



# The Civil-Military Divide: Moral Exemplars in the Public Sphere

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## *The Civil-Military Divide: Moral Exemplars in the Public Sphere*

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### ***Abstract***

Aristotle's two treatises, the *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, are not only intimately connected, but also intertwined. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, he discusses the nature of individual happiness (*eudaimonia*).<sup>1</sup> In the *Politics*, he argues that politics is a key means through which the individual attains happiness. Further, Aristotle argues, "the governing ideas of a polity are always best expressed by those whom stand for the absolute and final truth." The person Aristotle describes is not only a political leader, but also a moral exemplar. With the modern advent of post-truth relativism in politics and society, particularly in the United States (U.S.), it is imperative that we introduce moral exemplars, which Aristotle argues for, in the public sphere.

Where do we get these moral exemplars? Where do they come from? The virtues of a good civil servant are important not just for the government, but the society as a whole. One such civil servant are those in military service. While it is clearly important for the soldier to be a person of character while serving, it can be equally important when they complete their service and enter into the public sphere as a civilian. Whether they stay in for twenty years to reach a full retirement, or leave the service after just a few years, soldiers take these virtues with them when they go into public life and into the public sphere. There is a direct relationship between the ethos of good character in members of the armed forces and the community they join after leaving military service.

There are close to 1.2 million serving in the U.S. Military. Further, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs is tracking 22 million military veterans. This means that 7.3% living Americans have served in the military at some point. In the U.S., some companies do offer ethics training that is specific to their occupation (e.g. business, legal, or medical ethics), but few offer character training, or development programs. The best way to introduce virtues in the public sphere is through military service members. This could be done both while serving in the military and after joining the civilian world at the conclusion of their military service. The largest employer in the world is the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) with 2.9 million federal employees. If the DoD is the largest employer in the world, let alone the U.S., this is a great place to develop character and virtues.

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<sup>1</sup> By happiness, or *Eudaimonia*, Aristotle is referring to flourishing.

It is imperative that the US military continues to improve on character development and moral education at every level of professional military education and every military school. The U.S. Military is the largest pool of people in a singular organization in the world. The DoD must develop the character and virtues of their people because this is where our moral exemplars come from and this is how virtue will guide civic engagement. This is why developing character in the military is important for civil society. While this is not a panacea for character development in the public sphere, it is a good start exposing the public to virtuous action and good character through moral exemplars.

### ***Background & Introduction***

This paper is part of a larger research project focused on the need for a U.S. Army-wide character development program. The project argues that the U.S. Army<sup>2</sup> needs to develop and implement a moral education for all soldiers, specifically a character development program. Small communities within the Army are doing a good job of character development, like the United States Military Academy at West Point, but the Army as a whole does not have a character development program. The DoD as a whole definitely does not. While the purpose of a character development program is to develop soldiers of character, there are secondary and tertiary benefits beyond that of virtuous soldiers on the military base or in a war zone. This essay will focus on of these secondary benefits of a character development program for all soldiers, namely, that of moral exemplars that go out and live and work in society after their time in the military is up. These former military women and men will live in communities with citizens that may not be in a profession that offers character education and/or who may not have been exposed to professionals that have had character and virtue education.

While being virtuous as a soldier is important while you are serving in the military, a benefit of being a virtuous person after leaving military service is that the person can now serve as a moral exemplar to the new community where they live. All fifty U.S. States have representatives in the military. When soldiers leave military service, some move back to where they were originally from, some stay in the city or state they got out of the military service in, and some move to a completely new location. A positive and continuing benefit of the Army developing people of character is that these former service members can continue to develop their character through *phronesis*<sup>3</sup> and the character foundations that have developed after they leave the military, as well as, serve the community as moral mentors and moral exemplars.

This paper is in its nascent stage and I am interested in, and hoping for, feedback in order to improve both this paper and my project focusing on developing and instituting a character development program for the whole of the U.S. Army and ultimately DoD-wide.

### ***Importance of Character Development in Professions***

Aristotle's two treatises, the *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, are not only intimately connected, but intertwined. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, he discusses the nature of individual

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<sup>2</sup> While this paper is focusing solely on the U.S. Army and the U.S. public sphere, a similar argument can easily be made for the United Kingdom and the British Armed Forces.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle describes *phronesis* as "practical reasoning". It is the state of the fully developed virtuous person.

happiness. In the *Politics*, he argues that politics is a key means through which the individual attains *eudaimonia*, or happiness. Further, Aristotle argues, “the governing ideas of a polity are always best expressed by those whom stand for the absolute and final truth.” The person Aristotle describes is not only a political leader, but also a moral exemplar. With the modern advent of post-truth relativism in politics and society, particularly in the U.S., it is imperative that we get moral exemplars, which Aristotle argues for, in the public sphere. The best way to achieve this is by introducing virtue and character-based education to professions. Rule-based, deontological training in professions does not necessarily encourage virtuous behavior. It merely insists on following the rules. If professions introduced character-based approaches to their profession, it becomes not about what you do, but about who you are.

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has published a variety of research reports on virtuous practice and character in several professions to include teaching, medicine, nursing, law, and the military (Arthur, 2013; Arthur et al, 2015a; Arthur et al, 2015b; Arthur et al, 2015d; Arthur et al, 2015e; Arthur et al, 2017a; and Arthur et al, 2017c). While the Jubilee Centre and several professions are seeing the importance of practicing virtuously, virtue-based approaches to professional education is not exactly ubiquitous. This dearth of character-based professional education prompted the Jubilee Centre to devise and release a statement on “Character, Virtue and Practical Wisdom in Professional Practice” (Arthur 2017b).<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. Army's mission statement reads, “The U.S. Army’s mission is to fight and win our Nation's wars by providing prompt, sustained land dominance across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders.”<sup>5</sup> This means that the members of the profession of arms are charged with the use of lethal violence. Like doctors and nurses, albeit in a different way, members of the military hold the life and death of others in their hands. The last 15 years that the U.S. has been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan are rife with stories of Soldiers and Marines committing horrific war crimes of commission and omission. Further, major transgressions by senior leaders, make for embarrassing headlines and dominate the U.S. Military’s discourse on “ethical training”. If we want members of the military to be people of character, if we want them to be virtuous and not vicious, the U.S. Military needs to change our method and technique from a rule-based, deontological ethics training approach. We need to follow the approach other professions have taken, with the help of the Jubilee Centre, to a virtue and character-based approach to professional education.

Virtue and character-based professional education would help counter moral and ethical failures by professionals. There are countless examples of moral failures in professions but I will point to only a few. Each of these examples are people in positions of trust. They are all members of professions that the Jubilee Centre has done research on. These are all individuals that could have benefited from virtue-based approaches to professional education.

Dr. Larry Nassar was the USA Olympic Gymnastics Team doctor. He pleaded guilty to sexually molesting 130 young female athletes. Three of the girls, Nassar admitted to have

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<sup>4</sup> You can find the Jubilee Centre statement at: [http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Statement\\_Character\\_Virtue\\_Practical\\_Wisdom\\_Professional\\_Practice.pdf](http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Statement_Character_Virtue_Practical_Wisdom_Professional_Practice.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Army Mission Statement. Official U.S. Army Website. <https://www.army.mil/info/organization/>

sexually abused, were under the age of 13.<sup>6</sup> He would touch the girls in inappropriate places in inappropriate ways under the guise of medical care. He violated their trust.

A Dallas County assistant district attorney, Jody Warner, was fired after an Uber driver alleged that she hit him, insulted him and accused him of kidnapping.<sup>7</sup> The District Attorney, Faith Johnson, said that after a “thorough investigation”, they terminated Warner. "Although criminal charges have not been filed, her behavior is contrary to this office's core principle of integrity, and it will not be tolerated," Johnson said in a written statement. "As public servants, we represent the people of Dallas County and are examples of justice, professionalism, and ethical behavior both inside and outside of the courtroom."

It is not just doctors and lawyers acting viciously instead of virtuously. So too are politicians and US Army leaders. John Conyers, a member of the US House of Representatives representing the 13<sup>th</sup> District of Michigan, settled a sexual harassment claim against him quietly using U.S. taxpayers' dollars. The claim, by one of his staffers, was that he “violated her body, repeatedly propositioned her for sex and asked her to touch his genitals.”<sup>8</sup> Calls for his resignation after his settlement became known, include members of both political parties to include the Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and the leader of his party, Nancy Pelosi.

Additionally, Congressional Representative Joe Barton, a Republican and the Texas delegation's most senior House member, announced in an interview with the Dallas Morning News that he would not seek re-election after sexually suggestive online messages that he sent a constituent came to light.<sup>9</sup> The married member of the House of Representatives admitted to sending a female constituent sexually inappropriate Facebook messages and that the nude photo she had received was indeed him.<sup>10</sup> Joe Barton, 68, announced Thursday that he would not seek re-election following scrutiny after sexual images he shared while in an extramarital relationship were posted on Twitter.

Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, a retired Army Military Intelligence General and National Security Advisor to President Trump, pleaded guilty to lying to the F.B.I. about conversations he had with the Russian Ambassador to the U.S. The fact that he lied was even more questionable since speaking to the Russian Ambassador as the incoming National Security Advisor was not necessarily wrong, illegal, or immoral. Why did he lie?

There are plenty of examples of unethical behavior of members of the U.S. military. From senior officers instructing U.S. military personnel to ignore Afghan soldiers sexually abusing

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<sup>6</sup> Connor, Tracy. “Ex-Olympics doctor Larry Nassar pleads guilty to sex charges.” NBCNews.Com. 22 NOV 2017. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ex-olympics-doctor-larry-nassar-pleads-guilty-sex-charges-n823276>

<sup>7</sup> De Bruijn, Eline. “Dallas prosecutor fired after accusing Uber driver of kidnapping her in rant after night at bar.” Dallas Morning News. 13 NOV 2017. <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/dallas/2017/11/11/listen-dallas-prosecutor-accuses-lost-uber-driver-kidnapping-rant-night-bar>

<sup>8</sup> Alcindor, Yamiche. “House Leaders Call on Conyers to Resign After an Accuser Details Her Charges.” New York Times. 30 NOV 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/30/us/politics/conyers-accuser-today-show-hospital.html>

<sup>9</sup> Cheney, Kyle. “Barton to retire after nude selfie fallout.” Politico. 30 NOV 2017. <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/11/30/joe-barton-to-retire-after-nude-selfie-fallout-271366>

<sup>10</sup> Bogan, Ray. “Constituent who outed Rep. Joe Barton's lewd Facebook messages speaks out.” Fox News. 1 DEC 2017. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/12/01/constituent-who-outed-rep-joe-barton-s-lewd-facebook-messages-speaks-out.html>

boys, because “it is part of their culture”<sup>11</sup>, to general officers having extra-marital affairs with their subordinates<sup>12</sup>, many leaders seem to have lost their way morally. The example of General Flynn lying is actually not an anomaly. Lying is pervasive in the U.S. Army. The U.S. Army does not discourage lying nor encourage the army values of honesty or integrity. In fact, in February of 2015, the U.S. Army’s Strategic Studies Institute published a paper entitled “Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession.” In it, the authors claim that the U.S. Army currently has a “culture of dishonesty” where “untruthfulness is surprisingly common”. The authors argue that their study found that army officers have become “ethically numb” due to repeated overwhelming demands that force officers to choose which requirements will be done to standard and which ones the officers will merely say were done to standard. The authors call this “ethical fading”. If army officers are consistently untruthful over time on mundane and pedestrian issues, 1) their word is no longer any good, 2) their subordinates cannot, or will not, be able to trust them, and 3) these officers will begin to lie about important things.

### *Civic Friendship*

Aristotelians and Virtue Ethicists point out that humans cannot flourish in a vacuum. The good life requires interaction and friendships that bind people together. Steven Luper argues that, “Humans are social creatures in the sense that we do well only when we form a society and establish various sorts of relationships with others. To flourish is to live well with others.”<sup>13</sup> It is not merely respecting other people, but occasionally helping people. Both the helper and the person being helped are able to develop virtues through *phronesis*. The helper is refining and practicing their virtues and the person helped is learning virtues through the helper inadvertently acting as a moral mentor. David Norton contends that “in short, community and tradition are necessary to individuality as conceived *eudaimonistically*... community is necessary to self-actualizing individuality”.<sup>14</sup> Julia Annas takes this notion a step further arguing that in order to achieve *eudaimonia*, merely respecting others is insufficient. She argues we sometimes are required to further the good of others even if furthering their good is the only good we receive from helping.<sup>15</sup> Often, when we do something kind for someone, whether we are in a close relationship with him or her or the person is a complete stranger, we often get that positive up-lifting feeling. We call this feeling *moral elevation*. What is interesting is this feeling seems contagious. This act makes us feel good, and often, the moral elevation encourages us to pass it on. In other words, seeing a kind act often makes the person witnessing the kind act want to do something kind as well. It is like when a person pays for the coffee of the person behind them in line at their local coffee shop. There are cases when people just pass the kind act of paying for another person’s coffee multiple times over. This is part of civic friendship. Carolyn Gregoire

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<sup>11</sup> Rivett-Carnac, Mark. “U.S. Troops Told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Forces, Report Says.” Time.com, 20 September 2015, <http://time.com/4042104/us-military-afghanistan-sexual-abuse-soldiers/>.

<sup>12</sup> Goldman, Adam. “How David Petraeus Avoided Felony Charges and Possible Prison Time.” WashingtonPost.Com. 25 JAN 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-david-petraeus-avoided-felony-charges-and-possible-prison-time/2016/01/25/d77628dc-bfab-11e5-83d4-42e3bceea902\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6d5bbfac5e0c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-david-petraeus-avoided-felony-charges-and-possible-prison-time/2016/01/25/d77628dc-bfab-11e5-83d4-42e3bceea902_story.html?utm_term=.6d5bbfac5e0c).

<sup>13</sup> Luper, Steven. *A Guide to Ethics*. McGraw-Hill. New York. 2002. Pp 91-92.

<sup>14</sup> Norton, David. *Democracy and Moral Development: A Politics of Virtue*. Univ. of California Press. 1991. pp 132-3.

<sup>15</sup> Annas, Julia. *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford University Press. 1993 (223).

describes moral elevation as a specific emotion or state that individuals sometimes experience after they witness or hear about a virtuous act, an act in which someone showed unexpected compassion, forgiveness, understanding, and altruism.<sup>16</sup> Gregoire points out that after experiencing moral elevation, people tend to be more kind to others.

Most ethicists (e.g. Immanuel Kant) will argue that you cannot use someone as means to your end. A virtue ethicist might argue that not only can we not use someone as an instrument to our own good, but as a virtuous person, we sometimes try to further the good of others merely to help them achieve their happiness. In fact, we do this for the sake of helping them *find* happiness. Annas points out that “it is a fact of experience that we do care about the good of other people in a non-instrumental way, even when this is not a direct requirement of virtue; we love our family and friends for example.”<sup>17</sup> This is true, not just of our family and friends, but also interactions with fellow citizens. It could be argued that those who benefit from a character development program, may be morally required to serve as moral exemplars, or moral mentors, to those in the community that have not had the opportunity to be part of a character development program. This is civic friendship. But where do these moral exemplars and moral mentors come from?

### *How Do You Capture the Most People for a Character Development Program?*

How do you capture the most people for an ethics program? How can you teach character and virtue to the most people? How do you cast the widest net? While segments of professions are working on character in virtue within their fields, I argue that there are two professions that can reach the largest number of people. Education from early childhood through the teenage years and the military. If we can get virtue-based character education in every school, we can reach the most people. In fact, almost everyone would be exposed to virtuous living if we could get it in U.S. schools.<sup>18</sup> There are several impediments to achieving this goal. First is that in the U.S. it is difficult to get every state on a common path, let alone every school district and every city in the U.S. Take for example, the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each school grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. The problem is that not all states are a part of the Common Core Initiative. Only 42 of the 50 states have voluntarily signed on. Standards were released for mathematics and English language arts on June 2, 2010, with a majority of states adopting the standards in the subsequent months. States were given an incentive to adopt the Common Core Standards through the possibility of competitive federal “Race to the Top” grants. U.S. President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

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<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Gregoire. “Why Kindness Is Contagious, According To Science.” *Huffingtonpost.com*, 18 May 2015, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/18/kindness-contagious-psych\\_n\\_7292862.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/18/kindness-contagious-psych_n_7292862.html). Accessed 22 July 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Annas (223).

<sup>18</sup> The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtue is making remarkable progress in getting this message out to educators, school administrators, and politicians. See Character Education in UK Schools at: [http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/Character\\_Education\\_in\\_UK\\_Schools.pdf](http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/Character_Education_in_UK_Schools.pdf). Possibly one way to make inroads in the US is to have a US version of the Jubilee Centre.

announced the “Race to the Top” competitive grants on 24 July 2009, as a motivator for education reform.<sup>19</sup> To be eligible, states had to adopt “internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the work place.” If education grants cannot get educators across the U.S. to agree on standards, it seems a daunting task to get educators on board with including a virtue and character-based moral education in schools.

The other profession that could reach the most people is the U.S. Military. It could reach the most people in two ways. The first way is by the sheer number of people working for the DoD. The U.S. DoD is the largest employer in the world.<sup>20</sup> That’s right, not the largest employer in the USA, but in the world. Currently there are 2.9 Million employees of the DoD which is slightly down from 3.2 Million in 2015. In Fiscal Years (FY) 2016 and 2017, Congress reduced the troop levels in the U.S. Military, but has begun to increase them again for FY 2018. The DoD is broken down into Active Duty, Reserves, National Guard, and DoD civilians. Of the 2.9 Million DoD employees, currently 764,400 are civilians.<sup>21</sup> While it is not quite the same as reaching every school-age child in their formative years, targeting the DoD with a virtue-based character development program would be an impressive way to reach a large amount of people with character and virtue education. Critics of my argument would say the cost of creating and implementing a virtue-based character development program in the DoD for 2.9 Million people would be astronomical and fiscally irresponsible, if not fiscally impossible. Actually, there is already money budgeted for ethics training in the DoD. All military branches have money budgeted for ethics training. The training targets both military and civilian personnel. This training, often done annually, is not just for Active Duty (full time) members of the military, but also for the Reserves and National Guard for each branch of service. For years, like the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, the Army has had ethics training programs. Two of the programs the Army implemented are Consideration Of Other People (COOP) and Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) training. There are other programs like fraudulent government credit card training, government contractor fraud training, and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Training. The one thing that all of this training has in common is it goes back to character and virtues. In the years 2007-2012, the Army alone (not the whole of the DoD), increased their SHARP budget fivefold to combat sexual assault.<sup>22</sup> If the DoD creates and implements a virtue-based character development program many of these other programs can be rolled up into the character development program. Much of the training is done annually via 60 minute-or-less PowerPoint presentations and packet training that individual military members can do when they have the time to fit it in. Packet training is when a military leader prints out the PowerPoint presentation and places the printed presentation and a sign-up sheet in a pocket folder and pass it around so that everyone is trained. Everyone is busy. If military leaders leave it up to us to do our own training when we get the time, guess what is the first thing to go by the wayside? There is a requirement to read the presentation and then sign the roster that the presentation has been read. Like the U.S. Army’s Strategic Studies Institute paper entitled “Lying to Ourselves” argued, this type of training encourages people to lie. Further, if we want to encourage virtuous behavior, this is not the way to go about it.

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<sup>19</sup> The Obama Administration started \$4.35 Billion “Race to the Top” Competition, pledging a total of \$10 Billion for education reforms. <https://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/07/07242009.html>

<sup>20</sup> Chang, Sue. “U.S. military is the largest employer in the world.” Market Watch, 17 June 2015. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/us-military-is-the-largest-employer-in-the-world-2015-06-17>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/end-strength.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Army Human Resources Command (Army G1) [https://www.army.mil/article/77933/army\\_investing\\_more\\_money\\_training\\_into\\_sharp](https://www.army.mil/article/77933/army_investing_more_money_training_into_sharp)



The second way that the U.S. Military could capture the most people for a character development program is actually through civic engagement. While the DoD is the largest employer in the world, and thus would be a great place to offer a virtue and character-based approach to profession education, the same is true about the number of people that leave the military. Who has served? Are there a lot of military veterans in the U.S.? To give you a perspective, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is tracking 22 million military veterans currently living in the USA.<sup>23</sup> This means that there are 7.3% living Americans that have served in the military at some point in their lives. That is a lot of people that could be serving in the public sphere, in communities all across America, serving as moral mentors or moral exemplars, if they were the recipients of a virtue and character-based professional education.

The DoD is in a constant state of flux. Everyday people enlist in the military and people retire. Every month, people receive military officer commissions and enlisted people start Basic Combat Training.<sup>24</sup> While it is true that almost every profession has people get their licenses to practice in their field and have folks enter retirement on a monthly, if not daily, basis, the difference is the length in time people stay in the military versus the time they stay in other professions. Think about some of the professions that the Jubilee Centre has done research reports on such as educators, nurses, doctors, lawyers, etc. Generally speaking, the people in these professions tend to stay in these professions for the majority of their adult life. Occasionally, people do make a change in careers later in life to go into one of these professions, but generally, members of these professions stay for thirty or more years. You can imagine these professionals completing their college degree and advanced degree around their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday give or take. Typically in the U.S., retirement is at the age of 65. Quite frequently these professionals spend 30-40 years in their careers. While some of these retirees in the U.S. get vacation/holiday homes or move to the warmer climes of Florida or Arizona, many stay in the same home and the same community they have always lived in.

When it comes to professions, the field with the shortest career span are members of the military. Members of the military typically do not stay in this career field as long. A full military retirement is at 20 years. Further, retention rates among enlisted personnel for 20 years is around 50%.<sup>25</sup> Retention rates for officers just 10 years (half way) into their service is worse. Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) commissions sit just below 50% and officers commissioned through the United States Military Academy at West Point are only slightly above 37% retained at 10 years into their military careers.<sup>26</sup> While many people get out of the military after just 4-6 years of service, it could be for a variety of reasons. 1) They only joined for college money; 2) They have had too many combat deployments to Iraq/Afghanistan; 3) They only joined the military to learn a trade/skill; or 4) A combination of the above reasons. Even if a service member stays for a retirement, many retire at twenty years and not a day longer. This means that a soldier who enlists at 18 years old retires at 38. If a military officer gets her degree and then enters military service, she might be 22-24 years old. That means with a twenty year service, she is only 42-44 years old. The significance of this is that if the

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<sup>23</sup> Chalabi, Mona. "What Percentage of Americans Have Served in the Military?" *FiveThirtyEight.Com*. 19 MAR 2015. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-percentage-of-americans-have-served-in-the-military/>

<sup>24</sup> Basic Combat Training is also sometimes referred to as Basic Training or Boot Camp. This is the initial entry military training for newly enlisted people in the U.S. Military.

<sup>25</sup> Lopez, C. Todd. "To become 'force of future', Army must fix personnel churn." *Official Army Website*. 26 June 2015. [https://www.army.mil/article/151308/to\\_become\\_force\\_of\\_future\\_army\\_must\\_fix\\_personnel\\_churn](https://www.army.mil/article/151308/to_become_force_of_future_army_must_fix_personnel_churn)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

DoD, and the U.S. Army specifically, implements a department-wide, virtue-based character development program, military members can move into the public sphere and serve as moral mentors and moral exemplars to the community. This would be a crucial opportunity for people in the community that are professionals that have not had the opportunity to be part of virtue and character-based professional education and for people in the community that do not work in a profession.

### *It Comes Back to Civic Friendship: Moral Exemplars in the Public Sphere*

To garner respect and to serve as a role model, you need to be a person worthy of looking up to. You need to be a virtuous person. A person of character. Every few years or so, different media and news organizations release a poll, or list, of the most respected or most honorable professions. Military officers and soldiers routinely show up in the top five (frequently in the top two or three) of polls listing the most respected/honorable professions.<sup>27 28</sup> That is a good start for members of the military. While it might garner a bit of respect and a “thank you for your service” now and again, if our military personnel receive a military-wide virtue and character-based moral education while in service, they will be prepared to be that moral mentor, that moral exemplar, for the people in their new community upon retirement. Why is that former member of the military so important in their new community? It is due to the notion I discussed earlier. The notion of civic friendship. Humans are social creatures. To flourish is to live well with others. It is not merely respecting other people, but occasionally helping people. Both the helper and the person being helped are able to develop virtues through *phronesis*. The helper is refining and practicing their virtues and the person helped is learning virtues through the helper inadvertently acting as a moral mentor. As David Norton contends, “community is necessary to self-actualizing individuality.”

It is because that former service member is that conduit, connection, and middle segment that bridges the civil-military divide. They speak the language of the military member (they were once a member) and they are now a member of the civilian population. They have one leg in each group. They are in that middle bit of overlap in concentric circles. They are the intersection of both civilian and military worlds. Now, they can also be the moral exemplar and moral mentor to the people in their community so everyone can flourish.

### *Counterarguments*

There are several potential counterarguments that should be considered about my arguments for a U.S. Military-wide (DoD) Character Development Program.

One counterargument could be that while the DoD is the largest employer in the world, there are other large employers in the U.S. like Walmart (2.1 million employees) and McDonalds (1.9

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmcCarthy/2016/03/31/americas-most-prestigious-professions-in-2016-infographic/#10445b731926> ; and also <http://mix1051.radio.com/2014/09/11/the-10-most-respected-professions/>; [https://www.askmen.com/top\\_10/entertainment/top-10-most-respected-professions.html](https://www.askmen.com/top_10/entertainment/top-10-most-respected-professions.html); [http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2014/09/10/most\\_prestigious\\_jobs\\_in\\_america\\_the\\_short\\_list\\_has\\_barely\\_changed\\_in\\_37.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2014/09/10/most_prestigious_jobs_in_america_the_short_list_has_barely_changed_in_37.html);

<sup>28</sup> Polls in the UK show similar results as it relates to respect for the British Military.

<https://www.indy100.com/article/these-are-the-12-most-and-least-trusted-professions-in-britain--BJWXJhZKEe>

million employees) that could also incorporate a virtue and character-based professional education. While most of us would applaud Walmart and McDonalds for developing and implementing a virtue and character-based professional education for their employees, there are three problems with this argument. The first problem is that most of the employees in these two corporations do not meet the definition of being a profession. The Oxford Dictionary defines profession as, “a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification”.<sup>29</sup> Most of the positions at Walmart and McDonalds do not have prolonged training or formal qualifications. While you do need to learn to perform your job, and you should be tested to see if you are able to qualify to do that job, it seems something quite different than what teachers and nurses go through in order to start practicing in their fields. While that doesn’t mean these corporations cannot offer a character-based ethics program to their employees, it would not be a virtue and character-based professional education. The second problem is that many of these corporations hire seasonal and temporary workers. It seems unlikely these for-profit corporations would invest the time and money to provide a virtue and character-based professional education to employees that might only be there for a few weeks or a season. While some might argue that the military also have people that only stay a short time in the military, it is only true when you compare the military to other professions. While most lawyers, doctors, teachers, and nurses stay for decades and some members of the military only stay for 4-6 years, the difference is 4-6 years is enough time for people to get ongoing character training and start to flourish by developing *phronesis*. When it comes to length of time, 4-6 years is significantly longer than a few weeks or the holiday season. Further, the military is still a profession as defined by the Oxford Dictionary, whereas employment in retail is not. The third, and potentially biggest problem with Walmart and McDonalds developing and implementing a virtue and character-based professional education for their employees, is that the government cannot require a private corporation to undergo ethics training, let alone a virtue and character-based education program. The government can, and must in my opinion, do so with government entities, such as the DoD.

Another counterargument might be that not every soldier, sailor, or marine will be a moral exemplar after receiving a virtue and character-based professional education so we should not rely on a DoD-wide character development program. I would respond to this counterargument by asking if when we see a person in a wheelchair if we call into question human bipedalism. No. Of course we do not. It is an anomaly that that person is unable to walk due to an accident or birth defect. Similarly, if the DoD-wide character development program is done correctly, through *phronesis*, most of the members of the military will be developing into people of character.

A similar counterargument to the previous example might be that people that get out after just 4-6 years may not develop *phronesis* quite like someone who stays in for 20 plus years. Again, does this justify not having a virtue-based character development program DoD-wide? They may not be moral exemplars or moral mentors after leaving military service, but at least they will have the character foundations and can possibly be placed in contact with moral exemplars that have left military service and are continuing to be moral mentors in the private sector.

Finally, people with PTSD and/or moral injury may not be moral exemplars. While this is true, it is unlikely every service member will become moral exemplars, that does not mean that we should not have a character development program in the military, nor does it mean that since not

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<sup>29</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/profession>

all former members of the military will be moral exemplars, we should not strive to place moral exemplars in the communities. Some are better than none. While a virtue and character-based professional education can ameliorate some symptoms of PTSD and can help with counseling, it is likely the case that the number of moral injury occurrences would significantly decrease if the DoD developed and implemented a virtue-based character development program before it sent troops into war.

### *In Conclusion*

It is imperative that the U.S. military continues to improve on character development and moral education at every level of professional military education and every military school. The U.S. Military is the largest pool of people in a singular organization. The DoD must develop the character and virtues of their people because this is where our moral exemplars come from and this is how virtue will guide civic engagement. This is why developing character in the military is important for civil society. While this is not a panacea for character development in the public sphere, it is a good start exposing the public to good character through moral exemplars.

Military officers and soldiers routinely show up in the top five of polls of the most respected/honorable professions. Not only should military members live up to this expectation, but they might be the first person to go to as a moral example in a community. Community members already look up to people in the profession of arms. They are in a prime place to serve as moral exemplars to the community. People look up to their military service. There is already built-in respect. People might look to these new members of the community as pillars despite being new to the community based solely off being a former member of the military. Julia Annas argues that in order to achieve *eudaimonia*, merely respecting others is insufficient. She argues we sometimes are required to further the good of others even if furthering their good is the only good we receive from helping. Would it not be wonderful if it turned out that these new members of the community were actually moral exemplars to go along with the perception that they were already honorable citizens due to their military service? Would it not be lovely if the military lived up to its top five most respected and honorable billet and continued to serve through civic friendship, helping develop character and virtue in their communities?

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