

Ethical Leadership in the Military

The gap between theory and practice in ethics education

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Abstract

Leaders play pivotal roles in initiating and directing team actions in ethically challenging situations during military operations. This chapter¹ addresses how military leaders are being prepared to cope with such ethically challenging situations. Generally, ethical challenges require moral competence for actors to be able to come to morally sound decisions. In this chapter, we focus on the gap between leadership education in ethics and the translation of moral insights into actions in theatres of operations. We argue that the gap between education and practice is largely due to the neglect of psychological mechanisms in military training. Even when insights into psychological mechanisms are integrated into leadership courses, they remain mostly theoretical. The Armed Forces of the Netherlands are used as a case to illustrate these issues. We furthermore provide suggestions for ethics education that can stimulate moral competence in military leaders in the field as well as in the classroom.

Keywords: military; ethical decision-making; leadership; moral competence; education

¹ We would like to stress that the views expressed in this chapter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Netherlands Ministry of Defence. We also would like to thank Desiree Verweij and Derek Suchard for their comments on previous versions of this chapter. Correspondence concerning this chapter should be addressed to Miriam C. de Graaff, Department of Psychology of Conflict, Risk and Safety, University of Twente, P.O. Box 217, 7500 AE Enschede (The Netherlands). E-mail: m.c.degraaff-1@utwente.nl

1. Introduction

“On one occasion, when I was the senior rank at our post a few hours away from our base camp, a local man came to the gate of our camp with his terribly ill child. The man had overcome all of his fears of retribution by the insurgents by showing up at our ‘door’. The child needed immediate medical assistance so our medic suggested that the child should be transported to our base camp to receive appropriate medical assistance. The base commander decided no Dutch troops were to assist the transportation of the family, however. I knew that the family would probably not survive the trip due to insurgent activity in this region. [...] It was a tough call... In making the decision to obey the orders from my superiors, I had to balance the loyalty towards my superiors against the responsibility for my men and responsibility for the well being of the local population. I decided to advise them to go to the base camp by themselves. [...] The next morning we found the father and child killed and left behind at our gates...”

(Excerpt from an interview with an army captain regarding his deployment experiences.)

Personnel in uniformed professions (e.g., police, military and fire services) are regularly confronted with ethical challenges: moral dilemmas that are inherent due to the character of their profession². In military operations, in particular, and strengthened by increasingly complex operational environments, conflicting beliefs about soldier-hood,

² cf. R. Richardson, D. Verweij, & D. Winslow, ‘Moral fitness for peace operations’ (2004) 32 *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 99

mission goals and right or wrong may become apparent³. With stakes being so high, the actions of an individual serviceman may have far-reaching consequences. Especially in such high-stake environments as military environments, how the situation is interpreted is a relevant issue to address. After all, since military personnel use violence as an instrument while, at the same time protecting human rights and retaining the trust of the civilians, the decisions they make need to comply with social norms and need to reflect a so-called ‘moral high-ground’⁴. Failure to do so may result in extreme incidents that have major operational, humanitarian or political impacts on society or the wellbeing of individuals. In 2004, for example, photographs were published showing U.S. military personnel abusing Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib prison. The pictures showed detainees in humiliating poses and situations, such as tied to leashes, stacked naked on top of each other and in simulation of sexual acts. Even though the servicemen had accepted legal and moral obligations and international law when entering service, the pattern of abuse lasted for an extended period in 2003⁵. Service personnel charged with offences claimed that they were unaware such treatment violated the Geneva Conventions. This claim, however, should not be considered as mitigating circumstances; quite the contrary, in fact given the duty towards the prisoners in their charge. We propose that ethical challenges are particularly likely to occur in the context of military operations because of (a) high stakes, (b) cultural differences, (c) a necessity to

³ cf. E. van Baarle, J. Bosch, G. Widdershoven, D. Verweij, & B. Molewijk, ‘Moral dilemmas in a military context. A case study of a train the trainer course on military ethics’ (2015) 44 (4) *Journal of Moral Education* 457; M. Schut, M.C. De Graaff, & D. Verweij, ‘Moral Emotions during Military Deployments of Dutch Forces A Qualitative Study on Moral Emotions in Intercultural Interactions’ (2015) 41 (4) *Armed Forces & Society* 616

⁴ cf. M.C. de Graaff, & C.E.M. van den Berg, ‘Moral professionalism within the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces’ In J. Stouffer, & S. Seiler (Eds.), *Military ethics, international perspectives* (Canadian Defence Academy Press 2010) 1

⁵ P.T. Bartone, ‘Preventing prisoner abuse: Leadership lessons of Abu Ghraib’ (2010) 20 (2) *Ethics, & Behavior* 161

act, and (d) lack of clear solutions for a given situation⁶. Consequently, it is vital that military personnel, and especially military leaders, know how to cope with them.

All challenging situations are in need of an individual understanding of ‘morality’. Servicemen from all ranks must therefore be equipped with moral competence in order to deal with these challenging situations adequately. With that in mind, this chapter addresses the moral domain, focusing on issues that result from social interactions of individuals, groups, or organizations that affect the values of society as a whole or the interests of other parties involved⁷. The moral domain extends beyond mere social error or personal taste and preference. It regards human life in terms of values such as justice and fairness, protecting society as a whole regardless of personal interests of agents operating in this situation⁸. This chapter specifically addresses the complexity of these value-laden interactions and the dilemma-charged situations that require decision-making in complex environments.

High-stakes organizations, like the military, aim to enhance their personnel’s levels of moral competence by means of ethics education and the explicit declaration of organizational norms concerning good behaviour⁹. Many of the military ethics courses focus on an understanding of ethical codes, dilemma training and cognitive deliberation and reflection upon challenging situations in order to explore the ‘right thing to do’¹⁰. With regard to

⁶ c.f. E.H. Kramer, *Organizing doubt: Grounded theory, army units and dealing with dynamic complexity* (Business School Press DK 2007)

⁷ cf. Haidt, 2003; Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2005

⁸ cf. J. Haidt, ‘The moral emotions’ In R.J. Davidson, K.R. Scherer, & H. Goldsmith, (Eds.), *Handbook of affective sciences* (University Press 2003) 852; R. Folger, R. Cropanzano, & B. Goldman, ‘What is the relationship between justice and morality’ In J. Greenberg and J.A. Colquitt *Handbook of Organizational Justice* (Erlbaum 2005) 215

⁹ cf. D.E. Desplaces, D.E. Melchar, L.L. Beauvais, & S.M. Bosco, ‘The impact of business education on moral judgment competence: An empirical study’ (2007) 74 (1) *Journal of Business Ethics* 73; S. Seiler, A. Fischer, & S.A. Voegtli, ‘Developing moral decision-making competence: A quasi-experimental intervention study in the Swiss armed forces’ (2011) 21 (6) *Ethics & Behavior* 452; M.M. Thompson, & R. Jetly, ‘Battlefield ethics training: integrating ethical scenarios in high-intensity military field exercises’ (2014) 5 *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*; Verweij, Hofhuis, & Soeters, 2007; Williams, 2010; Wortel, & Bosch, 2011

¹⁰ e.g., Seiler et al., 2011; D. Verweij, K. Hofhuis, & J. Soeters, ‘Moral judgement within the armed forces’ (2007) 6 (1) *JME* 19; E. Wortel, & J. Bosch, ‘Strengthening moral competence: A ‘train the trainer’ course on military ethics’ (2011) 10 (1) *JME* 17

operations abroad, however, there is often no time for extensive and time-consuming deliberation. Moreover, knowing what the ‘right thing to do’ is does not necessarily mean that individuals act upon it. For example, it took the whistle-blower of the Abu Ghraib prison abuses in 2004 some time before he spoke out or intervened in the situation he considered morally reprehensible. So, the question is, what blocks the translation of knowledge of the ‘right thing’ into behaviour?

The issue of morality has been quite prominent in the military domain. In *The Lucifer Effect*, psychologist Philip Zimbardo describes various psychological and group-dynamic processes as well as situational features that contributed to the escalation of the Abu Ghraib prison abuses (Iraq) in 2004. Deindividuation, conformity, moral disengagement and fear in particular led U.S. military troops to mistreat and abuse prisoners during night shifts¹¹. These insights have been integrated in military leadership training to a significant extent, but the question of why these insights are not (always) translated into action in the theatre of operations remains?

Leaders play a pivotal role in initiating and directing team actions in ethically challenging situations during military operations¹². Therefore, this chapter addresses military leadership in relation to ethically challenging environments, and how these leaders are prepared to cope with such circumstances. Morally sound behaviour refers to an individual’s behaviour resulting from meticulous consideration of the ethical dimensions of a situation. That is, it refers to situations in which societal order is challenged due to the clash of important core values in social interactions, and the rights of the other parties involved are considered as well. We argue that this gap between insights and behaviour in military leaders is the result of neglect of relevant psychological mechanisms in military ethics education.

¹¹ P. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer effect: Understanding how good people turn evil* (ME Sharpe 2007)

¹² cf. Seiler, & Fischer, 2010

Military leaders need to know how to cope with these psychological mechanisms in order to serve as moral exemplars for their subordinates.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. The first goal is to reflect upon the ethical/moral aspects of leadership in order to raise the necessary questions addressing the gap between the establishment of moral character on the one hand and morally sound behaviour in leaders on the other. The second goal is to match the specific gaps to recommendations for the stimulation of morally sound behaviour in military personnel. We will use the Dutch military as a case to explore the processes that inhibit leaders from doing the right thing or from stimulating their followers to do the right thing.

Our starting points are two main assumptions. First, specific psychological and other mechanisms influence leadership and other behaviours regardless of the centrality of the leader's moral identity. Hence, in our view, behaviour is not only a result of moral development; we believe other (context) specific issues – such as group-dynamic processes – are relevant as well. Second, educating leaders to have theoretical knowledge of the existence of these mechanisms (i.e. creating awareness) may provide an important piece of the puzzle and contribute to solving the problem, but education alone may not necessarily be sufficient.

In the remainder of this chapter, we first describe the theoretical background of moral behaviour and related issues such as moral judgement. We subsequently address the group-dynamic aspects of leadership in relation with morality. Next, we describe how military training aims to prepare the servicemen for the social-psychological mechanisms that can be distinguished in military operations in situations that are morally challenging. Finally, we conclude with an overview of recommendations. These recommendations deal with both the military organization as well as its leaders. We advise military and other organizations on how to appropriately address these issues in educational settings. Moreover, we describe how

the organizational design can benefit from these social-psychological insights in order to stimulate morally sound behaviour.

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Moral decision making in practice.

During an anti-piracy mission, a commander in the Royal Netherlands Navy faces a dilemma. His mandate prohibits giving humanitarian aid on land, such as medical assistance to the local population, in the vessel's patrol area. The commander knows that his personnel can easily help the people living near the beaches, especially medically, without compromising the mission. He can order the marines on board to build an improvised platform in the water near the beach, so the locals can reach them in order to obtain medical assistance. This way, he both complies with the mandate and follows his personal desire to help these people. The Commander knows, however, that even though this construction is possible, it might only be for a short period of time. After all, when the situation changes (and risks increase) he may no longer be able to provide such help. Additionally, when another coalition partner takes over command in this area, the new commander may well decide to discontinue these activities. So, the Dutch commander wonders whether he would really be helping the local population by giving aid. What is the 'right' decision for him to make?

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2. Background - the moral domain

Theorists and scientists have been considering 'morality' for a long time and from many perspectives, aiming to understand ethical issues, such as moral dilemmas, in human

life¹³. In ancient cultures, myths and legends served as a source for standards and norms. More recently, from the beginning of the twentieth century, this moral functioning attracted the interest of psychologists and sociologists who have since been using a variety of perspectives to study and understand the depths of (individual) moral behaviour. After the Second World War, morality received even more attention, with researchers and practitioners trying to understand and explain how it was possible that ‘ordinary’ people behaved as cruelly as they had done during the period of war in Europe and Asia¹⁴.

2.1 Three Perspectives in moral judgement research

The research field that addresses morality empirically is that of moral judgement research. The predominant question in this field is how individuals cope with ethical challenges and how moral judgement works. Moral judgement refers to the processes (conscious and deliberate as well as unconscious and unintentional) that assist individuals in recognizing, assessing, and potentially acting upon a morally challenging situation¹⁵. In the psychological discipline, the domain of moral judgement was initially dominated by the classical Piagetian-Kohlbergian paradigm of cognitive moral development¹⁶. In the psychology of human development, broad stages of moral cognition were proposed, focusing on the reasoning process of individuals when confronted with moral dilemmas¹⁷. In this

¹³ cf. V. Saxena, & N. Babu, ‘Expanding the domain of morality by going beyond moral reasoning: emerging trends in moral research’ (2013) 58 (3) *Psychological Studies* 326; M.C. de Graaff, F.D.A. den Besten, E. Giebels, D.E.M. Verweij, ‘Moral Judgment in War and Peacekeeping Operations: An Empirical Review’ In T. Elßner, T.R. & R. Janke (Eds.), *Didactics of Military Ethics: From Theory to Practice* (Brill 2016) 75

¹⁴ i.e. L. Kohlberg, *Essays on moral development. Vol. 1, The philosophy of moral development: moral stages and the idea of justice* (Harper & Row 1981); L.K. Treviño, ‘Ethical decision making in organizations: A person-situation interactionist model’ (1986) 11 *Academy of management Review* 601; S.A. Haslam, & S. Reicher, ‘Beyond the banality of evil: Three dynamics of an interactionist social psychology of tyranny’ (2007) 33 (5) *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 615

¹⁵ cf. D. Kahneman, & C.R. Sunstein, ‘Cognitive psychology and moral intuitions’ In: J-P Changeux, A. R. Damasio, W. Singer, & Y. Christen (Eds.) *Neurobiology of Human Values* (Springer 2005) 91.

¹⁶ cf. Saxena, & Babu 2013, n13

¹⁷ Kohlberg 1981, n14

tradition, the decision-maker is seen as a rationalistic agent. A large variety of scales that could be applied to measuring aspects that relate to how individuals behave, such as moral reasoning¹⁸ and moral identity¹⁹, was developed, used and adjusted. This is referred to as the *cognitive or rationalist approach*.

A debate that is still on going began in 1970s regarding the influence of intuitions and proneness of certain '*foundations*' in the cognitive reasoning process²⁰. Gilligan²¹, for example, suggested that women are predisposed differently from men with respect to moral perspectives (or foundations), resulting in the development of '*care ethics*' as opposed to the ethics of '*justice*'. The *affective approach* stresses the importance of emotions and intuitions as a main cause of moral judgement. Following this line of reasoning, moral judgement is caused by effortless affective intuitions, and conscious cognitions are considered as '*post hoc justifications*' of decisions made²².

Recent developments tend to combine and integrate the two perspectives in the integrative approach. This approach is based on the assumption²³ that, in the event of a disruption in the 'expected state of the world', or when there is no obvious way of engaging the world, it is not a matter of deciding what to do, but a matter of interpretation. This approach leads to the emergence of '*affectual intuitionism*', which considers ethical intuitions

¹⁸ e.g. J.R. Rest, *Moral development: Advances in research and theory*. Praeger Publishers (1986); Kohlberg 1981, n14

¹⁹ K. Aquino, A. Reed, S. Thau, & D. Freeman, 'A grotesque and dark beauty: How moral identity and mechanisms of moral disengagement influence cognitive and emotional reactions to war' (2007) 43 *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 385

²⁰ e.g., C. Gilligan, *In a different voice* (Harvard University Press 1982); J. Haidt, 'The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral judgment' (2001) 108 (4) *Psychological review* 814 ; L.P. Nucci, & E. Turiel, 'Social interactions and the development of social concepts in preschool children' (1978) *Child development* 400

²¹ Gilligan 1982, n20

²² cf. Haidt 2001, 20

²³ Following empirical insights of, *inter alia*, S. Sonenshein, 'The role of construction, intuition, and justification in responding to ethical issues at work: The sensemaking-intuition model' (2007) 32 *Academy of Management Review* 1022; K.E. Weick, K.M. Sutcliffe, & D. Obstfeld, 'Organizing and the process of sensemaking' (2005) 16 (4) *Organization science* 409

as cognitive moral emotions with a cognitive foundation²⁴. This means, for example, that cognitions regarding humaneness or equality experienced in a specific situation form a foundation for emotions such as sympathy or anger. In this perspective, emotions are necessary for being able to make a practical, rational decision: emotions present a normative guide in moral judgements²⁵.

The on-going debate resulted in the establishment of two influential frameworks; Rest's '*four components model*'²⁶ and Treviño's '*person-situation interactionist model*'²⁷. Rest²⁸ proposed a fundamental model for moral judgement, including four elements: a) moral recognition, b) moral evaluation or judgement, c) moral intention, and d) moral behaviour. Where Rest²⁹ focused on individual characteristics influencing moral judgement, Treviño³⁰ pointed to the relevance of situational characteristics, such as the moral intensity of the situation, job characteristics, awarded responsibility, and outside pressures. Treviño argued that, while an individual's moral development forms the basis for that person's response to a moral dilemma, that alone is not enough to explain or predict ethical decision-making behaviour³¹. Recent research suggests that issue-related factors such as moral intensity are strong predictors of the outcome of the ethical decision-making process, and sometimes even more so than personal and organizational factors³².

²⁴ cf. J. Greene, & J. Haidt, 'How (and where) does moral judgment work?' (2002) 6 *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 517; S. Roeser, 'Intuitions, emotions and gut reactions in directions about risks: toward a different interpretation of neuroethics' (2010) 13 *Journal of Risk Research* 175

²⁵ Roeser 2010, n24

²⁶ Rest 1986, n18

²⁷ Treviño 1986, n14

²⁸ Rest 1986, n18

²⁹ Rest 1986, n18

³⁰ Treviño 1986, n14

³¹ Treviño 1986, n14

³² e.g., J.G. Paolillo, & S.J. Vitell, 'An empirical investigation of the influence of selected personal, organizational and moral intensity factors on ethical decision making' (2002) 35 *Journal of Business Ethics* 65

It is important to note that the use of the terms ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ often has a positive connotation. For example, ethical leadership is often portrayed as engagement in virtuous acts that benefit others³³. In this chapter we take a different stance, however, in line with relevant contemporary literature³⁴: we reserve the term “ethical” to refer to a specific state in an individual’s morality, instead of focusing on outcomes of the decision-making process such as fairness and altruism (e.g., in the distribution of resources). As such, ‘*moral judgement*’ does not refer to a process resulting solely in altruistic or fair decisions, it refers to a process in which an individual displays a certain sense of moral awareness (i.e. being aware of moral dimensions in a situation) and certain moral competence (i.e. being able to keep in mind all parties involved, their rights and interests and being able to think critically about possible solutions and consequences of actions in a situation).

The difference between the view described above and that common to most other ‘ethical leadership’–literature is subtle; some decisions may lead to results that are considered unfair to one party, but can be considered morally sound when looking at how those decisions were reached. In addition, even considerations of altruism, often regarded as noble, can result in morally challenging situations. Therefore, altruism in itself is an insufficient reason for labelling specific instances of leadership as ethical. The focus in this chapter is therefore not necessarily on the outcome of the moral judgement process, but also on all aspects related to the process of moral judgement preceding this outcome. As such, the terms ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ are used to characterize these aspects of the moral judgement process, irrespective of whether this process actually leads to a socially valued outcome.

³³ cf. A.H. de Hoogh, & D.N. Den Hartog, ‘Ethical and despotic leadership, relationships with leader’s social responsibility, top management team effectiveness and subordinates’ optimism: A multi-method study’ (2008) 19 (3) *The Leadership Quarterly* 297

³⁴ cf. Van Baarle et al. 2015, n3

2.2 Leadership, ethical leadership and moral exemplarship.

Since most subordinates look for ethical guidance outside themselves, it is generally thought that the leader ought to be a moral exemplar for his or her followers³⁵. That leadership is an important determinant for followers' behaviour is shown by several recent studies and acknowledged in managerial and business literature³⁶. For example, studies have shown strong correlations between 'bad' leadership and followers' unethical actions³⁷. Moreover, a large study conducted by Hannah and colleagues³⁸ in the U.S. Armed Forces during deployment in Iraq showed that the presence of abusive leadership correlates with higher rates of unethical acts. Leaders are therefore thought to be the ones most apt to inspire their personnel by setting goals/objectives, distributing resources, creating or stimulating a certain ethical climate, and, equally importantly, acting accordingly. However, other researchers have argued and shown that the actual degree of influence of leaders on followers is contingent upon group processes³⁹. Rather than this influence being a given resulting from a formal appointment, it is very much dependent on social or group identity and self-categorization processes, which are discussed in the next section.

2.3 Leadership as a group-dynamical process.

³⁵ cf. Treviño 1986, n14; M.E. Brown, L.K. Treviño, & D.A. Harrison, 'Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing' (2005) 97 (2) *Organizational behavior and human decision processes* 117

³⁶ e.g., De Hoogh, & Den Hartog 2008, n33; S. Van Gils, N. Van Quaquebeke, & D. Van Knippenberg, 'Tango in the dark: The interplay of leader's and follower's level of self-construal and its impact on ethical behavior in organizations' In B. Schyns, & T. Hansbrough (Eds.) *When leadership goes wrong: Destructive leadership, mistakes and ethical failures* Information Age Publishing (2010) 285

³⁷ cf. Thompson, & Jetly 2014, n9

³⁸ S.T. Hannah, J.M. Schaubroeck, A.C. Peng, R.G. Lord, L.K. Trevino, S.W. Kozlowski, ..., & J. Doty, 'Joint influences of individual and work unit abusive supervision on ethical intentions and behaviors: A moderated mediation model' (2013) 98 (4) *Journal of Applied Psychology* 579

³⁹ For an overview, see S.A. Haslam, S.D. Reicher, & M.J. Platow, *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence and power* (Psychology Press 2011)

2.3.1 *Social Identity and self-categorization.* Self-categorization in terms of social identity posits that an individual's self-image is defined in terms of group membership and corresponds to the interests of the group⁴⁰. The social identity approach to leadership sees leadership as a process of social influence, causing in-group members to become motivated to contribute to group goals, and focuses on leaders' capacities to "represent, create, advance and embed a shared sense of social identity for group members"⁴¹.

Social identity theory began with the notion that group members (in-group) are motivated to positively distinguish themselves from out-groups by discriminating against them⁴²; such in-groups and out-groups were easily created, even when the group division was based on criteria that were rather superficial⁴³, and equally easily resulted in in-group favouritism and out-group devaluation⁴⁴.

Social identities are rather fluid, and different identities can co-exist simultaneously, at various levels⁴⁵. One can consider oneself a member of groups with, for instance, a national identity ("we Dutch"), a work-related identity ("we fire-fighters"), or a gender-based identity ("we females"). Similarly, in a military context, one could consider oneself member of group with an identity related to the armed forces in general ("we soldiers" or "we Dutch soldiers") or to subgroups within the armed forces ("we Apache pilots", "we Marines", or "we riflemen"). Whichever identity becomes salient depends on what the standard for comparison is, and, hence, also on the circumstances. Someone may feel herself a member of the group

⁴⁰ N.K. Steffens, S.A. Haslam, S.D. Reicher, M.J. Platow, K. Fransen, K., J. Yang, ..., F. Boen, 'Leadership as social identity management: Introducing the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) to assess and validate a four-dimensional model' (2014) 25 (5) *Leadership Quarterly* 1001

⁴¹ Steffens et al. 2014, n40, p. 1002; cf. Haslam, et al. 2011, n39

⁴² H. Tajfel & J.C. Turner, 'An integrative theory of intergroup conflict' In: W.G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* Brooks/Cole (1979) 33

⁴³ e.g., a test ostensibly pointing out that individuals were more likely to prefer the art of Paul Klee versus Wassily Kandinsky

⁴⁴ J. Jetten, R. Spears, A.S.R. Manstead, 'Intergroup norms and intergroup discrimination: Distinctive self-categorization and social identity effects' (1999) 71 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1222

⁴⁵ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

'females' when women are pitted against men in a debate about women being underrepresented in high-level leadership positions. Similarly, one may feel distinctly Dutch when nationality becomes the basis for comparison, for instance during peacekeeping operations abroad when cooperating with military personnel from other nationalities. Also, being on a reconnaissance mission in hostile territory may create a closely-knit in-group on unit-level, even if multiple nationalities are represented within the unit, pitted against an out-group consisting of members of the local population who cannot be distinguished from insurgents hiding among them. This distinction may eventually cause the out-group to be regarded as a homogeneous group of perhaps devious or untrustworthy individuals, and perhaps spark immoral behaviour towards these locals. Indeed, research suggests that a threat to one's social identity increases aggressive tendencies⁴⁶. Specifically, Fischer et al. showed that when the national British identity was salient, threats to this identity, like the 2005 London bombings, led to greater support for retaliatory action; identical tendencies were found after women's female identity was made salient and they were subsequently confronted with examples of Taliban misogyny (i.e., a threat to female identity).

Social identities and self-categorization are not just the stuff of dusty theory but are, indeed, very real concepts. This is illustrated by the many examples in military practice and literature about personnel displaying heroic behaviour, simply because they wanted to "do the right thing" on a group level rather than for themselves as individuals. For example, in his book about the British bomber crews who flew night missions over Nazi Germany, Bishop (2008) lists many examples of diary entries and letters to relatives that underscore this. With chances of surviving a full tour estimated by some to be as low as 40 %, joining Bomber Command certainly was not in anyone's individual best interests. Many crewmembers motivated their choice to face these grim odds, however, by writing that they wanted to do

⁴⁶ P. Fischer, S.A. Haslam, & L. Smith, 'If you wrong us, shall we not revenge? Social identity salience moderates support for retaliation in response to collective threat' (2010) 14 (2) *Group Dynamics* 143

what was right for their country. In other words, they were willing to run great personal risk to contribute to the war effort of their country. Here, clearly, a higher-level national identity superseded that of the individual.

2.3.2 Group dynamics, influence and moral exemplarship. Social identity theory and self-categorization theory have important repercussions for group performance, leadership and followership. As discussed by Haslam⁴⁷, several studies have shown that individual identification in terms of a group membership has positive effects on factors as communication, trust, and cooperation within this specific group. In addition, self-categorization in terms of group membership plays an important role in group members' ability to influence one another and forms the basis for leadership and followership⁴⁸. Specifically, when group members identified strongly with their group, their leaders turned out to be evaluated more on how representative they were of the group's norms, rather than the degree to which they matched general leadership stereotypes⁴⁹. Furthermore, leaders showing such representativeness are more influential in the sense that followers respond more positively to their influence attempts⁵⁰.

The implications of social identity and self-categorization theory for leadership are discussed at great length by Haslam and colleagues⁵¹. First, it is important to realize that in-group members have greater potential to exert influence than out-group members. Power exerted by out-group members is experienced more negatively, being seen as interference that diminishes in-group members' sense of control, whereas in-group power is regarded uplifting,

⁴⁷ S.A. Haslam, *Psychology in organizations. The social identity approach* (Sage 2004)

⁴⁸ For an overview, see Haslam et al. 2011, n39

⁴⁹ M.A. Hogg, S.C. Hains, & I. Mason, 'Identification and leadership in small groups: Salience, frame of reference, and leader stereotypicality effects on leader evaluations' (1998) 75 (5) *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1248

⁵⁰ As suggested by M.M. Graf, S.C. Schuh, N. van Quaquebeke, & R. van Dick, 'The relationship between leaders' group oriented values and follower identification with hand endorsement of leaders: the moderating role of group membership' (2012) 161 *Journal of Business Ethics* 301

⁵¹ Haslam, et al. 2011, n39

motivating, and is able to increase cooperation. As such, being seen as an in-group member greatly enhances a leader's ability to lead. In fact, existence of leader-follower distinctions are downright detrimental; anything that sets a (would-be) leader apart from the group (e.g., because of unreasonably higher salary, privileges, or as a result of internal competition between two candidates up for a promotion) may undermine group members' motivation and create resistance to attempts to influence. In fact, studies have shown that groups with randomly selected leaders out-performed groups with no leader and groups with formally selected leaders⁵²; the formally selected leaders stand out from the group, whereas this is not the case for randomly selected leaders: random leadership could befall literally any group member. Finally, Haslam and colleagues⁵³ argue that leadership entails more than being part of an in-group; acting for the group along the lines of salient group norms, and actually being seen as prototypical of the group greatly enhances leaders' influence on the group.

Both successful leadership and moral exemplarship hinge on these psychological insights. These processes largely predict whether "morally leading by example" will produce the desired effects on follower behaviour. It should be noted, however, that the psychological mechanisms outlined in the above can work both for and against leaders. On the one hand, it gives leaders guidelines that may help them to lead more effectively. On the other hand, these processes are not restricted to appointed leaders; in principle, any group member, regardless of rank, may gain influence and become an informal leader within the group if he or she meets these 'criteria'.

2.3.3 *Group dynamics and the knowledge-behaviour gap.* In addition to explaining leader and follower interactions, social identity and self-categorization may also help explain

⁵² S.A. Haslam, C. McGarty, P.M. Brown, R.A. Eggins, B.E. Morrison, & K.J. Reynolds, 'Inspecting the emperor's clothes: Evidence that random selection of leaders can enhance group performance' (1998) 2 (3) *Group Dynamics* 168

⁵³ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

why knowledge about ethics and moral behaviour is not converted into corresponding action. Military units are often extensively trained to become tightly knit social peer groups and working together under dangerous circumstances further enhances their identity as a group. These social groups develop shared norms and values, and members transgressing those values run the risk of being corrected by others, or even ostracized. The set of norms that these groups develop may or may not include norms about ethical behaviour. If they do not, any attempt to instil a sense of morality in them, e.g. through education, may well be perceived as interference by an out-group. Congruous to the distinction that exists in many companies between those who perform core activities in a company and their management, military units may view teaching staff as non-stereotypic for the military organization and their teaching about ethical behaviour as bearing no relevance to military practice. In light of the above, it is not implausible to suggest that such teaching efforts are seen as an influence attempt by an out-group; this could effectively render these efforts ineffectual, which may explain the gap between knowledge and behaviour central to this chapter.

2.3.4 Fairness. Group members seem to expect fair treatment from their leaders; according to Haslam⁵⁴ group members reward fair leaders and show more commitment to groups governed by fairness. Basically, leaders should not treat themselves better than their followers, and they should not treat certain in-group members better than other in-group members; if they do, their standing will diminish⁵⁵. Correspondingly, research has shown that store personnel who had “survived” a round of lay-offs were more likely to quit their jobs anyhow if they felt that the management’s behaviour during the lay-off period had been unfair⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

⁵⁵ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

⁵⁶ J. Brockner, B.M. Wiesenfeld, T. Reed, S. Grover, & C. Martin, ‘Interactive effect of job content and context on the reactions of layoff survivors’ (1993) 64 (2) *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 187

Fairness, however, is a double-edged sword. For instance, while fairness seems to be valued greatly within groups, acting fairly to other groups is another matter; fairness appears to be appreciated less when shown to (members of) an out-group as opposed to the in-group. A leader's unfair distribution of money is more likely to invoke negative sentiments among group members when the afflicted are part of an in-group than when they belong to an out-group. Moreover, Haslam and colleagues⁵⁷ discuss several additional studies that show that justice tends to favour in-groups and is often not dispensed in an entirely fair fashion. For example, Australian football umpires were shown to decide more often in favour of teams from their home state by awarding them more free kicks⁵⁸; similarly, in the U.N.'s International Court of Justice, the judges have been shown to rule more in favour of the countries they represented⁵⁹. In fact, such in-group favouritism is often what groups expect from their leaders. They should support the group, after all; fairness towards an out-group would in fact fail to advance the group and its interests⁶⁰. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that unfairness to out-groups actually enhances the position of leaders in their groups; by taking decisions that are unfair to other groups, Haslam and colleagues⁶¹ argue that their leadership is consolidated because they can be seen to be "doing it for us", i.e., to advance group interests. In sum, therefore, differential treatment in terms of fairness of an out-group as opposed to an in-group is inherent to the social identity approach to leadership.

The psychological insights relating to group dynamics discussed above not only aid our understanding of group formation and leadership, they may also help us understand how moral disengagement and immoral behaviour towards others outside the own group evolves.

⁵⁷ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

⁵⁸ P.B. Mohr, & K. Larsen, 'Ingroup favoritism in umpiring decisions in Australian Football' (1998) 138 (4) *Journal of Social Psychology* 495

⁵⁹ E.A. Posner, & M.F.P. De Figueiredo, 'Is the international court of justice biased?' (2005) 34 (2) *Journal of Legal Studies* 599

⁶⁰ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

⁶¹ Haslam et al. 2011, n39

First, the very core of theories of social identity and self-categorization is that a collection of people, such as military personnel, for various reasons - including very superficial ones -, start seeing themselves as an in-group, by comparison with a salient out-group. It is to be expected that phenomena as in-group favouritism and out-group devaluation, well documented in psychological research, will rear their rather ugly heads. The very fact that in-groups and out-groups are discerned would arguably lead to treating out-group members differently than in-group members. Moreover, if one's group and corresponding identity is under threat, this may spark aggression and revenge towards the out-group⁶². In addition, to a certain extent, being unfair to these out-groups may consolidate existing leadership in the group, and this may be used by leaders as a mechanism to increase influence and group control.

3. Observations - ethical decision-making education

Most organizations, including the military, aim to guide and train their personnel in ethical decision-making. However, military organizations have come to realize that in the area of operations servicemen sometimes actively and deliberately take part in barbarous and inhuman actions towards the local population or the opposing forces⁶³. Military organizations still struggle with respect to how to equip their personnel with the competency to come to meticulous decisions. This is especially the case in situations that make it impossible to come to 'The Right decision', due to the tragic consequences of all options. Such appalling dilemmas resemble the one of the army captain described in the introduction, in which a code

⁶² Fischer, Haslam, & Smith 2010, n46

⁶³ cf. Thompson, & Jetly 2014, n9

of conduct or the rules of engagement were not sufficient to make it possible to reach a 'right' solution⁶⁴. Verweij⁶⁵ refers to such situations as tragic dilemmas.

Mechanisms of moral disengagement are often present in these inherently challenging situations, but may be exacerbated by high levels of stress and emotional and moral numbing⁶⁶, and the group-dynamical processes outlined above. A clear illustration was provided during one of our interview sessions⁶⁷, when we asked a Dutch sergeant major to reflect on his experiences during his deployment in Iraq. He told us that, while watching some video footage his men had made, he had suddenly become aware of how impertinent their behaviour and how indecent their language had become. To his dismay, this behaviour and language had gradually become normal within his group. Considering this undesirable, he summoned the troops and showed them the footage, asking them to mentally place themselves outside the group and evaluate themselves as the kind of person their mothers and girlfriends wanted them to be. This intervention was the start for the unit actively and consciously reflecting upon its own behaviour and language, in order to prevent escalation of moral disengagement during the mission.

In the following section, we will describe how the Netherlands armed forces prepares and trains its leaders in moral judgement and how the organization contributes to morally sound behaviour in the mission area. In order to achieve moral exemplarship, military leaders take part in various types of training sessions such as dilemma training, group-dynamic exercises and moral character building. We will shortly explain these elements of ethics

⁶⁴ cf. M. Schulzke, 'Ethically Insoluble Dilemmas in War' (2013) 12 (2) JME 95; D. Verweij, 'Responsibility as the 'ability to respond' adequately?' In H. Amersfoort, R. Moelker, J. Soeters, & D. Verweij (Eds). *Moral Responsibility, & Military Effectiveness* Den Haag: T.M.C. Asser Press (2013) 11

⁶⁵ Verweij 2013, n64

⁶⁶ cf. M.C. de Graaff, M. Schut, D.E.M. Verweij, E. Vermetten, & E. Giebels, 'Emotional Reactions and Moral Judgment: The Effects of Morally Challenging Interactions in Military Operations' (2016) 26 (1) *Ethics & Behavior* 14

⁶⁷ De Graaff, Schut, et al. 2016, n66

education in the Dutch military in order to demonstrate why we consider it insufficient in its current form for contemporary military missions.

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Moral decision making in practice.

A Dutch lieutenant is employed for a peacekeeping mission in an international team in Northern Africa during a major Ebola outbreak. Some of her Dutch colleagues, members of her unit in the Netherlands, are scheduled to arrive at her international camp within a few days. A member of the coalition at the camp displays symptoms of the Ebola virus. Therefore, nobody is allowed to leave the international camp. However, since the disease has not (yet) been officially diagnosed, units off base are not informed about the possible outbreak in the camp. The commander does not want to alarm allied and opposing forces by calling attention to this premature conclusion regarding the situation in camp. The Dutch lieutenant knows about the commander's decision, but when she speaks to her Dutch colleagues, she is torn: should she be loyal to her Dutch unit members and warn them about the possibility of an Ebola outbreak in the camp, or should she be loyal to her Commander and not inform them? By doing the former, she may prevent them from contracting a possible Ebola infection but she may also cause commotion and compromise the camp; the latter would help maintain stability but may also expose her Dutch unit members to severe health risks...

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3.1 Moral character building – being a military professional.

When educating military personnel in ethics, the focus mainly lies on improving professionalism in the servicemen. We have identified five relevant cornerstones in moral character building in the Royal Netherlands military: (1) virtues, (2) dilemma training, (3) moral competence, (4) moral disengagement and (5) codes of conduct.

3.1.1 Virtues. In order to embed professionalism in all ranks, the Dutch military aims to achieve a certain ‘level’ of moral development by instilling military virtues in its personnel. Specific virtues – which recall the standards of ‘chivalry’ of bygone ages -- are considered most relevant in terms of military professionalism such as courage, comradeship, heroism, hardiness and honour⁶⁸. These virtues are traditionally transferred as ‘*esprit de corps*’ in military codes. However, according to some scholars in this field, there is a downside to this *esprit de corps*. They claim that this causes the servicemen to maintain an in-group, or even an inward, focus⁶⁹. For example, loyalty is displayed, but only to one’s own team⁷⁰, which in turn may lead to what is referred to as ‘*moral blindfolding*’ and immoral actions⁷¹. How such in-group formation ties in with psychological processes, and consequently may give rise to in-group favouritism, out-group devaluation, and aggression towards outsiders is a matter that is poorly addressed in military ethics educations.

3.1.2 Dilemma training. All ranks are stimulated to recognize the moral dimensions in situations. For this reason, servicemen are invited to take part in dilemma training in pre-deployment sessions and during ‘regular’ ethics courses. However, we believe there is room for improvement when it comes to recognizing the moral dimensions in situations. A recent study showed that more than 50% of the dilemmas shared after deployment, were not

⁶⁸ cf. M.C. de Graaff, & M.J. van Gils, ‘Military Professionalism, an organizational challenge by itself’ In J. Stouffer, & D. Lindsay (Eds.), *Threats to military professionalism, international perspectives* (Canadian Defence Academy Press 2012) 57

⁶⁹ cf. Verweij 2013, n64

⁷⁰ cf. Verweij 2013, n64

⁷¹ cf. M. Schut, & R. Moelker, ‘Respectful Agents: Between the Scylla and Charybdis of Cultural and Moral Incapacity’ (2015) 14 JME 232 ; Thompson, & Jetly 2014, n9

recognized as ethical issues by fellow servicemen after the fact⁷². Moreover, the same study demonstrated that when the moral intensity of a situation increased, sense-making tactics that require a higher level ‘*critical thinking*’ (i.e. moral awareness, integrating available information and critical (self-) reflection on personal biases in the decision making process) were seldom used⁷³. This raises the question of why servicemen seem incapable of recognizing the moral dimensions in events as they are unfolding. One explanation may be that, in most sessions, the dilemmas are presented in a manner that does little to encourage participants to take the perspective of the individuals being portrayed. The scenarios can for instance be hypothetical, theoretical, rather extreme, or conveyed in text or film, all of which may create a distance between the subject matter and the participants’ own world or experiences. Only in a few sessions are servicemen invited to share their own dilemmas. We believe that this causes servicemen to grow accustomed to recognizing dilemma situations and moral dimensions when explicitly asked (for example when reflecting upon a movie as ‘*Armadillo*’ in the classroom), but not in daily-life situations. Similarly, in dilemma-training sessions in which participants are encouraged to share personal experiences, most of them (even those in the social domain, such as coaching and HR) seem to have difficulty to come up with one. In a civil educational context similar difficulties have been acknowledged by Walker and colleagues⁷⁴. They argued that this problem occurs among individuals who attach no significance to their moral identity in daily life⁷⁵. Thus, it seems that military personnel are better able to recognize moral dimensions in life-and-death challenges presented to them as

⁷² M.C. de Graaff, D. Meijer, D.E.M. Verweij, & E. Giebels, *Sensemaking in Military Critical Incidents: The Impact of Moral Intensity* (under review A)

⁷³ De Graaff et al. under review A, n72

⁷⁴ L.J. Walker, R.C. Pitts, K.H. Hennig, & M.K. Matsuba, ‘Reasoning about morality and real-life moral problems’ In M. Killen & D. Hart (Eds.), *Morality in everyday life: Developmental perspectives* Cambridge University Press (1995) 371

⁷⁵ cf. L.J. Walker, ‘Gus in the gap: Bridging the judgment-action gap in moral functioning’ In D.K. Lasley & D. Narvaez (Eds) *Moral development, self, and identity* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers (2004) 1

scenarios (the so-called tragic dilemmas), than in more prevalent yet less obvious morally challenging situations.

3.1.3 Moral competence/moral professionalism. Karssing⁷⁶ introduced the concept of moral competence, which resembles Rest's perspective on moral development. Verweij (2007) defines moral competence as the ability and willingness to adequately and carefully perform tasks by taking interests into account after consideration of the relevant facts. Moral competence therefore is not achieved only by possessing enough knowledge, but also requires the right attitude and capacity of skills.

Originally, Verweij⁷⁷ formulated five conditions that have to be satisfied in order to achieve moral competence. The first condition is the capacity of an individual to be aware of the moral aspects of a situation. The second condition is that an individual must be capable of acknowledging his/her own moral standards and the underlying values, rules and interests in the situation under consideration. According to the third condition, an individual must be able to evaluate the different alternatives and their consequences. Fourth, an individual must be capable of forming a judgement consistent with his moral considerations and acting in accordance with this moral judgement. Fifth is the ability to communicate and explain the moral dimension to others and the ability and willingness to take responsibility for one's own actions and decisions⁷⁸. Verweij later added another condition, an individual's '*moral buoyancy*'⁷⁹. This refers to the capacity that allows an individual to deal with the tragic elements of the moral dimensions in any situation⁸⁰. Contrary to the other conditions, which

⁷⁶ E. Karssing, *Morele competenties in organisaties* (Van Gorcum, & Comp BV 2000)

⁷⁷ D. Verweij, 'Morele professionaliteit in de militaire praktijk' In: J. Kole, & D. de Ruyter, (Eds.), *Werkzame idealen – ethische reflecties op professionaliteit* Koninklijke van Gorcum (2007) 126

⁷⁸ P. Olsthoorn, M. Meijer, & D. Verweij, 'Managing moral professionalism in military operations' In J. Soeters, P. C. V. Fenema & R. Beeres (Eds.), *Managing Military Organizations: Theory and Practice* Routledge (2010) 138; Verweij 2007, n77

⁷⁹ D. Verweij, 'Militaire Ethiek' In: R. Moelker, J. Noll en M. de Weger (Eds.) *Krijgsmacht en Samenleving. Over de inzet van een geweldsinstrument: bestuurlijke, politieke en veiligheidsaspecten* Boom (2009) 247

⁸⁰ Verweij 2009, n79

are considered trainable and flexible, moral buoyancy should be considered a personality trait. As such, it is more or less stable over time and cannot be trained⁸¹.

Even though the Dutch military acknowledges the relevance of the concept of moral professionalism, the concept is scarcely being put in to practice throughout the organization⁸². In officer-career programs, moral professionalism is trained by requiring officers to reflect upon the elements of moral competence described above and formulate their personal learning objectives in this respect (for example, to suspend immediate judgement, or to listen without prejudice and bias). NCO training and other ranks education, on the other hand, focus more on ‘real soldier activities’ (e.g., basic weapon skills and drills) and normative ethics such as behavioural codes; only NCOs who are trained ethics instructors receive a 9-days training in moral competence⁸³.

3.1.4 Moral disengagement. Individuals tend to reaffirm their sense of ‘self’ in all situations. In some situations, however, individuals take part in activities that they themselves would not consider ‘right’, like the whistle-blower in the Abu Ghraib prison abuses who at first did not think disapprovingly of the situation. Presumably, witnessing members of one’s own group behaving unethically causes a mental imbalance in the observer, i.e., cognitive dissonance, which needs to be reduced. Similar to smokers justifying their habit by downplaying the associated health risks, the observer’s negative feeling of cognitive dissonance may be reduced by invoking moral disengagement. Moral disengagement is a psychological mechanism individuals use to dissociate themselves from what they believe is unethical conduct and to justify their own actions⁸⁴.

⁸¹ Verweij 2009, n79

⁸² cf. De Graaff, & Van den Berg 2010, n4

⁸³ Van Baarle et al. 2015, n3

⁸⁴ cf. A. Bandura, ‘Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action’ In W. M. Kurtines, & J.L.Gewitz (Eds.), *Handbook of moral behavior and development* (Erlbaum 1991) 45; A. Bandura, ‘Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities’ (1999) 3 *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 193; A. Bandura, C.

There are numerous examples of incidents during recent military operations in which moral disengagement is displayed⁸⁵ despite the efforts in ethics education. Although moral disengagement is a topic in ethics education for the Dutch NCOs and officers, it is approached highly theoretically, and applied to extreme situations such as the My Lai massacre or the Haditha incident⁸⁶. However, extreme situations are not the only situations where moral disengagement poses a real risk; in recounting daily experiences as part of interview sessions, many servicemen verbally displayed signs of moral disengagement, often accompanied by so called ‘other-condemning’ emotions such as anger and contempt⁸⁷.

3.1.5 Codes of conduct. Since ethical violations have resulted in considerable media attention and political discussions, ethics receives a great deal of attention at the strategic level in the military. As a consequence of ethical violations, e.g., the harassment on board the Royal Netherlands Navy frigate HNLMS Tjerk Hiddes, the Dutch military formulated policy and a code of conduct, in order to promote normative behaviour in all military personnel. The code of conduct demands a certain level of personal responsibility of the servicemen. However, taking responsibility for one’s own and other’s actions is quite different from saying one is or feels responsible. For example, in their study on military moral identity, De Graaff and colleagues⁸⁸ found that military leaders, despite their training, experience similarly low levels of sense of moral worth as their subordinates. Interestingly, this sense of moral worth is an important aspect for individuals to be able to feel morally obliged to act upon their

Barbaranelli, G.V. Caprara, & C. Pastorelli, ‘Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency’ (1996) 71 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 364

⁸⁵ c.f. De Graaff, Schut et al 2016, n66; E. Grassiani, ‘When soldiers explain. Discursive strategies used by Israeli conscripts when recounting their experiences in the field’ In: M.M. Six-Hohenbalken & N. Weiss (Eds.), *Violence expressed: an anthropological approach* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd. 2012) 91

⁸⁶ In the My Lai Massacre in South Vietnam, 1968, over 400 civilians – including children, women and the elderly – were gang-raped, mutilated and eventually killed by US troops (c.f. Oliver, 2003). US Marines killed 24 Iraqi civilians – including children, women, and the elderly – in Haditha, Iraq in 2005 (c.f. E. Knickmeyer, ‘In Haditha, Memories of a Massacre’ *The Washington Post* (2006, May 27) Retrieved: October 7, 2014, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/26/AR2006052602069.html>).

⁸⁷ De Graaff, Schut et al. 2016, n66

⁸⁸ M.C. de Graaff, E. Giebels, D.E.M. Verweij, *On Moral Grounds: Moral Identity and Moral disengagement in Relation to Military Deployment* (under review B)

judgements. One can hardly expect leaders with a low sense of moral worth to serve adequately as moral exemplars. It has furthermore been argued that codes of conduct are utterly ineffective, as they fail to stimulate moral consideration⁸⁹. Karssing⁹⁰, for example, argued that when moral consideration is not triggered, ‘morally irresponsible’ decisions may be the result.

3.2 Group dynamics and group norms – being a professional team member.

Within the armed forces, the team one operates in is extremely important. Team formation therefore receives a great deal of attention, resulting in strong identification with the team, the unit and the organization⁹¹. As we have outlined above, however, team building is linked with several group-dynamic processes that can have an important impact on behaviour in the moral domain. Below, we will discuss the various ways in which the Dutch military addresses these issues in terms of morality.

First, in pre-deployment training, military leaders discuss ethical issues with their subordinates, pertaining to, for example, coping with differences in cultural background between the troops and the local population and social-psychological processes in terms of group dynamics. Cultural awareness training is intended to equip servicemen with some insights into the specific norms, customs and characteristics relating to the cultural and ethnical background of the local population. They are taught, for instance, how to avoid provoking members of the local population unnecessarily and unintentionally when approaching and addressing them. In spite of such training, however, cultural differences between the local population and the servicemen have continued to be the cause of many

⁸⁹ Karssing 2000, n76

⁹⁰ Karssing 2000, n76

⁹¹ C. Van den Berg, & J. Soeters, ‘Self-perceptions of soldiers under threat: A field study of the influence of death threat on soldiers’ (2009) 21 (2) *Military Psychology* 16

moral dilemmas⁹². Apparently, cultural awareness training sessions do not explicitly contribute to coping with such situations. One reason for this may be that these sessions merely teach participants about the existence of specific issues or situations in the local culture, without providing tips and tools about appropriate responses in practice. Merely knowing what is considered ‘customary’ in a certain environment is insufficient to prevent the servicemen from experiencing dilemmas. This, in turn, may lead to ‘*ethical relativism*’, a mechanism that causes over-rationalization of the situation at hand and may prevent an individual from intervening in situations in which human rights are being violated, simply because they situation is considered to be culturally driven and therefore exempt from intervention for reasons ranging from avoidance of (neo-) colonialist attitudes to ‘not my circus, not my monkeys’⁹³. Schut and Moelker⁹⁴ have identified an intervention to counteract this effect in at least one instance. In Afghanistan, Dutch troops observed that everyone involved in a crime situation were all being detained in the same cell. Sometimes, perpetrators and victim were being held together. Schut and Moelker⁹⁵ described how the servicemen, being aware of the cultural and ethnical traditions and norms, started a dialogue with the local police force about how to maintain safety and human dignity by separating women, children, men and animals when they were being detained. The situation changed for the better, and its positive effects are still being felt today.

Secondly, the lower moral self-worth of military personnel regardless of rank⁹⁶ discussed previously may lead to situations in which the servicemen are well aware of wrongdoings or bad intentions in their environment, but where, at the same time, they

⁹² cf. De Graaff, Schut et al. 2016, n66; M. Schut, M.C. De Graaff, & D. Verweij, ‘Moral Emotions during Military Deployments of Dutch Forces A Qualitative Study on Moral Emotions in Intercultural Interactions’ (2015) 41 (4) *Armed Forces & Society* 616

⁹³ cf. De Graaff, Schut et al. 2016, n66; D. Whetham, ‘The Challenge of Ethical Relativism in a Coalition Environment’ (2008) 7 (4) *JME* 302

⁹⁴ Schut and Moelker 2015, n71

⁹⁵ Schut and Moelker 2015, n71

⁹⁶ De Graaff et al. under review B, n88

consider themselves incapable of intervening in that specific situation (bystander effect). Interestingly, research has shown that taking responsibility and taking morally sound decisions is enhanced when people are under the impression that they are being watched⁹⁷. Indeed, several studies⁹⁸ have shown that exposure to cameras make people behave more in conformance with socially accepted norms, i.e., become more helpful towards other people. Currently, however, the use of such instruments is more the exception than the rule.

Thirdly, *'loyalty'* is an important virtue in the military, even though it may also complicate the situation. Ethical decision-making starts with the awareness of ethical dimensions in a situation. These dimensions are concerned with the social order. It is therefore important to consider who and what is included in an individual's sense of society. Who is worth considering, without prejudice? On the one hand, we see that military personnel are trained to have virtually unconditional loyalty towards their own team or unit. They are taught that 'the team always comes first' and that we 'leave no man behind', resulting in strong group identification and in-group loyalty. As argued above, however, that may have a negative impact on relationships with outsiders: because of the strong focus on one's own group, the other parties involved may be disregarded, which is considered undesirable for ethical decision-making. We therefore promote the implementation of theoretical and practical insights related to group-dynamics issues in military leadership education. Specifically, officer candidates should be exposed during their education with the social-psychological phenomena pertaining to leadership, intra- and intergroup relationships, and intergroup hostility. Those who are to lead others under difficult circumstances should be very aware of such phenomena as the *'black sheep effect'* – referring to the process that in-group members are more strongly evaluated and punished than out-group members when they do

⁹⁷ E. Grassiani, & D. Verweij, 'The Disciplinary Gaze of the Camera's Eye: Soldiers' Conscience and Moral Responsibility' (2014) 15 (3) *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*

⁹⁸ e.g., T.J. van Rompay, D.J. Vonk, & M.L. Fransen, 'The eye of the camera effects of security cameras on prosocial behavior' (2009) 41 (1) *Environment and Behavior* 60

not meet the criteria of the group⁹⁹ – or ‘*in-group favouritism*’ – referring to the process of in-group preference and implicit prejudice towards out-group members¹⁰⁰. As most servicemen join the armed forces at a young age, they are easily influenced. Therefore, the (unwritten) collective norms they learn to respect as their own from early on are mostly not subjected to and challenged by reflection or critical thinking. In other words, the rules and norms are not critically assessed. This, however, requires a major change in mind set: officers who have been indoctrinated to see the team as the ‘*greater good*’, will be required to take a more theoretical stance and occasionally actually question the usefulness of this strong team focus and the norms they believe to be true.

3.3 Moral judgement captured in models.

Finally, we address the ‘solutions’ formalized by the organization for dealing with dilemmatic situations. In the Netherlands armed forces, ethical decision-making models are introduced and used as an attempt to confront ethical challenges meticulously. One of the problems with these models, however, is that they oversimplify reality and that the steps (like the questions of the ethical awareness model) are ambiguous and multi-interpretable¹⁰¹. Thus, although initially meant to facilitate processing dilemmatic situations, such models are regularly used as a linear decision-making model instead of the awareness models that they are intended to be. The models are not used as a starting point for further examination of the situation, but are considered to result in a reliable and responsible ‘end-state’. In conclusion, however understandable, we believe it to be irresponsible to use these models as the only

⁹⁹ c.f. J.M. Marques, & V.Y. Yzerbyt, ‘The black sheep effect: Judgmental extremity towards ingroup members in inter- and intra- group situations’ (1988) 18 (3) *European Journal of Social Psychology* 287

¹⁰⁰ c.f. H. Tajfel, M.G. Billig, R.P. Bundy, & C. Flament, ‘Social categorization and intergroup behaviour’ (1971) 1 (2) *European journal of social psychology* 149

¹⁰¹ cf. T.A. Van Baarda, & P.J.M. Van der Heijden, ‘Ethiek en dilemma’s bij de Koninklijke Luchtmacht’ In T.A. Van Baarda, A.H.M Van Iersel, D.E.M. Verweij (Eds.) *Praktijkboek Militaire Ethiek* Uitgeverij Damon (2004) 181

foundation for moral judgement. After all, models are only a representation of reality. Critical thinking is still necessary in order to come to a decision in ethical dilemmas. Moreover, we see that these models are often used without taking into consideration what the purpose of the specific model is. Consequently, individual servicemen and women use the models in inappropriate situations and phases in the decision-making process.

4. Recommendations

Clearly, moral judgement is not a topic that should be reserved for philosophical considerations and classroom discussions. Instead, we suggest integrating ethics education, including the psychological mechanisms, into military operational exercises. At present, evaluation of operational exercises mainly focuses on how the drills and drills were carried out and procedures followed. We believe that it is relevant to address the ethical dimensions and group dynamical processes in debriefings as well. It is only then that servicemen learn to recognize the full scope of ethical challenges in their profession, as well as the group dynamical processes that inhibit themselves or their teams from doing the right thing.

As we described earlier in this chapter, there is a clear link between the behaviour and actions of leaders on the one hand and followers' behaviour on the other¹⁰². This suggests that leaders have an important role to fulfil when it comes to coping with ethical challenges, and, therefore, that leaders need adequate training in this respect. Specifically, the necessity to lead by example requires them to recognize ethical dimensions in situations and moral disengagement in themselves as well as in their units. Military leaders, in particular, need to be morally competent as research showed that merely displaying ethical leadership behaviour (i.e. demonstrating normatively appropriate conduct in alignment with organizational norms)

¹⁰² cf. K. Kalshoven, H. Van Dijk, C. Boon, 'Why and when does ethical leadership evoke unethical follower behavior?' (2016) 31 (2) *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 500

is insufficient to prevent unethical and undesired subordinate behaviour in terms of societal norms¹⁰³. Leaders need to explicitly apply the results of ethical considerations in their dealings with issues that arise with subordinates and with mission-specific questions, and to be seen to be doing so.

We have argued that the current ethics training in the Dutch military is insufficient; students are failing to put what they have learned into practice. In most educational settings (especially for NCOs) lessons focus on the theory of military ethics and normative rules rather than on enhancing personal (and team) moral competence. We believe that the psychological processes and phenomena discussed in this chapter may be valuable in bridging the gap between current ethics education and contemporary military operations. In this section, we present four suggestions that may contribute to optimizing ethics education.

First, critical reflection may help to incorporate dilemmatic choices and one's deliberation about it into one's moral self-concept. As such, it may contribute to reducing moral disengagement. Investing in the servicemen's reflexivity may help to prevent moral stress and promote better moral judgement. As Verweij¹⁰⁴ states, judgement largely depends on the ability to make sense of (i.e. give meaning to) what is physically observed and of what one cannot observe directly; clearly, reflexivity and critical thinking are vital aspects of this ability. In educational and training sessions, the servicemen should be made aware of this mechanism and stimulated to develop critical thinking and self-reflection (reflexivity) further. One particularly major challenge would be to incite critical reflection upon one of the core elements of the '*bildung*' of military personnel, the placing of the good of the group above all else. This is a norm taught from early on and is arguably almost never subjected to reflection or critical thinking. In addition, differential, more favourable treatment of the own group as

¹⁰³ cf. Kalshoven et al. 2016, n102

¹⁰⁴ Verweij 2013, n64

opposed to out-groups also happens to be a frequent outcome of the group-dynamic processes discussed above, and may also be a means for leaders to consolidate their position.

Consequently, ethical education would not only require people to question aspects of their 'bildung', but to also question the psychological mechanisms underlying group formation and leadership which might not be obvious to the untrained eye. For example, as we know that fairness is considered important within the in-group, but less so when considering out-groups (i.e., in-group favouritism), the local population runs the risk of being dealt with unfairly. Examples of such occurrences have been described in the MHAT 2006 report regarding behaviour of U.S. troops in 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'. Congruent with the findings of De Graaff and colleagues¹⁰⁵, the misbehaviour of these troops (such as damaging of private property of the local population or insulting them) was intensified by anger¹⁰⁶. Understanding the underlying mechanisms and the roles that everyone involved –leaders as well as followers – may play in such situations may well help prevent such adverse behaviour, or help to sanction it when it does occur.

The focus on creating tightly-knit units as part of 'bildung', beneficial though it may be in high-risk situations, may not only increase the chance of out-group devaluation and aggression, it may also affect military personnel's acceptance of ethics education. As outlined in the above, identifying strongly with an in-group may actually reduce influence attempts by an out-group. Specifically, teaching staff may well be viewed as a distinct out-group, and the message they try to convey may not correspond to what in-group members regard as important in light of their group identity. The result may be that ethical education content is viewed as a necessary evil or even an unnecessary interference. If this were indeed the case, ethical education is very likely wasted on these students. Similarly, leaders emphasizing

¹⁰⁵ De Graaff, Schut et al. 2016, n66

¹⁰⁶ MHAT (2006). *Operation Iraqi Freedom, final report*. Retrieved: February 29, 2016. http://www.combatreform.org/MHAT_IV_Report_17NOV06.pdf

ethical reflection when this is not considered to be an important aspect of their social identity may face a similar fate, in that their efforts fall on deaf ears.

Moreover, the considerations above would suggest that knowledge of group-dynamics, consideration towards out-groups, and critical reflection on ethical matters should become part, not just in ethical education, but also in ‘bildung’. In ‘bildung’ a foundation should be laid for these ethical issues, so that regular personnel come to view them as part of their identity rather than as something imposed on them; teaching staff and leaders alike may subsequently have an easier task of building on these foundations when necessary.

Second, recent studies have suggested how mindfulness, i.e. having an open mind in difficult situations, may contribute to ethical decision-making. Research appears to show that a state of mindfulness facilitates individuals’ awareness of the ethical dimensions in their context¹⁰⁷. Therefore, we suggest that military training embrace both reflexivity and mindfulness as psychological competencies in actual training sessions. Enabling servicemen and women to let go of their fixed frameworks and checklists may well cause them to have an open mind in experiencing the situation without direct interpretation. Feedback from superiors and team-members can help in developing these competencies by making them more salient in discussions.

Third, in line with social identity theory and self-categorization, we would like to argue that it is important that the teaching staff be perceived as part of the in-group, and perhaps even as prototypical in-group members, i.e., someone who meets the criteria of their own in-group (i.e. their unit). As argued above, it is crucial for the adequate transference of educational content that the educators are trusted as ‘one of the “military” peers’. We therefore suggest that, in addition to highly educated professors, teaching also to be conducted

¹⁰⁷ e.g., N.E. Ruedy, & M.E. Schweitzer, ‘In the moment: The effect of mindfulness on ethical decision making’ (2010) 95 (1) *Journal of Business Ethics* 73; S.L. Shapiro, H. Jazaieri, & P.R. Goldin, ‘Mindfulness-based stress reduction effects on moral reasoning and decision making’ (2012) 7 (6) *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 504

by instructors who are recruited from the operational field (e.g., the infantry). Being in-group members, such staff can provide educational content in a motivating and inspirational manner, and make it stick. In addition, they can add their own experiences to regular content material, and thus both increase the content's perceived relevance and their own trustworthiness.

Fourth, we believe it to be vital to acknowledge the importance of the group in the ethical decision-making process and therefore in the behaviours of individual group members, as well. As discussed above, the leader's influence largely depends on the position he or she has within the group. It is therefore important for the organization to identify the (informal) leaders and unit-influencers before deployment. These individuals then need to be equipped in such a way that they can stimulate morally sound behaviour, i.e. the organization should not aim to convincing its personnel to normatively comply and use a certain set of guidelines or rules rather on displaying moral professionalism. After all, this moral professionalism should enhance decision-making capacity, in which situational and individual characteristics are meticulously weighed. Otherwise, situations may escalate as they did in the Abu Ghraib incident, where Corporal Graner was the informal leader who instigated the horrific events.

Within the Dutch forces, various Dutch military leaders believe that in addition to guidelines, rules and checklists, other methods are necessary in order to stimulate morally sound behaviour within their unit. These military leaders start initiatives to stimulate morally sound behaviour. For example, in pre-deployment training, team members are encouraged to discuss what they expect from each other and what behaviour or attitude they find acceptable. Thus they together form an idea of the boundaries for their behaviour. By incorporating ethical issues and considerations, this may result is a collective, sound moral compass and a willingness among group members to confront and correct those within their team who display aberrant behaviour. Since this collective moral compass is moulded by all team-members and not only the leader, commitment of all is the likely result. The Royal Netherlands Army has made several attempts to train teams for employment in anti-drug

operations and border control in the Caribbean in this particular manner; facilitating this process of creating a specific moral compass for the team reportedly resulted in success. During and after their deployment team members indicated their collective moral compass proved to be functional in their time abroad. Although such self-reports are themselves rather subjective measures of the effectiveness of this type of pre-deployment preparation¹⁰⁸, at an organizational level, these were supported by considerably fewer reports of incidents that involved violation of the collective moral agreements declared in the moral compass. We recommend that the military embrace such initiatives, study their effectiveness, and disseminate them throughout the organization.

Fifth, after deployment, the Dutch military aims to record lessons learned from the deployment. These lessons tend to focus on procedures and operations and not so much on the ethical dimensions of the mission, however. It is therefore possible that important ethical issues are not recognized and, hence, not transferred in the preparation of follow-up deployments. For example, within the Afghanistan deployments, this proved to be an issue in relation with encountering so-called '*Bacha Bazi*'¹⁰⁹. Since there were no guidelines or indicators available, individual Dutch troops - in each subsequent deployment - were presented with situations that to them were new and unexpected, although their predecessors had encountered them as well. Apparently, such experiences were not shared with those who would likely benefit most from them, i.e. the servicemen and women brought in to relieve

¹⁰⁸ D.L. Kirkpatrick, & J.D. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2006)

¹⁰⁹ A 2010 documentary brought to light that adult Afghan men had sexual relationships with pre-adolescent boys (Bacha Bazi) who were dressed up as women and danced for their masters (cf. Schut, & Van Baarle, 2014). Dutch military leaders (e.g., platoon commanders) were in some cases offered the services of these boys by their hosts (e.g., high-ranking Afghan police officers) resulting in very delicate situations; Dutch military leaders were required to strike a balance between the taboo in the Afghan culture regarding this tradition, the high positions of their hosts offering Bacha Bazi services and the necessity of maintaining good working relationships with these individuals, and personal opinions and Western norms regarding basic human rights and human dignity (cf. M. Schut, & E. Van Baarle, 'Dansjongens in de schijnwerpers, een artikel over de praktijk van bacha bazi' (2014) 2 *Carre* 32).

their colleagues when their deployment was up, like in the Bacha Bazi case. This in fact required everyone to re-invent the wheel repeatedly¹¹⁰.

In terms of the procedures and operations as well as the ethical dimension of the mission, the experiences of one's predecessors in operational environments provide highly relevant information on which to base attempts for improvement. At least, at an individual level: the servicemen would then have the opportunity to think over such difficult situations in order to prepare them mentally for the possibility of encountering such a dilemma.

5. Conclusion

In sum, we conclude that ethics education for military leaders should be optimized by means of deepened attention for psychological mechanisms that are at work in high-stake environments. Not surprisingly perhaps, group leaders have an important role to fulfil. Taking account of the group-dynamic processes discussed in this chapter should help these leaders to increase their degree of influence in the group. One important suggestion would be to incorporate moral education and group-dynamical insights in 'bildung', which now focuses perhaps too much on the importance of the own group, potentially to the detriment of out-groups. Preferably, for the same group-dynamic reasons, moral education should be taught by staff who are similar to the students, so as to facilitate transference of educational content; any clear distinction between attendees and staff may render the transference of content ineffective, especially when content does not seem to resonate with what the group believes is important. In addition, we suggest that it is important to identify, educate and counsel important influencers in this regard regardless of formal rank, i.e. also informal leaders, those individuals considered prototypical for their in-group. Moreover, we argue moral education should be designed to bridge the gap between knowing and doing that is commonly observed

¹¹⁰ cf. Schut, & Van Baarle 2014, n109

in the field; it should focus on moral competence instead of normative compliance or theoretical ethics. As contemporary military operations are fraught with moral dimensions, moral education should equip military leaders with tools for dealing with these dimensions, which, as they are inherently insoluble using fixed mental models and by strictly following the rules, demand moral competence.

Author's biography

Miriam C. de Graaff, MSc received her academic degree in both Psychology and Communication Studies (Cum Laude) from the University of Twente (The Netherlands) in 2008. Since 2008, she has been working for the Netherlands Ministry of Defence (MOD) in various (managerial) functions in the field of leadership, ethics, and education. Miriam is also affiliated to the University of Twente as a PhD candidate. The subject of her doctoral dissertation in psychology is ethical challenges in dynamic complexity. She has published several (international) manuscripts dealing with leadership and ethics in the Dutch armed forces. In 2015, Miriam was nominated for the Netherlands Young Talent Award in female leadership.

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Walter J. van Bijlevelt, MSc is a lieutenant colonel in de Netherlands armed forces. After having served as an Infantry officer for many years, he received his academic degree in Psychology in 2004 from the University of Tilburg. Since then, he has been combining his experience as a military leader with his theoretical and psychological knowledge to improve leadership within MoD. From 2004 until 2007, he conducted research on team effectiveness and leadership in the field during deployment in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. He was subsequently invited to lead a new Leadership and Ethics Centre of Excellence in the Royal Netherlands Army. Since 2012, he is commander of the Education Centre of Excellence of Netherlands Ministry of Defence.

Prof. **Ellen Giebels**, PhD is full professor of psychology at the University of Twente and head of the department of Psychology of Conflict, Risk and Safety. She focuses on a better understanding of high-stakes, real-world conflicts and how they might be resolved peacefully. She cooperates with Dutch, other European and North American police forces, justice departments and the military on topics related to how to promote behavioural change, on intelligence-gathering and deception detection, and on the psychology of victimization and conduct after capture. In 2012, Ellen received the Rubin Theory-to-Practice-Award, co-sponsored by the International Association for Conflict Management (IACM) and the Harvard Program on Negotiation.