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*Form Approved  
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<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 29-04-2021	<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master of Military Studies (MMS) thesis	<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> AY 2020-2021
--------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------

<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Command Climate Change in the United States Army	<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b> N/A

<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Aldaya, Michael A. (Major)	<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b> N/A

<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068	<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b> N/A
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<b>9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A	<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>
	<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b> N/A

**12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**  
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

**13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**

**14. ABSTRACT**  
Command climate plays a significant role in the performance and readiness of a United States Army unit. A strong command climate is not developed overnight; it takes effort and dedication to ensure the correct mechanisms and tools are established. Trust, ethics, cohesion, and sound leadership must be cemented into the foundation of a unit before the construction of a healthy command climate is started. Leaders at all ranks can and should influence their unit's climate; however, it is first and foremost the commander's role to shape the environment and ensure a vigorous command climate.

**15. SUBJECT TERMS**  
Command climate; Culture of trust; Professional ethic; Cohesion; Teamwork; Leadership

<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b>	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>			USMC Command and Staff College
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU		<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)</b> (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

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**MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES**

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**COMMAND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**MAJOR MICHAEL A. ALDAYA, UNITED STATES ARMY**

AY 2020-21

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Command Climate Change in the United States Army

**Author:** Major Michael A. Aldaya, United States Army

**Thesis:** The most crucial measurement of a successful United States Army unit should be its ability to develop a strong command climate through a culture of trust, professional ethics, teamwork/cohesion, and leadership.

**Discussion:** The United States Army strives to ensure every unit is effectively trained, well equipped, and prepared to accomplish any assigned mission. The success of the unit is typically measured by their performance throughout that mission; however, a unit's command climate should also hold weight in the measurement of success. A strong and healthy command climate plays a significant role in the performance and readiness of a United States Army unit. Cultures of trust and teamwork within the Army can sometimes be opinionated and not simply descriptive. Therefore, the research began with academically defining a command climate, a culture of trust, professional ethic, teamwork/cohesion, and leadership. Then the focus shifted towards U.S. Army doctrine and current trends in the Army with regard to these pillars. The continued presence of sexual harassment and assault within the U.S. Army proves that some commanders still have not mastered the formula for developing a healthy and positive command climate.

**Conclusion:** A strong command climate is not developed overnight; it takes effort and dedication to ensure the correct mechanisms and tools are established. Trust, ethics, cohesion, and sound leadership must be cemented into the foundation of a unit before the construction of a healthy command climate is started. Leaders at all ranks can and should influence their unit's climate; however, it is first and foremost the commander's role to shape the environment and ensure a vigorous command climate.

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## DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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## PREFACE

Throughout my 11 years of active-duty service, I experienced a multitude of U.S. Army units and commanders. The common factor amongst the successful units was the commander's ability to develop and maintain a healthy and strong command climate. Subordinates performed above the standard and felt empowered to contribute to the organization and strive for efficiency. There was comradery amongst the formation, and the unit embodied a teamwork mentality. A sense of accountability and trust was established; the unit's potential felt unlimited. On the contrary, the dysfunctional units I served in were filled with a negative or hollow command climate. The commander was either a toxic leader or he failed to put forth the effort to develop a strong climate for his command. With all this in mind, I chose to write this paper and do the due diligence to determine through research what commanders can specifically do to ensure a healthy command climate across their formations.

Multiple individuals assisted me throughout the framing, research, and writing process of this paper. I would like Dr. Paulo J. Tripodi, Ph.D., for his continued mentorship and instrumental guidance. His expertise, systematic approach, and direction were vital in the framing and development of this paper. I would also like to thank retired Colonel Raymond C. Damm Sr., U.S. Marine Corps (retired), for his continued advice, critiques, and leadership expertise. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Hallie, for her unwavering support to myself and our family throughout the writing process of this paper.

The previously mentioned individuals offered vital advice and mentorship during the construction of this paper; however, the findings, perspectives, opinions, and conclusions presented throughout this paper are my own. These mentors are not accountable for any mistakes or oversights in this paper.

## I: Introduction

The United States Army strives to ensure every unit is effectively trained, well equipped, and prepared to accomplish any assigned mission. The success of the unit is typically measured by their performance throughout that mission and overall readiness; however, a unit's command climate should also hold weight in the measurement of success. Without an effective and focused command climate, even the lowest level unit can become susceptible to a toxic environment. According to *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1 (ADRP-1)*, "Army leaders, at all levels, are responsible for reinforcing the Army culture of trust and establishing a professional organization and command climate essential for mission command."<sup>1</sup> Unit climates that uphold the Army values and incorporate the warrior ethos encourage creative performance.<sup>2</sup>

The most crucial measurement of a successful U.S. Army unit should be its ability to develop a strong command climate through a culture of trust, professional ethics, teamwork/cohesion, and leadership. This paper will academically define these mechanisms, examine their current states in the U.S Army through doctrine, analyze the effects of command climate through sexual harassment case studies, and provide a way forward for improvement as required. The ultimate objective is to empower current and future commanders with the tools necessary to develop and maintain a strong and healthy command climate in which their unit can thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession*, ADRP-1, (Washington, DC: 14 June 2015): 3-3.

ADP 6-0: Mission command is the Army's approach to command and control that empowers subordinate decision making and decentralized execution appropriate to the situation.

<sup>2</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 6-17.

Army Values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.

Warrior Ethos: I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat, I will never quit, and I will never leave a fallen comrade.

## II: Command Climate

To determine whether a unit possesses a strong command climate, an individual must define and understand the framework of an organizational climate. Don Hellriegel and John Slocum explain organizational climate and offer metrics to determine its effectiveness in their article “Organizational Climate: Measures, Research and Contingencies.” The authors define climate as “Organizational climate refers to a set of attributes which can be perceived about a particular organization and/or its subsystems, and that may be induced from the way that organization and/or its subsystems deal with their members and environment.”<sup>3</sup> The article later presents measurements for organizational climate as scaling, sample, reliability, and validity.<sup>4</sup> Studies also showed that when climate is utilized as an intervening variable, the independent variables include human relations training, leadership, and personality profile.<sup>5</sup> However, the argument is also made for it being a dependent variable; “that climate is dependent upon the organization's structure and can be changed through human relations training programs.”<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, in the book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Edgar Schein defines climate as “The feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers, or with other outsiders.”<sup>7</sup> This definition illustrates the unique perspective that external individuals and groups are also affected by an organization’s climate. In terms of the U.S. Army, this could be seen as an adjacent unit, the local populace, or even family members. The book later explores the

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<sup>3</sup> Don Hellriegel and John W. Slocum, “Organizational Climate: Measures, Research and Contingencies,” *Academy of Management Journal* 17, no. 2 (June 1974): 256.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 260-263.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-274.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>7</sup> Edgar H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey Wiley, 2017): 3.

distinction between culture and climate where “Some culture analysts see climate as the equivalent to culture, but it is better thought of as the product of some of the underlying assumptions and is, therefore, a manifestation of the culture.”<sup>8</sup> In military terms, this could be translated as the United States Army has a culture, while individual units and commands develop climates. Schein also discusses how an organization’s climate and culture are based more so on group behavior as opposed to individual behavior.<sup>9</sup> This plays a pivotal role in the climate assessment process, where a climate must be gaged holistically, and not simply measured by the perspective of a handful of individuals. In the words of Edgar Schein, “Just surveying individuals misses the derivative effect of individual responses in the subgroup contexts.”<sup>10</sup> The book also addresses how organizations too often set out to fix an issue within their climate, while Schein recommends the solution should be viewed more broadly in terms of ‘changing’ or ‘improving’ the climate.<sup>11</sup> As Schein states, “Information that something is not going right (what I call ‘disconfirmation’) will reveal problems but not necessarily solutions.”<sup>12</sup> Organizations must develop a change process that will address the issue holistically and provide a path to improve its climate.

The article “Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics” also offers an analysis of how leadership and values directly impact an organization’s climate. The authors define climate as “perceptions of organizational practices and procedures that are shared among members, and which provide an indication of the institutionalized normative systems that guides

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<sup>8</sup> Edgar H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey Wiley, 2017): 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

behavior.”<sup>13</sup> Organizational climate directly impacts the way individuals interact, perform, and uphold standards. The article also references the importance of including human resource functions when developing and maintaining an organizational climate. These specific functions include “entry, socialization/training, compensation/rewards, and effectiveness criteria.”<sup>14</sup> Organizations must utilize these mechanisms in an all-encompassing approach to create a positive, effective, and lasting climate.

The United States Army defines climate as, “The state of morale and level of satisfaction of members of an organization.”<sup>15</sup> Similar to the definition of organizational climate found in the academic journal “Sexual Harassment in Academia: Ethical Climates and Bounded Ethicality,” which defined climate as “the shared meanings that organization members experience and the behaviors that they observe to be rewarded, supported, and expected.”<sup>16</sup> In line with Edgar Schein’s earlier distinction, the Army places the responsibility of establishing climates on units and organizations, while the ‘Army’s institutional culture’ is maintained by strategic leaders.<sup>17</sup> U.S. Army doctrine continues to describe organizational climate as the discernment and attitudes of Soldiers towards leaders, peers, and subordinates as they conduct themselves within a unit’s culture.<sup>18</sup> A previous Army Field Manual 22-100, titled *Army Leadership*, explicitly stated that “an organization’s climate is the way its members feel about their organization. Climate comes

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<sup>13</sup> Michael W. Grojean, Christian J. Resick, Marcus W. Dickson, and D. Brent Smith. “Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 55, no. 3 (December 2004): 224.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>15</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Regulation 600-100: Army Profession and Leadership Policy*, AR 600-100 (Washington, DC: 5 April 2017): 31.

<sup>16</sup> Ann E. Tenbrunsel, McKenzie R. Rees, and Kristina A. Diekmann, “Sexual Harassment in Academia: Ethical Climates and Bounded Ethicality,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 70, no. 1 (January 4, 2019): 249.

<sup>17</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 3-12.

<sup>18</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Regulation 600-100: Army Profession and Leadership Policy*, AR 600-100 (Washington, DC: 5 April 2017): 2.

from people's shared perceptions and attitudes, what they believe about the day-to-day functioning of their outfit. These have a great impact on their motivation and the trust they feel for their team and their leaders."<sup>19</sup> Trust and leadership play integral roles in the development of a strong command climate. When subordinates trust in their commander and feel a sense of belonging, their performance directly increases. Additionally, effective communication is key to diminishing friction and promoting an overall positive organizational climate.<sup>20</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Doty and Major Joe Gelineau, previous instructors at the United States Military Academy, defined command climate as a unit's culture that sets a precedent for how the unit "conducts business."<sup>21</sup> An organization's climate has a direct impact on whether the unit conducts itself professionally or becomes susceptible to moral or ethical lapses in judgment. Command climate can be defined largely to encompass training, leadership, discipline, values, and an understanding of the environment a unit finds itself.<sup>22</sup> A unit's climate defines its level of readiness and how the troops will perform both in training and combat. In order to achieve success, the focus of all units should be first and foremost to develop and maintain a strong command climate.

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<sup>19</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 3-12.

<sup>20</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Publication No. 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: 31 July 2019): 6-22.

<sup>21</sup> LTC Joseph Doty and MAJ Joe Gelineau, "Command Climate," *Army* 58, no. 7 (July 2008): 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

### III: Culture of Trust

Climate and a culture of trust are significantly intertwined throughout all organizations, and the two are arguably dependent on one another. Paul Zak, in his book *Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies*, argues that a culture of trust is the most significant contribution to any organization. The book presents eight factors from which trust is achieved: ovation, expectation, yield, transfer, openness, caring, invest, and natural (Oxytocin).<sup>23</sup> Zak also presents evidence to prove, “that high-performance organizations have cultures with high interpersonal trust and highly motivated employees.”<sup>24</sup> An organization founded on trust provides the framework for productive teamwork and increased motivation amongst its members.<sup>25</sup> Increased trust not only promotes efficient and effective workers but also enables them to become more satisfied outside of the workplace with their families and society.<sup>26</sup>

Stephen Covey and Rebecca Merrill discussed the importance of trust on a personal and organizational level in their book *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*. The book describes trust as the one entity that impacts everything, and if removed will undoubtedly lead to the failure of a relationship, organization, or any other group.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, if an increase of trust is achieved, then the performance of an organization will rise through an improved sense of belonging. When it comes to motivation, trust tends to be one of the most powerful tools that a group or unit can utilize. The book also describes trust as confidence, in comparison to a lack of trust which results in suspicion. Throughout the literature, Covey and

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<sup>23</sup> Paul J Zak, *The Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies* (New York, NY: Amacom, 2017): vii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen M R Covey and Rebecca R Merrill, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2018): 40-41.

Merrill further dissect trust as the “The Five Waves of Trust.” Those waves consist of self-trust, relationship trust, organization trust, market trust, and social trust.<sup>28</sup> In terms of the U.S. Army, the most applicable wave is organizational trust, and the ability of leaders to develop trust within their organization. Chapter 4 specifically describes organizational trust as the “The Principal of Alignment;” and addresses the outcomes of “low-trust” and “high-trust” organizations.<sup>29</sup> Low-trust organizations result in redundancy, bureaucracy, politics, disengagement, turnover, churn, and fraud.<sup>30</sup> High-trust organizations produce increased value, accelerated growth, enhanced innovation, improved collaboration, stronger partnering, better execution, and heightened loyalty.<sup>31</sup> While most U.S. Army units at some point experience the redundancy and turnover found in low-trust organizations, they should continuously strive to achieve a level of high-trust.

Additionally, the article “Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics” specifically emphasizes the importance of trust in leaders, and how it is essential to developing an organization’s climate. The authors articulate that “When followers have trust in leadership, and believe that the leader’s focus is on the collective interests of the group, they are more likely to work toward collective objectives.”<sup>32</sup> If perceived trust in a leader is lacking, subordinates are less likely to accept that leader’s vision/values, and as a result, the desired organizational climate cannot be achieved.<sup>33</sup> The establishment of a culture of trust must begin with the leadership’s effort to create trust amongst the entire organization. The article also emphasizes “Structures that

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 32-36.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 251-252.

<sup>32</sup> Michael W. Grojean, Christian J. Resick, Marcus W. Dickson, and D. Brent Smith. “Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 55, no. 3 (December 2004): 235.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 235.

enable members to clearly identify the interdependencies among units highlights shared concerns, promotes collectivist thinking, and builds trust and interpersonal attachments.”<sup>34</sup> When individuals and subordinate units recognize that they can and should rely on one another to achieve the desired end state, not only is a culture of trust established, but the organization becomes a more efficient unit.

In his book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Edgar Schein discusses the importance of trust in three levels of relationship: “Level 1 transactional relations, Level 2, working relationships, and Level 3 close friendships, love and intimacy.”<sup>35</sup> Based on the description, units within the U.S. Army can be labeled as level 2 or working relationships. According to Schein, this level of relationship involves a strong form of trust and honesty achieved by “(1) making and honoring commitments and promises to each other; (2) agreeing to not undermine each other or harm what we have agreed to do; and (3) agreeing not to lie to each other or withhold information relevant to our task.”<sup>36</sup> U.S. Army units could also partially achieve level 3 relationships when individuals not only avoid harming each other but also actively support one another whenever possible and become more open within the unit.<sup>37</sup> Trust, shared ethics, and open communication play significant roles in an organization’s effectiveness and climate.<sup>38</sup>

The *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession* specifically states that “An Army professional’s store of trust develops from demonstrated character, competence,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>35</sup> Edgar H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey Wiley, 2017): 101.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 120.

and commitment.”<sup>39</sup> The doctrine continues to illustrate that a unit loses trust in a fellow service member when their actions fail to meet those standards.<sup>40</sup> Trust in the U.S. Army must be maintained between superiors and subordinates, but also between peers and other units within the organization. In his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni states “Trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team. Without it, teamwork is all but impossible.”<sup>41</sup> Through leading by example, training, and shared experiences, leaders can gain the trust of their subordinates.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, ADP 6-22 illustrates that military leaders should encourage both a climate and a culture of trust. The doctrine further details that, “Teams develop trust through cooperation, identification with other members, and contribution to the team effort.”<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, a culture of trust relies heavily on the leader, but only with the support and buy-in of the entire unit.

According to a former Sergeant Major of the Army, Daniel A. Dailey, “Arguably the highest performing squads in our formations are those that are built upon trust; trust in their leaders and trust in one another.”<sup>44</sup> A unit that lacks trust within its ranks is destined to unravel when faced with an ethical or moral dilemma. The commander’s ability to develop a culture of trust is essential to the foundation upon which a strong command climate is built.

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<sup>39</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession*, ADRP-1, (Washington, DC: 14 June 2015): 3-2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>41</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002): 195.

<sup>42</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession*, ADRP-1, (Washington, DC: 14 June 2015): 3-3.

<sup>43</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Publication No. 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: 31 July 2019): 5-8.

<sup>44</sup> Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey, “Noncommissioned Officers Operating in a Complex World.” [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil). United States Army (October 5, 2015).

#### IV: Professional Ethic

Trust and professional ethics are interconnected, one cannot be fostered without the other. Andrew Brien describes the connection between the two unique fundamentals and proposes solutions for an organization that lacks an ethical approach and in turn a culture of trust in his journal article “Professional Ethics and the Culture of Trust.” The article illustrates the ultimate goal of an ethics program as the development of trust.<sup>45</sup> Brien also defines a profession through two methods, the “functionalist” and “power” approaches.<sup>46</sup> The article described the nature of trust and how it is both developed and, in some cases, destroyed within an organization.<sup>47</sup> Andrew Brien stated “To trust another then, involves a feeling of security about another and a prediction about the behaviour of that person, when that person has the capacity to damage you or something in which you have an investment. Specifically, this feeling is directed at the trustee's underlying motivation or disposition.”<sup>48</sup> The article continues to describe how the development of trust promotes ethical behavior.<sup>49</sup> Overall, this analysis argues that instead of striving directly for ethics, a professional organization should first focus on developing a foundation of trust.<sup>50</sup>

In the article “Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics” the authors examine the importance of ethics and ethical conduct in an organization’s climate.<sup>51</sup> The ethics upon which

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<sup>45</sup> Andrew Brien. “Professional Ethics and the Culture of Trust.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no.4 (March 1, 1998): 395.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 396-397.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 397-400.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 400-402.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>51</sup> Michael W. Grojean, Christian J. Resick, Marcus W. Dickson, and D. Brent Smith. “Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 55, no. 3 (December 2004): 223.

an organization is built, directly reflect how members treat one another and determine the overall organizational climate. The authors articulate how “The perceived norms of ethical conduct that become shared are the foundation of the organization’s initial climate regarding ethics, and reflect the personal values and ethics held by the founder and the organization’s membership.”<sup>52</sup> Organizations must develop a culture that emphasizes professional ethics to achieve the ultimate goal of establishing and maintaining a strong and effective climate.

The journal article “Sexual Harassment in Academia: Ethical Climates and Bounded Ethicality” describes how ethics directly impact organizational climates. The authors discuss a historical observation on unethical decision making where “Unethical behavior was argued to be the result not only of so-called bad apples, as had traditionally been assumed, but also of both bad barrels and underlying psychological processes that could lead good apples to deviate from their ethical values.”<sup>53</sup> Individuals that commit unethical offenses are not always the source of the problem, with the understanding that ‘bad barrels’ are seen as organizations with an unethical or flawed climate. The article later defines ethical climate as “employees’ shared meaning associated with the ethical policies, practices, and procedures within an organizational environment.”<sup>54</sup> Ethics play a fundamental role in the development of an organization’s overall climate, while also maintaining a subordinate climate in the form of an ethical climate.

The U.S. Army describes a professional ethic as a reflection of laws, values, and beliefs ingrained within the culture of that particular profession.<sup>55</sup> Army doctrine continues to state that

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>53</sup> Ann E. Tenbrunsel, McKenzie R. Rees, and Kristina A. Diekmann, “Sexual Harassment in Academia: Ethical Climates and Bounded Ethicality,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 70, no. 1 (January 4, 2019): 247.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>55</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession*, ADRP-1, (Washington, DC: 14 June 2015): 1-1.

“The professional ethic binds individual members together in a common moral purpose to do the right thing for the right reason in the right way.”<sup>56</sup> It is a common understanding, especially from within, that military professionals are held to a higher moral and ethical standard than civilians.<sup>57</sup> The term professional ethic in the U.S. Army is given the more specific and overarching name of the ‘Army Ethic.’ ADRP-1 specifically defines this ethic as “the evolving set of laws, values, and beliefs, embedded within the Army culture of trust that motivates and guides the conduct of Army professionals bound together in common moral purpose.”<sup>58</sup>

Similar to Andrew Brien’s article mentioned earlier, the U.S. Army fully embraces the intertwined relationship between trust and professional ethic. The ‘Army Ethic’ was a relatively new term in 2015, and the U.S. Army declared that, “After two years of extensive study, feedback from the Army, and guidance from senior Army leaders, the Ethic serves as a guide for conduct of both the individual members of the profession and the Army as a whole.”<sup>59</sup> The U.S. Army continues to make strides “to reinforce *Trust*, inspire *Honorable Service*, strengthen our commitment to ethical, effective, and efficient *Stewardship of the Army Profession*, and enhance *Esprit de Corps*” through the “Living the Army Ethic” campaign and training program.<sup>60</sup>

Dr. Martin L. Cook, Professor of Ethics at the U.S. Army War College, stated that “the highest standards of ethical climate and conduct are essential to maintaining a healthy military service and to attracting and retaining the best and most talented of each new generation of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1-1.

<sup>57</sup> Carl Ficarrota, “Are Military Professionals Bound by a Higher Moral Standard?” *Armed Forces and Society* 24, (Fall 1997): 59.

<sup>58</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession*, ADRP-1, (Washington, DC: 14 June 2015): 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> “The Army Ethic,” [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil), United States Army (June 15, 2015) <https://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2015/06/15/>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Americans.”<sup>61</sup> Instilling, promoting, and enforcing professional ethics and the Army Ethic is essential to not only retaining quality Soldiers but also in enabling those Soldiers with the tools necessary to make the correct decision when faced with a moral or ethical dilemma. On March 1, 2021, the 28<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin III, delivered a memorandum on ethical conduct to all DoD personnel stating that “We must practice and exercise ethical decision-making in the same manner and with the same alacrity that we practice and exercise other professional skills. It must become a daily task, a habit, if you will.”<sup>62</sup> Professional ethics are an integral part of the military and create a foundation upon which an effective and inclusive climate is built. Commanders must promote and uphold professional ethics amongst their formation through clear direction and unwavering action.

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<sup>61</sup> Martin L. Cook, "Moral Foundations of Military Service." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 30, 1 (2000): 129.

<sup>62</sup> Lloyd J. Austin III, "Reaffirming Our Values and Ethical Conduct," Secretary of Defense, (Washington, D.C. March 1, 2021).

## V: Teamwork/Cohesion

Similar to professional ethics, cohesion is an essential pillar in developing a culture of trust and ultimately a successful command climate. The journal article, “Team Building, Employee Empowerment and Employee Competencies,” presents a systematic approach to team development and promotion of self-worth for the betterment of an organization.<sup>63</sup> The authors develop an effective team-building strategy through four succinct parts: goal setting, role-clarification, interpersonal relations, and problem-solving.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the article describes the necessity of an ‘organizational learning culture’ to foster a sense of teamwork amongst individuals.<sup>65</sup> This culture is defined as “A set of norms and values about the functioning of an organization that support systematic organizational learning.”<sup>66</sup> Studies found that the implementation of an ‘organizational learning culture’ significantly reinforced the relations through teamwork.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, U.S. Army Doctrine specifically states that “you must establish an organizational climate that rewards collective learning and act to ensure your organization learns from its experiences.”<sup>68</sup>

In comparison, Patrick Lencioni explores the common pitfalls preventing effective teamwork in his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. He lists the five dysfunctions as the “absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results.”<sup>69</sup> If any one of these dysfunctions is allowed to thrive within an

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<sup>63</sup> Rama Krishna Gupta Potnuru, Chandan Kumar Sahoo, and Rohini Sharma, “Team Building, Employee Empowerment and Employee Competencies,” *European Journal of Training and Development* 43, no. 1/2 (February 18, 2019): 39.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 5-13.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002): 188-189.

organization, the goal of successful teamwork becomes unachievable.<sup>70</sup> However, the most common dysfunctions and often the most detrimental to a team are the absence of trust and avoidance of accountability. Lencioni describes the absence of trust when “Team members who are not genuinely open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses make it impossible to build a foundation of trust.”<sup>71</sup> Once again, trust and teamwork are labeled as codependent on one another. Similar to trust, the book examines the avoidance of accountability: “Without committing to a clear plan of action, even the most focused and driven people often hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviors that seem counterproductive to the good of the team.”<sup>72</sup> This dysfunction ties together the critical relationship between a strong organizational climate and teamwork. If a teammate or subordinate does not feel comfortable coming forward to report unethical conduct, then not only does the team falter, but the organizational climate failed to set the precedent and standard.

Richard Hackman, in his article “Six Common Misperceptions about Teamwork” describes how teamwork and collaboration are essential to mission accomplishment in any organization that must respond rapidly to changing conditions or environments.<sup>73</sup> The article also emphasizes the common misconception that effective teamwork always depends on the leader, specifically their personality, leadership style, and behavior.<sup>74</sup> While good leaders do make a difference, Hackman argues that “the most powerful thing a leader can do to foster effective collaboration is to create conditions that help members competently manage themselves.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, the organizational climate and culture developed by the leader is a major

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>73</sup> Richard J. Hackman, “Six Common Misperceptions about Teamwork.” *Harvard Business Review* (7 June 2011).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

determining factor in effective teamwork. The research behind the article articulates “that condition-creating accounts for about 60% of the variation in how well a team eventually performs.”<sup>76</sup> The remaining percentage is a combination of how a team is created and the leader’s coaching abilities.<sup>77</sup> Leaders that promote a healthy and ethical environment through their established climates set the organization up for success through teamwork and cohesion.

In the book, *Group Dynamics*, Donelson Forsyth defines group cohesion as “The strength of the bonds linking individuals to the group, feelings of attraction for specific group members and the group itself, the unity of a group, and the degree to which the group members coordinate their efforts to achieve goals.”<sup>78</sup> In this context, cohesion is described as a measurement tool to assess how unified a team or group is when accomplishing a common goal or task. Additionally, Forsyth specifically categorizes the military as a ‘primary group’ defined by “face-to-face interaction and high levels of cohesiveness, solidarity, and member identification.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, from an academic perspective, the military is a highly cohesive organization by nature. However, the climate of the unit can ultimately affect that level of cohesion and the overall effectiveness of the group.<sup>80</sup>

The U.S. Army addresses the need for cohesive teamwork throughout the idea of esprit de corps and a winning spirit. ADRP-1 specifically defines esprit de corps as, “a traditional military expression that denotes the Army’s common spirit, a collective ethos of camaraderie and cohesion within the team.”<sup>81</sup> The U.S. Army breaks down esprit de corps and cohesion through

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Donelson Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*. 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2006): 14.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>81</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication No. 1: The Army Profession*, ADRP-1, (Washington, DC: 14 June 2015): 7-1.

reflections within the individual Soldier, unit, command, and overall Army as a profession.<sup>82</sup> FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, describes the purpose of team building: “Teams, like individuals, have different personalities. As with individuals, the leader’s job isn’t to make teams that are clones of one another; the job is to make best use of the peculiar talents of the team, maximize the potential of the unit climate, and motivate aggressive execution.”<sup>83</sup>

The ultimate objective of teamwork or cohesion within military units is to achieve a bond and a sense of trust between Soldiers, to not only care for one another but also to become the most efficient and successful unit that they can be. On the opposite spectrum, ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, states that “Unethical behavior quickly destroys organizational morale and cohesion—it undermines the trust and confidence essential to teamwork and mission accomplishment.”<sup>84</sup> It is clear that teamwork and cohesion are essential to a successful command climate; however, they are also susceptible to immoral and unethical pitfalls if not properly maintained and strengthened. Regarding a successful command climate, Army Field Manual 22-100 states “To create such a climate, organizational leaders recognize mistakes as opportunities to learn, create cohesive teams, and reward leaders of character and competence.”<sup>85</sup> Units often experience shortfalls or failure; however, it is the commander’s responsibility to learn from those mistakes and ensure the formation bonds together resiliency to overcome the next obstacle or dilemma.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 7-3.

<sup>83</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 5-20.

<sup>84</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Publication No. 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: 31 July 2019): 2-6.

<sup>85</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 6-17.

Former Sergeant Major of the Army, Daniel A. Dailey, stressed that “we must focus our efforts on building cohesive teams bonded by trust that are not only capable of fighting and winning in a complex environment, but also able to protect and inspire each other in all aspects of their lives.”<sup>86</sup> Cohesive units are achieved at all levels of the U.S. Army through mutual trust and a shared understanding of the overall mission.<sup>87</sup> Commanders cannot build a successful command climate without the truss of cohesion and teamwork.

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<sup>86</sup> Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey, “Noncommissioned Officers Operating in a Complex World.” [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil). United States Army (October 5, 2015).

<sup>87</sup> Master Sgt. Michael Holmberg, Master Sgt. Andres Salazar, Sgt. 1st Class Jonah Herd, Sgt. 1st Class Brandie Lane, and Sgt. 1st Class Natasha Orslene. “A Culture of Trust.” *Army University Press*. NCO Journal (May 2019): 2.

## VI: Leadership

Leaders play a significant role in a unit's command climate; specifically, ethical leadership has become increasingly crucial to the success of the U.S. Army, down to the lowest level. Alan Lawton and Iliana Paez offer a systematic approach to grow and promote these types of leaders in their article, "Developing a Framework for Ethical Leadership." The article analyzes ethical leadership in three specific questions, 1) "Who are ethical leaders and what are their characteristics?" 2) "How do ethical leaders do what they do?" 3) "Why do ethical leaders do what they do?"<sup>88</sup> Through contributions from several scholars, the authors determine that the characteristics of ethical leaders are derived from their virtues, specifically those of integrity and authenticity.<sup>89</sup> The article later discusses how ethical leaders treat their subordinates, specifically the scope and context of those relationships.<sup>90</sup> The authors also define the purpose or outcome of ethical leadership in the framework of both subordinates and the organization as a whole.<sup>91</sup>

The United States Army defines leadership as, "the activity of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."<sup>92</sup> It continues to define leaders as those who encourage others to feel inspired and eager to accomplish their assigned task and mission.<sup>93</sup> The U.S. Army breaks leadership into core attributes and core competencies:

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<sup>88</sup> Alan Lawton and Iliana Páez, "Developing a Framework for Ethical Leadership," *Journal of Business Ethics* 130, no. 3 (June 29, 2014): 639.

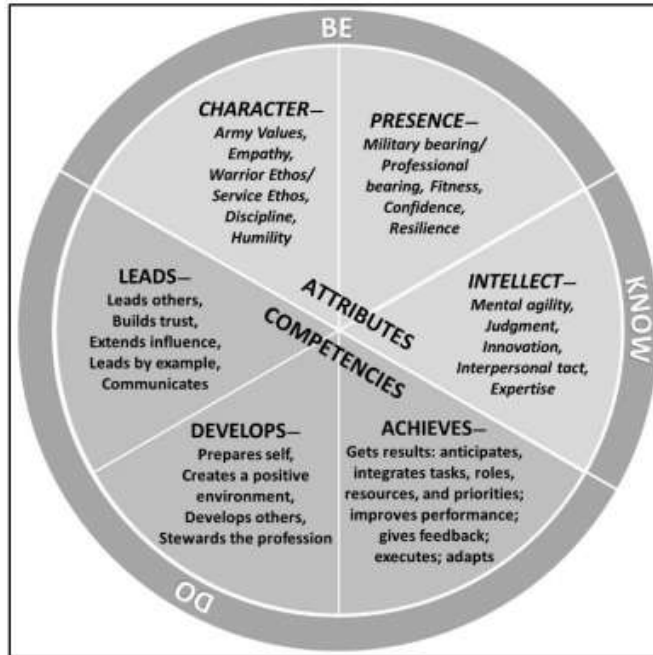
<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 641-642.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 643.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 643-645.

<sup>92</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Publication No. 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: 31 July 2019): 1-3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3.



The Army leadership requirements model.<sup>94</sup>

ADP 6-22 also differentiates between formal and informal leadership throughout the organization.<sup>95</sup> The formal leader is granted authority to lead through their assigned position, with the responsibility based on their rank and experience.<sup>96</sup> For example, leaders in formal roles can be defined as commanders, staff officers, platoon leaders, squad leaders, and even team leaders.<sup>97</sup> While informal leadership is not defined by position, it instead falls on every Soldier in the unit. As stated in ADP 6-22, “Informal leadership occurs when someone takes the initiative to assume responsibility for action in a situation, takes charge when no formal leader is present, or to make formal leaders aware of something they need to know.”<sup>98</sup> The formal leader, or

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 1-6.

<sup>95</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Publication No. 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: 31 July 2019): 1-8, 1-9.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 1-8.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 1-8.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 1-9.

commander, is responsible for the command climate of the unit; more importantly, a measure of a successful command climate is the existence of informal leaders.

An effective command climate promotes individual leadership and responsibility. When subordinates feel that their contributions to a unit are valued, there is an increase in morale and productivity throughout the organization.<sup>99</sup> Army Regulation 600-100 states “The greatest influence on an organization’s climate is the quality of its leadership.”<sup>100</sup> In comparison to counterproductive leadership behavior, which hinders the development of a positive climate.<sup>101</sup> Leaders must develop their leadership styles methodically, and utilize methods of influence like pressure sparingly to preserve the command climate. According to ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, “When subordinates perceive that pressures originate from their leader’s attempt to please superiors for personal recognition, resentment can quickly undermine an organization’s morale, cohesion, and quality of performance.”<sup>102</sup> Ultimately, leaders must take ownership of the orders and tasks provided to subordinates, and in turn, build a sense of teamwork and a culture of trust to achieve mission success as a cohesive unit.

In their *Command Climate* article, LTC Doty and MAJ Gelineau stressed that “The leader of the organization is solely responsible for the organization’s command climate. Commanders at all levels establish this climate by what they say and what they do. Character-based leadership is the bedrock requirement for a successful command climate.”<sup>103</sup> A previous Army Field Manual, *Army Leadership*, also described the vital role leaders play in developing and maintaining a

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<sup>99</sup> Karel Montor, *Naval Leadership: Voices of Experience* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998): 389.

<sup>100</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Regulation 600-100: Army Profession and Leadership Policy*, AR 600-100, (Washington, DC: 5 April 2017): 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Publication No. 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, ADP 6-22, (Washington, DC: 31 July 2019): 5-3.

<sup>103</sup> LTC Joseph Doty and MAJ Joe Gelineau, “Command Climate,” *Army* 58, no. 7 (July 2008): 22.

positive command climate: “The members’ collective sense of organization- its organizational climate- is directly attributable to the leader’s values, skills, and actions. As an Army leader, you establish the climate of your organization, no matter how small it is or how large.”<sup>104</sup>

Unit commanders also inadvertently display their priorities to formations and deliver strong messages by what things they inspect or focus on.<sup>105</sup> Leaders that place specific emphasis on accurate ethical reporting, discipline, and training to standard, make it clear to the unit where their priorities lie.<sup>106</sup> In comparison, according to FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, “A leader’s willingness to tolerate discrimination or harassment on any basis, or a failure to cultivate a climate of respect, eats away at this trust and erodes unit cohesion.”<sup>107</sup> Soldiers will typically follow in the footsteps of their leaders and mimic whatever they allow and demonstrate.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, a commander that fails to establish and enforce a command climate enables subordinate leaders to develop ‘subclimates’ that may not be in line with the commander’s intent or desires.<sup>109</sup> FM 22-100 states “Trust is a basic bond of leadership, and it must be developed over time.”<sup>110</sup> Commanders must develop a climate that promotes ethical leaders and open communication across the chain of command; they should remain approachable and continually foster a climate of trust.<sup>111</sup> Without a strong ethical and moral commander, a strong command climate cannot be achieved.

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<sup>104</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 3-12.

<sup>105</sup> LTC Joseph Doty and MAJ Joe Gelineau, “Command Climate,” *Army* 58, no. 7 (July 2008): 22.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 2-6.

<sup>108</sup> LTC Joseph Doty and MAJ Joe Gelineau, “Command Climate,” *Army* 58, no. 7 (July 2008): 24.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>110</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 1-5.

<sup>111</sup> LTC Joseph Doty and MAJ Joe Gelineau, “Command Climate,” *Army* 58, no. 7 (July 2008): 24.

## VII: Effects of Command Climate in the U.S. Army

Command climate has a significant impact on numerous areas of a United States Army unit; however, the issue of sexual harassment and assault may be the most prevalent in today's military. According to the 2019 *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military*, "The Department focuses on military climate and culture because over a decade of research, including Department surveys, concludes that respectful and healthy workplace climates reduce the risk of sexual assault."<sup>112</sup> The Department of Defense's focus areas for sexual assault prevention and response in 2019 were "unit climate, sexual assault reporting, victim assistance, and efforts to reduce and stop sexual assault."<sup>113</sup> The fact that unit climate is one of the Department of Defense's top priorities in combating sexual assault displays how significant a command climate is to the overall success and readiness of a unit.

In 2019, the Army continued to receive a high number of sexual assault reports, "5.5 reports of sexual assault per 1,000 Soldiers," which remained unchanged from the previous year.<sup>114</sup> This could be viewed as a positive in terms of victims having confidence in their chain of command and the reporting process.<sup>115</sup> However, it is also a clear indication that unit command climates are not improving adequately to prevent these acts of sexual misconduct. In response to the increase of sexual assault and harassment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the United States Army developed the *Sexual Harassment Assault Response Prevention (SHARP)* program in 2009.<sup>116</sup> The Army's SHARP program addresses five detailed goals that aligned with the Department of

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<sup>112</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 5.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>114</sup> United States Department of Defense, "Enclosure 1: Department of the Army," *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>116</sup> United States Department of Defense, "Enclosure 1: Department of the Army," *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 2.

Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Strategic Plan: “1) Prevention of sexual assault, 2) Assistance to, and advocacy for, victims of sexual assault, 3) Competent and sensitive investigations of sexual assault, 4) Accountability for the alleged perpetrators of sexual assault, 5) Effective assessment of the SHARP program.”<sup>117</sup> Although command climate can be applied to all five goals in some capacity, its most significant role is found in the prevention and reporting components of the SHARP program.

The 2020 Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee determined that “the command climate relative to the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program at Fort Hood was ineffective, to the extent that there was a permissive environment for sexual assault and sexual harassment.”<sup>118</sup> There is no doubt that a healthy and positive command climate is vital to the prevention and accurate reporting of sexual harassment and assault cases.

The U.S. Army made it clear that they are committed to increasing readiness by preventing sexual harassment and assault through the SHARP program.<sup>119</sup> To achieve this pledge, the United States Army stated: “Army leaders must establish a culture of dignity and respect that does not tolerate behaviors and attitudes that lead to sexual misconduct and in which victims feel safe to report without fear of retaliation.”<sup>120</sup> This approach clearly defines the need for a positive command climate that combines a culture of trust, professional ethic, cohesion, and leadership. The Army addresses its primary goal of prevention through the new U.S. Army Strategy for the Prevention of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment.<sup>121</sup> The strategy expands

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>118</sup> “Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee,” FHIRC, November 6, 2020. <https://www.army.mil/forthoodreview/>.

<sup>119</sup> United States Department of Defense, “Enclosure 1: Department of the Army,” *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 1.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 2.

the prevention goals beyond the individual level to encompass relationships, organizational climate, and Army culture.<sup>122</sup> According to the U.S. Army, the new strategy “also focuses on leaders and their role in establishing and maintaining expectations and attitudes to support positive behaviors and healthy relationships.”<sup>123</sup> Ultimately, the U.S. Army’s current approach to preventing sexual harassment and assault is to improve unit command climates.

The Department of Defense conducted multiple focus groups in 2019 and determined that leadership is the primary influencer that creates a culture of trust. The DOD discovered that “focus group participants indicated that Service members view their unit commanders as the primary drivers behind encouraging reporting, ensuring training within the unit, and providing perspective on why sexual assault is a readiness issue.”<sup>124</sup> In comparison, the participants also felt that when commanders do not stress the importance of the program, the unit’s efforts falter in combating sexual misconduct.<sup>125</sup> Evidence of units lacking a culture of trust can be found in some focus group participant responses, where “they believe victims continue to have concerns regarding confidentiality breaches and indicated that third-party disclosures sometimes discourage victims from participating in the reporting process.”<sup>126</sup>

Although commanders are ultimately responsible for their command climate, developing a culture of trust, and instilling professional ethics, studies showed that mid-level enlisted members (E4-E6) play a significant role as well.<sup>127</sup> Feedback from participants in the 2019 focus groups indicated that “Enlisted members in these grades are at a relatable age to younger

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>124</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 6.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 5.

members and are believed to exemplify desired standards of proficiency, knowledge, and effectiveness.”<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the mid-level enlisted Service members may have a greater influence on the behavior of the younger Service members and are better positioned to lead them because of their frequent interactions.<sup>129</sup> This continues to emphasize the point that the climate of an organization relies on all members, not just those in leadership positions. General James C. McConville, 40<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the Army, stated: “Our Army’s people are our greatest strength...We must take care of our people and treat each other with dignity and respect.”<sup>130</sup> The establishment of a culture of trust and unit cohesion has never been more important than it is now in the prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment within the U.S. Army.

U.S. Soldiers that commit acts of sexual misconduct or fail to stop/prevent the act from occurring, violate not only the trust of the Nation but also the trust of their unit and fellow Soldiers.<sup>131</sup> Ryan D. McCarthy, 24<sup>th</sup> Secretary of the Army, declared that “We will reverse the negative trends in suicide, sexual assault, and sexual harassment... To do this, we have to change our Army culture to become better teammates.”<sup>132</sup> It is again clear that cohesion and teamwork are essential factors in developing both a culture of trust and a positive command climate. If a unit tolerates any form of misconduct, no matter the severity, the risk of sexual harassment and assault increases.<sup>133</sup> Professor Deborah Knapp stated, “sexual harassment does not occur in a vacuum but, rather, in an organizational environment that affects the way people behave.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>130</sup> United States Department of Defense, “Enclosure 1: Department of the Army,” *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 2.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>133</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 11.

<sup>134</sup> Deborah Erdos Knapp, Robert H. Faley, Steven E. Ekeberg, and Cathy L. Z. Dubois. "Determinants of Target Responses to Sexual Harassment: A Conceptual Framework." *The Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 3 (1997): 709.

Sexual assault and harassment cannot be prevented in any unit if its organizational climate lacks a moral and ethical foundation to encourage professional Soldiers. Every United States Army unit owes its Soldiers a place to work that emphasizes a culture of trust, inclusion, and respect.<sup>135</sup>

After over a decade with the SHARP program, the United States Army still has a significant amount of room for improvement in the prevention of sexual harassment and assault within its ranks. And the only way to accomplish their primary goal of prevention is through a focus on improving command climates across the entire organization. As stated in the conclusion of the 2018 *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military*, “climate factors around dignity and respect were found to be robustly associated with risk for sexual assault. Commanders must have greater visibility into their unit’s climate, and the tools needed to swiftly address related concerns.”<sup>136</sup>

Based on the unchanged number of sexual misconduct reports between 2018 and 2019, it is evident that more emphasis must be placed on commanders to improve their command climate to prevent sexual misconduct and therefore promote readiness. As the 16th and current Sergeant Major of the Army, Michael A. Grinston, stated, “We’ve got a lot of work to do... I want you to think, ‘This is my squad. What are the positive aspects I can reinforce?’.”<sup>137</sup> Every Soldier, no matter their rank or position, has an obligation to their fellow service members to promote a positive environment; however, it is ultimately the commander that must establish a strong and healthy command.

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<sup>135</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 10.

<sup>136</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2018*, (Washington, DC 2019): 23.

<sup>137</sup> United States Department of Defense, “Enclosure 1: Department of the Army,” *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2019*, (Washington, DC 2020): 3.

## VIII: Conclusion

There is no doubt that the climate of an organization or military unit plays a critical role in readiness, production, and overall performance. However, the question lies in how to develop and maintain a strong and healthy climate. This paper proposed a solution to that question. United States Army unit success is evaluated through a multitude of criteria, but the most essential is its ability to generate a strong command climate through a culture of trust, professional ethics, teamwork/cohesion, and leadership. These steps provide a systematic approach to the development and sustainment of a positive command climate.

The ability to establish trust amongst a formation is crucial to a unit's strength and success in the face of adversity. As Patrick Lencioni stated "Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare."<sup>138</sup> Leaders must consistently strive to achieve a culture of trust that encourages and empowers their subordinates to take initiative in advancing the organization.<sup>139</sup> Soldiers must be grounded in their professional ethics and have trust in their unit and its leadership to gain the strength and courage to address unethical or immoral dilemmas within the formation. A unit can only become a truly cohesive team if it bonds together with trust and upholds professional ethics. This trust, cohesion, and ethical culture cannot be established without a competent and moral leader paving the way for a healthy environment for growth. In terms of leaders and their units, U.S. Army Doctrine explicitly states, "They also improve

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<sup>138</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002): vii.

<sup>139</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 1-14.

conditions by sustaining an ethical and supportive climate, building strong cohesive teams and organizations, and improving the processes that work within the organization.”<sup>140</sup>

A positive command climate is essential to the readiness and success of any unit, no matter the level. U.S. Army Field Manual 22-100 states: “The foundation for a positive organizational climate is a healthy ethical climate, but that alone is insufficient. Characteristics of successful organizational climates include a clear, widely known intent; well-trained and confident soldiers; disciplined, cohesive teams; and trusted, competent leadership.”<sup>141</sup> A strong command climate is not developed overnight, it takes effort and dedication to ensure the correct mechanisms and tools are established. Trust, ethics, cohesion, and unwavering leadership must be cemented into the foundation of a unit before the construction of a healthy command climate is started.

U.S. Army doctrine states “Climate is generally short-term: it depends on a network of the personalities in a small organization. As people come and go, the climate changes.”<sup>142</sup> While this is true, the commander is still responsible for ensuring their unit maintains a strong command climate. If a commander can instill a culture of trust, professional ethics, teamwork/cohesion, and strong leadership within the unit, then the Non-Commissioned Officers and Soldiers that remain will uphold those pillars with the next commander.

United States Army officers are chosen for unit command because they are deserving, experienced, and capable; however, that does not mean they know everything and have the same

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<sup>140</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 6-32.

<sup>141</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 6-17.

<sup>142</sup> Headquarters, US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1999): 3-12.

attributes. The capacity for growth is one of the most critical traits of a great leader.<sup>143</sup> Even though commanders have a wealth of experience and knowledge, they must still fully understand and incorporate the necessary pillars of command climate. Trust, ethics, teamwork/cohesion, and leadership are all intertwined in the establishment of a command climate, and they are essential to its sustainment. This Venn diagram provides a visual depiction:



The purpose of this paper is to bring awareness to commanders and empower them with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement a strong and healthy command climate. Leaders at all ranks can and should influence their unit's climate; however, it is first and foremost the commander's role to shape the environment and ensure a vigorous command climate. United States Army commanders possess the power to positively affect their unit's climate, they only require the tools and will to do so.

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<sup>143</sup> Karel Montor, *Naval Leadership: Voices of Experience* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998): 2.

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