

Integrating Staff Elements, Personality Type and Groupthink

**A Monograph
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Abstract

INTEGRATING STAFF ELEMENTS, PERSONALITY TYPE AND GROUPTHINK by MAJ Ronald D. Walck, U.S. Army 40 pages.

This monograph presents original research that seeks to reveal the relationship between individual personality type, as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and individual attitudes about the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP). It contends that the relationship between individual personality types and attitudes towards the MDMP has evolved since the late 1990s in concert with the changing composition of personality types within the U.S. Army officer corps. Accordingly, this monograph questions the relevance and validity of the current MDMP process. Additionally, this monograph considers the role of personality types within the integrating staff elements of Division-level and higher staffs, and offers practical suggestions towards avoiding groupthink within integrating staff elements.

Isabel Briggs-Myers and Katharine Briggs developed the MBTI as a system to describe individual personalities by their self-reported traits. Briggs and Myers describe these traits in terms of eight preferences and sixteen types. The U.S. Army has been using the MBTI for individual development and as a research tool since the 1980s. The personalities of people involved in the MDMP are as important as the process itself. Understanding the role of type diversity in staff work will enable leaders to carry out more complete and effective planning.

According to various researchers, effective staff work requires the development and use of cross-functional teams, and the most effective cross-functional teams consist of members who have a variety of personalities. The varied perspectives and alternate approaches provided by a variety of personalities tend to complement each other as teams work toward solutions to staff problems. U.S. Army doctrine designates what researchers call cross-functional teams as integrating cells. Integrating cells are central to the Military Decision-Making Process.

Previous studies have shown that cross-functional teams with a variety of complementary types tend to perform better than teams without variety. The predominance of certain personality types in the U.S. Army's officer corps limits the effectiveness of the cross-functional teams that make up its integrating cells. The lack of variety in individual perspectives and approaches to planning and problem solving inhibit effective staff work.

First conceptualized by Dr. Irving Janis, groupthink is a theory that appears several times in U.S. Army doctrine. Doctrinal warnings describe the dangers of groupthink, but U.S. Army culture predisposes soldiers to its effects. In many cases, the cultural standards that give the U.S. Army its strengths become disadvantages when working in integrating cells.

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Failure does not strike like a bolt from the blue; it develops gradually according to its own logic. As we watch individuals attempt to solve problems, we see that complicated situations seem to elicit habits of thought that set failure in motion from the beginning.

- Detrich Dörner, *Logic of Failure*

Introduction

Why do staffs fail? In a controlled environment, sixty-six majors, students from all branches of service, along with inter-agency and international partners, worked together to develop a plan to employ a coalition force in a full-spectrum combat environment. At the end of ten days of effort, the planning product they presented failed to meet even the most basic requirements of their commander. The staff-preferred course of action was neither suitable nor feasible. It was neither acceptable nor complete. The commander was resoundingly disappointed, and the students were left bewildered as to how their combined efforts came to naught.

Were they inexperienced? Each individual student had roughly ten years of experience in his or her individual field. The vast majority of the group consisted of combat veterans, and many had served two or more combat tours. Was their leadership lacking? Some of the most knowledgeable instructors in the military chose the group's leadership. The leaders were hand selected to succeed, not fail. Did dissent or apathy sabotage the group? Again, the answer is no. This was a professional setting; individual work was on par with what one might expect from a group of this caliber in a 'real world' environment. Morale throughout the event was as high as could be reasonably expected. There was no drama, no fistfights, no 'meet the instructor in the hallway' altercations or conversations. This group of mid-career professionals did their best to accomplish a task for which they had been training at some level for their entire careers. Their efforts were a complete failure.

What happened to this group is a phenomenon called Groupthink. The results were a bitter lesson for the sixty-six individuals involved.

As a practical matter, staff coordination can be terribly difficult. Effective staff work requires the development and utilization of cross-functional teams. The most effective of these cross-functional teams consist of members with a variety of personality types. The varied perspectives and approaches to problems provided by a variety of personality types facilitate complimentary efforts when teams work to solve staff problems. The predominance of specific personality types in the U.S. Army's officer corps limits the effectiveness of cross-functional teams formed from its ranks. The lack of variety in individual perspectives and approaches to both planning and problem solving inhibit effective staff work by amplifying those conditions that encourage groupthink.

Staff Composition and Cross-Functional Teams

Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1, *The Operations Process*, indicates that, "Staffs are organized into staff section by area of expertise. Commanders organize CPs (command posts) into functional and integrating cells. These cells contain elements from staff sections." The manual delineates the two types of cells by their composition. "Functional cells group personnel and equipment by WFF (war fighting function)" and "Integrating cells group personnel and equipment to integrate functional cell activities."¹ These two types of cells interact with each other and with superior and subordinate units in an effort to anticipate and react to the commander's need for information and action.

The interim manual goes on to identify three types of Integrating Cells: Current Operations, Future Operations and Plans. It explains that the Current Operations cell usually has a member representing every staff section. However, current doctrine provides assigned personnel as resources to the Future Operations cell only at and above the corps level. In both the Future

¹ U.S. Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1, The Operations Process*, (Washington DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), 2-6.

Operations cell and the Plans Cell, personnel from other staff sections come in to assist a core group of planners as required.²

Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1 also covers boards and working Groups. It describes them as temporary groupings that change as needed. Both working groups and boards can work to synchronize contributions from multiple sources, but boards are the appropriate forum if that synchronization process requires approval from the commander.³ The functional cells delineated by FMI 5-0.1 are synonymous with what leading organizational theorists describe as functional teams. The doctrinally designated integrating cells are the same as cross-functional teams in organization and management theory. The figure below is a representation of the relationship of functional and integrating cells from FMI 5-0.1⁴

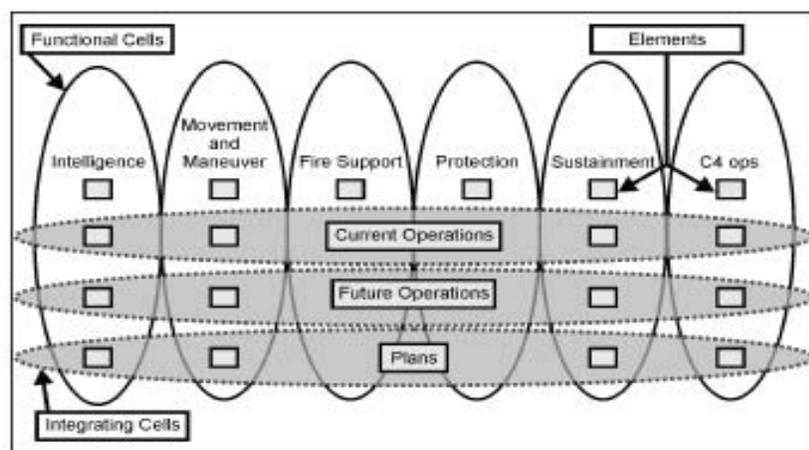


Figure 2-2. Command post organization

J. Richard Hackman is a Professor of Social and Organizational Psychology at Harvard University. His description of task-performing teams is similar to the working groups and boards annotated in doctrine, “work teams in organizations have four features: a team *task*, clear

²U.S. Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1, The Operations Process*, 2-11.

³ *Ibid.*, 2-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-7.

boundaries, clearly specified *authority* to manage their own work processes, and membership *stability* over some reasonable period of time.”⁵ Hackman writes that task-performing teams, “can turn in performances that far outstrip what could be obtained by merely stitching together the separate contributions of individual team members,” but cautions that “task-performing teams are always at risk of falling victim to process losses that compromise their potential.”⁶

Glenn Parker has also authored several books on leadership and is currently a leadership consultant for a large number of pharmaceutical and industrial corporations. His client listing includes industry giants such as 3M, Johnson & Johnson and the Department of the Navy. In his book on cross-functional teams, Parker takes a position similar to Hackman’s when he states, “the ability to deal with complex issues came up often as an outcome of cross-functional teams.”⁷ Likewise, he recommends avoiding cross-functional teams in situations where senior leaders consistently second-guess decisions and where functional department heads are unwilling to give up their best people⁸. In these situations, he asserts that cross-functional teams are likely to do more harm than good. Field Manual 6-22, *Army Leadership*, supports Parker’s position by stating that organizational leaders “avoid micromanaging the staff while trusting and empowering them to think creatively and provide truthful answers and feasible questions.”⁹

Gary Yukl is a professor of management at the University at Albany, State University of New York, and a well-regarded author and authority on business leadership. In one of his several books on leadership, *Leadership in Organizations*, Yukl describes functional teams as having

⁵ Richard J. Hackman, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances*. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 41.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁷ Glenn M. Parker. *Cross-Functional Teams: Working with Allies, Enemies and Other Strangers*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁹ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 6-22 Army Leadership-(Confident Competent and Agile)*. (Washington DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), 11-7.

members who “are likely to have jobs that are somewhat specialized but still part of the same basic function.”¹⁰ Yukl’s description is consistent with the one from FMI 5.0-1 that depicts functional cells as, “organized by WFF (war fighting function).”¹¹ Parker adds to Yukl’s description with his assertion that “the classical functional team is made up of a boss and his or her direct reports. This so-called military model has been the staple of modern business.” Parker goes on to describe this type of team as comfortable and as having few challenges as far as leadership, decision making and authority.¹²

Alone, functional teams possess both strengths and weaknesses. The primary strength of a functional team is its ability to solve quickly and effectively those closely bounded problems that fall within its particular sphere of expertise. Parker submits that functional teams “work well in traditional hierarchical organizations”¹³ The relationship between functional teams and hierarchal organizations would seem to indicate that functional teams struggle in situations where clear lines of authority are not present. What is clear is that functional teams tend to create information and decision-making stovepipes that can defy attempts at coordination. They are often slow to react to changing situations, and their relationship with authority may tend to lead them toward groupthink.¹⁴

Recognition of the weaknesses inherent in functional teams and the stovepipe organizations that multiple functional teams create has led to the development of what U.S Army doctrine terms integrating cells, and the business world terms cross-functional teams. Parker defines cross-functional teams as “a group of people with a clear purpose representing a variety of functions or

¹⁰ Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (6th ed.). (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 320.

¹¹ U.S. Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1, The Operations Process*, 2-10.

¹² Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴ Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 3.

disciplines in the organization whose combined efforts are necessary for achieving the team's purpose."¹⁵ Compare that description with current Army doctrine, which states, "integrating cells group personnel and equipment to integrate functional cell activities."¹⁶ Parker describes the diversity of relationships between individual members in terms of strangers, colleagues, friends, and enemies. Doctrine describes those relationships in terms of expertise and focus. Both Parker and current doctrine agree that a clear description of purpose is necessary for their respective constructs.

It is clear that the functional cells described in U.S. Army doctrine are the same as the functional teams defined by Yukl, Parker and others. Functional cells have a hierarchal structure with relatively stable membership, and an internal leader who is responsible for internal organization and function.¹⁷ Inside functional cells, "issues such as authority, relationships, decision making, leadership, and boundary management are simple and clear."¹⁸ In short, functional cells are functional teams.

The connection between the integrating cells described in doctrine and cross-functional teams is similarly clear. Commanders form integrating cells for specific purposes and staff them with personnel from multiple functional teams.¹⁹ Integrating cells are simply another name for cross-functional teams.

¹⁵ Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 6.

¹⁶ U.S. Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1, The Operations Process*, 2-6.

¹⁷ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 320.

¹⁸ Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 2.

¹⁹ For descriptions of Cross-Functional teams and Integrating cells, see Gary Yukl. *Leadership in Organizations (6th ed.)*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 320; Glenn M. Parker. *Cross-Functional Teams: working with allies, enemies and other strangers*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4-6; U.S. Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1 The Operations Process*. (Washington DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), 2-11.

The Military Decision Making Process

The U.S. Army uses the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) to help commanders and staffs organize their thinking about the problems they face. U.S. Army doctrine defines the MDMP as “a process that integrates the activities of the commander, staff, and subordinate commanders in developing an operation plan or order. It establishes procedures for analyzing a mission; developing, analyzing, and comparing courses of action; selecting the best course of action; and producing an operation plan or order.”²⁰ Planners abbreviate the seven steps of the MDMP when necessary to develop workable solutions in a time-constrained environment.²¹

The doctrine is clear that at levels where integrating cells exist, performing the MDMP is one of their functions. When discussing the Current Operations cell, FMI 5-0.1 states “it also performs short-range planning using the military decision making process (MDMP) in a time-constrained environment...” and the Future Operations cell “uses the MDMP...to develop plans and orders.”²² Integrating cells are the primary performers of the MDMP. The elements of the staff that have the responsibility of integrating, analyzing and communicating the commander’s intent both externally to subordinate units and internally among functional staff elements are themselves cross-functional teams. The vulnerability of those cross-functional teams to groupthink is an Achilles heel for the organizations they serve.

Research shows that cross-functional teams work best when their members have a variety of personality types.²³ In 2006, James Stapleton completed a rigorous study and concluded that

²⁰ U.S. Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-0.1, The Operations Process*, 1-12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3-2, 3-59.

²² *Ibid.*, 2-11.

²³ James L. Stapleton, *Joint Effects of Team Composition and Team Decision Mode on Complex Decision Quality*” Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University, 2006; Robert T. Keller, “Cross-Functional Project Groups in Research and New Product Development: Diversity, Communications, Job Stress, and Outcomes.” *Academy of Management Journal* 44, no 3 (2001). Warren E. Watson, Kumar Kamalesh, Larry K. Michaelsen “Cultural Diversity’s Impact on

teams with heterogeneous mix of personality types performed better at resolving complex problems than similar but homogenous teams. His study of business school undergraduates was unsuccessful in identifying a cause for what he terms the assembly effect. This is the effect that some groups achieve allowing them to produce better quality decisions than their best individual member.

When building cross-functional teams, diversity is important. Many theorists agree that cross-functional teams work best with a variety of personality types. Yukl, Hackman and Parker are all clear on this point. Hackman writes “Team composition should balance between homogeneity and heterogeneity, with special attention to countering the natural social forces that tilt teams toward similarity among members and uniformity of belief, attitude, and behavior.”²⁴ Citing a 2001 study by J.T Keller, Yukl adds, “When the right people are selected for the team, it is likely to have more expertise than individual managers to make important design and operating decisions.”²⁵ Yukl goes on to say that “having members with different perspectives, experiences, and knowledge can result in more creative solutions to problems. It is easier to convert diversity into cooperative problem solving when members are highly interdependent for attainment of important shared objectives, but making it happen is a major leadership challenge.”²⁶

In the study cited by Yukl, Robert Keller finds that “Cross-functional groups can be effective if they contain the proper mix of functions and people to enhance external communication.”²⁷ Parker also comments specifically about the need for diversity when he writes “You cannot have effective teamwork without effective team players and, more important, a *diverse* group of

Interaction Process and Performance: Comparing Homogenous and Diverse Task Groups”. *Academy of Management Journal* 36, no 3 (1993).

²⁴ Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 128.

²⁵ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 339.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 320-321.; Keller, “Cross-Functional Project Groups in Research and New Product Development,” 553.

effective team players.” He goes on to describe this desired diversity in terms of technical expertise, openness to new ideas, willingness to ask tough questions, ability to see the larger picture, and awareness of cultural diversity.²⁸

The U.S. Army agrees that diversity is important. Its doctrine supports the notion that variety is important to teamwork. In its section discussing diversity, Field Manual 6-22 states, “A leader’s job is not to make everyone the same; it is to take advantage of the different capabilities and talents brought to the team. The biggest challenge is to put each member in the right place to build the best possible team.” When discussing the selection of staff leaders, the manual goes on to say, “A high performing staff begins with putting the right people in the right position.” Additionally, in its chapter on Strategic Leadership, the manual states “As strategic leaders build and use effective staffs, they continually seek honest and competent people: Soldiers and civilians of all diverse backgrounds.”²⁹

Unfortunately, the Army officer corps has been and continues to be largely homogenous.³⁰ Decisions made in the mid-nineteen-eighties about officer personnel management led to the depletion of talent and diversity in the pool of active duty officers.³¹ According to a Strategic Studies Institute monograph by Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso, “this stemmed from a strategic decision to abandon forever the notion of a professional force that could serve as the nucleus of a

²⁸ Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 180-183.

²⁹ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 6-22 Army Leadership*, 6-3, 11-7, 12-12 respectively.

³⁰ Robert D. Gailbreath, Sharon L. Wagoner, Richard G. Moffett III, and Michael B. Hein, “Homogeneity in Behavioral Preference Among U.S. Army Leaders”. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 1, no 3 (1997), 229.

³¹ Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle, and Michael J. Colarusso, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused Upon Talent*, (US Army War College, Carlisle PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 11-13.

rapidly expanded conscript army...Although this drastic reduction increased short term savings, it engendered substantial long-term consequences.”³²

Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso argue for a comprehensive strategy for the U.S. Army’s officer corps that includes accessing, developing, retaining and employing talent. This strategy would include a job matching capacity that would shift current practice from “*adapting* individuals for assignments to *matching* individuals against assignments.”³³ Their argument is that the U.S. Army can best use its people by assessing, developing, retaining and employing them based on individual talent. They assert that continued failure to focus on individual talent imperils the ability of the U.S. Army to defend the nation.

Today’s Army leaders are limited in their selection of personnel because of the decisions made by their predecessors. Creating a heterogeneous team can be difficult in the current environment. Including adequate diversity is clearly a key consideration when developing teams. However, if most of the officers available have similar personality types, it is reasonable to assume that most of the teams composed of these officers will be homogenous in nature.

When viewed from the outside, the U.S. Army appears monolithic. External traits tend to reinforce this perspective. Visually, soldiers standing in formations tend to subvert individual traits into an anonymous mass. Regulations decree the similarity in dress and appearance; they measure and regulate levels of fitness and body fat, as well require the use of some substances, while discouraging others. To a casual observer, soldiers look the same, walk the same, dress the same and talk the same. As the observer moves closer, individual differences may appear to be superficial and inconsequential. Even to those familiar with the Army, these differences tend to be seen more as outward statements of individuality than as a window into the individuals

³² Wardynski, Lyle, and Colarusso, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused Upon Talent*, 35.

³³ *Ibid.*

themselves. Tattoos and loud music proclaim independence, motorcycles and leather jackets portray virility. However, neither fashion nor style constitutes important differences when it comes to individual soldiers. The most important differences between soldiers are those of personality. One way to measure the personality differences of individual soldiers is with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, or MBTI.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

The U.S. Army has been interested in the use of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator since the publication of the first MBTI manual in 1985.³⁴ The U.S. Army War College has used the instrument for more than two decades to help students understand their personal strengths and weaknesses.³⁵ The U.S Army Command and General Staff College also has a long history of MBTI use. Completion of the MBTI at the Command and General Staff College is not mandatory, but currently each class section has at least one opportunity to take the instrument as a tool for self-understanding and self-development.

In order to make the work of Carl Jung more accessible, Isabel Briggs-Myers and her mother, Katharine C. Briggs developed the MBTI as a system to describe individual personalities by their observable traits. Together with her son, Peter B. Myers, Isabel describes these traits in terms of four preferences and sixteen types. The four preferences described by Briggs and Myers are; Extraversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling, and Judgment or

³⁴ For a more complete discussion of the four preferences of the MBTI and their implications for personality type, see Isabel Briggs-Myers with Peter B. Myers. *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Types* Mountain View CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1995), xix-15. This section attempts to condense ideas from the foreword and first chapter of that book into a few paragraphs. Another excellent source for information about the MBTI and personality types is Isabel Briggs Myers, Mary H. McCaulley, Naomi L. Quenk, Allen L. Hammer. *MBTI Manual: A Guide to the Development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Third Edition)*. (Mountain View CA: CPP Inc.).

³⁵Gailbreath, Wagoner, Moffett, and Hein, "Homogeneity in Behavioral Preference Among U.S. Army Leaders."

Perception.³⁶ Myers and Briggs use the combination and strengths of these four preferences to describe an individual's personality type, and organized those types into this chart.³⁷

		Sensing Types		Intuitive Types	
		Thinking	Feeling	Thinking	Feeling
Introvert	I--J	ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
	I--P	ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
Extravert	E--P	ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
	E--J	ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ

In rough terms, the idea is that each individual has preferences along those four lines, and that their personality can be described in terms of the combination and strengths of those preferences. The preferences are not exclusive. In other words, a preference for sensing as a way of getting information about the world does not mean that the individual does not use his or her intuition. Instead, it means that individual's preference is for sensing, and that their sensing ability is more developed than their intuition.

It is easiest to understand how these preferences interact by starting with the second preference set, sensing and intuition (Intuition is indicated by an 'N'; an 'I' is used to indicate a preference for Introversion). The S-I preference is about how an individual prefers to perceive the outside world. A sensing preference indicates that a person prefers to focus on the realities of a situation, where an intuitive preference indicates focus on the possibilities that those realities create. Individuals with a sensing preference have developed differently than those with a preference for intuition, and their understanding of the opposite preference is necessarily limited. In short, the sensing-intuition preference is about how individuals see the outside world.³⁸

³⁶ Isabel Briggs-Myers with Peter B. Myers. *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Types* (Mountain View CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1995), 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

The next set of preferences is about judgment. As they mature, people develop one of two ways of coming to conclusions. One is through a logical process of thinking, and the other is by an appreciation of subjective value, that is, feeling. As with the other preferences, these differences are indicative of levels of preference, they are not absolute. That is, a preference for thinking does not equate to an absence of feeling. Thinkers are not full-blooded Vulcans with pointy ears. Instead, some individuals prefer thinking as an approach to making judgments. The thinking-feeling preference is about how individuals judge the quality of what they perceive.³⁹

The extraversion-introversion preference is about whether a person is more interested in their inner or outer world. An extraverted individual prefers to focus externally, validating themselves and their ideas by interaction with their environment. An introverted individual, on the other hand, focuses on their inner world and is most comfortable validating their ideas within themselves. It is important to remember that the extraversion-introversion preference is independent of the sensing-intuition and thinking-feeling preferences. Individuals with either an external or an internal focus can have any combination of the other three preferences. The introversion-extraversion preference is about how individuals act on the things they are interested in.⁴⁰

The final preference, judging-perceiving, is about how individuals interact with the world. These preferences are the most clearly in opposition to each other. Usually an individual who is using a judging preference has, temporarily at least, suspended his or her ability to perceive. A judging preference indicates a desire for order and decision, where a preference for perceiving

³⁹ Isabel Briggs-Myers with Peter B. Myers. *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Types*, 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

indicates comfort with ambiguity. A shorthand way of thinking about this preference is that judging-perceiving is about whether or not an individual made their bed this morning.⁴¹

So, a combination of the four preferences; How an individual sees the outside world, how they judge the quality of what they see, whether they act on the things they are interested in internally or externally, and whether or not they made their bed this morning, describes an individual's personality type. The types are descriptive, not proscriptive. For each person, some preferences are stronger and some weaker. However, when considered together the four-letter descriptors provide a lens into an individual's personality that is potentially very revealing, both to themselves and to others.⁴²

One twist that is often confusing for students of personality type is the effect that introversion has on the outward expression of personality. A person with a preference for Introversion tends to focus his or her other preferences internally rather than externally. In other words, the individual will interact with the external world using their least preferred rather than their most preferred choices. For instance, a person with a strong INTJ preference might appear to the inattentive observer as an ISFP.⁴³

The MBTI is not universally accepted. Verner Petersen offers an especially insightful critique of the MBTI in his 2006 Credo working paper.⁴⁴ He points out that Myers and Myers make claims that the four sets of individual preferences (Introversion – Extraversion, Sensing - Intuition etc.) are independent from each other without offering evidence in support of that claim. Petersen likens the MBTI to astrology, and points out that it has similar adherents.⁴⁵ He is concerned that

⁴¹ Briggs-Myers, Myers. *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Types*, 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

⁴⁴ Verner Petersen, *MBTI- Distorted Reflections of Personality?* (Aarhus: Aarhus School of Business, 2006).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

personnel managers may be using personality tests like the MBTI as a crutch to replace their own judgment. Finally, Petersen draws an analogy between personality tests like the MBTI and the world of fashion, and asks “where has the independent and self-confident individual gone?”⁴⁶

As part of a revision of their MBTI, researchers from CPP, Inc., the company that owns the trademark on the MBTI instrument, sponsored a nationwide sample of MBTI results. The third edition of the MBTI manual provides the results of that sampling as a national normative sample of adult personality type for the United States. I have summarized that sample in the following table.⁴⁷

NATIONAL NORMATIVE SAMPLES OF
ADULTS (1997)

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
11.60%	13.80%	1.50%	2.10%
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
5.40%	8.80%	4.40%	3.30%
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
4.30%	8.50%	8.10%	3.20%
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
8.70%	12.30%	2.50%	1.80%

In 1997, researchers tested the idea that certain personality types might be more prevalent in the U.S. Army’s officer corps than in other groups of college graduates. As a part of their

⁴⁶ Petersen, *MBTI- Distorted Reflections of Personality?*, 14-15.

⁴⁷ Isabel Briggs Myers, Mary H. McCaulley, Naomi L. Quenk, Allen L. Hammer. *MBTI Manual: A Guide to the Development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Third Edition)*. (Mountain View CA: CPP Inc.), 379.

research, they administered Form G of the MBTI to 1755 officers selected for battalion and brigade command. Summarized data from their study appears below.⁴⁸

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE (1997)

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
32.93%	2.56%	0.57%	9.91%
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
3.99%	0.91%	0.74%	3.25%
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
3.13%	0.63%	1.03%	3.48%
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
24.33%	1.82%	0.97%	9.74%

The researchers noted the overrepresentation of personality types ESTJ and ISTJ, stating, “Senior Army leadership may be quite homogeneous because the organization has a distinct preference for leaders who demonstrate Sensing-Thinking-Judging behaviors and systematically selects out leaders who demonstrate Feeling behaviors.” They went on to say, “the small proportion of leaders with a Feeling preference coupled with the predominance of Thinking and Judging leaders may indicate a potential weakness in the organization.”⁴⁹

Review of this research brings into question the current distribution of MBTI types in the U.S. Army. Is there currently enough variety among those personnel who form the integrating cells in staff elements, or does the lack of variety in integrating cells hinder their effectiveness? In short, are integrating cells hindered by a lack of variety?

Ideally, a survey could determine the distribution of personality type preferences for personnel currently holding positions as members of integrating cells. As an alternative to such an intrusive and demanding approach, the present research sought data from a representative sample.

⁴⁸ Gailbreath, Wagoner, Moffett and Hein, “Homogeneity in Behavioral Preference Among U.S. Army Leaders.”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 227, 228.

Graduates of the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) course and School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College routinely receive assignments as members of integrating cells. Data from a random sampling of ILE and SAMS students should be similar to data from a survey of those currently holding positions in integrating cells. According to previous research, "homogeneity in leadership may lead to suboptimal decision processes, because fewer 'personality resources' are available to the group of decision makers."⁵⁰ If the students, and by proxy, members of integrating cells are found to be homogenous, their efforts may be susceptible to a process known as groupthink.⁵¹

Groupthink

Dr. Irving Janis coined the term Groupthink in the early nineteen seventies. In his book *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, he provides not only a definition of groupthink, but also a description of how he came to use the term.

I use the term 'groupthink' as a quick and easy way to refer to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. "Groupthink" is a term of the same order as the words in the newspeak vocabulary George Orwell presents in his dismaying *1984*-a vocabulary with terms such as "doublethink" and "crimethink." By putting groupthink with those Orwellian words, I realize that groupthink takes on an invidious connotation. The invidiousness is intentional: Groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures.⁵²

⁵⁰ Gailbreath, Wagoner, Moffett and Hein, "Homogeneity in Behavioral Preference Among U.S. Army Leaders," 227.

⁵¹ Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 192.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 9.

Groupthink is a theory that appears several times in U.S. Army doctrine. Department of the Army Pamphlet 525-5-500 describes groupthink as “the antithesis of healthy discourse.”⁵³ Field Manual 5-0 goes into more detail when it declares “Groupthink is a common failing of people or groups who work together to make decisions or solve problems. It is a barrier to creativity that combines habit, fear and prejudice.”⁵⁴ These descriptions are complimentary to Janis’ theories, and both publications reference his work.

Janis describes eight symptoms of groupthink. They are:

1. An illusion of invulnerability
2. Collective efforts to rationalize away warnings
3. An unquestioned belief in the group’s inherent morality
4. Stereotyped views of enemy leaders
5. Direct pressure on individuals to conform
6. Self-censorship
7. A shared illusion of unanimity
8. The emergence of self-appointed mindguards

Janis theorizes “when a policy-making group displays most or all of these symptoms, the members perform their collective tasks ineffectively and are likely to fail...”⁵⁵ In other words, the more of these symptoms a group displays, the more susceptible they are to groupthink.

The people, values and history of the U.S. Army forms a culture that is unique from both the armies of other nations, and from other branches of the U.S. military. It has evolved for over two

⁵³ U.S. Army *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-50, Commander’s Appreciation and Campaign Design* (Fort Monroe, VA: Headquarters, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command 2008), 15.

⁵⁴ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production*. (Washington DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2005), 2-4.

⁵⁵ Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 197-198.

hundred and thirty years. The mores and values it promotes have repeatedly proven themselves as necessary for military effectiveness. Unfortunately, some of the facets of Army culture create conditions that are similar to Janis' symptoms of groupthink. As an example, consider Janis' symptom #3- An unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality. Army leadership doctrine illuminates the issue with its discussion of Army values; "Conflicts between personal and Army Values should be resolved before a leader becomes a morally complete Army leader," and "Honor provides the moral compass for character and personal conduct..." Perhaps the clearest demonstration of unquestioned belief in inherent morality comes from the discussion of enlistment and commissioning oaths; "The oath and values emphasize that the Army's military and civilian leaders are instruments of the people of the United States. The elected government commits forces only after due consideration and in compliance with our national laws and values. Understanding this process gives our Army moral strength and unwavering confidence when committed to war."⁵⁶ Taken together, these samples are representative of the U.S. Army's desire to encourage its soldiers that their actions have solid moral groundings. That this moral grounding predisposes them to groupthink is an unfortunate, unplanned coincidence.

Direct pressure to conform and the suppression of dissent are almost a way of life in the U.S. Army. Many soldiers spend the first few weeks of their careers internalizing the lesson that their opinions do not count. For more seasoned soldiers, the expression of dissent has evolved into a veritable art form. Potentially, there are career-ending implications tied to an individual's desire to speak the truth to those in power. Often, those who choose the safer route and remain silent receive an indirect reward. Huntington described the quandary faced by the subordinate who holds dissenting views, "In particular, the subordinate must consider whether the introduction of the new technique, assuming he is successful in his struggle, will so increase military efficiency

⁵⁶ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 6-22*, 4-8, 4-6, 2-2.

as to offset the impairment of that efficiency caused by the disruption of the chain of command.”⁵⁷ These considerations lead many soldiers to a form of self-censorship when dealing with their superiors, either out of fear of potential repercussions, or in a desire to please.

One final symptom of groupthink that is often present in a military environment is the shared illusion of unanimity. Janis describes this symptom as tied to the self-censorship mentioned above, but occurring as members of a decision-making group struggle to establish and maintain membership and unity within the group. In his discussion of this symptom, Janis states:

Each individual in the group feels himself to be under an injunction to avoid making penetrating criticisms that might bring on a clash with fellow members and destroy the unity of the group. Adhering to this norm promotes a sense of collective strength and also eliminates the threat of damage to each participant’s self-esteem from hearing his own judgments on vital issues criticized by respected associates.⁵⁸

Junior officers are most likely to experience this symptom when in the presence of their senior leaders. U.S. Army culture encourages junior officers to offer an opinion only when asked, and otherwise to be seen and not heard. This indoctrination leads over time towards the mindset that beliefs or opinions in opposition to the group consensus are not worthy of mention.

The fact that at least four of the eight symptoms of groupthink that Janis describes are extant in the U.S. Army culture is troubling. More troubling is the fact that U.S. Army culture actively pursues the maintenance of those conditions. The more symptoms a group of decision-makers displays, the more likely they are to become victims of groupthink. U.S. Army decision-makers are hamstrung by their culture before they begin. By virtue of their makeup and preexisting culture, integrating cells are predisposed towards groupthink. Leaders of integrating cells are

⁵⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 76.

⁵⁸ Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 205.

compelled to undertake methods to avoid the occurrence of groupthink, or to find a way to mitigate its effects.

Avoiding Groupthink

Janis offers nine suggestions towards avoiding the groupthink phenomenon.⁵⁹ Of the nine suggestions, the five that appear the most useful in a military context are; for leaders to present an initially impartial stance, for the use of multiple independent groups, for the systematic inclusion of trusted associates, for outside experts to validate progress and for the inclusion of a meeting to voice any previously unspoken concerns.

Janis believes an atmosphere of open inquiry can be created if the supervisor responsible for creating the cross-functional team displays an impartial attitude towards the problem the team was brought together to solve. His position is that leaders who avoid tainting the group process with preconceived notions enjoy a wider and more thoroughly considered range of potential solutions. One disadvantage of this approach that Janis points out is the potential for a hands-off approach resulting in a team forming a consensus in opposition to the leader's wishes.⁶⁰

Along this vein, Hackman advises that the best point for a leader to make corrections to a team's performance is when they are near the mid-point of their work.⁶¹ As to the timing and composition of these interventions, Hackman states:

Effective leaders are able to extract from the complexity of the performance situation those themes that are diagnostically significant (as opposed to those that are merely transient noise or that are of little consequence for team behavior). These themes, which summarize what is happening in the group or its context, are then compared with what the leader believes *should be* happening to identify interaction patterns or organizational features that are not what they could be. Only then is the leader in a position to craft interventions that have a reasonable chance of

⁵⁹ Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 209-219.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

⁶¹ Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 177, 181.

narrowing the gap between the real and the ideal. Natural leaders do this intuitively and seemingly without effort.⁶²

In their book *Mastering Virtual Teams* Deborah Duarte and Nancy Snyder identify four events that signal team leaders that their team is experiencing a midpoint transition:⁶³

1. Abandonment of much of the team's early work, including plans and agendas.
2. Task completion and a feeling of urgency to finish in time.
3. Renewed contact between the team and its organizational environment.
4. Specific new agreements on the direction the team should take.

Hackman describes two kinds of skills as critical to team leadership: diagnostic skills and execution skills.⁶⁴ He describes the diagnostic skills as those that allow the leader to understand what is happening and when and where the best point is for him or her to intervene. He lists seven execution skills that are necessary for effective team leadership; Envisioning, Inventive, Negotiation, Decision-Making, Teaching, Interpersonal, and Implementation Skills.⁶⁵ These are similar to Parker's "Dimensions of Successful Cross-Functional Team Leadership." Parker's list is a bit more descriptive. It contains dimensions that roughly parallel Hackman's skills, but adds "Being Comfortable with Lack of Clarity" and the superficially dubious "Keep it Real" as additional requirements for success.⁶⁶

Leaders of Army planners could use the technique of maintaining a neutral stance until they believe the work to be half-complete or until half the time allotted for the task has expired. By

⁶² Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 223-224.

⁶³ Deborah L. Duarte, Nancy Tennant Snyder. *Mastering Virtual Teams: Strategies, Tools, and Techniques that Succeed* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) 196.

⁶⁴ Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 223.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁶⁶ Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 65.

providing direction after their team is more familiar with various issues surrounding the problem, the leader is allowing team members to reach their own understanding of how these issues interact with each other. Limiting direct guidance encourages consideration of wider options.

Another technique Janis suggests to help avoid groupthink is the use of multiple, independent groups when addressing a particular problem. He suggests that using multiple groups would help prevent isolation from contrary evidence. A critical drawback to such an approach is what Janis terms a “let George do it” attitude that presumes that others will do or have already done whatever critical thinking might be required.⁶⁷ The use of multiple groups has potential advantages, but assumes that adequate personnel resources and time are available. Only organizations with adequate resources should attempt using multiple independent teams on individual problems.

Janis asserts that periodic discussions with trusted associates can alleviate groupthink by providing both independent criticism and potential solutions. Periodic discussions with trusted associates allow team members to gain a fuller understanding of the various points of view within their team.⁶⁸ Despite the danger of damage to group cohesion, periodic meetings with functional cell leaders have the potential to help integrating cells troubleshoot and gain agreement with their plans.

In his book on cross-functional teams, Parker states, “The department managers of the cross-functional team members are often in a make-or-break role in regard to the success of the team.”⁶⁹ His observation applies just as well in a military context. Functional cell leaders are typically more senior than their integrating cell counterparts are, and they often hold what amounts to veto authority over integrating cell initiatives. Parker makes it repeatedly clear that maintaining the

⁶⁷ Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 211-212.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁶⁹ Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 99.

interpersonal relationships between functional and cross-functional team leaders is critical to overall success.⁷⁰

Janis also proposes that teams should use outside experts to challenge the views of its members.⁷¹ Outside experts offer the opportunity for fresh perspectives from a respected source, but the team should consult them before they come to a consensus about an issue. Additionally, outside experts are only helpful if they actively participate in the process. For instance, an information brief given to subordinate planners is only useful if it encourages continued interaction between the briefers and the participants, and if it occurs before team members are committed to their individual positions.

Janis believed that “Some moderate, institutionalized form of allowing second thoughts to be freely expressed before the group commits itself might be remarkably effective for breaking down a false sense of unanimity and related illusions...”⁷² One final technique that Janis believed would fill this needs is what he called a “second chance meeting”. This meeting is generally informal in nature and gives every team member an opportunity to express even vague doubts. Changing the location of these meetings to social settings provides conditions that allow for less formal interaction, encouraging the participation of all members.

Limits of Groupthink Model and Research

The idea of groupthink is not without its critics. Several studies and papers oppose Janis’ theory, and many of the studies that support his theories are limited as to the scope of their inquiry. In general, there has been little systematic, empirical research into the phenomena of

⁷⁰ Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams*, 97-111.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 219.

groupthink.⁷³ For the sake of simplicity, most research is conducted using students and creating teams from scratch, as opposed to using real-world, previously existing teams. The example mentioned at the beginning of this paper is no exception. The use of students rather than real world practitioners as study subjects minimizes the ability of the researcher to understand the impact of mature relationships between individual team members. The use of newly established teams limits the ability of researchers to understand how team life-cycle issues relate to the groupthink phenomena.

Despite the difficulties involved in conducting disciplined, applicable research, the idea of groupthink persists. Clearly, there is something about group processes that occasionally leads decision-making bodies to disastrous results. Until a more complete, more conclusively researched theory is developed and tested the groupthink model will retain its position as the accepted paradigm.

Present Research about Army Diversity

In view of ideas of groupthink and past research into the distribution of Army officer personality types, I developed the hypothesis that:

1. The distribution of U.S. Army officer personality types in its population of students attending the Command and General Staff College in 2009, and by proxy, the distribution of officer personality types in integrating staff cells, would be similar to the distribution of U.S. Army officer personality types in the population of students attending the U.S. Army War College in 1997.
2. An individual officer's personality type would be a predictor of their commitment to the Military Decision Making Process.

⁷³ Ramon J. Aldag and Sally Riggs Fuller, "Beyond Fiasco: A Reappraisal of the Groupthink Phenomenon and a New Model of Group Decision Processes" in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 113, No. 3, (1993):539.

3. The distribution of personality types in the Army creates environments in integrating staff cells that are conducive to groupthink.

A short, optional, internet-based survey was presented to a convenience sampling of students at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College's Intermediate Level Education (ILE) and students at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). The survey's intent was to identify the personality types of its subjects, and then relate their commitment to the MDMP.

While the method of data collection was sound, and the rate of response was acceptable, the overall survey results were inadequate to draw conclusive results for all three hypotheses. The survey relied on self-reporting of individual personality type, and so it was possible for individuals to report an incorrect personality type by accident. Future research might diminish this potential for selection bias by including an MBTI assessment or by timing the release of the survey instrument to coincide with the MBTI training of each class.

The rate of response was acceptable but it limited the utility of the survey results. The Command and General Staff College's office of Quality Assurance presented the survey to a total of 232 students, of which, 44 responded. The low response rate (19%) might be attributable to survey overload, as students typically receive several surveys during the course of their studies at CGSC, but have no incentive, outside of professional courtesy, to complete them. Additionally, the structure of the survey precluded a large portion (24 of 44, or 54%) of respondents from consideration with regards to the second hypothesis (personality preference as a predictor of commitment to the MDMP), as it required respondents to recall and report their individual MBTI personality preferences.

ILE AND SAMS (2009)

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.56%
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
0.00%	5.56%	0.00%	11.11%
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
5.56%	0.00%	5.56%	27.78%

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE (1997)

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
32.93%	2.56%	0.57%	9.91%
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
3.99%	0.91%	0.74%	3.25%
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
3.13%	0.63%	1.03%	3.48%
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
24.33%	1.82%	0.97%	9.74%

Overall, there was a consensus among respondents (34 of 44, or 79%) in favor of the MDMP as an effective tool. Respondents also either agreed or agreed strongly to statements like ‘the MDMP works’ (75%), and “I will rely on the MDMP in the future (84%). Just one in four (25%) of respondents indicated a belief that the MDMP always produces the best solution to problems, and only six of 44 (14%) believe that the MDMP is the only technique they need.

In 1997, the four most prevalent personality types at the U.S. Army War College were; ISTJ (32.93%), ESTJ (24.33%), INTJ (9.91%), and ENTJ (9.74%). Together, these types represented almost 77% of the student body. In 2009, the four most prevalent personality types at the Command and General Staff College were; ENTJ (27.78%), INTJ (22.22%), ISTJ (16.67%) and ENTP (11.11%), and these types represented almost 78% of survey respondents. This represents a halving of ISTJs, a doubling of INTJs, and an almost tripling of ENTJ preferences.

Survey results support the first hypothesis. The distribution of U.S. Army officer personality types in its population of students attending the Command and General Staff College in 2009, and by proxy, the distribution of officer personality type in integrating staff cells, is similar to the distribution of U.S. Army officer personality types in the population of students attending the U.S. Army War College in 1997. However, the distribution of personality types in the 2009 survey was more heavily weighted towards the intuitive-thinking preference than in the War College study of 1997 by over 40 percent.

Because of the limited response to the survey, it is difficult to determine if there is a relationship between personality type and opinions about the MDMP. Respondent attitudes towards the MDMP were generally positive. However, the fact that less than half of those surveyed could or were willing to recall their MBTI type hinders attempts to determine correlation by type.

The limited survey response also hindered the proof of the third hypothesis, that the distribution of personality types in the Army creates environments in integrating staff cells that are conducive to groupthink. Aggregate results provide a general picture of the changing composition of integrating staff cells. However, the question of whether integrating cell are more prone to groupthink now than in 1997 remains.

Both the 1997 War College study and the current (2009) survey show a significant deviance from the national norm in the distribution of personality types towards the thinking-judging preferences. In 1997, 76.9 percent of officers surveyed showed a thinking-judging preference. In 2009, that number fell to 72.7 percent. Both of these sets of results present a marked difference from the 1997 normative sampling that showed just over 24 percent of the general U.S. population as having a thinking-judging preference.

The four corners of the chart that coincide to the thinking-judging preference are indicative of personality types referred to by the MBTI manual as “Logical Decision Makers.”⁷⁴ All four of these personality types extravert thinking as a preference in an attempt to bring order to their external environment. The goal of people with these personality types is “to create logical order in the external world by making the outer environment rational.”⁷⁵ The current data indicates that 72.73% of ILE and SAMS students have this type preference, and by inference, 72.73% of officers in integrating cells as well.

In addition to a thinking-judging preference, the 1997 War College study also showed a marked reliance in its subjects for sensing-thinking preference. Sixty-four percent of the students in the War College study reported a sensing-thinking preference, more than double the rate (30%) in the general population. The MBTI manual refers to those with a sensing-thinking preference as “Practical and Matter-of-Fact Types,” and notes that they “rely on Sensing for purposes of perception and on Thinking for purposes of Judgment”.⁷⁶ Sensing-thinking types rely on facts and objective analysis to make decisions in a linear and logical process.

Alternately, the 2009 survey participants showed an inclination for the intuitive-thinking, or NT, preference. The MBTI manual describes individuals with this preference as “Logical and Ingenious Types.” Intuitive-thinking types “prefer Intuition for purposes of perception, but they prefer the objectivity of Thinking for purposes of Judgment.”⁷⁷ Two-thirds (66.67%) of the officers in the 2009 survey reported a preference for a combination of intuition and thinking, as opposed to one-fourth (26.3%) in the 1997 War College study.

⁷⁴ Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, Hammer, *MBTI Manual*, 52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

Results of the current survey could be interpreted as representing a shift in the distribution of personality types in the Army's officer corps from a sensing-thinking preference to an intuitive-thinking preference. This would be a shift in the profession from what the MBTI manual describes as a desire for "nonpersonal analysis of concrete facts"⁷⁸ to a desire for "logical and ingenious"⁷⁹ problem solving.

It is noteworthy that while 84 percent of officers surveyed agree they will rely on the MDMP in the future, only 64 percent trust it. Only 41 percent questioned under the current survey believe that the MDMP always produces a viable course of action, and only 1 in 4 believe that the process always produces the best solution to a problem. The results of the survey beg the question; what other techniques are being developed, taught, and used?

As conducted, the survey was not adequate for the task intended. A more detailed study is necessary. Longitudinal studies to track the composition of year-group cohorts of officers throughout their careers might prove to be especially enlightening. While an in-depth study over an extended period of time would obviously be extremely difficult in both its initiation and management, the resulting data and its interpretation could have exceptional value. The U.S. Army is one of the few organizations in the world that could even attempt a work of this scope.

The options for further study are virtually unlimited. Study of potential correlation between MDMP acceptance and personality type remains particularly useful. Additionally, study of potential detrimental effect of the thinking-judging personality preference on group processes could be illuminating, as would more information about the relationship between the distribution of personality type in the U.S. Army officer corps and the distribution of personality type in the general population of the United States as a whole.

⁷⁸ Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, Hammer, *MBTI Manual*, 41.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

I recommend further study into the attitudes of senior Army leaders towards the MDMP and the relationship between individual attitudes and personality types, and to restart the current survey as a longitudinal work, Identification of trends over time would help isolate institutional influence on personality type. In addition, future studies related to this topic should include representation outside of resident ILE students. Surveys of satellite course students may reveal a personality type distribution that is either complimentary or opposed to resident course students.

Conclusion

Groupthink is real. Because of our cultural predispositions, Army officers are especially prone to its effects. Of the eight precursors to groupthink that Janis identified, the culture of the Army actively reinforces four, and is fertile ground for the development of at least three others. One way to combat the effects of groupthink is to include diverse personalities when undertaking group efforts. Towards this end, the Army seeks diversity in its cross-functional, integrating cell teams. Unfortunately, the pool of officers it draws from for these teams has been and continues to be remarkably homogenous.

Integrating cells are one area where the groupthink phenomena can have serious consequences. These elements of the staff have the responsibility to integrate, analyze and communicate the commander's intent both externally to subordinate units and internally among functional staff elements. The vulnerability of these cross-functional teams to groupthink is an Achilles' heel for the organizations they serve. Poor quality work from integrating cells can easily result in an unclear plan, and a muddled commander's intent.

The method that integrating cells use to analyze problems and develop solutions is the Military Decision-Making Process. Less than two-thirds of the officers who use this process trust it, and only one in four believe that it consistently produces the best solution to a given problem. In short, we are using a process that we do not really believe in to produce results that we think

are sub-optimal in pursuit of goals that we probably do not understand, let alone possess the ability to communicate.

Indications of a changing distribution of personality type may provide some insight into a way forward. The Sensing-Thinking preference personified by the “nonpersonal analysis of concrete facts”⁸⁰ may be giving way to the “logical and ingenious”⁸¹ problem solving of those with an Intuitive-Thinking preference. If this is the case, we should consider appropriate changes to the conceptual tools available to our decision makers. If future commanders are going to have a primarily Intuitive-Thinking preference, they will need tools that compliment “logical and ingenious”⁸² problem solving rather than those that support “nonpersonal analysis of concrete facts.”⁸³ If the preferences of military decision makers are changing, then our Military Decision-Making Process should change as well.

To be clear, the changes proposed are not proactive, but reactive, and they are not optional, but inevitable. They represent an organizational response to its own changing composition. If my data are correct, the changes they suggests are unavoidable. Margaret Wheatley provides a glimpse into the process of organizational change, “a clear sense of organizational (and personal) identity gives people the capacity to respond intelligently in the moment, and to choose actions that are congruent. Times of crisis always display the coherence or incoherence at the heart of our organization.”⁸⁴

Leaders influence an organization’s climate through their interactions with members of that organization. Through their actions, leaders provide examples to their subordinates and peers

⁸⁰ Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, Hammer, *MBTI Manual*, 40.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁴ Margaret Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2007), 119.

about how to act. Their interactions model behavior for others to emulate. This holds true whether the leader's choices are positive, negative or neutral. Positive or negative, the example of the superior represents his or her expectations for the subordinate. Yukl describes this process, "effective leaders engage members and other stakeholders in a dialogue to determine what types of changes are necessary and morally right for the organization. The process may (or may not) result in the emergence of a new set of shared beliefs and values."⁸⁵ The process is cyclic, and continuous. The emergence of new tools for decision makers is a natural evolution of that process.

Without confirming the results of the current survey, conjecture regarding the MDMP is essentially futile. Radical changes are often radically wrong. The MDMP has a reputation as a reliable process, and it has all the cultural advantages that come with any current paradigm. I am not foolish enough to recommend that the Army scrap a process that has worked for over thirty years. I do suggest that it is time to let the MDMP evolve into something more useful in the current environment. The evidence at hand indicates the topic merits further consideration.

Groupthink, on the other hand, is a real and dangerous phenomenon that exists independently of technique. With or without the MDMP, groupthink is seductive, insidious, and dangerous. Techniques exist with the potential to diminish or eliminate groupthink. The wise leader will remain vigilant against the indicators of groupthink, and with an understanding of the personalities involved, will be ready with appropriate measures to mitigate its effects.

⁸⁵ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 423.

APPENDIX

The following is a listing of the questions that appeared in the survey instrument, along with the responses obtained by count and percent. The intent of the initial questions was to identify soldiers in the sample by year group and by MBTI type. The intent of the MDMP questions was to identify the level of acceptance of the MDMP by the sample population.

		Count	Percent	
What is your year group?				
	90	3	7.50	
	92	1	2.50	
	93	4	10.00	
	94	5	12.50	
	95	14	35.00	
	96	7	17.50	
	97	3	7.50	
	98	3	7.50	
		Total	40	100.00 %
		Responses		
Do you remember your MBTI personality type?				
	Yes	18	42.86	
	No	24	57.14	
		Total	42	100.00 %
		Responses		
What is your MBTI personality type?				
	ISTJ	3	16.67	
	ESTJ	1	5.56	
	ESFP	1	5.56	
	ENTJ	5	27.78	
	INTJ	4	22.22	
	ENTP	2	11.11	
	INTP	1	5.56	
	ENFJ	1	5.56	
		Total	18	100.00 %
		Responses		

What is your basic branch?

Infantry (11).	12	28.57	
Armor (19).	7	16.67	
Field Artillery (13).	3	7.14	
Air Defense Artillery (14).	1	2.38	
Aviation (15).	3	7.14	
Special Forces (18).	1	2.38	
Corps of Engineers (21).	5	11.90	
Military Police Corps (31)	1	2.38	
Civil Affairs (38).	1	2.38	
Signal Corps (25).	1	2.38	
Military Intelligence Corps (35).	3	7.14	
Transportation Corps (88).	1	2.38	
Quartermaster Corps (92).	1	2.38	
Logistics Corps (90).	2	4.76	
	42	100.00	%

Total Responses

If forced to change branches, which new branch would you choose?

Infantry (11).	12	31.58	
Armor (19).	4	10.53	
Field Artillery (13).	1	2.63	
Aviation (15).	1	2.63	
Special Forces (18).	5	13.16	
Military Police Corps (31)	1	2.63	
Psychological Operations (37).	3	7.89	
Civil Affairs (38).	1	2.63	
Military Intelligence Corps (35).	2	5.26	
Logistics Corps (90).	2	5.26	
Medical Corps (60-62).	1	2.63	
Army Medical Specialists (65).	2	5.26	
Army Nurse corps (66).	1	2.63	
Medical Service Corps (67, 68).	2	5.26	
	38	100.00	%

Total Responses

The MDMP is an effective tool for determining solutions to operational problems.

Agree Strongly	14	31.82	
Agree	20	45.45	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	15.91	
Disagree	1	2.27	
Disagree Strongly	2	4.55	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

My input is an important part of the MDMP process.

Agree Strongly	19	44.19	
Agree	23	53.49	
Disagree	1	2.33	
Total Responses	43	100.00	%

The MDMP works.

Agree Strongly	15	34.88	
Agree	18	41.86	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8	18.60	
Disagree	1	2.33	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.33	
Total Responses	43	100.00	%

In my experience, the MDMP leads staffs to optimal solutions.

Agree Strongly	4	9.09	
Agree	17	38.64	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	25.00	
Disagree	10	22.73	
Disagree Strongly	2	4.55	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

The MDMP is fair to all participants.

Agree Strongly	4	9.09	
Agree	12	27.27	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	17	38.64	
Disagree	10	22.73	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.27	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

The MDMP is an effective tool.

Agree Strongly	11	25.58	
Agree	23	53.49	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	11.63	
Disagree	3	6.98	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.33	
Total Responses	43	100.00	%

The MDMP always produces the best solution to a problem.

Agree Strongly	2	4.55	
Agree	9	20.45	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10	22.73	
Disagree	17	38.64	
Disagree Strongly	6	13.64	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

The MDMP considers input from my area of expertise.

Agree Strongly	14	32.56	
Agree	17	39.53	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8	18.60	
Disagree	2	4.65	
Disagree Strongly	2	4.65	
Total Responses	43	100.00	%

I will rely on the MDMP in the future.

Agree Strongly	16	36.36	
Agree	21	47.73	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	9.09	
Disagree	2	4.55	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.27	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

I trust the MDMP.

Agree Strongly	13	29.55	
Agree	15	34.09	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	25.00	
Disagree	4	9.09	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.27	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

When participating in the MDMP, I feel that my input is relevant.

Agree Strongly	12	27.27	
Agree	24	54.55	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	9.09	
Disagree	3	6.82	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.27	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

When participating in the MDMP, I feel that my input is welcome.

Agree Strongly	13	29.55	
Agree	19	43.18	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	15.91	
Disagree	4	9.09	
Disagree Strongly	1	2.27	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

The MDMP always produces a viable course of action.

Agree Strongly	6	13.64	
Agree	12	27.27	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	29.55	
Disagree	9	20.45	
Disagree Strongly	4	9.09	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

The MDMP is the only technique I need.

Agree Strongly	3	6.82	
Agree	3	6.82	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	9.09	
Disagree	18	40.91	
Disagree Strongly	16	36.36	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

The MDMP is the best tool available.

Agree Strongly	3	6.82	
Agree	13	29.55	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	17	38.64	
Disagree	4	9.09	
Disagree Strongly	7	15.91	
Total Responses	44	100.00	%

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