

# An Assessment of Moral and Character Education in Initial Entry Training (IET)

CHAPLAIN (LIEUTENANT COLONEL)  
KENNETH R. WILLIAMS

*14<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, USA*

**ABSTRACT** *The US Army conducts extensive training on its core values beginning with Initial Entry Training (commonly referred to as basic training) in order to shape soldiers' behavior and decision making in combat and non-combat situations. This paper addresses the apparent limited empirical research on the effect of US Army Initial Entry Training on soldier's moral development. The study which is the subject of this paper employed a mixed methods quantitative/qualitative model. The Defining Issues Test was administered at the beginning and conclusion of Military Police (MP) Initial Entry Training to determine change in soldiers' moral judgment. This study also used focus groups of MP Initial Entry Training soldiers to identify key factors that soldiers said influenced changes in their moral development. Data analysis of Defining Issues Test scores revealed no significant changes in scores of the overall sample or within the categories of age and educational level. Gender tests revealed a decline in personal interest scores among females, females having higher postconventional scores than males, and no change in scores among males. Focus group results revealed the relationship with drill sergeants as having a significant impact on moral development. This study provides feedback to trainers and commanders that can be used to design effective moral and character education and thereby prepare soldiers for decision making and morally consistent behavior in combat and non-combat situations.*

**KEY WORDS:** Moral judgment, moral development, moral education, character education

## Introduction

The United States Army (hereafter referred to as the Army), as every values-based organization, expects its members' behavior and decisions to reflect its moral code. The Army's moral code is outlined in the Army core values and the Soldiers' Creed in which is embedded the Warrior Ethos. Although the Army's moral code is publicized and taught extensively throughout the Army system, there continues to be a number of moral collapses. A survey of reports of investigations obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union

---

*Correspondence Address:* Chaplain Kenneth R. Williams, 14th Military Police Brigade, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri 65473, USA. E-mail: Kenneth.williams43@us.army.mil

1502-7570 Print/1502-7589 Online/10/010041-16 © 2010 Taylor & Francis

<http://www.informaworld.com>

DOI: 10.1080/15027570903523107

(2005) shows over 100 investigations of war crimes committed by American military personnel. These crimes range from theft to aggravated assault to torture and to rape and murder. The appearance is that the Army must do a better job of moral education in training at all levels, especially in Initial Entry Training (IET). However, it is not only the major incidents of moral failures that are of concern. Of major concern are the daily violations of the Army's moral code. Such violations include theft, sexual harassment, fraternization, and assault.

Effective moral and character education is necessary for several reasons. The nature of combat operations is evolving. The unconventional warfare of today's conflicts blurs the distinction between combatant and noncombatant. Also, the current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have accentuated the reality of the *three block war*, now often enlarged to be called the *four block war*, in which soldiers conduct humanitarian support, peacekeeping, and combat actions within the short span of time and distance all the while dealing with the media and other information operations (Krulak 1997; Mattis & Hoffman 2005). Protracted conflict erodes the moral decision making processes of personnel. Over time, personnel tend to view all members of a specific nation as the enemy, not just those that are combatants (Perry 2009). Personnel also tend to justify violations of the laws of war regarding protection of noncombatants and use of appropriate levels of force. These factors have significant influence over unit readiness and support for military personnel from the United States' and the occupied nations' population and support from the world for the policies of the US. These factors emphasize the need for effective moral and character education within the Army in IET and post-IET. This paper summarizes a study of the effect of IET on the moral development and character of soldiers.

The Army's process of character education is described in an Army Research Institute report entitled *Warrior Ethos: Analysis of the Concept and Initial Development and Applications*. Methods of character education include classroom lectures, rote memorization, repetition, various forms of conditioning and reinforcement, and engagement in various training exercises. In 2004, the US Army Research Institute commissioned a study of the 'Warrior Ethos' to determine the attributes it promoted and methods for inculcating the Warrior Ethos. The researchers identified seven attributes that reflect the Warrior Ethos (perseverance; ability to set priorities; ability to make tradeoffs; ability to adapt; ability to accept responsibility for others; ability to accept dependence on others; motivated by a higher calling) and nine battle drills that they said facilitated development of the Warrior Ethos (react to contact – visual, improvised explosive device, direct fire, to include rocket propelled grenade; avoid ambush – every soldier a sensor; react to ambush – blocked and unblocked; react to indirect fire; react to chemical attack; break contact; dismount a vehicle; evacuate injured personnel from vehicle; secure at a halt) (Riccio et al. 2004).

The Army Research Institute (ARI) report indicated that this process, based on the theories of Bloom (Bloom's Taxonomy), Rogers, and Bandura (self-efficacy and modeling), will facilitate the internalization of the Army's

moral code. However, to date, there has been little or no empirical research on soldiers in IET to determine the effect of such an educational process on the moral character of soldiers. Therefore, the effectiveness of the process is unknown.

### **Method of Assessment**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of Military Police (MP) IET on the moral character of soldiers. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Rest's Four Component Model of moral development, the schemas of the Defining Issues Test (DIT), and the US Army's moral code consisting of the Army values, the Soldiers' Creed, and the Warrior Ethos. Two types of data were desired – objective and subjective. The objective, quantitative data was needed to determine a specific change in moral judgment, that is, the thought processes for making a moral decision. The subjective, qualitative data was needed to determine the factors, from the soldiers' perspective, that might account for a change in moral and character development, that is, the growth and acquisition of moral attitudes and skills for moral action. The quantitative data was collected through the administration of the DIT in a pre-training/post-training format during the first and last weeks of MP IET, a duration of 19 weeks. The DIT is a highly valid assessment of moral judgment and relates well to the Army's moral code and the purpose of the study. The DIT provided data on the institutional elements of moral judgment while the qualitative data, obtained through the use of focus group discussions, provided data on the interpersonal elements of MP IET.

The DIT is a paper and pencil assessment that asks respondents to select and rank decisions on five moral dilemmas. The DIT categorizes moral judgment according to three schemas – *personal interest*, *maintain norms*, and *postconventional reasoning* (Bebeau 2002; Rest et al. 1999; Thoma 2006). The personal interest schema is characterized by making decisions based on the advantage to self, the fair exchange of favor for favor, a focus on intentions, a concern for good relationships, and obtaining the approval of others. Personal relationships are based on the Golden Rule. The maintain norms schema is characterized by making decisions according to uniform, societal norms; duty; partially reciprocal relationships; rules; and maintaining existing laws, roles, and organizational structure. Personal relationships are based on give-and-take. The postconventional schema is characterized by making decisions according to shared ideals, the primacy of moral principles (not rules), fully reciprocal relationships, safeguarding basic rights, and the premise that society is based on consensus-producing procedures. Personal relationships are based on the duty to serve others regardless of receiving anything in return.

A primary goal of the Army is influencing the moral behavior of soldiers of all ranks through instilling the Army's moral code (Klein et al. 2006). The moral code of the US Army is embodied in the Army Values and the Soldiers' Creed. The Army core values are:

Loyalty – bear true faith and allegiance to the US Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other soldiers.

Duty – fulfill your obligations.

Respect – treat people as they should be treated.

Selfless service – put the welfare of the Nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.

Honor – live up to the Army values.

Integrity – do what’s right, legally and morally.

Personal courage – face fear, danger, or adversity (physical or moral). (United States Army 2006: 4-2—4-8)

The Soldiers’ Creed states:

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

**I will always place the mission first.**

**I will never accept defeat.**

**I will never quit.**

**I will never leave a fallen comrade.**

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment, and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier. (United States Army 2006: 4–10)

The Warrior Ethos is printed in bold above.

An analysis of the Army’s moral code yields reinforcement of key elements of moral behavior – selflessness, commitment, perseverance, justice, and professionalism. These elements relate to the three areas of assessment of the DIT. The Army seeks to eliminate selfishness in favor of team development, which relates to the personal interest schema. The Army is a structured, duty-oriented, and rules-based organization which relates to the maintain norms schema. The Army’s transformation into a more flexible, adaptable force to meet with the challenges of unconventional warfare relates to postconventional moral judgment. Therefore the DIT seems well-suited for assessing moral judgment in the arena of IET.

The DIT is based on Kohlberg’s (1980, 1981, 1984) theory of moral development, which focuses more on societal morality than interpersonal morality. Rest and his associates, the authors of the DIT, define macromorality and micromorality as follows: ‘*Macromorality* concerns the formal structures of society that are involved in making cooperation possible at a society level’ while ‘*Micromorality* concerns the developing relationships with particular others, and with an individuals’ creating consistent virtues with him- or herself throughout everyday life’ (Rest et al. 1999: 2–3).

Micromorality emphasizes loyalty to individuals, especially to those with whom one is familiar. Macromorality emphasizes impartiality toward others. The authors of the DIT assert that Kohlberg’s theory best addresses the

element of macromorality. Therefore, being based on Kohlberg, the DIT tends to assess macromorality, specifically 'how the individual views social cooperation in terms of justice and fairness within law and the mechanisms of government and other social institutions' (Thoma 2002: 227). The theory underlying the DIT asserts that moral development occurs as people grow in their 'understanding of macromoral conceptions of social cooperation in conventional and postconventional terms' (Ibid.: 227). The developers of the DIT assert that this macromoral feature of the DIT is the 'default interpretive system', that is, responses tend to reflect the participant's understanding of the general, big picture ideals and expectations of society or the institution to which one belongs. Therefore, the DIT provides an assessment of the soldiers' understanding of the Army's expectation of their moral judgment.

The qualitative data was collected through the use of four focus groups of 10 soldiers in each group, one group for each platoon in a training company. The focus groups were conducted during the last week of IET. The facilitator used discussion questions that centered on change in values and moral behavior and factors that the soldiers believed influenced the changes. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed into text. The text was analyzed using the process of qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis focuses on various relationships among variables rather than simply analyzing frequencies of items as in quantitative content analysis.

It is arguable that 19 weeks of MP IET is not long enough to observe significant change in moral judgment and character. However, studies have shown that significant change in moral judgment has occurred through interventions of 12 weeks in duration (Bebeau 2002; Bebeau & Monson 2008; Reimer et al. 1983) and some in colleges of a semester in duration (King & Mayhew 2002). Such studies indicate that change in moral judgment through the course of IET is possible and observable. It can be argued that IET has significantly more instructional hours than a semester college course. Additionally, IET consists of more than just instruction. Soldiers in IET are immersed in the Army culture which provides for greater influence over the soldiers' moral development than a semester college course.

## **Results**

### *Quantitative*

The DIT scores were analyzed in several ways – overall scores, gender, age, and educational level. The overall scores were analyzed by means of matched pair *t*-test. A total of 190 soldiers completed the pre-training DIT and 167 the post-training DIT. Due to extreme inconsistencies in responses, 19 were purged from the pre-training and 34 from the post-training scores. This purging resulted in 120 matched pairs – an individual's pre-training scores are matched to his or her post-training scores. The demographics of the matched pairs are displayed in Table 1. The matched pair analysis revealed no statistically significant change in moral judgment scores between the pre-training and post-training scores in all three schemas. At the start and completion of IET

**Table 1.** Demographics of Pre-Test/Post-Test Paired Sample (n = 120)

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	28	23.3
Male	92	76.7
Age		
18	36	30.0
19	24	20.0
20	15	12.5
21	10	8.3
22	11	9.2
23	3	2.5
24	4	3.3
25	1	0.8
26	6	5.0
27	3	2.5
28	2	1.7
29	0	0.0
30+	4	3.3
Age undetermined	1	0.8
Educational Level		
Grades 10–12	72	60.0
Vocational Technical	8	6.7
Junior College	14	11.7
Freshman	7	5.8
Sophomore	7	5.8
Junior	2	1.7
Senior	2	1.7
Other	4	3.3
Educational level not reported	3	2.5

the maintain norms score was 42%, the personal interest score was 28%, the postconventional score was 24%, and the N2 score was 23%. The scores indicate that these soldiers are most likely to follow the rules when making moral decisions or resolving moral dilemmas. The scores also indicate that when the rules do not provide resolution, these soldiers are more inclined to act based on personal benefit rather than applying the principles that are foundational to the rules (Williams 2009).

The analysis of the scores by gender revealed that mostly, there were no significant differences with the exception of three comparisons. First, females scored higher than males in postconventional reasoning on both the pre-training and post-training assessments. Second, females scored lower than males on the post-training personal interest schema. Third, the female score for personal interest was significantly lower on the post-training assessment. These three items indicate that females in MP IET exercise postconventional

reasoning more than males and that MP IET affects a decline in personal interest moral reasoning among females.

The analysis of age and educational level revealed no significant differences among the various groups. Norms for the DIT indicate that postconventional scores increase with age and educational level. Usually older people and those with higher level education score higher in postconventional reasoning. The data of this study did not support these norms.

*Qualitative*

The qualitative content analysis revealed several causative elements from the soldiers’ perspective. Additionally four primary categories of change were identified – decision making, personal values, interpersonal relationships, and personal leadership. Table 2 displays the areas and items that were identified as positive and negative changes.

Table 3 displays the factors that soldiers stated had influenced their moral and character development through the course of IET.

*Conflicting Influences*

The results of the qualitative content analysis of the focus group session indicate conflicting and contradictory influences. Many positive influences

**Table 2.** Positive and Negative Changes

Area of Change	Positive Changes	Negative Change
Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Problem-solving</li> <li>● Critical thinking</li> <li>● Prioritizing</li> <li>● Managing change</li> <li>● Personal choices affect others</li> <li>● Mental discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Eliminated the need for personal decision making</li> </ul>
Personal values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-control</li> <li>● Spirituality</li> <li>● Patience</li> <li>● Courage (overcoming fear)</li> <li>● Self-confidence</li> <li>● Selfless service</li> <li>● Humility</li> <li>● Respect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Decrease in spirituality</li> <li>● Increase in negative attitudes</li> <li>● Decrease in personal morals</li> </ul>
Interpersonal relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interacting with diversity</li> <li>● Relationship skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distrust of others</li> </ul>
Personal leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contributing to the team</li> <li>● Being responsible for others</li> <li>● Following others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None mentioned</li> </ul>

**Table 3.** Influencing Factors

Influencing Factors	Positive Influences	Negative Influences
Training events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Field training exercise</li> <li>● Confidence course</li> <li>● Bayonet course</li> <li>● Urban operations</li> <li>● Mud pit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None mentioned</li> </ul>
Training content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Swift correction</li> <li>● Shared adversity</li> <li>● Realistic training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of practical application of values and standards</li> <li>● Limited discussion of values</li> <li>● Values memorization only</li> <li>● Lack of real world situations</li> </ul>
Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diversity/multicultural elements</li> <li>● Encouraging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Negative attitudes</li> </ul>
Leaders	<p style="text-align: center;">Motivating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encouraging</li> <li>● Spent extra time to train</li> <li>● Present</li> <li>● Inspiring</li> <li>● Believing in soldiers</li> <li>● Passionate</li> <li>● Participating in training</li> <li>● Using disappointment as a motivational technique</li> <li>● Pushing soldiers</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Relating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interacting on a personal level</li> <li>● Open and honest</li> <li>● Genuine and sincere</li> <li>● Trustworthy</li> <li>● Listening</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Correcting</li> <li>● Holding accountable</li> <li>● Using a variety of correction techniques</li> <li>● Giving feedback on performance</li> <li>● Enforcing standard</li> <li>● Balance positive and negative</li> <li>● Limit harsh discipline</li> <li>● Teaching critical thinking</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Motivating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of positive reinforcement</li> <li>● Lack of incentive to live the values</li> <li>● Apathetic</li> <li>● Tearing down soldiers</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Relating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Impatience</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of correction of values violations</li> <li>● Extreme strictness</li> </ul>



Table 3 (Continued)

Influencing Factors	Positive Influences	Negative Influences
	Integrating	Integrating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sharing personal problems</li> <li>● Discussing real world situations</li> <li>● Demonstrating compassion</li> <li>● Focusing on soldiers' needs</li> <li>● Ensure survival</li> <li>● Help with soldiers' problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not set an example</li> </ul>

were mitigated by negative influences. Positive changes in decision making and values were not necessarily moral in content. Additionally, soldiers stated that the extreme focus on rules eliminated the need for personal decision making. Soldiers also reported mixed changes in personal values. Some experienced an increase in moral character while others declined. In interpersonal relationships, learning to interact with diverse people was contradicted by growing distrust of others. Personal leadership was developed in contributing and being responsible to a team.

The conflicting changes were due to the often opposing factors of influence. At times, leaders enacted a swift and consistent correction for rules violations. Shared adversity and realistic training were also positive factors. However, soldiers mostly stated that lack of practical application and discussion of values was a negative factor. The influence of peers had a positive and negative effect as learning to interact with a diversity of multicultural elements and receiving encouragement was undermined by the negative attitudes of many.

Based on the qualitative data, leaders played the key role in influencing soldiers' moral and character development. Effective motivation by leaders included encouragement and inspiration, spending extra time with soldiers, giving positive feedback on performance, and using disappointment as a motivational technique. These positive leader actions were counteracted by a failure to give positive feedback and actions that emotionally degraded soldiers. Effective leaders displayed passion for the tasks of training soldiers whereas the ineffective leaders were seen as apathetic. This indicates that the leader's attitude about the mission and toward the soldiers has great influence.

Effective leaders developed healthy relationships with soldiers through openness, honesty, sincerity, and taking time to listen. Ineffective leaders were seen as impatient. This indicates that the leader-follower relationship is a key element in IET.

Leaders who were effective trainers held soldiers accountable, applied a variety of leadership skills, balanced positive and negative correction, and consistently gave feedback on soldiers' performance. Ineffective leaders acted in the extreme; either failing to correct rules violations or going overboard with correction. This indicates that the most effective leaders care enough to confront poor performance. And when they correct poor performance they

do it with moderation, not emotion, applying a variety of techniques to instill the lesson to be learned.

Leaders who had the most impact were those who could take the basic rules and facts and apply them to real world situations, either personally or professionally. They could integrate various elements of training in such a way that soldiers could apply the lessons to their personal experience. Effective leaders demonstrated by their personal example an integration of the Army's moral code in such a way that it had meaning and purpose, whereas ineffective leaders did not set such an example.

### **Interpretation**

The results of the study indicated superficial and limited change. There was no significant change in moral judgment among soldiers through the course of IET. Soldiers indicated that they had experienced significant changes in attitudes and behaviors. However, although the focus of the discussion was on moral development, soldiers' responses were often amoral and pragmatic in nature. The results also indicate conflicting and contradictory factors of influence. These assessments lead to the interpretation that IET has only a superficial effect on the moral development of soldiers. Why was there little change? What was the nature of the change? Five factors emerged – emphasis on the rules, inconsistent leader actions, lack of moral challenge, ineffective training methods, and moral climate.

### *Rules versus Principles*

The quantitative data indicate that soldiers tended to make moral decisions based on the rules (maintain norms schema) at the start and conclusion of IET. This implies that IET reinforced a rules-based approach to moral decision making or at least did little to facilitate a principle-based or postconventional approach. Soldiers learned new rules but did not necessarily understand or apply the principles that support the rules. Soldiers indicated that IET eliminated the need for personal decision making. They perceived that they were discouraged from thinking for themselves. The strong emphasis on control and reinforcement of the rules tended to restrict moral and character development.

The Army's moral code, as mentioned above, relates to the three areas, or schemas, that are assessed by the DIT. There are elements in the Army's moral code that are intended to counteract personal interest, to reinforce maintain norms, and even to facilitate postconventional thinking, e.g., the Army value of respect. Since the DIT tends to assess one's understanding of the expectation of a society or institution regarding moral behavior, the indication is that soldiers understood that the Army expected them to follow the rules rather than apply the principles foundational to the rules. Perhaps it is an unrealistic expectation that the Army, a rules-based organization, facilitate postconventional thinking among its individual members. Still, contemporary unconventional warfare may indicate a need for postconventional moral thinking among the members

of the Army in order for them to adapt moral action according to the needs of the situation. This conflict between organizational moral thinking and individual moral thinking is worthy of future discussion.

Moral development cannot be taught in the same ways as military skills through repetition and reinforcement. The development of moral values must allow for self-construction as people choose to internalize those values that they perceive are necessary for successful living. Each person is his or her own moral philosopher. Controls and enforcement of the rules may serve as an initial guide but are not sufficient for deep internalization of the Army's moral code. Soldiers may learn the rules and know when to follow them, but still not buy into the Army's moral code as a way of life. Soldiers will only internalize the Army's moral code as they see it demonstrated in the behavior of their leaders and practiced in the policies and procedures of their units. Specific methods for facilitating soldiers' internalization of the Army's moral code will be discussed below.

#### *Leader Actions*

It is clear from the study that leaders, specifically drill sergeants, had the greatest impact on soldiers' development, moral or otherwise. Leaders who had a positive effect on soldiers' moral development engaged in the following activities: (a) developed a positive, motivational relationship with them; (b) used a variety of training and disciplinary techniques to hold soldiers accountable to standards; and (c) provided personal and practical examples of the Army's moral code in word and deed.

Leaders that hindered and had a negative effect on soldiers' moral development failed to provide positive feedback on performance, demonstrated apathy, and consistently degraded soldiers; were extremely harsh and strict in their methods or failed to address violations of the Army's moral code; and were inconsistent in their behavior.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2001, 2006), the most significant factor in facilitating the internalization of moral values is that of the first line supervisor, which in this case is the drill sergeant. The inconsistent behavior of several leaders definitely hindered the moral development of soldiers. Leaders would do well to remember that their example is the best instruction.

#### *Moral Challenge*

Cognitive developmental moral theory asserts that development occurs when people are challenged in their current level of moral judgment and their current level of moral judgment is found to be inadequate (Power et al. 1989). The most effective method of challenging moral judgment is through dilemma discussion and role taking exercises (Bebeau 2002; Bebeau & Monson 2008; Thoma 2002; King & Mayhew 2002). Discussion in small groups exposes participants to thinking that is different from one's own. The challenge of resolving different thought processes causes one to restructure

the way one resolves moral dilemmas. The results indicate that soldiers' current schema of moral judgment (maintain norms) was not challenged and was not found to be inadequate. Therefore they did not pursue more adequate moral judgment (postconventional). In fact, the results of the qualitative data indicate that both the methods and the perceived changes tend to reinforce and reflect 'maintain norms' moral judgment.

Moral challenge through dilemma discussion and role taking events can occur in IET. Drill sergeants and other leaders can guide soldiers in discussions of moral dilemmas that soldiers typically encounter in deployment and garrison situations. Such dilemmas would focus on issues of confronting moral or legal violations in others, avoiding or causing noncombatant casualties, retaliation against local indigenous population, and violations of the rules of engagement or principles of just war. Additionally, when preparing for or when conducting after-action reviews of training operations, drill sergeants can discuss the moral issues involved. Such discussion is not to give soldiers the book answer. It is in the process of discussion that soldiers understand the moral implications of their actions and assume personal responsibility for internalizing the Army's moral code as it applies to certain situations.

### *Training Methods*

The Army's training methods focus heavily on repetition, memorization, rules, behavior modification, and reinforcement theory. Such methods have not been proven effective in the area of moral development and character education and were identified by the focus groups as having negative effects (Berkowitz & Bier 2005; Williams 2009). These methods do not make an explicit connection between the Army's moral code and moral action. Moral and character education that uses extensively a system of rewards and punishments is not sufficient to ensure morally acceptable behavior (Martinelli-Fernandez 2006).

In the words of Kupperman (2005: 211), much of the Army's character education appears to consist of simply 'imprinting the messages of a moral code' onto the minds of soldiers. The use of extrinsic motivation and 'a public awareness approach to values' (Davidson 2005: 229) fall far short in soldier moral development. The major problem of quick-change approaches is that they tend to produce moral agents who are fair weather moral soldiers (Kupperman 2005). They can behave morally when the situation is favorable or reinforces moral action. But they tend to fail in adverse or ambiguous circumstances.

Moral and character development requires methods that allow for dialogue, interaction, personal involvement, and practice of moral decisions and application (Berkowitz et al. 2008). Such methods provide opportunities for soldiers to choose to internalize the Army's moral code because they see the personal and organizational benefits. The purpose of such training methods is to produce soldiers who are experts in the moral conduct of a professional Soldier, not just experts in the Army's tactics, techniques, and procedures.

### *Moral Climate*

The Army is basically a maintain norms type of organization. At its most commonly experienced level, the military is about hierarchy, chain of command, rules and regulations, standing operating procedures, standardization, controlling oneself and situations, and following orders. Therefore, one would expect that the organization's culture would have great influence over the member's personality.

Certainly, moral and character education must begin with awareness. However, moral and character education must move to a deeper level through facilitating an understanding of principles and foundations through practice and experience (Kupperman 2005; Davidson 2005). Shields and Bredenmeier (2005) in their piece *Can Sport Build Character?* report that simply playing sport does not build character. In fact, they state that those who play sports generally have lower moral judgment than those who do not play sports. Playing sports tends to create a dual morality as participants develop a morality for the sport and a separate morality for outside the sport. Sports participation can influence character if the team creates a sense of community, practices democratic leadership, and establishes shared values, norms, and goals in order to make the moral elements of the sport explicit. Additionally, the climate of the team must be characterized by mastery, not performance. A mastery climate is task-oriented; one is in competition with oneself to develop expertise. A performance climate is ego oriented; one is in competition with others. Shields and Bredenmeier (2005: 133) state:

Mastery climates are associated with participants' use of effective learning strategies, preference for challenging tasks, positive attitudes, and the belief that effort leads to success. Mastery climates nurture an achievement ethics that places value on the intrinsic quality of the experience.

Bebeau and Monson (2008: 570) state that 'the moral milieu or climate of the institution . . . either inhibits growth or, in some cases, actually erodes growth in reasoning. Disillusionment and cynicism about the possibility of applying the ideals of *postconventional* moral arguments in real life situations may drive such regression'. Several focus group participants voiced such disillusionment regarding the moral climate of IET, the moral practice of leaders, and the constraining elements of IET that relate to moral decision making and the Army's moral code. Bebeau and Monson report that most college level courses of study result in growth in moral judgment except when the course of study is extremely narrow in focus and authoritarian in practice, which, in the view of the focus groups, accurately describes IET.

### **Conclusion**

The content and methods of IET seem to have a limited and superficial effect on the moral character of soldiers. The results of the DIT indicate that moral judgment remained consistent at the maintain norms (rules-based) level. The leader-follower relationship appears to be the most powerful force for moral

education and character education. The training methods and climate of IET tend to reinforce rules-based moral judgment. These methods tend to restrict the development of principle-based or postconventional moral thinking. Inconsistent and contradictory elements hinder internalization of the Army's moral code. The continued use of rules-based approaches to moral and character education will not result in a decline in moral violations. The Army continues to struggle with issues of sexual harassment, discrimination, and the varieties of abuse. A rules-based approach to morality, with its focus on extrinsic motivation, allows for violations as perpetrators commit acts and try not to get caught. The Army needs a values- and principle-based or postconventional approach to morality that focuses on intrinsic motivation from the perspective of professionalism. This study suggests that the Army's core values appear to be used as rules, not as principles. The ARI report on the Warrior Ethos (Riccio et al. 2004) indicates that the intent is to develop principle-based or postconventional lifestyle and decision making among soldiers. Future military operations will arguably require the kind of moral judgment that is more flexible and adaptable than a rules-based approach allows.

The superficial effect of IET on the moral character of soldiers, coupled with the need for advanced moral practice, imply the necessity of revising the elements of moral and character education with IET and the incorporation of moral and character education post-IET within operational units. A detailed discussion that outlines moral and character education within IET and post-IET is beyond the limits of this article. Let it be said at this point that Army IET needs to incorporate the methods and create a training climate that facilitate internalization of the Army's moral code. Methods need to be morally challenging and self-directive. The climate needs to be one of mastery that focuses on producing expert practitioners of the Army's moral code.

The effective elements of moral and character education must continue post-IET. Unit training needs to include moral elements in order to facilitate the deeper internalization of the Army's moral code. A lecture on the Army values is not indicated here, but dilemma discussion, role-taking, and practical exercise. The Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) and Officer Education System (OES) should also include elements of moral and character education commensurate with the noncommissioned officer's or the officer's respective level of position and responsibility. Such training is consistent with the professional development of other professions, such as medical, legal, and educational.

While this study focuses specifically on a sample of soldiers in MP IET some broad generalizations can be made for other populations from hierarchical and military institutions. Although there may be some minor cultural differences, the claims of this study can be applied to other branches of the US Armed Forces, as well as those of other nations. Military training around the world is structured and regimented to various degrees. The cultural differences will certainly affect moral and character education to some extent. However, Kohlberg believed that moral development followed a similar pattern in every culture. That being the case, the rigid, rules-based

methods that seem to hinder adaptive, principle-based or postconventional thinking in MP IET will arguably have a similar affect in the military training of other branches of service, both in the US and around the world. Also, the basic methods for facilitating moral development and the internalization of a military's moral code will be effective in other militaries.

One can only expect that the world will continue to experience events that require military action whether in the form of humanitarian aid, peace-keeping, nation building, or confronting oppression and terrorism. The need for principle-based or postconventional moral thinking among military forces will only continue to grow as multinational coalitions develop to confront an adaptive, unconventional enemy. Principle-based or postconventional moral thinking will facilitate coalition building and the adaptive application of the moral principles that are foundational to the accepted laws of land warfare. If armed forces continue to train with conventional methods, the result will be personnel who lack the adaptive, principle-based or postconventional moral judgment and character development that will enable nations to confront such a challenging enemy. The militaries of the world continue to transform and cooperate to meet the challenges of the modern battlefield. Such transformation must include the moral dimension. Effective moral and character education for future military operations, the development of moral expertise, is a necessity.

## References

- American Civil Liberties Union (2005) Army Documents, accessed 2 February 2005, available at: <http://www.aclu.org/safefree/torture/torturefoia.html>; Internet.
- Bebeau, M. (2002) The Defining Issues Test and the Four Component Model: Contributions to Professional Education, *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(3), pp. 271–295.
- Bebeau, M. & Monson, V. (2008) Guided by Theory, Grounded in Evidence: A Way Forward for Professional Ethics Education, in: L. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds), *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, pp. 703–732 (New York: Routledge).
- Berkowitz, M. & Bier, M. (2005) The Interpersonal Roots of Character Education, in: D. Lapsley & F. Power (Eds), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, pp. 268–285 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press).
- Berkowitz, M., Battistich, V. & Bier, M. (2008) What Works in Character Education, in: L. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds), *Handbook of Character Education*, pp. 414–431 (New York: Routledge).
- Davidson, M. (2005) Harness the Sun, Channel the Wind: The Art and Science of Effective Character Education, in: D. Lapsley & F. Power (Eds), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, pp. 218–244 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press).
- King, P. & Mayhew, M. (2002) Moral Judgment in Higher Education: Insights from the Defining Issues Test [Electronic version], *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(3), pp. 247–270.
- Klein, G., Salter, M., Riccio, G. & Sullivan, R. (2006) *Enhancing Warrior Ethos in Soldier Training: The Teamwork Development Course* (ARI Research Report 2006–12) (Arlington, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences).
- Kohlberg, L. (1980) Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education, in: B. Munsey (Ed.), *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg*, pp. 15–100 (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press).
- Kohlberg, L. (1981) *Essays on Moral Development* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row).
- Kohlberg, L. (1984) *Essays on Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*, Vol. 2 (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row).
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2001) *The Leadership Challenge*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass).
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2006) *A Leader's Legacy* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass).

- Krulak, C. (1997) The Three Block War, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 64(5), pp. 139–141.
- Kupperman, J. (2005) How Not to Educate Character, in: D. Lapsley & F. Power (Eds), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, pp. 201–217 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press).
- Lapsley, D. & Power, F. (Eds) (2005) *Character Psychology and Character Education* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press).
- Martinelli-Fernandez, S. (2006) Educating Honorable Warriors, *Journal of Military Ethics*, 5(1), pp. 55–66.
- Mattis, J. & Hoffman, F. (2005) Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars, U.S., *Naval Institute Proceedings*, 131(11), pp. 18–19.
- Perry, D. (2009) *Partly Cloudy: Ethics in War, Espionage, Covert Action, and Interrogation* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press).
- Power, F., Higgins, A. & Kohlberg, L. (1989) *Lawrence Kohlberg's Approach to Moral Education* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Reimer, J., Paolitto, D. & Hersh, R. (1983) *Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press).
- Rest, J., Narvaez, D., Bebeau, M. & Thoma, S. (1999) *Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum).
- Riccio, G., Sullivan, R., Klein, G., Salter, M. & Kinnison, H. (2004) *Warrior Ethos: Analysis of the Concept and Initial Development and Applications* (ARI Research Report 1827) (Arlington, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences).
- Shields, D. & Bredemeier, B. (2005) Can Sports Build Character?, in: D. Lapsley & F. Power (Eds), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, pp. 268–285 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press).
- Thoma, S. (2002) An Overview of the Minnesota Approach to Research on Moral Development, *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(3), pp. 225–245.
- Thoma, S. (2006) Research on the Defining Issues Test, in: M. Killen & J. Smetana (Eds), *Handbook of Moral Development*, pp. 67–91 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum).
- United States Army (2006) *Field Manual 6–22: Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army).
- Williams, K. (2009) Assessing the Effectiveness of Character Education in U.S. Army Initial Entry Training (IET). Paper presented at the International Symposium of Military Ethics, San Diego, CA, USA, accessed 15 April 2009, available at: <http://www.usafa.edu/isme/ISME09/Williams09.html>; Internet.

## Biography

**Chaplain (LTC) Kenneth R. Williams** currently serves as the brigade chaplain for the 14th Military Police Brigade which trains enlisted military police soldiers and conducts training for officers in basic officer leader course (BOLC) and captains career course (CCC). Previously Chaplain Williams served as an instructor in leadership and ethics at the US Army Military Police School. He is pursuing a PhD in leadership and organizational change concentrating on the effect of IET on the moral development of soldiers. He has served as a chaplain for 20 years.



Copyright of Journal of Military Ethics is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.