leadership is seen as a “universal” social phenomenon or construct which is built in relationships among people across time and place, rather than as a personological attribute embodied in or possessed by an individual (Bass, 1990; Brown, 1991; Hollander, 1985; Ospina & Hall, 2001). Several scholars have defended the idea that leadership is something that is manifested between the leader and the led (e.g., Wood & Dibben, 2015). Moreover, leadership occurs both within and between multiple levels (i.e., societal, organizational, others, and the self) and, as such, leadership effectiveness is highly dependent upon the social, cultural, and ecological environmental context (Crossan et al., 2008; Osborne et al., 2002).

These contexts can build leaders possessing different degrees or level of excellence or effectiveness. The development of high-quality leaders clearly is not universal or pre-ordained; efforts aimed at accelerating leader growth for quality leadership should consider an individual’s competence, expertise, developmental readiness, epistemic cognition, and moral ethical development (Clark & Gruber, 2020). Organizations fail or excel depending on the quality of their leaders. Ethics becomes an especially central feature of organizational leadership due to the nature of the process of influence and, thus, the impact leaders have on other’s work performance and values (Northouse, 2007). The values forged, promulgated, and exhibited by

the leader have a significant impact on the value exhibited by, and the ethics of, their organizational context (Carlson & Perrewe, 1995; Schminke et al., 1997; Trevino, 1986).

In *The Elements of Ethics for Professionals* Johnson and Ridley (2008) assert that “there is nothing mystical about being ethical” (p. xv). However, those who study the ethical aspects of leadership have found that the dynamic forces of character involved in leading engage a vast set of “positive attributes that have emerged across cultures and throughout history” (Park & Peterson, 2006, p. 896). Although there may be nothing magical about leadership and character, the connection is certainly complex. Character is known to entail many complex capacities that are beneficial to leadership, such as the ability to “think about right and wrong, experience moral emotions, engage in moral behaviors, believe in moral goods, demonstrate an enduring tendency to act with honesty, altruism, responsibility, and other characteristics that support moral functioning” (Berkowitz, 2002, p. 48). Whereas complexity has certainly been discussed in the leadership literature, empirical verifications of complex phenomena are challenging (Cilliers, 1998; Gharajedaghi, 1999; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Therefore, even the most contemporary models of character development are works in progress.

Models of character development that are current at this writing (e.g., Berkowitz et al., 2017; Lerner & Callina, 2014) underscore that features of positive character develop through mutually influential, and mutually beneficial, relations between a specific individual and their specific situational and environmental context. Within these specific contexts, the examination of character attributes highlights the key role of educational institutions; specifically, higher education institutions with a mission to train leaders of character. This dissertation focused on an exemplar of such an institution.

The United State Military Academy (USMA) at West Point

An example of one such institution is the United States Military Academy (USMA), also known as West Point. The mission of USMA is “To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a *commissioned leader of character* committed to the values of *Duty, Honor, Country* and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army. This focus in character development within USMA is predicated on cadets having experienced the West Point Leader Developmental System (WPLDS) (Judd et.al., 2018, p. 2).

As displayed in Figure 1, WPLDS is enacted and assessed through ‘three pillars’ of the cadet experience: academic (i.e., one’s major/focus of study, projects, academic classes), physical (i.e., fitness tests, physical related classes), and military (i.e., summer training, attendance of Army schools, chain of command leadership positions, military related classes). There is an inherent tension and, at times, tenuous balancing act within the pillars (i.e., which is most important at a given time) but also between cadets who are experiencing the development model, as well as among staff/faculty and senior West Point leaders who are enacting the model. As an example of a contemporary model, WPLDS focuses on West Point’s espoused behavioral outcomes.

Features of character development

Individual behaviors relating to character play an important part within organizational contexts (Burke, 2011). To understand what it means to be a commissioned leader of character, it is important to refine the definition of character, because ‘commissioned’ simply means to become an Army officer. Character has been defined as “...the entire set of positive traits that have emerged across cultures and throughout history as important for the good life. Virtues are

the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence” (Park & Peterson, 2006, p. 901). Seminal leadership studies by Blake and Mouton (1964), Fiedler (1967), and Hersey and Blanchard (1977) all challenged the conventional wisdom that leaders and their character should be viewed through personal and behavioral characteristics alone. Psychological processes that include cognitive and emotional components (e.g., moral reasoning, values, attributes, empathy, etc.; Lerner, 2018a) are important as well. In turn, character has evolved to include the ideas of performance (e.g., striving for excellence) and morality (e.g., striving for ethical behavior) (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). If character is a “constellation of psychological dimensions of a person,” then these dimensions could be centered around a set of character strengths (Berkowitz, 2002, p. 49).

Moreover, character strengths are the processes that display virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Even further, the sub-category of honesty, authenticity and/or integrity should also be defined. Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 29) define this specific subset of character strengths as “speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions.” As such, feelings and attitudes about doing the right thing matter as much as actually doing the right thing (Jones, 2020). A commissioned leader of character, then, could be an individual who has character as *enacted* through both the performance and moral aspects of character, as well as via the *display* of character strengths as evidenced by honesty, authenticity and/or integrity. Given this definition, the development of character is multifaceted, to say the least (Berkowitz, 2012; Lerner, 2018a).

Because of the complexity of character development, it may be best understood through an approach derived from concepts associated with relational developmental systems (RDS) metatheory (Lerner, 2018b). In contemporary social and behavioral science, theoretical models associated with RDS metatheory emphasize that human development involves dynamic, that is, mutually influential, relations, within and across levels of organization of the integrated and self-constructing (i.e., autopoietic) developmental system; these dynamic relations, represented as individual↔context relations, constitute the basic process of human life (Overton, 2015). The levels integrated within the dynamic, relational development system range from physiological, psychological, and social, and include as well cultural, ecological, and historical contexts. Any model of character development that uses dynamic, RDS-based ideas will view character development as an open, self-constructing, and integrated/holistic system (Callina & Lerner, 2017; Lerner & Callina, 2014; Nucci, 2017).

The individual↔context relations involved in character development may occur within the ecology of a person's life-span development or they can be promoted through character development programs (e.g., Berkowitz et al., 2017). Participation in such programs has been associated with a plethora of favorable outcomes, such as moral development (Elias et al., 1991; Leming, 2001), prosocial behaviors (Cheung & Lee, 2010), problem-solving skills (Taylor et al., 2002), emotional competence (Greenberg et al., 1995), and achievement (Flay & Allred, 2003; Sherblom et al., 2006). From a social and organizational leadership perspective, such outcomes overlap with many contemporary leadership theories, such as transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and ethical leadership (Northouse, 2007). For instance, one key component of transformational leadership behaviors is *idealized influence*, which specifically refers to the extent to which a leader performs with integrity and is a role model for ethical behavior (Dóci et

al., 2015). Whereas these outcomes and leadership theories overlap, it is useful to examine leader character as its own entity (Byrne et al., 2018).

The character of leaders

The features of a leader's character have garnered a great degree of research attention (e.g., Cameron, 2011; Hannah & Avolio, 2011; Lerner, 2018a; Palanski et al., 2015; Wang & Hackett, 2016; Wright et al., 2017). Within this literature there is agreement with two points I have made about the key attributes of character development, that is, that character has a moral component that is related to but also distinct from values and personality attributes (see Berkowitz, 2012 and Nucci, 2017 for similar ideas), and character is a developmental phenomenon (e.g., Crossan et al., 2016; Hannah & Avolio, 2011; Lerner & Callina, 2014; Wright & Quick, 2011). To optimize a leader's professional development, it is important from an RDS-based perspective to consider not only the setting and individual strengths of the leaders, but also the degree to which specific values are threaded through every aspect of the learning environment.

Constructing learning environments focused on leadership development are both misunderstood as processes, as it includes more than just training and realistic experiences (LeBouf, 2002). Building high-performing leaders begins with crafting a learning environment that fosters the development of agile thinking, decision-making, and deliberate focus (Cook et al., 2020). Moreover, whereas experience and training have long been analyzed to discover their relationship to higher performance, different types of experience and training certainly have differing effects on outcomes for developing leaders of character (Galton, 1979; Ericsson, 2002; Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996; Ericsson et al., 2006).

As well, to develop leaders of character their developmental context should include evidence-based curricular features having moral and ethical foci. One cannot overlook the contemporary science which undergirds moral and ethical development because “far too many leadership training and developmental programs are atheoretical and are not grounded in what [research dictates] about adult learning” (Day et al., 2004, p. 361). Indeed, whereas war stories and the past leadership experiences of military leaders are important, experience alone can be a poor teacher and appropriate use should be made of relevant theoretical perspectives (Day et al., 2004). Academic institutions that blend both experience and theoretical perspectives would be fertile ground for building leaders of character. As previously noted, USMA is such an institution. A deeper discussion of the specific contextualization of character at West Point is therefore appropriate.

The broader West Point context

Contextualization matters, as multifaceted settings make for complex leader and follower social actions. Specifically, decision-making in such multifaceted contexts can begin to employ concepts from multiple character domains (Smetana et al., 2014). As post-adolescence is a critical time for consolidation of one’s self-concept and identity, it is also likely that “the formation of a sense of oneself as a moral agent develops at the same time” (Berkowitz, 2002, p. 53). In matters of character development in higher education, the university itself also has to be “a model of an institution with values the students can emulate, because students learn more from what they *see the institution doing* to live up to an ideal of contributing to the greater good of society,” rather than what anyone will try to tell them in their classrooms (Osiero, 2012, p. 135). Similarly, building character has long been an important component of colleges and universities.

Consequently, many academic institutions promote character development as one of the features that differentiates their campuses as a setting that not only educates but also develops students' character and civic responsibility. Moreover, MacIntyre (1988) argues that if a scholar's immediate concern is to learn about the intentionality behind character development, beyond just the content employed, then an assessment of the specific communities of practice and their traditions is needed. As such, a final contribution to understanding the development of leaders of character to consider is the specifics of the USMA context, one of the world's foremost leader-development institutions.

Over its 217-year history West Point has evolved from an institution focused on citizen-soldier education to a professional military academy, with an explicit focus on inculcating cadets with a professional military ethic that prepares each individual for a lifetime of service to the nation. At USMA, in addition to the educational mission of the institution, there is a corresponding institutional commitment for training professional military leaders of character and an emphasis on athletic prowess (Callina et al., 2014). Across all facets of this tripartite mission (academic, military, physical), the character of cadets goes through dynamic development. Such development occurs through the mutual influences of individual on context and context on individual (Overton, 2015).

To further understand these mutual influences, it is important to comprehend how the individual attributes of cadets impacts their own development. As USMA is a unique context, it attracts some unique qualities of the individuals that must be considered. This is also the case in other peer institutions that focus on imbuing students with civic duty, character, and leadership. As research "has not yet parsed out the variance in character attributes of cadets that are due to selection effects (i.e., young people with certain values and background characteristics apply to

USMA) versus the transformative effects of West Point on cadets' character development," it is immensely important to "note the individual-level variables that differentiate [the West Point experience] from the greater post-secondary education population" (Callina et. al., 2017, p. 11). Two important points are relevant here.

First, there are several unique aspects among the students at institutions like USMA that differentiate them from many other higher education institutions. At West Point and other comparable institutions applicants are exceptional with respect to academic and athletic achievements. Regarding USMA specifically, according to the profile of the latest (at this writing) entering class, the Class of 2024, there about 74% of cadets ranked in the top 5th of their high school class, and 96% were high school varsity athletes. Moreover, to be considered for admission to West Point, individuals must be a U. S. citizen, be at least 17 but not yet 23 years old upon entering the Academy, be unmarried, and have no legal obligations to any children. They must also complete academic testing requirements (e.g., the SAT and/or ACT), as well as physical fitness and medical health requirements. In addition, demographically USMA cadets are at this writing only about 25% female, whereas across America women make up about 54% of college students (U. S. Census Bureau, 2018).

A second point about distinctions between USMA cadets and other U.S. college students pertains not to selection effects per se but, instead, to the specific focus on character development at the institution. The individual development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to both internal thoughts about character and outward behavioral instantiations of character are continuously shaped by explicit and implicit influences of an institutional context intent on building military leaders. This emphasis includes instruction in ethical decision-making; behavior modeled by other cadets, faculty, and staff; and the norms of the broader social

context (Baehr, 2013; Colby et al., 2003). Cadets have been found to contrast with their civilian equivalents at non-military institutions regarding character values. Research conducted by Franke (2001) that compared value orientations and attitudes of cadets and those at comparative private, secular universities found that cadets were “significantly more conservative, patriotic, and held more positive opinions on the military’s role in war and peacekeeping than students at other colleges and universities” (p. 111). An observer of the Academy must acknowledge that the institution is primarily engaged with a specific type of professional training – the training of cadets to become Army officers of character. With very few exceptions, each graduate enters the military service as a commissioned officer in the U. S. Army.

To achieve the various aspects of its mission throughout its history, USMA has taken a variety of developmental approaches intended to indoctrinate cadets with the behaviors, attitudes, values, and virtues that reflect a commissioned leader of character for the Army. For success in this matter, Osiemo (2012) states that “the university must be able to turn its vision into action through its students, and the students in their turn should live out their convictions as they prepare for their careers” (p. 136). Desimone (2008) notes that beyond the home and family influences, school environments are possibly the most important developmental context for late adolescents for both academic and occupational development, as well as for the development of the social skills that will shape their transition to young adulthood.

As such, the Academy leadership, including the administration, faculty, and staff, has identified a set of outcomes believed to be the optimal combination of behaviors, attitudes, and competencies for West Point cadets. More specifically, USMA has devoted the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic (SCPME), in conjunction with the Center for the Army Professional Ethic (CAPE), to supervise cadet’s character and leadership development.

Therefore, any model or framework for character development at USMA would also have to be in alignment with SCPME, CAPE, and the U. S. Army. Concerning character development, an observer can start to see how these many different layers can create potential tension regarding character outcomes and how to implement character development approaches unless each entity and organization is in concert, interweaving and intertwining developmental experiences and frameworks at West Point.

Regarding specific character and/or leadership frameworks at the Academy, since the turn of the millennium the Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS) was transformed into what is now known as WPLDS. Prior to CLDS West Point was associated with an attrition model of student retention and graduation (Judd et. al., 2018). CLDS was a step in the right direction toward placing the most weight on appropriate learning and development of cadets. The revised model known as WPLDS seeks to encompass the entire West Point system in a more developmentally focused way. WPLDS focuses on creating a common vision and vocabulary for individuals at all levels within the Academy system – from cadet to Superintendent. WPLDS directs much of the staff's, faculties', and cadet's attention toward *honorable living*, a framework that encompasses both the minimum requirements of the *honor code* ("A cadet shall not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do") and the maximum aspiration of fully expressing integrity and virtue. This emphasis on honorable living supports character development by including the expectations that USMA and the larger Army have for cadets as future officers, rather than simply the minimum behavioral requirements that are needed to graduate (Callina et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the current model at of character development at USMA has two main features. The first depicts WPLDS through the model presented in Figure 1. This model is meant

to visually show staff and faculty how to purposefully integrate leader development by focusing on building leaders of character. There is an “emphasis on individual development and leadership development, supported within a culture of character” (Judd et. al., 2018, p. 9). The figure displays these components in a fashion that depicts, over 47 months, how living honorably, leading honorably, and demonstrating excellence occurs.

The second feature of the model is the Leader Growth Model (LGM) (see Figure 2). The WPLDS manual very briefly speaks to its components, but nevertheless depicts the model as a continuous cycle of gaining new knowledge and capacities by engaging in challenging experiences and reflection (Judd et. al., 2018). The explanation of the LGM states that it is an “adaptive conceptual framework” that “guides USMA’s evolving leader development system” while “adapting to the ever-changing needs of the Army” (Judd et. al., 2018, p. 17). Whereas it is certainly regarded as “comprehensive and integrated” the LGM, as is also the case with the overall WPLDS model, uses causal language such as “cadets must embrace a new way of thinking to become a leader of character” (Judd et. al., 2018, p. 17). Such a conception could be perceived as placing a considerable developmental burden on the cadet rather than on the institution.

Whereas these models have well-known conceptual foundations, interweaving psychology, philosophy, many leadership developmental theories, historically important institutional knowledge, and Army doctrine (e.g., ADRP 6-22. 2012, Judd et. al., 2018, Kegan, 1982, Kohlberg, 1976), West Point’s character development and professional ethic curriculum has not been extensively subjected to rigorous evaluation research. Outside evaluation, from either a quantitative or qualitative lens, simply is lacking. Although there may be little doubt about the needs and benefits of West Point’s broad and diverse character programs, little is

understood about the efficacy of such programs and the factors that promote long-term support of pro-social character development among cadets.

In addition, the character components of the models used at the Academy are based almost solely on the work of Robert Kegan (1982) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1976). In an arguably flawed longitudinal study by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (Lewis et al., 2005), the authors used subject/object interview methods to investigate development level scores, with ill-defined language such as “adequate interviewer inquiry and participant response” and “scorable bits... as short as a single sentence or as long as several paragraphs” to assign cadets to a stage in Kegan’s theory (p. 361). The authors then only offer two limitations of the study which were focused solely on the demographic distribution of the sample and generalizability of the findings, though they admit that “prospects for objectively scored developmental assessments are mixed” (Lewis et al., 2005, p. 372). Current literature suggests that stage theories do not fully account for transitions both within stages and between stages, they do not pay attention to the empirical evidence in support of Bornstein’s (2017) specificity principle, and thus they do not recognize the presence of individual differences in both transformational and variational change (Feldman, 2000, 2007; Lerner, 2018b). These models also do not account for the aggregation of effects and inevitable tensions that can be found as cadets affect each other as part of an orchestrated experience marked by deeply developmental crucible experiences each must overcome. A deeper look into a few aspects of peer relations and the specifics of crucible experiences therein should now be examined.

Cadet actions and coactions within the West Point context

The presentation, enactment, and display of character requires outward action and activity in social settings such as the team and the organization. Because context is socio-

specific, many performance contexts could potentially give rise to cooperation and competition in peer relations as character manifests and is enacted. Crucible experiences increase the pressure within peer relations. Group influence on individual motivations and behaviors, and the obverse, is bound by a connectedness between intragroup and intergroup goals and outcomes (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Extrinsic rewards, such as grades in the collegiate environment, are context-specific influences that can affect these complex relations (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). At USMA, for instance, cadets are ranked across their class (i.e., freshman, sophomore, etc.) with academic, military and physical scores, but are also placed into a hierarchical leadership structure, involving chains of command and units, akin to the military. To further interrogate how this system impacts character development, specific concepts require further illumination. Specifically, this section will delve into the context and definitions of peer relations, cooperation, competition, and crucible events.

Peer Relationships

Whereas the influence of peers begins early on in the preschool years, peer relationships continue to have “a strong effect on self-concept, social skills (e.g., conflict resolution, making and maintaining friendships), moral reasoning development, involvement in risky behaviors, [etc.]” that will inevitably play out at the college level (Berkowitz, 2002, p. 54). Pre-college characteristics (i.e., intellectual ability, study habits, high school grades, etc.) certainly account for a large proportion of the variance in college student achievement (Nelson et al., 1984; Pace, 1984; Willingham et al., 1985). However, what a student does while in college also extensively determines the success they experience (Moran & Gonyea, 2003). Chickering (1981) has asserted that the main goal of higher education should be to encourage intentional psychosocial developmental changes in students. Significant developments occur as students progress through

collegiate education programs (Chickering, 1981; Winston & Miller, 1987). These changes are certainly not only in the realm of intellectual development, but also include affective and psychosocial dimensions of development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Davis and Murrell (1993) proposed that optimum growth occurs when classroom studies relate to other aspects of the student's daily lives outside the classroom through social integration. Social integration pertains to the level of relatedness, or fit, a student feels with not only the institution, but also its broader culture and any subcultures or groups of which the student may be a part of (Tinto, 1975, 1993; Kuh & Love, 2000). These subcultures and groups include peers.

There is considerable research on peer learning that has discussed both cognitive growth (e.g., O'Donnell & King, 1999) and social aspects of learning (e.g., Johnson et al., 2000; Resnick et al., 1991; Rubin et al., 2015). Whereas the meaning of the term "peer" in peer learning can have many meanings, most often it is defined as a student in the same cohort or learning situation (Boud & Lee, 2005). In addition, concepts undergirding peer relations address such constructs as interdependence, scaffolding, and tutoring, which are all of importance to the learning activities on campus (Boud & Lee, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Tosey & Gregory, 1998). Several areas of the college literature—policy analyses, student involvement, social integration, and developmental education—assert the importance of student peer relations outside the classroom (Maxwell, 2000).

Students who are more integrated within the social system on campus as well as with their peers are more likely to see growth in their psychosocial skills (Hagedorn et al., 1999). Psychosocial growth is critical to the development of character (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). As such, college should be recognized as an integral part of student's broader psychosocial development and, in particular, the development of one's morality. Whereas several studies have

revealed that college education advances the moral reasoning of students, Dewey (1939) and Nucci (1985) emphasized the importance of real-world experience through actual social action outside the classroom to develop the ability to confront moral issues (Rest, 1988; Colby et al., 1983). In turn, faculty engagement, social integration, and community involvement provide several opportunities for the development of psychosocial domains. However, Chickering (1974) stated, “student culture either amplifies or attenuates the impact of curriculum, teaching and evaluations, residence hall arrangements, and student faculty relationships” (p. 90). In line with this thought, Astin (1993) stated in his work *What Matters Most in College*, that “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development in the undergraduate years (p. 398).

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and Kaufman and Creamer (1991) supported the concept that student peer interaction correlates with personal and intellectual development. Tinto’s (1993) student interaction model states that both academic and social integration are essential for students to successfully complete their academic journeys. Several researchers have empirically verified the vital role of student involvement and commitment to each other and how, regardless of the institution, peer relations play a critical role in developing persistence, competence, character, and feelings of belonging (e.g., Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Students who feel a strong sense of belonging and who have a sense of connectivity with peers are more likely to grow and develop both academically and personally (Kuh et al., 1991).

Growth in these areas allows for growth within the character domain. Socializing and connecting are activities college students will surely do with passion and energy. Institutions of higher learning that are concerned with the development of prosocial behavior and how it affects the character of their students would do well to do all that can be done to make peer coactions as

positive and productive as possible. These processes are no different for USMA and its social settings.

As such, a discussion of the concepts surrounding both cooperation and competition as subcomponents of peer coactions is important to undertake. Whereas the literature surrounding cooperation and competition within and between groups has developed without much cross-fertilization due to individual level moderating effects (i.e., motivation and self-awareness), it is important for the proposed research to examine both in concert rather than in opposition (Cikara & Paluck, 2013).

Cooperation

Vygotsky (1978) and others (Bornstein & Bruner, 1989; Chickering, 1969; Smith, 1986; Webb, 1982) have acknowledged the importance of peer coaction in promoting intellectual development early in life. In addition, the implications of this relation for higher education have not been overlooked (e.g., Astin, 1996; Johnson et al., 1991; Pascarella et al., 1983; Schulman, 2000). Research into cooperation (also often referred to as collaboration or prosocial behavior) over several decades has shown that cooperation among students leads to increases in learning outcomes, productivity, and problem-solving abilities (Johnson & Johnson, 1989b). Group work fosters achievement, develops thinking skills, improves attitudes toward school, and promotes interpersonal and intergroup relations (Blumenfield et al., 1996). Regarding cooperation in learning settings, five components develop to help ensure that groups function to the maximum benefit of all students involved, including positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills training, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1989b).

Interestingly, however, in the service of being a good group member or facilitating the group's goals, people can and will willingly misrepresent their opinions and perceptions (Asch,

1951), exhibit pluralistic ignorance (Prentice & Miller, 1993), and suppress dissenting ideas (Janis, 1972). In another words, cooperating in the short-term can have long-term negative consequences for individuals and the groups of which they are a part. In addition, when performed in an ill-structured or haphazard fashion, peer cooperation groups can “stigmatize low achievers, exacerbate status difference and create dysfunctional interactions” because students do not “automatically become more involved, thoughtful, tolerant, or responsible when working with others” (Blumenfield et al., 1996, p. 37). Furthermore, in most instances research focused on group outcomes report different findings than research focused on group processes, which may miss opportunities to further understand cooperation (Good et al., 1992; Webb & Palincsar, 1996).

Despite these challenges, the integration of academic content and dialogue among students to build a “learning community” approach within the collegiate arena can assist in crafting longer-term cooperative behaviors (Hilk, 2013). Peer learning has long been an educational technique that is transformative for students (Blumenfield et al., 1996). Peters and Waterman (1982) stated that effective learning communities induce students to perform at more optimal levels than do those in which collaborative values are less pronounced. Moreover, Treisman's (1985) ethnographic study of college achievement found that students who worked together outside of class, cooperatively integrating their studying and social activities, were shown to have much greater success than did those students who studied in a private, asocial, or noncooperative fashion.

Whether in or outside of the classroom, creating successful group work and peer cooperation is not as simple as putting students together. How the group is composed, organized, led, held accountable, and what tasks and roles are involved are some of the main considerations

regarding effective peer-to-peer cooperation (Blumenfield et al., 1996). For example, Palincsar et al. (1993) have shown that for the most cooperative interchanges, students need considerable assistance in the process of collaboration and problem-solving early on when tasks are first assigned. Slavin (1990) also notes that both individual accountability and group rewards are essential to ensure cooperation. Moral conduct develops in line with peer-group norms (Kohlberg, 1964). Faculty who can assist with peer-to-peer cooperation and collaboration before, during, and after task assignment, while also holding individuals appropriately accountable for group outcomes, will maximize the student educational experience. In turn, students report that when this facilitation occurs, they experience the greatest gains in learning and describe their peers as supportive of their academic achievements (Ayers & Bennett, 1983).

Accordingly, it seems appropriate to agree with Moran and Gonyea's (2003) idea that academically focused peer cooperation is "critical to a full understanding of both the outcomes of the college experience and the organizational dynamics of colleges and universities" (p. 2). Institutions of higher learning that have strong peer-to-peer engagement within positive organizational cultures exert a transformative effect across their membership (Cameron & Tschirhart, 1992; Goleman et al., 2003). This transformative effect leads students to be more productive and effective in achieving goals and has related beneficial outcomes (i.e., effective student culture, promoting intellectual development, improved cognitive functioning, increased student/peer interaction) with a multitude of potential applications to colleges and universities beyond just the classroom (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

A transformational setting is ideal for the development of character (Cook & Aman, 2020). Research indicates that transformational leadership improves group behavior (Hu et al., 2016). Transformational leadership utilizes the concept of idealized influence through

appropriate role modeling, following a core set of ethical values, and leading by example through embodiment of a personal belief system (Bourne et al., 2015). Solomon et al. (2001) have compiled extensive reviews that list cooperation (in the forms of student participation, discussion, and collaboration) as one of four practices that have strong empirical support when implementing character developmental programs. Moreover, Baluch's (2002) survey research on implementing character education curriculum indicated that cooperation was the first among thirteen values found.

Furthermore, studies have shown that the processes involved in cooperative group work enhances students' skills in civic engagement and character development, the expansion of which are increasingly seen as an essential mission of higher education and beyond (Callina et al., 2014, 2017, 2018; Colby et al., 2003; Colby & Sullivan, 2008; Cook & Aman, 2020; Lerner & Callina, 2014; Murray et al., 2019). The development of a leader's character matters beyond just the leader themselves, as followers infer their leader's underlying character "from the leader's demonstrated cooperative behavior" (Sweeney & Hannah, 2007, p. 166). As much as character matters, cooperation does too. How character and cooperation are affected by competition is also an important consideration.

Competition

Whereas cooperation is seen as generally more effective than independent effort, not all peer encounters are necessarily productive (e.g. Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1983; Kruger, 1993). In fact, from a Piagetian (1970) perspective the construct that distinguishes successful from unsuccessful peer cooperation is socio-cognitive conflict or competition. However, little theoretical or empirical attention has been paid to participants' understanding of competition (Shields et al., 2014). Duina states that "we often think of winning as the opposite of losing, but

we are unsure about how the two concepts relate to each other. We push ourselves, congratulate winners, and console losers – all without knowing why” (2011, p. 6). These ideas may lead to the question of whether competition is either harmful or beneficial. To help address the question, an understanding of the definitions of competition and how the competitive arena is conceptualized is relevant.

The research that has been done indicates that the role modeling of, education about, and the environment surrounding competition are some of the factors that have the most positive and negative effects on moral growth (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981; Lickona, 1991; Fox, 2000; Fraleigh, 1984; Gazzinga, 2007; Tancredi, 2005). The causes of competition are often complex, entwined, and situationally dependent (Deutsch et al., 2006; Jervis, 1997; Lederach, 1997). Several researchers within the field of high-level competition indicate that the longer one participates in high-level competition, the more one’s moral reasoning can become negatively affected (e.g., Beller et al., 2004; Beller et al., 2006; Rudd & Stoll, 2004). Because USMA uses several grading procedures to rank order cadets into various order-of-merit lists, it could be posited that negative interdependence can manifest and lead to competitive types of class and group structures (Hilk, 2013).

However, there are a few underlying themes that shed light on both the maintenance and resolution of competitive conflicts. One of the relevant themes is to understand the nature of how one person responds to another person. For example, Deutsch (1973) and Deutsch et al. (2006) developed a theory that posited the idea that many different types of conflicts between two persons can be viewed through either the cooperation or the competition between them when achieving interdependent goals. Most competition that leads to conflict, however, can be de-

escalated to at least a neutral state if one actor unilaterally shifts their behavior to cooperation (Liebovitch et al., 2010).

In addition, Shields (2009) has argued that most analyses do not distinguish between the various forms of competition. He argues that much of what is seen and taught today regarding competition is something called *decompetition* (short for decomposed competition), or a striving *against* an opponent (Shields, 2009). In decompetition the focus is on certainty regarding the outcome of a contest rather than the shared experience. The etymology of the word “competition” means “to strive” or “to seek” with (Merriam-Webster, 2020). This definition speaks to a partnership between opponents that brings out the best in each other; “a mutual striving for excellence in attempting to win a contest” (Scott, 2015, p. 8). Through what Scott (2015) defines as a *partnership metaphor*, so-called opponents are co-competitors who bring out the best in each other, pushing one another to reach their full potential with a mutual respect and appreciation for the shared competitive experience. Accordingly, the process involved in the shared experience and partnership is more important than the outcome of the contest. From this perspective, one could agree with Stoll (2012) that true competition, that is, the competition which helps grow desirable character, is “*striving with* the opponent to push self and opponent to excellence” (p. 4).

In transformative developmental settings that promote efforts to strive with another, competitive co-construction can occur when two individuals delve into each other's thoughts to potentially create a new, integrated perspective (Kruger, 1993). Therefore, it is critical to both participants that their peer engagements focus on more than their own perspectives. Furthermore, such a focus is particularly important because of the developmental benefits of comparing one's own understanding to that of another in the service of trying to integrate varying perspectives

(Tomasello et al., 1993). Damon (1975) proposed a distributive justice index where individuals were post-tested to assess changes in moral reasoning from peer engagements, among other types of pairs. The results showed that individuals paired with peers had significantly greater post-test scores than individuals paired with non-peers (1975). In a follow up to Damon's study Kruger (1993) found that "reasoned examination of more than one viewpoint results in development that can be measured - even after a single event" (p. 168). In other words, if done in the right environment with the right intent, competition can enhance developmental opportunities, or more colloquially, iron sharpens iron.

A review of several studies aligned with either the conflict or cooperation side of the debate regarding which is most significant developmentally suggests that the two are not far apart in their positive developmental impact (e.g., Bearison et al., 1986; Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1983; Damon & Killen, 1982; Dimant & Bearison, 1991; Roy & Howe, 1990). By competing with each other's *ideas*, rather than solely with each *other*, people can discover together a more coordinated view of an issue (Kruger, 1993). In larger groups, competition also allows for the joint rejection of inferior ideas and the proposal and acceptance of a superior ones. This work suggests a much richer vision of competition, one that features competition linked closely with cooperation, which are both in turn linked with development.

Regarding the relevance of competition to character development, some aphorisms state that competition either *builds* or *reveals* character. But these aphorisms harken back as far as ancient Greek culture and philosophy. In Plato's *Republic*, competition "serves the educational objective of personal virtue, intellectual achievement, and political harmony" (Reid, 2007, p. 160). Plato seems to have understood the value of contests of will (*agones*) in the development of virtue (*arête*) or character (Reid, 2007). This development, through competition, simply could

not happen without a co-competitor. What co-competitors do, then, is increase the developmental challenge from a basic test to a *contest* – or a *testing together* (Reid, 2007). In this case the co-competitors become facilitators directly involved in transforming the developmental experience, allowing for achievements of character where they are “not judged by their ends, but by their agent, who must act voluntarily, have knowledge of what [they are] doing, and act from a stable disposition” (Holowchak, 2011, p. 99). Competition, like cooperation, allows for the co-creation of one’s character.

Finally, here, Shields and Bredemeier (2011) state that it makes a significant ethical difference whether we see ourselves as fundamentally at odds with others when we compete or whether we see others as partners who are also partly cooperating with us (and we with them) as competition ensues. Moreover, from this partnership perspective, competition is viewed from a complex meta-perspective that seeks a common good amid often intense opposition. This meta-perspective heavily relies on one’s character, which, in line with RDS ideas of individual↔individual coaction, adds to an ethical environment which affects the character of other participants. Therefore, the “critical examination of more than one perspective, as compared to simple competition or simple cooperation” could be seen as the quintessential “element of the peer interactions that are crucial” to developmental outcomes for character (Kruger, 1993, p. 168). This more complex form of competition, as a partnership with others, underlies the idea that one can compete against an idea rather than just another person, such as a set standard that needs be met.

Furthermore, competing against yourself (also known as *compete with yourself* in the education literature - CWY) (e.g., improving your GPA or standardized test scores) is a much different developmental experience than solely competing against others, where the evidence

suggests that “a pupil does not put in more effort just because s/he is good or poor in performance in relation to others” (Gandhi, 2017, p. 222). As such, the ipsative assessment characterized by CWY has been shown to boost individual confidence, motivation, and improve performance (Gandhi, 2017). In addition, whereas this dissertation does not include a focus on the organizational concept called *coopetition*, defined as the “seemingly paradoxical but simultaneous cooperation and competition can give rise to important synergies,” an observer could see how institutions can craft cultures that foster or negate both the positive and negative aspects of competition and cooperation (Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016, p. 655). In sum, one can surmise that competition is very much intertwined with cooperation. This integration may be especially salient within the context of crucible experiences.

Crucible events

Studies of leadership tend to overlook the relational and experiential aspects of leadership development (Olivares, 2011). Assuredly, leaders learn from experience. Scholarship by Bennis, Schein, Argyris, Schon, and McCall “has helped make possible a sophisticated understanding of experience-based leadership development” (Thomas, 2008, p. 15). First labeled ‘leadership crucibles’ by Bennis and Thomas (2002), crucibles involve a severe test or trial, can be intense, and can at times even be traumatic. These events are both planned and unplanned events (Avolio, 2005). To expand from the original idea Bennis and Thomas (2002) offered that was directly connected to trauma, it is useful to note Pillemer’s (2001) definition of momentous events as “distinctive, circumscribed, and highly emotional” (p. 123) and Terr’s (1990) description of events and experiences that are highly relevant and consequential, having meaning that “influences, and continues to influence, attitudes and behaviors” (p. 35). Crucible events were also further defined to include experiences that are a “transformative experience through which

one comes to a new or an altered sense of identity” (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 27). Four skills enable leaders to learn from these transformative moments: engaging others in shared meaning, gaining a distinctive and compelling voice, maintaining integrity, and growing an adaptive capacity (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). For the remainder of this work, the definition used for crucible includes these four skills and the expanded definitions included above. The term *crucible* is used evoke the idea of the containers in which alchemists attempted to transform base metals into gold; “a kind of super-concentrated form of leadership development” (Thomas, 2008, p. 15).

Moreover, Rest (1986) noted that changes in one’s beliefs come from “experiences that do not fit one’s earlier conceptions. Cognitive disequilibrium is the condition for development” (p. 32). Also referred to in this literature as *developmental experiences*, crucible events bring about a point of deep internal reflection that forces individuals to question who they are and what matters to them. Learning happens both during the crucible experience as well as upon reflection. An event or experience by which you do not learn and are not internally changed does not meet the definition of being developmental or at the crucible level. Both qualitative and quantitative studies regarding teachers, students, and young professionals have shown that there can be considerable progress in moral development dependent upon an individual’s educational and professional experiences (Sprinthall, 1994; Sprinthall et al., 1994; Reiman & Parramore, 1994).

Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) stated that developmentally, the experiences that “are the most potent are the ones that stretch or challenge people” and “force people out of their comfort zone” (p. 7). They also state that “comfort is the enemy of growth and continued effectiveness” (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004, p. 7). Opportunities need to be provided to engage in self-sustaining moral development and moral autonomy (Lind, 2000b). These

opportunities include role-taking opportunities, which are a necessary condition for moral development (Lind, 2000b). Crucible events can be characterized by several developmental challenges, such as confusion, ambiguity, variety, difficult goals (internally or externally set), novelty, conflict (with others or with self), loss, failure, and even disappointment, if the context serves the dual purpose of motivating development and providing the opportunity for development (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004).

Hardship and challenge are requirements to develop well-rounded leaders (Moxley & Pulley, 2004). Research from the *Center for Creative Leadership* states that the reason is that: “learning is not random,” and therefore, “specific experiences teach specific lessons, and hardships offer lesson not attainable elsewhere” be it “challenging assignments, feedback-intensive courses, [or] mentors and coaches” (Moxley & Pulley, 2004, p. 184). The ability to learn is a “complex combination of motivational factors, personality factors, and learning tactics” that one engages through experience (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004, p. 4). Not all experiences are equally developmental. The life-altering developmental experiences needed to build character cannot just happen through dialogue and instruction, as most of an individual’s learning happens from either their career, from independent activities, or from life experience outside the classroom rather than direct ethics teaching (Douglas, 2003; Lind, 2000b; McCall et al., 1988; Ruderman & Ohlott, 2000).

To develop character at USMA, cadets need to experience opportunities for moral action (Lickona, 1996). Moments that intertwine autonomy and responsibility test one’s character (Dempsey, 2020). If ethics is an intellectual domain and cadets are constructive learners then cadets may learn best by doing. Constructing developmental experiences for those who will endure ambiguity and/or settings that will challenge their moral leadership requires a skillful

understanding of individual, leader, group, and organizational development (Cook et al., 2020).

Whereas these experiences are one-time, one-off events in the sense that they must be individual ⇔ context specific, they must also be iterative and nested. To be clear, development is a process and not a sole event or circumstance; very rarely will a single developmental event be enough to create lasting change regarding leadership (Van Velsor et al., 2004). Being able to take advantage of multiple different types of experiences presents unique challenges that, in turn, require different learning tactics and approaches to master new learnings previously not experiences. Doing so provides a broader opportunity for a leader to get more learning from any one experience as well as buffering those experiences that may be more difficult and/or challenging (Van Velsor et al., 2004).

A focus on context-specific factors should drive all models of leader development. Creating leader development frameworks for character-building crucibles should accomplish three goals: clarify the demands placed on leaders; explain the capacities that need to be developed so that leaders can adapt to the demands and challenges within the given circumstances; and recognize that the demands placed on leaders differ when focusing on character development as compared to other components of leader development (Palmer et al., 2011). In line with RDS metatheory, the individual cannot be removed from the specifics of their environment and vice versa; there is a bidirectional relation between the individual and their environment developmentally, a relation with social, cultural, ecological, and historical modifiers (Lerner & Overton, 2008). Linking developmental experiences together should also not be seen from a linear perspective or sequence but should be seen through a lens of interrelated psychological capacities at both these previously mentioned individual and contextual levels, consisting of various skills and traits.

The *Center for Creative Leadership* states that a developmental experience is comprised of three key elements: assessment, challenge, and support (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). A variety of these experiences coupled with other leader(ship) development opportunities and fostering the ability to learn within an organizational or another context may create a developmental process. As such, it is incumbent upon leaders to deliberately craft continuous developmental experiences that assess, challenge, and support the coaction of individual and organizational growth. Leaders assess appropriately by finding out what is really needed. To challenge is to create developmental disequilibrium through deliberate and realistic growth activities (Piaget, 1970). Leaders support this situation by creating conditions for success via resources, emotional and physical care, and accountability. Whether termed crucible or trigger events, these developmental experiences help cadets, staff, and faculty key in on the central elements of Avolio's (2004) full range of leadership potential: self-awareness → self-regulation → self-development.

Cadets do not come into USMA as blank slates; they come into the institution with preconceived ideas about leadership via other leadership experiences and implicit leadership theories that may at times not even highlight values, character, or ethics in leadership (Epitropaki et al., 2013). In addition, as character is deeply personal, it should be noted that, even when leaders are provided with knowledge of character, this information alone will not necessarily trigger sudden changes in behavior (Byrne et al., 2018). West Point graduates receive an education “intended to produce first an individual of character and eventually a leader of character” (Dempsey, 2020, p. 52).

Schein (2010) notes that the developmental experiences for leaders from an organizational culture perspective require consideration of at least five factors: perception and

insight; motivation; emotional strength; ability to change assumptions; and the ability to create involvement and participation. When creating developmental experiences or crucible moments at USMA, learning and organizational culture cannot be imposed on people; their involvement and participation is needed in figuring out what is going on, what there is to do, and what is the actual process of learning that is occurring (Schein, 2010). Theoretical and empirical evidence strongly support the belief that organizational design, configuration, and the participation of people within the systems and subsystems therein, in addition to the aforementioned factors, impact both culture and performance (Daft, 2007; Miller, 1987; Schein, 2010).

Where, when, and how experiences happen is critical to both life-span human development and RDS-based approaches. Just as a person-centric design that accounts for individual↔context relations are essential when evaluating individual and organizational readiness, this RDS-based view is also a useful approach when designing, creating, conducting, and interpreting developmental experiences. Accounting for this nuanced approach aligns directly with Bornstein's (2017) specificity principle, which states that the development of specific characteristics in specific individuals is affected by specific experiences in specific ways at specific times. A study by Cook (2019) provides such information.

The findings of Cook (2019)

Results of a qualitative study focused solely on the academic pillar of the cadet experience (Cook, 2019) found that there was a significant theme involving peer relations, which consisted of both competitive and cooperative practices. Positive linkages (cooperative behaviors) are associated with "sinking or swimming together," whereas negative linkages (competitive behaviors) are associated with one "sinking while the other swims" and vice versa (Deutsch et al., 2006). Given the almost maxim-like "cooperate and graduate" mantra referenced

by cadets, it was found that positive linking with others helped cadets swim more often than they seemingly sank. At USMA, a hierarchical, rules-based and orderly organization, cooperation appeared to be the most used peer relationships approach. Cooperation has been found to lead to coordination of effort, division of labor, orientation to task achievement, orderliness of discussion, and high productivity (Deutsch et al., 2006). These attributes all happen to also be the hallmarks of any successful military institution, even though USMA is a competitive and rigorous context for developing future Army officers. Cooperation has been found to be superior to not just competition, but to any individualistic efforts in promoting achievement and productivity, and it has even been further specified that cooperation *without* intergroup competition outperforms cooperation *with* intergroup competition regarding achievement and productivity (Johnson et al., 1981).

The process by which peer relations happens within the academic pillar of the USMA context is represented in Figure 3. Cook's (2019) analyses identified a process which verified the primary core category of peer relationships. Peer relationships appeared at USMA through two complementary categories, namely competition and cooperation. There were more instances of cooperation, which is reflected in the size differential between cooperation and competition in the figure. As cadets undergo cooperation and competition due to various aspects of the USMA journey, staff, faculty, tactical officers and leaders ensure an overall integration of cadets' developmental experiences, facilitating growth toward becoming a commissioned leader of character. The transition to a commissioned leader of character happens before cadets graduate but does not cease once the USMA experience has ended, arguably extending into their time as Army Second Lieutenants (2LT) (and possibly beyond). The next step to enact, then, was to test the findings made in Cook (2019) to see if they were in concert or conflict with the military and

physical pillars. The implications of the Cook (2019) study, and the limited existence of qualitative studies of the *Project Arete* dataset, led to the design of the analyses used in this dissertation.

Aims of the study

This study was part of the larger *Project Arete* investigation. As such, it is important to understand the aims of the overall project. There were two overarching questions addressed by the *Project Arete*: 1. How can the nation imbue its young people, and future leaders, with attributes of character enabling them to lead others and our nation effectively and with honor?; and 2. Can one service academy's approach to character virtue development and leadership, if found to be at least one answer to Question 1, generalize to other service academies, other institutions of higher education, and other programs of professional education?

An accelerated cohort-sequential design was put in place along with a mixed-method approach to attempt to triangulate information across an assortment of quantitative and qualitative measures. The methodology of *Project Arete* developed out of a partnership that was built between Tufts University and West Point. The members of the *Arete* team within the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) indicated that we had qualitative data on cadets that was not being fully explored and that IARYD did not have anyone specifically focusing on or specializing in qualitative research approaches. Qualitative work can appraise non-standard contexts (i.e., USMA) to identify questions and other potential research implications within those contexts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I determined that taking the lead on the qualitative approach would not only be best suited to the team's needs, but also make use of the data on hand to further illuminate the processes involved in developing cadet's character.

If character development is to be fully understood within the institutional frameworks present at USMA, and with sensitivity to RDS principles of analysis, then the research must assess the construct both quantitatively and qualitatively, with sensitivity to the aspects of person and context that may be related to how character develops. Therefore, I decided to conduct a phenomenological study with the purpose of furthering understanding of the essence of cadet culture and peer-relations as character is cultivated. Qualitative approaches may be better suited for the exploratory frameworks that allow for the appraisal of contexts that have the unique students and institutional emphases that are present at USMA (Arbeit, 2015).

In my initial pilot study, I looked solely at the academic pillar of the USMA experience (Cook, 2019). A cadet's ability to navigate through West Point was very much intertwined with the experience of fellow cadets through peer relations. Given the results and implications for future research directions derived from the study of Cook (2019), I explored in this dissertation whether (1) there are crucible experiences that stand out, and (2) how cooperation and competition exist in the military and physical pillars in addition to the academic pillars. I expected that the tripartite aspects of cooperation, competition, and crucible events would be evident in all pillars.

As such, I believed that it was important to understand components of peer-relations, such as cooperation and competition, beyond just the academic pillar because cadets ultimately are placed on multiple order-of-merit lists that determine everything from developmental opportunities (i.e., military training/schools during the summer, chain of command positions, internships, etc.) to what job and base they will be assigned to at the start of their Army career. In addition, understanding what crucible developmental experiences, both deliberately crafted and spontaneous (if any), significantly impact peer relationships could illuminate the nuances of how

USMA develops cadet character. There are several aspects within peer relationship contexts that I believed needed to be further uncovered through the words and voices of cadets, staff/faculty, and senior USMA leaders, which are encapsulated in the following lines of inquiry:

1. What are the dynamics of character development at USMA?
2. What are the dynamics of peer relations at USMA?
3. Why does cooperation and competition appear in cadet culture?
4. What is the essence of cooperative and competitive contexts at USMA?
5. What is the nature of crucible experiences, both in an official and unofficial manifestation?

There is always a sense of struggle at USMA, a tension that seemingly flows back and forth within cadet coactions and activity. Crucible experiences shape and characterize the tension within the world of cadet character development. This “back and forth” movement seems to fluctuate around aspects of peer relationships, namely the ostensibly opposing ideas cooperation and competition. But cadet culture also breeds a striving, whether it be through cooperation or competition, toward the same goal – becoming a *commissioned leader of character*. Cultural understanding is very interpretive and qualitative research is a set of interpretive, naturalistic approaches that “make the world visible” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 7). There are also several underlying elements that are interwoven and intertwined within the developmental processes at USMA, with a common thread that involves character.

As a common thread among cadets, staff/faculty, and leaders at USMA, character is understood to be intertwined with so many other aspects of the 47-month experience, so much so that the metaphor of a literal thread is certainly too thin. It should be viewed more so as a taught rope, woven and braided by academics, military training, physical events, and other features of

character. As I envisioned this rope, I visualized it being kept tight by the previously mentioned back-and-forth movement of peer coactions among cadets, specifically regarding relationships involving elements of both cooperation and competition and I wanted to know why this situation seems to be the case.

The tension and the movement I believed existed is akin to a tug of war. Merriam-Webster (2020) has a secondary definition of a tug of war that calls it “a situation in which two evenly matched people or factions are striving to keep or obtain the same thing.” In a lot of ways, a tug of war represents a balance through the tension of two opposites, or the need to resolve conflict between two polarities through deliberate but intelligent actions. But I also found in this metaphor an interesting parallel regarding how a particular set of people are pulled (i.e., “tugged”) toward a system such as the one that exists in the Academy, due to service or, in the starkest sense, toward the sounds of guns, danger, or even war. Having taught an elective course called “Leadership in Combat” at USMA, I believed that the “tug of war” in this sense speaks directly to cadet character. USMA is devoted to the development of all cadets, especially given that the Academy wishes to develop leaders of character, be it for the front lines, the front of a formation, or the front office.

A final research question

A final research focus from the literatures I have discussed and from trying to understand the tug of war became “What is the essence of peer relationships within the frame of character development at USMA?” The next chapter presents the methods I used to initiate further inquiry.

CHAPTER 2: METHOD

The latest science provides a helpful guide for what the future may bring.

- Barack Obama

A desire to capture the personal views of those implementing and receiving character development steered my analytic approach toward a qualitative methodology. In line with the views of Thomas and Magilvy (2011), I became increasingly interested in a holistic, close-up view of the many features (i.e., variables in quantitative terms) of the singular (but dynamic) phenomenon of character development. Of note, the purpose of qualitative research is “not to generalize to other subjects or settings, but to explore deeply a specific phenomenon or experience on which to build further knowledge” (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 152).

This close-up view can be missed in the generalizability of quantitative research. Therefore, I came to believe that to get the most out of the *Project Arete* focus groups and interviews I needed to find a deeper and richer view of character within the specific USMA context. To address these ideas and the aims of my research in illuminating aspects of my lines of inquiry, I conducted a phenomenological analysis of qualitative data collected as a part of research formally known as *West Point Character Development Project*, titled “Duty, Honor, Country: A Study of the Development of Leaders of Character at the United States Military Academy.” The purpose of this section is to present the research context and describe the process of data collection and analysis.

Research Context

Corbin and Strauss (2015) note that when conducting qualitative research, delineating the context and/or conditions through which something happens, is done, is felt, or is said is just as important as coming up with the correct research approach. They further go on to say that

“context not only grounds concepts but also minimizes the chances of distorting meaning or misinterpreting intent” (p. 70). It is therefore of the utmost importance to identify and clarify the research context.

My research was conducted at USMA, situated in West Point, NY. As referred to in Chapter One, it is a post-secondary educational institution that prepares young people for service as commissioned Army officers. The research was part of a larger study of USMA’s character development program previously introduced as *Project Arete*. The setting for *Project Arete* for all waves of both quantitative and qualitative data collection occurred at USMA during summer training, the academic year, through online surveys, as well as through focus group inquiry and personal interviews. My work was more concerned with the qualitative research portion of the Project.

A major framework for this study was the USMA proposed theory of change regarding character development (see Figure 4). As shown in the figure, staff and faculty at USMA have a professional Army ethic, which is codified as the set of laws, values and beliefs of the U. S. Army culture. One example of this ethic is the *duty to steward the Army profession*, which inspires USMA staff and faculty to encourage the positive professional development of cadets. A second example is the seven Army core values, (e.g., Loyalty, Excellence, Duty, Respect, Service, Honor, and Personal Courage). The study was conducted over a period of five years, ending in 2020. This research, involving a partnership among researchers at Tufts University and USMA, sought to identify character development strategies and activities specific to USMA that are especially relevant in promoting character and leadership attributes among cadets via this theory of change. By assessing leadership and character development approaches within the

academic, military, and physical programs the research served to assess, inform, and enhance character and leadership education within the Corps of Cadets.

The Army ethic informs all the institutional policies, programs, and procedures that comprise the character development process at USMA. The experiences of this process in many ways are formal policies, such as the Honor Code or more informal instances such as forum-based discussions (i.e., classroom, presentations, guest speakers, lectures, etc.) about moral dilemmas that may present themselves throughout a career in military leadership. As shown in the Figure 4 the 47-month developmental experience at USMA promotes cadet character virtues (i.e., humility, grit, intentional self-regulation, optimism, etc.). It is important to note the bidirectional arrow between cadet character strengths and character development experiences, in line with RDS metatheory.

More specifically, this qualitative research sought to identify the lived experiences and relevant features of the ecology at USMA that promote character development. Another useful approach to assessing the many educational activities of West Point was to acknowledge that the institution is engaged primarily in the professional preparation of Army officers and leaders of character. Professional preparation of this specific type requires an educational model that integrates students and their educational environments (Overton, 2015).

In addition to being members of the *Project Arete* research team, Colby and Sullivan (2008) have proposed a framework of three common professional apprenticeships which prepare emerging professionals across a variety of fields. The first involves intellectual training, the second includes learning the complex skills required for practice in the field, and the third seeks to ground apprentice's professional identities in their profession's ethical standards. Of note, Colby and Sullivan (2008) posit that the central foundation of the framework must be based in

the third type of apprenticeship. This third type includes integrating one's professional identity with the values of their chosen profession through the personal and moral aspirations of the individual. Within the USMA context, cadet's professional identity is to align with that of an Army officer and the values of the profession as illustrated by Army doctrine.

Furthermore, the three apprenticeships must be fully integrated with each other within the observed setting if they are to effect professional preparation (Colby & Sullivan, 2008). At USMA this professional preparation requires an integration both within and across the Academy's academic, military, and physical programs. Although the three programs are differentially relevant to the three apprenticeships of professional preparation, each program helps cadets connect knowledge, skills, abilities, attributes, understanding, professional identity, and various other areas to character. Accordingly, the study setting was integral to the understanding of character education at USMA.

Designing the Present Study

USMA is guided by U.S. Federal law (U.S. Code, Title 10) that requires officers "to show themselves a good example of virtue" and "to guard against...immoral practices." In pursuit of fulfilling that requirement, USMA has become the nation's preeminent leader development institution. It trains approximately 20% of the officers for the U.S. Army, and many graduates serve in leadership roles in various settings following their military service. *Project Arete* was designed to ascertain how the development of character creates leaders of this caliber of character.

In 2007 Michael Matthews, a professor in USMA's Department of Behavioral Sciences and co-investigator of *Project Arete*, identified character strengths that are of critical importance for cadet performance and for successful completion of training at USMA. Later, in 2011, he

found that, among a large sample of Army leaders studied after deployment to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, specific character strengths were determined most valuable for effectively managing combat situations. These findings laid the basis for a larger study of character development at USMA. In 2013 a planning grant was proposed for a multi-year study involving a cohort-sequential, longitudinal assessment of the development of character and leadership attributes among cadets, from acceptance to USMA through at least their graduation. The study sought to assess the presence and impact of policies, practices, and programs influencing character and leadership development among USMA cadets and graduates, from the time of entry into USMA in summer, 2015, through winter 2020.

In the first year of the study, the project team surveyed and interviewed cadets from all four class years as well as conducted interviews of tactical officers (TACs), instructors, and key staff and faculty leaders. The following years of the study continued this approach. I came to doctoral studies during the last three years of the study.

Exploring the USMA setting for the specific features and attributes that are displayed in specific contexts is in direct adherence to the role of educational institutions as key settings for development, in general, and for character development specifically (e.g., Berkowitz et al., 2017). The range of educational settings considered in the literature includes Kindergarten through Grade 12 and, as well, extends into post-secondary settings, including both community college, vocational schools, and four-year college and university settings (Johnson et al., 2014). Therefore, conducting research in person on the USMA campus was paramount to understanding the professional identity of future officers from a developmental context.

I chose to continue the process of interviews already in place, while also changing and adjusting the interview protocols as well as who, within the staff and faculty, would be

interviewed. This decision was made partly because the *Arete* team had only conducted focus groups and key leader interviews for the academic pillar, leaving the military and physical pillar needing assessment. A new IRB protocol was drafted, and we planned to do the focus groups and interviews for the military and physical pillars separately. Unfortunately, we had very low attendance for the military pillar data collection during the fall of 2018 and had to cancel the spring 2019 data collection due to unforeseen circumstances. In the fall of 2019, a new IRB protocol was drafted that planned to conduct combined focus groups and interviews for both the military and physical pillars and we were able to complete our final data collection at that time.

Data Collection

The data used for this inquiry started when *Project Arete* was launched at USMA in 2015. My key objective in the semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews I conducted with cadets, staff, faculty, and senior leaders was to discuss their opinions and experiences in order to gain insights into how the priorities of the character development program are represented and integrated with the academic, military, and physical programs. The overall goal was to understand and characterize the culture of USMA as a developmental institution, using the information I could discern about the actual, day-to-day practices and experiences found among leaders, faculty, staff, and cadets. The aim of the qualitative investigation was to enhance and supplement the findings of the quantitative study by providing an ethnographic depiction of the ways in which West Point enacts its mission.

To my knowledge, there has been no ethnographic study of this type at USMA. From a qualitative lens a few studies do exist. A previous ethnographic study (Gold & Friedman, 2000) published in “Military Medicine” looked solely at stress and coping during cadet basic training in 1993. The previously mentioned study by Lewis et al. (2005) delved into identity development

through the narrow lens of Kegan's (1982) theory. A narrative typology was used for a dissertation (Helms, 2008) that illuminates personal reflections of women's transition to become West Point cadets. A study by Ender et al. (2017) focused on transgender integration and attitudes around the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" in 2011 and lifting the ban on openly transgender service in 2016. Arbeit's qualitative works (2017a, 2017b, & 2018) focused on sexual relationships and sexual violence. The most recent qualitative work by Lewis (2019) focuses on gathering an oral history of the West Point experience and leader identity for women in the early- to mid-80s, specifically focusing on the Class of 1985. As such, these studies have focused in the main on issues of gender and identity rather than issues of character development. The goal of sampling for this study was to select key informants from cadets, staff, and faculty to focus more so on character. All qualitative interviews are time intensive regarding collection and analysis. Therefore, we attained a sample size that was small enough to provide valuable interview data, yet large enough to obtain a diversity of perspectives from the participants regarding the development of character.

Participants

The potential value for understanding how leaders of character are "produced" within an institution such as USMA was a key basis of *Project Arete*. The data set includes focus group and interview data for four different groups: cadets, staff/faculty (teachers), staff/faculty (Tactical Officers), and key leaders, at three times of measurement. Tactical Officers (TACs) are the primary cadet developer and the legal commander of a cadet company (approximately 125 cadets) and assist cadets in balancing the requirements of the physical, military, and academic development while mentoring the cadet chain of command. Totals for each group were 113

cadets, 24 teachers, 6 TAC Officers, and 5 key leaders. In sum, there were 148 total participants. The cadets were in the classes of 2017 through 2020 ($M_{age} = 22.11$ years, $SD = 1.19$).

Demographics of the cadets interviewed matched the demographics of the institution, in that the racial/ethnic composition of the sample was 74.9% male and 25.1% female and, in turn, 70% White; 9.2% Hispanic; 9% Black; 8% Asian; 1.8% Other; 1.4% Not Identified; and 0.1% Unknown. Given limitations of time, participants were not asked to report other potential demographic information, and each participant was given a pseudonym that corresponded to their interview time and class year to further preserve confidentiality. Of note, the imbalance of men versus women and the low representation of racial minorities in the sample of cadets was historically consistent with both USMA and general Army populations.

Procedures

Participants were recruited and selected through coordination with either the Brigade Tactical Department (BTD) which oversees the TAC officers and their assigned cadet companies, the Department of Physical Education (DPE), the Department of Military Instruction (DMI), the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership (BS&L) through a proprietary SONA Systems-based research platform that granted extra credit opportunity for study participation, or the USMA Office of Institutional Research (OIR). Staff, faculty, and TACs were specifically requested to volunteer through DPE, DMI, BTD, and OIR respectively. I was given SONA access to maintain confidentiality of the cadet participants from BS&L leadership, and to further preserve confidentiality no names on these lists were shared with anyone outside OIR. Cadets could sign up for specific SONA-based research participation times that I had pre-selected or had volunteered through BTD or OIR. All staff, faculty, key leaders, and cadets were contacted by me or a member of the research team via an IRB approved email protocol and were

assigned to an interview time (except the cadets who had selected pre-determined interview times through SONA).

During each time of data collection, the research teams planned to focus on one of the pillars where performance is measured. As noted previously, due to a paucity of support for the focus group interviews during the military pillar data collection, the research team decided to reinvestigate that pillar alongside the physical pillar data collection at our final visit to USMA. Due to the incentive for extra credit and members of our team contacting the participants, the final sample of participants certainly includes some bias because of self-selection.

Participants either were instructed that they would receive email instructions for surveys or receive direction from Academy leadership (a combination of upperclassmen and staff/faculty) regarding locations for any in-person participation. Most respondents offered content in line with the context given or the pillar being discussed, but additional questions and follow-up questions to specific answers were included in addition to the protocols/scripts that were derived prior to each data collection. Data from previous interviews and focus groups informed follow-up questions for subsequent engagements to verify and/or modify results. Any field notes taken were uploaded for the transcription service.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups at three time points that were targeted toward the previously mentioned three USMA pillars. Interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. No one received compensation other than those cadets who signed up for research participation credit through SONA. However, cadets were offered snacks and refreshments during the various interviews to thank them for their participation. The consent process took place in person at the beginning of the interview. The interviewees were read an informed consent form and another researcher, or I asked if they had any questions or concerns.

The interviewer then reiterated that the participants could decline to take part in the interview without any consequences at that point or at any other time during the interview. The interviewer explained that the interview would be recorded, how the confidentiality of the audio would be managed, and how the data would be stored and protected from that point forward. Both interviews and focus groups were recorded and then transcribed by an outside service. All interviews and focus groups included multiple open-ended questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on their experiences via their own words.

The Interview Protocol

The interview protocol (see *Appendix*) was developed through conversations among the Tufts IARYD/Stanford team and with representatives from the OIR at USMA. The purpose of the protocol was to provide cadets with the opportunity to reflect on their overall opinions and experiences within the context of character development at USMA. Cadets were asked diverse questions, including direct questions about their own portion of the 47-month USMA experience.

Each interview opened with general questions about the specific pillar in question (e.g., academic, physical, or military) and the role of character therein. Next, participants were asked to reflect on the developmental culture at USMA. The protocol did not include any potential scenario in which the participants were asked questions about character failure. After general discussion, the conversation shifted more explicitly to a discussion of character development, including questions about the various character programs and developmental crucibles at USMA. Participants were then asked specifically about their future role as Army officers and what they thought they would take with them from USMA to the Army. Given time at the end of the interviews, cadets participants were prompted to offer advice they would offer to staff and faculty regarding improving the character development process. The protocol was not piloted

due my experience both as a former cadet and as USMA staff/faculty, but it was co-created with the collaboration of the qualitative data team.

Transcripts

The recorded audio interviews were sent to Rev transcription services. The transcripts were left in raw form, including disfluencies (i.e., err, uh, umm, etc.), and I went through each interview and took initial notes on each one prior to transitioning to data analysis. All data were de-identified. The transcripts were then uploaded to the NVivo program, version 12 for Windows (QSR International, 1999), which was used to conduct all analyses. As of the time of this writing NVivo software was the most used qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software tool by academics and professional researchers (QSR International, 1999). The team compared our initial notes prior to what would become the iterative process to reframe the research process. This process also helped identify the best research approach to relay the experiences of the participants through our findings, which in turn developed a robust, phenomenologically based qualitative approach. In the following *Data Analysis* section, I further delineate this approach.

Data Analysis

Conducting a phenomenological study

Qualitative research uses an open and flexible design. Such an approach may seem to stand at odds with the notion of rigor in quantitative/positivist perspectives (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Indeed, both beginner and experienced qualitative researchers often struggle with the idea of what it means to have qualitative rigor, as it is frequently debated among qualitative scholars (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). However, this concept may be one of the most critical aspects of all research, so qualitative research is no exception. Having a single, generalizable truth perceptible by all is not possible, as each person has their “own personal perspective, as seen through the

lens of cultural, experiential, environmental, and other contextual influences” (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 152). Therefore, paying particular attention to the qualitative rigor and model of trustworthiness (e.g., credibility, applicability, consistency, and confirmability) from the moment of study conceptualization is critical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interpretation is a very complex process and, whereas all research is a balance of art and science, qualitative analyses involves making interpretations only after careful consideration (Blumer, 1969). Qualitative analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are “neither terminal nor mechanical” are always “ongoing, emergent, and unfinished” if one is seeking the rigor required for proper representation of the data but also for proper interpretation by the outsider (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 276). This process starts with selecting a methodology regarding which qualitative approach one will take. Indeed, when selecting said approach a qualitative researcher knows that regardless of the approach taken, “meaning, interpretation, and representation are deeply intertwined with each other” (Denzin, 1998, p. 322). Therefore, the perspective I took as a qualitative researcher when conducting this analysis was to stay focused on making meaning of the phenomena/experience of character development at the Academy, rather than attempting to find ways I could generalize my interpretations to other subjects or settings. As such, I needed to select a specific line of qualitative research that would allow me to maximize the information and interpretation of specific phenomena or experiences.

To properly situate this study, I used the overarching lens of social constructivism to further understand cadet culture as it is experienced at USMA. Social constructivism (also described as *interpretivism*) is an approach to meaning making around experiences, objects, things and the world in the specific contexts from the view of individuals involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Understanding their “subjective reality,” while also constructing an inter-

subjectivity between us (cadets, staff/faculty, key leaders, and the research team, through the focus group and interview data), helped me interpret the complex culture of cadets while also addressing the process of living in, and inculcating the influences of, the USMA context.

The interpretivist view ties into the RDS metatheory in several ways. First, RDS metatheory helps the researcher understand the dynamic person $\leftrightarrow$ context relations that influence the interview process and thus the interpretation of the data. Second, interpretivist views can help integrate RDS ideas of the autopoietic nature of human development (e.g., Arbeit et al., 2014). Finally, interpretivist theory and RDS metatheory enables scholarship that can contribute to social justice through the optimization of human development (Fisher et al., 2012; Fisher & Lerner, 2013).

A phenomenological approach was chosen to find the reasons behind the context, process, and outcomes regarding character, cooperation, and competition among cadets at USMA. As described by Creswell and Poth (2018), the purpose of a phenomenological study is to describe the common meaning for several individuals regarding a specific concept. A phenomenological method seeks to critically examine presuppositions and freshly describe lived experiences (Giorgi, 2009; Desai et al., 2021). It is a study of the lived experiences of persons, from which one draws descriptions of the essence of the experiences rather than solely explaining why they happen (Moustakas, 1994). Rather than finding a homogenous, theory-based sample for variation of the experience, I desired to seek the shared experience of multiple individuals. This approach separates a phenomenological study from an ethnographic, narrative, case study and from grounded theory approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Among these approaches, phenomenology was originally designed with the goal of allowing meanings and

themes emerge from the concreteness of life-as-lived, rather than proceeding from or resulting of theoretical constructions (Husserl, 1970; Wertz, 2005; Wertz & Desai, 2013).

The researcher develops a composite description of the essence of the experience of the phenomena for all the individuals who experience said phenomena within their social world. The social world influences meaning, which is continuously being modified by experiences and interactions (Baker et al., 1992; Crooks, 2001). However, this approach is not just about capturing the introspective reflections of those being observed. McGill (1966) notes that a sharp distinction is that phenomenological approaches are not elementary in this fashion but are a complex recognition of meaning as the “constant and most important feature of experience” (p. 586). Furthermore, MacLeod (1964) stated that introspection alone leads to reduction of elements to their attributes, whereas “for the phenomenologist, meaning [making] is central and inescapable” (p. 54).

There are two main types of the phenomenological approach – hermeneutic and transcendental/psychological (van Manen, 2014). The former focuses on the interpretation of the researcher, whereas the latter focuses more on describing the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher should identify the phenomena of study, bracket out their experiences as much as possible, collect data, reduce the data to significant statements and quotes, and combine the text into themes. Thereafter, providing textual descriptions (*what* was experienced) and structural descriptions (*how* it was experienced) helps convey the overall essence of the studied phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is undoubtedly difficult to transcend one’s own interpretations but taking a fresh perspective toward the examination of cadet’s lived experiences was of the utmost importance to a study of character development and peer-relations (see *Phenomenological Reflection*).

I used the NVivo program to look through all the focus group and interview data, working through the process of data reduction, memo writing, and an initial thematic review of textual and structural descriptions. Appendix B outlines an example of the process. The data were already catalogued when the data set was initially made and participants were only identified by type (e.g., cadet, staff member, tactical officer or senior leader). I have already established that I have a representative sample of people who have experienced the phenomenon (i.e., what is called a ‘criterion sample’ in this case). The next sections detail the means I needed to take to specify and organize my findings.

Analytic Steps

Presenting the steps for this qualitative approach required an immediate acknowledgement that there was no one all-encompassing technique or singly perfected ‘step-by-step’ approach for the phenomenological method of inquiry (Holroyd, 2001). What I present here is derived from the works of Giorgi (1997), and Moustakas (1994), respectively. Given their perspectives, I used the following steps:

- 1) *Gain an intuitive/holistic understanding of the data.*
 - a. Read the raw data, repeatedly if necessary. Bracket all preconceptions and initial judgements.
 - b. Fully identify the phenomenon of study.
 - c. Describe the phenomenon in detail.
 - d. Craft memos.
- 2) *Form a constituent profile by generating themes and a thematic index.*

- a. Find and annotate discrete segments of expression and meaning of the participant's experiences (i.e. "referents"). Highlight significant statements, quotes, and sentences.
 - b. Find self-definable aspects of each participant's experiences.
 - c. Reduce discrete segments and deduce clusters of meaning into centralized themes or "bins." Refine the thematic index.
 - d. Build a constituent profile.
- 3) *Develop textual and structural descriptions.*
- a. Search the thematic index to compare central themes and referents to help "code" the data, and then share among researchers/writers for cross analysis and internal consistency.
 - b. Build interpretive themes and descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants.
 - c. Craft extended descriptions of the interpretive themes.
- 4) *Report the "essence" of the phenomena through extended descriptions.*
- a. Explicate meaning by synthesizing composite descriptions and themes (i.e., find the common thread).
 - b. Explain the connections between and within composite descriptions and themes.
- 5) *Present understanding/findings in written form.*
- a. Combine/revisit memos and all notes.
 - b. Choose the medium through which to describe the findings (i.e., presentation, report, craft a manuscript, etc.).

In the Cook (2019) study, patterns emerged that indicated themes around peer-relations, competition, and collaboration. Due to the nature of USMA identified outcomes, the nature of these patterns coalesces around crafting a commissioned leader of character. Data were to be summarized and collected into different themes and headings, which are to be confirmed and modified throughout analyses.

Verification and Validation

Through the previously mentioned organizing steps, I continually aggregated information about each category and the potential relationships between categories. As a part of my data collection and initial pilot study I also shared my memos and thoughts with the other members of the project team who were involved in the data collection process. Memos are notes, reflections, or even potential preliminary analyses a researcher writes and organizes throughout the research process. Whereas these memos are mostly written for personal use, they record thinking and decision-making, continue constant comparisons and connections, and identify different directions to pursue (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This portion of the analytic process is where the researcher begins to apply an analytic framework to the data, and where I sought to confirm what I was gleaned from the data. Each researcher shared their notes and themes, and I was able to develop and verify categories of interest based on what we were all recognizing as being the most prevalent and relevant within the dataset.

Phenomenological Reflection

As pointed out by Corbin and Strauss (2015), qualitative research is a form of research where the researcher “is as much a part of the research process as the participants and the data they provide” (p. 4). As such, the authors’ own experience as a graduate and former instructor at USMA “situate” this qualitative research through a personal, historical, and cultural perspective.

In line with McGill (1966), observational biases are to be avoided by continual, deliberate efforts. Accordingly, observational biases must be overcome in every psychological method. Whereas in other instances of empirical work an investigator's research interests certainly color interpretation, this work is not only colored but enmeshed with the cadet experience as well as their ultimate outcome – to become a commissioned leader of character. Whereas this background may have biased some views, knowing so at the outset of this work and acknowledging the presence of specific schemas, scripts, and prejudices within the context of this study helped tailor my interpretation in a way that likely goes deeper than that of an outside observer.

In addition, as a qualitative researcher I was what Corbin and Strauss (2015) would describe as more drawn “to the fluid, evolving, and dynamic nature” or this approach as compared to “the more rigid, structured designs of quantitative methods” (p. 5). Moreover, as a currently serving Army officer who will one day return to USMA as a professor to build upon my earlier teaching experiences, conducting a qualitative phenomenological study was an opportunity to connect with cadets and the Academy beyond just seeing them as research participants and a research context. Speaking to these various influences on my methodological style help “bracket” and/or “set aside” my personal experiences with the phenomena in order to focus on the experiences of the participants (Giorgi, 2009; van Manen, 2014).

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

*“Character is built over time in the choices we make;
it is an accumulation of habits.”*

- GEN(R) Martin Dempsey

From 18 verbatim transcripts of individual interviews and focus groups, over 100 significant statements were extracted, and 63 of the most significant statements are presented here. Analyses of the transcripts and statements led to a process which verified a primary core category of peer relations. Peer relations are manifested at USMA through two distinct but interrelated and complementary categories, namely competition and cooperation. As cadets undergo cooperation and competition due to various aspects of the USMA journey, staff, faculty, tactical officers, and leaders ensure an overall intertwining of cadets’ crucible experiences, facilitating growth toward becoming a commissioned leader of character. This integration happens across each of the academic, military, and physical pillars in both unique and complementary ways.

The back and forth experience of cadet development and the balancing act induced by the tension, or creative friction, caused by the tug-of-war of the journey is palpable across many thematic areas. To illustrate, consider Escher’s lithograph, *Drawing Hands*, where one hand is drawing the other and although they are opposites, they are integrating co-actions. This work of art illustrates the idea of the deep complementarity of the following themes (Overton, 2015). That is, the transition to a commissioned leader of character happens before cadets graduate but certainly does not cease once the USMA experience has ended, arguably extending into their time as Second Lieutenants and beyond. To be specific, the following interpretive themes were explicated from the data:

1. Peers must relate

2. Cooperate and graduate
3. Be discreet when you compete
4. One must fully experience 'the crucible'
5. All the strands are intertwined
6. Building commissioned leaders of character

Some of these themes are more closely linked than others. This variation came about naturally within the reflections from the participants. As a researcher I thought it most important to accurately depict those reflections, rather than force a seemingly more connected depiction. I elected to present a phenomenologically representative model. The manifestation of the following themes found roots in each of the academic, military, and physical pillars in ways unique to the pillar (i.e., *cooperate and graduate* being manifested in the form of group work for class as a reference to the academic pillar, or *one must fully experience 'the crucible'* manifested through a senior leader discussing the variety of roles, positions, and leader development experiences cadets face). A deeper explanation of the details regarding the themes and ideas is presented below:

1. Peers must relate

Peer learning is encouraged at all levels of the educational system for theoretical, empirical, and policy motives (Riese et al., 2012). As humans are highly social creatures, peers are an inescapable aspect of life. Peer influences greatly shape human development, whether peer groups are heterogenous or homogenous (Harris, 1995). Interpersonal character strengths are predictive of positive peer relations while not being a significant predictor of popularity (Park et al., 2017). These relationships include leadership development as well, as many contemporary

researchers articulate leadership as a product of relationships (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Hosking, 1988; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). One cadet remarked,

I think that your peers are a big part of developing yourself as a leader because I watched how many other people ... how people act as leaders when they're being looked at.

Adolescents and young adults spend more time with their peers than with their parents, and consequently, are more likely to be influenced by their peers than by any other group, especially as they become more agentic in their social roles and responsibilities (Hart & Carlo, 2005). Becoming a leader in peer relationship, is not particular easy, however it can be rewarding:

Peer leadership's hard and sitting up there with your peers is hard. But that's probably the [best thing] leadership-wise I've learned the most out of during my time here.

Group norms among colleagues shape the personality and actions of group members in specific norm-consistent ways which can account for developmental differences between groups (Krietz et al., 2014). Many organizational scholars have posited the idea that leadership is a shared or distributed commodity among multiple individuals and groups (Gronn, 2002; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Spillane, 2006). USMA capitalizes on these facts by integrative, challenging, and reflective physical, academic, and military-based developmental experiences that allow for the most interaction and familiarity among cohorts of classmates. A cadet reflected on this familiarity:

In all my experiences as far as like, class or in my own company, or even in company athletics everybody has [the] same mindset so it's very easy to become connected and become friends [even though] I didn't expect that from the

Academy. Most civilian schools where everybody is kind of like, maybe sometimes funneled in a little more on themselves instead of everybody as a whole.

Furthermore, social and academic development are believed to be related (Anderman & Anderman, 1999; Wentzel, 1996), and the relationships built in social and academic environments are significant with regard to the learning outcomes from peer learning (Riese, 2010). An instructor expanded upon this idea by saying,

I think here unlike a regular civilian school, you can approach anybody like your [sic] peers with no problem and already have a connection with them. I mean, previous to coming to West Point, I'd meet people all the time that I'd never met before and never really have that connection but here we're all doing the same thing and have the same mindset so it's very easy to strike up a conversation and become [connected] with practically anybody in my opinion.

Relationship-based approaches to leadership in these integrated settings have long been studied since the seminal work of Blake and Mouton (1964), Fiedler (1967), and Hersey and Blanchard (1977). The integration creates a closeness and a bond that is critical to leader development. Often, observing what right looks like in these settings facilitates reflection and growth, as one cadet illuminated:

You go in with sort of the idea of how you want to be a leader and sort of you develop that idea by seeing those upperclassmen and how they went about. So, you start to develop your idea of what a good platoon sergeant is, what a good officer is from seeing how other people handle themselves as leaders.

Research indicates that peer relationships create conditions for a multitude of positive leadership effects, such as increased social skills, group goals, interdependence, and student

responsibility, at both the individual and group level (Cohen, 1994; Hattie, 2009; Prince 2004; Rohrbeck et al., 2003; Springer et al., 1999; Topping, 1996). These and other aspects of interaction and collaboration across the Academy experience can be heard through the longer reflection of one instructor that stated:

So, I think what we do right here at the military academy is leadership roles that cadets are put in throughout their 47-month experience. The leadership roles that the cadets are put into throughout that time. Both in the academic year and during summertime, where they do have a group of subordinates underneath them, they're also put in the position where they're leadership of their peers. And I think that challenges them on a daily basis, while also managing course loads for academics, managing their sports that they play for a Division I sports team, or a club sports team. And obviously in the summertime also managing their own military skills training, but also being a leader of their peers out there in the summertime.

Peer relations were also spoken of at highest levels of leadership that I interviewed. In my observation, senior leaders were best able to relate it most directly to being a future leader in the Army. When discussing this topic with the director of DMI (an Army Colonel) and his deputy (an Army Lieutenant Colonel), an illuminating thought came out about the importance of decision making in the learning environment that USMA is, when life, limb, or eyesight is not on the line:

I think that the meeting of your peers is a huge experience that cadets get here that teaches them about possibly having to make some tough decisions. Now the good news about this place is that none of these decisions are really that tough,

because nobody's dying here. The training that they're doing is all in an environment where the expectation is that they're learning.

Peer leadership is seen as the most difficult type of leadership. The idea of learning the difficulty of peer leadership and making tough decisions while in a safe environment should not be taken lightly, as Huntington (1957) reminds us that ultimately, an officer's profession is the management of violence in his pivotal work *The Soldier and the State*. In this case, it cannot be overstated that skills related to future employment can be encouraged by learning practices where students work together in similar conditions to the future context (Boud et al., 2001).

Further research on peer learning has addressed both cognitive growth (O'Donnell & King, 1999) and social aspects of learning (Johnson et al., 2000; Resnick et al., 1991). However, a widely held assumption is that competition will inevitably arise, and that competition brings out the best in people. When viewed from an interpersonal standpoint, critics contend that competition has been overemphasized at the expense of cooperation (Haskins et al., 1998). Luckily, it seems as if USMA cadets prioritize (or at least emphasize) cooperation in their peer relations, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2. Be discreet when you compete

Competition is another subcategory of peer relations. It should be noted upfront that due to the culture of contemporary K-12 academia, by the time students enter college they generally are successful competitive learners, as they are products of a competitive-based academic model. USMA is no exception; a senior member of the staff and faculty very clearly stated that *"individual performance is highly valued and highly stressed in the entire West Point program"* and a cadet remarked that they *"came from a high school where everybody was super competitive, it was all about the end result, and everybody was result driven, and then I come*

here and I'm still viewing certain things in that light." As a point of fact, studies show that students who attend the most prestigious universities are often those most experienced with individualized academic competition (Hilk, 2013). USMA is one of those prestigious colleges, and its selectivity immediately places those who used to be the big fish in a small pond, in an ocean of high performers. In addition, many cadet chain of command positions and highly regarded summer training opportunities are attained through a selective process. Therefore, some individuals cannot help but fall back into a competitive mindset. However, as mentioned earlier, many of these cadets are competing against a standard and/or competing against themselves vice competing against their peers in an unproductive manner.

Cadet rankings contribute most to competition, and cadets do not gloss over that fact, as one stated "*because academics pretty much decides your future plain and simple.*" Others observe that the weight of academics and ranking pushes cadets toward non-collaboration:

(Cadet 1): *Helping somebody else out on an assignment just takes away from their own time to complete their own assignments. I think that's where cadets fail to collaborate sometimes.*

(Cadet 2): *If you have a lot of requirements that you have to complete on your own, you're gonna be less likely to help out people who may be not as good as you.*

There seems to be a desire to be discreet when you compete. The term *discreet* was chosen to denote how exactly competition tends to happen at USMA, which is in a very intentionally unobtrusive, careful, and circumspect way, especially to avoid causing any offense. Cadets use discretion and do not overtly compete in aggressive ways outside of the athletic teams and activities that they are required to participate in. Every cadet must play a sport and there are

mandatory classes such as boxing, combatives, survival swimming, and gymnastics. The “friendly fields of strife,” as these sports and activities are referred to, are areas of positive stress release, team building, and gaining a competitive edge. It should be stated that one can build character in competitive settings, but only “if the environment is structured and a stated goal is the development of character” – sports being the most widely-known (if often debated) example (Doty, 2006, p. 6). Two DPE instructors noted that they are directly involved in the fields of friendly strife:

So, one of the things that we also do, and this is probably less in the core curriculum, but more in the competitive sports side of things... both of us work in the competitive sports office and [we see] all the cadets who will participate in some kind of athletic activity with a few exceptions, whether that's an NCAA sport or whether it's a competitive club team, or whether it's the company athletics or intramural program that I oversee.

Involvement in competitive arenas at USMA, especially sports, provides oversight as well as checks and balances. Extensive observations of dyadic and group behavior show that conflict and competition, when not checked or bounded, results in no clear “winner” (Gottman et al., 2002; Rogge et al., 2006; Northouse, 2007). Opportunities for development certainly happen surely abound on the sports field, where a cadet recognized that “*a lot of [it] takes place in competitive sports.*” But a TAC officer reminded me that there’s always the idea that “*officers are largely promoting the vision and administrating a lot of what the organization does,*” continually crafting the boundaries and developmental path of the Academy experience. Furthermore, USMA not only has bounds, but seeks to create a challenging atmosphere:

West Point either directly or indirectly somehow makes your life difficult. And [it] somehow directly or indirectly makes you... kind of forces you to make choices.

Whether due to time restraints or just the environment you're in.

Regardless of the challenging atmosphere, cadets are still seeing the bigger picture in terms of character development and the impact and importance of competition. The more and more cadets I interviewed, the more I heard their experiences to be on the positive end of the competition spectrum as opposed to some of the more friction-based ends of competition. When pressed in the interviews to look at competition in multiple domains cadets had been witness to the tension competition creates, but interviewees also viewed positive elements of competition:

(Speaker 1): *Yeah, within the team I see a lot of positive group cohesion but against other teams there can definitely be some struggle. I think it actually can be difficult to play against someone and then right after be like, "Oh, you're my brother in arms" and whatnot.*

(Speaker 2): *That's actually a really good point because... having some kind of competition, with yourself but it's some kind of competition there the entire time, that made things more interesting. If you have an obstacle course, no one wants to run it really, but by having... the time you're aiming for and everyone's aiming for that time, it's a little bit of competition with yourself, and with other people too, just makes it better training, I guess.*

(Speaker 3): *Sort of turning around, looking at it more as healthy competition, saying, okay, they're excelling at this, how can I challenge myself and hold myself to that same standard. So, it's finding that balance between, okay, I can do this. They're at this level, and I'm mediocre, so to speak, how can I maybe even surpass*

them or be at the same level so I can keep being in that same competition with myself as well as others.

USMA is finding the balance that promotes healthy competition and, in turn, the development of character in a holistic fashion. The senior leadership of DPE captured this by saying, “*I think [we are] finding that balance between that comradery and that competitiveness.*”

They went on to elaborate by stating:

There's certainly a fitness value to it. There's a competition value. But in competition, character emerges a lot of times and your character emerges when conditions are at their toughest. It really replicates or provides a surrogate experience, potentially, for combat.

In the end, there is a unity of experience that does not allow for leadership to be solely seen in terms of “individual agents as detached substances imposing their will upon others” (Wood & Dibben, 2015, p. 39). To the contrary, the tension that is felt from competition slowly becomes less about a struggle between persons, but rather a struggle within persons, or as Wood and Dibben (2015) emphasize it, “quite literally *in-tension*” (p. 39).

3. Cooperate and graduate

“Cooperate and graduate” is an informal phrase under the peer relations concept of cooperation that came up multiple times in many interviews and interactions with both cadets and staff/faculty at West Point. When asked to explain what the phrase means in a practical sense, a cadet responded:

Yeah, I think I've kind of seen a little bit here. It's you hear the cooperate to graduate phrase a lot and just little things in the room at night. All of us, there's three of us and we're vastly different but we help each other with different

homework assignments, different things. So, it just kind of builds teamwork because I guess we all have different strengths, different weaknesses and we're able to use that. And West Point helped me build some ability just so far to communicate with each other and work with what we have, I guess.

Many times, however, the phrase comes up in an academic sense. Ranking and selectivity may lead to competition, but academics overall contributes to a “cooperate and graduate” *modus operandi*. Whereas students (in this case cadets) entering college may be professional competitors, Bosworth and Hamilton (1994) posit that the collegiate atmosphere is one of the best opportunities for students to become experts in cooperation. USMA focuses on honing this ability, as reflected by a focus group participant:

Yeah, I totally agree with that teamwork aspect. That can be found in both academics and military and it applies to both. But just the one overarching thing that goes over academic, military, and physical, would just be I guess the overall experience of just interacting with all these different people coming from all different places of the country, all these different leaders who have had totally different experiences. Just interacting with such a diverse group of people.

Peer tutoring is a major type of collaborative learning (Topping, 1996). Cadets discussed peer tutoring, which is not always formally assigned:

(Cadet 1): I help my company mates. There were some cadets in my company that came to me every single night asking for help with the homework.

(Cadet 2): From my own experience, when I tutor the kids in my company with math or chem, I may understand it really easily, but how I understand it may not be the same way they'll be understanding it.

Group projects and summer training amongst cadets takes advantage of team-based learning, which according to Michaelsen et al., (2002) develops high levels of cohesiveness and maximizes learning outcomes within student teams. Group work is a staple of the Academy experience. A few cadets and staff talked about formal and informal groupings:

(Cadet 1): *I think every single class I've had they encourage us to work in groups, in lab projects, or for homework, for problem sets, and things like that. It's all working in groups and peer reviewing.*

(Cadet 2): *Most of the time it's all just cadets communicating back and forth, like, "Hey, do you want to study for this tonight or do you want to work on this project or do you want to do this together?"*

(Cadet 3): *Then if it's a project where you're not necessarily ... you don't necessarily have groups set aside, then, we all have to [meet] each other for that. I have a lab group, which all of our assignments are straight up group grade. It's not individually based. That kind of forces you to collaborate when it might be more of a person like me, that should do things by yourself.*

(Cadet 4): *The way we do the group work, I think it lends itself by design to rely on your peers more than just the instructor, and I think that peer to peer interaction trying to figure stuff out is important.*

Communication plays a major role in these interactions, and one instructor reflected how well USMA is structured to facilitate interpersonal communication by saying “*I think what West Point in all of like [its] entirety, it stresses how to communicate with people.*”

Assessing interactions involving cooperation in a study of 84 freshman university students that were assessed over four time points during an academic semester, Hays (1985)

found that participants who initially form superficial relationships can transition to intimate bonds in as short as three to six weeks (five months was the longest observed, which is still within a semester's time). Strong relationships are based upon character, which is a cornerstone of cooperation as groups work toward mutual goals and the common good. Strong bonds assuredly occur through hardship, and a few cadets talked about how shared suffering make the USMA experience bearable:

(Cadet 1): It's that [the] environment that we're in is very stressful and talking to someone and venting about it is very important and this common suffering 20 years down the line when we come back for a reunion and [we'll] joke about it.

(Cadet 2): We all suffer together, and we're able to talk to each other about our problems. Just [to] reminisce on experiences.

(Cadet 3): I think this common suffering makes us a group that's very dependent on each other and also independent because we have to develop ourselves.

Cadets also recognize that cooperating contributes to the learning of others, as well as who you cooperate and build peer relationship with matters:

I would say that the old saying [is] if you sleep [with] dogs, you get fleas. There's people in my company that you can obviously see if you associate yourself with them then they get in trouble a lot. So, you get sucked into that. But if you stick with people that are squared away and have their head on straight that's conducive to your success and their success because you can contribute to each other's character development and holding each other accountable is like the standard. So, that's a big part of it I think too. It's a team aspect.

Finally, the DPE leadership brought up an interesting perspective on an interesting form of cooperation that emerges which is very unique to USMA because of atypical college classes like combatives (i.e., ground based self-defense) or boxing. These classes are inevitably competitive, but a cooperative sense still emerges:

This is the very first time for [most] cadets where they're allowed to put hands on one another and beat each other up. But also, [the] discussion had is, "Hey, you need to have trust in your partner because you want them to stop whenever you tell them to stop." Right? So that goes into a great discussion of being a good teammate and being able to understand the ability of your opponents and knowing that, "Hey, in this practice realm, we need to be able to take it easy on people when they are struggling." So that's always great.

4. One must fully experience ‘the crucible’

Being provided with information about character will not generate sudden changes in behavior (Byrne et al., 2018). Therefore, institutions interested in shaping character must create unique experiences for development. These unique experiences must force leaders into deep self-reflection, where the leader revises or reinterprets what occurred so that it fits within one's existing rationality (e.g. Kuhn, 1996; Piaget, 1960). As such, these momentous events disrupt one's current framework such that an alternative meaning framework is eventually asserted (Heine et al., 2006); that is, eventually new meaning is created and the crucible event becomes transformational (Olivares, 2011). Undoubtedly, there are many shapes that crucibles take, from violent and life-threatening to positive and still challenging. USMA shapes the latter (i.e., the difficulty of the curriculum and its schedule, hard summer training, physical classes like boxing, chain of

command responsibilities) to prepare cadets (who are future Army officers) for the former (i.e., war, peace enforcement, security (re)establishment, civil disobedience, genocide, etc.).

Moreover, Berkowitz (2002) noted that during his time at a parallel institution, the United States Air Force Academy, his interests became surrounded what postsecondary education can offer to the character development of students. One of the principle components of postsecondary character education he found was the importance of *character practice*, namely through experiential learning (Berkowitz, 2002). WPLDS encourages the self-sustainment of character development and moral judgement competence through developmental experiences, particularly ones where leaders rely on character in order to adapt and overcome challenges. Greater clarity around what Piaget (1970) called moral autonomy is “best achieved when the individual with sufficient opportunities for role-taking” (Lind, 2000b, p. 13). As such, crucible leader development experiences must be “sequential and progressive in complexity [to] provide a common leader development foundation for cadets” (Judd et al., 2018, p. 11).

The importance of these crucible experiences is shown as the second step within USMA’s theory of change (see Figure 4), and a more specific outline of these core developmental experiences is shown in Figure 5. Certainly, many may point to the sports field or the military training field for these sequential and complex developmental opportunities, as one instructor summarized many of their colleagues by stating, “*I think character is developed and cemented with a lot of cadets in our summer training.*” However, these experiences abound, vary, and are iterative across the Academy experience, as noted by a senior DPE leader, “*the varied experiences [are] another contributing factor [and] the repetition.*” This was further expanded upon by one of the senior leaders at West Point:

They may be put into a team leader position, or a squad leader, platoon leader position where they have to care for a mission that's bigger than themselves, and I think that they're definitely tested with upholding a high standard for not only them, but also their subordinates. They might get an order that they don't necessarily agree with, and this is the first time that maybe in a military science classroom, or in a math classroom they're hearing about it from an instructor about being in a moral dilemma or an ethical dilemma, or they hear a vignette about it at Camp Buckner in the summer training. They might get that order from their cadet company commander; they might be forced to make a decision on an objective or that's not a real practice of them having that pressure on them and now really seeing what their true character is about.

This quote also illuminates Bennis and Thomas' (2002) ideas of how the adversity of crucible experiences build *integrity* and *adaptive capacity*. As one reads through the narrative elements of how values and true character are tested and must prevail, as well as cadets building the capacity to grasp context and build hardiness.

Developmental progress through these various experiences occurs when deliberate, guided, and structured reflection afterward causes a cadet to realize that what they might have known before is no longer valid given the more complex situation they just encountered. Byrne et al. (2018) remind us that crucibles without reflection are nothing more than just arduous experiences. These reflection opportunities become critical to ensure that cadets “connect what they experience in crucibles to what they had previously conceptualized regarding leadership, character, and the development of both” (DeRue et al., 2012, p. 1003). As a result of these experiences, cadets should embrace a

new way of thinking. A TAC noted what this may entail when they are involved in helping facilitate leader growth:

This is about character, your integrity, and your position and really yourself. Not being insecure with things that you don't know, or experiences that you don't have. [It's] good to ask why... It's actually in our [USMA] doctrine to ask why. That happens throughout the semester in the classroom, and it darn sure happens in the field environment, where a cadet makes a choice... [we ask] 'well what were you thinking?'

Fortunately, not all crucible experiences require trauma to engender reflection and questioning. As illustrated through this quote, they can involve a positive, even if deeply challenging, experience such as having a boss or mentor ask the right questions. Asking 'what were cadets thinking' allows for the deep self-reflection that Olivares (2011) states is optimal for questioning assumptions and honing judgement. It is also readily apparent that it pushes cadets to *engage others in shared meaning*, another of the four skills Bennis and Thomas (2002) discussed.

Whereas the adage states that practice does not make perfect, in the case of a variety of perspectives regarding character development it is clear that "when students have opportunities to practice good character, their character development benefits" (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p. 21). Experiential learning is at the forefront of practicing 'what right looks like' regarding one's character development. Beyond classroom exercises, these experiences can take many forms. As previously mentioned, some can be violent, life-threatening events whereas others are more ordinary episodes of self-doubt. The key factor, whatever the crucible's nature, is an ability to create a narrative around the event. In doing so, leaders further access what Blakeley and Higgs (2014) say is "the power of embedded consciousness-raising experiences" (p. 565), which in turn

stimulate deep, transformational learning (Pless et al., 2011; Mirvis, 2008; Olivares 2011). In the case of USMA a unique crucible, an internship with the Army called Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT), came up repeatedly as a particularly effective practice. It was recognized by both staff/faculty and cadets. At CTLT, a cadet shadows an Army Lieutenant for approximately four weeks as they execute their daily duties. An interviewee captured the importance of CTLT further:

Every cadet has to do cadet troop leader training out there in the Army somewhere. And actually, a recent survey that I saw, cadets choose really their job in the Army. Most... because of their CTLT experience out there in the Army. They all go out in a two-way unit and they will mirror a Second Lieutenant that's actually out there serving as a platoon leader for whatever branch that they want to get on. They get the opportunity to see the Army in real life.

Whereas core leader development experiences are common like CTLT to all cadets, there are several extracurricular opportunities that go above and beyond the core developmental opportunities. It is believed that most cadets “also take advantage of these many optional, yet important, developmental opportunities” (Judd et al., 2018, p. 14). The optional crucible experiences abound, adding to the richness of the USMA experience but the differentiation of USMA in comparison to other commissioning sources. As noted by a DPE instructor,

The opportunities are a-plenty here at West Point. I mean, from an ROTC perspective, I did not have nearly the amount... whether it's guest speakers, summer training experiences, military training, schools, whatever it is. Academic

opportunities that present itself, or internships and all that, simply was not available for me as an ROTC cadet.

Having a multitude of crucible developmental experiences, where staff, faculty, and other leaders can assess, challenge, and support cadets is critical to the growth of character at USMA. Bennis and Thomas (2002) indicate that the most critical of the four skills that are essential for leaders to learn from leadership crucibles is the ability to have an *adaptive capacity*, which they also describe as ‘applied creativity.’ Two primary qualities comprise this skill – one’s ability to grasp context and display hardiness (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). The ability to grasp context, by weighing multiple factors, managing how different groups will interpret leader actions, and putting experiences into context is concretized by the plentiful experiences at USMA. The perseverance and toughness needed to build the hardiness required for the multiple ups-and-downs of both failure and success epitomizes the journey Baldwin (1993) described when he stated that “people who cannot suffer can never grow, can never discover who they are” (p. 98). Struggling, suffering (in a good way), and overcoming the crucibles of the 47-month USMA experience is a hallmark of the interwoven nature of academic, military, and physical challenges cadets face, in addition to the cooperative and competitive interactions they have with each other.

5. All the strands are intertwined

Undoubtedly, simply having cadets work together (be it in dyads, groups, or teams) does not lead directly to increases in learning or productivity. A lack of structure, unclear goals, and an absence of guidance often leads to an unreasoned collective thinking or concurrence-seeking with few learning gains (Hilk, 2013). Therefore, guidance, mentorship, and structure are key components of capitalizing on the potential positive outcomes of character development. As such, Berkowitz (2002) would argue that schools need to *expect good character of all members*,

to include displaying character (both by individuals and by institutional policies). Certainly, then, a critical assumption would be that faculty, leaders, tactical officers, and other members of the West Point community are all charged to be integrators of the character development experience, intertwining the various elements of a character focused education. We see this reflected when looking at USMA's theory of change (see Figure 4), as staff and faculty are listed as the first input and it is also evidenced through WPLDS.

A key component of WPLDS is the intentional integration of the experiences and opportunities across cadets' development. When bringing cadets together, *Project Arete* found that the Academy adheres to the four essential principles of team-based learning: (a) groups must be appropriately formed and managed; (b) students must be accountable for both individual and team outcomes; (c) class assignments and activities must promote learning and team development; (d) students must receive frequent and timely formative feedback (Michaelsen et al., 2002). An instructor demonstrated how he did all four of these principles:

I don't always grade them as an instructor grade based on solely how they're actually performing as a team member, but what their self and peer evaluation's content was, or are you giving good feedback to your peers, and constructive criticism that they can action on? Are you looking at yourself in a neutral light? So those are things I do look at and grade them on.

By holding cadets responsible across the various facets of Academy life, including the physical and military pillars outside of the academic classroom, staff and faculty encourage cadets to role model their future leadership roles in the Army. This helps them practice and interweave many of the aspects of leading themselves and others. A TAC officer said,

I think what we do right here at the Military Academy is leadership roles that cadets were put in throughout their 47-month experience. Both in the academic year and during the summertime. While they do have a group of subordinates underneath them, they are also put in a position where they are leaders of their peers. And I think that challenges them on a daily basis, you know, while also managing course loads for academics, managing their sports (if they play for a Division I sports team or a club sports team). Then obviously in the summertime also managing their own internal, you know, their own military skills training but also being a leader of their peers out there during the summertime. I think that is something that we do very well here at West Point.

Moreover, cadets (and Army leaders) rarely act on an individual basis without membership to a unit, group, or team. As such, integration of individual actions is one of the most important and one of the most fundamental aspects of an effective team (Northouse, 2007). An instructor succinctly discussed focusing on this point, saying that his objectives for the cadets “*would be to have them continually contribute to character development of their peers.*” Another faculty member spoke to how they reminded cadets to reflect and to remain cognizant of the peer relations experience:

I tell cadets when they're bagging on their worst peer, I'm like okay, 12,000 apply, 1,200 we selected, about 1,000 will graduate. Your worst peer is a pretty good American. It's just your context is ... you gotta be exposed to more of America, be exposed to more of the world.

Instructors, staff, and faculty continually make attempts not only to intertwine Academy experiences *across* the campus, but also *within* particular Academy experiences by connecting

character to other aspects of the robust USMA academic journey. The senior leadership within DMI stated that with “*our military training wants to [create] time for reflection and time for more experiences, too, throughout the entire school year.*” Another senior academic leader captured the idea when they talked about working to find the thread of character in what they do, stating that “*I know we've reached out and we've done stuff with the departments to integrate, so they see there's a thread of character performance.*” The importance of doing so cannot be understated, as Hannah and Jennings (2013) emphasize that “leaders must have both character and competence and that either by itself is deficient” (p. 8). One instructor expanded upon the idea by stating:

I think there's a natural interaction of character, physical fitness, intellect.

There's a social factor in the way we've, I think you guys know this, the way we've conceptualized character at West Point is through the West Point [leader] development system, the five facets of character. I try to speak with them about those five facets as often as I have the opportunity. But, those five facets take on a meaning in each one of our classrooms.

Two cadets expanded upon the same line of thinking and captured the sentiments of many other interviewees in the recognition of the efforts of their instructors to go beyond lesson instruction:

(Cadet 1): *Going off the idea of working it into class, my chemistry teacher does.*

He does this new thing where he starts every day with a word of the day that relates to the lesson and usually that word relates to a story from his time in the military, and usually there's some lesson or some something learned about being an officer and I really like it because it helps explain the lesson. It's a nice little intro to what that lesson is going to be about, but then also he usually tells the

story in a funny way that's also inspiring and can teach us something about what our time [in the Army] might look like.

(Cadet 2): I think that character is brought up pretty well and organically, and even just if you have a professor that you look up to, I think that that can teach you about officership, just by the way that they act.

These approaches and behaviors are practiced over and over. The lessons are taught, and moral behavior is expected because repetition undoubtedly influences character, as Aristotle (2016) noted that if we want to be honest, we must continuously undertake honest acts. This requires an immersive environment, which is exactly what USMA provides as opposed to other commissioning sources, as one TAC described, stating that “*it's not the same as doing ROTC at another university. As great as that opportunity might be, it's just not the same – this is a very intentional immersive environment.*” This intentionality came up in another interview, where a DPE senior leader noted that:

[Nothing] is by accident. Certainly, there's been many folks before us leading this department and we have a great group... a blend of excellence, if you will. So, a lot of unique perspectives that come to the classroom, and our classrooms obviously look a lot different than maybe a traditional classroom would look.

The immersion is also seen as having a purpose beyond just West Point's halls and walls, as another instructor that has been serving on staff and faculty for over seven years noted:

The diverse educational immersion, the multitasking that happens every day in their lives, in a safe space, as in [this] university, I see it as replicating what it's like when we've been in an operational environment across the pond, doing our nation's bidding.

The experience is arguably so integrated that there is not a chance to potentially see it any other way, as evidenced by another cadet saying:

I don't know that they can divide it because it's so heavily layered across campus and out in the wood line that they're being put in situations and they're being called to test. That's the difference, is because the majority of the people on this campus are in uniform while we're in uniform. So, it's personal. They've done what we're aspiring to do.

In sum, intertwining character into the entire cadet experience is “the result of practicing the required virtuous behaviors so that they thereby develop into lasting habits” (Crittenden, 2007, p.7). USMA cadets must practice virtuosity across all spectrums of their 47-month experience, thinking beyond the classroom and thinking beyond themselves. Regarding the former, character education “cannot be isolated, codified, and packaged into tidy little instructional units” in a classroom (Gilness, 2003, p. 243). Regarding the latter, getting cadets to think beyond themselves requires an immersive, integrated experience that a focus on one pillar alone could not accomplish. Arguably, either a program has full coordination across the spectrum of education or else character education fails. A senior DPE instructor reflected this sentiment succinctly by stating:

The program as a whole, we couldn't just have the physical program at West Point. We couldn't just have the military, just the academic program. It's all three, and it's the interaction of the three. It's the integration. It's the synchronization. I don't think we're perfect. We're always striving to work toward perfect and we know we won't ever get there, but I think it's the interaction of all of the pillars

and programs, [with] character woven... interwoven throughout all three. It's really part of the environment here.

6. Building commissioned leaders of character

All steps, processes, and procedures have the equifinality of creating a leader of character to be commissioned in the U.S. Army. The leader “always holds themselves in relation with, and therefore morally accountable to others” (Cunliffe & Eriksen, p. 1425). Moral conduct as a leader can take three forms; ethical egoism (low concern for others, high concern for self), utilitarianism (equal concern for others and self), or altruism (high concern for others, low concern for self) (Northouse, 2007). Even when conducting ethically based leadership in the most optimistic conditions, balancing competition (*leaning toward ethical egoism*) and cooperation (*finding ground between utilitarianism and altruism*) can have character implications due to actions or decisions being regarded as good in and of themselves. One cadet reflected,

I would definitely say once you have people underneath you, you really do just begin to understand the importance of what leadership is and the value of it. You kind of ... you realize the amount of work you need to put into ... You can't just leave people alone.

Concerning conduct, however, USMA is not just concerned with the teleological perspective (i.e., consequences, ends, purposes), the institution also focuses on the deontological perspective (i.e., duty, obligations, responsibilities) as well as virtue ethics (i.e., who to be rather than what to do). Cadets see the benefit, as another cadet stated:

I think it's very beneficial that they stress these things. There's certain expectations of what a good leader is and then you actually have avenues to exercise and practice those kind of leadership [styles].

As such, ethical behavior is central to leadership because of the nature of influence, the engagement of others for mutual goal accomplishment, and because of the impact of leaders on organizational values (Northouse, 2007).

One of the current WPLDS outcomes is to *demonstrate excellence*. Former USMA Superintendent retired Lieutenant General Robert Caslen originally used the phrase “demonstrate a winning culture” as a WPLDS priority. However, he saw the potential character issues associated with this and changed it to *demonstrate excellence* because USMA does not develop a ‘win at all costs’ culture. Instead, he thought *excellence*—doing the absolute best that you can within the bounds of your character—was essential. As such, crafting leaders of character requires fostering a more cooperative than competitive atmosphere. Regarding excellence, a focus on sheer competition tends to elicit two important failures; first, it does not promote excellence, as trying to do well and trying to beat others are two very different approaches, and second, excellence often depends on sharing resources which is impossible when people work against each other (Kohn, 1986). To be clear, however, by some accounts *task-oriented conflict*, as opposed to *relationship conflict*, deepens group understanding and encourages participatory perspectives, i.e., dissent and discussion rather than in-fighting, “othering” and bullying. (Cikara & Paluck, 2013).

Whereas one may argue that without the previously mentioned integrators USMA may fail in its ultimate mission to produce commissioned leaders of character, cadets seem to manifest just the right peer relations mix of cooperation and competition to optimally develop over their 47-

month experience. They also unquestionably understand that all their efforts are aligned toward becoming officers:

Later on, when we're commissioned as officers, we're able to understand the inner workings of not only what good leadership is, but what my men under me can and cannot do and what I can ask of them. I think a big part of what separates us from a different kind of college is the whole reason we're having this conversation is other colleges and universities aren't preparing you to be military officers.

Creating leaders of character certainly makes USMA is a different kind of college, a developmental institution that one senior leader described to have very few equals – “*nowhere near compares to what USMA does with the Corps of Cadets.*” As owners and arbiters of character development, USMA staff and faculty are not just integrators of the cadet experiences – they are key orchestrators of developing them into commissioned leaders of character. Educational institutions certainly influence many aspects of character, such as self-concept, social skills, values, moral reasoning maturity, knowledge about morality, etc. (Berkowitz, 2002). West Point recognizes that this developmental influence is not just about making their graduates morally fit members of society, but professional officers, as many interviewees noted:

(Instructor): I do believe [that] what the Academy does here is above the other commissioning sources in preparing junior officers for the profession of arms, regardless of what specialty they go into.

(TAC): Really training these men and women to get to that point where they're ready to go wherever the nation needs to send them to. This place is not the end.

(DPE Senior Leader): Each graduate is certainly a commissioned leader of character.

Solomon et al., (2001) found that there is strong empirical support in character education initiatives for encouraging character development through the promotion of student autonomy and influence; student participation, discussion, and collaboration; social skills training; and helping and social service behavior. One of their additional important mediating variables was having a moral atmosphere (Solomon et al., 2001). An important caveat is that this atmosphere must encompass the campus and community and not just the classroom. When asked about how the character education program actually develops character in cadets, one interviewee remarked:

Character is a topic at the Academy from their introduction to [being] here on campus. But the cadet character education program, formerly the cadet character development program, [includes] small groups, [a] facilitator, a faculty team member, volunteers to enable that group to discuss different aspects of character and values beyond the Army's values... going deeper than just that. Not memorizing, 'oh it's the acronym LDRSHIP', and 'we have to do this', but actually talking about it and examples.

These ideas indicate that West Point creates and maintains the right atmosphere to craft commissioned leaders of character. It is without doubt that many universities are also interested in contributing to the formation of character in the future citizens of our society, however, as Snook (2006) stated in his article “Developing Educational Leaders Of Character: Lessons from West Point,” USMA takes on this process in a next-level way because “the profession of arms demands it, and our country expects nothing less” (p. 516). In the end, it is not just the experiences that matter, it is also what cadets do with them, so a supportive, meaning-shaping environment so that developmentally rich experiences do not slip by with

minimal impact. It should be fair, then, to agree with Berkowitz (2002) that “institutions like military academies and religiously affiliated colleges and universities bring to the table is consistent, well-supported, and justified whole institution commitment to character education” (p. 62).

Overall conclusions from these results

There was a significant core activity regarding character development in areas involving peer relations, which mostly consisted of competitive and cooperative practices by cadets. Positive linkages (cooperative behaviors) lead to a spirit best described as “sinking or swimming together,” whereas negative linkages (competitive behaviors) lead to an idea that cadets are “sinking while the other swims” and vice versa (Deutsch et al., 2006). Given the almost maxim-like “cooperate and graduate” mantra referenced by cadets, positive linking with others helps cadets swim more often than they seemingly sink. Indeed, this concept is in line with the idea that “even two novices can facilitate each other’s acquisition of complex concepts” (Kruger, 1993, p. 165).

These findings also further illuminated the interwoven nature of a variety of practices that build a leader and future officer character, to include most significantly the idea of the importance of crucible experiences. The data reflected what Starr (2014) captured in the quotes of Disraeli, who said “there is no education like adversity,” (p. 29) and Seneca, who stated “a gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected by trials” (p. 50). Finally, this work found that the developmental models used for USMA cadets, who will become America’s future service members, must continually evolve to build the professionalism required to stand and lead morally and ethically. Developmental models should account for peer relations and the different ways cadets cooperate and compete. When integrated properly into the multitude of crucible

experiences by key leaders, staff, and faculty, peer relations concepts contribute to the accomplishment of the USMA mission to graduate commissioned leaders of character. Of course, these conclusions need to be understood within the context of the limitations of this research. I discuss these limitations within the next chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

“When and if the dust settles, it should be clear that the bottom line of character education is not philosophical distinctions, pedagogical ideologies, politics, or other conceptual disagreements.

Rather, it is development.”

- Marvin Berkowitz

This study explored the essence of peer relationships within the frame of character development at USMA. The purpose of the current study was to bridge the gap between the quantitative and qualitative work done by *Project Arete*, but also to close the distance between the theoretical conceptualizations Academy leadership espouse and the empirically based understanding and measurement of the development of cadet character. At USMA, a hierarchical, rules-based and orderly organization, cooperation appears to be the most often used peer relations approach, in that cooperation leads to coordination of effort, division of labor, orientation to task achievement, orderliness of discussion, and high productivity (Deutsch et al., 2006). These steps all happen to also be the hallmarks of any successful military institution. Cooperation has been found to be superior to not just competition, but also to any individualistic efforts that promote achievement and productivity, and it has even been further specified that cooperation *without* intergroup competition outperforms cooperation *with* intergroup competition regarding achievement and productivity (Johnson et al., 1981). In any event, these practices at the Academy are in constant motion, balance, and tension, perpetually intertwined in a way that is reminiscent of the rope grasped in a tug of war.

These findings encompass what is found only within the qualitative aspects of the data. Whereas the focus group and interview data were only qualitative, I decided to exclude specific data that were both quantitative and qualitative measures of performance. For example, cadets

receive Periodic Developmental Reviews (PDRs), which are mandatory measures of cadet performance assessed at least twice per school year, and are formatted as self-reports, subordinate/peer-reports and faculty-reports with both scores and illustrative feedback. Of note, research has indicated that the use of these types of mixed-methods data could most likely lead to increased validity in findings and a deeper, broader understanding of the studied phenomena (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & Nummela, 2006). A consideration in the literature suggests that student grades alone are often too similar to accurately measure students, so the use of a multi-metric system is more indicative of performance (Dickenson & Adelson, 2016). These considerations are why I chose to work with the qualitative information of *Project Arete* rather than the exhaustive quantitative data that reflects various aspects of cadets. Many prominent positive psychologists have also interpreted character as a more important determinant of performance than quantitative items such as GPA alone (Duckworth et al., 2015; Duckworth, Eichstaedt, & Ungar 2015; Seligman, 2007). Certainly, this view indicates that any research regarding performance character should include more than just quantitative items to make it more legitimate and comprehensive, but at the time of this writing USMA has focused almost solely in quantitative areas for measuring and differentiating cadets.

The final aim of these analyses was to fortify the theoretical model and the previously mentioned quantitative findings in insights that can be derived only from close observation of the institution's culture and educational practices. This grounding required not only careful observation and documentation of key aspects of education for character and leadership but also an analysis of the meaning that the various educational and cultural practices have for cadets as well as for faculty, staff, and institutional leaders. Taking a much more ethnographic approach to this study illuminates the other major components of the study of character at West Point (i.e.,

survey and administrative data collected as part of *Project Arete*). Adding context and texture to the findings and recommendations of the larger project further enhances the ecological validity of the understanding of character development at USMA and its implications for institutional improvement.

Limitations and future directions

There are several relevant questions that remain unanswered regarding character education at USMA. Certainly, as more research is done on the science of character education, the development of character, and what aspects of character matter most in context-specific arenas such as USMA, those concerned with developing leaders will continue to find more questions with every potential answer. A few of those potential questions most germane to this qualitative study are illustrated within this section.

Whereas this work delved into character development from the standpoint of where cadets are and where they could go, it did not engage in a discussion about where cadets were, i.e., their *developmental readiness*. Leader developmental readiness is one of the few developmental theories that addresses the baseline state of the leaders embarking upon their learning journey, making readiness a central determinant of their success (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Arguably, some leaders change by leaps and bounds in the areas of leader identity, leader knowledge, leadership skills, self-awareness, and efficacy, whereas still others fail to change in significant ways (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Studies have attributed this failure to significantly change situations to developmental readiness, stating that those leaders who are ‘developmentally ready’ maximize their potential growth from leadership experiences and crucible events (Hannah & Avolio, 2010). Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative assessments from data currently available within *Project Arete* or in other studies of the

Academy that look at cadet's pre-West Point performance metrics, self-awareness, and knowledge-skills-attributes-abilities (KSAAAs) could be greatly beneficial to character developmental programs at USMA.

The demographic distribution of the participants was a major limitation, as the sample was primarily White and male. Therefore, generalizability to non-USMA populations is severely constrained leading to a very low likelihood of external and ecological validity. Future studies should specifically focus on increasing the potential for generalizability at the very least to other military academies and institutions (i.e., the Air Force Academy, Naval Academy, Virginia Military Institute, the Citadel, etc.). As an example, an interesting dynamic may emerge regarding competition and cooperation through research into athletics at West Point and the strong rivalries with those from Naval or Air Force Academies in various sporting events. Eventually these various cadets realize that these competitive rivalries are part of a larger leadership training pipeline and that it is necessary for them all to partner in our national defense (Scott, 2015). Athletic opponents from other service academies are not seen as enemies, but as partners in a reciprocal process of crucibles which eventually leads to providing security for our country, defending the United States, protecting the freedoms our country enjoys (Scott, 2015).

In addition, future studies could provide an opportunity to understand whether the current study's population (USMA cadets) is comparative to other collegiate student populations besides just military academies and comparable institutions. As noted, the demographics of the sample are representative of the overall USMA cadet population; however, I did not analyze findings by participant race, but future research could delve further into other aspects of demographics (i.e., religion, socio-economic background, admissions data, academic major, etc.). This project's demographic distribution is also constrained by birth cohort, as most of the participants have

recently entered college together as a class (though there is some fluctuation due to prior enlisted Army service and prior college attendance post high school, as well as early high school graduation). These demographic constraints make parsing out cadet development increasingly more difficult than is the case for other intuitions. It would be intriguing to see how a variety of other demographic variables align with other samples.

An interesting point of research unaddressed in this work is the idea that leadership is more of a novel moment along a continually renewed relational experience, rather than something that should be essentialized by calling someone ‘the leader’ (Wood & Dibben, 2015). It may be argued that leadership is a set of novel events or moments that causes one to see, feel, and think in terms of the essentiality of the one who capitalizes on those events (e.g., the leader) rather than just seeing said person(s) as an opportunist of experiential novelties (Bracken, 1989; Wood & Dibben, 2015). As my work disagrees with such a perspective, I have not investigated the so-called “subjective immediacy” of the more extrinsic connections between leaders, followers, and/or the peer relationship within (Wood & Dibben, 2015, p. 32). Indeed, future research could study these phenomena.

Future studies, through different types of qualitative research, such as grounded theory or ethnographic analyses, could provide further analyses to nascent stages of qualitative views regarding character development at West Point and beyond. A natural next step would also be to conduct a quantitative analysis and include other performance-based measures that were not considered for these analyses. Including these facets via structural equation modeling, for example, to further define the variables that contribute to quantitative performance metrics alongside qualitative analyses would potentially craft a better composite of cadet experiences as they become commissioned leaders of character. It was noted that the scope of this study did not

consider, for example, the PDR – future studies should. A researcher will have to consider how to manage the portion of the PDR that is self-reported, however, as self-reported measures are subject to potential bias e.g., social desirability bias, response bias, response-shift bias, and the fact that individuals may not be aware of their understanding of themselves as it pertains to research constructs and are also more prone to exaggerate their answers (Northrup, 1996; Rosenman et al., 2011). In addition, more robust future analyses could also possibly include behavioral infractions such as honor violations – an extremely important consideration for character. Future research should consider parsing out these various measures to also see if there are any potential predicting, moderating, and mediating effects. Future approaches, whether qualitative or quantitative, should also include ipsative measures to provide the chance of intraindividual differences among cadets, as the work here looks at the normative, or inter-individual, level.

Whereas this dissertation looked at multiple levels of participants beyond just cadets (e.g., including staff/faculty and senior leaders), I did not delve into how mentors and role models affect the development of character at West Point. Tiered mentorship, or the opportunity for mentoring to happen among cadet peers as well as staff and faculty, illustrates the philosophy of “building on the foundation of previous discoveries and intellectual expertise” across a broad span of ranks and ages within a cadre of relationships and not solely one individual (Boitana et al., in press). Kram’s (1988) seminal work *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life* elucidates both the career and psychosocial functions of mentoring within organizational contexts, explicitly defining how impactful role modeling is on the development of professionals. The questions on the interview protocols I used did not address these areas; future interviews should do so. There also is untapped information remaining in the *Project*

Arete data set, as well as across essays and other untapped reserves of class material across West Point, in which cadets reflect upon their work with mentors and role models that should be further investigated to grasp the impact of these key developmental figures at the Academy.

Finally, there is knowledge to be gained with future exploration into the ongoing research regarding the common conditions in which cooperation may be counterproductive and controlled conflict can promote positive outcomes (Cikara & Paluk, 2013; Ellermers, 2012; Giner-Sorolla, 2012). This direction would entail an interdisciplinary approach which involves social psychology, organizational behavior, sociology, anthropology, developmental economics and sports psychology across intra- and intergroup contexts (Cikara & Paluck, 2013). Taking such an approach would enhance the ability of the staff, faculty, and leadership at West Point to identify the elements of cooperation and competition that align (or do not align) with specific character strengths of each cadet to then use this information to build leadership training approaches. There could be potential benefits of conflict and competition for specifically valued outcomes, especially when considering war, peace, and human welfare, where USMA cadets will undoubtedly find themselves.

Implications, Applications, and Recommendations

William Bruce Cameron points out that, “not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts” (Starr, 2014, p. 59). As previously noted, the focus of analyses at the Academy have been, in all but a few instances, within the quantitative realm, leaving it understudied by the qualitative lens. Future research directions do not necessarily need to collect more qualitative data. On the contrary, there is already a large trove of untapped qualitative data not only in the Project *Arete* data but also within the archives of academics at USMA in the form of essays, reflections, and other class projects completed by cadets. For

example, there are reflective papers completed in class like *PL100 - General Psychology for Leaders* and *PL300 - Military Leadership* that remain unanalyzed beyond the teacher's assignment of a grade. My results raise important questions about the practice of assessing cadets based on the existing instruments. USMA could gain both efficiency and knowledge simply by accessing and analyzing these readily available materials.

Within the theoretical realm specific to USMA, whereas the WPLDS model may be regarded as drawing upon RDS-theory, this work has already highlighted that point that it does so problematically because it also tries to adhere to incommensurate stage theory perspectives (Lerner, 2018a, 2018b). Among the many problems of stage theory discussed by both Feldman (2000, 2007) and Lerner (2018b), stage models have the fundamental problem of “miraculous transition,” that is there is not an adequate explanation of “the integrated, qualitative features that characterize... the whole of a given stage” (Lerner, 2018b, p. 149). In addition, this miraculous transition lacks clarity about what changes appears as or look like within each stage and what should be seen when there is progression into a subsequent stage (Lerner, 2018b). Moreover, between-person variation is not adequately considered within classical stage theories (Lerner, 2018b) and, in this regard, the WPLDS model is insensitive to individual change. As such, a reliance by USMA on stage-based theory cannot fully account for the integration of actions of the individual and the situational and contextual levels considered in RDS.

In the broader sense, research on character at the post-adolescent stages and beyond should be further understood from the perspective of peer relations, especially regarding cooperation and the positive aspects of competition. Theoretical realms within organizational behavior, organizational culture, and group dynamics, among others, could benefit from a more robust understanding of how character manifest between and within individuals with respect to

peer interactions with a focus on leadership. This could take advantage of the insights Gronn (2002) and Pearce and Conger (2003) have offered into shared and group leadership process. Much of the research at the intersection of pro-social behavior, competition, and character development focuses on childhood and adolescence, both in and outside the classroom. When one overlays the focus of contexts such as higher education at the collegiate and graduate levels there are very little empirical studies that attempt to explicate character development through the interaction and coercion of peer relations.

From a policy perspective, after taking the above recommendations and research into consideration institutions like West Point should spearhead external organizational efforts that consider implementing procedures that increase accountability, transparency, and assessment regarding character development. In other words, how is the Academy, and other developmental institutions with a similar focus, helping to shape policies outside of their direct contributory spaces (e.g., West Point not only being concerned with the character Army officers, but the character of leaders in business)? With the advent of the 24-hour news cycle and the seeming unending deluge of character-based failures it is not beyond reason to posit that many prominent leaders and their leadership continue to disappoint their subordinates, their superiors, and the public writ large (Byrne, Crossan, & Seijts, 2018; Lerner & Chase, 2020). As such, the current policy environment demands accountability, and accountability requires assessment. Therefore, as evidenced within this dissertation, efforts by developmental institutions to measure and implement incentives for cooperation, the positive aspects of competition, and structured and nested crucible experiences may therefore be a promising way to support not only students' and workers' success but their growth as civic-minded contributors to society. To understand where negative leadership and public failure stems from, as well as how to promote positive leadership,

understanding leadership and insisting on policies that emphasize a character-based lens are of great importance.

Conclusions

The word *character* is a derivative of the Greek word *charakter*, which at its origin was a permanent mark placed on a coin that determined the coin's worth (Kerr, 2013). Likewise, one could agree that today a person's character is "marked" by the set of beliefs and values which serve as guideposts for how individuals make decisions as well as how they conduct themselves (Murphy, 1998). Character is paired with commitment and competence in the profession of arms as defined in Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership* (ADRP 6-22, 2012). Maxwell (2006) argues that behavior determines the culture, values determine decisions, attitude determines the atmosphere, and character determines the trust in an organization. Leaders who display character through both behavior and values are more likely to build a culture of trust in their organizations (Rybacki & Cook, 2016).

Furthermore, Steele (2011) states that there is a strong relationship between constructive leadership and behaving ethically, wherein there lie inviolable moral principles. Lacking principles may lead to a bending of rules that destroys the trust that connects a leader and followers (Rybacki & Cook, 2016). In addition, O'Toole (1995) argues that without committed leadership that is couched within morals and values, trust will be broken, and the leader will not be followed. As a leader's trust is intrinsically based upon influence, Widener (2008) prioritizes character's importance as the first rule of his Four Golden Rules of Influence: "Live a life of undivided character" (p. 55). Character development is therefore critical to leadership, and as such, is critical to many of the underpinnings of this dissertation. Invariably, then, the development of character as a critical component of leadership can also be a critical factor along

the human developmental spectrum. This dissertation and other studies like it add to both the nomothetic and idiographic understanding of leadership and character, as each has aspects of objective phenomena and cultural or subjective phenomena.

To be clear, there is no single correct theory or set of corresponding strategies to develop leader character in general, or in the specific niche of military leadership (Cook & Aman, 2020). I am not seeking to define a specific theory, a decision reflected by my not taking a grounded theoretical qualitative approach. Whereas it has certainly been established, both in the U.S. and abroad (Kohlberg & Higgins, 1984; Lind, 2000a; Rest, 1986; Rest & Thoma, 1985; Sprinthall, 1994; Sprinthall et al., 1994), that “education is important for fostering moral-cognitive development and making it self-sustaining,” there is no one right way to put together such a plan (Lind, 2000b, p. 12). Every program will depend on the experience, interests, and needs of individual organizations, as well as the skills of the leaders enacting it and the context in which it is emplaced (Dyer et al., 2007). I propose to further illuminate the experience, interests, and needs of USMA.

Moreover, the development of leaders of character at USMA is not solely a concern of the Academy alone, as the institution trains leaders who are obligated to the profession of arms, to its clients, American citizenry, and to the Constitution of the United States (Callina et al., 2017). For the military, leader character matters because soldiers have an obligation to accomplish their missions while minimizing harm. There is a unique responsibility in managing the risk to mission, the risk to others, and the risk to self, all while potentially inflicting harm to restore or protect order and/or peace. Whereas this responsibility can be instantiated in a variety of contexts, a leader’s character may even be tested in the ultimate crucible of war, an environment which, as Hartle (2007) states that, without exception, erodes our humanity.

Therefore, designing, executing, and evaluating complex leader developmental systems that build leaders who cannot only contest high-risk threats but highly perform in various high-stress conditions will produce more professional forces at the individual and collective participant levels (Cook et al., 2020).

The individual and collective levels matter because leadership cannot happen within a vacuum. Organizations rise and fall at the hands of leaders and their interactions (or inaction) with followers. Simply put, without followers, one is not a leader; “the word leader does not have any sense without a word like follower implied with it” (Rioch, 1971, p. 262). Furthermore, Rioch (1971) went on to state that almost all relationships can be looked at through variations on the theme of leadership-followership. If it is to be believed that leadership is a process, we cannot extricate the fact that there is a transaction occurring between the leader and follower and both their respective perspectives and experiences (Rybacki & Cook, 2016). Whereas this linkage burdens the leader with both creating and maintaining that relationship while also initiating and continuing communication and direction, it is of the utmost importance for a follower to listen, be loyal, share the values of the group, and give honest feedback to better the experience (Rybacki & Cook, 2016). These qualities strengthen and enhance the leader-follower relationship while allowing for a bidirectional ‘checks and balances’ system of trust, stemming from one’s character at the individual and collective levels. Balance, linkages between multiple strands or common threads, and relationships among teammates and competitors are inevitably elements of any tug of war match.

Berkowitz (2002) posed several questions at the beginning of the millennium that are still relevant today regarding the scientific understanding of character education:

- Which components of comprehensive character education models impact which components of character?
- What are the most critical components of effective character education?
- How does effective character education vary from school to school?
- What are the long-term effects of character education?
- How can we most effectively measure character?
- What is the “dose response” for effective character education; that is, how much is enough to make a difference?
- What existing forms of education impede the fostering of character?

Whereas my work did not specifically address each of these areas, these areas will remain relevant to my research, the outcomes of *Project Arete*, and the continued development of character at USMA.

The scientific understanding of character development has greatly expanded in recent years, whereas the empirical understanding of character measurement at USMA is still in its early stages. Focusing on the long-term development of individual character, instead of class-by-class assessments, would be of great benefit to the USMA community. Peer relations and the different ways cadet cooperate and compete, when integrated properly into the multitude of crucible experiences by key leaders, staff, and faculty, leads to an accomplishment of the USMA mission to graduate commissioned leaders of character. Continued research about cadets, their character, and the associative essence of peer relations in various contexts will further self-awareness, understanding, and a more holistic comprehension and (dare I say) appreciation of the cadet experience. Indeed, if further understanding character development and leadership at

West Point is proven useful, the implications for building leaders of character across other sectors are certainly profound.

The most intuitive sector is other colleges, as education surely affects character. President Theodore Roosevelt once said that “to educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society” (Gilness, 2003, p. 243). Martin Luther King (1947) stated, “intelligence plus character is the goal of true education” (p. 123). As such, it should be noted that postsecondary education “provides society one of its last large—scale opportunities to shape the character of tomorrow’s leaders” (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p. 18). Schools that make character “a centerpiece of their identity and mission” are certainly most likely to “get more character output from their program input” (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p. 22). Moreover, beyond the scientific implications or the implications for USMA and other colleges, the development of leaders and their character will never subside as a need across all sectors of society. Arendt (1981) once said that most of the evil done in the world is sadly done by those who have not made up their mind to do evil or do good. The complexities of the world require leaders of character on and off the battlefield, in and around the board room, in our homes and within our communities. Character, leadership, and individual moral autonomy is “essential for maintaining, and sometimes also for correcting, the social order” (Lind, 2000b, p. 15). Moreover, the order of modern societies “can only be maintained by individuals who take ownership in, and have learned to apply competently, the virtuous moral principles on which the society is based” (Durkheim, 1961, p. 1902). Being virtuous is not solely about doing the right actions, so development of character should focus on developing one’s ethos as well as the whole person (Jones, 2020).

One’s leadership ethos is a construct deeply integrated and central to a multitude of organizational constructs. As ethos is “characterized by levels of character, values, and beliefs

sufficient to motivate a willingness to endure the cognitive, emotional, and physical hardships” associated with leading across various contexts, a leader’s commitment goes further than just the organization or a cause (Palmer et al., 2011, p. 356). A higher calling “tugs” at many a young person entering the Academy, who ultimately may put their life on the line to defend our country. Beyond the threat of the loss of life, loss of livelihood, or even the loss of opportunity, the potential ethical implications of one’s actions or inaction make leading a morality laden affair, be it today or in the future.

It is unknown what the rest of the century has in store for America, let alone USMA and the armed forces, but it will surely at times be uneasy. America may find itself in constant conflict, much of it violent, and the Armed Forces are likely going to add a lot of battle streamers to their service flags (Peters, 1997). In the age of information warfare and media globalization, the military’s actions will always be on display. USMA cadets, who will become America’s future service members, must continually develop the professionalism to stand their ground morally and ethically. Character development is not a discrete event that takes place at a set time for a set period; “rather, it is a persistent activity of the moral life” (Jones, 2020, p. 198). Through persistence of development, commissioned leaders of character will buttress our society writ large in the existential effort to “surprise the critics, both domestic and foreign, who predict our decline” (Peters, 1997, p. 4).

References

- ADRP 6-22. (2012). *Army Leadership*. GPO, 3-1.
- Anderman, L., & Anderman, E. (1999). Social predictors of changes in students' achievement goal orientations. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 24(1), 31–37.
- Arbeit, M. (2015). *Developing leaders of character and preventing sexual violence in the U. S. military: Towards a model of respectful sexuality*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Tufts University.
- Arbeit, M. (2018). "They're hoping we can stop it": Student leadership in sexual violence intervention and response at West Point. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 46, 598–615.
- Arbeit, M. (2017a). "It could affect you as a person, character-wise": Promoting character development and preventing sexual violence at West Point. *Journal of College and Character*, 18(4), 279-295.
- Arbeit, M. (2017b). "Make sure you're not getting yourself in trouble:" Building sexual relationships and preventing sexual violence at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 54(8), 949-961.
- Arbeit, M., Hershberg, R., DeSouza, L. M., & Rubin, R. (2014). "I'm hoping that I can have better relationships": Exploring interpersonal connection in developmental research with adolescent boys. *Society for Research on Adolescence*.
- Arendt, H. (1981). *The life of the mind* (Vols. 1 & 2). Mariner Books.
- Aristotle. (2016). *Nichomachen ethics* (W. D. Ross, Trans). DigiReads Publishing.
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. (1996). "Involvement in learning" revisited: Lessons we have learned. *Journal of*

- College Student Development*, 37, 123-134.
- Avolio, B. (2004). Examining the full range model of leadership: Looking back to transform forward. In D. Day, S. Zaccaro, & S. Halpin's (Eds.) *Leader development for transforming organizations* (pp. 71-98). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Avolio, B. (2005). *Leadership development in balance: Made/born*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Avolio, B., & Hannah, S. (2008). Developmental readiness: Accelerating leader development. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60, 331-347.
- Ayers, W., & Bennett, R. (1983). University characteristics and student achievement. *Journal of Higher Education*, 54(5), 518-532.
- Baehr, J. (2013). Educating for intellectual virtues: From theory to practice. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 47(2), 248-262.
- Baker, C., Wuest, J., & Noerager Stern, P. (1992). Method slurring; the grounded theory/phenomenology example. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 17(11), 1355-1360.
- Baluch, C. (2002). Implementing a character education curriculum and assessing its impact on student behavior. *The Clearing House*, 76(2), 79-83.
- Bass, B. (1990). *Bass and Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications* (3rd ed.). Free Press.
- Bearison, D. J., Magzamen, S., & Filardo, E. (1986). Socio-cognitive conflict and cognitive growth in young children. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 32, 51-72.
- Beller, J., Stoll, S., & Calmeiro, L. (2004, September). *The RSBH Value-Judgment Inventory: Analysis of the Portuguese version*. Poster presentation at the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

- Beller, J., Stoll, S., Burwell, G., & Cole, J. (2006). The relationship of competition and Christian liberal arts education on moral reasoning of college student athletes. *Research on Christian Higher Education*, 3, 99–114.
- Bennis, W., & Thomas, R. (2002). Crucibles of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 1-9.
- Bennis, W. & Nanus, B. (2007). *Leaders: Strategies for taking charge*. Collins Business Essentials.
- Berkowitz, M. (2002). The science of character education. *Bringing in a New Era of Character Education*, 508, 43-63.
- Berkowitz, M. (2012). Moral and character education. In K. Harris, S. Graham, & T. Urdan (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook. Vol. 2 Individual differences and contextual factors* (pp. 247–264). American Psychological Association.
- Berkowitz, M., & Gibbs, J. (1983). Measuring the developmental features of moral discussion. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 29, 399-410.
- Berkowitz, M., & Fekula, M. (1999). Educating for character. *About Campus*, Nov-Dec, 17-22.
- Berkowitz, M. W., Bier, M. C., & McCauley, B. (2017). Towards a science of character education: Frameworks for identifying and implementing effective practices. *Journal of Character Education*, 13(1), 33-51.
- Blake, R., & Mouton, J. (1964). *The managerial grid*. Gulf Publishing Company.
- Blakeley, K., & Higgs, M. (2014). Responsible leadership development—Crucible experiences and power relationships in a global professional services firm. *Human Resource Development International*, 17(5), 560-576.
- Blumenfield, P., Marx, R., Solway, E., & Krajcik, J. (1996). Learning with peers: From small group cooperation to collaborative communities. *Educational Researcher*, 25(8), 37-40.

- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. Prentice Hall.
- Boitana, T., Chi, D., Copeland, L., & Straughn, M. (in press). Standing on the shoulders of giants: Mentorship advice from leaders in the field. *Gynecologic Oncology*.
- Bornstein, M. H. (2017). The specificity principle in acculturation science. *Perspectives in Psychological Science*, 12(1), 3–45.
- Bornstein, M., & Bruner, J. (1989). *Interaction in human development*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bosworth, K., & Hamilton, S. (1994). Collaborative learning: Underlying processes and effective techniques. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 59. Jossey-Bass.
- Boud, D., & Lee, A. (2005). ‘Peer learning’ as pedagogic discourse for research education. *Studies in Higher Education* 30(5), 501–516.
- Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Sampson, J. (2001). *Peer learning in higher education: Learning from and with each other*. Kogan Page.
- Bourne, J., Liu, Y., Shields, C., Jackson, B., Zumbo, B., & Beauchamp, M. (2015). The relationship between transformational teaching and adolescent physical activity: The mediating roles of personal and relational efficacy beliefs. *Journal of health psychology*, 20(2), 132-143.
- Bracken, J. (1989). Energy events and fields. *Process Studies*, 18, 153-165.
- Brown, D. (1991). *Human universals*. McGraw-Hill.
- Burke, W. W. (2011) *Organization change: Theory and practice*, (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Byrne, A., Crossan, M., & Seijts, G. (2018). The development of leader character through crucible moments. *Journal of Management Education*, 42(2), 265– 293.

- Callina, K. S., & Lerner, R. M. (2017). On the importance of coherence in the study of character development. *Journal of Character Education*, 13(1), 19-27.
- Callina, K., Agans, J., Arbeit, M., Arnow, H., Colby, A., Damon, W., & Lerner, R. M. (2014). *Professional development in the profession of arms: Frameworks, findings, and future directions for developing leaders of character at the United States Military Academy*. Medford, MA: Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development.
- Callina, K. S., Ryan, D., Murray, E. D., Colby, A., Damon, W., Matthews, M., & Lerner, R. M. (2017). Developing leaders of character at the United States Military Academy: A relational developmental systems analysis. *Journal of College and Character*, 18(1), 9-27.
- Callina, K., Burkhard, B., Schaeffer, J., Powers, J., Murray, E., Kobylski, G., Ryan, D., Kelly, D., Matthews, M., & Lerner, R. (2018). Character in context: Character structure among United States Military Academy cadets. *Journal of Moral Education*.
- Cameron, K. (2011). Responsible leadership as virtuous leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98, 25-35.
- Cameron, K., & Tschirhart, M. (1992). Postindustrial environments and organizational effectiveness in colleges and universities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 63(1), 86-108.
- Carlson, D. & Perrewe, P. (1995). Institutionalization of organizational ethics through transformational leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 14(10), 829-838.
- Cheung, C., & Lee, M. (2010). A theoretical model of intentional social action in online social networks. *Journal of Decision Support Systems*, 49(1), 24-30.
- Chickering, A.W. (1969). *Education and identity*. Jossey-Bass.

- Chickering, A.W. (1974). The impact of various college environments on personality development. *Journal of the American College Health Association*, 23, 82-94
- Chickering, A.W. (1981). *The modern American college: Responding to the new realities diverse students and a changing society*. Jossey-Bass.
- Chickering, A. & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity*. Jossey-Bass.
- Cikara, M. & Paluk, E. (2013). When going along gets you nowhere and the upside of conflict behaviors. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 7/8, 559-571.
- Cilliers, P. (1998). *Complexity and postmodernism: Understanding complex systems*. Routledge.
- Clark, M. & Gruber, C. (Eds.). (2020). *Leader development deconstructed*. Springer.
- Cohen, E. (1994). Restructuring the classroom: Conditions for productive small groups. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(1), 1–35.
- Colby, A., & Sullivan, W. M. (2008). Formation of professionalism and purpose: Perspective from the preparation for the professions program. *U. St. Thomas LJ*, 5, 404–427.
- Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E., & Stephens, J. (2003). *Educating citizens: Preparing America's undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility*. Jossey-Bass.
- Colby, A.L., Kohlberg, L., Gibbs, J. & Libermann, M. (1983) A longitudinal study of moral judgment, *SRCD Monograph*, 48(1-2), 33-42.
- Competition. (2020). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved August 24, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/competition>.
- Cook, C. (2019). *A grounded theory exploration of character, cooperation, and competition amongst cadets at the United States Military Academy*. [Unpublished manuscript]. Tufts University, Medford, MA.

- Cook, C., & Aman, A. (2020). A strategy for the development of principled professionals. *AUSA Institute of Land Warfare Paper*, 20-2.
- Cook, C., Webb, C., & Vansickle, J. (2020). Developing and mentoring in-extremis leaders: Lessons learned from special operations. *Air and Space Power Journal*, 67-76.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Crittenden, J. (2007). Integral character education. *AQAL: Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 2(2), 6-25.
- Crooks, L. (2001). The importance of symbolic interaction in Grounded Theory research on women's health. *Healthcare for Women International*, 22(1-2), 11-27.
- Crossan, M., Seijts, G., & Gandz, J. (2016). *Developing leadership character*. Routledge.
- Crossan, M., Vera, D., & Nanjad, L. (2008). Transcendent leadership: Strategic leadership in dynamic environments. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19, 569-581.
- Daft, R. L. (2007). *Essentials of organization theory and design*. South-Western.
- Damon, W. (1975). Early conceptions of positive justice as related to the development of operational reasoning. *Child Development*, 46, 301-312.
- Damon, W., & Killen, M. (1982). Peer interaction and the process of change in children's moral reasoning. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 28, 347-367.
- Davis, T.M. & Murrell, P.H. (1993). A structural model of perceived academic, personal, and vocational gains related to college student responsibility. *Research in Higher Education*, 34, 267-290.
- Day, D. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *Leadership Quarterly* 11, 582.

- Day, D., & Dragoni, L. (2015). Leadership development: An outcome-oriented review based on time and levels of analysis. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 2, 133-156.
- Day, D., Zaccaro, S., & Halpin, S. (2004). *Leader development for transforming organizations*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dempsey, M. (2020). *No time for spectators*. Missionday.
- Denzin, N. (1998). The art and politics of interpretation. In D. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 313-371). Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1998). The art of interpretation, evaluation, and presentation. In D. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 275-281). Sage Publications.
- DeRue, D., Nahrgang, J., Hollenbeck, J., & Workman, K. (2012). A quasi-experimental study of after-event reviews and leadership development. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97, 997-1015.
- Desai, M., Paranamana, N., Restrepo-Toro, M., O'Connell, M., Davidson, L., & Stanhope, V. (2021). Implicit organizational bias: Mental health treatment culture and norms as barriers to engaging with diversity. *American Psychologist*, 76(1), 78-90.
- DeSimone, J. (2008). The impact of employment during school on college student academic performance. *NBER Working Papers* 14006, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
- Deutsch, M. (1962). Cooperation and trust: Some theoretical notes. In M. Jones *Nebraska symposium on motivation*. University of Nebraska Press, 275-319.
- Deutsch, M. (1973). *The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes*. Yale University Press.

- Deutsch, M., Coleman, P. T., & Marcus, E. C. (2006). *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice*. Wiley.
- Dewey, J. (1939) *Theory of valuation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Dickenson, E., & Adelson, J. (2016). Choosing among multiple achievement measures: Applying Multitrait-multimethod confirmatory factor analysis to state assessment, ACT, and student GPA data. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 27, 4-22.
- Dimant, R., & Bearison, D. (1991). Development of formal reasoning during successive peer interactions. *Developmental Psychology*, 27, 277-284.
- Dóci, E., Stouten, J., & Hofmans, J. (2015). The cognitive-behavioral system of leadership: Cognitive antecedents of active and passive leadership behaviors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1-15.
- Douglas, C. (2003). *Key events and lessons for managers in a diverse workforce: A report on research and findings*. Center for Creative Leadership.
- Doty, J. (2006). Sports build character?! *Journal of College & Character*, VII, 1-8.
- Duina, F. (2011). *Winning: Reflections on an American obsession*. Princeton University Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1961). *Moral education: A study in the theory and application of the sociology of education*. Free Press.
- Dyer, W. Dyer, W. G., & Dyer, J. (2007). *Team building: Proven strategies for improving team performance*. Jossey-Bass.
- Elias, M., Gara, M., Schuyler, T., Branden-Muller, L., & Sayette, M. (1991). The promotion of social competence: Longitudinal study of a preventive school-based program. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61(3), 409-417.

- Ender, M., Ryan, D., Nuszowski, D., Spell, E., & Atkins, C. (2017). Dinner and a conversation: Transgender integration at West Point and beyond. *Social Sciences*, 27(6), 1-18.
- Epitropaki, O., Sy, T., Martin, R., Tram-Quon, S., & Topakas, A. (2013). Implicit leadership and followership theories “in the wild”: Taking stock of information processing approaches to leadership and followership in organizational settings. *Leadership Quarterly*, 24, 858-881.
- Ericsson, K. (2002). Attaining excellence through deliberate practice: insights from the study of expert performance, in ed. Michel Ferrari, *The Pursuit of Excellence Through Education*, 21–55. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Ericsson, K. & Lehmann, A. (1996). Expert and exceptional performance: Evidence of maximal adaptation to task constraints. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47(1), 273–305.
- Ericsson, K., Charness, N., Feltovich, P., & Hoffman, R. (2006). *The Cambridge handbook of expertise and expert performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ericsson, K., Krampe, R. & Tesch-Römer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological Review*, 100(3), 363–340.
- Feldman, D. H. (2000). Piaget’s stages: The unfinished symphony. Unpublished manuscript. Medford, MA: Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University.
- Feldman, D. H. (2007). Vertical and horizontal décalage in Piaget’s theory. In *CD 151 Intellectual development*, Fall, 2007. Tufts Open Courseware (p. 17). Medford, MA: Tufts University. <http://ocw.tufts.edu/Course/53/Coursehome>.
- Fiedler, F. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill.

- Fisher, C., & Lerner, R. (2013). Promoting positive development through social justice: An introduction to a new ongoing section of Applied Developmental Science. *Applied Developmental Science*, 17(2), 57–59.
- Fisher, C., Busch-Rossnagel, N., Jopp, D., & Brown, J. (2012). Applied developmental science, social justice, and socio-political well-being. *Applied Developmental Science*, 16(1), 54–64.
- Flay, B. & Allred, C. (2003). Long-term effects of the Positive Action program. *American Journal of Health and Behavior* 27(1), 6-21.
- Fox, R. (2000). *Moral reasoning*. Prentice Hall.
- Fraleigh, W. (1984). *Right actions in sport*. Human Kinetics.
- Franke, V. (2001). Generation X and the military: A comparison of attitudes and values between West Point cadets and college students. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 29(1), 92–119.
- Galton, F. (1979). *Hereditary Genius: An inquiry into its laws and consequences*. Julian Friedman Publishers.
- Gandhi, S. (2017). Compete with yourself (CWY): Maximising learning gain in schools. In G. Hughes (Ed.), *Ipsative Assessment and Personal Learning Gain* (pp. 221-242). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gazzinga, M. (2007). *The ethical brain*. Dana Press.
- Gharajedaghi, J. (1999). *Systems thinking—managing chaos and complexity: A platform for designing business architecture*, (2nd ed.). Butterworth- Heinemann.
- Gilness, J. (2003). Classroom practice: How to integrate character education into the curriculum. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(3), 243-245.

- Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 28*, 236-260.
- Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press.
- Gold, M., & Friedman, S. (2000). Cadet basic training: An ethnographic study of stress and coping. *Military Medicine, 165*(2), 147-152.
- Golman, D., Boyatsis, R., & McKee, A. (2003). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Good, T., Mulryan, C., & McCaslin, M. (1992). Grouping for instruction in mathematics: A call for programmatic research on small-group processes. In D. Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning* (pp. 165-196). Macmillan.
- Greenberg, M., Kusche, C., Cook, E., & Quamma, J. (1995). Promoting emotional competence in school-aged children: The effects of the PATHS curriculum. *Development and Psychopathology, 7*, 117-136.
- Gottman, J., Swanson, C., & Swanson, K. (2002). A general systems theory of marriage: Nonlinear difference equation modeling of marital interaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4*, 326-340.
- Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly, 13*, 423-451.
- Hagedorn, L., Pascarella, E., Edison, M., Braxton, J., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. (1999). Does institutional context influence the development of critical thinking? A research note. *Rev. Higher Education, 22*, 247-263.

- Hannah, S., & Avolio, B. (2010). Ready or not: How do we accelerate the developmental readiness of leaders? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31, 1181-1187.
- Hannah, S., & Avolio, B. (2011). The locus of leader character. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 979-983.
- Hannah, S., & Jennings, P. (2013). Leader ethos and Big-C character. *Organizational Dynamics*, 42, 8-16.
- Harris, J. (1995). Where is the child's environment? A group socialization theory of development. *Psychological Review*, 102, 458 – 48.
- Hart, D., & Carlo, G. (2005). Moral development in adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15(3), 223 – 233.
- Hartle, A. (2007). Moral principle and moral reasoning in the ethics of military professionals. In D. Snyder (Ed.), *Forging the warrior's character* (pp. 163-200). Jerico, LLC.
- Haskins, M., Liedtka, J., & Rosenblum, J. (1998). Beyond teams: Toward an ethic of collaboration. *Organizational Dynamics*, 34-50.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Heine, S., Proulx, T., & Vohs, K. (2006). The meaning maintenance model: On the coherence of social motivations. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 10, 88-110.
- Helms, K. (2008). *Self-reflection during transition to college: A qualitative understanding of women becoming West Point cadets*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K. (1977). *Management of organization behavior: Utilizing human resources* (4th ed.). Prentice-Hall.

- Hilk, C. (2013). *Effects of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic structures on college student achievement and peer relationships: A series of meta-analyses*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Minnesota.
- Hollander, E. (1985). Leadership and power. In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (pp. 485-537). Random House.
- Holowchak, M. (2011). The "measure" of an athletic achievement character versus production, or a forced dichotomy in competitive sport. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 38(1), 88-102.
- Holroyd, C. (2001). Phenomenological research method, design and procedure: A phenomenological investigation of the phenomenon of being-in-community as experienced by two individuals who have participated in a community building workshop. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Hosking, D. (1988). Organizing leadership and skillful process. *Journal of Management Studies*, 25, 147-166.
- Hu, Y., Parker, S., Lipsitz, S., Arriaga, A., Peyre, S., Corso, K. A., ... & Greenberg, C. (2016). Surgeons' leadership styles and team behavior in the operating room. *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, 222(1), 41-51.
- Huntington, S. (1957). *The Soldier and The State*. Harvard University Press.
- Hurmerinta-Peltomaki, L., & Nummela, N. (2006). Mixed methods in international business research: A value-added perspective. *Management International Review*, 46, 439-459.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*. Northwestern University Press.
- Janis, I. (1972). *Victims of groupthink*. Houghton-Mifflin.

- Jakobsson, S., Horvath, G., & Ahlberg, K. (2005). A grounded theory exploration of the first visit to a cancer clinic—strategies for achieving acceptance. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 9, 248-257.
- Jervis, R. (1997). *System effects: Complexity in political and social life*. Princeton University Press.
- Johnson, B. & Ridley, C. (2008). *The Elements of Ethics for Professionals*. Palgrave-McMillan.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F. (2009). *Joining together: group theory and group skills* (10th Ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R.T. (1989a). *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research*. Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R.T. (1989b). *Leading the cooperative school*. Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K.A. (1991). *Active learning: Cooperation in the college classroom*. Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (2007). The state of cooperative learning in postsecondary and professional settings. *Educational Psychological Review* 19(1), 15–29.
- Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Stanne, M. (2000). *Cooperative learning methods: A meta-analysis*. University of Minnesota.
- Johnson, D. W., Maruyama, G., Johnson, R., Nelson, D., & Skon, I. (1981). Effects of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures on achievement: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 56-57.
- Johnson, S. K., Hershberg, R. M., Arbeit, M. R., DeSouza, L. M., Callina, K. S., Gutierrez, A. S., ... & Lerner, R. M. (2014). Exploring characteristics of young adult men: Initial findings

- from a mixed methods evaluation of an all-male, character-focused trade school. *Journal of Character Education*, 10(2), 129-154.
- Jones, H. (2020). Operationalizing creativity: Developing ethical leaders who strive in complex environments. In M. Clark & C. Gruber (Eds.), *Leader development deconstructed*. (pp. 189-208). Springer.
- Judd, T., Kelly, D., Kobylski, G., Peterson, J., Ryan, D., Spain, E., West, H., & Dodge, M. (2018). *Developing leaders of character: The West Point Leader Development System*. United States Military Academy.
- Kaufman, M. & Creamer, D. (1991). Influences of student goals for college on freshman-year quality of effort and growth. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32(3), 197-206.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self problem and process in human development*. Harvard University Press.
- Kerr, J. (2013). *Legacy: What the All Black can teach us about business*. Constable.
- King, M. L. (1947). The purpose of education. *Maroon Tiger*, January-February, 123-124.
- Kohlberg, L. (1964). *Development of moral character and moral ideology*. In M. Hoffman and L. Hoffman's (Eds.), *Review of child development research*, (vol. 1, pp. 383-432). Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kohlberg, L. (1976). *Collected papers on moral development and moral education*. Harvard University Center for Moral Education.
- Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The philosophy of moral development: Moral stages and the idea of justice* (1st ed.). Harper and Row.

- Kohlberg, L. & Higgins, A. (1984). Continuities and discontinuities in childhood and adult development revisited - again. In L. Kohlberg (Ed.), *The Psychology of Moral Development*, (pp. 426-497). Harper & Row Publisher.
- Kohn, A. (1986). How to succeed without even trying. *Psychology Today*, 27-28.
- Kram, K. (1988). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. University Press of America.
- Krietz, A., Zimmerman, J., Hutteman, R., Specht, J., & Neyer, F. (2014). How peers make a difference: The role of peer groups and peer relationships in personality development. *European Journal of Personality*, 28, 279-288.
- Kruger, A. (1993). Peer collaboration: Conflict, cooperation, or both? *Social Development*, 2(3), 165-182.
- Kuh, G., & Love, P. (2000). A cultural perspective on student departure. In J. Braxton (Ed.), *Rethinking the departure puzzle: New theory and research on college student retention*. Vanderbilt University Press.
- Kuh, G., & Whitt, E. (1988). The Invisible Tapestry: Culture in American Colleges and Universities. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Ed Report, No.1*, Washington, D.C. ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education.
- Kuh, G., Schuh, J., Whitt, E., & Associates (1991). *Involving colleges: Successful approaches to fostering student learning and personal development outside the classroom*. Jossey-Bass.
- Kuhn, T. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

LeBoeuf, J. (2002). Case No. 3: The 2000 army training and leader development panel. In D.

Snider & G. Watkins' (Eds.), *The Future of the Army Profession* (pp. 487–504).

McGraw-Hill.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*.

United States Institute of Peace Press.

Leming, J. (2001). Integrating a structured ethical reflection curriculum into high school

community service experiences: Impact on students' socio-moral development.

Adolescence, 36(141), 33-45.

Lerner, R. M. (2018a). Character development among youth: Linking lives in time and place.

International Journal of Behavioral Development, 42(2), 267-277.

Lerner, R. M. (2018b). *Concepts and Theories of Human Development* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Lerner, R. M., & Callina, K. S. (2014). The study of character development: Towards tests of a

relational developmental systems model. *Human Development*, 57(6), 322–346.

Lerner, R. M., & Chase, P. A. (2020). Hate in Contemporary America: Pathology or Opportunism?

In Sternberg, R. J. (Ed.) *Hate in the Modern World: What It Is, Where It Comes From, and*

What to Do About it. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Lerner, R. & Overton, W. (2008). Exemplifying the integrations of the relational developmental

system: Synthesizing theory, research, and application to promote positive development

and social justice. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23(3), 245–55.

Lewis, L. (2019). *West Point women: An oral history of the west point experience and leader*

identity development [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Clemson University.

Lewis, P., Forsythe, G., Sweeney, P., Bartone, P., Bullis, C., & Snook, S. (2005). Identity

development during the college years: Findings from the West Point longitudinal study.

- Journal of College Student Development* 46(4), 357-373.
- Liebovitch, L., Vallacher, R., & Michaels, J. (2010). Dynamics of cooperation-competition interaction models. *Peace and Conflict Journal of Peace Psychology*, 16, 1-13.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character*. Bantam.
- Lickona, T. (1996). Eleven principle of effective character education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 25(1), 93-101.
- Lickona, T., & Davidson, M. (2005). *Smart & good high schools: Integrating excellence and ethics for success in school, work, and beyond*. Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect & Responsibility) / Character Education Partnership.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Lind, G. (2000a). *Can morality be taught? Research findings from modern moral psychology* (in German). Berlin: Logos-Verlag.
- Lind, G. (2000b). The importance of role-taking opportunities for self-sustaining moral development. *Journal of Educational Research*, 10, 9-15.
- MacIntyre, A. (1988). *Whose justice? Which rationality?* University of Notre Dame Press.
- MacLeod, R. (1964). Phenomenology: A challenge to experimental psychology. In T. Wann (Ed.), *Behaviorism and phenomenology* (pp. 47-78). University of Chicago Press.
- Maxwell, J. (2006). *The 360° leader*. Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- Maxwell, W. (2000). Student peer relations at a community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24, 207-217.
- McCall, M., Lombardo, M., & Morrison, A. (1988). *The lessons of experience: How successful executives develop on the job*. New Lexington Press.

- McGill, V. (1966). Behaviorism and phenomenology. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 26(4), 578-588.
- Michaelsen, L.K., Knight, A.B., & Fink, L.D. (2002). *Team-based learning: A transformative use of small groups for large and small classes*. Bergin & Garvey.
- Michaelsen, L., & Richards, B. (2005). Drawing conclusions from the team-learning literature in health-sciences education: A commentary. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine: An International Journal*, 17, 85-88.
- Miller, D. (1987). The genesis of configuration. *Academy of Management Review*, 12, 686-701.
- Mirvis, P. (2008). Executive development through consciousness-raising experiences. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 7(2), 173-188.
- Moran, E., & Gonyea, T. (2003). The influence of academically focused peer interaction on college students' development. *ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED478773*.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Murphy, M. (1998). *Character education in America's blue-ribbon schools: Best practices for meeting the challenge*. Technomic Publishing Company.
- Murray, E., Burkhard, B., Schaffer, H., Ryan, D., Farina, A., Cook, C., Powers, J., Matthews, M., & Lerner, R. (2019). Toward a developmental approach to measuring the development of character: Perspectives from Project Arête. *Journal of Character & Leadership Development*, Summer, 22-33.
- Nelson, R., Scott, T., & Bryan, W. (1984). Pre-college characteristics and early college experiences as predictor of freshmen year persistence. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 50-54.
- Northouse, P. (2007). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

- Northrup, D. (1996). The problem of the self-report in survey research. *Institute for Social Research, 11*(3).
- Nucci, L. (2017). Character: A multi-faceted developmental system. *Journal of Character Education, 13*(1), 1-16.
- Nucci, L. (1985) Future direction in research on children's moral reasoning and moral education. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, April*, 272-282.
- O'Donnell, A., & King, A. (Eds.). (1999). *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- O'Toole, J. (1995). *Leading change*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Olivares, O. (2011). The formative capacity of momentous events and leadership development. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal, 32*(8), 837-853.
- Osborn, R., Hunt, J., & Jauch, L. (2002). Toward a contextual theory of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*.
- Osiemo, L. (2012). Developing responsible leaders: The university at the service of the person. *Journal of Business Ethics, 108*(2), 131-143.
- Ospina & Hall (2001, November). *Leadership (Re)constructed: How lens matters*. Paper presented at APPAM Research Conference, Washington D.C.
- Overton, W. (2015). Process and relational developmental systems. In W. F. Overton & P. C. M. Molenaar (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*, Volume 1: *Theory and method* (7th ed., pp. 9-62). Editor-in-chief: R. M. Lerner. Wiley.
- Pace, C. (1984). *Measuring the quality of college student experiences*. University of California, Higher Education Research Institute.

- Palanski, M. E., Cullen, K. L., Gentry, W. A., & Nichols, C. M. (2015). Virtuous leadership: Exploring the effects of leader courage and behavioral integrity on leader performance and image. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 132, 297-310.
- Palincsar, A., Anderson, C., & David, Y. (1993). Pursuing scientific literacy in the middle grades through collaborative problem solving. *The Elementary School Journal*, 93, 643-658.
- Palmer, N., Hannah, S., & Sosnowik, D. (2011). Leader development for dangerous contexts. In Sweeney, P., Matthews, M., & Lester, P. (Eds.), *Leadership in dangerous situations: A handbook for armed forces, emergency services and first responders*. Naval Institute Press.
- Park, N. & Peterson, C. (2006). Moral competence and character strengths among adolescents: The development and validation of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29, 891-909.
- Park, D., Tsukayama, E., Goodwin, G., Patrick, S., & Duckworth, A. (2017). A tripartite taxonomy of character: Evidence for intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intellectual competencies in children. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 48, 16-27.
- Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from 20 years of research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E., Duby, P., Terenzini, P., & Iverson, B. (1983). Student-faculty relationships and freshman year intellectual and personal growth in a nonresidential setting. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 395-402.
- Pearce, C., and Conger, J. (2003). A landscape of opportunities: Future research on shared leadership. In C. Pearce and J. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership* (pp. 703-723). Sage Publications.

- Peters, R. (1997). Constant conflict. *Parameters*, Summer, 14.
- Peters, T., & Waterman, R. (1982). *In search of excellence*. Harper & Row.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Oxford University Press and American Psychological Association.
- Piaget, J. (1960). *The child's conception of the world*. Routledge.
- Piaget, J. (1970). Piaget's theory. In P.H. Mussen (Ed.) *Carmichael's manual of child psychology* (3rd ed., Vol. 1. pp. 703-723). Wiley.
- Pillemer, D. (2001). Momentous events in the life story. *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 5, 123-34.
- Pless, N., T. Maak, & Stahl, G. (2011). Developing responsible global leaders through international service-learning programs: The Ulysses experience. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 10(2), 237–260.
- Prentice, D., & Miller, D. (1993). Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus: Some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 243–243.
- Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), 223–31.
- QSR International. (1999). NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software v12 [Software]. Available from <https://qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products/>.
- Reid, H. (2007). Sport and moral education in Plato's "Republic". *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 34(1), 160-175.

- Reiman, A., & Parramore, B. (1994). First-year teachers' assignments, expectations, and development: A collaborative investigation. In M. O'Hair, & S. Odell (Eds.) *Teacher education yearbook II* (pp. 118-132). Macmillan.
- Resnick, L., Levine, J., & Teasley, S. (1991). *Perspectives on socially shared cognition*. American Psychological Association. Learning Research and Development Centre, University of Pittsburgh.
- Rest, J. (1986). *Moral development: Advances in research and theory*. Praeger.
- Rest, J. (1988). Why does college promote development in moral judgement? *Journal of Moral Education*, 17, 183-94.
- Rest, J., & Thoma, S. (1985). Relation of moral judgment development to formal education. *Developmental Psychology*, 21, 709-714.
- Riese, H. (2010). *Friendship and learning. Entrepreneurship education through mini enterprises*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Bergen.
- Riese, H., Samara, A., & Lillejord, S. (2012). Peer relations in peer learning. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 25(5), 601-624.
- Rioch, M. (1971). All we like sheep. *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes*, 34(3), 258-273.
- Rogge, R. D., Bradbury, T. N., Hahlweg, K., Engel, J., & Thurmaier, F. (2006). Predicting marital distress and dissolution: Refining the two-factor hypothesis. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20, 156-159.
- Rohrbeck, C., Ginsburg-Block, M., Fantuzzo, J., & Miller, T. (2003). Peer-assisted learning interventions with elementary school studies: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(2), 240-257.

- Rosenman, R., Tennekoon, V., & Hill, L. (2011). Measuring bias in self-reported data. *International Journal of Behavioral and Healthcare Research*, 2(4), 320-332.
- Roy, A., & Howe, C. (1990). Effects of cognitive conflict, socio-cognitive conflict and imitation on children's socio-legal thinking. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 20, 241-252.
- Rubin, K., Bukowski, W., & Bowker, J. (2015). *Children in peer groups*. In M. H. Bornstein, T. Leventhal, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science: Ecological settings and processes* (p. 175–222). John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Rudd, A., & Stoll, S. (2004). What type of character do athletes possess? An empirical examination of college athletes versus college non-athletes with the RSBH Value Judgment Inventory. *The Sport Journal*, 7(2), 1–10.
- Ruderman, M., & Ohlott, P. (2000). *Learning from life: Turning life's lessons into leadership experience*. The Center for Creative Leadership.
- Rybacki, M., & Cook, C. (2016). Switching the paradigm from reactive to proactive: Stopping toxic leadership. *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 82, 33-39.
- Schein, E. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Shields, D. (2009). *What is decompetition and why does it matter?* Retrieved from <http://ezinearticles.com/?What-isDecompetition-and-Why-Does-it-Matter?&id=2285569>.
- Shields, D. & Bredemeier, B. (2011). Contest, competition, and metaphor. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 38, 27-38.
- Shields, D., Funk, C., & Bredemeier, B. (2014). *Development and validation of the contesting orientations scale*. St. Louis.
- Schminke, M., Ambrose, M., & Noel, T. (1997). The effect of ethical frameworks on perceptions of organizational justice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(5), 1190-1207.

Schulman, L. (2002). From Minsk to Pinsk: Why a scholarship of teaching and learning.

Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 1(1), 48-52.

Scott, D. (2015). *True competition: An investigation and analysis of competition metaphors as viewed by NCCAA student-athletes*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. United States Sports Academy.

Sherblom, S., Marshall, J., & Sherblom, J. (2006). The relationship between school climate and math and reading achievement. *Journal of Character Education*, 4(1/2).

Slavin, R. (1990). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research, and practice*. Prentice Hall.

Smetana, J., Jambon, M., & Ball, C. (2014). The social domain approach to children's moral and social judgments. In M. Killen & J. Smetana (Eds.), *Handbook of moral development* (2nd ed., pp. 23–45). Psychology Press.

Solomon, D., Watson, M., & Battistich, V. (2001). Teaching and schooling effects on moral/pro-social development. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed.). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Springer, L., Stanne, M., & Donovan, S. (1999). Effects of small group learning on undergraduates in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 69(1), 21–51.

Sprinthall, N. (1994). Social role taking and counseling. In J. Rest & D. Narváez, (Eds). *Moral development in the professions: Psychology and applied ethics* (pp. 85-99). Erlbaum.

Sprinthall, N., Sprinthall, R. & Oja, S. (1994). *Educational psychology. A developmental approach* (6th ed). McGraw-Hill.

- Stadlter, L., & Van Wassenhove, L. (2016). Coopetition as a paradox: Integrative approaches in a multi-company, cross-sector partnership. *Organization Studies*, 37(5), 655-685.
- Starr, J. (2014). *The mentoring manual*. Pearson.
- Steele, J. (2011). Antecedents and consequences of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army: A two-year review and recommended solutions. *Center for Army Leadership, Technical Report 2011-3*.
- Stoll, S. (2012). Effects of athletic competition on character development in college student athletes. *Journal of College & Character*, 13(4), 1-5.
- Sweeney, P. & Hannah, S. (2007). High-impact military leadership: The positive effects of authentic moral leadership on followers. In D. Snyder (Ed.), *Forging the warrior's character* (pp. 163-200). Jerico, LLC.
- Tancredi, L. (2005). *Hardwired behavior: What neuroscience reveals about morality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, C., Liang, B., Tracy, A., Williams, L., & Seigle, P. (2002). Gender differences in middle school adjustment, physical fighting, and social skills: Evaluation of a social competency program. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 23(2), 259-272.
- Terr, L. (1990). *Too scared to fly*. Basic Books.
- Thomas, R. (2008). Crucibles of leadership development. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 49(3), 15-18.
- Thomas, E., & Magilvy, K. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, 16, 151-155.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125.

- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd Ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Tomasello, M., Kruger, A., & Ratner, H. (1993). Cultural learning. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16(3), 495-511.
- Topping, K. (1996). Effective peer tutoring in further and higher education: A typology and review of the literature. *Higher Education*, 32(2), 321–345.
- Tosey, P., & Gregory, J. (1998). The peer learning community in higher education: Reflections on practice. *Innovations in Education and Training International* 35(1), 74–81.
- Treisman, U. (1985). A study of the mathematics performance of Black students at the University of California, Berkeley (Doctoral dissertation University of California, Berkeley) Dissertation Abstracts International, 47, 1641A.
- Trevino, L. (1986). Ethical decision making in organizations: A person-situation interactionist model. *Academy of Management Review*, 11(3), 601-617.
- Tug of War. (2020). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tug-of-war>.
- Uhl-Bien, M., & Ospina, S. (2012). Mapping the terrain: Convergence and divergence around relational leadership. In M. Uhl-Bien & S. Ospina (Eds.), *Advancing relational leadership: A dialogue among perspectives*. Information Age Publishing.
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *Leadership Quarterly* 18, 298–318.
- U. S. Census Bureau (2018). More Than 76 Million Students Enrolled in U.S. Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/school-enrollment.html>.

- van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press.
- Van Velsor, E., & McCauley, C. (2004). *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development*. Jossey-Bass.
- Van Velsor, E. Moxley, R. & Bunker, K. (2004). The leader development process. In E. Van Velsor & C. McCauley (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development* (2nd ed., pp. 204–233). Jossey-Bass.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind and society*. Harvard University Press.
- Wang, G., & Hackett, R. D. (2016). Conceptualization and measurement of virtuous leadership: Doing well by doing good. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 137, 321-345.
- Webb, N. (1982). Student interaction and learning in small groups. *Review of Educational Research*, 52(3).
- Webb, N., & Palincsar, A. (1996). Group processes in the classroom. In D. Berliner & R. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 841-873). Macmillan.
- Weick, K., & Sutcliffe, K. (2001). *Managing the Unexpected: Assuring High Performance in an Age of Complexity*. Jossey-Bass.
- Wentzel, K. (1996). Introduction: New perspectives on motivation in school. In J. Juvonen & K. Wentzel (Eds.), *Social motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment* (pp. 1–8). Cambridge University Press.
- Wertz, F. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 167-177.

- Wertz, F., & Desai, M. (2013). Phenomenological schools of psychology. In B. Kaldis (Ed.), *Sage encyclopedia of philosophy and the social sciences* (pp. 711-715). Sage Publications.
- Widener, C. (2008). *The art of influence: Persuading others begins with you*. Crown Business.
- Willingham, W., Young, J. & Morris, M. (1985). *Success in College: The role of personal qualities and academic ability*. College Entrance Examination Board.
- Winston, R., & Miller, T. (1987). *The student development task and lifestyle inventory manual*. Student Development Associates.
- Wood, M., & Dibben, M. (2015). Leadership as a relational process. *Process Studies*, 44(1), 24-47.
- Wright, T. A., & Quick, J. C. (2011). The role of character in ethical leadership research. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 975-978.
- Wright, T. A., Quick, J. C., Hannah, S. T., & Hargrove, M. (2017). Best practice recommendations for scale construction in organizational research: The development and initial validation of the Character Strength Inventory (CSI). *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38, 615-628.

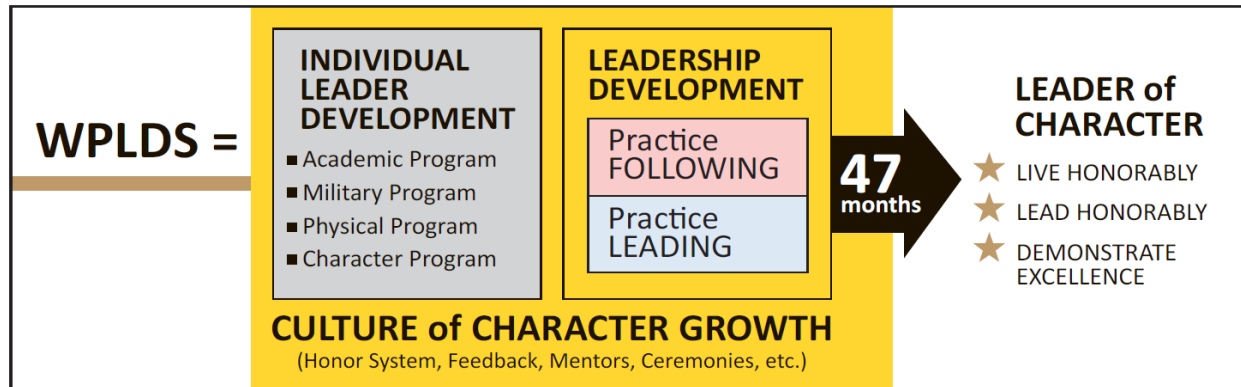


Figure 1: *West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS) Model*

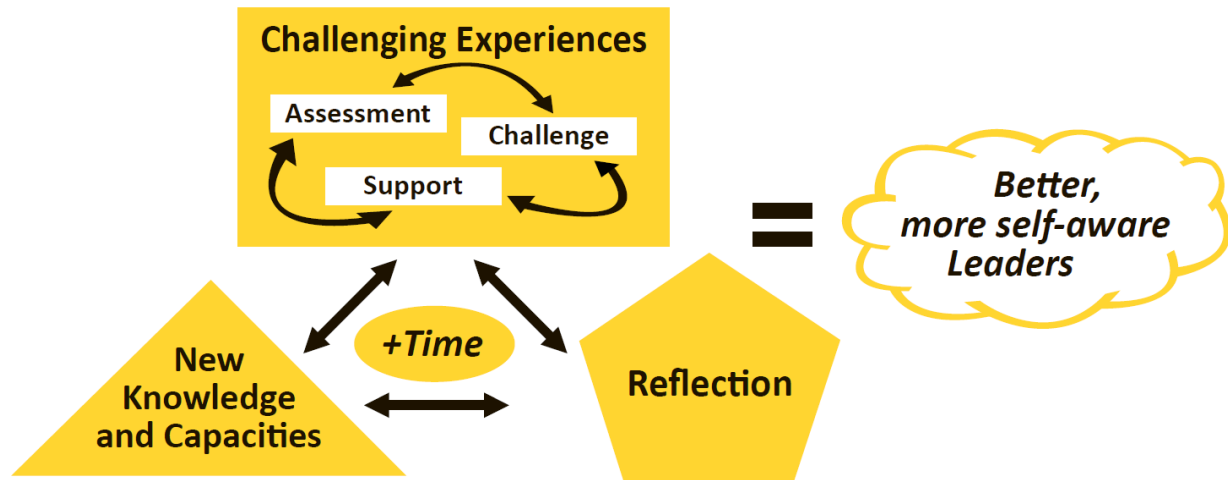


Figure 2: *The Leader Growth Model*

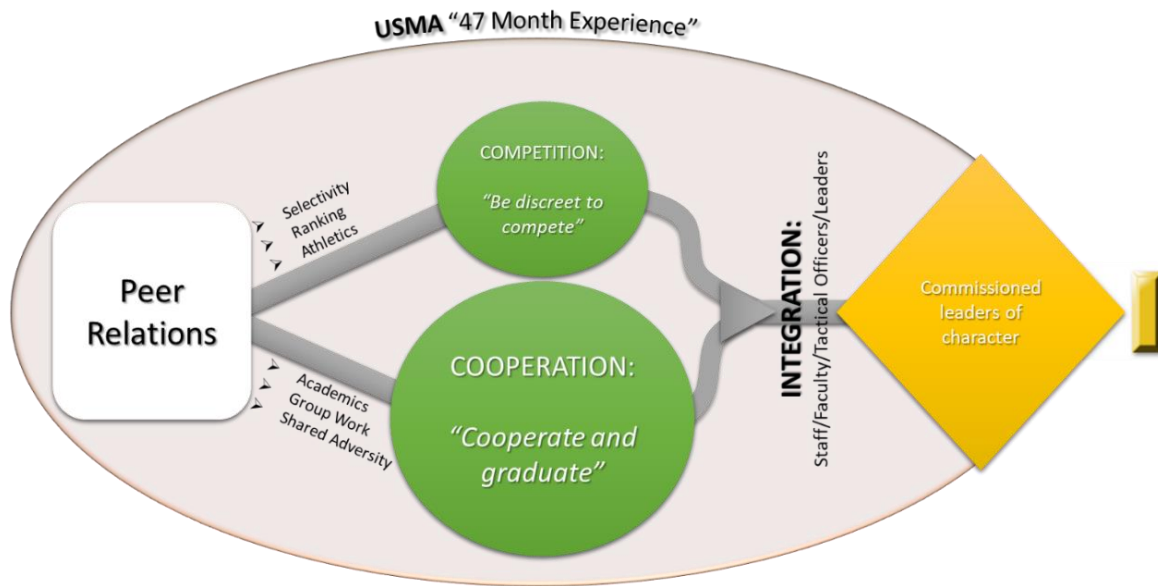


Figure 3: *Peer relations contexts in the USMA experience.*

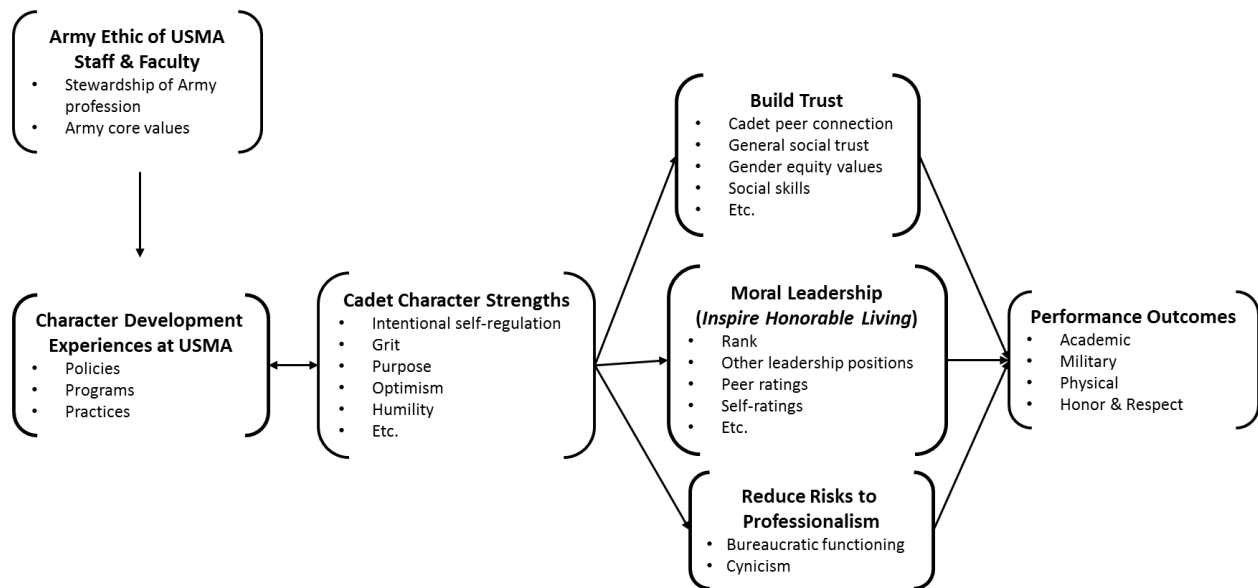


Figure 4: *USMA's theory of change regarding character development*

Table 2: WPLDS Core Development Experiences

Table 2: WPLDS Core Development Experiences		Freshman (Plebe)	Soph. (Yearling)	Junior (Cow)	Senior (Firstie)		
Culture of Character Growth	Cadet Company Tactical Officer & Tactical NCOs are primary integrators of each cadet's experience						
	Faculty and Staff are role models for all cadets						
	Individual Leader Development	Academic Program	Academic Curriculum (Bachelor of Science) 30 x Core Courses (STEM & Humanities) and 10 x Electives Choose 1 of 38 Academic Majors, 1 of 5 Engineering Tracks, and 1 of 7 Language Req.				
		Military Program	<u>Cdt Basic Tng skills</u>	<u>Cdt Field Tng skills</u>		<u>Cdt Ldr Dev Tng skills</u>	
			Intro. to Warfighing	Fund. Army Opns	Platoon Operations		
			2 x APFT	2 x APFT	2 x APFT	2 x APFT	
		Physical Program		IOCT	IOCT	IOCT	
			Boxing	Personal Fitness	Combatives	Unit Fitness	
			Military Movement	Survival Swimming	Lifetime Physical Activity [^]		
		Competitive Sports (intercollegiate, competitive club, or company athletics)					
		IADs		AIAD/MIAD/PIAD [^]			
		Character Program	Cadet Character Development Program				
			Leader Challenge				
	Leadership Development	Practice Following	Practice Leading	<u>CBT Mem. of Sgd</u>	<u>CFT Mem. of Sgd *</u>	<u>Sum. Ldrship Detail</u> SL/PSG/PL/staff *	<u>CLDT Patrol Leader</u> SL, PSG, PL *
				1st Acad. Sem. MOS *	3rd Acad. Sem. Team Ldr *	5th Acad. Sem. SL, PSG, or NCO *	7th Acad. Sem. PL CO, Officer, or Tm CPT *
				2nd Acad. Sem. MOS *	4th Acad. Sem. Team Ldr *	6th Acad. Sem. SL, PSG, or NCO *	8th Acad. Sem. PL CO, Officer, or Tm CPT *
				Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT) [^]			
		Environment	Life in the Corps: cadet companies, chain of command, regulations & standards, stewardship				
			Honor System and Code				
			Aspirational Creeds: Cadet Creed, Worth's Battalion Orders, Schofield's Def. of Discipline, etc.				
			Cadet Character Committees				
		Feedback	Cadet Observation Reports (CORs)				
			Periodic Develop. Reviews (PDRs) (4 x semester providing a 360-degree eval)				
	Cadet Development Reports* (1 x semester)						
	Mentors	Plebe Sponsors		PL300 Mentors			
Department Academic Counselors (DACs)							
Ceremonies	Oath; Acceptance	CFT Graduation	Affirmation	Ring; Commissioning			
See Appendix G for Glossary of terms							
Legend Bold & Underlined = occurs during summers <i>Italicized</i> = cadet led *= performance assessed in a force - distributed way [^] = must complete at least once during cadet career							

Figure 5: USMA's developmental experiences

Appendix A: Examples from the Codebook*Peers must relate*

Code	Subcodes	Definition	Example
Peers	Relating	Direct relation with peer cadets	<i>“Everybody has [the] same mindset so it's very easy to become connected and become friends...”</i>
	Not relating	Being distanced or separated from peers due to any circumstance	<i>“Previous to coming to West Point, I'd meet people all the time that I'd never met before and never really have that connection...”</i>
Peer involvement in development		Direct reference to peers shaping experiences	<i>“Your peers are a big part of developing yourself...”</i>
Peer leadership		Descriptions of leading or following peers	<i>“Peer leadership's hard...”</i>

Cooperate and graduate

Code	Subcodes	Definition	Example
Cooperation	General	Working with each other, displaying pro-social behavior and teamwork	<i>“I help my company mates. There were some cadets in my company that came to me every single night asking for help with the homework.”</i>
	Specific	Explicit usage of the phrase “cooperate and graduate”	<i>“You hear the cooperate to graduate phrase a lot.”</i>
Communication		Building teams and utilizing or	<i>“I think what West Point in all of like [its]</i>

		maximizing teamwork through communication	<i>entirety, it stresses how to communicate with people.”</i>
Group work	Academic	Working together on projects, as opposed to in a military formation or on a sports team	<i>“I think every single class I've had they encourage us to work in groups, in lab projects, or for homework, for problem sets, and things like that. It's all working in groups and peer reviewing.”</i>
Shared suffering		Shared experiences that build strong bonds and create a ‘common good’ to strive for	<i>“I think this common suffering makes us a group that's very dependent on each other and also independent because we have to develop ourselves.”</i>

Be discreet when you compete

Code	Subcodes	Definition	Example
Competition	Positive	Competitiveness that leads to the good aspects of development	<i>“Yeah, within the team I see a lot of positive group cohesion...”</i>
	Negative	Competitiveness that leads to the negative aspects of development	<i>“I came from a high school where everybody was super competitive, it was all about the end result, and everybody was result driven, and then I come here and I'm still viewing certain things in that light.”</i>
Using discretion when competing		Competing in a constructive manner by challenging oneself	<i>“Looking at it more as healthy competition, saying, okay, they're excelling at this, how</i>

		rather that outright competition with another	<i>can I challenge myself and hold myself to that same standard."</i>
Competitive stress	Positive	Stress that leads to the good aspects of competition	<i>"West Point either directly or indirectly somehow makes your life difficult."</i>
	Negative	Stress that leads to the bad aspects of competition	<i>"individual performance is highly valued and highly stressed in the entire West Point program"</i>

One must fully experience the crucible

Code	Subcodes	Definition	Example
Crucible experiences	Leadership challenges		<i>"They may be put into a team leader position, or a squad leader, platoon leader position where they have to care for a mission that's bigger than themselves, and I think that they're definitely tested with upholding a high standard for not only them, but also their subordinates."</i>
	Summer training	Military developmental experiences related to the summer semester	<i>"I think character is developed and cemented with a lot of cadets in our summer training."</i>
	Classroom experiences	Academic developmental experiences	<i>"Academic opportunities that present itself, or internships and all that, simply was not available"</i>

	Cadet troop leader training (CTLT)	A unique crucible experience where cadets conduct an internship with the Army	<i>for me as an ROTC cadet.”</i> <i>“Every cadet has to do cadet troop leader training out there in the Army somewhere. And actually, a recent survey that I saw, cadets choose really their job in the Army. Most... because of their CTLT experience out there in the Army.”</i>
Leader growth		Contributions to cadet growth from the impact of developmental experiences	<i>“This is about character, your integrity, and your position and really yourself. Not being insecure with things that you don't know, or experiences that you don't have.”</i>

All the strands intertwine

Code	Subcodes	Definition	Example
Integration	Classroom activity	Intentional weaving of character, teambuilding, learning, etc. with activities happening beyond the academic experience	<i>“I don't always grade them as an instructor grade based on solely how they're actually performing as a team member, but what their self and peer evaluation's content was...”</i>
	Military activity	Intentional carrying over of leadership activities throughout the Academy experience	<i>“Our military training wants to [create] time for reflection and time for more experiences, too, throughout the entire school year.”</i>
	Academy-wide activity	Intentional weaving of different aspects	<i>“I think there's a natural interaction of character,</i>

		of the Academy experience	<i>physical fitness, intellect.”</i>
	Going beyond the classroom	Intentional broadening of the cadet experience while also infusing the staff/faculty perspectives from the Army in cadet development	<i>“The majority of the people on this campus are in uniform while we're in uniform. So, it's personal. They've done what we're aspiring to do.”</i>
Nesting		Developmental activities that connect day-to-day learning with what will occur out in the Army	<i>The diverse educational immersion, the multitasking that happens every day in their lives, in a safe space, as in [this] university, I see it as replicating what it's like when we've been in an operational environment across the pond, doing our nation's bidding.</i>

Commissioned leaders of character

Code	Subcodes	Definition	Example
Leadership	Roles	Leadership positions given to cadets for developmental purposes	<i>“I think what we do right here at the military academy is leadership roles that cadets are put in throughout their 47-month experience.”</i>
	Expectations	Standards set and levels of achievements to meet regarding being a leader of character	<i>“There's certain expectations of what a good leader is and then you actually have avenues to exercise and practice those kind of leadership.”</i>
Professionalism	Expressing professionalism	Talking about what it means to be a	<i>“Character is a topic at the Academy from their</i>

	professional or a leader of character	<i>introduction to [being] here on campus."</i>
Stewardship	Keeping the traditions of West Point and the Army	<i>"...discuss different aspects of character and values beyond the Army's values... going deeper than just that. Not memorizing, 'oh it's the acronym LDRSHIP', and 'we have to do this', but actually talking about it and examples."</i>
Officership	Discussion about applicability of lessons learned beyond West Point	<i>"You start to develop your idea of what a good platoon sergeant is, what a good officer is..."</i>

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Protocols

USMA Faculty Focus Group Protocol Academic Pillar Revised 3/19/18

Introduction

1. Description of Project Arete and purpose of the focus group.
2. Explanation of confidentiality and permission to record. Participants sign consent forms.

Educational Goals and Strategies

1. How would you describe the ways the academic program prepares cadets to be Army officers of character?
2. What are the key elements of the academic program that are intended to do this?
3. In what ways do you think the program succeeds in accomplishing these goals, in what ways is it less successful? (Are there some goals it does not typically achieve?)
4. How do the courses you teach and the programs you run fit into this picture?
5. Does the topic of officership or Army professionalism come up in any of the courses you teach or programs you lead? If so, how do you raise this topic, what does that involve? What messages do you hope students will take away from those conversations?
6. Taking a representative course among those you teach, what are you trying to achieve? How do you go about that? (What are the pedagogies?)
7. What seems to work well? What are the challenges?
8. What methods do you use to assess cadet learning?
9. Are there things you would like to change about the academic program at West Point? Are there any ways you feel as though your “hands are tied” with respect to changes you’d like to make?
10. Are there controversies or disagreements about priorities in the academic program?

USMA Student Focus Group Protocol
Academic Pillar
Revised 3/19/18

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete.

We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the academic program USMA. We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. If we quote you or refer to your ideas in any way, we won't use your name.

Distribute and collect consent forms.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. Go around the room and say name, year, and major (if any).
2. Do you feel that the USMA academic program is doing a good job of preparing you for a career in the Army? What, if anything, could be done better?
3. What experiences that you have had in the academic program have been especially important or influential for you? What courses, professors, or other experiences will you remember ten years from now?
4. Have any of your instructors raised the topic of officership, character, or Army professionalism? If so, what messages do you think they would like you to take away from those experiences?
5. Have you been able to see connections between your military courses and your academic courses, or are they pretty much completely separate?

USMA Student Focus Group Protocol
Plebe - Military and Physical Pillar
Revised 9/15/19

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete.

We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the military and physical program at USMA. We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of anyone else so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. What experiences that you have had in the military/physical program have been especially important or influential for you? What experiences will you remember ten years from now? **(If need prompting ask about Cadet Basic Training or DPE class)**
2. Do you feel that the USMA military/physical program is doing a good job of preparing you for a career in the Army? What, if anything, could be done better?
3. Was the idea of character development part of these experiences and if so how?
4. Have you met anyone since being at West Point that comes to mind when we talk about character and the military/physical program? Why do they come to mind? What was your relationship to this person? Please only use the person's position and not name again to maintain confidentiality.

**USMA Student Focus Group Protocol
Yearling - Military and Physical Pillar
Revised 9/15/19**

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete.

We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the military and physical program at USMA. We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of anyone else so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. What experiences that you have had in the military/physical program have been especially important or influential for you? What experiences will you remember ten years from now? **(If need prompting ask about Cadet Field Training or DPE classes)**
2. Do you feel that the USMA military/physical program is doing a good job of preparing you for a career in the Army? What, if anything, could be done better?
3. Was the idea of character development part of these experiences and if so how?
4. How has the transition from being a Plebe to a Yearling impacted you in the military/physical program? What differences are there? How have you had to develop to address those differences?
5. Have you met anyone since being at West Point that comes to mind when we talk about character and the military/physical program? Why do they come to mind? What was your relationship to this person? Please only use the person's position and not name again to maintain confidentiality.

USMA Student Focus Group Protocol
Cow - Military and Physical Pillar
Revised 9/15/19

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete.

We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the military and physical program at USMA. We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of anyone else so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. What experiences that you have had in the military/physical program have been especially important or influential for you? What experiences will you remember ten years from now? **(If need prompting ask about Military Science Classes or sports)**
2. How has the transition from being a Yearling impacted you in the military/physical program? Do you feel that the USMA military/physical program is doing a good job of preparing you to be a leader in the Army? How? What, if anything, could be done better?
3. Was the idea of character development part of these experiences and if so how?
4. Have you met anyone since being at West Point that comes to mind when we talk about character and the military/physical program? Why do they come to mind? What was your relationship to this person? Please only use the person's position and not name again to maintain confidentiality. **(Mentor)**
5. Have your trainers (cadet or officers) raised the topic of officership, character, or Army professionalism? If so, what messages do you think they would like you to take away from those experiences?

USMA Student Focus Group Protocol
Firstie - Military and Physical Pillar
Revised 9/15/19

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete.

We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the military and physical program at USMA. We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of anyone else so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. What experiences that you have had in the military/physical program have been especially important or influential for you? What experiences will you remember ten years from now? **(If need prompting ask about Military Science Classes or DPE classes)**
2. How has the transition from being a Cow impacted you in the military/physical program? Do you feel that the USMA military/physical program is doing a good job of preparing you to be a leader in the Army? How? What, if anything, could be done better?
3. Was the idea of character development part of these experiences and if so how?
4. Have you met anyone since being at West Point that comes to mind when we talk about character and the military/physical program? Why do they come to mind? What was your relationship to this person? Please only use the person's position and not name again to maintain confidentiality. **(Mentor)**
5. Have your trainers (cadet or officers) raised the topic of officership, character, or Army professionalism? If so, what messages do you think they would like you to take away from those experiences?

Military and Physical Pillar Protocol #1**USMA DPE Instructor Focus Group Protocol / DPE Master of the Sword****Revised 9/15/19****I. Introduction**

Give a very brief description of Project Arete. We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the physical program at USMA. This includes reflection on both the physical education classes and any physical activities cadets may encounter during military training.

We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of any Cadets so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions – maybe add an opening question about what they see as important goals and strategies of the physical program before zeroing in on the character elements.

1. What are the elements of the physical program that are intended to prepare cadets to be Officers of Character?
2. How do you feel that the USMA Physical Education program is doing in its overall efforts to prepare Cadets to be leaders and Officers of Character in the Army? What, if anything, could be done better?
3. Are there things you would like to change about the physical education program at West Point? What are the challenges the program faces? What are the specific challenges related to incorporating character into physical education classes and events?
4. Do you discuss character or topics related to character with cadets? What do you hope the cadets will take away from these experiences? What are the challenges and successes?
5. How do think you do in regard to character development in fitness/athletics through your specific role? What do you think you could personally do to improve the overall strategy?

Military and Physical Pillar Protocol #2:
USMA Athletics Coach Focus Group/Interview Protocol

Revised 9/15/19

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete. We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the physical program at USMA. This includes reflection on both the physical education classes and any physical activities cadets may encounter during military training.

We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of any Cadets so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. What is your overall contribution to character development of cadets as a coach?
2. How does being a part of an athletics team prepares cadets to be Officers of Character? Can you provide an example from your team?
3. Do you ever wonder whether sports involvement can have a negative effect on some aspects of character?
4. What practices have you used to ensure your involvement with the cadets is contributing to their development of character? Do you have practices directed toward minimizing any potential negative impact that sports involvement could have?
5. Does the topic of Officership or Army professionalism come up in your interactions or training with cadets? What messages do you give? What are the challenges and successes?
6. What do think West Point does well regarding character development in sports? What do you think could be improved?

Military and Physical Pillar Protocol #3**USMA Cadet Focus Group Protocol (Use for All Year Groups)****Revised 9/15/19****I. Introduction**

Give a very brief description of Project Arete. We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the physical program at USMA. This includes reflection on both the physical education classes and any physical events cadets may encounter during military training.

We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of any Cadets so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. How have experiences in USMA's PE Courses changed how you view your role as a leader and a future Officer?
2. How would you describe the ways the physical program prepares cadets to be Officers of Character?
3. What character challenges have you faced? How do you navigate those challenges?
4. What, if anything, could be done better in USMA physical training program to prepare you for a career in the Army?
5. What experiences have you had in the physical program that have been especially important or influential to you? What takeaways from these experiences will you always remember?
6. Have your PE instructors raised the topic of officership, character, or Army professionalism? Can you provide an example?

Topics to reference if needed for prompts: Courses (Boxing, Military Movement/IOCT, Swimming), Obstacle Courses, Slide for Life, Ruck Marches, PT Test, Combatives, Buckner Run Back, Leadership Details, Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT)

Military and Physical Pillar Protocol #4:
USMA Cadet Athlete Focus Group Protocol

Revised 9/15/19

I. Introduction

Give a very brief description of Project Arete. We are interested in getting to know more about your experiences in the physical program at USMA. This includes reflection on both the physical education classes and any physical events cadets may encounter during military training.

We'd like to record the interview so we can go back to make sure we didn't miss anything important. The members of our project group are the only ones who will have access to the audio-recording and notes from the interview. Please do not use your name or the name of any Cadets so that we maintain confidentiality. Know that this is voluntary and at any point you can walk out of the interview with no detrimental effect or repercussion.

II. Focus Group Questions

1. How have experiences on your team, participating and/or leading a team sport, changed how you view your role as a leader and future officer?
2. What have you learned about character since your arrival to West Point? How has character training been incorporated in your involvement in athletics?
3. What kinds of challenges to character have you faced? How do you navigate those challenges?
4. How do you feel that the USMA athletics program is doing in preparing you [CADETS] for a career in the Army? What, if anything, could be done better?
5. What experiences have you had in the athletics program that have been especially important or influential to you? What experiences or advice will you remember 10 years from now?
6. Have your coaches raised the topic of Officership, character, or Army professionalism? If so, what messages do you think they would like you to take away from those experiences? Are those the messages that you have taken away?

*The merit of a man
is not the knowledge he possesses,
but in the effort he made to achieve it.*

- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing