

Personality and Leadership

The Potential Impact to Future Strategic Thinking

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Leadership gurus James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner insisted that “leadership is a relationship.”¹ That relationship depends on trust in the form of credibility. A foundational requirement for leaders to develop credibility and trust is for them to first know and understand themselves.² This self-awareness allows a leader to make a better sense of the world around them. Such self-awareness includes the way they take in and process information and why they might have positive interactions with certain people and more negatively perceive their interactions with others.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) has been used for decades by the military to help officers understand better who they are.³ One limitation of the MBTI is that it measures only type and not trait characteristics for each of the eight preferences. This limitation means that a respondent taking the MBTI will be provided with a four-letter preference type and a probability index on the

consistency of answers along the lines of their type. However, the instrument does not measure the magnitude of each preference (i.e., how extroverted versus introverted they are). To reap the benefits of both typology and trait measurement, the USAF Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) use the NERIS Type Explorer that uses the MBTI theoretical framework but also measures trait magnitude.

The problem explored in this study is the knowledge gap regarding USAF officer personality typology demographics. The Naval War College published the most recent similar study in 2005.⁴ This study examines the same variables using a more recent military sample of field grade officers and covers the generations of leaders who are moving from middle management to senior leadership over the next decade. Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative descriptive nonexperimental study was to understand better the impact and importance of personality on military officers and their ability to lead effectively.

Personality Preferences/Aspects

Four dichotomies form the foundation of an individual's personality. Each dichotomy contains two opposite preference pairs. The various combinations of these preference pairs make up the 16 personality types. The NERIS Type Explorer refers to each preference as a personality aspect and includes a fifth aspect—an *identity* pair that measures *turbulence* and *assertiveness*.⁵

Extroversion (E) vs. Introversion (I): The Mind Aspect

The preference for extroversion or introversion refers to how a person orients their energy. One who prefers extraversion directs their energy toward the outer world, while one who prefers introversion directs their energy toward the inner world. Someone with an extroversion preference typically directs energy toward and draws energy from interaction with other people, objects, and activities. In contrast, someone with an introverted preference draws energy and directs energy toward their thoughts, ideas, and impressions. As individuals direct and draw energy, their next action is to process what they perceive from their interaction with the external or internal world.⁶

Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N): The Energy Aspect

As people process what they perceive from the outside or inside world, they tend to prefer processing information based on the details or the big picture. People who prefer sensing process information that they can perceive with their five senses—facts, data, and past events. When people prefer intuition, they tend

to focus less on the details and more on the interconnectedness and patterns of the information.⁷

When asked about a deployment experience, an officer who prefers sensing might describe the experience in terms of time away, location, temperature, activities, and people. An officer who prefers intuition might refer to the same deployment in terms of how rewarding it was (or was not) and the impact it had. Regardless of how one processes information, one must judge the information that they perceive.

Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F): The Nature Aspect

According to Jung Theory, there are two ways that people judge the information that they perceive and process—thinking and feeling. When people prefer thinking, they use objective and logical criteria to judge a situation. Someone who prefers feeling uses a more subjective, values-based reasoning when judging a situation. For example, during the reorganization of a squadron, a commander who prefers thinking might consider objectively realigning manpower positions, operations efficiency, long-term unit sustainability, and cost. A commander who prefers feeling would consider seeking harmony by distributing resources fairly (not necessarily evenly), adjusting implementation timelines to allow personnel to adapt, and focusing on how the change impacts the people in the unit. Neither is better or worse, but leaders who prefer thinking often see feeling as soft while leaders who prefer feeling can see thinking as cold. Once energy is directed and drawn, and information is processed and judged, an individual must then take an approach on what to do with that processed information.⁸

Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P): The Tactics Aspect

How one approaches the outside world is either one of judging or perceiving. Because the names of these preferences seem to be the most misleading, one can more easily understand them as *structured* (J) and *flexible* (P). People who prefer judging typically have a more structured approach to the world. Calendars, schedules, daily to-do lists, milestones to deadlines, and daily planners are all things that may bring comfort to officers who prefer judging. On the other hand, the aforementioned items bring stress to those who prefer perceiving as they are less structured, are not driven by closure, still meet deadlines but may work at the last minute or in unscheduled spurts, and like flexibility in their schedules.⁹

Assertive (-A) vs. Turbulent (-T): The Identity Aspect

As noted, an added benefit to adopting the NERIS Type Explorer was the ability to assess an officer's *assertiveness* (-A) and *turbulence* (-T). Officers who

measure higher in assertiveness are predicted to exhibit a greater degree of temperance under stress and be more self-assured. Those who measure higher in turbulence are predicted to have a greater degree of responsiveness to stress, exhibit a wider range of emotions, and be more success-driven.¹⁰ The identity aspect (or preference) is used in conjunction with the extrovert/introvert preference pair (or mind aspect) to determine an individual's *strategy*.

The strategy layer of personality combines the *mind* and *identity* aspects to help understand better individuals' strategy as they direct and draw energy. For example, turbulent introverts might seek continuous self-improvement while assertive introverts may have confidence in their skills and be less likely to seek such improvement. While all extroverts are likely to seek social interactions, *assertive extroverts* are less likely to care what others think of them than *turbulent extroverts* would.¹¹

Flexing

Understanding the preference pairs (or aspects) is critical to examine the impact of personality on an officer's ability to lead. It is also important to understand that no personality type or preference is better than another. Each type has its strengths and limitations, depending on the environment. Officers with a preference for introversion may need to be extroverted at times to interact with subordinates, engage at a social function, or to present a brief. This process of acting out of preference is called *flexing*, and everyone does it to some degree. The trait measurement values provided by the NERIS Type Explorer help show officers how much stress they might endure when flexing out of their preference.

For example, an officer who has a preference/trait combination of thinking (75 percent) over feeling (25 percent) might still be excellent at empathizing with subordinates. Still, an interaction requiring such empathy can be increasingly exhausting to that officer. Officers with a preference/trait combination of feeling (75 percent) over thinking (25 percent) would find great comfort in a situation where they had to empathize with a subordinate. In both situations, the subordinate would perceive empathy from their leader.

Research Questions

Q1: What potential impacts can officers' personality types and traits have on their ability to lead in the military?

Q2: Are gender differences in personality present among military officers as they are in the general US population?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in personality type when comparing male and female officers.

H_a: There is a significant difference in personality type when comparing male and female officers.

Methodology

Pursuant to our goals of examining the presence of gender differences and the potential impact of personality diversity on an officer’s ability to lead, we decided upon a quantitative descriptive nonexperimental method and design for the study. The foregoing allowed us to combine our professional credentials and related literature surrounding the topic with the information extracted from our survey participants. The most effective tool for determining type and trait information was the *NERIS Type Explorer*—which we ultimately used for this study.

Populational and Sampling

Adult male and female officers from around the world were used for this study; however, most of the officers surveyed were US officers—most of which were US Air Force-affiliated. All participants were ACSC class of 2020 students. Our sample of 424 represented the USAF officer demographic with a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent confidence interval (or margin of error). Table 1 depicts the demographics of the officers sampled.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of population sample (n)

<i>Service</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Int'l officer	72	17.0	17.0	17.0
Other	7	1.7	1.7	18.6
USA	40	9.4	9.4	28.1
USAF	282	66.5	66.5	94.6
USCG	1	0.2	0.2	94.8
USMC	11	2.6	2.6	97.4
USN	11	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	424	100.0	100.0	

Data Collection Instrument

We selected the *NERIS Type Explorer* for data collection because it combines the typology characteristics of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and trait mea-

surement capability unique to the NERIS Type Explorer. This feature means that we were able to type our participants (INTP, ESFJ, etc.), as well as to measure the magnitude (or trait) of each scale (e.g., 53 percent introvert, 47 percent extrovert). Having type and trait information allowed us to understand better how officers might *flex* outside of their preferred type more or less effectively than others.

Validity and Reliability

The NERIS Type Explorer was chosen because it is a proven instrument—this means that it is both valid and reliable. The NERIS Type Explorer was subjected to a discriminant validity analysis and two reliability tests: a Cronbach’s Alpha and test-retest. In both cases, the values were within acceptable ranges to highlight that the five personality scales did not overlap and that both reliability tests for each scale were between the 0.70 and 0.90 range.¹²

Results

We used a combination of descriptive analysis and independent-samples t-tests to examine the research questions and test the research hypothesis. Tables 2–5 display the results of both examinations.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of sample type distribution

<i>Type</i>	<i>US Population</i>	<i>Class AY20</i>	<i>US AY20</i>	<i>Int’l AY20</i>
ENFJ	3%	11%	10%	12%
ENFP	8%	5%	6%	0%
ENTJ	2%	2%	1%	4%
ENTP	3%	2%	2%	0%
ESFJ	12%	13%	11%	22%
ESFP	9%	2%	1%	3%
ESTJ	9%	6%	7%	3%
ESTP	4%	1%	1%	0%
INFJ	2%	11%	11%	14%
INFP	4%	2%	3%	0%
INTJ	2%	8%	8%	7%
INTP	3%	2%	2%	3%
ISFJ	14%	17%	16%	21%
ISFP	9%	3%	3%	1%
ISTJ	12%	13%	14%	10%
ISTP	5%	2%	2%	0%

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of sample trait distribution

<i>Service</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>J</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>-A</i>	<i>-T</i>
USAF	282	ISFJ-A	47.4	52.6	47.0	53.0	44.4	55.6	62.3	37.7	50.8	49.2
USA	39	ISFJ-A	46.7	53.4	46.5	53.5	45.9	54.1	61.5	38.5	56.9	43.1
USN	11	ISFJ-T	32.5	67.5	41.1	58.9	44.0	56.0	54.5	45.5	49.5	50.5
USMC	11	ESFJ-T	52.9	47.1	42.9	57.1	49.4	50.6	65.2	34.8	45.9	54.1
USCG	1	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Int'l	72	ISFJ-A	49.3	50.7	47.2	53.3	43.3	57.5	67.3	31.9	60.4	39.1
Class AY20	416	ISFJ-A	45.8	54.2	45.0	55.2	45.4	54.8	62.2	37.7	52.7	47.2

** = The sample was too small to include the participant's data anonymously.

We conducted a series of independent samples t-tests to evaluate the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in personality type when comparing male and female officers. The independent variable was the respondent's gender, and the dependent variables were the five dichotomies used to determine a personality type (i.e., E/I, S/N, T/F, P/J, -A/-T). The group statistics are depicted in table 4, and the results of the test are depicted in table 5. We used the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I statistical errors due to conducting five tests at one time. We required a *p*-value of less than 0.01 ($0.05/5 = 0.01$ or 99 percent CL) for significant results.

Table 4. Independent-samples t-test group statistics for gender differences

<i>Personality Type</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
N	Male	349	48.40	16.084	0.861
	Female	75	38.07	18.409	2.126
S	Male	349	51.71	16.215	0.868
	Female	75	61.93	18.409	2.126
T	Male	349	45.46	14.036	0.751
	Female	75	39.95	14.898	1.720
F	Male	349	54.71	13.792	0.738
	Female	75	60.05	14.898	1.720

Table 5. Independent samples t-test results for gender differences

<i>Personality Type</i>	<i>Significance (p)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference—Lower</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference—Upper</i>
N	0.001	10.337	2.102	6.206	14.469
S	0.001	-10.223	2.115	-14.381	-6.065
T	0.002	5.518	1.806	1.967	9.068
F	0.003	-5.346	1.781	-8.846	-1.845

Discussion

The Judging and Perceiving Preference Pairs

The preponderance of J-preferences among the ACSC student body raise significant questions about the military’s ability to adapt to complexity or uncertainty—typically a P-preference function. What actions are being taken by the military to ensure officers can flex their P-preference when required? How does this impact joint planning versus execution?

The first finding of significance is the departure of the data from sampling studies on the US population as a whole regarding the J to P dimension. Most studies place the proportion of those with the J preference to P among samples of the general US population at 55 percent for J and 45 percent for P. In contrast, AY20 student body results of the US military population revealed 81 percent of those with the J preference to 19 percent for P. ACSC’s numbers are quite close to the results of other studies using US military populations, indicating a fair amount of consistency in personality type and trait between ACSC students and the US military as a whole. However, the results also show that representative of the broader US military, our students also demonstrate an aggressive “J” considered in the aggregate. This finding contains intriguing implications both at the aggregate level (e.g., across all the J or P groups) and between the various types and traits.

First, we will look at the level of J-P. That the military’s reliance on structure, hierarchy, predictability, and clear guidance would appeal to those with the J preference at the recruiting stage and carry over into the higher retention of J compared to P might surprise no one. Nor would anyone with knowledge of military culture find it shocking that those with the J preference relative to P would prefer to remain in service, or that those in J might experience a higher rate of promotion. Additionally, for some student categories, selection to ACSC is highly competitive, proposing the idea that pressures to prefer or conform to J increase with

advancement. However, the proximity of current percentages on all J types and traits between ACSC students and the general US military reinforces the conclusion that the ACSC population is very representative of the US military as a whole. Instead, our significance relates to the implications to be derived from the preponderance of J members (26 percentage points higher than the general US population) in terms of learning, decision-making, and leadership behaviors, and secondly, to the divergence from a previous study of US military populations.¹³

For the military profession, from the PME environment to the field, multiple sources have suggested a certain narrowness of mind persists in these contexts, despite the function of PME to broaden inquiry among its graduates and the increasing diversity of challenges and threats the US military faces.¹⁴ What adds complexity to this judgment is the amount of evidence indicating that those with the J-preference incline toward a certain degree of intellectual inflexibility, such that a preponderance of J exponentially raises the possibility of convergent thinking. While the inference researchers must make is that a J-preference for structure extends from the physical to the cognitive, the psychometric data have tended to support such an inference. This inference would help to explain the observation that in PME environments, there is a tendency to place a high value on practical experience, not as an absolute value only, but relative to a disparagement of theory and academic research.¹⁵

From the civil-military relations field, a description of the “military mind” proposes first that there is uniqueness particular to military professionals via recruitment, training, and professional practice, and second, reflects the following qualities: “the military mind is disciplined, rigid, logical, and scientific; it is not flexible, tolerant, intuitive, and emotional.”¹⁶ This cast of mind is by no means entirely problematic. The same source is quick to point out the professional desirability of certain related cognitive preferences: “The military mind. . . consists of the values, attitudes, and perspectives that inhere in the performance of the professional military function and that are deducible from the nature of that function.”¹⁷ In short, successful military leaders must internalize and practice resoluteness in the face of doubt, risk, uncertainty, and loss, and receive assistance from these same cognitive preferences.¹⁸ However, might there not also be significant potential drawbacks to this degree of singularity in the cognitive preferences of US military populations, if this singularity affects the quality of organizational decision-making, leadership behaviors, and responses to ambiguity or uncertainty? Identifying these drawbacks with some specificity would go a long way toward the development of mitigating strategies, including strategies beyond those the institution may have already recently attempted. While the investigation of effects from a preponderance of J

members is warranted and no doubt fruitful, researchers and military leaders can gain even more insight at the level of specific types and traits.

Type Distribution

Based on the more prevalent SJ-types, qualities in danger of being too scarce to have influence, especially in the group dynamics of problem solving, include iconoclastic, divergent, or innovative thinking, a preference for debate, openness to reality, and conformity to truth rather than conformity based on loyalty to the group.

Now, we will consider some suggestions from the evidence at the level of individual types and traits. The evidence is highly suggestive of a significant finding on one point—30 percent of the ACSC AY20 student body scored as ISFJ (17) and ESFJ (13), registering a difference between them of only one letter. While ISTJs in the student body tied ESFJs at 13 percent, completing our identification of the top three types and traits, historical research suggests a significant change has taken place. With a somewhat similar military population surveyed 16 years ago, ISTJs held pride of place at 30 percent, with ISFJs and ESFJs together accounting for only 2 percent each!¹⁹ The conclusion section will more directly address the possible implications of such a historical shift. For now, we will just note that the high concentration of identical preferences among this 30 percent amounts to certain other qualities being less widely shared and offer related implications.

Given such an outcome to the research, cognitive preferences particular to a range of J types and traits will be prevalent, while preferences across N-T-P and F-P types and traits combinations will be in shorter supply. Desirable qualities most likely to flourish under this J-concentration include decisiveness, unit loyalty, a bias for action, and moral strength, as in readiness and faithfulness to act on conviction. Qualities in danger of being too scarce to have influence, especially in the group dynamics of problem solving, include iconoclastic, divergent, or innovative thinking, a preference for debate, openness to reality, and conformity to truth rather than conformity based on loyalty to the group.

Two research areas of tremendous significance to the US military related to these observations are: (1) improving the quality of strategic thinking as leaders rise in rank; and (2) reducing the prevalence of convergent thinking in instances when that type of thinking harms unit health and performance, mission accomplishment, and faithfulness to the military's ultimate purposes—in short, its reason to exist in the first place. Scholars have previously demonstrated, related to these two research areas, (1), that personality affects the quality of a leader's ability

to think strategically and (2), that instilling the practice of divergent thinking corrects groupthink and improves the quality of decision outcomes.²⁰ As these are research areas, the military simply cannot afford to ignore, studies such as this should be encouraged and rate higher-level attention. Particularly relevant is research investigating the mix of personalities at typical staffs and commands to understand the effects of various concentrations of personalities on outcomes in an operational setting.

In his classic text from 1972, *Victims of Groupthink*, psychologist Irving L. Janis investigated the quality of foreign policy decisions, such as two decisions of the Kennedy administration—the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. His research agenda was to determine likely explanations for why groups of highly intelligent people often make suboptimal decisions; for example, decisions based on needs for group cohesion, feelings of accomplishment, and other goals that on rational terms were not the best decisions to fit the problem. Among problematic group characteristics, homogeneity unsurprisingly surfaced as a major indicator of groupthink tendencies. Military units, commands, and career fields, the foreign policy community, and multiple other types of organizations are clearly vulnerable to this problem. Symptoms of groups practicing groupthink notably included a rigid moral certitude, rejection of balanced debate, and the use of particular group members to punish divergence and reward compliance while maintaining a veneer of unified consensus. Obviously, remedies to groupthink would include planned diversity of thought and experience. Still, more to the purposes of this research, military organizations in danger of groupthink need to instill and protect the practice of reasoned analysis and self-questioning at the group and individual level (why do I/we believe what I/we believe? What other information might I/we be missing or avoiding? Are my/our beliefs about reality consistent with the full reality, with things as they really are? Have I lopped off the part of reality I/we like and bloated it into a false substitute for reality? Finally, what are the best practices for questioning or re-examining my/our beliefs?).

Closely related to Janis and the research on the difficulties of protecting organizations from groupthink is Chris Argyris's important work on the high value and scarcity in most organizations of double-loop learning.²¹ From decades of studying the quality of organizational decision-making, Argyris repeatedly saw that self-protection practices led to denying reality when that reality included bad news and to the repackaging of facts such that glaring errors persisted yet remained hidden from all levels of leadership. Using the metaphor of a thermostat, Argyris explained that an organization responding as a thermostat normally does, responding to changes in ambient temperature by turning on or removing heat to return the temperature to an established standard, say 68 degrees, is an organiza-

tion using single-loop learning. By contrast, an organization using double-loop learning would have in place an established norm of questioning whether 68 degrees was the right standard in the first place, and questioning, what else, the right standard, whether 68 degrees or not, called upon the organization to consider and accomplish. The immediate danger indicated here is that organizations too often rely on implicit norms (e.g., no bad news to the boss, truth, and promotions don't mix) to avoid double-loop learning expressly. The more general concern regarding groupthink and the avoidance of double-loop learning is whether certain personality types and traits or imbalances across the frequency of types and traits make groups especially insular, as in resistant to reasoned analysis or double-loop learning. Undesirable potential organizational outcomes from such insularity include rigid conformism, antipathy to innovation, and a loss of objectivity. Conversely, researchers should consider the implications of severely underrepresented types and traits for these same organizational outcomes. For example, from 1989–2004, on average, 38 percent of the general US population were combined ISTPs, ESTPs, ISFPs, and ESFPs. These groups were often claimed as the four most innovative types and traits (often dubbed “SPs” and the “Explorers”), compared with just 11 percent among Naval War College student bodies during the same timeframe. In 2019, the general US population included 27 percent SPs while the ACSC AY20 student body included just 8 percent SPs. Elsewhere, researchers have described SPs as “contingency”-type leaders, indicating their ability to see clearly in a crisis and respond quickly and effectively to the unexpected, and have noted that organizations favoring other types and traits retaining SP's is very difficult.²² Surely, the status and retention of SPs are relevant to the US military's demand for leaders comfortable in ambiguous, uncertain contexts.

The Nature and Tactics Relationship

The preponderance of FJs means that officers may tend less toward constructing chains of logic based on impersonal data (e.g., thing-related, concept-related) and are less inclined to keep open pathways for new data, especially in a crisis or as deadlines approach.

In addition to our review of the implications of a preponderance of Js and the under-representation of types and traits such as the SP “Explorers,” another fruitful research finding resulted from a comparative analysis of the last two letters. The dimensions for these letters indicate cognitive preferences while working out decisions (T-F) and responding to the information that one gathers (P-J) from mental reflection or sense perception.²³ When we combined results of the frequency of the

four types and traits ending in FJ (INFJ/ISFJ/ENFJ/ESFJ), we found they comprised 31 percent of the general US population *but 52 percent of the ACSC AY20 student body*. Even starker differences appeared when we compared the frequency of FJs to all other types in the ACSC student body with different two-letter ending combinations. The four TJ types and traits accounted for 29 percent of the class, with the other two combinations registering way less than this—FP's totaled 12 percent of the class and TPs just 7 percent. To briefly characterize this finding's significance, FJs making decisions tend to construct chains of logic based on experiential and relational data (e.g., personal, interpersonal, people-oriented) and react to information processing by setting limits to inputs (e.g., emphasizing scheduling, imposing structure, driving to closure).²⁴ Not only is there nothing inherently wrong with these cognitive preferences, but as indicated earlier, these preferences provide numerous benefits such as timeliness, decisiveness, and loyalty. Some research suggests FJs tend to be more likely to display high emotional intelligence, particularly outwardly, by recognizing, tapping into, and shaping the emotional resonance of the group toward goals. Researchers investigating leaders in the business sector concluded that FJs placed higher value than other type and trait combinations on the “core” emotional intelligence leader attributes of adaptability, self-awareness, and empathy.²⁵ However, there is utility in identifying what an FJ cognitive style tends to de-emphasize, that TJs, FP, and TPs would more likely contribute. Specifically, FJs tend less toward constructing chains of logic based on impersonal data (e.g., thing-related, concept-related) and are less inclined to keep open pathways for new data,²⁶ especially in a crisis or as deadlines approach. While these distinctions resulting from analysis of the SFJ versus NTP clusters are helpful, we have two other pairings from our results that can add texture to the implications we've addressed so far, SJ and SF.

The Energy and Tactics Relationship

SJs in the ACSC AY20 class far outpaced the frequency of the other three clusters at 49 percent of the student body, compared to 29 percent NFs, 14 percent NTs, and just 8 percent SPs. The foregoing means that many officers may lack providing optimal solutions to unexpected crises, theory-making, objectivity, analytical acumen, and complex problem solving.

Following up on the work of Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter B. Myers, in 1978, David Keirsey developed his theory of the four temperaments based on the four possible two-letter pairings derived from the dimensions of data gathering preferences (S-N) and preferences in reactions to data processing (J-P). Keirsey pro-

posed these temperaments and argued that they explain the consistency we see in a person's words and actions over time: SJ "Guardians," SP "Artisans," NF "Idealists," and NT "Rationalists."²⁷ Other researchers have continued this work of extending the original typology of Briggs Myers and Myers into the study of temperaments, following in Keirse's footsteps. For example, in 1995, Demarest used the same four clusters to identify four managerial styles: SJ "scientific managers," SP "contingency managers," NF "social managers," and NT "strategic managers."²⁸ Synthesizing some of this research on temperament, we find that the principal motives that drive SJ Guardian/scientific managers are order, service, and progress. These motives lead SJ temperaments to strive for excellence in engaged supervision, organized planning, and process improvement. SJ's value efficiency, protecting others and clarity, but struggle in contexts suited to flexibility, reflection, and objectivity. For the three other temperaments, what they provide centers on these three SJ vulnerabilities. SPs crave freedom of action and lack of restraint and strive to excel at providing optimal solutions to unexpected crises. NFs crave growth and purpose-finding and strive to excel at visioning, interpreting tasks, especially meaning-making. NTs crave theory making, objectivity, and succeeding, and strive to excel at analysis, resource management, and solving complex problems. Notably, SJs in the ACSC AY20 class far outpaced the frequency of the other three clusters at 49 percent of the student body, compared to 29 percent NFs, 14 percent NTs, and just 8 percent SPs.

The Energy and Nature Relationship: The Cognitive Functions

Most current officers (SFs) are likely to focus on a combination of facts from the sensible world (versus possibilities) and personal connection (versus "thing-orientation") and are less likely to focus on different combinations of facts, possibilities, or things that are logically oriented.

The SF versus ST, NF, and NT clusters, advanced by Briggs Myers and Myers, is yet another way to analyze distinctions across personalities.²⁹ The key differences revealed by this comparison are that SFs focus on a combination of facts from the sensible world (versus possibilities) and personal connection (versus "thing-orientation"). In contrast, the other clusters focus on different combinations of either facts, possibilities, personal connection, or a thing-orientation. Implications from these differences include the proposal that SF's most desired output is a life of practical, sacrificial service. The other clusters might very well share this goal but moderated by different behavioral outputs, namely STs and technical expertise, and NFs and shared meaning-making. At the same time, NTs

favor achieving and applying theoretical expertise. This analysis of the comparative meaning of the SJ and SF pairings suggests important conclusions in the areas of group dynamics as well as the quality of strategic thinking. Another finding is speculative but interesting. What if the FJ pairing contains a specialized tension, one we could roughly describe as a “people-structure” tension, and what if this tension is problematic but, identified and mitigated, can turn to a strength? As a cluster causing internal tension, one way to characterize this is that regard for interpersonal connections by nature is an open-ended project. Humans are ends as well as means, and their meaning persists past the mission. Their social nature resists certain mechanisms of control, and wise leaders realize that persuasion and trust, versus control, are crucial leadership tools, especially as the leader’s scope of responsibility increases. Yet, the inclination to impose structure can fight against the realities and demands of this interpersonal dimension. This dimension is just one example of a cluster likely to produce an inner tension. We propose that a type and trait with such a tension can learn to stretch *because of* the inner tension, basically that the tension is itself a gateway to increased self-and-other awareness that allows a leader to maximize his or her performance. This proposal is not meant to say that anyone has a perfect type and trait, but that we can each learn to flex to our weaker inclinations when the context calls for that. Specifically, for FJs, as noted earlier, perhaps the tension is what predisposes these types and traits to potentially excel in emotionally intelligent leadership behaviors.

Gender Differences

What does it mean for a military that has seen a significant increase in female accessions and may have experienced a notable shift from T- to F-types over the last 16 years?

Regarding differences between males and females from the ACSC AY20 student body, the most significant statistical findings related to the S-N and T-F dimensions (see tables 4–5). First, in support of the above statistical results, both men and women were more than 50 percent SF, and less than 50 percent NT. However, men were nearly evenly split on the S-N dimension (51.7–48.4), while women showed a much bigger disparity of 61.9 S members to 38.1 in the N group. A similar finding appeared based on an analysis of the T-F dimension. Men showed a bigger difference compared to their S-N results (54.7/F to 45.5/T). Still, the disparity among women was again significantly larger, with 60 percent female F members compared to 40 percent in the T group. If female military leaders are statistically significantly more likely to be SFs than males, what does

this mean for military organizations? What does this mean for a military that, over time, may have experienced a notable shift from T- to F-types and traits? According to researchers in 2005, Naval War College student bodies from 1989–2004 (n=7180), on average, were 90 percent T members and 10 percent in the F group. The ACSC AY20 student body, admittedly with different rank, demographics, and experiences, was very different on this statistic, with 36 percent T members and 64 percent in the F group!

Conclusion

The first conclusion from the above statistical results and discussion relates to the topic of conformism. Many recognize the value and desirability of conformism in multiple dimensions of military service. Still, one would hardly wish to see this tendency in the areas of analysis, decision-making, and strategic formulation. In short, intellectual conformism is likely to have major drawbacks, even without consideration of the complex, uncertain, and ambiguous operational and strategic environments found today in every geographic command. While any military these days is at risk for losing its effective edge, the dimension of human personality is yet another way to affect this edge, if researchers can capture the significance of personality and its relationship to unit and organizational effectiveness. The US military has capitalized on the study of personality for decades, but has it optimized this effort? The applicability of personality analysis to military leader self-awareness and personal growth is important, but the point here is that studying personality in the aggregate has significant potential as well. We may ask whether team and unit composition bears on the optimal distribution of personality types and traits, but what about the force as a whole? The preponderance of those with a J preference is just one way to examine this, in particular that the J preference for imposing structure on responses to the processing of information has tremendous planning advantages but potential strategizing drawbacks. This is not a call for a massive recruitment effort of P types and traits; it is a signal that both preferences need to stretch their willingness to remain open to new and/or conflictual data when the context requires it. Another concern related to the lack of P types and traits is the potential for discouragement of innovation. This is a multitiered problem, as P type and trait subordinates need bosses who are at least prepared to stretch their behaviors to accommodate the risk and openness that innovation requires.

A second consideration is the possible deeper meanings behind a high concentration of S-F-Js in military populations. Many of the cognitive and leadership behaviors associated with this cluster resonate in military cultures, particularly SJ Guardian tendencies of a bias toward action, sense of duty, instinct to protect and preserve,

and unyielding attention to demands and deadlines. The inclusion of F, noted as a possible increasing tendency among high-performing officers, adds what we will call “moral strength,” a strong sense of conviction, or a motivation to see through on responsibilities. Such a passionate dedication to duty accounts for many of the positive experiences with students that faculty at ACSC anecdotally have provided over the years. We personally have yet to find a student body we have worked with more committed to increasing their technical expertise and professional growth. Taking this line of investigation a step further, we should not forget the other type and trait clusters and what they offer. In the cognitive realms of strategic thinking and core purpose (why organizations or institutions exist at all, what is my purpose as person/officer/leader), conviction is important but perhaps not enough. This is not to say a leader cannot successfully practice or present behaviors in all three realms, but simply that no one leader, however magnetic or commanding, can *make* a small unit or large organization *do anything*. Many of the members and their unique contributions are required to fuel achievement and mission accomplishment. The best leaders tap into their strengths and the strengths of others to complete the task of providing purpose, motivation, and strategic guidance.

To build on the above proposed connection between personality and the acts of strategic thinking and strategy formulation, Bullis’ work has significant implications for military organizations. His claim that this kind of work demands the practice of N-F-P preferences in cognitive and leadership behaviors is both controversial and very promising, if accurate. His article makes clear that he is not advocating hiring and promotion practices to mandate INFP and ENFP personalities, but rather his argument calls for *stretching* among senior leaders and soon-to-be senior leaders to accommodate the benefits of the preferences related to N-F-P types and traits. What this means in relation to our study is that, with a high proportion of S-F-J in our population, what preferences inherently exist when needing to think strategically, and what types of cognitive and leader behaviors would require stretching one’s more inherent inclinations? The Bullis piece argues that strategic thinkers need to “discover underlying interdependent or reciprocal relationships (N),” “place primacy on the interpersonal component of their interactions (F),” and “apply patient decision-making techniques (P).” Is he right?

The statistical results on the differences between males and females did not demonstrate significant departures from studies on similar populations. However, it is important to consider the implications of these results when considering group dynamics and leader-follower dyadic relationships and interactions, as many researchers have done before. The prevalence of the F group across men and women bode well for subordinates, as the behaviors associated with this preference have often translated into successful leader-follower relationships, according

to the bulk of research. If the above data accurately signal an en masse movement of T to F in the wider US military, this has very significant implications for leadership and command issues and development.

Recommendations

Although many recommendations for future research are possible from this study, we will only name a few. First, it would be valuable to explain why the preponderance of SFJs occurred and what happened to account for the apparent movement toward a majority of the F group in contrast to the Buckwalter study and other studies of military populations. Also, the demographic-specific results provide numerous follow-on research paths. The differences in males and females have implications regarding leader-follower dyadic relationships, group dynamics, and teambuilding. Additionally, we need to acknowledge the results among our international officers, who although quite a bit smaller in number (n=72), demonstrated some interesting differences from the US military population. ISFJs and ESFJs accounted for 43 percent of all international officers, an even greater preponderance than among US students. If we add INFJs and ENFJs, we arrive at 70 percent of all international officers across only four of the 16 types or traits! As a final research proposal, we return to Huntington's treatment of the "military mind." His descriptors such as "realizing himself in groups. . . corporative in spirit. . . anti-individualistic. . . (believing he learns) only from experience. . ." share some conceptual space with the higher frequency types and traits seen in this study.³⁰ However, Huntington also addresses his claim of a prevalent pessimism in the military mind. We do not see this in the results, nor do we notice it in our hallways! So, what is the military mind today? 🌟

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