Selecting Officers Based Upon Character Strengths: Applications for Leadership Development

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Abstract. This chapter discusses how character strengths can be a relevant tool for selection of military officers, prediction of entrance into a military academy, leadership education, and prediction of military performance. Twelve character strengths have been found to be important for Norwegian officers, and an observational instrument that can be used to measure character strengths in field exercises has been developed and tested. The chapter also discusses the development of self-proficiency, social proficiency, and subject matter proficiency, and which character strengths to develop under each of these three proficiencies.

Keywords. Character strengths, armed forces, leadership development, virtues

1. Introduction

> *War is for participants a test of character. It makes bad men worse and good men better*
> *(Chamberlain, 1915, p. 295)*

Changes, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity characterize many modern military operational environments. These types of situations are also referred to as VUCA, as an acronym used to describe the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of different conditions and situations (Stiehm, 2002). An additional challenge is "asymmetric" warfare, that is, a type of conflict characterized by terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and ideological manipulation (Matthews, 2014). This forces the military leader to constantly rethink his or her role, as well as their norms and values in the chosen military profession (Snider & Matthews, 2012).

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity" (Patton, n.d.). This quote from General George Patton goes straight to the heart of the Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) leadership philosophy: mission command (Forsvarsstaben, 2014). The military leader must be able to express his or her intention clearly and make sure that the personnel have perceived as precisely as possible what to do and for what reason.

The document outlining the Chief of Defense's basic view on leadership in the NAF emphasizes that good leadership is based on mutual respect and trust between leaders

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and followers (Forsvarsstaben, 2012) and that leadership is based on relationships. The NAF is also a value-based organization that must make sure that its mandate towards society is professionally sound, both nationally and internationally. The basic values of the NAF are respect, responsibility, and courage (known collectively as RAM in Norwegian). These values are expected to accompany the officer's decisions and actions (Forsvaret, 2016). The requirements of the military leader can further be summarized in the words be–know–act, as described in Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine. The officer is expected to have incorporated the military profession as part of his/her personality, and to have knowledge and understanding of relevant interpersonal and professional areas that provide action. Action here means to see opportunities, take initiative, and inspire and provide care for the personnel (Forsvarsstaben, 2007).

In addition, companionship, loyalty, and self-sacrifice are emphasized because the profession is exercised within a collective framework (Forsvarsstaben, 2014). Robustness, flexibility, trust, credibility, and authenticity are qualities sought by the officer. This signals the organization's need to influence its employees with normative orientations, called the divisional spirit. Closely linked to the divisional spirit is the concept of character, which is a characteristic that can be found in each single individual. So where do we educate personnel in the NAF to incorporate these values and character strengths?

2. The Norwegian Armed Forces and the Norwegian Military Academy

The NAF consisted of 16,376 officers and civilian employees in 2014 (NSD, 2018). In 2017 the total number of employees (men and women) in NAF was 15,874. Table 1 gives an overview of the number of employees in the NAF in 2017 as well as the number of conscripts and also personnel in the Norwegian Home Guard.

Looking at Table 1, the total number in the NAF is quite small. In addition, most of the personnel in the Norwegian Home Guard are former conscript soldiers who serve for a few days every year, and they can be mobilized in case of need. The total number of mobilizable personnel—military, civilian, conscripts, and Norwegian Home Guard—is approximately 61,000, which is considerably fewer than the 300,000 who could be mobilized during the Cold War[2] (Bonafede, 2014).

Table 1. Number of employees in the NAF in 2017 and conscripts as well as personnel in the Norwegian Home Guard.

	Men	%	Women	%	Men and women
Military[1]	10,255	88	1,341	12	11,596
Civilian[1]	2,859	67	1,419	33	4,278
Conscripts[1]	5,658	77	1,729	23	7,387
Number in the Norwegian Home Guard[2]					37,823
Total number in the NAF					61,084

[1] Forsvaret, 2018a, [2] Forsvaret, 2018b.

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[2] The Cold War describes the state of tension that arose between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, later between East and West, after WWII (Gaddis, 2007).

A relatively small number of current NAF employees receive their officer education from one of three military academies. Naval officers are educated at the Naval Academy, air force officers at the Air Force Academy, and Army officers at the Norwegian Military Academy (NMA). All regular officer education is based on a three-year education leading to a bachelor's degree and takes place at one of these three academies.

Since 1750, the NMA has provided education to officers (Hosar, 2000). It is the oldest educational institution in Norway and is commonly known to provide the best leader education in Norway (Forsvaret, 2018c). The NMA currently provides a three year bachelor's program in military studies and leadership for the Norwegian Army. This education is offered along two separate lines: operational studies (KSO in Norwegian) or engineering studies (KSING in Norwegian).

3. Leadership Development at the NMA

Leadership training and leadership development has been a key component throughout the NMA's history (Hosar, 2000). The NMA has in recent years had a program for leadership development (Andersson et al., 2009; Jensen, 2013). It has been shown that this leadership development program required a revision, partly because of experiences from encounters with the unexpected and unforeseen in Afghanistan in recent years. Previous studies have also shown that officers educated at NMA will face challenging and unforeseen situations after graduating from NMA (Heen, 2006: Heen & Wathne, 2006). This is not unique for the officers from the NMA, as this is likely to happen for officers in other national and international military academies after graduation. Facing these unforeseen situations will require sound leadership skills. Cadets need to have adequate academic, social, and personal foundations to exercise leadership in such situations. Based upon this, an effort to develop a new leadership development concept for the NMA started in 2012. The basis for the new concept is the Norwegian Chief of Defence's view on the leadership of the Norwegian Armed Forces (Forsvarsstaben, 2012), which like the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine (Forsvarets Stabsskole, 2007) posits mission-based leadership as the basic leadership philosophy. These two governing documents provide clear guidelines for how to conduct leadership development at the NMA. The NMA's new concept for leadership development was introduced at the NMA together with the new educational plan for operational training during the summer of 2012. A difference between the new concept of leadership development and the old leadership development program is that the new concept has a more holistic approach, regarding both leadership development as a concept and in its practical application in educational settings (Lilleng, 2014). The new leadership development concept is referred to as "Officer development: NMA's concept for leadership development" and is currently documented at NMA in terms of an overall concept description for use by staff and cadets (Boe, Eldal, Hjortmo, Jensen, Holth, Kjørstad & Nilsen, 2015; Boe, Eldal, Hjortmo, Lilleng, & Kjørstad, 2014) and in several scientific articles (Boe, 2015a: 2015b; Boe & Hjortmo, 2017).

4. NMA's Concept of Officer Development

Officer development, the NMA's concept of leadership development for cadets being educated at the NMA, is consequently the NMA's comprehensive formation process of

developing leaders for the Norwegian Army, and is a central theme in all NMA activity (Boe, 2015a; Boe et al., 2015; Boe & Hjortmo, 2017). The description in this chapter is intended to provide a common basic understanding of the conceptual thoughts that underlie the officer development processes that take place throughout the three-year bachelor's program at the NMA.

The starting point for officer development is based upon the definitions of leadership and leadership development described in the Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). Leadership is here defined as the process of producing direction, alignment, and commitment in collectives, and leadership development as expanding a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. Leadership thus revolves around the development of competencies to lead processes by virtue of being in leader roles, both formal and informal.

An officer resolves the vast majority of his or her assignments as part of a collective, in relation to others and in a professional community. It is therefore central to military leadership to establish direction, create obligations, and facilitate interaction in the military unit they belong to. This is done in accordance with the profession's values. Officer development is therefore the process of developing each cadet's professional identity and his or her capacity to be effective in leadership roles and management processes within the military profession (Boe, 2015b). Specifically, the development of officers at the NMA has as its main goal to develop officer competency, particularly in the three key roles that the NMA has stated that an officer must master: platoon leader, education planner, and asset manager. All three roles reflect the military profession, but it is the platoon leader role that most resembles the profession's core: military operations. According to Matthews (2014), successful military personnel must be of high character, fair and honest in dealing with each other, physically and morally courageous, and loyal to their country and their units.

5. Defining Character Strengths

Embedded within the relatively new positive psychology paradigm, one will find a lot of research on different character strengths. In 2004, a character strength classification system was developed. The result was the book *Character Strengths and Virtues*, classifying 24 character strengths sorted under six virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004): wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. The six virtues each have a corresponding set of character strengths, which serve as psychological ingredients or pathways to these virtues. In addition, each strength needs to meet most of the following 10 criteria: "fulfilling, morally valued, does not diminish others, has non-felicitous opposites, trait-like, distinctive from other strengths, have paragons who exemplify it, has prodigies, selective absence of it in some situations, and has institutions/rituals to celebrate or express it" (Niemiec, 2013, p. 12). Under each virtue, there are thus several character strengths that relate to the specific virtue. For instance, courage entails emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal. Included in this virtue are the character strengths bravery (valour), persistence (perseverance, industriousness), integrity (authenticity, honesty) and vitality (zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy). Courage is a fundamental aspect for every military officer when it comes to leading others in dangerous contexts (Matthews, 2014). Elements of courage have been said to include self-volition, a worthy goal,

Table 2. Overview of the classification of virtues and character strengths, based on Niemiec (2013) and Peterson and Seligman (2004).

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1. Wisdom and knowledge: cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge

Creativity (originality, adaptivity, ingenuity)

Curiosity (interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience)

Open-mindedness (judgment, critical thinking, thinking things through)

Love of learning (mastering new skills and topics, systematically adding to knowledge)

Perspective (wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big-picture view)

2. Courage: emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

Bravery (valour, not shrinking from fear, speaking up for what's right)

Persistence (perseverance, industriousness, finishing what one starts)

Integrity (authenticity, honesty, speaking the truth, presenting oneself and acting in a genuine and sincere way)

Vitality (zest, enthusiasm, vigour, energy, feeling alive and activated)

3. Humanity: interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

Love (valuing close relations with others, both loving and being loved, being close to people)

Kindness (generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, niceness, helping others)

Social intelligence (emotional intelligence, being aware of the motives/feelings of self/others)

4. Justice: civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

Teamwork (citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, doing one's share, working well as a team member)

Fairness (just, treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice, not letting feelings bias decisions about others)

Leadership (organizing group activities, encouraging a group to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group)

5. Temperance: strengths that protect against excess

Forgiveness and mercy (accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance, not being vengeful)

Humility/modesty (letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves, not regarding oneself as more special than one is)

Prudence (careful, cautious, not taking undue risks, not saying or doing things that might later be regretted)

Self-regulation (self-control; discipline; controlling one's appetites, impulses, and emotions)

6. Transcendence: strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

Appreciation of beauty and excellence (awe, wonder, elevation, noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence and/or skilled performance in various domains of life)

Gratitude (being aware and thankful for the good things that happen, feeling blessed)

Hope (optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation, believing a good future is something that can be brought about)

Humour (playfulness, liking to laugh and tease, bringing smiles to others, light-heartedness)

Spirituality (religiousness, faith, having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe)

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and a significant personal risk (Lester & Pury, 2011). A lot of research into Peterson and Seligman's character strength classification system has been conducted over the past 10 years (see Niemiec, 2013, for an overview of the research up to 2013). Table 2 gives an overview of the six virtues and the corresponding 24 character strengths.

According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), these six virtues and 24 character strengths are recognized and valued all across the world.

Considering the fact that the military is the most powerful tool a state or nation can have, one wants people serving in the military to be good people. A military leader will probably encounter VUCA situations with unknown content and several unforeseen aspects. The unforeseen can be defined as "something that occurs relatively unexpected and relatively low probability or predictability for those who experience and must deal

with it" (Kvernbekk, Torgersen, & Moe, 2015, p. 30, authors' translation). Based on this definition, we can derive the question: Which character strengths would be the most suitable for those who experience and must deal with these types of unforeseen and VUCA situations? Not all the character strengths revealed in Table 1 are of equal importance for military officers. For instance, West Point candidates at the U.S. Military Academy score higher than civilians do on character strengths such as bravery, integrity, leadership, teamwork, self-regulation, and persistence (Matthews, Eid, Kelly, Bailey, & Peterson, 2006). The same character strengths have also been found to be a common trait in famous and successful Norwegian officers in the period from 1940–2012 (Boe, Kjørstad, & Werner Hagen, 2012). It is further possible to trace several of these character strengths through for instance the NMA's motto "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*" (If you want peace, prepare for war) (Forsvaret, 2017), or through the National Defense Academy of Japan's motto, which consists of the three values "*Honor, Courage, Propriety*" (National Defense Academy, 2018).

6. Which Character Strengths Are the Important Ones for Officers at the NMA?

A series of studies conducted within the framework of the NMA's research project on character may shed some light on which character strengths are considered important for officers. A common theme in these studies has been to give the participants a list of the 24 character strengths as described by Peterson and Seligman (2004), and to ask the participants to indicate on a 5-point scale how important each character strength is for military officers. This list is referred to as the Character Strengths Questionnaire (CSQ) (Bang, 2014; Boe & Bang, 2017; Boe, Bang, & Nilsen, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c). Below a short overview of the conducted studies and the research findings from the research project at NMA will be given.

A common finding in studies using the CSQ is that the same 12 character strengths emerge as the most important for military officers at the NMA (Boe & Bang, 2017). These can be seen in Table 3, categorized under the five virtues to which they belong.

As can be seen from Table 2, none of the character strengths from the virtue transcendence, that is, appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, and spirituality, were important for the officers at the NMA. The chosen 12 character strengths were later named "The Big 12" (Boe & Bang, 2017).

7. The Link Between the NMA's Concept of Officer Development and Character Strengths: The Officer Competency Model

A person can express his or her values through one's character. This has been shown to play an important role in aspects such as leadership, adaptability, and achievement

Table 3. Overview of selected character strengths categorized according to virtues.

Courage	Wisdom and Knowledge	Justice	Temperance	Humanity
Bravery	Open-mindedness	Teamwork	Self-regulation	Social intelligence
Persistence	Creativity	Leadership		
Integrity/honesty	Love of learning	Fairness		
	Perspective			

(Gayton & Kehoe, 2015a; Matthews, Eid, Kelly, Bailey, & Peterson, 2006; Picano & Roland, 2012). But within which types of areas is it possible to see this expression of character and character strengths in military officers? And how is this connected to officer development? An important note here is that one's character strengths, or possible lack of them, come out in difficult and challenging situations and under unforeseen conditions. It is in these types of VUCA situations that one's true nature comes forward. Looking at combat situations, Park (2005) investigated the content analysis of the narratives accompanying U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Park found that 100% of the recipients were brave, and their next highest character strengths were self-regulation, persistence, leadership, and teamwork. Matthews (2011) surveyed U.S. Army captains who had just returned from combat rotations in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was interested in which character strengths these officers had used effectively in combat. In descending order from the most used character strengths, they were teamwork, bravery, love, persistence, and integrity. When life is on the line, either one's own life or one's fellow soldiers' lives, or that one will have to take lives, these character strengths seemed to matter most. In contrast, the least used character strengths in combat were prudence, spirituality, curiosity, creativity, and appreciation of beauty and excellence.

The positive side of character strengths is that they can be developed through increased vigilance and effort, and character strengths is a phenomenon that exists along with objectives, interests, and values (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011).

In 2014, the NMA launched a research and development project to examine the nature of character, what specific character strengths are particularly crucial for military officers to develop, and if and how such character strengths can be developed in cadets at the NMA (Boe, 2014). An important aim of this research and development project was to investigate to what degree character strengths can be used for selection of military officers. Research conducted through this project ("Character in military officers", Boe, 2014) has shown that officers should have sufficient self-proficiency, social proficiency, and subject matter proficiency so that they can exercise leadership in challenging, difficult, and unforeseen situations (Boe 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2013). These three proficiencies are thought to lead to the incorporation of officer competency and are shown in Fig. 1 (elements written in Norwegian). Officer competency also has to be in accordance with the existing norms and values in Norwegian society (Forsvarsstaben, 2007). Officer competency is also linked to certain character strengths that are deemed necessary for military officers (Boe, 2016). The NMA has designed an officer competency model incorporating the four areas of expertise (Boe, 2014; Boe et al., 2015), also shown in Fig. 1 (elements in Norwegian).

The officer competency model is shaped like a pyramid with a triangular base and three side surfaces that meet at a common vertex. The NMA has chosen to define the pyramid's foundation and side surfaces as constituting the fundamental areas of expertise: self-proficiency (*selvkompetanse* in Norwegian), social proficiency (*sosialkompetanse* in Norwegian), and subject matter proficiency (*fagkompetanse* in Norwegian). The model's top element, officer competency (*offisersompetanse* in Norwegian), constitutes competence of particular importance for practitioners of the military profession. The model's foundation is in principle constructed of three independent pyramids that represent social proficiency, subject matter proficiency, and self-proficiency. The integrated composition visualizes the mutual interaction of the proficiency areas and how they contribute to and underpin the pyramid's top element. The three independent pyramids lead to an enhanced relational competence (*relasjonskompetanse* in Norwegian). Officer competency is understood as an "extended function" of all areas of proficiency. The
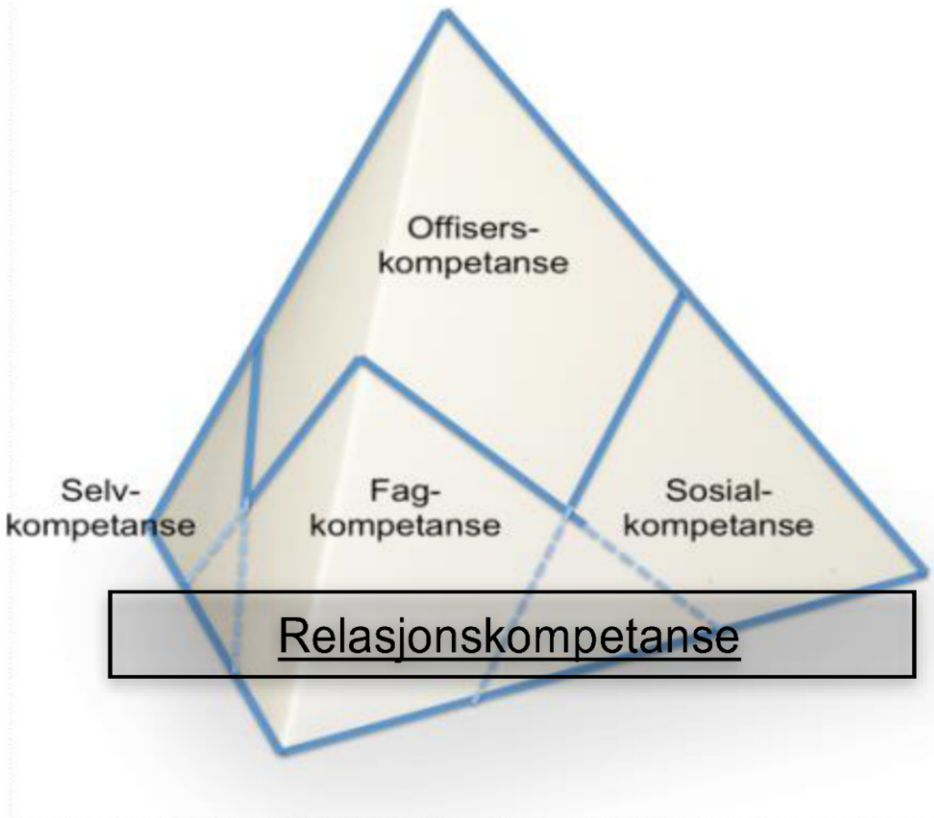
Figure 1. Officer competency model.

NMA adds officer competency through developing all areas of proficiency, either by developing each proficiency by itself or by developing the proficiencies in synergy with each other. It is in this synergy and in the seamless interface between the proficiencies that the NMA aims to facilitate interdisciplinary and excellent arenas for officer development. Officer competency thus deals with the actions an officer takes in order to carry out and solve a given mission. This element is the ability that the officer has to transform self-proficiency, social proficiency, and subject matter proficiency into actions that will obtain the defined objectives and solve a mission (Boe, 2015a). The NMA has thus defined the need for officer development in three areas of proficiency and one area of competency, and the 12 important character strengths can be found in these different areas of the competency pyramid. The character strength of fairness can be found in all three areas of proficiency, as it is relevant for all three areas. The three areas of proficiency and the area of competency are described below, together with the relevant character strengths that the NMA wants to develop in its officers.

Self-proficiency maintains the individual dimension that consists of personality, personal skills, and character strengths that enable self-management. This is accomplished by teaching individuals how to manage and regulate their thoughts, feelings, and actions, in other words how they manage themselves and develop their personal capacity. From the virtue of courage, the development of the character strengths of integrity, persistence,

and bravery are important. This virtue may possibly be said to be the most important virtue for military officers. Officers also need to feel what is right, and fairness as a character strength from the virtue of justice becomes important to develop. From the virtue of temperance, the character strength self-regulation is also important to develop. In sum, the character strengths integrity, persistence, bravery, fairness, and self-regulation are important for officers to develop within the self-proficiency area.

Social proficiency maintains the interaction dimension that enables effective collaboration with others during missions. To lead others, an officer must be aware of how individuals interact in social contexts. Officers must be able to handle others in a fair way, and the development of the character strength fairness from the virtue justice is important for this. Officers must also be able to lead others. The character strength leadership from the virtue justice is thus important to develop. The character strength social intelligence from the virtue humanity is also important to develop for officers, as is the character strength teamwork from the virtue justice. Summing up, the important character strengths to develop for officers within the social proficiency area are fairness, leadership, social intelligence, and teamwork.

Subject matter proficiency maintains the academic dimension, consisting of the disciplinary knowledge and skills that form the basis of the deliberations and decisions that one takes, which in turn enables one to lead the work in the unit. Subject matter proficiency also includes critical thinking ability. Officers need to know what is right, and here the development of the character strength fairness from the virtue justice will be important. In addition, all the four character strengths open-mindedness, creativity, love of learning, and perspective from the virtue wisdom and knowledge are important for officers to develop within the subject matter proficiency area. Thus within subject matter proficiency the five important character strengths to develop for officers are fairness, open-mindedness, creativity, love of learning, and perspective.

Officer competency maintains the professional dimension and enables effective leadership in a military context. Solving missions requires that the officer can translate his or her competency into practical action. To choose the correct action the officer must first and foremost understand the context in which the action is going to happen, and then understand the effects that will result from the chosen action. Officer competency is then the result of the development of all the character strengths within all areas of proficiency.

8. Character Strengths in the Norwegian Army Special Forces

In a study of the Norwegian Army Special Forces, the CSQ was again used, resulting in 15 character strengths being identified as important. The same 12 character strengths were found to be the most important for military officers as in the previously mentioned studies at the NMA. However, in addition to these 12, the character strengths of curiosity, humility/modesty, and forgiveness and mercy were also considered as important (Boe, Nilsen, Kristiansen, Krogdahl, & Bang, 2016). An explanation for this finding might be that being selected for and serving in a military special unit is more demanding and complex, and thus requires a wider range of character strengths than previously identified in the studies at the NMA. A second possible explanation is that the Norwegian Army Special Forces military officers tend to be older and probably also more mature than the military officers at the NMA.

9. Character Strengths in Staff Students vs. Cadets

This study investigated whether there existed any specific differences in the 24 character strengths between military cadets at the NMA and staff students at the Norwegian Command and Staff College at the Norwegian Defence University College. The CSQ was again used to collect data on which character strengths were important for military officers. The staff students scored significantly higher than the NMA cadets on 13 character strengths and lower than the NMA cadets on one character strength. For the remaining 10 character strengths—leadership, open-mindedness, persistence, courage, love of learning, fairness, self-regulation, hope, humility/modesty, and prudence—no significant differences were found between the staff students and the cadets. The staff students scored significantly higher on these 13 character strengths: integrity, social intelligence, perspective, creativity, curiosity, forgiveness and mercy, kindness, vitality, humour, gratitude, appreciation of beauty and excellence, spirituality, and love. The only exception, where the staff students were found to score lower than the NMA cadets, was on the character strength teamwork (Boe, Nilsen, Østergaard, & Bang, submitted). A plausible explanation for the differences between the two groups is that the staff students are approximately 15 years older than the cadets at the NMA and therefore probably have had more time and possibilities to work on their character strengths and thus develop them over time. This can be traced through the higher scores that the staff students gave to less important character strengths such as humility/modesty, forgiveness and mercy, kindness, vitality, gratitude, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and spirituality.

10. Observing Character Strengths in Field Exercises

The Big 12 selected character strengths have been used to develop (Bang, Boe, & Nilsen, 2015a; Boe, 2015a) and to validate an observational instrument to observe the character strengths in field exercises at the NMA (Bang, Boe, Nilsen & Eilertsen, 2015; Bang, Eilertsen, Boe, & Nilsen, 2016). The observational instrument is referred to as OBServation of Character Strengths in Field (OBSCIF) and, as far as the author is aware, this is the first objective measuring instrument of character strengths found in the world. OBSCIF consists of 36 questions, and it assesses a cadet's behaviour in relation to the Big 12 character strengths that have been established as important for a military leader. The OBSCIF has proved to a very high degree to be able to predict the performance of the cadets during the Combat Fatigue Course and other field exercises at the NMA (Bang, Eilertsen, Boe, & Nilsen, 2016; Boe, Davidson, Nilsen & Bang, 2016; Boe, Heiskel, Grande, Nilsen, & Bang, 2016).

In a study using the OBSCIF, Boe, Davidson, Nilsen, and Bang (2016) posed the research question to what extent there exists consistency between NMA cadets' self-assessment and their observed behaviour. The cadets assessed themselves and were assessed by their peers and by an instructor after having completed an extreme field exercise, the Combat Fatigue Course. The results revealed that the peers and instructor had a much higher consistency in the correlations than any of the other combinations. For the peers and instructor the correlations reached significance for these 10 character strengths: leadership, integrity, persistence, bravery, teamwork, self-regulation, perspective, creativity, love of learning, and social intelligence. The character strengths fairness and open-mindedness were not significantly correlated between peer cadets and instructor ratings of the cadets. This might be due to possible challenges to observe any behaviour related

to these two character strengths during a field exercise. The cadet's self-assessment correlated with peer assessments on seven out of the 12 character strengths: leadership, persistence, open-mindedness, teamwork, perspective, love of learning, and social intelligence. On the other hand, the cadet's self-assessment and the instructor's assessments correlated on only four character strengths: leadership, integrity, self-regulation, and perspective. The four character strengths on which the cadets had rated themselves highest were integrity followed by teamwork, persistence, and love of learning. The same four character strengths have been found to be rated the highest in other military studies using the same character strengths (Consentino & Castro Solano, 2012; Gayton & Kehoe, 2015a, 2015b; Matthews, Eid, Bailey, & Peterson, 2006). The findings from this study thus supported that the OBSCIF functioned well for observing character strengths through behaviour.

11. What About the Validity of the OBSCIF Instrument and Observation of Character Strengths?

The NMA has used two different instruments to measure character strengths in its cadets. The instruments are a self-report questionnaire called Values In Action-Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and the OBSCIF (Bang, Boe, Nilsen & Eilertsen, 2015; Bang, Eilertsen, Boe, & Nilsen, 2016). The purpose of the research in a study by Boe, Heiskel, Grande, Nilsen, and Bang (2016) was to determine whether the NMA has chosen the right methods of measurement of character strengths in its cadets. Data was gathered before and during a field exercise with high physical and psychological stress. The observational instrument OBSCIF was used for data collection during the exercise "The demands of war", a military field exercise that lasts for five days (Bang, Boe, Nilsen, & Eilertsen, 2015). The exercise is intended to prepare the cadets for warlike situations where special focus is put on leadership and uncertainty. To achieve a nuanced picture of the cadets, observations were collected from three different sources: instructors who followed a team, cadets who assessed themselves, and cadets assessing each other. One week ahead of the exercise the cadets filled out the self-report form VIA-IS. The VIA Institute on Character has conducted tests on psychometric data and concluded that the VIA-IS test in long form (240 questions) has a satisfactory internal consistency of $\alpha = .83$ (VIA Institute on Character, 2016).

Cadets filled out the VIA-IS before the field exercise and were then observed by both peer cadets and experienced instructors during the exercise. The cadets, their fellow cadets, and the instructors filled out the OBSCIF after the field exercise. Cadets' self-assessments on the VIA-IS revealed very low correlations with both peer and instructor assessment of OBSCIF, and high correlations between self-assessments on VIA-IS and OBSCIF. On the other hand, correlations on OBSCIF between peers and instructors were high, whereas correlations between self-assessment and peers and self-assessment and instructors were low. Some possible sources of error could explain the mixed results. Sources of error may be related to the person being evaluated, the one who observes, the context, and/or the instruments that are used to collect data. However, some significant correlations were found within the methods, which may mean that some character strengths are better suited for measurement through self-reporting and others through observation (Boe, Heiskel, Grande, Nilsen, & Bang, 2016). As a measure of reliability, the Cronbach's alpha has been found to be over .70 for the OBSCIF, except for the character strengths bravery, open-mindedness, and creativity (Boe, Davidson, Nilsen &

Bang, 2016). Values over .70 are acceptable and indicate that the instrument is valid and reliable (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of questions are as a group (Cronbach, 1951).

12. Character Strengths and Selection of Officer Candidates

The Norwegian Chief of Defence (Forsvarstaben, 2012, p. 11) has stated, "[Military leadership] is about doing the uncomfortable and being able to cope with it, overcoming powerlessness, and avoiding emotional breakdown. Military leadership will demand a robustness in order to think clearly and effectively, and cope with one's feelings when facing complex and difficult situations" (authors' translation). The selection process to the NMA, as well as to the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy in Norway, uses a variety of measures to find the best possible officer candidates. For instance, IQ tests, personality tests, an interview, prognoses of leadership, and academic potential based upon previous performance and physical tests are used for this task. Still, it is hard to predict among the selected officer candidates who will be the most successful in his or her job as an officer.

Previous attempts to identify suitable character and to predict performance in the military and in other high-risk organizations have usually been based upon measurements of personality (Elsass, Fiedler, Skop, & Hill, 2001; Picano & Roland, 2012; Picano, Williams, & Roland, 2006). One challenge with this is that personality is about differences between individuals when it comes to how one reacts to circumstances, while character is about the values that govern the actions and behavior. In a meta-analysis conducted by Picano, Roland, Rollins, and Williams (2002), it was found that personality and general mental ability could account for only 15% of the variance in ratings of the suitability of applicants for high-risk occupations. A total of 80 personality and intelligence measures were examined in this meta-analysis. On the other hand, character strengths can be developed through increased vigilance and effort (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011).

13. Prediction of Entrance into a Military Academy

Norway has three military academies offering basic officer education to cadets: the NMA for the Norwegian Army, the Royal Naval Military Academy, and the Royal Air Force Academy. Is it possible to use character strengths as a valid predictor for entrance into these three military academies? A study by Boe, Nilsen, Wangberg, and Bang (submitted) examined whether character strengths were applicable for selection into these three military academies. Selection into the three-year bachelor's degree officer's course, named "GOU" in Norwegian, was done by examining any relationships between self-assessed character strengths and gaining entry into one of the three military academies. The applicants used the VIA-IS) (see above) (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Data collection was conducted during the Joint Admission and Selection for the Military Academies (FOS KS in Norwegian) in 2015, where the respondents were the total number of applicants for the GOU for that year. Independent samples t-test, and later analysis of variances (ANOVAs), were applied to find out if there were any differences between the applicants who were offered the course and those who were not. Scores on each of the

six virtues were constructed by taking a mean of the individual character strengths belonging to the specific virtue. A self-assessed mean value was then obtained from each of the six virtues. The analysis of the VIA-IS results revealed a significant difference between the two groups for two of the core virtues: wisdom and knowledge and courage. Applicants being admitted to one of the three military academies scored themselves significantly higher on these two virtues than applicants who were not admitted. This indicates that how applicants score themselves on wisdom and knowledge and courage can be used for selecting personnel to the GOU. For the individual character strengths, the ANOVAs further revealed significant differences between the two groups for the strengths of open-mindedness, perspective, courage and social intelligence. This indicates that these strengths might be applicable for the selection of personnel to the GOU.

14. Using Character Strengths to Predict Performance

How important are the 12 character strengths for how the military cadets perform academically and physically during the NMA bachelor's programs? In a study by Bang, Boe, Nilsen, and Eilertsen (2017), the purpose was to examine to what extent the 12 character strengths could predict how well cadets succeed during their bachelor's programs, and if character strengths could outperform mental intelligence as a predictor of cadet performance.

The cadets' character strengths were measured with OBSCIF filled out by peer cadets at the end of a combat fatigue exercise. The cadets' performances were measured by physical tests and grades from different courses of the bachelor's programs. Mental intelligence was measured as a general ability score, based on a combined measure of the performance on three tests: arithmetic, word similarities, and figures. Analyses included partial correlations between the 12 character strengths and cadet performance indicators, controlling for mental intelligence. Ten out of 12 character strengths—bravery, love of learning, leadership, integrity, perspective, creativity, self-regulation, persistence, open-mindedness, and teamwork—correlated moderately to strongly with how the cadets performed either academically or physically, even when controlling for intelligence. The character strengths fairness and social intelligence did not correlate significantly with any of the performance criteria. The results indicate that character strengths as observed by fellow cadets are strong predictors for how the cadets performed academically and physically during the bachelor's programs at the NMA.

15. Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with leadership development, character strengths, and selection of officers. Character strengths have been shown to be a relevant tool for leadership education and selection of military officers. The CSQ has proved itself to be valid for finding out which character strengths are important for officers, and the OBSCIF has been found to be a valid instrument for predicting performance in officer cadets.

The differences found between the younger cadets at the NMA and the older Special Forces officers and staff students at the Norwegian Command and Staff College make sense, as being older and more mature most likely will lead to changes in one's values. Another possible explanation is that younger officers are braver because they have less experience than do older ones.

Also, a limitation to the studies reported in this chapter is that not much is known about the participants' background and social development. How does childhood and the pubertal period impact on future leadership characteristics? Some characteristics can be learned and some must be developed during childhood. However, there is no way to know which characteristics belong to those acquired during childhood or in young ages.

The results from the studies conducted at the NMA and described in this chapter indicate that there seems to be a very strong consensus among at least Norwegian military officers regarding which character strengths are seen as important for military officers. However, more work will be needed, as the observational instrument is not yet fully developed or validated, and the number of participants in the studies until now has been low. Future research on character strengths should focus on the whole spectrum of leadership, from small-unit leadership to high command in the military. This may reveal if there are certain clusters of character strengths or specific character strengths required for successful leaders at different levels of leadership.

Character strengths thus seem to be important predictors for how well cadets succeed during their bachelor's programs, and they outperform mental intelligence as predictors of cadet performance (Bang, Boe, Nilsen, & Eilertsen, 2017). Military education programs should consider selecting cadets characterized by certain character strengths, and aim at further developing these character strengths during education (Boe, Nilsen, Wangberg, & Bang, submitted).

However, a challenge regarding the concept of character is that it is easy to talk about but not so easy to know how to develop character. It is not so easy to know which character strengths are the most important when selecting officers. Michelson (2013) emphasized the importance of taking moral decisions in modern warfare. In his article, Michelson criticised the U.S. Army's character development program and questioned whether the U.S. Army's doctrine and existing methods for developing character is sufficient.

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