How to Grow Character: Lessons from West Point and the Army

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Army Values

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LOYALTY	Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. 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 subordinates before your own.
HONOR	Live up to all the Army Values.
INTEGRITY	Do what's right—legally and morally.
PERSONAL COURAGE	Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical or moral).
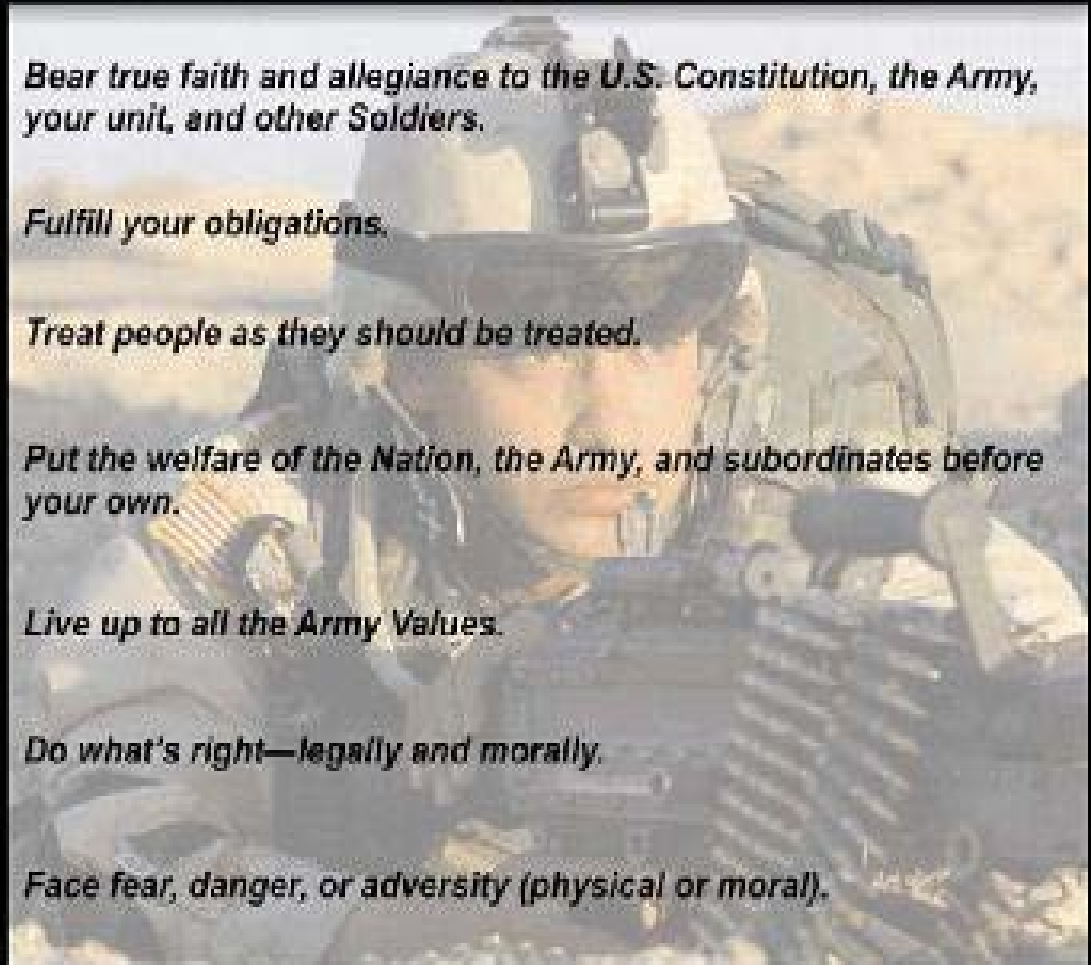
USMA Mission: To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army.

USMA Vision: To be the world's preeminent leadership development institution.

West Point Leader Development System

- WPLDS
- A system designed to develop and sharpen positive character through the 47 month education and training experience of West Point cadets
- High standards
- Allows cadets to learn from failure
- A community-wide initiative

Historical Context

	Structure	Cadet Focus	Outcome	System
1802-1990	4th Class System	Plebes	Compliance	Attrition
1991-2012	Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS) "4-Class System"	All Cadets	Officership -Mem of Prof -Ldr of Char -Serv of Ntn -Warrior	Attrition & Development
2012-2017	WPLDS 1 -WPLDS Hnbk -BCL -CDS	All Cadets (& specific S&F roles)	Ldr of Char - 8xOutcomes	Development
2018-UTC	WPLDS 2 -"Developing Leaders of Character"	All Cadets (all S&F have the same role)	Ldr of Char -Live honorably -Lead honorably -Dem expertise	Development to Accountability

Develop = Educate, Train, and Inspire

from USMA's mission statement

A leader is someone who influences others to accomplish a mission or fulfills a purpose.

Army Leadership (ADP 6-22, p.1)

The Five Facets of Character

- Moral
- Social
- Civic

$\left. \right\}$ Live Honorably

- Performance $\}$ Demonstrate Excellence
- Leadership $\}$ Lead Honorably

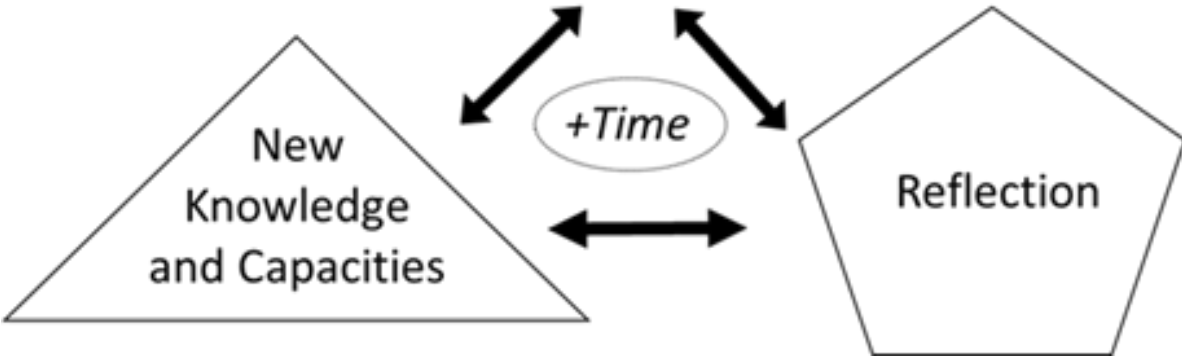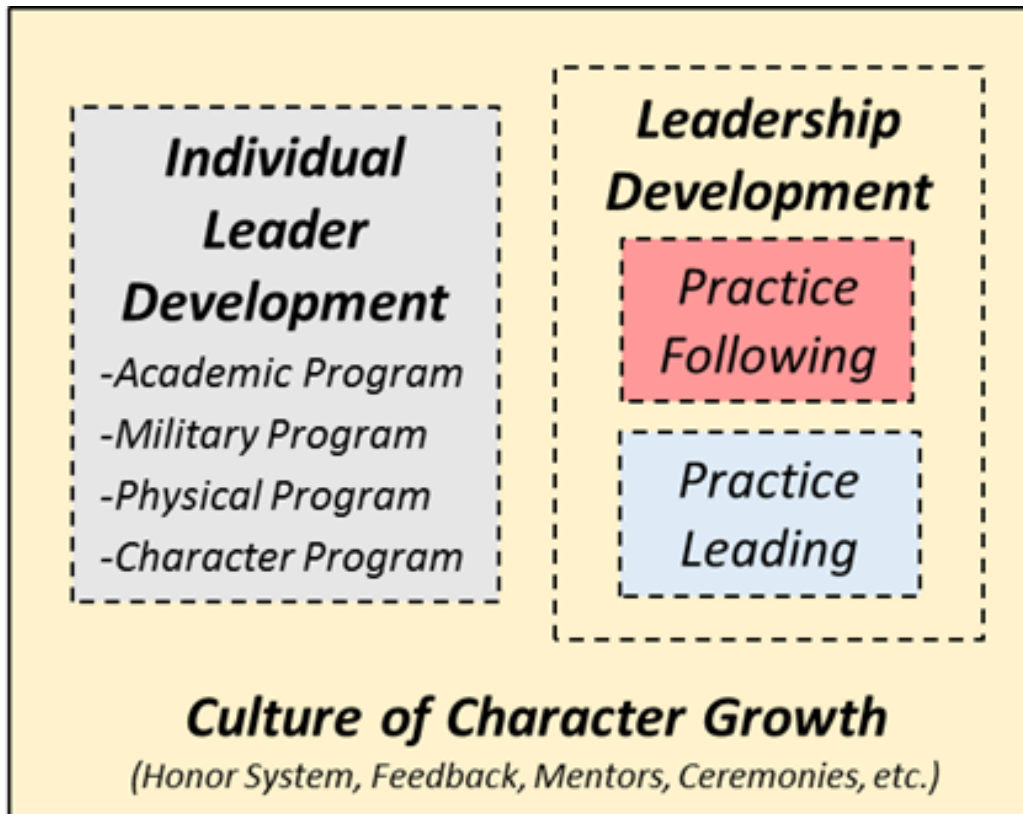|	Stage 2: *Imperial*	Stage 3: *Interpersonal*	Stage 4: *Self-authored*
Person's Focus	**Self-focused**	**Other's approval-focused (team)**	***Duty-Hnr-Cntry, 7-Army Values, 5-Facets of Character***
WPLDS Expectation	New cadets	Upperclass	Graduates

-Set and enforce high standards
-Put in shared team activities
-Provide Stage 3 role models

-Give choice of thought and authority
-Contexts where identities conflict
-Facilitated deliberate reflection

Challenging Experiences

Assessment

Challenge

Support

New Knowledge and Capacities

+Time

Reflection

= Better, more self-aware Leaders

Individual Leader Development
- Academic Program
- Military Program
- Physical Program
- Character Program

Leadership Development

Practice Following

Practice Leading

Culture of Character Growth
(Honor System, Feedback, Mentors, Ceremonies, etc.)

47 mo.

Leader of Character
- Live honorably
- Lead honorably
- Demonstrate excellence

WPLDS' Core Leader(ship) Development Experiences

				Freshman (Plebe)	Soph. (Yearling)	Junior (Cow)	Senior (Firstie)
Culture of Character Growth	**Individual Leader Development**		Cadet Company Tactical Officer & Tactical NCOs are primary integrators of each cadet's experience				
			Faculty and Staff are role models for all cadets				
		Academic Program	**Academic Curriculum (Bachelor of Science)*** 30 x Core Courses (STEM & Humanities) and 10 x Electives. Choose 1 of 38 Academic Majors, 1 of 5 Engineering Tracks, and 1 of 7 Language Req.				
		Military Program	**Cdt Basic Tng skills***	**Cdt Field Tng skills***		**Cdt Ldr Dev Tng skills***
			Intro. to Warfighing*	Fund. Army Opns*	Platoon Operations*	
			2 x APFT*	*2 x APFT**	*2 x APFT**	*2 x APFT**
		Physical Program		IOCT*	IOCT*	IOCT*
			Boxing*	Personal Fitness*	Combatives*	Unit Fitness*
			Military Movement*	Survival Swimming*	Lifetime Physical Activity*^	
			Competitive Sports (intercollegiate, *competitive club*, or *company athletics*)*			
		Misc			**AIAD/MIAD/PIAD^**	
		Character Program	*Cadet Character Development Program*			
				Leader Challenge		
						MX400: Officership*
	Leadership Development / *Practice Following* / *Practice Leading*	Misc	**CBT Mem. of Sqd ***	**CFT Mem. of Sqd ****	**Sum. Ldrship Detail** SL/PSG/PL/staff**	**CLDT Patrol Leader** SL, PSG, PL **
			1st Acad. Sem. MOS**	*3rd Acad. Sem. Team Ldr***	*5th Acad. Sem. SL, PSG, or NCO***	*7th Acad. Sem. PL, CO, Officer, or Tm CPT***
			2nd Acad. Sem. MOS**	*4th Acad. Sem. Team Ldr***	*6th Acad. Sem. SL, PSG, or NCO***	*8th Acad. Sem. PL, CO, Officer, or Tm CPT***
				Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT)*^		
		Environment	*Life in the Corps: cadet companies, chain of command, regulations & standards, stewardship*			
			Honor System and Code*			
			Aspirational Creeds: Cadet Creed, Worth's Battalion Orders, Schofield's Def. of Discipline, etc.			
			Cadet Character Committees			
		Feedback	Cadet Observation Reports (CORs)*			
			Periodic Develop. Reviews (PDRs)* (4 x semester providing a 360-degree eval)			
			Cadet Development Reports** (1 x semester)			
		Mentors	Plebe Sponsors		PL300 Mentors	
			Department Academic Counselors (DACs)			
		Ceremonies	Oath; Acceptance	CFT Graduation	Affirmation	Ring; Commissioning

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Legend

Bold & Underlined = occurs during summers

Italicized = cadet led

*= performance assessed, **= performance assessed in a force-distributed way

^= must complete at least once during cadet career

Source		WPLDS Outcomes		
		Live Honorably	**Lead Honorably**	**Demonstrate Excellence**
	Army Ethic	Honorable Servant	Steward of the Army Profession	Army Experts
	Army Professional Certification	Character	Commitment	Competence
	West Point Values	Honor	Country	Duty
	Five Facets of Character	Moral, Civic, Social	Leadership	Performance
Note: ADRP 1 provides official Army doctrine on professional certification and the Army Ethic.				

**All** USMA employees' foundational responsibility is to develop leaders of character.

A Touch of Theory

What is Character?

- Character reflects a person's positive relationship with the world around them

- The attributes that make up character must vary across time and place, in order to meet situational demands

- Individuals have unique constellations of character attributes – success in life may be linked to different aspects of character

How does Character Develop?

- "Mutually beneficial person ⇔ context relations"
  - Alignment of youth strengths and strengths of the setting

- Youth have agency to develop their own character
  - Intentional self-regulation skills, executive functioning important

- Successful character development programs leverage relationships, empower youth agency, take a holistic and developmental approach
  - PRIMED model

Moral Virtues & Character Strengths

Wisdom & Knowledge	Courage	Justice	Humanity	Temperance	Transcendence
Creativity	Bravery	Teamwork	Capacity to Love	Forgiveness	Appreciation of Beauty
Curiosity	Persistence	Fairness	Kindness	Modesty	Gratitude
Judgment	Integrity	Leadership	Social Intelligence	Prudence	Hope/ Optimism
Love of Learning	Vitality			Self-Regulation	Humor
Perspective					Spirituality

Classification of Character Strengths

- Based on years of research
- Linked to
  - Positive adjustment
  - Improved performance
  - Increased resilience
- Signature Strengths

PROJECT ARETE

A Study of Character and Leadership Development among Cadets at the
United States Military Academy

Collaboration with West Point

- **Project Arete** builds on a decade of existing research
  - Grit (Duckworth, Matthews, Kelly, et al.)
  - Hardiness (Bartone, Matthews, Kelly, et al.)
  - Values-in-Action (Matthews, Kelly, et al.)

- Study is first of its kind: longitudinal, multi-rater, multi-method, linking different data sources

- This new study addresses the multi-part "what" question to describe how character develops for more targeted feedback and intervention

Initial Findings

4 Key Components of Character

Relational
+

Commitment
+

Honor
+

Machiavellian
—
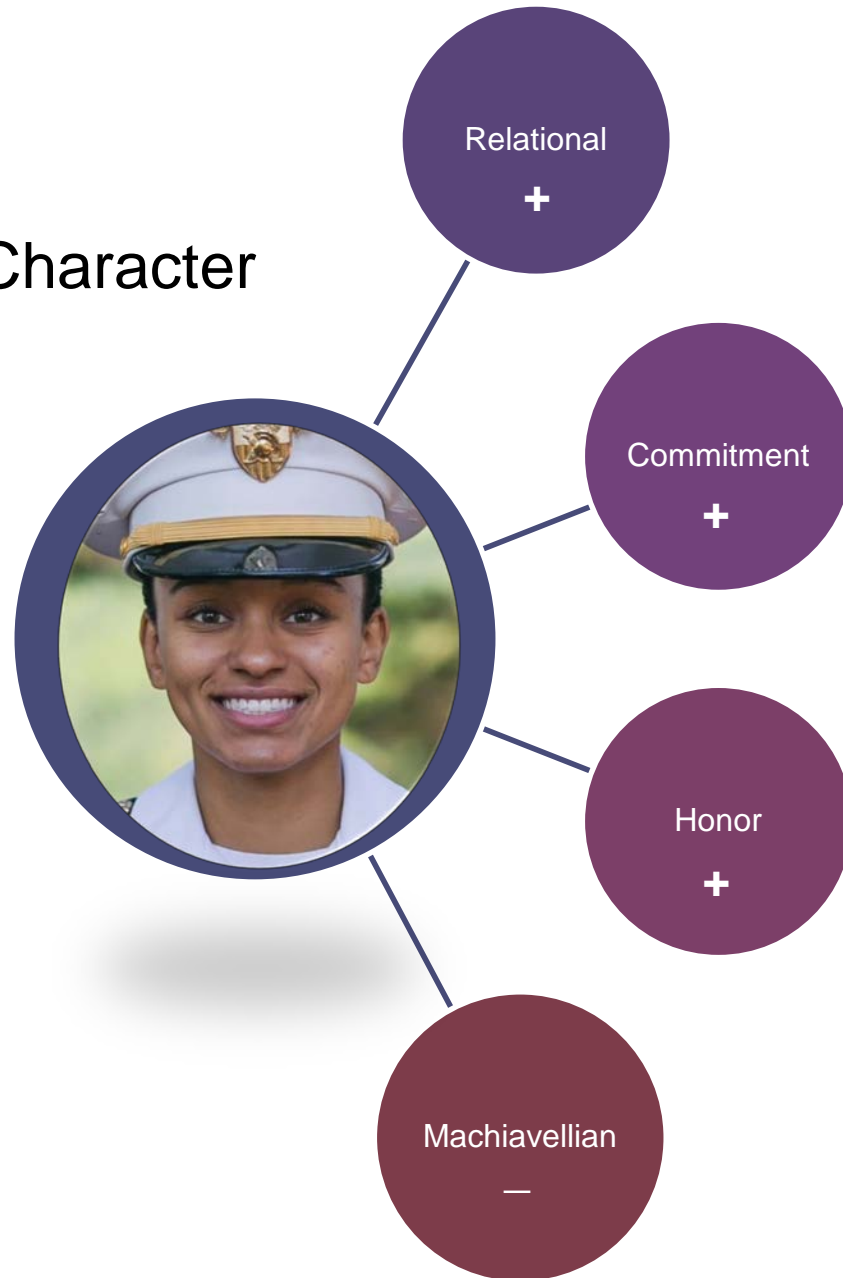
4 Key Components of Character

- Relational
  - Leadership, Intellectual Openness, Relational Humility, Social Intelligence, Empathy, Teamwork

- Commitment
  - Hardiness-Commitment, Optimism, Hardiness-Control, Purpose, Grit

- Honor
  - Honesty, Integrity, Bravery

- Machiavellian
  - Control, Status, Distrust, Manipulation, Intellectual Arrogance

Developing Leaders of Character

Project Arete investigates:

- What is the relationship between character and leadership?

- How are character and mastery related in cadets' professional development at USMA?

- How can these findings be applied to other youth-serving organizations, out-of-school time activities, service academies, the larger Army?

How Might These Ideas Translate to K-12?

- Group discussion

Parents, educators, and practitioners often ask: What is the "right amount" of character?

Better Questions: What are this young person's strengths? What are the resources available in our family, community, school, installation, to help optimize their strengths?