COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

This Manual implements Department of the Air Force Policy Directive 36-35, *United States Air Force Academy* (USAFA), and describes the purpose and structure of the Leader of Character (LoC) Framework. The LoC Framework is the overarching doctrinal framework for leader development at USAFA.

The guidance applies to all USAFA personnel, including civilian employees and uniformed members of the Regular Air Force, the Air Force Reserve, the Air National Guard, the United States Space Forces, all DAF civilian employees, and those with a contractual obligation to abide by the terms of DAF issuances. Ensure all records generated as a result of processes prescribed in this publication adhere to Air Force Instruction 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, and are disposed in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule, which is located in the Air Force Records Information Management System. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using Department of the Air Force (DAF) Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route DAF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. This publication may be supplemented at any level, but all supplements must be routed to the OPR of this publication for coordination prior to certification and approval. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the publication OPR for non-tiered compliance items.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Major changes include the addition of language around respect and protecting others from sexual harassment and violence to paragraphs **2.3**, **2.6**, and **3.4.2.2.1**. In addition, 9 new vignettes were added (3 in chapter **5** and **6** in **chapter 6**).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO DEVELOPING LEADERS OF CHARACTER AT USAFA

Figure 1.1. Lao Tzu Quote.

> Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words,
> they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits,
> they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny.
> ~ Lao Tzu

1.1. Scope and Purpose. The mission of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) is, "To educate, train, and inspire men and women to become officers of character motivated to lead the United States Air Force and Space Force in service to our Nation."[1]   To best prepare cadets to become officers committed to defending the United States and its Constitution, this Manual:

   1.1.1. Outlines a Framework for Developing Leaders of Character for all members of USAFA, to include permanent party, cadets, and cadet candidates. In this document, from this point forward, the term "cadets" refers to both cadets and cadet candidates.

   1.1.2. Provides guidance for how USAFA personnel can foster a personal commitment to leadership in their day-to-day roles, and to help them grow as leader-developers.

1.2. Roles and Responsibilities.

   1.2.1. USAFA Mission Element (ME) leads will align each ME's education, training, and experiences (ETEs) with the Leader of Character Framework.

   1.2.2. The Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD) will maintain the Leader of Character Framework and assist USAFA MEs in its integration and implementation.

   1.2.3. The Outcome Strategy Team, as outlined in USAFAI 36-3502, *Institutional Effectiveness Plan*, will ensure the USAFA Institutional Outcomes align with the Leader of Character Framework.

1.3. The Foundation – "Why" We Develop Leaders of Character. The identity of a leader of character is by necessity broad. A leader's identity must include an inspirational and unshakeable core as military members may be asked to sacrifice their lives in the course of discharging their duties. A leader must establish their identity on a stable, well-supported foundation linked directly to the fundamental principles of the American way of life. The **Constitution** provides the philosophical foundation, the **Oath of Office** affirms one's commitment to this core set of ideals, while the **Core Values** guide all Airmen and Guardians.

   1.3.1. Previous Academy leadership development guidance highlighted four attributes associated with military service: possessing a Warrior Ethos, being a Professional, developing as a Leader of Character, and acting as a Servant to our Nation. This revision returns to the foundation from which these attributes were derived: the officer commission. Each graduate of the Academy is commissioned to serve based on the expectation they will demonstrate the

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[1] USAFA Strategic Plan (2021).

patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities demanded of a leader in the military profession. By extension, all who develop them to be commissioned must also live and exemplify these attributes. *Patriotism* -- the love of country -- is a prerequisite for selfless service and a hallmark of professionalism in an all-volunteer military service. *Valor* is called forth by circumstances and marked by physical or moral courage at the point of testing; preparation for challenge is gained by inculcating an indomitable spirit, or warrior ethos. Effective performance in defending the nation is premised on the development of physical, moral, and mental *abilities* in academic, military, and athletic arenas. Lastly, all of these qualities are knit together by *fidelity*, the conscious decision to commit to the ideals outlined in the Constitution, Oath of Office, and Core Values, and to sustain this commitment over time in pursuit of service to nation and to others above self.

1.4. The Leader of Character Framework. The Leader of Character Framework (see **Figure 1.2**) exists to guide development of Academy graduates who possess the attributes necessary to fulfill the nation's expectations in their service as officers and citizens. It underpins and reinforces each of the USAFA Outcomes and provides a platform for the growth of life-long leadership. Its purpose is to provide all Academy personnel, military and civilian, with a deliberate, flexible, and foundational conceptual framework to use in developing themselves and others as leaders of character who live honorably, lift others, and elevate performance.

1.4.1. The Leader of Character Framework articulates a comprehensive approach aimed at advancing USAFA's mission expressed above, as well as its vision to be the Air Force's and Space Force's premier institution for developing leaders of character. The Framework is theory-supported and evidence-based. It incorporates insights and perspectives from a wide number of disciplines, specifically the fields of moral development, leadership development, organizational behavior, theories of motivation and cognition, developmental science, high-impact pedagogical practices, organizational dynamics, philosophy, military science, and positive psychology. Through this document, we "institutionally embrace the Leader of Character Framework to guide how we define leaders of character and develop Airmen and Guardians.[2] The Framework clearly defines how a "Leader of Character" acts, specifies key aspects of development applicable to cadets, faculty and staff, and provides a common vernacular for communicating and implementing Leader of Character Development. Beyond these essential common elements, it is highly flexible and intended as a guide for USAFA personnel as they develop and integrate ETEs in support of the USAFA mission.[3]

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[2] USAFA Strategic Plan (2021).

[3] The Leader of Character Framework has been influenced by the pioneering work on the nature of leadership conducted by Rost (1993); Bass (1996); Avolio (2005); Gardner 1990); and Greenleaf (1977), among others. Much of the current scholarship on leadership marks a commitment to the notion of development and growth. Furthermore, scholarly research demonstrates the dynamic relationship between character and leadership, often by highlighting specific traits or qualities of character that are critical to effective leadership.

Figure 1.2. LEADER OF CHARACTER FRAMEWORK.
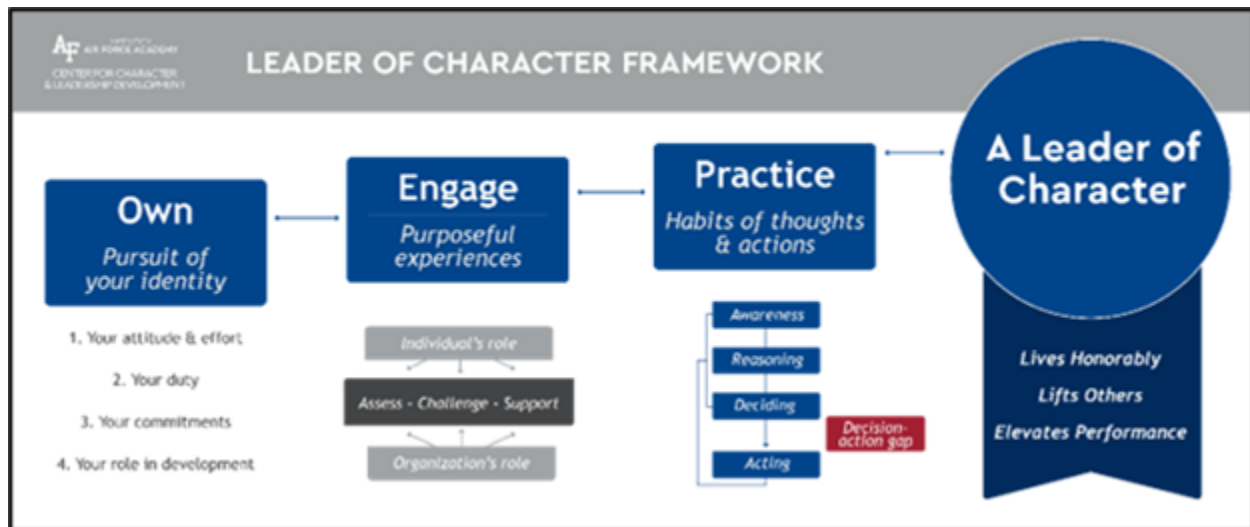
Chapter 2

DEFINING A LEADER OF CHARACTER

2.1. Introduction. In a general sense, the term "character" has come to mean the constellation of strengths and weaknesses that form and reveal who we are. Contrary to some perspectives, our character is not engraved by age 6 -- or even 16. Each of us can change and improve our character. Just as a mountain is constantly being reshaped by weather patterns, our character is reshaped by the different choices we make, including the people around us, and the virtues we choose to practice.[4]

2.2. A Leader of Character. Is defined as someone who respects the dignity of others and practices habits consistent with the Air Force Core Values[5] by: (1) Living Honorably; (2) Lifting Others; and (3) Elevating Performance (**Figure 2.1**.).

Figure 2.1. THE DEFINITION OF A LEADER OF CHARACTER.
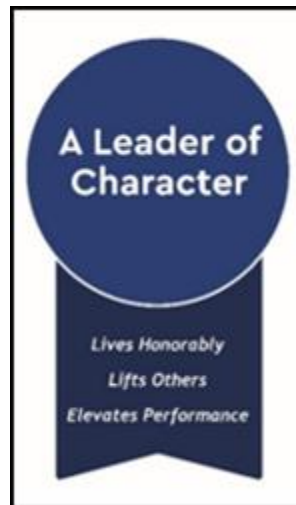
2.3. Connection to Air Force Core Values. Inspired by the Air Force Core Values, which were first derived at USAFA, the Leader of Character Framework's refinement on how a Leader of Character acts (Lives Honorably, Lifts Others, and Elevates Performance) puts the aspirational core values (Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do) in motion. As examples, when we live honorably, we embody what it means to put integrity first. When we lift others to be their best possible selves, we showcase commitment to service before self. Moreover, when we elevate performance toward a common and noble purpose, both as individuals and as organizations across USAFA, we demonstrate excellence in all we do. As the Little Blue Book explains, "As professionals, we are defined by our strength of character, respect for others, and a lifelong commitment to Core Values. We all have a responsibility not to engage in—nor tolerate— behaviors that harm members of our formation. Actions like harassment, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, bullying, extremism, and discrimination erode our foundation and weaken

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[4] The field of character education has produced a number of seminal works on the philosophy and psychology of character development. For an overview, see Berkowitz (2002) and Davidson, Lickona & Khmelkov (2008).

[5] A Profession of Arms: Our Core Values. (2022).

us from within. These actions violate our Core Values [and associated virtues]. We must guard against those at all times."[6]

2.4. Lives Honorably. The term "live honorably" has significant meaning to all Airmen and Guardians – indeed to all men and women who serve in the military. We are bound by a code of behavior that defines our chosen profession. Achieving the identity of a person who lives honorably is the most desirable goal. Falling short of these high standards tarnishes the noble profession to which we have voluntarily committed and undermines the interpersonal and institutional trust essential in a profession involving life-and-death decisions. Living honorably extends far beyond mere compliance with the technical and legal requirements of our profession, to include the USAFA Honor Code. When one truly lives honorably, daily and consistently, conduct that exceeds the standards of an Honor Code becomes an expected by-product. Being committed to military service also demands that we strive to embody integrity in every facet of our character and conduct. Living honorably means committing ourselves to live by certain standards of behavior -- standards that do not necessarily bind those outside the military.

2.5. Lifts Others. There is growing recognition that the "best possible self" concept is integral to leadership development.[7] The concept is steeped in transformational leadership theory and developed by researchers over the past three decades interested in how our "possible selves" provide meaning, organization, and direction through which we set goals and aspirations (as well as how we face fears and threats).[8] The concept of the "best possible self" suggests that each one of us has the capacity to pursue the "best" of who we are (or want to become). For leaders to be able to "lift others" they need to have a deep understanding of their followers' uniqueness, identities, history, and experiences. Similarly, a part of helping followers be their "best possible selves" is to help followers "bring their whole selves to work" and not feel as if they must hide parts of their identity for fear of being an outsider. Practicing diverse and inclusive leadership results in a sense of belonging, which is essential to lifting others to their "best possible selves." The best leaders inherently help others to achieve their best possible selves, and in a complex endeavor like the military, lifting others is both inherently good and an institutional necessity.

2.6. Elevates Performance. A leader of character goes beyond simply getting things done, to finding ways -- large and small -- to enhance and transform how things are done.[9] The most outstanding leaders are always growing, developing, and searching for new ways to expand their capacities beyond the minimum standard of expected performance. We must elevate our own performance, but more importantly, look for ways to elevate the performance of the organizations of which we are a part, including the pursuit of new ideas and transformational innovation. The achievement of organizational excellence by Airmen and Guardians is inherently valuable, and more importantly -- it is society's expectation of the profession that defends it. We also know that we cannot elevate performance unless we value the diversity of others and lead them inclusively. Also emphasized in AFI 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities*, a healthy climate ensures good order and discipline; guarantees members are treated with dignity and respect; and fosters teamwork, cohesion, belonging, inclusion, and trust. Leaders of character at all levels ensure members are

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[6] A Profession of Arms: Our Core Values. (2022), p.6.
[7] See Avolio & Gardner (2005).

[8] See Burns (1978) and Bass & Riggio (2006).

[9] For research on the concept of "making a real difference" see Bass (1996), Avolio (2005) and Erhard, Jensen & Granger (2011).

treated with dignity, respect, and inclusion, and do not tolerate harassment, assault, or unlawful discrimination of any kind.

Chapter 3

OWN – ENGAGE – PRACTICE

3.1. Introduction. This chapter focuses on the process of how leaders of character are developed at USAFA. Development is both a process and an outcome experienced by an individual, but never an end-state. Institutions may offer experiences that result in development, but no institution can claim with certainty that an individual will develop definitive new insights or commitments by a certain date. In many ways, education, training, and other experiences within USAFA's *Course of Instruction* are the means through which we develop others and ourselves in purposeful and engaging ways. In this sense, ETEs are developmental "stepping stones." Developing Leaders of Character at USAFA follows the path depicted in **Figure 1.2** progressing through the three critical steps of 1) Own, 2) Engage, and 3) Practice. While this path is not necessarily linear in nature, developing ourselves prepares us to develop others, which helps each of us develop our organizations.

3.2. Own. Owning the process of one's development is the critical first step in developing Leaders of Character at USAFA (*Figure 3.1.*). Development is the crystallization and consolidation of new insights, knowledge, observable skills and responsibilities.[10] Individual and collective development should reflect behavior aligned with the three aspects of being a Leader of Character: Living Honorably, Lifting Others, and Elevating Performance.

Figure 3.1. OWN THE PURSUIT OF YOUR IDENTITY.
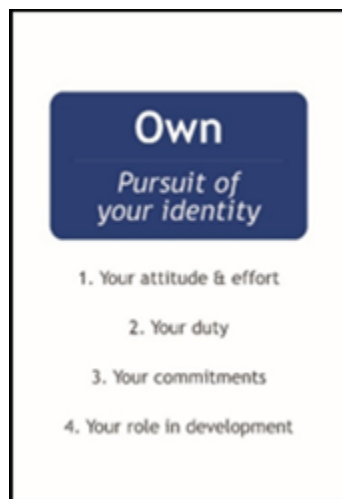
> 3.2.1. The term "Own" underscores the importance of leaders taking responsibility for their own development. Ownership involves an element of self-belief, *i.e.*, an "individual's belief about his or her capacity to perform, master experiences and challenges, as well as the ability to receive constructive feedback and encouragement about one's perceived capacities."[11] In many ways, development is a function of pursuing one's desired and best identity. Taking

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[10] Our definition is informed by Lewin's (1954) model in which people "unfreeze" from stable practices and perspectives to a new state where changes occur (transition) until these initial changes -- initially fragile and tentative -- become consolidated as new, stable practices and perspectives (refreeze).

[11] See Bandura (1997).

ownership and pursuing one's identity involves: (1) Owning Your Attitude and Effort; (2) Owning Your Duty; (3) Owning Your Commitments; and (4) Owning Your Role in Development.

3.2.2. Pursuit of Your Identity. The question begs to be asked: Development toward what end? Since its inception, USAFA has sought to develop leaders who possess the capacity and habits of thought and action required for membership in the profession of arms. USAFA is -- and has always been -- in the "identity development" business. USAFA's goal is to provide its personnel with a sturdy foundation upon which to grow into their identity as military leaders with an unyielding commitment to integrity, service, and excellence. One's identity is rooted in an individual's internal drive for self-consistency, and the Leader of Character Framework can help inform and solidify one's journey to self-consistency.[12]

3.2.2.1. Ideally, a military professional who continues to develop an identity as a leader is one who fully embraces and integrates the values of the profession and consistently applies these values in how he or she thinks, feels, and acts. For example, the philosopher Charles Taylor wrote that "my identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good or valuable, or what ought to be done or what I endorse or oppose."[13]

3.2.2.2. The process of identity development is different for each person. USAFA strives to provide each cadet with intensive leadership training, education, and a multitude of leadership experiences through which they develop and engrain identity-conferring behaviors into firm and stable habits. From a permanent party perspective, the role of helping cadets own their identity should also lead to self-reflection about their own identity as a leader-developer. By assisting cadets with their development, permanent party also experience development.

3.2.2.3. The USAFA process of identity development includes integrating other elements into the leader experience: embracing and consistently living in accordance with the Air Force Core Values; learning and mastering a wide range of leadership competencies; and assessing the extent to which leaders can demonstrate competence, confidence, and commitment to the USAFA Outcomes and expectations for operational leadership.

3.2.3. Owning Your Attitude and Effort. At USAFA, and throughout the military, there are many factors beyond a leader's control. However, every leader can own his or her attitude and effort. To use an analogy, each leader is responsible for "stepping up to the plate and swinging the bat," rather than deciding to leave the bat on their shoulder. Making a concerted and authentic effort to succeed reflects a positive mindset. Those with a positive mindset are less likely to experience a downward spiral fueled by negative thoughts and behaviors, and more likely to cope with adversity and setbacks.[14]

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[12] See Ibarra, Snook, & Ramo (2008).

[13] See Taylor (1989). For research on identity see Blasi (1984, 2005) and Lapsley (2008). According to PsychologyToday, "Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one's sense of self. This amalgamation creates a steady sense of who one is over time, even as new facets are developed and incorporated into one's identity" (https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/identity#theories-of-identity).

[14] See Frederickson (2009).

3.2.4. Owning Your Duty. In the military, duty is defined as a "moral obligation to place accomplishment of the assigned task or responsibility before all personal needs and apprehensions."[15] We use the term to encourage the idea that leaders should possess an ability to subordinate their personal desires to the needs of the mission when called upon to do so. "Owning your duty," means the ability to consistently demonstrate self-sacrifice over narrow self-interest. [16] In addition, engaging with the concept of "owning your duty" forces constructive reflection and discussion on the nature of duty itself and the perpetual prioritization of tasks characteristic of military service. In the cadet context, owning your duty is also a reflection of the Commission each graduate receives, which calls for the performance of a wide range of tasks as directed by competent authority.

3.2.5. Owning Your Commitments. Philosophers have long suggested that fully virtuous actions spring from one's commitments – commitments so deeply rooted (and motivational) that, in many cases, it would be unthinkable for an individual to act or behave otherwise. In short, leaders of character recognize that their commitments reflect the core of who they are -- or who they are striving to become. At USAFA, our institutional challenge and mission is to inspire a commitment to our duties and the leader of character development of others and ourselves.[17]

3.2.6. Owning Your Role in Development. Taking ownership of one's development and growth represents a cornerstone insight of the Leader of Character Framework. In addition to cadets, it is critical that every permanent party member assigned to USAFA sees their personal role in the development process – for themselves and for the people they lead. It is not enough to think that I am "only a cadet", "only a professor", "only a coach", "only an AOC/AMT", "only an Airfield instructor", or "only a security forces Airman." Each cadet and permanent party member must also see themselves as a developer of leaders of character, i.e., a leader-developer, a role that implicitly involves recognition of individual dignity and respectful interpersonal relations.

3.3. Engage. The previous section examined the belief that a leader of character should be an active participant in the developmental process. Indeed, developing oneself is something leaders must take responsibility for, rather than something that is done to them. More than merely showing up, leaders must be vitally engaged in their own development. Similarly, all individuals representing USAFA, whether a coach, instructor, a member of the cadre, or the Superintendent, have a set of responsibilities that help create the context for leader development and growth. USAFA has adopted the Engagement Model of Development (**Figure 3.2**) to explain the essential features of this relationship.

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[15] See *The Armed Forces Officer* (2006).

[16] The concept of duty is central to the USAFA experience, as prominently expressed in the concluding phrase of the Cadet Honor Oath: "…I resolve to do my duty and to live honorably, [so help me God]." In addition, cadets are taught early about the "5 Rights" - right place, right time, right uniform, right attitude, and ready to do the right thing.

[17] See Taylor (1989). The concept of commitment underpins moral self-identity research conducted by Blasi (1984, 2005) and Lapsley (2008).

Figure 3.2. ENGAGE IN PURPOSEFUL EXPERIENCES.

3.3.1. At the heart of this model is the concept of purposeful engagement, a practice that researchers confirm predicts growth and development, especially among college-age students.[18] The model makes two assumptions: first, that all individuals at USAFA, regardless of role, have the primary responsibility for their own development; second, that the organization has a set of responsibilities for supporting an individual's development. Notably, everyone at USAFA will at times be the "individual" (responsible for their own development) and at times a key agent of the "organization" (responsible for fostering the development of others). This relationship is best understood as a collaboration between those in the roles of the individual and the organization.[19]

3.3.2. Purposeful Experiences. By purposeful, USAFA seeks to create experiences and relationships that are "threaded together" intentionally in order to produce leaders of character. Purposeful experiences and relationships require an intensive commitment by all stakeholders at the organizational level; indeed, there is ample research to suggest that these experiences and relationships, while difficult to achieve, are a key predictor of development.[20]

> 3.3.2.1. By engaging, USAFA seeks to create experiences and relationships that are sustained over time and meaningful to the individual. These experiences should connect those developing with those who are supporting their development. That is, these relationships should serve as an antidote to an "us versus them" mentality that often hinders or halts development, while also challenging those in the leader-developer role to engage purposefully. USAFA's set of sustained and engaging experiences should challenge the capabilities and capacities of each individual, whether the aspiring leader of character or the leader-developer.

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[18] There is ample research on college student development that shows that the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Moreover, researchers have documented that certain institutional practices are known to lead to higher levels of student engagement (Kuh & Schneider, 2008). These principles include: student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1991).

[19] The dynamic role of individuals and organizations vis-à-vis development is addressed in multiple chapters in McCauley & Van Velsor (2004). See also Hackman (2002).

[20] McCauley & Van Velsor (2004).

3.3.3. Individual and Organizational Role. A leader-developer engages others through formal and/or informal assessments to make them aware of strengths and areas for development, challenges them to develop based on current and desired habits, and supports them in doing so via multiple experiences and resources. The Engagement Model of Development is not limited to the Cadet-Permanent Party relationship. For example, a second-class cadet may have discrete "individual" responsibilities but, serving in a leadership role, this same cadet has "organizational" responsibilities to other cadets as well. Likewise, a new instructor transits almost daily between his or her responsibilities as a member of the "organization" and as an "individual" striving to understand and develop his or her responsibilities as a new instructor. In sum, *every* person at USAFA will -- at one time or another -- assume both "individual" and "organization" responsibilities. These relationships may have degrees of mentoring and/or coaching to them and may entail giving and receiving constructive feedback.[21]

3.3.4. Engagement Model of Development.   Three essential practices underpin the Engagement Model of Development:[22] Assess, Challenge, and Support.

3.3.4.1. Assess – Every organization ought to embrace a culture that encourages individuals to learn more about their strengths as well as gaps in their performance. Whether formal or informal, at the individual or organizational level, a culture based in honest feedback and constructive assessment enables individuals to better understand strengths and opportunities for growth.

3.3.4.2. Challenge – Development is often motivated by a discrepancy between current and desired ability, facilitated by what are commonly known as "stretch goals." Individuals are often quite motivated when effectively challenged to test their perceived confidence, competencies, and commitments, especially against assessed feedback. Those who desire to strengthen certain competencies can then be held accountable to their developmental plan by a leader-developer in either a subordinate, peer, supervisor, coach, and/or mentor role.[23]

3.3.4.3. Support – It is the responsibility of the organization to support the individual during all "developmental" experiences. Support involves the establishment of trusting relationships, guidance toward new practices, and encouragement to persevere through setbacks or hardships.[24]

3.3.5. Engagement in Action**.** It is through purposeful and engaging relationships and experiences that USAFA delivers the tools for development. This delivery process has unique phases and responsibilities from both individual and organizational perspectives.

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[21] For more information on how the Air Force supports the feedback process, see the Airman Leadership Qualities that are derived from AFI 1-2, *Air Force Culture: Commander's Responsibilities* (Executing the Mission, Leading People, Managing Resources, and Improving the Unit).

[22] These practices (Assess, Challenge, & Support) are essential to the work of the Center for Creative Leadership. See Ting & Scisco (2006).

[23] It is widely understood that trust is an essential ingredient to full engagement, especially during the Challenge phase. An important implication of trust is the willingness to feel vulnerable. Furthermore, development is enhanced at various levels of trust: trust in self, those in supervisory roles, and the organization.

[24] It is important to clarify what the research reveals about the scope of support. Support includes developmental experiences as well as cognitive supports, commonly called "scaffolding" experiences in the educational literature (Knight & Sutton, 2004). Providing support entails guiding the individual, whether by providing resources or setting standards. In this way, challenging an individual is also a form of support.

3.3.5.1. Phase One: Preparing and Readiness. During this initial phase of engagement, the organization has a responsibility to communicate the purpose of instruction or training, and the individual has a readiness responsibility, striving to understand and receive the purpose of instruction or training. This is an important time within the development process to assess and identify the individuals' strengths, to include those involving character. "Character strengths" are indispensable to a military member, especially since these positive dispositions focus largely on the *moral dimension* and are distinct from his or her talents or abilities.[25]

3.3.5.2. Phase Two: Providing Aligned Opportunities. In this phase, the organization has a responsibility to create challenging and purposeful experiences (to include training and education), while the individual has a responsibility to embrace these challenges by being open to new experiences and reflecting on those experiences. In addition, the organization has the responsibility to provide feedback in a timely and constructive manner. Scholarship suggests that feedback is a prized "gift" to the individual, and one that is optimally given within the context of a sustained coaching relationship. Actionable, timely and consistent feedback is critical, especially within the context of one's leadership or character performance.   Actionable feedback and developmental coaching work in tandem, providing opportunities to assess, challenge, and support each individual.[26] A final key element of aligned and engaging opportunities is the need to provide time for (and possibly even training or modeling in) effective reflection.[27] Research suggests that encouraging reflection supports development.[28] Reflection opportunities can take many forms, including journaling, one-to-one discussions, in-class reflections, etc. These interventions help the individual to focus on crystallizing and consolidating new insights, knowledge, skills and commitments.

3.3.5.3. Phase Three: Consolidating and Connecting. The third phase illustrates where development as a process becomes development as an outcome.   Once again, the organization has a responsibility to help the individual "connect the dots," often by making sense of the experience, while the individual has a responsibility to consolidate and crystallize new insights, knowledge, skills, beliefs, and commitments.[29] [30] In addition, the

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[25] The research on developing the strengths of an individual (and organization) is growing. Seligman and Peterson (2004) conducted measurement research that focuses on 24 character strengths. The different strengths of a leader -- such as open-mindedness, bravery, kindness, perseverance, humility, and gratitude -- also contribute to the well-being of the individual. These strengths enable us to experience such positive qualities as curiosity or courage, positive relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment or achievement. There is also a body of research that suggests individuals possess a set of "signature strengths" that we depend on in new or challenging situations, that we are excited about intrinsically, and that we readily seek opportunities to practice and display.

[26] Fundamentally, feedback guides all performance, from the ability to sustain airspeed and increase altitude while flying, to developing skills that improve leadership and character. The leadership literature is quite extensive on the role and benefits of feedback in development and leadership performance.

[27] For example, as an individual practices developing a command presence, he or she must strive toward becoming competent in that aspect of leadership while simultaneously striving to suppress any nervousness or counterproductive doubts about being in such a role. Combined with direct feedback, the leader can accurately identify what he or she is doing well and the specific areas in which improvement is needed. This example reflects what Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) have written about regarding self-efficacy in the workplace.

[28] See Guthrie & King (2004).

[29] We use the term "connect the dots" to emphasize a growing perception at USAFA that the Permanent Party needs to help cadets *make connections* between their myriad of experiences, rather than just offering cadets a series of disparate experiences ("collecting the dots").

[30] This can also be referred to as exercising the virtue of prudence, which is defined as "the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason [See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prudence and Peterson & Seligman (2004)].

individual should also own the responsibility of exploring other contexts in which these insights and knowledge may be applied.

3.4. Practice. In his autobiography, General (Retired, USA) Colin Powell emphasized the importance of practice: "*If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude.*"[31] America's 21st-century security challenge is dynamic, complex, and at times, chaotic. It is imperative that USAFA develops leaders of character with the requisite capacities to interact with this asymmetric environment in a focused and intentional way. This explicitly demands inclusive styles of leadership necessary to build effective teams and constructively communicate with people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, cognitive skills, and expertise. Leaders must be attuned to cues within themselves, and within the environment that indicate or influence the opportunity to live honorably, lift others to their best possible selves, and elevate performance toward a common and noble purpose. While a list of specific values, responsibilities, skills and knowledge may represent the optimal assortment of tools available to a leader of character, it is equally important for leaders to know *when* and *how* to employ these tools. It is critical that all leaders, to include cadets and permanent party, not only practice actions that align with being a leader of character, but also the thought processes associated with leaders of character (**Figure 3.3**.).

Figure 3.3. PRACTICE HABITS OF THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.
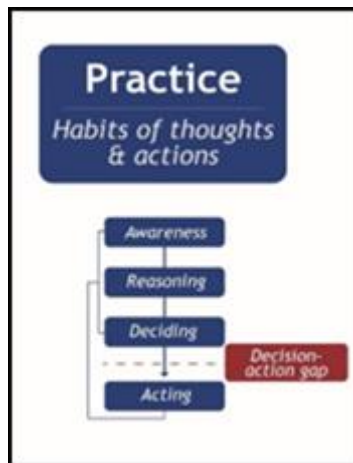
3.4.1. Habits of Thoughts and Actions. The Leader of Character Framework incorporates such a capacity-building process that captures patterns of thought and behavior related to ethical and moral concerns.[32]

3.4.2. The ARDA Model. This four-step process (**A**wareness, **R**easoning, **D**eciding, and **A**cting), called the ARDA Model, represents a *technique* and *approach* to ethical and effective leadership that can be used and practiced by all individuals at the Academy via a wide variety of experiences, programs, and courses.[33] It is important to note that awareness, reasoning, and

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[31] See Powell & Perisco (1995, p. 446).

[32] See Rest (1979). Also, Rest (1999). It should be noted that Rest developed the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to measure conventional and post-conventional moral thinking. For several years all entering cadets at the Air Force Academy have taken the DIT.

[33] It is important to note that a number of studies have demonstrated that ethical growth can be influenced by educational interventions. See Bebeau (2006).

deciding can either precede or follow the action step. This iterative process is how feedback occurs and the decision-action gap shrinks over time. **Figure 3.3** offers a brief overview of the steps in the ARDA Model.[34]

3.4.2.1. Awareness. The capacity to scan, spot/recognize, identify, interpret, or diagnose whether a situation is a moral or ethical leadership "moment"…often by imagining the implications of current scenarios and of possible future scenarios...awareness includes the capacity for self-understanding, empathy and perspective-taking skills.

3.4.2.1.1. Too often, events pass without any internal alarm that "this moment matters," indicating the need for intentional consideration or engagement. Leaders of character have developed a capacity for heightened awareness and vigilance in identifying such moments. Often, perpetrators of failures in character or leadership have responded to their missteps by stating, "It didn't seem like a big deal at the time" or that "it never even crossed my mind to act differently." Effective leaders can skillfully detect character and leadership situations or opportunities and use these "awareness skills" to manage choices and actions. Military history is replete with leadership successes and failures -- ethical, operational, and interpersonal -- that hinged on the leader grasping or failing to grasp the pivotal nature of a moment in time.

3.4.2.1.2. An individual must first recognize that there is an opportunity to act as a leader of character. Individuals can learn to strengthen this awareness capacity and recognize the saliency or "intensity" of a particular moment. [35] In many cases all that is required is the ability to slow down, breathe, and learn how to pay attention to the moment at hand. President Ronald Reagan, in an address to cadets at The Citadel spoke directly to this idea when he said, "The character that takes command in moments of crucial choices has already been determined…by a thousand other choices made earlier in seemingly unimportant moments."

3.4.2.2. Reasoning. The capacity to reason about the best course of action, based on past experiences, self-reflection, the values of the organization, as well as your personal obligations, values, ideals and commitments.

3.4.2.2.1. The reasoning process includes the criteria that inform potential courses of action. These processes can, and often do, reflect assumptions, biases, and inaccuracies that limit an individual's reasoning. Therefore, leaders of character must be aware of and monitor these tendencies and biases, and intentionally develop the habits and capacities to consider other perspectives before selecting a course of action. Leaders of character train themselves to think about their thinking, and ask such questions as: Have I considered other viewpoints? Am I simply rationalizing my reasons to line up with the opinions of my friends? How are my emotions informing my reasoning? What

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[34] The concept of moral potency is also relevant here as a way to improve the individual's ability to more from the Deciding step to the Acting step with greater success. Moral Potency is a concept made up of Moral Ownership, Moral Efficacy and Moral Courage. Leaders should strive to develop higher levels of Moral Potency which will help them in their efforts to cross the decision-action gap. As one's moral potency – or capability to accurately assess and respond honorably to morally ambiguous situations – grows, the shorter the time required to internally wrestle within the decision-action gap. See Hannah & Avolio (2010).

[35] See Jones (1991) to learn more about the concept of "moral intensity." The ARDA Model suggests as well that situations can present themselves with differing degrees of "leadership intensity," situations that are particularly salient with regard to an opportunity "lift others" or "elevate performance."

criteria am I using or not using (fairness, respect, care, concern)? How have I considered my values and the values of my organization? How is my reasoning informed by the virtues associated with the Air Force Core Vales (i.e., integrity – honesty, courage, accountability, humility; service before self – duty, loyalty, respect; excellence – mission, discipline, teamwork)?

3.4.2.2.2. Developing the ability to create potential scenarios and then deciding how to respond to the situation is also an effective way for individuals to sharpen their capacity to reason. For example, every cadet should practice what he or she would say if someone asked them to violate the honor code, or what they would say if someone asked them to have a drink, even though they are underage. Working out these responses (or scripts) in advance helps to reduce or even eliminate the tension that will arise if and when the situation does occur.[36]

3.4.2.2.3. This is not to say reasoning is purely a logical endeavor. It also includes caring deeply for the obligations, values and ideals that form our commitments. Thus, at this stage in the process, we need to recognize what we care about. Caring is the motivational force that will help us reach a decision that is consistent with the type of person we want to be. When we care deeply about our commitments, we can literally feel their importance and seriousness.

3.4.2.2.4. These practices will enable the leader of character to develop habits of focused and flexible reasoning that reflect a commitment to live honorably, to lift others to their best possible selves, and to elevate performance toward a common and noble purpose.

3.4.2.3. Deciding**.** The capacity to connect your reasons to your self-identity and commitments and determine the most appropriate action for the situation. This step in the process indicates an intentional commitment to a particular course of action (which includes, at times, doing nothing). Individuals often know the right decision, but they spend a great deal of time working backward to "rationalize" their way out of what they know (often in their gut) is right. Therefore, individuals must fearlessly evaluate whether their decision – even in the face of pressures, fears and doubts – is consistent with their commitments.

3.4.2.4. Acting. The capacity to act in ways that align with your commitments, values, and beliefs, including developing the habits of courage and self-discipline to bridge or cross the "Decision-Action Gap."

3.4.2.4.1. This step in the process acknowledges that decisions and intentions do not always align with actions. Indeed, many forces discourage individuals from acting in accordance with their well-reasoned decisions. Fears, doubts, and other challenges (e.g., social norms, counterproductive reward systems, time pressures, resource constraints, comfort/discomfort considerations) widen the "Decision-Action Gap." When in that decision-space -- the 'gap' -- one must either cross the gap and do the "right thing," or rationalize a different decision to avoid facing that particular challenge or pressure.

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[36] The importance of scripts is central to the work of Mary Gentile's "Giving Voice to Values" program in partnership with the Aspen Institute. Visit: www.GivingVoicetoValues.org.

3.4.2.4.2. To offer a somewhat literal example of "standing at the gap," some cadets struggle to jump from the 10-, 7- or 5-meter platforms into the swimming pool as part of the water survival curriculum, despite their strong desire and determination to do so. While they have made the decision to jump, and rehearsed jumping in their mind, at the moment of execution, some internal challenge prevents them from doing so. Similarly, cadets and permanent party struggle with correcting their peers and holding others accountable for fear of social discomfort. The "Decision-Action Gap" reflects what each of us have experienced at one time or another (e.g., "I knew the right course of action, but I just didn't follow through"). Not making the "right" decision may lead to a variety of unforeseen consequences. Moreover, the words we hold so dear -- integrity, discipline, courage, resilience -- are terms we ascribe to people who demonstrate the ability to cross the gap.

Chapter 4

ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

4.1. Introduction. To improve how USAFA develops leaders of character within the Leader of Character Framework, it is important to consider external and internal guidance. Research demonstrates that within organizations, strong alignment occurs when strategies, structures, systems, shared values, and leadership styles are compatible, mutually supporting and consistent.[37] Thus, USAFA Mission Elements should work to align their respective education, training, and experiences to the concepts of the Framework.

4.2. External Alignment. The Framework supports DoD and DAF developmental guidance, which aligns the USAFA experience with accepted USAF practices.

4.2.1. Officer Accessions**.** Per DoD policy, USAFA provides newly commissioned officers who are developed to be leaders of character. The accession of these officers sustains and renews a core group of innovative leaders who will exert positive peer influence to convey and sustain traditions, attitudes, values, and beliefs essential to the long-term readiness and success of the Air and Space Forces.[38]

4.2.2. Air Force Foundational Competencies**.** Foundational competencies are common to all Airmen and Guardians (officer, enlisted, civilian). [39] The Airman's Foundational Competencies align with the Leader of Character Framework because one cannot act as a Leader of Character without Developing Self, Developing Others, Developing Ideas, and Developing Organizations.

4.3. Internal Alignment.

4.3.1. USAFA has a responsibility to help cadets and permanent party connect or "thread together" their respective ETEs. For instance, the Honor System is one example of an ETE that is aligned with the concept of Living Honorably; cadet roles/positions (supervisors) are examples of ETEs aligned with Lifting Others; and various academic, athletic, and military training programs are examples of ETEs aligned with Elevating Performance.

4.3.2. The Framework considers the alignment of four specific areas: assessments; programs/courses; reward systems; and thoughts, words, and actions.[40] In terms of aligned assessments, the Institutional Effectiveness Plan measures and informs effectiveness in achieving the USAFA mission through the USAFA Outcomes. [41] Thus, accomplishing USAFA's mission of developing leaders of character is inherently supported by the USAFA Outcomes, and in-turn, the Framework informs the Outcomes.[42] Moreover, USAFAI 36-3526,

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[37] See Galbraith (1977); Hanna (1988); Biggs, Brough, & Barbour (2014); and Miles (1997).

[38] DoD Instruction 1322.22, *Military Service Academies*, Para 3.

[39] For more information on the Foundational Competencies and their corresponding proficiencies, see Air Force Handbook 36-2647, *Competency Modeling* (8 Feb 22).

[40] See Kerr (1975) and Simons (2008).

[41] For a more detailed description of the USAFA Outcomes, visit: https://www.usafa.edu/academics/outcomes/. The USAFA Outcomes include a sophisticated combination of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities needed to succeed as airmen and citizens.

[42] The purpose of the USAFA Institutional Effectiveness Plan is to: Measure effectiveness in achieving the USAFA Mission, through the USAFA Strategic Plan, USAFA Institutional Outcomes, and USAF Institutional Competencies in a repeatable and systematic manner using assessments, performance measures, and/or metrics.

USAFA Course of Instruction & Change Control (COI) outlines how courses and programs achieve alignment. In the spirit of the COI, this Manual serves to support USAFA's mission and offers a way to integrate cohesive execution of the ETEs in developing leaders of character.

Chapter 5

PERMANENT PARTY APPLICATION

5.1. Introduction. All USAFA personnel own a role in USAFA's mission, regardless of their involvement with cadets or role at the institution. USAFAI 36-3522, *Roles and Responsibilities*, indicates "every member of the USAFA community has the opportunity and duty to participate directly in the professional development of our cadets" and mandates "all personnel should seize every opportunity to mentor cadets and provide them with as many diverse developmental opportunities as possible." In this sense, the Framework is transferable to personal development regardless of role. It is also applicable to the development of others, whether "others" are cadets or permanent party. This chapter outlines how members can apply Own-Engage-Practice to their personal development, as well as how they can serve as a leader-developer by Assessing-Challenging-Supporting the development of others. The selected vignettes highlight Framework concepts in a relatable way for all USAFA personnel. Notably, everyone at USAFA at times will be the "individual" (responsible for our personal development) and at other times, will be the "organization" (responsible for fostering the development of others).

5.1.1. The Air Force's total force development model leverages the Continuum of Learning (CoL) as a life-long process of individual development.[43] The CoL integrates development opportunities utilizing the Foundational Competencies.

5.1.2. This chapter uses the competencies of Developing Self and Developing Others as guideposts for incorporating the competencies into the Leader of Character Framework, solidifying the bond between the Air Force and USAFA approaches to leader development.

5.2. Developing Self (Own-Engage-Practice). As discussed in **Chapter 3**, development is both a process and an outcome, but it is not an end-state. Owning our personal development and engaging in purposeful experiences facilitates growth, but it is the habitual practice of thoughts and action, that helps mold competencies into appropriate behavior as leaders of character.

5.2.1. Own. It is essential that members understand their respective roles in both personal development and as a leader-developer. Conscious pursuit of individual development empowers one to better develop others.

5.2.2. Engage. In addition to educational opportunities such as Professional Military Education, local training opportunities bring individuals from various career fields and backgrounds together to learn from one another. Many of these different developmental opportunities exist at USAFA. From experiential learning opportunities, to workshops and instruction in leader and character development, there is a litany of resources available to help hone skills and further growth. The CCLD and Center for Educational Innovation hosts a variety of developmental opportunities open to all USAFA personnel.

5.2.3. Practice. Practicing habits of thoughts and actions also comes in a variety of forms. For example, a Defender manning the gates may face an ethical dilemma on whether or not to allow an improperly credentialed yet high-ranking individual on base. An instructor pilot at the airfield may be tempted to "lean forward" and fly with a cadet in order to complete their last flight despite the weather or aircraft being less than suitable. Within these opportunities

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[43] DAFI 36-2670, *Total Force Development*, certified current 8 November 2023.

to practice, individuals leverage commitments and character strengths to live honorably and overcome the "Decision-Action Gap." Dilemmas confront USAFA personnel every day and in every job. Situations will not look the same across the institution, and contextual factors may complicate seemingly simple decisions to Live Honorably. By sharing these experiences through practice and reflection, USAFA personnel also grow as leader-developers.

5.3. Developing Others (Assess-Challenge-Support). USAFA members have responsibilities to encourage leader development and personal growth. Individuals must develop skills and perspectives as both leaders of character and leader-developers because they will serve simultaneously in both capacities at every level of their careers. The Engagement Model of Development (see **para. 3.3.4**) is a guiding framework which helps put leader development into practice. At the organizational level, leader-developers have the responsibility to support an individual's development. This support shows up through purposeful engagements created by leader-developers. In addition, leader-developers foster a culture of assessment to capture the strengths and areas for improvement for those being developed and to provide meaningful feedback.

5.3.1. Assess. Air Force doctrine indicates that an Airman's current level of leadership determines the Foundational Competencies required to lead.[44] Thus, it is essential for a leader-developer to assess a member's current level of leadership, determine the desired level and its competencies, and derive a plan to help the member achieve that new level of leadership.

5.3.2. Challenge. The leader-developer has a role in challenging an individual in an intentional way in order to achieve the desired level of leadership.

5.3.3. Support. Finally, the leader-developer supports an individual's development journey. This support should include building trusting relationships, providing guidance toward new practices, and encouragement to persevere through setbacks or hardships.

5.3.4. As an example, for a Dean of Faculty instructor, this could include assessing students' strengths and deliberately altering engagement techniques to enable each student's growth in this area. This includes scaffolding challenges in a manner that progresses toward closing the gap between the current and desired states. Moreover, the instructor has a role in supporting this development to facilitate students' growth. This purposeful engagement is likely something many leader-developers already do, but it is essential to understand roles as they Assess-Challenge-Support those they are developing. In essence, leader-developers lift others, in this case students' development, which in turn elevates the performance of the entire organization.

5.4. Vignettes. This chapter illuminates how permanent-party members can apply the Own-Engage-Practice and Assess-Challenge-Support concepts as leaders and leader-developers. The vignettes help answer the questions of "how can I own my personal development?" and "how can I use these concepts to fulfill my leader-developer role?"

5.4.1. Vignette #1 – "Leading Up." Leader-developers have the ability to lead up and down their chains-of-command, as well as across their organizations. This vignette describes a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) who "led up" by challenging her supervisor's decision making. The NCO engaged in courageous leadership by holding her supervisor accountable.

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[44] DAFI 36-2670, *Total Force Development*, 24 June 2020.

Figure 5.1. LEADING UP.

> **"Leading Up"**
>
> I was serving in my first Flight Chief role. My Flight Commander, a seasoned Captain, and I had a great and trusting relationship. Together we were responsible for the Intelligence Officer technical training course and operated much like a self-sufficient squadron. While we only had about 20 instructors, we always had roughly 250 intelligence officer students under our care. Something I admired about my Flight Commander was his ability to live honorably through the consistent practice of values. In essence, this was the basis of our trust. Specifically, he was a pillar of moral courage when representing the needs of our team to higher headquarters and when dealing with higher-ranking students who were cross training into our field. One student, Lt Col Johnson, was not performing well and had failed a major examination. Part of my responsibility was to approve the instructor's recommendation for washback. To me, it was an easy response to washback the student until he understood the concepts.
>
> My Flight Commander, however, denied the instructor's recommendation and opted to allow Lt Col Johnson to continue with his class. As I assessed the situation, I realized my Flight Commander was not living honorably and was faulting in his moral courage. I decided to step in and challenge him to align his words and actions. I explained to him that rejecting the instructor's recommendation is not in line with our policies, could have negative consequences for trust within our flight, and could cause a perception of favoritism for the high-ranking student. I asked him what was motivating his decision. He asked if he could have a few minutes to digest my comments.
>
> Although we had a great relationship, it was not easy to highlight the discrepancy, and I was nervous that he would be angry with me for doing so. When he came back, he had changed his decision to wash the student back. He told me what was stopping him was fear of the individual's rank, and if it were any other student, he would follow the established processes. He thanked me for my honesty. Knowing he was a bit nervous about informing the student, I asked him if I could support him through it.
>
> When we met with the student, he was angry and made a complaint to our commander, who reviewed the case and agreed the washback was appropriate. This situation paid enormous dividends to enhancing trust in our flight. Leading up is not always easy, but as a leader of character, it is necessary.

5.4.1.1. Reflection: The NCO furthered her personal development and the development of her supervisor by modeling the Assess-Challenge-Support concepts. Not only did she assess a gap between who her supervisor says he is and the decision he made, but she supported her supervisor by reminding him what the established policies were and then supporting him through his decision-making process.

5.4.2. Vignette #2 – "60 Seconds is All It Takes." This story demonstrates how an athletic coach fulfills the role of leader-developer while also fulfilling their coaching duties. Coaches can use the Framework as a lens through which to create meaningful experiences/conversations both on and off the athletic fields.

Figure 5.2. 60 SECONDS IS ALL IT TAKES.

> ### *"60 Seconds is All It Takes"*
>
> *On the first lesson of a PE class, I shared values and beliefs, verbally and in a follow-up email after class. "Do not worry about your grade; just come down with a great attitude and be willing to play. Thank you for your service to our great nation. We need you to be leaders and it starts now… as 'standards never sleep' and you are 'always on parade.' Enjoy the journey of our Academy and be proud of what we stand for. My door is always open if you want to chat about life or anything on your mind. My job is to help you."*
>
> *Little did I know, my actions and words affected a young cadet in the class who wanted nothing more than to serve, but was in the process of trying to fight a medical disqualifier for commissioning. She reached out shortly after class asking for advice and guidance on the battle she was facing, and said that she realized through my words and actions that I would give her straight answers and not let her just take an easy option. I continued to advise her in navigating the obstacles that came up and encouraged her through periods of doubt and fear. The hard part came in helping her to accept the outcome when the battle was over. That is when the foundation of trust became even more crucial to have.*
>
> *Through involvement and engagement at every level of her struggles, a bond of genuineness enabled me to motivate her to see beyond the surface of how living honorably, lifting others up, and elevating individual performance is not just a USAFA, Air Force, or military concept. I helped her to understand that these values are a philosophy for life and something she can carry into anything she does. Trust must be earned. It comes from conscious effort to walk your talk, keep your promises, and align your behavior with your values in the hopes of making a difference every day.*

5.4.2.1. Reflection: First, this coach seeks to further his personal development by engaging in purposeful experiences beyond the white lines of the athletic fields, talking with squadrons during M5s, acting as a mentor for cadets on probation, and teaching PE Classes. In addition, this coach modeled the concepts of Assess-Challenge-Support in their authentic teaching style and building trust with cadets.

5.4.3. Vignette #3 – "Owning My Education." During personal development, an individual must take ownership of the process. This vignette describes someone who could have missed an opportunity for personal growth if they had not owned the opportunity for development.

Figure 5.3. OWNING MY EDUCATION.

> **"Owning My Education"**
>
> As a young Major, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend in-residence Intermediate Developmental Education. I already completed the distance-learning version of Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), and I was hoping to attend a sister-service school or a fellowship program. I wanted something prestigious and unique that would set me apart from my peers. In truth, I wanted anything other than spending a year in Montgomery, Alabama. I put every other school on my "dream sheet" for assignment preferences and explained why I should not go to Alabama. When I received orders to Maxwell AFB to attend ACSC, for what I viewed as a redundant course, I was disappointed. I begrudgingly accepted the assignment, but was openly upset.
>
> Despite my initial poor attitude, I quickly learned to appreciate the opportunity. I had the choice to own my attitude and effort as well as the role in my own development. ACSC is a year to focus on yourself, to further your education and leadership skills, and to recover from the past decade of continual operational requirements. The flexible academic schedule allowed many opportunities to enjoy family time and group activities.
>
> While earning PME credit and a master's degree, I was encouraged to reflect on where I had been and to connect with senior leaders on where I wanted to go with my career. I could have missed out on a resilient and engaging year if I let my initial disappointment spoil the opportunity. By owning the opportunity presented to me, I was able to better myself in personal and professional aspects. I now advocate for ACSC as much as I can as a mentor, to prevent people from falling prey to my misguided perspectives and to seize opportunities when presented.

5.4.3.1. Reflection: The military member owned the pursuit of his identity by learning to appreciate the opportunity afforded to him and owning their attitude and effort. In addition, he engaged in a purposeful experience that assessed, challenged, and supported his ability to develop academically. Finally, he practiced habits of thought and action by reflecting on future goals and actively lifting others through mentorship.

5.4.4. Vignette #4 – "Getting the Message." This story demonstrates how a permanent party member assigned to the cadet wing can use the concepts of Assess-Challenge-Support to create developmental experiences and conversations.

Figure 5.4. GETTING THE MESSAGE.

> **"Getting the Message"**
>
> I was in my second year as an AOC and had a second-class cadet with significant academic challenges. The interactions my AMTs and I had with her showed us she was not taking responsibility for her struggles, but rather was finding ways to blame them on external causes (i.e., teachers, extracurricular activities, family issue). Our assessment of the situation was that she needed to start taking individual responsibility for her situation. In her meetings with the command team, we challenged her to do some self-reflection, figure out what she needed to do to improve her grades, and let us know how we could support her.
>
> When the Academic Review Committee recommended her for disenrollment, she was compelled to take action and, as a result, began to make positive progress. She changed her major, adjusted some of her classes, and implemented a plan for studying and getting extra instruction. Based on these adjustments and her taking personal responsibility for her development, the AMTs and I supported her and advocated for her retention. Ultimately, the Superintendent retained her, challenged her to improve her grades, and directed her to check in with him regularly. We continued to meet with her to ensure she continued to make progress. In the end, she got her grades up, came off probation and graduated on time. She went on to a highly successful Air Force career and was very grateful for the efforts we made to support her during this challenging time.

5.4.4.1. Reflection: Acting on behalf of USAFA and in the role of leader-developers, the AOC/AMTs assessed the cadet's demonstrated behavior; challenged her to take responsibility for her development and to make an action plan; and supported her throughout the process.

5.4.5. Vignette #5 – "Developing Leaders of Character in the Classroom." This story demonstrates how a civilian instructor can use the Framework as a lens through which to create meaningful classroom experiences and conversations for their students.

Figure 5.5. DEVELOPING LEADERS OF CHARACTER IN THE CLASSROOM.

> *"Developing Leaders of Character in the Classroom"*
> As an Assistant Professor in the Math Department, I am devoted to the development of cadets in the classroom through providing extra instruction and supporting various cadet development events. Although it took some introspection and connection making, I realized I am a leader-developer and have an integral role in developing our students into leaders of character. While this connection was not immediately overt, I now realize how important it is as a civilian, to understand the role "leaders of character" play in the military and in our society. After all, we are in the business of connection making!
>
> At the start of every semester, I introduce the Leader of Character Framework. Sometimes I see the cadets' faces say, "What does this have to do with this class?" My response is to say, "I know you must all be wondering what this Framework has to do with solving for X, and the answer is EVERYTHING." I explain how each cadet must own their role in their development, engage in the experiences, and practice through their habits and thoughts.
>
> I always employ a group exercise early in the class. This is an opportunity for cadets to live honorably, lift others in the form of supporting their teammates, and I hope, to lead to the elevated performance of their entire team. The group exercise provides me the opportunity to observe each team as they work through interpersonal issues in the pursuit of a specific learning objective. I am then able to assess their performance, challenge them appropriately, and support them throughout the experience. Moreover, I explain how each of them worked through the Framework, demonstrating how it applies in both the classroom and in opportunities they face each day. Finally, in addition to helping the cadets as a leader-developer, I find myself being developed too.

5.4.5.1. Reflection: Acting in a leader-developer role, the instructor assessed ways to integrate Framework concepts into classroom experiences. By being proactive and reflecting on what it means to be a Leader of Character themselves, the instructor continues the conversation about what it means to be a Leader of Character, regardless of the subject area.

5.4.6. Vignette #6 – "It Takes Courage To Step In." In this example, a challenging scenario unfolds in which a witness decides to take preventive action even though they do not know the person being harassed.

Figure 5.6. IT TAKES COURAGE TO STEP IN.

> **"It Takes Courage to Step In"**
>
> "I was at a coffee shop, and I observed a male customer sexually harassing a woman I did not know. The man was asking the woman, 'You look good! You should hit me up with your snap or insta so I can hit you up.' The male looked her up and down and crowded her space. The woman backed away from him. She tried to be respectful and let him know she was uninterested in the attention, but he persisted by saying, 'Hey baby doll, don't be like that. I got what you want.' I intervened by removing her from the environment. I acted as if I knew her. I said, 'Hey Jen, it's been a long time. How are you? Let's head over here and catch up.' I stepped in front of the harasser, moved with her to another part of the coffee shop, and got her out of the situation. Even though she did not know me, she immediately recognized that I was helping her escape the situation. She thanked me and left the store."

5.4.6.1. Reflection: The person who intervened demonstrated the ability to take care of others and practiced the virtue of courage when they noticed a situation that needed to be addressed, even though they did not personally know the person. Cadets learn similar bystander [45] intervention techniques in their self-protection courses. We all have a responsibility not to engage in, nor tolerate, behaviors that harm our members. Discussion Questions: How might your willingness to intervene change if the gender of the person being harassed was different? What things might you consider prior to intervening? How could you handle the situation if it escalated and the man became defensive or aggressive?

5.4.7. Vignette #7 – "Accountability." In this example, we hear from a leader who chooses to uphold a standard while also nurturing a healthy classroom climate. In prevention, those providing accountability and reinforcing a culture of dignity and respect can often be at a crossroads deciphering between intent and impact. Holding the cadet accountable is an example of lifting others and resulted in elevated performance of the class/team.

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[45] A **bystander** is someone who witnesses harassing behavior and can make a positive difference by becoming an **upstander** who "sees what happens and intervenes, interrupts, or speaks up" to stop the harassing behavior (https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/featuredtopics/become-an-upstander.html).

Figure 5.7. ACCOUNTABILITY.

"Accountability"

"As a leader, I have a lot on my plate. Taking care of people, our cadets, is always at the top of my priorities. These are future leaders, and they are also college students. They are the best from across our nation, and most of them are fresh from home, high school, or a prep school. Balancing their needs, expectations, and development is not always easy. When a cadet breaks a law, violates moral or ethical boundaries, or acts in a manner unbecoming of the uniform, it can seem black and white to step in and hold the cadet accountable. I struggle with that -- leading people feels "in the grey" sometimes.

A cadet in my classroom openly used harassing and discriminatory language. Other cadets approached me expressing their concerns and strong feelings. We have a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and discrimination, so this should be easy, right? Upon digging in, I learned from other witnesses that the cadet's language was more open and not made towards any specific person. Sitting with the cadet, she explained that was how people speak where she grew up and that she wasn't even aware she was offending anyone. As leader-developers at the Academy, we teach new social norms, leveling the "acceptable" playing field. We have to remember that not everyone arrives on the same social starting line. That does not mean we do not have accountability -- holding someone accountable does not translate into a lack of compassion, empathy, or understanding. Her language was unacceptable, she was held accountable, and she was heard and given an opportunity to grow. After the exchange with the cadet, I followed up with the cadet's AMT for awareness."

5.4.7.1. Reflection: This leader-developer realized how important her response to the concerning language would be and purposely used a developmental approach in holding the cadet accountable. Discussion Questions: How did this leader-developer implement "Assess-Challenge-Support" with the cadet? Wouldn't it have been much easier to punish the cadet without taking the time to learn about why she made the comments? In what ways was the cadet held accountable for the harassing and discriminatory language she used?

5.4.8. Vignette #8 – "Building Trust and Providing Support." In this example, we focus on the importance of building trust with cadets, as well as demonstrating how reflective learning activities can contribute to the leadership development process. When cadets feel valued and heard, they are more willing to share if they experience a traumatic event.

Figure 5.8. BUILDING TRUST AND PROVIDING SUPPORT.

> **"Building Trust and Providing Support"**
>
> *"As an instructor in the cadet leadership curriculum, I emphasize the importance of written reflection in our personal and professional development journey. In the first assignment, cadets reflect on their most profound leadership experience. I work to establish trust with my students before asking them to share their candid reflections. During my time as an instructor, cadets have shared myriad stories of success and triumph, but also experiences that were troubling or even traumatic. In response, I attempt to appreciate and validate their narratives, offer tools for deeper analysis, and prompt additional reflection to derive new insights.*
>
> *As an example, a student shared his story from when he was a newly accepted 4-degree and felt targeted by a female upperclassman with unsolicited romantic advances. When he rejected her invitations, the upperclassman became emboldened, resulting in veiled sexual harassment and a hostile training environment. The 4-degree found little sympathy among his classmates, who did not believe his accusations, and squadron leadership, who had little evidence to justify administrative action. Not knowing what else to do, the cadet endured in isolation, lamenting interactions with the upperclassman until her graduation.*
>
> *Since his initial informal reporting, the cadet had not shared his story with anyone until I invited him to share his most profound leadership reflection. This experience dominated his formative years at the Academy, painting cadet leadership roles in a negative hue. Through our engagement, however, I validated his struggle, introduced helping agencies that could assist him in navigating this challenge, and facilitated his reflection to examine how this experience could positively shape his leadership approach at the Academy and beyond.*
>
> *In my instructor role, I attempt to operationalize the Leader of Character Framework, validating cadets' pursuit of their identity as leaders in development, engaging in purposeful experiences that link individual and organizational roles in development, and providing multiple opportunities to practice through reflection, writing, and discussion to hone one's habits of thought and action."*

5.4.8.1. Reflection: Building trust in an instructor-student relationship is an important part of the growth process. Planning in deliberate time for reflection also supports development. Discussion Questions: How might an instructor validate a cadet's feelings when they share a personal experience? How can instructors build trust in their classroom setting? What resources are available to individuals who are experiencing similar situations (e.g., unwanted advances)? How could the instructor let the cadet's chain of command know without losing the cadet's trust?

Chapter 6

CADET APPLICATION

6.1. Introduction. Cadets' leader development journeys start long before coming to USAFA. Cadets come here to pursue dreams and participate in experiences not available at civilian universities. With that choice, cadets must commit to developing thoughts and actions in order to consistently Live Honorably, Lift Others, and Elevate Performance. This is a mindset that future leadership demands, and something the tax-paying public expects. Regardless of a cadet's Air Force or Space Force ambitions, leading credibly presumes sound character. This is something cadets came to USAFA to learn and experience, and something USAFA – to include every permanent party member assigned here – is committed to providing. While USAFA strives to send cadets into the operational Air Force and Space Force with character and leadership foundations, continuing to grow as a leader of character is a life-long journey. The leader development journey may have started before arriving on I-day, but it accelerates here. Get on board and own your role in the process.

6.2. This chapter. Describes how cadets can apply the Leader of Character Framework concepts of Own-Engage-Practice during their leader development journeys**.** In addition, as leader-developers, cadets can apply Framework concepts by Assessing-Challenging-Supporting the development of others. The following examples highlight ways in which cadets may already employ many of the concepts in their day-to-day experiences. The selected vignettes utilized emphasize framework concepts in a relatable way.

6.3. Vignettes. The focus of this chapter is to illuminate how cadets can apply the Own-Engage-Practice and Assess-Challenge-Support concepts as leaders and leader-developers. The vignettes in help answer the questions of "how can I own my personal development?" and "how can I use these concepts to fulfill my leader-developer role?"

6.3.1. Vignette #1 – "Embracing Fear." In this vignette, a cadet develops courage by engaging in a purposeful experience. The cadet decides to move forward despite her fear of failure.

Figure 6.1. EMBRACING FEAR.

> **"Embracing Fear"**
>
> The day I got the call that I had made it to the tryout stage for the Wings of Green, I went into full panic mode. The doubts began to flood in, and I questioned my ability to succeed. At the time, there was no one on the team who looked like me, and a part of me wondered if that was for a reason. Maybe I wasn't meant for things like this. Coupled with a healthy fear of heights, I was ready to give myself an excuse to give up before I even tried.
>
> As a cadet, it is easy to fold to comfort and complacency. No one would have faulted me if I didn't want to jump out of perfectly good airplanes hundreds of times. Yet, I would have known that I let fear overpower my desire to grow. In my own life, fear has served as a defense mechanism to guard me from life's hard lessons. I was aware of this tendency, and I knew I needed to face my fear. I took the chance and showed up for tryouts.
>
> Fast-forward a year and a half. I am thankful for the scared, past version of myself who embraced her fears for the sake of growth. The process of becoming a jumpmaster during Wings of Green year was demanding in terms of time and performance standards. Through endless early mornings, long days, and stressful examinations, I learned to trust myself, and I gained self-confidence. Now, I enjoy helping new applicants ease some of their own self-doubts.

6.3.1.1. Reflection: The cadet owned the pursuit of her identity by committing to a higher calling. In addition, she engaged in a purposeful experience that assessed, challenged, and supported her ability to be courageous. Finally, she practiced habits of thought and action, and she pushed through the fear of failure and showed up for the Wings of Green tryouts. In this situation, the cadet realized her own misgivings, but also understood she had the power to show up and try. The outcome was unknown, but the decision to choose courage prevailed.

6.3.2. Vignette #2 – "Being an Athlete: Letting Yourself Be Lead." Perhaps some of the most powerful leader-developers of cadets are other cadets. In this vignette, a cadet athlete received help from a teammate who noticed they were struggling. Through their leader-developer role, the teammate embraced the concept of lifting others to elevate team performance.

Figure 6.2. BEING AN ATHLETE: LETTING YOURSELF BE LEAD.

"Being an Athlete: Letting Yourself Be Lead"

Wrestling is a sport like no other. It is just you and your opponent. For seven minutes, coaches, teammates, and fans are focused on two people. For seven minutes, it is your job to impose your will on the enemy, to display your superiority. With this immense task often comes a tidal wave of emotions. Nerves build up, knowing you will be the only one out there, you cannot rely on others to help you perform. In wrestling, your best performance derives from you and you alone. It's this aspect of wrestling that I personally struggled with the most. I had no problem putting in the work or fueling my body with the proper nutrients. It was the pre-match mental routine I had not yet mastered. Lucky for me this was obvious.

A teammate, recognizing that the work I put in was not translating to results in competition, pulled me aside after practice and said, "Look, everyone knows you're the hardest working guy in the room, but how do you prepare mentally before a match?" I paused. Not giving much thought to this part of my warmup, I solemnly replied, "Nothing, I guess."
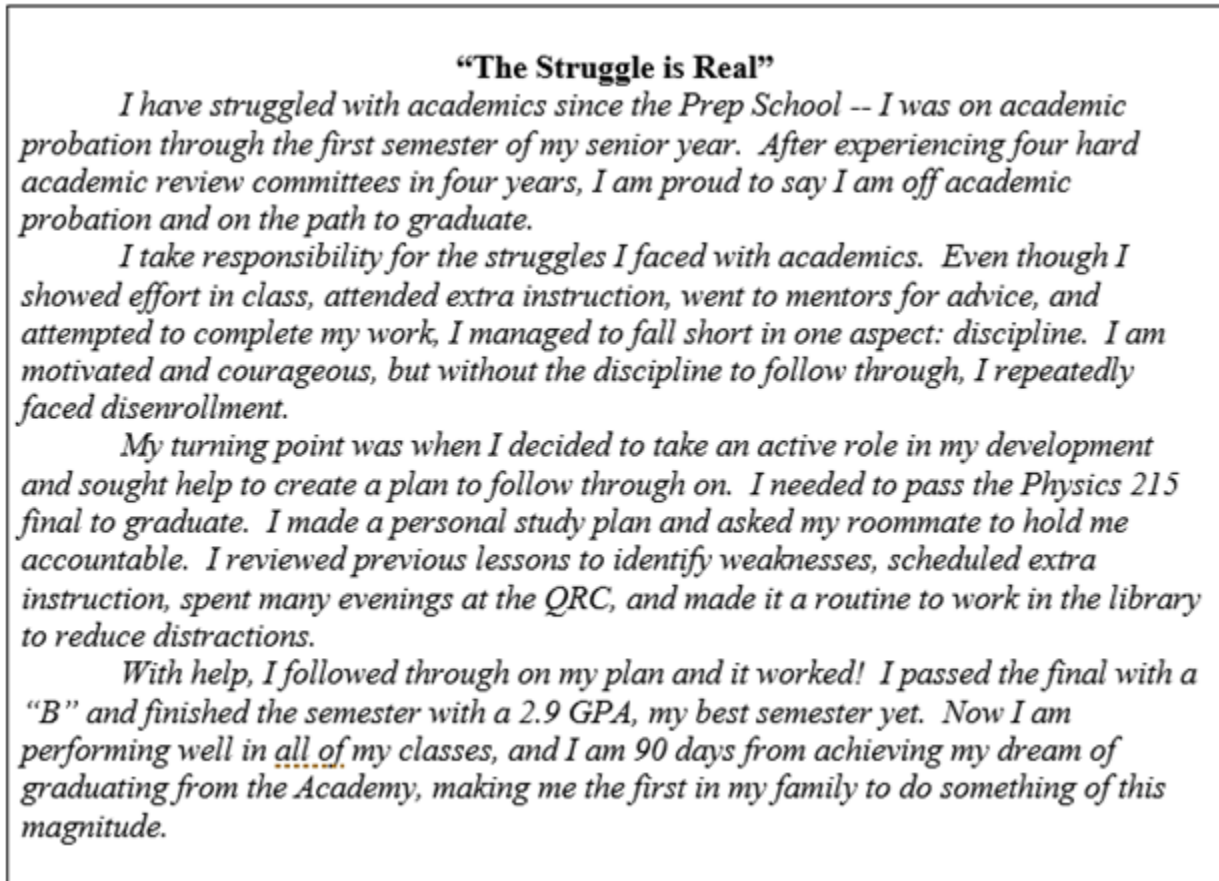
My teammate recommended, "Start by listening to yourself. Whether you realize it or not, how you talk to yourself before the match has an impact on your performance." Not fully understanding what he was referring to, I nodded and agreed to try.

The following week I listened to the subtle, but convincing voices in my head, and I began to realize what he meant. The negative words, insecure thoughts, and dramatic scenes that played out in my head had gone unrealized until now. I asked my teammate how I could make them stop. He smiled, nodded, and told me, "You have to change the paradigm. You have the power to write your own story." My eyes grew wide as I began to understand. A switch flipped as I made the connection and this short dialogue led to a significant shift in perspective and "fixing" my self-talk. With this change came fantastic results. My pre-match routine became consistent and enhanced my performance. Finally, I was achieving results I was proud of.

6.3.2.1. Reflection: This cadet owned the pursuit of his identity by taking an active role in his development and being open to feedback from his teammate. In addition, he engaged in purposeful experiences that challenged his ability to perform as an athlete. Finally, he practiced habits of thought and action, enabling the discipline he needed to win on the mat. From an organizational perspective, being a leader-developer is everyone's job. In this case, an upperclassman played the role of developing another teammate; however, each member of the organization has something to contribute toward this effort, regardless of rank, age, or experience. This cadet was willing to receive and seek mentorship from a teammate who had found success. Before that happened, however, a caring teammate assessed that something wasn't working, challenged the cadet to employ positive thoughts, and supported him to "write his own story." Ultimately, the upperclassman inspired the underclassman to elevate their performance towards a noble and common purpose. The cadet found more athletic success, and in turn, this elevated the performance of the team and organization.

6.3.3. Vignette #3 – "The Struggle is Real." In this vignette, a cadet navigates the rigors of academics, examining their own habits of thought and action in order to improve performance.

Figure 6.3. THE STRUGGLE IS REAL.

> **"The Struggle is Real"**
> *I have struggled with academics since the Prep School -- I was on academic probation through the first semester of my senior year. After experiencing four hard academic review committees in four years, I am proud to say I am off academic probation and on the path to graduate.*
>
> *I take responsibility for the struggles I faced with academics. Even though I showed effort in class, attended extra instruction, went to mentors for advice, and attempted to complete my work, I managed to fall short in one aspect: discipline. I am motivated and courageous, but without the discipline to follow through, I repeatedly faced disenrollment.*
>
> *My turning point was when I decided to take an active role in my development and sought help to create a plan to follow through on. I needed to pass the Physics 215 final to graduate. I made a personal study plan and asked my roommate to hold me accountable. I reviewed previous lessons to identify weaknesses, scheduled extra instruction, spent many evenings at the QRC, and made it a routine to work in the library to reduce distractions.*
>
> *With help, I followed through on my plan and it worked! I passed the final with a "B" and finished the semester with a 2.9 GPA, my best semester yet. Now I am performing well in all of my classes, and I am 90 days from achieving my dream of graduating from the Academy, making me the first in my family to do something of this magnitude.*

6.3.3.1. Reflection: This cadet owned the pursuit of their identity by taking an active role in their personal academic development. In addition, this cadet engaged in purposeful experiences that assessed, challenged, and supported their ability to follow through on their goals. They took stock of their behavior and assessed themselves to be lacking in discipline. Finally, they practiced habits of thought and action, enabling the discipline needed to follow through on the plan. Whether or not they knew it, this cadet employed the ARDA (Awareness–Reasoning–Decide–Act) model. Aware that a change needed to be made, the cadet fully embraced the challenge, took responsibility for developing self-discipline, and acted on the plan. It likely took many iterations of the ARDA model to create sustainable habits of thought and action, enabling this cadet to make graduation a reality. Each of us must learn and live out the virtue of discipline, as this cadet learned to structure their time, prioritize goals, and seek help when needed. With consistent effort, the discipline we develop in ourselves will also Lift Others within our sphere of influence and Elevate Performance of the organization.

6.3.4. Vignette #4 – "Choosing to Live Honorably." In this vignette, a cadet shares an experience when his values and behaviors did not align, creating a disconnect between who he said he was and his actions.

Figure 6.4. CHOOSING TO LIVE HONORABLY.

> **"Choosing to Live Honorably"**
>
> *The honor remediation process is, undeniably, a humbling experience. The first few weeks were rough. I was frustrated and embarrassed -- I never imagined I would be on honor probation. I was restricted to base, lost the "privilege" of wearing civilian clothes, and was entering a new squadron where solid first impressions matter. Furthermore, my family lives locally in the Colorado Springs, and I had grown accustomed to visiting them almost every weekend. Finally, I am a pre-med student, so the fear of losing my shot at medical school weighed heavily on me. At times it felt like my dream was slipping away because of one mistake. I constantly lived under the shadow of that knowledge. I had a bad attitude and grew more pessimistic and bitter by the day.*
>
> *However, as the weeks and months went by, I began to open my mind to the true value offered through the remediation process. After writing countless journal entries and meeting several times with my AOC, Honor Officer, Squadron Professional Ethics Advisor, and senior mentor, I transitioned from blaming others to embracing the situation. I realized it was within my power to learn from my mistake and grow internally. Before probation, I went through my days giving little thought to what I did or why I did it. I went through the motions without a sense of how my habits may or may not lift others and elevate the performance of the team. Now, reflection is a daily habit I look forward to, and I have made it a goal to personally improve every day, even in seemingly small things like getting my work done early or purposefully managing my time.*
>
> *Currently, I have an optimistic view of my remediation experience. I now see it as an avenue for improvement rather than merely a punishment. There are still times I wish I could travel back in time to stop myself from committing the act; however, I am grateful to those who have invested in my growth. My biggest takeaway is that I can choose not to let a single mistake define who I am. I have an image of the type of person I want to be, and my actions today are now in alignment with that version of myself.*

6.3.4.1. Reflection: This cadet learned to own his mistake, allowing him to fully engage in the remediation process. In addition, practicing the tasks required during remediation enabled him to take even greater ownership of his development. In this example, the Own–Engage–Practice progression is cyclical. The cadet did not truly own his situation until he allowed himself to engage in the practice of reflection. In some cases, we need to trust our training and let the process work, simply by sticking with it. What may not seem immediately clear gains clarity over time. As the sense of ownership grew with his engagement and practice of remediation strategies, he embraced the opportunity to grow. This cadet allowed "doing their duty" to change his attitude. By shifting his mindset from "I'm *being held* accountable" to "I *am* accountable," he was able to renew his focus and appreciate the benefits of the process. Undoubtedly, others noticed this turnaround, and learned that they too can own their mistakes and move forward. The strength of an organization rests upon the commitment of the individuals and on the accountability that exists among them.

6.3.5. Vignette #5 – "Prior-Enlisted Frustrations." In this vignette, a cadet came to USAFA with a certain set of expectations for both themselves and for the experience. Being a prior-enlisted member in the cadet wing brings an added layer of development, and being a high performer on active duty does not provide immunity to the struggles of cadet life. As many prior-enlisted cadets express, the adjustment to cadet life can be more of a challenge than anticipated.

Figure 6.5. PRIOR-ENLISTED FRUSTRATIONS.

"Prior-Enlisted Frustrations"

As a young, enlisted Airman, I always looked for opportunities to grow. When I received my acceptance letter to USAFA, I was thrilled. Having prior enlisted time, I expected to have a leg up on the other cadets in terms of time management and assimilation to the military lifestyle. Yet, I was surprised to learn that life at the Academy was extremely difficult. As a freshman, I struggled to greet upperclassman (most of whom were younger than I am), memorize long quotes, and follow traditions I could not understand, all while juggling a full academic load. To top it off, my paycheck was about a quarter of what I received as a Senior Airman!

Being a part of the Prior-Enlisted Cadet Assembly helped me realize my purpose here -- to become a leader and an officer. My fellow priors went through similar challenges and made it through. Their encouragement and perspective gave me the confidence that I would also make it. Today, when I experience tough times, I remind myself of the reason why I first came here. I look back to the people who helped me throughout my journey and those who saw my potential. These mentors gave me the courage to continue to move forward – through the unavoidable hardships life presents. I believe that tough times are more manageable when you can remember your purpose. The Prior-Enlisted Cadet Assembly helped me stay connected to the bigger picture and I hope to be able to do the same for my fellow cadets while I am here at the Academy.

6.3.5.1. Reflection: It is common for experiences to not match initial expectations. This cadet's struggle to adapt demonstrates that the Own-Engage-Practice cycle does not necessarily have to be a linear process. In fact, most often, it's not. It was not until after the cadet found a sense of support and engaged in a purposeful experience with other prior-enlisted cadets, that he was able to practice mutual support, appreciate the USAFA experience, and take ownership of his development. *Lifting Others* includes *challenging, supporting, developing, and inspiring others to their best possible selves*. In this story, the cadet was inspired and supported by the assembly and is now motivated to help others in similar situations. From affinity groups, to clubs, teams, and squadron activities, there are a myriad of ways to maintain a sense of self and center ourselves so we can be more effective and motivated leaders and leader-developers.

6.3.6. Vignette #6 – "Where do I fit?" In this vignette, an upperclassman recounts the experience of shuffling to a new squadron. While moving squadrons can be an opportunity to turn over a new leaf, it can also be stressful. The ability to stay grounded through change is

helpful as we step into new roles and help others adapt when they move to a different location or join our squadron.

Figure 6.6. WHERE DO I FIT?

> **"Where do I fit?"**
>
> Shuffling into a new squadron, I did not know what to expect. I knew some of the people, but certainly not all of them. We did not have common objectives, or at least we did not feel strongly about working together to achieve the objectives we had. I tried to talk to people, but it was hard because I felt like everyone kept their head down, trying not to socialize. I lost the sense of community and belonging I felt in my previous squadron, so I avoided walking through the halls and minimized my time spent in the squadron.
>
> Before things got better, I talked to my closest friend quite often. She also struggled to fit in. We tried doing things like helping clean the common areas and giving people rides to football games, but no one seemed interested in developing relationships. The two of us stuck together and provided each other with a sense of value and support. I also talked to my mentor who is an academic instructor. She told me it is common to feel this way going to a new squadron.
>
> After discussing my challenges with my friend and mentor, I realized I was not happy because I did not feel valued. I thought more about how I could best process this feeling to address my sense of belonging. I knew I could not wave a magic wand and change the squadron climate, but I could do my best to create a sense of unity. I focused my efforts on getting to know people, and I learned to be authentic, with the goal of creating a sense of belonging for others.
>
> Little by little, cadets in my squadron are more connected and have a better sense of purpose and value. As a result, our performance continues to improve. I even had a few cadets thank me for connecting with them, of which I am proud.

6.3.6.1. Reflection: This cadet reflected on the root of their struggle: a lack of a sense of belonging and not feeling valued. Rather than waiting for someone else to fix the problem, the cadet owned the problem, engaged with other cadets and practiced strategies of connection within their control. The cadet's outward focus allowed them to act as an example of inclusiveness, creating an environment they wished someone had created for them. This cadet recognized ways to value the diversity of others and inspire connection across the unit, ultimately Lifting Others and Elevating Performance. By seeing themselves as a valuable part of something bigger, their mentality to elevate the unit became more about what they can do for the organization rather than what the organization is doing for them. This story is an example of how owning our attitude and effort can translate to purposeful engagements and developing meaningful connections.

6.3.7. Vignette #7 – "The Power of Cadets." In this example, a cadet recognizes the need to shift her perspective with the help of a cadet mentor. This example portrays the positive impact cadets can have on each other when they embrace their role as leader-developers.

Figure 6.7. THE POWER OF CADETS.

> **"The Power of Cadets"**
>
> Today, I consider myself someone who puts forth continuous effort with the goal of improving as a leader of character. However, it was not always so. As a freshman, I struggled to push myself. I had the mental habit of giving up when the going got tough. For so long, I depended on external motivators -- mentors, family, and friends -- to get me to, and through, the Academy. However, I learned that friends, family, and mentors are not the ones who wake up early, attend classes and training all day, and strive to be a positive example for others.
>
> The competing demands were not the challenge; the problem was the way I perceived the expectations. Early in my cadet career, I saw these challenges as necessary evils on the path to graduation – things that were being done to me. I had yet to learn that my development takes place through the academic, fitness, and training opportunities along my path, and that I had to take responsibility for my development. I shifted my perspective and viewed the challenges as privileges. I replaced "I've got to" with "I get to." I _get to_ put in work while others are sleeping. I _get to_ attend a prestigious military academy. I _get to_ develop into a leader of character who lives honorably, lifts others, and elevates performance.
>
> Fortunately, an upper-class cadet recognized my potential and took the time to mentor me. He stressed the importance of setting the example, no matter what rank we held or what class we were in. Over time, his positive example of helping others and consistent encouragement inspired me to push myself harder, and I discovered that pushing myself actually made life easier. My path to success became clear when I shifted from merely going through the motions, to being an active participant in my development. Pursuing leadership roles and engaging in meaningful opportunities allowed me to contribute and advocate for positive change. I now treasure the developmental experiences the Academy provides.
>
> I attribute my growth to my upper-class mentor and other cadets who offered support and encouragement. I am thankful for the mentorship and, in turn, I will continue to mentor others. As a sophomore, I ensured freshmen in my squadron knew I supported their development. Additionally, I tried to brighten their day, which was no easy task at times. My peers noticed. My chain of command also noticed and supported my renewed effort. Just as the path to becoming a leader of character is a mountain that has no top, my development is a continuous, life-long process I will continue to take an active role in.

6.3.7.1. Reflection: As we gain perspective on past experiences, we can use the Leader of Character Framework to clarify goals and proactively approach experiences with an awareness that we are developing ourselves, regardless of the success or failure of our endeavor. This cadet leaned on the experiences of another cadet leader, allowing herself to gain valuable experience, own her goal, engage in the pursuit of it, and take action to practice courageous leadership. Furthermore, the upper-class cadet who took the time to be a mentor demonstrated inclusive leadership and Lifted Others by helping the cadet own her development.

6.3.8. Vignette #8 – "It Takes Courage." In this example, a challenging scenario unfolds in which a witness decides to take preventive action even though they did not know the person being harassed.

Figure 6.8. IT TAKES COURAGE.

> **"It Takes Courage"**
> "I was at a coffee shop, and I observed a male customer sexually harassing a woman I did not know. The man was asking the woman, 'You look good! You should hit me up with your snap or insta so I can hit you up.' The male looked her up and down and crowded her space. The woman backed away from him. She tried to be respectful and let him know she was uninterested in the attention, but he persisted by saying, 'Hey baby doll, don't be like that. I got what you want.' I intervened by removing her from the environment. I acted as if I knew her. I said, 'Hey Jen, it's been a long time. How are you? Let's head over here and catch up.' I stepped in front of the harasser, moved with her to another part of the coffee shop, and got her out of the situation. Even though she did not know me, she immediately recognized that I was helping her escape the situation. She thanked me and left the store."

6.3.8.1. Reflection: The person who intervened demonstrated the ability to take care of others and practiced the virtue of courage when they noticed a situation that needed to be addressed, even though they did not personally know the person. Cadets learn similar bystander [46] intervention techniques in their self-protection courses. We all have a responsibility not to engage in, nor tolerate, behaviors that harm our members. Discussion Questions: How might your willingness to intervene change if the gender of the person being harassed was different? What things might you consider prior to intervening? How could you handle the situation if it escalated and the man became defensive or aggressive?

6.3.9. Vignette #9 – "Standing My Ground." Individual and collective development should reflect behavior aligned with being a Leader of Character. This scenario presents a personal challenge related to dealing with peer pressure and maintaining personal values and beliefs associated with personal identity.

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[46] A **bystander** is someone who witnesses harassing behavior and can make a positive difference by becoming an **upstander** who "sees what happens and intervenes, interrupts, or speaks up" to stop the harassing behavior (https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/featuredtopics/become-an-upstander.html).

Figure 6.9. STANDING MY GROUND.

> **"Standing My Ground"**
> *"I was at a party where people were drinking. I felt pressure from others at the party to drink, even though I did not want to. My friends kept handing me beers saying things like, 'Come on man, let's have some fun! Hey, just have a couple of beers, it is no big deal. What are you, the sobriety police?' Despite the persistent peer pressure, I stood my ground by saying things like, 'thanks bruh, I'm the DD; Nah, I'm not drinking tonight; I appreciate the offer, but no thanks.' Eventually, those around me respected my decision and backed off from pressuring me to drink. I attribute this willingness to be assertive to the training received in self-protection, alcohol awareness, and sexual resistance education."*

6.3.9.1. Reflection: The person who held their ground demonstrated the ability to stand up for themselves and to stick to their values and beliefs. Despite experiencing peer pressure, he exhibited a known protective factor in the prevention of sexual harassment and assault/violence by choosing not to drink. Discussion Questions: If your intent is not to drink that evening, what considerations cross your mind prior to attending this party? If you witnessed someone else being pressured into drinking, how could you help them? How do your considerations shift if you know there are underage people at the party (either drinking or not drinking)?

6.3.10. Vignette #10 – "Protecting a Friend." In this example, we show a challenge that a bystander may experience. Having normal life experiences, going out with friends does not remove the fact that there are bad actors. Even when you step in and do what you think is right, there may be challenging longer-term effects. Having conviction and stepping in is not necessarily easy, but it is of the utmost importance to creating and maintaining a culture of zero-tolerance. Specifically, this story highlights the Assess-Challenge-Support aspect of the Leader of Character Framework – stepping in and supporting the friend is an example of engaging in purposeful experiences.

Figure 6.10. PROTECTING A FRIEND.

> **"Protecting a Friend"**
>
> *"I was at a bar with a few friends, a normal Friday night out really. We were drinking, dancing, and generally just having a good time. Later on, the group decided to leave and head to party at a friend's house. The house belonged to a "friend of a friend" and I thought nothing of it. As the night progressed, I noticed that my close girlfriend was past her limit, so we put her to bed in a guest room. About 30 minutes later, I was standing in the hall with another friend waiting for the bathroom when a guy we did not know opened the guest bedroom door, paused and went in, shutting the door behind him. My friend and I tried to follow him in, but the guy pushed back on the door to keep us out. We were yelling at this point that he needed to get out. In almost no time at all, others joined us and he finally came out, yelling at us as if we were in the wrong. Fortunately, my friend did not wake-up through the commotion.*
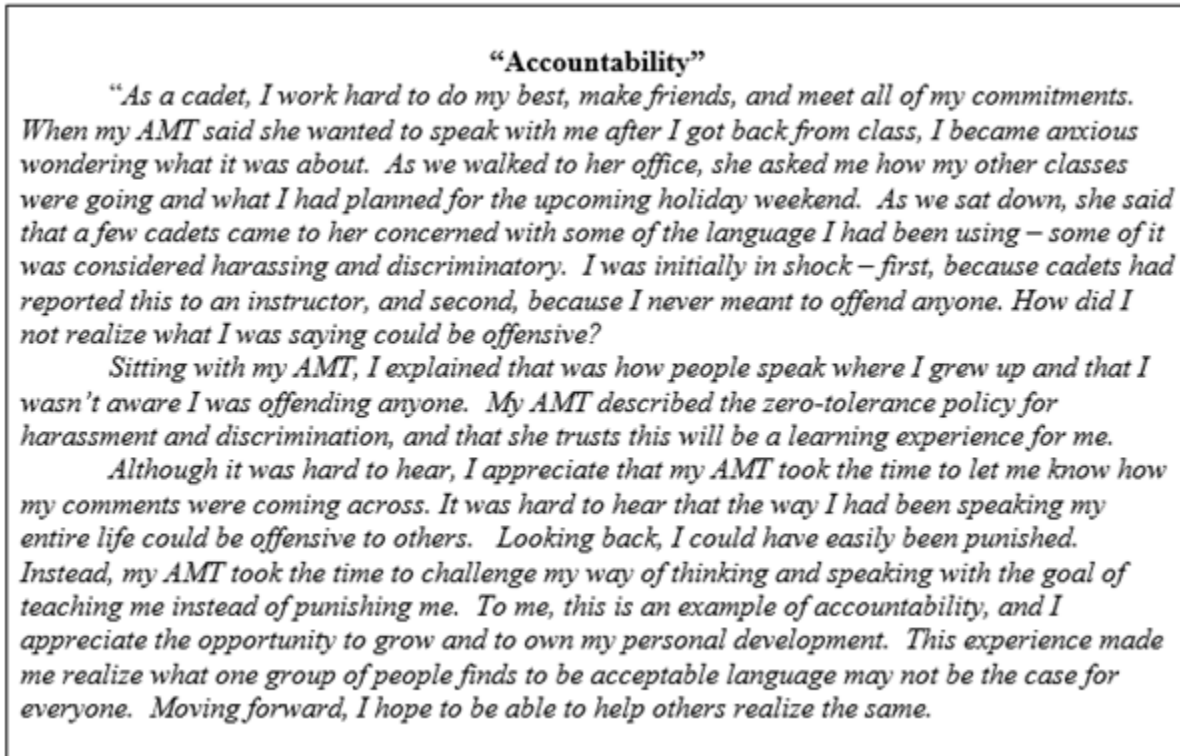>
> *The next day a few of us explained to her what happened and she was mortified. She kept saying how stupid she felt and 'how could I put myself in that situation?' We told her she did not do anything wrong. She is of age and she was with friends – we safely put her to bed and she was alone, sleeping. That guy was the problem, not her. A drunk woman, any drunk person for that matter, is not an opportunity. As it turned out, she did know him, and she sat with that for a few days. I can't imagine how she felt knowing someone she knew, someone who knew her, would do that.*
>
> *I am glad we were there, but how do you convince your friend that she did not do anything wrong, that she is not the problem? I realize that the worst thing that could have happened didn't happen. I know that is not always the case. Regardless of how far it goes, it is that old story, 'what was she wearing' that keeps the narrative going that the victim has to take ownership for the perpetrator's actions.*

6.3.10.1. Reflection: The friend who acted demonstrated the ability to take care of others (in this case, her friend) when they noticed a situation that needed to be addressed immediately. We all have a responsibility not to engage in, nor tolerate, behaviors that harm members of our formation. This is an example of how a person can intervene and provide support afterwards. Discussion Questions: As the person who stepped in to prevent a potential assault, how can you support a friend after-the-fact? How might your actions differ if you did not know the person?

6.3.11. Vignette #11 – "Accountability." In this example, we hear from a cadet who was using language that was offensive to her fellow cadets, but was unaware of how her words were coming across. In prevention, those providing accountability and reinforcing a culture of prevention can often be caught between what seems obvious and what is unknown.

Figure 6.11. ACCOUNTABILITY.

> #### "Accountability"
>
> "*As a cadet, I work hard to do my best, make friends, and meet all of my commitments. When my AMT said she wanted to speak with me after I got back from class, I became anxious wondering what it was about. As we walked to her office, she asked me how my other classes were going and what I had planned for the upcoming holiday weekend. As we sat down, she said that a few cadets came to her concerned with some of the language I had been using – some of it was considered harassing and discriminatory. I was initially in shock – first, because cadets had reported this to an instructor, and second, because I never meant to offend anyone. How did I not realize what I was saying could be offensive?*
>
> *Sitting with my AMT, I explained that was how people speak where I grew up and that I wasn't aware I was offending anyone. My AMT described the zero-tolerance policy for harassment and discrimination, and that she trusts this will be a learning experience for me.*
>
> *Although it was hard to hear, I appreciate that my AMT took the time to let me know how my comments were coming across. It was hard to hear that the way I had been speaking my entire life could be offensive to others. Looking back, I could have easily been punished. Instead, my AMT took the time to challenge my way of thinking and speaking with the goal of teaching me instead of punishing me. To me, this is an example of accountability, and I appreciate the opportunity to grow and to own my personal development. This experience made me realize what one group of people finds to be acceptable language may not be the case for everyone. Moving forward, I hope to be able to help others realize the same.*

6.3.11.1. Reflection: Both the AMT and cadet approached this situation with a developmental perspective. The leader-developer (AMT) realized how important her response would be and purposely used a developmental approach in holding the cadet accountable for using the harassing and discriminatory language. How feedback is presented and how it is received is essential to a positive outcome and growth. In this case, the cadet was open to feedback and owned their development when presented with constructive feedback. Discussion Questions: Think about the purposeful experience this AMT created -- what did they do that encouraged the cadet to be receptive instead of defensive (private conversation, education-based, calm environment, etc.)? How did this cadet accept the feedback presented to her? How does it feel when you hear feedback that feels uncomfortable because it challenges your norms?

6.3.12. Vignette #12 – "Mealtime at Mitch's." In this example, cadets in an informal setting have an opportunity to practice (Own-Engage-Practice) responding to a comment that, if left unchecked, can negatively impact unit cohesion and trust.

Figure 6.12. MEALTIME AT MITCH'S.

<div style="border:1px solid">

"Mealtime at Mitch's"

"As a 3-degree, I was sitting at my lunch table in Mitch's, chatting casually with the cadet next to me. Suddenly, I overheard a Firstie at the table laugh and loudly announce, "that's so gay." Another Firstie at the table piped in, "hey, it's not cool to say stuff like that," and the conversation stifled some. Eventually, the Firstie who spoke up left the table to grab a salad. The Firstie who made the initial comment started talking badly about the one who just left, saying "What's his problem, why is he so sensitive?" I was not sure how to respond, so I just stared at my food and quietly finished my lunch."

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6.3.12.1. Reflection: As a developing leader of character, it can be hard to respond appropriately in the moment when comments like this are made by your fellow cadets, co-workers, friends, or even family members. Getting practice at responding in order to uphold dignity and respect and preserve unit cohesion is challenging. As Firsties and as officers in our units, we often have the greatest influence in setting the tone for what's acceptable. Responding in the moment and telling that person their comment "isn't cool," addresses the immediate behavior; however, there can also be longer-term effects. Discussion Questions: What is the intent of the Firstie who laughed and said, "That's so gay"? What is the impact on team cohesion if this language is allowed? What factors might you consider in how to respond in this situation? How was the Firstie who corrected the disrespectful behavior treated by peers? How might the Firstie who was corrected feel in the moment? How can you respond to uphold dignity and respect and preserve unit cohesion both in that moment and long term?

6.3.13. Vignette #13 – "Hiding Behind Anonymity." In this example, cadets are faced with everyday pressures on social media that go against what we stand for as members of the profession of arms and leaders of character who live honorably, lift others, and elevate performance.

Figure 6.13. HIDING BEHIND ANONYMITY.

<div style="border:1px solid">

"Hiding Behind Anonymity"

It was ACQ, and I needed a break from studying. I decided to scroll through Jodel. While scrolling, I see this post: "Who are the hottest 4-degs?" As I check out the comments that follow, I see that many cadets have responded.

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6.3.13.1. Reflection: Comments and questions like these focus discussions around something unrelated to our USAFA mission. In fact, comments and questions like these, especially on social media, detract from our mission and our culture of dignity and respect. They create a culture of objectifying a specific group of cadets – treating them as objects; send the message that those cadets' bodies/appearance is for enjoyment and pleasure; and degrade a culture of dignity and respect by not viewing 4-degrees as professional Airmen/Guardians. Discussion Questions: What do you think the anonymous person

intended by posting this question about the 4-degrees? What are the implications of this post? What are the possible impacts on team cohesion? As a developing leader of character, how can you respond?

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION: THE LEADER OF CHARACTER FRAMEWORK IN PERSPECTIVE

7.1. The Leader of Character Framework requires thought, commitment, and sustained action. Understood and put into practice, it will help us—cadets, teachers, trainers, coaches, and staff—to develop and grow as individuals, leaders and public servants, fully worthy of the trust and confidence of each other and the nation we serve. We should seek no less.

7.2. Character development is a journey, not a destination. The Leader of Character Framework is the road map for that journey. It not only defines what it means to be a leader of character, it also provides guideposts to challenge ourselves and our teammates along the way. Each of us must "own" our individual character and leadership development journey and recognize that leaders grow leaders. We must embrace virtues like Honesty, Courage, Dignity, Respect, Duty, Teamwork, and more. We cannot simply grow in character for our own benefit; we must also reinforce this process in our superiors, peers, and subordinates in order to elevate performance across the enterprise.

7.3. I urge each of you to learn and integrate this Leader of Character Framework into your organizational processes, strategic plan, and most importantly your speech. Those who live honorably, lift others, and elevate performance are exactly the leaders we need to win the high-end fight of the 21st century. The Framework is OUR road map to character and leadership development. This is a journey we all need to take seriously, but also one to enjoy along the way.

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Superintendent

Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AF—Air Force

AFMAN—Air Force Manual

AFMD—Air Force Mission Directive

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

AFRC—Air Force Reserve Command

AFRIMS—Air Force Records Information Management System

ALQ—Airman Leadership Qualities

AMT—Academy Military Trainer

ANG—Air National Guard

AOC—Air Officer Commanding

ARDA—Awareness, Reasoning, Deciding, and Acting

CCLD—Center for Character and Leadership Development

COI—Course of Instruction

COL—Continuum of Learning

DAF—Department of the Air Force

DIT—Defining Issues Test

ETE—Education, Training, and Experiences

LOC—Leader of Character

NCO—Non-Commissioned Officer

ODS—Officer Development System

OPR—Office of Primary Responsibility

ME—Mission Element

RDS—Records Disposition Schedule

USAFA—United States Air Force Academy

Terms

Airman Leadership Qualities—To improve the quality of performance feedback to our Total Force, the Air Force has quantified the qualities we value in our Airmen into 10 Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs). These ALQs are grouped into 4 Major Performance Areas derived from AFI 1-2, *Air Force Culture: Commander's Responsibilities* (Executing the Mission, Leading People, Managing Resources, and Improving the Unit).

Coaching—As defined by the International Coach Federation, coaching is partnering with individuals in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Furthermore, it is a dynamic and tailored partnership between a Coachee and a Coach, with the purpose of supporting the Coachee in making progress on Coachee-initiated goals.

Leader-Developer—One aspect of being a Leader of Character is lifting others to be their best possible selves and developing those around us; we refer to the person in this role as a "leader-developer." This role implicitly involves recognition of individual dignity and respectful interpersonal relations. As described further in **chapter 3**, a leader-developer engages others through assessments to make them aware of strengths and areas for development, challenges them to develop based on current and desired habits, and supports them in doing so via multiple experiences and resources. To support USAFA's mission, at times both cadets and permanent party may step into this role.

Leader of Character—someone who consistently honors the dignity and respect of others and practices the Air Force Core Values by: (1) *Living Honorably*; (2) *Lifting Others*; and (3) *Elevating Performance*.

Mentoring—According to Department of the Air Force Handbook 36-2643, *Coaching and Mentoring Program*, mentoring is defined as a type of professional relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally. This relationship helps achieve mission success and motivates Airmen to achieve their goals.

USAFA Outcomes—USAFA is a unique institution, providing an elite undergraduate educational program, a world-class training program in the profession of arms, a rigorous four-year regimen of physical education classes and competitive athletics, and a continuous grounding in character development. However, the most unique characteristic of the Academy is how these distinct elements work together toward the shared mission of producing leaders of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation. The synergy of these distinct elements allows us to offer an integrated four-year experience that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. By the time cadets graduate from the Air Force Academy and are commissioned as second lieutenants, we expect them to acquire a sophisticated combination of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities that they will need to succeed as airmen and citizens. We have described these characteristics in the following nine U.S. Air Force Academy Institutional Outcomes: Critical Thinking; Application of Engineering Methods; Scientific Reasoning and the Principles of Science; the Human Condition, Cultures, and Societies; Leadership, Teamwork, and Organizational Management; Clear Communication; Ethics and Respect for Human Dignity; National Security of the American Public; and Warrior Ethos as Airmen and Citizens.

Attachment 2

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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