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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 23-10-2009	2. REPORT TYPE <p style="text-align: center;">FINAL</p>	3. DATES COVERED (From - To)		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <p>Perspective Taking and the Educated Operational Level Commander</p>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
		5b. GRANT NUMBER		
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)  John C. O'Connor III, CDR, USCG  Paper Advisor (if Any): Associate Professor Ivan T. Luke		5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
		5e. TASK NUMBER		
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.				
14. ABSTRACT  The complexities of problem solving in the post-Cold War era replete with irregular and asymmetric warfare leveraged by organizations of transnational extremists, many with cultural and value systems much different than our own, require a new way of thinking. The ability to plan, make decisions, and solve problems in this environment requires, more than ever before, a robust capacity for perspective taking and the ability to understand, hold, and reconcile multiple perspectives on issues. This paper addresses how the problems facing operational commanders in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century will less likely be the well-structured or "tame" problems associated with the Cold-War era and more likely be the ill-structured or "wicked" problems associated with those incurred through the military's role in humanitarian assistance, counterinsurgencies, and counterterrorism. This paper also presents human development theories that highlight the psychosocial competencies needed to address such problems and how military culture, including the underlying assumptions for what educational backgrounds predict officer success, and a military lifestyle, including long hours, the nature of military deployments and missions, as well as off-duty social networks, including military housing environments may limit exposure to alternative and diverse perspectives. Finally, the paper concludes that it may be the limited points of view that result from traditional education and military lifestyle that work at cross purposes to the development of the skills required of our current and future operational level commanders.				
15. SUBJECT TERMS Problem solving; perspective taking; military education; military culture; military lifestyle; psychosocial competence				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED			c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.**

**Perspective Taking and the Educated Operational Level Commander**

**by**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**23 October 2009**

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## **Abstract**

The complexities of problem solving in the post-Cold War era replete with irregular and asymmetric warfare leveraged by organizations of transnational extremists, many with cultural and value systems much different than our own, require a new way of thinking. The ability to plan, make decisions, and solve problems in this environment requires, more than ever before, a robust capacity for perspective taking and the ability to understand, hold, and reconcile multiple perspectives on issues. This paper addresses how the problems facing operational commanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will less likely be the well-structured or “tame” problems associated with the Cold-War era and more likely be the ill-structured or “wicked” problems associated with those incurred through the military’s role in humanitarian assistance, counterinsurgencies, and counterterrorism. This paper also presents human development theories that highlight the psychosocial competencies needed to address such problems and how military culture, including the underlying assumptions for what educational backgrounds predict officer success, and a military lifestyle, including long hours, the nature of military deployments and missions, as well as off-duty social networks, including military housing environments may limit exposure to alternative and diverse perspectives. Finally, the paper concludes that it may be the limited points of view that result from traditional education and military lifestyle that work at cross purposes to the development of the skills required of our current and future operational level commanders.

## INTRODUCTION

Upon receipt of the U.S. Naval War College Distinguished Graduate Leadership Award in May 2009, General Raymond Odierno, Commanding General, Multi-National Force - Iraq, quoted General George Marshall saying "It became clear to me that at the age of 58, I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills." General Odierno said that this quote now applies to new set of skills required of our current operational level leaders.<sup>1</sup>

What new skills might General Odierno be speaking of? General Stanley A. McChrystal's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance released on 26 August 2009, may begin to give us some insights as to the nature of these new skills. In this document General McChrystal echoes concerns previously articulated by the likes of General David Petraeus and David Kilcullen who claim that our lack of cultural awareness in the execution of counterinsurgency operations is in fact inflaming an already volatile situation in which we are losing the battle for the hearts-and-minds of the civilian population to the insurgents and therefore unwittingly contributing to the creation of additional terrorists.<sup>2</sup> In this Counterinsurgency Guidance, General McChrystal outlines the mission in Afghanistan as protecting the people, and offers that with an understanding that the Afghan culture is founded in personal relationships, we can work to earn their trust.<sup>3</sup> General McChrystal emphasizes that "We need to understand the people and see things through their eyes. It is their fears, frustrations, and expectations

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<sup>1</sup> Gen Raymond Odierno, Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq (remarks, Distinguished Graduate Leadership Award Dinner, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, 12 May, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> FM 3-24, "Counterinsurgency Manual," 15 December 2006; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Gen Stanley A. McChrystal (International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance, 26 August 2009): 5.

that we must address.”<sup>4</sup> This requires the military to change the way in which it thinks, acts, and operates.<sup>5</sup> “We must understand how the insurgents compete in order to combat their strategy.”<sup>6</sup> If we continue to respond instinctively, through a conventional paradigm, to insurgent attacks, this behavior will become self-defeating.<sup>7</sup> The General’s direction is to engage, establish and foster relationships with the people, getting to know them, their neighborhoods and what they value.<sup>8</sup> “Be a positive force in the community, shield the people from harm, and foster safety and security so people can work and raise their families in peace.”<sup>9</sup> By attempting to place themselves in the shoes of the Afghan population and thinking about how they would want a foreign army to operate in their neighborhood, among their family and children, the U.S. military can begin to internalize these values and act accordingly.<sup>10</sup>

The complexities of problem solving in the post-Cold War era replete with irregular and asymmetric warfare leveraged by organizations of transnational extremists, many with cultural and value systems much different than our own, require a new way of thinking. The ability to plan, make decisions, and solve problems in this environment requires, more than ever before, a robust capacity for *perspective taking* and the ability to understand, hold, and reconcile multiple perspectives on issues.

What General McChrystal has described in his guidance to change the way in which the ISAF will think, act, and operate requires this capacity for perspective taking which

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1.  
<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1.  
<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2.  
<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2.  
<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 5.  
<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5.  
<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 5.

includes being clear about how one personally sees the world as well as having the capacity to understand how others may see the same world differently.

While several cultural awareness training programs have been established by the Marine Corps, the Army, and the U.S. Joint Forces Command,<sup>11</sup> there is no quick fix that can be found in the training environment. The roots of this problem run much deeper, with deficiencies in perspective taking resulting from a lifetime of cognitive and psychosocial shortfalls. Unfortunately, these same shortfalls to perspective taking are endemic in and exacerbated by the systemic thought processes inherent in the academic disciplines valued in military organizations as well as the limited perspectives associated with being part of a military culture and military lifestyle.

This paper will specifically address how the problems facing operational commanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will less likely be the well-structured or “tame” problems<sup>12</sup> associated with the Cold War era and more likely be the ill-structured or “wicked” problems<sup>13</sup> associated with those incurred through the military’s role in humanitarian assistance, counterinsurgencies, and counterterrorism.<sup>14</sup> Next the paper will present human development theories that highlight the psychosocial competencies needed to address such problems. And finally it will outline how military culture, including the underlying assumptions for what

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<sup>11</sup> Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning Center in Quantico, Virginia in 2005, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Cultural Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona in 2006 and the Virtual Cultural Awareness Trainer being proposed for the U.S. Joint Forces Command's Joint Knowledge Online to be tested in the fall of 2009.

<sup>12</sup> The term “tame” problem was first coined and considered in the context of social planning and public policy in H. Ritter and M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning.” *Policy Sciences* Vol. 4 (1973).

<sup>13</sup> The term “wicked ” problem was first coined and considered in the context of social planning and public policy in H. Ritter and M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning.” *Policy Sciences* Vol. 4 (1973).

<sup>14</sup> Willam J. Hartig, “Problem Solving and The Military Professional.” (research paper, Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, 2007), 5-6.

educational backgrounds predict officer success,<sup>15</sup> and a military lifestyle, including long work hours, the nature of military deployments and missions, and off-duty social networks, including military housing environments may limit exposure to alternative and diverse perspectives. It may be these limited points of view that work at cross purposes to the development of the skills required of our current and future operational level commanders.

## BACKGROUND

### Problem Solving

A Problem is defined as “a question raised for inquiry, consideration, or solution;” “an intricate unsettled question;” “a source of perplexity, distress, or vexation.”<sup>16</sup> Using the lexicon consistent with the study of military problem solving, this paper will outline two general types of problems; the well-structured or tame problem and the ill-structured or wicked problem.<sup>17</sup>

The well-structured problem is exemplified by those encountered in the disciplines of math and science<sup>18</sup> which traditionally construct and view problems as linear, measurable, and solvable. Using strict protocols such as those found in the scientific method or in various mathematical equations one can reach a solution that can be objectively evaluated as being right or wrong.

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<sup>15</sup> The “hard skills” acquired through the study of science, technical, engineering, and mathematics are well suited to address well-structured or “tame” problems, while the “softer skills” acquired through the humanities and social sciences may be more suitable for ill-structured or “wicked” problems.

<sup>16</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Deluxe Edition*, s.v. “problem.”

<sup>17</sup> H. Ritter and M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning.” *Policy Sciences* 4, (1973).

<sup>18</sup> Willam J. Hartig, “Problem Solving and The Military Professional.” (research paper, Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, 2007), 4.

Ill-structured problems on the other hand are typically social problems associated with the complexities of age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, and values (to name a few) that may manifest themselves in actions being planned or implemented across the lower end of the Range of Military Operations (ROMO), in crisis responses and limited contingency operations in particular, but may also be found in military engagements, security cooperation, and deterrence operations as well.<sup>19</sup> Ill-structured or wicked problems lack the predictability of well-structured or tame problems thus making the identification of any one solution more elusive and the need for innovation and creativity more imperative.<sup>20</sup>

The types of problems being encountered by operational commanders have increasingly become wicked problems<sup>21</sup> as the military finds itself dealing with the operations associated with humanitarian assistance, counterinsurgencies, and counterterrorism. These problems are often manifested in the grass root efforts to leverage an understanding of a populations' culture and values that provides for the gathering of human intelligence and winning the hearts-and-minds of non-combatants by countering ideological support to terrorism.

Understanding the types of problems that operational commanders will face, we can now look at Human Development Theory to understand how the skills necessary to problem solving are developed over time.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Developmental theorists tell us that human development occurs across three domains: the interpersonal<sup>22</sup>, the intrapersonal<sup>23</sup>, and the cognitive.<sup>24</sup> It is the life-long development that occurs in an individual across all three of these domains that provides for an individual's capacity for leadership and the ability to make decisions and solve problems.

### **Perspective Taking**

For the purposes of this discussion, perspective is defined as “the interrelation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed (places the issues in proper perspective);” “the capacity to view things in their true relations or relative importance.”<sup>25</sup> Perspective taking is defined in social psychology as “the capacity to appreciate the point of view of another person with whom one is interacting.”<sup>26</sup> In the context of military decision making, perspective taking amounts to being able to understand values, cultures, and religious beliefs different from ones' own and how these elements come together to form a world view. It is this ability to understand, hold, and reconcile multiple perspectives on issues and to understand how their view differs from the view of others that allows operational level commanders to make informed decisions and solve problems with a greater appreciation for the implications and consequences of their actions or inactions.

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<sup>22</sup> *Dictionary of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. “interpersonal.” Characterizing relations between two or more persons, with the connotation that the interaction is mutual and reciprocal.

<sup>23</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Deluxe Edition*, s.v. “intrapersonal.” Occurring within the individual mind or self.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “cognitive,” Based on or capable of being reduced to empirical factual knowledge; The three domains of human development are outlined in R. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 314-315.

<sup>25</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Deluxe Edition*, s.v. “perspective.”

<sup>26</sup> *Dictionary of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. “perspective taking.”

Two prominent Harvard University professors Robert Selman and Robert Kegan each offer theories rooted in constructivism, a concept originally introduced by the legendary Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget,<sup>27</sup> who theorized that people move through stages of intellectual development using a process that he labeled assimilation<sup>28</sup> and accommodation.<sup>29</sup> Piaget asserts that while children are initially held prisoner by their perceptions (e.g., that the taller of two glasses, both containing the same amount of a liquid, is perceived to contain more) over time, as they mature, they modify the way in which they had previously viewed the world to create new ideas to accommodate new experiences (e.g., that a tall narrow glass may contain the same volume of liquid as a shorter wider glass). It is this process that is critical to the development of perspective taking and essential in the military context to the problem solving skills necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> Century operational level commanders.

The theories of Selman and Kegan extend the constructivist view beyond childhood by identifying sequential patterns associated with the way that people construct meaning throughout their lives, and how, in the process, they progress from simple to more complex way of understanding.<sup>30</sup>

Selman provides a framework through which to understand the importance of *perspective taking* to the development of moral reasoning and to the qualities necessary in leadership.<sup>31</sup> In general, perspective taking is fostered as the result of the development of

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<sup>27</sup> J. Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1954. (first published in 1939)).

<sup>28</sup> Dictionary of Psychology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. "assimilation." To take in, absorb or incorporate as one's own.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., s.v. "accommodation." In Piaget's theory, the modification of internal schemes to fit a changing cognizance of reality; *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Deluxe Edition*, s.v. "accommodation." A reconciliation of differences.

<sup>30</sup> K. Kuhnert and P. Lewis, "Transactional and Transformational Leadership: A Constructive/Developmental Analysis." In *Contemporary Issues in Leadership* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. W. Rosenbach and R. Taylor, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 192-205.

<sup>31</sup> L. Schultz and R. Selman, "Ego Development and Interpersonal Development in Young Adulthood: A Between-Model Comparison." In *Personality Development: Theoretical, Empirical, and Clinical Investigations*

psychosocial competencies (the intersection of psychological and social factors) across all three human development domains; to include the melding of the cognitive and intrapersonal lines of development with that which is encountered through the interpersonal or social interaction with others. The theory of psychosocial competence is outlined in the Interpersonal Development Model (IDM), which maintains that it is the individual's ability to reconcile multiple perspectives and to differentiate and coordinate their own perspective with those of others, both cognitively and emotionally, that underlies social reasoning and social behavior.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Kegan's theory of "Self-Evolution" provides a framework for viewing developmental changes in the underlying structures of individual meaning-making which focuses on the development of the activity of meaning-construction across the three dimensions of development: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.<sup>33</sup> The theory consists of five developmental stages called orders of consciousness, from which people make meaning in all three dimensions. It is the third and fourth stages, or orders of consciousness, that are most prevalent among late adolescents and adults. In the third order of consciousness, individuals co-construct meaning with others with whom they are in relationship. This ability to share meaning with others develops as one is able to internalize the other's point of view. Using the concept of peer pressure as an example, people who are

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*of Loevinger's Conception of Ego Development*, ed. P. Westenberg, A. Blasi, and L. Cohn, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 181-202.; R. Selman, "Toward a Practical Theory." In *Fostering Friendship: Pair Therapy for Treatment and Prevention*, ed. R. Selman, C. Watts, & L. Schultz, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997), 53-74.; R. Selman, *The Growth of Interpersonal Understanding: Developmental Clinical Analysis* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> L. Schultz and R. Selman, "Ego Development and Interpersonal Development in Young Adulthood: A Between-Model Comparison." In *Personality Development: Theoretical, Empirical, and Clinical Investigations of Loevinger's Conception of Ego Development*, ed. P. Westenberg, A. Blasi, and L. Cohn, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 181-202.; R. Selman, *The Growth of Interpersonal Understanding: Developmental Clinical Analysis* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> R. Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).; R. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

developmentally in the third order of consciousness are psychologically dependent on their relationships with peers/friends to make meaning of the self (to define who they are).

Through this concept, we can begin to understand the power and influence of peer pressure, and why high school and college students may have a sense of self that is co-constructed in relationship with peers.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, fourth order consciousness is when people's ability to make meaning (to define who they are) stems from an internal system, one that allows them to construct a sense of self from within rather than from external relations with others. This internal sense of self allows a person to hold, observe, and reflect upon relationships instead of being held by, influenced by, dominated by, or controlled by their relationships. In the fourth order, unlike the third order, a person is no longer made up by, or allow themselves to be defined by, others, their relationships or their surroundings, but instead are able to control or "author" their actions in relation to others or environments, allowing them to develop an internal sense of self, to hold, make-meaning of, and reconcile multiple perspectives (their own perspective and the perspective of others).

The similarity between these two frameworks (the IDM and the theory of Self-Evolution) is the concept that psychosocial competencies are a factor of individual points of view and *perspective taking* skills. In summary changes in perspective (perspective taking) is the result of developmental orientation as outlined in the IDM or changes in orders of consciousness as outlined in the theory of Self-Evolution.

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<sup>34</sup> R. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 126.

With an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings associated with the development of perspective taking we can now look at how the underlying assumptions for the militaries' desired educational disciplines in the linear thought process associated with the hard sciences, engineering and mathematics as well as military culture and lifestyle, which limit the exposure of military officers to alternative and diverse perspectives, may work at cross purposes to this development.

## **DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS**

### **Educational Priorities**

Beginning with the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point in 1802, the traditional educational priorities for the four U.S. Service Academies have been engineering and science. For the school's first half century, graduates of the USMA, with civil engineering as the foundation of its curriculum, were at the forefront of the initial establishment of the nation's transportation infrastructure, designing and supervising the construction of roads, railway lines, bridges, and harbors.<sup>35</sup> Today, with the emphasis on the knowledge, development, and sustainment of a high-tech military, engineering and science account for nearly 70 percent of the academic majors being offered at the four U.S. Service Academies and graduates from these majors make up approximately 50 percent of each academy's graduating class.<sup>36</sup> With the academies only conferring Bachelor of Science degrees (and not Bachelor of Arts degrees) for all disciplines, there is little room in the curriculum for humanities and social science electives. The core curriculum at each of the

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<sup>35</sup> The U.S. Military Academy, <http://www.usma.edu/history.asp/> (accessed 10 October 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.; The U.S. Naval Academy, <http://www.usna.edu/about.htm/> (accessed 10 October 2009).; The U.S. Coast Guard Academy, <http://www.cga.edu/> (accessed 10 October 2009).; The U.S. Air Force Academy, <http://www.usafa.edu/superintendent/pa/factsheets/quick.htm/> (accessed 10 October 2009).

institutions are heavily weighted toward the hard sciences and mathematics, with students, regardless of their major being required to take at least two semesters of chemistry and calculus, and a three-semester engineering sequence,<sup>37</sup> with others also requiring the addition of two semesters of physics.<sup>38</sup>

While Academy graduates only make up approximately 17.4 percent of those serving in the active duty officer ranks across all four Department of Defense services and the U.S. Coast Guard combined,<sup>39</sup> each service also leverages the same bias for technical degrees found at the service academies by looking for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees from those new accessions entering military service from Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Officer Training School (OTS) and Officer Candidate School (OCS),<sup>40</sup> as well as individuals with the background required for the development of leadership and character, and the skills required for their ultimate roles as commissioned officers in the U.S. Armed Forces.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the service academies with their relatively homogeneous populations, long work hours, insulated barracks (living) environments, and limited off-duty social networks are arguably analogous to, and a

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<sup>37</sup> Andrew Exum, "Are U.S. Military Academies Preparing Graduates for Today's Wars?" The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch #1190, 2007,

<http://www.thewashingtoninstitute.org/pdf?template=C05&CID=2559> (accessed 10 October 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Required by the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, <http://www.cga.edu/> (accessed 10 October 2009).

<sup>39</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, *DOD Service Academies: Problems Limit Feasibility of Graduates Directly Entering the Reserves*, Report to Congressional Requesters GAO/NSIAD-97-98 (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, March 1997), 2. <http://www.gao.gov/archive/1997/ns97089.pdf> (accessed 17 October 2009).; While this report only speaks to the Department of Defense service academies, U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduates account for approximately 46% of those serving in the Coast Guard's officer ranks. [http://www.uscg.mil/top/about/doc/uscg\\_snapshot.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/top/about/doc/uscg_snapshot.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2009).

<sup>40</sup> The following ROTC websites list specific math and science requirements for new officer accessions. OCS and OTS programs do not officially advertise a predisposition for math and science degrees, but these preferences are clearly understood to exist in officer recruiting and selection processes. U.S. Air Force ROTC, <http://afrotc.com/admissions/requirements-standards/academic/> (accessed 21 Oct 2009).; U.S. Navy ROTC, <https://www.nrotc.navy.mil/pdfs/Academic+Majors+2009+w-tiers.pdf> (accessed 21 Oct 2009).

<sup>41</sup> J. O'Connor, "Authority, Responsibility, and Privilege: Developing Leaders of Character Through Interpersonal Relations in Military Higher Education." (*Dissertation Abstracts International*. 63(06), 2134. (UMI No. 3055875) 2002), 31.

reflection of, their larger service cultures with both having limited exposure to alternative and diverse perspectives that may work at cross purposes to the development of perspective taking.

While we can look to leverage the hard skills acquired through technical courses to address the well-structured or tame problems, we need to look at the academies' leadership components and the soft skill development within the academy environment for the preparation to address the challenges faced by 21<sup>st</sup> Century military professionals who make up operational planning teams and serve as operational level commanders to address ill-structured or wicked problems.

The service academies are viewed as leadership laboratories with shared responsibilities for the development of leaders of character across their academic, military, and athletic programs. However, the literature on moral judgment development points to potential unintended consequences in the development of interpersonal relations and ultimately perspective taking in the academy environment.<sup>42</sup>

While extensive empirical evidence suggests that college has a positive effect on the development of moral judgment in students in civilian colleges and universities,<sup>43</sup> the relatively small amount of research conducted at the U.S. Service Academies in this area fails to observe this positive "college effect" in cadets and midshipmen<sup>44</sup> suggesting that the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> S. McNeel, "College Teaching and Student Moral Development." in *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics*, ed. J. Rest and D. Narvaez, (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 27-49.; J. Rest, *Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986).; J. Rest and D. Narvaez, "The College Experience and Moral Development." In *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development*, 2, ed. W. Kurtine & J. Gewirtz, (Hillsdale, J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 229-245.; J. Rest and D. Narvaez, *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> J. O'Connor, "Impact of Law and Peer Influence on Moral Judgment and Moral Development at the United States Coast Guard Academy." (Unpublished Manuscript, 1997).; J. O'Connor, "Authority, Responsibility, and

academy and the overarching organizational culture may inadvertently create an environment that hinders the development of moral judgment.

Studies in civilian institutions have shown that the role of the social environment, specifically student friendships and social networks, are the factors most important to moral judgment development. The work on the influence of social environments in civilian colleges and universities begins by looking at the nature and quality of friendships in college and offer their theory on how the density of students' friendship networks influences moral judgment.<sup>45</sup>

High-density friendship networks are those in which the people in the network have many common interests and know each other well, e.g., high school friends who see each other at school and spend nights and weekends together. By contrast, a low-density friendship network occurs where people come together for specific activities, e.g., to play soccer, and do not see each other in other contexts.<sup>46</sup>

Based on these descriptions we can see that the service academies, and by extension the military services in general, may resemble high-density friendship networks, because they have relatively homogeneous student bodies that participate in structured activities in an overarching organizational culture that may inadvertently create an environment that hinders the development of moral judgment.

Because of the nature of service academies with their strict residential, academic and military regimen, and the nature of each of their respective services with their robust training,

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Privilege: Developing Leaders of Character Through Interpersonal Relations in Military Higher Education.” (Dissertation Abstracts International. 63(06), 2134. (UMI No. 3055875) 2002).; C. Luedtke, “A Longitudinal and Qualitative Descriptive Study of Cadet Moral Judgment Development at the United States Air Force Academy.” (*Dissertation Abstracts International*. A 60(12), 4344. (UMI No. 9953982) 1999).

<sup>45</sup> W. Derryberry, and S. Thoma, “The Friendship Effect: Its Role in the Development of Moral Thinking in Students. *About Campus*, 5 no. 2: 13-18.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

duty, and deployment schedules, there is very little room for friendship networks outside of the academy or military context. Thus, cadets and midshipman (as well as their active duty counterparts) are forced into perhaps a limited and restrictive set of learning experiences with few differing points of view.<sup>47</sup>

Hypothesizing that broad and diverse interpersonal relations not only influence perspective taking, but contribute to the development of moral judgment, there may be other unanticipated and perhaps unwanted side effects of the service academy culture. Low-density friendship networks, more prevalent at civilian institutions, provide exposure to diverse perspectives conjectured necessary for the development of strong moral judgments. In addition, the culture of low-density friendship networks at civilian institutions may dilute the strength of peer relationships that are hypothesized to adversely influence the development of an individual's moral motivation and strength of character. Because cadets and midshipman in their academy environments and officers in their high paced active duty military environments are limited in the social relationships they have access to and time to develop outside of the military context, their exposure to multiple diverse perspectives are curtailed and thus their development may suffer.

The work on friendship networks corroborates the findings of the literature in military higher education, which fails to find a positive college effect for the development of moral judgment.<sup>48</sup> The limited research on military education frequently cites as the reason for a

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<sup>47</sup> J. O'Connor, "Authority, Responsibility, and Privilege: Developing Leaders of Character Through Interpersonal Relations in Military Higher Education." (Dissertation Abstracts International. 63(06), 2134. (UMI No. 3055875) 2002), 4.

<sup>48</sup> J. O'Connor, "Impact of Law and Peer Influence on Moral Judgment and Moral Development at the United States Coast Guard Academy." (Unpublished Manuscript, 1997).; J. O'Connor, "Authority, Responsibility, and Privilege: Developing Leaders of Character Through Interpersonal Relations in Military Higher Education." (Dissertation Abstracts International. 63(06), 2134. (UMI No. 3055875) 2002).; C. Luedtke, "A Longitudinal and Qualitative Descriptive Study of Cadet Moral Judgment Development at the United States Air Force Academy." (*Dissertation Abstracts International*. A 60(12), 4344. (UMI No. 9953982) 1999).

lack of college effect the negative influence of the restrictive environment, peer pressure, and institutional dogma.<sup>49</sup>

### **Military Culture and Lifestyle**

The concerns raised about the influence of high-density friendship networks at the service academies are arguably analogous to those found in general military organizational culture as well. Based on the long work hours, the nature of military deployments and missions, and the off-duty social networks, including military housing environments, may limit exposure to alternative and diverse perspectives, and may work at cross purposes to the development of the new skills required for operational level commanders to deal effectively with the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **The Need for a Paradigm Shift**

The educational and military lifestyle paradigms that once benefited the U.S. military through the education and training of engineers intended to directly contribute to the infrastructure development and prosperity of the new nation,<sup>50</sup> as well as the insular lifestyle designed to foster the camaraderie, teamwork, trust and interdependence of soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and coast guardsmen in times of war and crisis through the Cold War era, may now be working at cross purposes to the development of the perspective taking required to address the complexities and uncertainties confronting operational level commanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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<sup>49</sup> C. Luedtke, "A Longitudinal and Qualitative Descriptive Study of Cadet Moral Judgment Development at the United States Air Force Academy." (*Dissertation Abstracts International*. A 60(12), 4344. (UMI No. 9953982) 1999), 285.

<sup>50</sup> As well as providing the educational foundation to address well-structured problems.

How can we hope to win the hearts-and-minds of others when we know little to nothing about either and have as military organizations institutionally created ways of thinking based on education and organizational culture that limit our capacity to do anything about it? Without the proper awareness of these potential barriers to understanding and a dedicated strategy to diversify individual interpersonal experiences to gain broader knowledge and perspectives, the services may be unwittingly making themselves victims of “group think” and therefore becoming the purveyors of poor, ill-informed, decision making.

The list of personal attributes that an operational level commander must possess includes character, critical thought, moral courage, intellect, humility, foresight, creativity, and boldness developed through life, their military career and self study.<sup>51</sup> This said, it is becoming clear that in the post-Cold War era, the challenges facing operational level commanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will require “...becom[ing] an expert in a whole new set of skills.” “...learn[ing] new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield.”<sup>52</sup> This will require the U.S. military to impose a paradigm shift in the educational background the military desires in its officers and how the military expects officers to acquire the overall skills necessary to be an effective operational level commander.

These educational concerns were recently raised by Loyola University of Chicago political science Professor John Williams and his colleagues, Williamson Murray, Professor Emeritus at Ohio State University, and Lieutenant General David Barno, U.S. Army (Ret.) in their testimony before the House Armed Services Committee’s oversight and investigations panel, in hearings convened to address the professional military education of officers. The

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<sup>51</sup> Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2007), X-6 – X-9.

<sup>52</sup> General Odierno’s remarks at NWC Distinguished Graduate Leadership Award Dinner, 12 May, 2009.

group offered to the panel that it can no longer be assumed that senior officers will have gained the knowledge they need through their operational experience and dedicated self-study.<sup>53</sup> The group also suggested that more military officers should be afforded opportunities to pursue graduate education at nonmilitary colleges and universities, where they would be exposed to different curricula, diverse perspectives and various schools of thought. In addition, the group offered to the panel that the services should accept more officers with undergraduate degrees in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>54</sup> In their recommendations, Professor Williams and his colleagues also said “without underestimating the need for technically competent officers, the proper balance of technical, social science, moral and humanist components in curricula needs to reconsider if we are training officers to lead people, as opposed to machines, in the most challenging and ambiguous environment.”<sup>55</sup>

These recommendations by Professor Williams and his colleagues are yet another recognition of the existence of organizational barriers to growth and development, and the critical need to address the impediments to the development of perspective taking based on the military’s emphasis on education in the hard sciences, engineering and mathematics and the high density friendship networks associated with military culture and lifestyles that may limit the development of perspective taking.

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<sup>53</sup> R. Maze, “Expert: Officers Need More Time in Classroom,” *Air Force Times*, 10 September 2009, [http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/09/military\\_officer\\_education\\_091009w/](http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/09/military_officer_education_091009w/) (accessed 17 September 09).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Professor John Allen Williams is also the president of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, a study group of more than 700 scholars who study military personnel and policy issues.

## CONCLUSION

In addressing the topic of perspective taking this paper brings to address the new skills important to the U.S. military's ability to anticipate, plan, and respond quickly and appropriately to issues across the range of military operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In his remarks at the U.S. Naval War College, Distinguished Graduate Leadership Award Dinner, General Odierno said that "we cannot, nor should we try, to prepare our leaders for every possible scenario they face. But as my experience in Iraq and elsewhere has shown, what we absolutely must do is train our leaders how to think, how to adapt, and how to succeed amidst uncertainty. Our leaders must provide clarity in the fog of war. My time in Newport widened my perspective and was vital in helping me develop a thought process to formulate, listen, assess, and act decisively in the multi-faceted environment of modern warfare." <sup>56</sup>

Today the military focus is on Iraq and Afghanistan, tomorrow it may be China and Russia. Therefore, it is not the awareness and understanding of an individual culture that is important, it is the overarching understanding and internalization of the value of perspective taking in general and how it informs our ability to make decisions and solve problems that is crucial.

It is the responsibility of each service to recognize and address organizational barriers to personal and professional growth and development within their services and to find ways to stimulate the desire and capacity for intellectual curiosity in each of its officers for new and diverse perspectives through an understanding of their importance to critical thought and creativity. It is then the responsibility of the organization to reinforce the importance of this

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

element in operational level commanders as they find ways to gain, leverage, and cultivate these diverse perspectives in their planning and decision making processes.

Recommendations on how to accomplish these ends are beyond the scope of this paper and are left as an area for further study and development.

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