

Ethics education in the military

Fostering reflective practice and moral competence

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

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*Fostering reflective practice
and moral competence*

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

In 2006 a young captain is deployed to the Darfur region of northwestern Sudan for the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Within this mandate, the captain and four of his colleagues are appointed to escort six American journalists to visit a number of small villages in the Darfur region. His orders are to be back at the military base before six p.m. In the late afternoon, after driving through several villages that have been completely destroyed, the group stops at a village. The civilians speak to the journalists about mass executions, rape, and other atrocities conducted by a militia group referred to as the Janjaweed. On the way back to the military base, the captain spots a group of militia who seem to be heading towards this village. What is he supposed to do? What does his mandate say? What is the right action from a moral perspective? Leave the villagers and continue to escort the journalist back to the safety of the military base? Or risk the lives of the journalists, his own life as well as the lives of his colleagues, and return to the village in the hope of averting a slaughter? What would you do if you were in his shoes?

In 2003 the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) as well as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel groups began fighting the government of Sudan, which they accused of oppressing Darfur's non-Arab population. While the Sudanese government signed the Darfur Peace Agreement in early 2006, July and August 2006 saw renewed fighting (Flint & de Waal 2005). An African Union (AU) peacekeeping force operated primarily in the country's western region of Darfur with the aim of performing peacekeeping operations related to the Darfur conflict.

The mandate of AMIS included: monitoring, investigating and reporting ceasefire violations as well as to 'protect civilians whom it encounters under imminent threat and in the immediate vicinity, within resources and capability' (African Union 2004: paras 65, 67). The mandate and the rules of engagement do not describe what civilian protection means as a mission task (Badescu & Bergholm 2009). A seemingly problematic mandate due to several elements, including the fact that the parties did not respect the ceasefire as well as due to a mismatch between resources and tasks (Ekengard 2008).

While this example is taken from the movie *Attack on Darfur* (Boll & Clarke 2009), it also represents a real life example that international military personnel experienced during their deployment in Sudan. It is also an example that is easily recognized by Dutch military personnel who have worked with similar mandates in equally challenging situations.

In this example the captain is faced with a complex moral dilemma. The officer is responsible for the safety of both his team (including the journalists) and for villagers, yet it seems that he cannot guarantee both at the same time. In Darfur there have been cases of military personnel returning and successfully protecting villagers. However, there have also been numerous attacks on AMIS by the Janjaweed. Hampered by a lack of intelligence and resources, the captain is left with a difficult choice. Ultimately, to be accountable (to others

as well as himself), the officer must be able to explain why he prioritized certain values at the expense of others.

This is an example of the many difficult moral dilemmas that military personnel face during military missions. During missions soldiers can be faced with conflicting norms and values, situated on the individual, organizational, political level, or on all these levels at the same time. In operational environments, the stakes are high. Military personnel are often confronted with cultural differences and a necessity to act. Interpretations of situations, subsequent reactions and actions may have far-reaching consequences (Kramer 2007; de Graaff 2017). In moral dilemmas values collide. There are conflicting beliefs about, for instance, soldier-hood, mission goals and right or wrong (cf. van Baarle et al. 2015). It is in the nature of these moral dilemmas that they cannot always be dealt with on the basis of regular routines or rules (cf. Thompson & Jetly 2014). At the same time actions may have far reaching consequences, since the stakes are high.

Within the military organization itself military personnel may also face difficult moral dilemmas during peacetime. How to react when your commanding officer consciously makes jokes that you deem inappropriate? How to act when one witnesses a colleague committing actions that go against the code of conduct? One can imagine that such situations pose a dilemma for people in many different organizations. However, in a hierarchical organization, in which loyalty is one of the key values, it may be particularly difficult to deal with such situations. Moral dilemmas during peacetime may include situations of bullying, humiliating, intimidation, discrimination, alcohol or drug abuse, theft or corruption and sexual harassment. The moral dilemmas and moral questions that follow from these situations may differ (and present different consequences), but they can be just as complex as dilemmas faced during military operations.

Military ethics education aims at fostering the ability to recognize the moral dimension of situations, to analyze a moral dilemma (or question) and justify a choice, and to communicate and act on this judgment. As such, it prepares military personnel to deal with the complex moral dilemmas and moral questions they face in daily practice, both during military missions and during peacetime.

In this introductory chapter, we will first present a short background of ethics training courses in a military context and different strategies to these ethics training courses. Next, we present the central research question and sub-questions. This is followed by a description of the research context, namely ethics education in the Netherlands armed forces and the train-the-trainer course on military ethics. As one of the researchers (Eva van Baarle) has more than ten years' experience delivering these courses, the case provides an opportunity to reflect and learn from experiences acquired delivering these courses. In the final part of this introduction we present the methodology and conclude with an overview of the chapters.

The importance of ethics training courses in a military context

There is a growing awareness of the need to address ethics during training in the armed forces. Today, it is common for most (Western) armed forces to pay attention to this topic in education and training programs. In fact, ethics is regarded as foundational to the military profession:

It sets the environment of trust between a nation's military, the government and the people it serves that allows military members to serve as true professionals. When this trust fails, the military is reduced to bureaucratic status or worse: an institution to be feared and a treat to civilian government (Cook 2015, p. 104).

Ethics education includes empowering military personnel to say 'no' when it is legally and/or ethically appropriate (Robinson 2008; Coleman 2013). Military personnel of all ranks are morally and legally responsible for their actions in warfare and during peacetime. Therefore, military ethics scholars argue that ethics in the armed forces should be of service to all professionals to enable them to carry out their tasks 'as honorably and correctly as possible' (Cook & Syse 2010, p. 119). Military tasks are often performed in dynamically complex environments in which there is a necessity to act (Kramer, 2007). This involves situations in which the rules and laws are 'insufficiently clear, silent or even contradictory' (van Baarda & Verweij 2006, p. 1). Dealing with this complexity requires autonomous critical thinking (Kramer 2007). The military organization has a (moral) responsibility to prepare military personnel thoroughly for a wide range of situations, and to consider the ethical aspects that are in play (Wakin 2000; van Baarda & Verweij 2006; Robinson, De Lee, & Carrick 2008; Lucas Jr 2015).

Different strategies to military ethics training courses

Military institutions act upon their responsibility to prepare military personnel for dealing with moral questions and dilemmas by providing various forms of ethics training and education courses, each with different explicit or implicit theoretical underpinnings.

In this thesis we distinguish between compliance strategies and virtue strategies (Paine 1994, 1996) to ethics education in organizations. In other words, we distinguish between courses focusing on a set of moral rules (codes of conduct) and interdictions on the one hand, and courses that do not attempt to provide universal rules or principles for ethical decision-making (Robinson 2007; Moore 2005) but rather try to stimulate reflection, ethical decision-making and accountability (Birden et al. 2013; Knights et al. 2008; Mueller 2015). The latter are referred to as 'learning-based' approaches.

Compliance strategies can be viewed as concretely normative. There is a given set of moral rules and interdictions, which one has to comply with. Conversely virtue strategies

are normative in a more general sense and more process-oriented. They are focused on developing virtues and actively reflecting on practices and moral dilemmas.

While virtue ethics as a single category of ethics theory can be viewed as an oversimplification (Nussbaum 1999), compared to compliance strategies focused on compliance to duties and obligations it plays a critical role highlighting the importance of deliberation, reflection and dialogue with the aim of achieving ethical decision-making and accountability. It is important to stress that these aims involve neither a break with Kantian ethics nor a rejection of guidance or rules. Rules and guidance are valuable in any agents' deliberation. We often cannot assess particular circumstances well enough, on account of time or because of insufficient information. To depart from well-thought-through rules we need to be very sure we are not 'engaging in special pleading' (Nussbaum 1999, p. 547).

In his study on ethics education in a military context, Paul Robinson (et al.) finds that in most countries military ethics programs 'more or less follow the principle of virtue ethics' (Robinson 2008, p. 4). It is shown that within military organizations, as within many organizational contexts, a shift from a compliance-based (or rule-oriented) culture towards a virtue approach took place (Robinson 2008; Olsthoorn 2010; Verhezen 2010). What does this virtue approach look like in practice? It appears that a certain methodological and terminological confusion persists regarding this virtue ethics approach (Robinson 2008). Most military institutions produce lists of prime military virtues, such as for instance, 'integrity, moral courage, duty and 'a can do mentality' (Robinson 2008, p. 7), which are regarded as desirable characteristics of military personnel. Some of these pre-described virtues can be at odds with a virtue ethics approach to moral issues. For instance, a 'can do mentality' focusses on the willingness to take on the challenges that are set to be implemented without hesitation, doubt or discussion (Soeters 2016).

Moreover, strategy to dislodge these virtues in personnel can be interpreted as heading in the direction of compliance strategies. For instance, in the British armed forces:

'ethics are caught not taught; the sheer force of the institution, via its traditions and examples of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, shapes soldiers in the desired directions through unseen, but nonetheless powerful processes' (Robinson 2008, p. 9).

It is crucial that military personnel understand what is expected of them as professionals, and which norms they have to understand. The question remains as to the extent to which this strategy fosters the ability of individuals to engage in autonomous, critical thinking, to recognize, and to actively reflect on practices and moral dilemmas. The ability to recognize ethical aspects worthy of consideration in the situation before us (referred to as 'ethical sensitivity') may seem obvious, but rarely do moral issues come 'with waving red flags that say, 'Hey, I'm an ethical issue, think about me in moral terms' (Treviño & Brown 2004, p. 70).

The ability to recognize ethical aspects in situations is particularly important in a military environment where there is much reliance on Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), and a

strong pressure toward conformity. As Martin Cook highlights this stating ‘Ethical sensitivity may be an aspect of moral development we should perhaps reflect on more deeply’ (Cook 2013).

In most armed forces, the attitude with regard to ethics training strategies for officers and non-commissioned officers is different. While officers are often encouraged to develop virtues and to engage in autonomous, critical thinking, to recognize, and to actively reflect on practices and moral dilemmas, lower-ranking personnel are mainly trained to obey the institutional rules and legitimate orders of their superiors (Wolfendale 2008). This bifurcation may be regarded as problematic. Military personnel of all ranks are morally and legally responsible for their actions in warfare and in the institutional setting. In combat situations it is often the ‘strategic corporal’ – a noncommissioned officer – who is faced with the most immediate and pressing ethical issues (Krulak 1999; Whetham 2010). Non-commissioned officers have to find the courage to uphold the laws of war when external pressures of time and threat might tempt them to break these laws. As such, one may question the difference regarding the strategy to ethics education for senior and less senior military personnel (Wolfendale 2008).

Moral competence

In this thesis we use a specific notion of moral competence that includes six different elements, which are assumed to be relevant in developing virtues and reflecting on moral questions and dilemmas. Relying upon literature on fostering moral competence in organizations (Karssing 2000; Sherblom 2012; Verweij 2005), and on our experience of developing ethics education in the Netherlands armed forces, we use the term moral competence that includes the following six elements:

1. The awareness of one’s own personal values and the values of others;
2. The recognition of the moral dimension of a situation and identify which values are at stake or are at risk of violation;
3. The ability to adequately judge a moral question or dilemma;
4. The ability to communicate this judgment;
5. The willingness and ability to act in accordance with this judgment in a morally responsible manner;
6. The willingness and ability to be accountable to yourself and to others.

Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to understand how moral competence in a military organization can be further reinforced by means of ethics education in order to assist military personnel in dealing with the complex moral dilemmas they face in their daily practice. We aim to continuously learn from experiences with a train-the-trainer course on military ethics and improve ethics training courses in a military context. We do so by reflecting on relevant theoretical foundations of ethics education, by reflecting on challenges in ethics education in a military context, by putting forward ideas on how these challenges with regard to ethics education can be met, and finally by exploring the effects of ethics training and identifying several aspects that remain challenging. The following question encapsulates the focus of this dissertation:

How to foster moral competence by means of a train-the-trainer course on military ethics?

The subsequent sub-questions will be examined:

- a. **What are relevant foundations for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence?**
 - What are potential theoretical starting points for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence? (*Chapter 2*)
 - What is the relevance of Foucauldian ‘art-of-living’ for ethics education? (*Chapter 3*)
- b. **What are challenges in fostering moral competence by means of ethics training in a military context, and how can these challenges be met?**
 - What are challenges in dealing with concrete moral dilemmas in a military context? (*Chapter 4*)
 - What aspects of military culture may influence ethics education in a military context? (*Chapter 5*)
 - What is the relevance of safety during ethics training and how can an atmosphere of safety be fostered during ethics education? (*Chapter 6*)
- c. **What are perceived outcomes of the train-the-trainer course?**
 - How do participants perceive the development of their moral competence? (*Chapter 7*)
 - How do participants perceive the impact of the training on their own training practice? (*Chapter 7*)

Research context

The research presented in this dissertation focusses on ethics education in the Netherlands armed forces. The shift towards attention for ‘moral competence,’ the ‘thinking soldier’ and ‘moral professionalism’ is present in the armed forces of the Netherlands (e.g. de Graaff & van den Berg 2010). Likewise, ethics training and education in the Netherlands armed forces is aimed at contributing to the ‘moral competence’ of individual military personnel (van Baarda & Verweij 2006; Olsthoorn 2008).

Within the Dutch armed forces, military ethics courses are provided to military personnel at different levels. For instance, officers trained at the Netherlands Defense Academy can opt for a short one year curriculum or for a four-year Bachelor’s degree program containing both military training and academic training. In doing so they can obtain a degree in Management, War Studies or Military Systems and Technology. All students attend several courses in military ethics and leadership. Several years later, during officer-career programs, officers reflect on their experiences and their own moral competence, and they formulate personal learning objectives in this respect.

A number of non-commissioned officers and officers who are trainers or instructors in military ethics, or will be in the near future, receive training aimed at fostering their moral competence. At the same time they are trained to teach or train military ethics themselves. In the studies presented in this dissertation we focus on this train-the-trainer course on military ethics.

The train-the-trainer course on military ethics

The train-the-trainer course on military ethics is organized four times per year by the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defense Academy. It was launched in 2006 by means of a five-day pilot. Since then, it has developed into a nine-day course consisting of three non-consecutive blocks of three days that provide participants the opportunity to put their newly acquired theory and tools into practice in between the blocks. This is subsequently reflected on during the course.

The course participants are mainly non-commissioned officers, who already teach military ethics to military personnel or plan to do so in the near future. In some courses officers participate as well. The participants work within the four Dutch armed forces Services (i.e. the Army; the Navy; the Air Force and the Military Police Corps).

The training can be characterized as an in-company training: the two trainers and participants of each group work within the Netherlands armed forces. Initially, Jolanda Bosch and Eva van Baarle (both civilian employees working for the Netherlands Defense Academy) were the trainers of this course. In order to guarantee four training courses a year, at present, there are 17 trainers (both civilian and military personnel) who, on a voluntary

base, act as trainers during this course. All trainers are selected from the participants of the course, potential trainers are identified and recommended by at least two trainers from the ‘trainers group.’

For the majority of the participants this course has become a formal requirement for teaching military ethics at their respective military education establishments within the Netherlands armed forces. Generally, more than half of the group has been asked by their superiors to attend the course. The other participants apply for the course themselves. Participants who successfully complete the course receive a certificate.

The aim of the course is to train participants to become ethics trainers in their own military work environment and at the same time foster their own moral competence. We assume that everyone who is engaged in military ethics education is an example to others. As such, trainers who have experienced working through the various elements of moral competence themselves will become better ethics trainers.

Each group consists of between 11 and 16 participants. Before the start of the training, individual intake interviews are held with all participants. Participants are invited to have an open attitude during the training and to put forward personal moral dilemmas in order to subsequently reflect on those dilemmas. This creates a learning environment that offers an opportunity to link theory, one’s own actions in the group, day-to-day practice and reflection on all of these elements.

The training comprises several modules including: a general introduction to ethics and several ethics theories (utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics); ethics and the law of armed conflict; integrity; Socratic dialogue; dilemma training; ethics and emotions; power and ethics; moral disengagement; and sexuality in the organization.

Trainers take as didactical methods the four-factor model from Theme Centered Interaction (TCI) (Cohn 1976; Jaques & Salmon 2007; Stollberg 2008; van de Braak 2011). Trainers seek to create a dynamic balance among four factors that arise in groups in learning situations: the task, the course objective or theory which is presented (the IT), the group (the WE), the individual (the I), and the context (the CONTEXT). In this approach, participants connect theory with their own point of view and their experiences in practice (Cohn, 1976; Schneider-Landolf, Spielmann & Zitterbarth 2009).

Methodology

In this thesis we use a qualitative research approach to explore how moral competence can be fostered during ethics education. This qualitative approach allows us to evaluate experiences and learning processes as well as to develop and improve the theory and practice of ethics training. We draw on the case study method (Yin 2003), in which theoretical notions are applied and analyzed in practice.

Within this case study, in each chapter, we use different sources of data: semi-structured interviews, participant observation (detailed notes by trainers) and documents (for instance documents including guidelines and codes of conduct). Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection used in every chapter.

Table 1: Chapter focus, and data collection

Chapter focus	Data collection
2. Strengthening moral competence; a train the trainer course on military ethics	Detailed notes
3. The relevance of Foucauldian 'art-of-living' for ethics education in a military context; theory and practice	Detailed notes
4. Dancing Boys and the Moral Dilemmas of Military Missions; The Practice of Bacha Bazi in Afghanistan	Semi-structured, in-depth interviews, documents
3. Moral dilemmas in a military context. A case study of a train the trainer course on military ethics.	Detailed notes and thick descriptions
4. Safety dynamics during ethics training. A case study on safety within a military ethics train-the-trainer course	Semi-structured in-depth interviews, detailed notes, thick descriptions
7. What sticks? The evaluation of a train-the-trainer course on military ethics and its perceived outcomes	Semi-structured, in-depth interviews

As the different research strategies are separately discussed in-depth within each chapter, in this section we focus on the selection of the case study and on the trustworthiness of the research.

Case selection

The train-the-trainer course on military ethics was selected as a case for this research. Within this course trainers work with a virtue approach aimed at fostering moral competence. This course is rather unique as it mainly aims at fostering moral competence of non-commissioned officers who are themselves trainers or instructors in military ethics or will be in the near future. As stated above, international comparative research shows that most ethics training courses that empower personnel to develop virtues and engage in autonomous, critical thinking, to recognize, and to actively reflect on practices and moral dilemmas aims at officers rather than at non-commissioned officers (Robinson et al. 2008). This case provided us with the opportunity to explore the relevance of a virtue strategy, by means of evaluative research, for less senior military personnel.

Within the train-the-trainer course we are able to experiment with different methods and strategies, over a longer period of time. As stated above, one of the researchers (Eva van Baarle) is also a trainer in this course. As two trainers are present throughout the course, this created opportunities for both trainers to write down experiences and responses.

Trustworthiness

In contrast to research in which the researcher is assumed to be an objective or detached outsider to the study context, in this study, one of the researchers is part of the practice that is studied, and as such an insider. Following Bartunek and Louis (1996, p.62), the insider and outsiders (i.e. Laura Hartman, Ineke van de Braak, Bert Molewijk and Guy Widdershoven) in this study keep each other honest - or at least more conscious than a single party working alone may easily achieve.' Given the double function of one of the researchers - being a developer, trainer and researcher - bias is a risk. This double role requires transparency and trustworthiness.

The goal of this interpretive qualitative research is not to aim for generalizability, but to seek depth, detail, and the perspective of experiences with regard to the development of moral competence of military personnel during ethics education. Lincoln and Guba argue that interpretive research is based on a different set of ontological and epistemological assumptions than positivist research. The traditional notions of validity and reliability do not apply in the same fashion. They provide an alternative notion by which to judge the rigor of interpretative qualitative research: trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Trustworthiness in this research is ensured by paying attention to four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Erlandson et al. 1993). These quality criteria entail the following questions: are our results believable or truthful?; Are they consistent over time?; Are the results applicable to similar settings?; And: did we use different data sources to produce greater depth and understanding?

Several steps were taken to guarantee that these criteria were met: 1) the researcher has a long-term involvement in this particular ethics training course and had first-hand observations 3) multiple sources of data were used (semi-structured interviews, participant observation and documents) 4) detailed first-order thick descriptions of the setting are provided so that others can judge the plausibility of the findings and their applicability to other settings 5) member checks and 6) peer-debriefing sessions were regularly organized with 'outsider' researchers, to uncover taken for granted biases, perspectives and assumptions on the researcher's part (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Outline of dissertation

In **Chapter 2** three theoretical foundations of the train-the-trainer course on military ethics are introduced. To enable participants to work on their moral competence, three basic requirements are identified for ethics education: virtue ethics; the Socratic attitude; and creating a process of 'living learning'.

In **Chapter 3** we rethink the foundations mentioned in chapter two. Based on insights from this study and our experiences with the train-the-trainer course over the past years: How

can ethical decision making in organization be further reinforced? This chapter explores the relevance of Michel Foucault's ideas on 'art-of-living' for ethics education in organizations. First, we present a theoretical analysis of 'art-of-living' in the work of Foucault as well as in the work of two philosophers who greatly influenced his work, Friedrich Nietzsche and Pierre Hadot. Next, we illustrate how 'art-of-living' can be applied in ethics education. In order to examine some of the benefits and challenges of applying the 'art-of-living' in the practice of ethics education, we discuss an example of how the 'art-of-living' has been used in the train-the-trainer course on military ethics. We suggest that 'art-of-living' may be an appropriate theoretical foundation for a virtue strategy to ethics education and training. Foucauldian 'art-of-living' may foster awareness of power dynamics that are in play when military personnel face moral dilemmas. We argue that this can be regarded as a precondition for ethical decision making.

Chapter 4 examines the moral dimension of the military context by reflecting on a specific moral dilemma faced by military personnel deployed to Afghanistan. This dilemma is also often mentioned by participants during the train-the-trainer course, and is known as the Afghan 'dancing boys' phenomenon. The practice of dancing boys often entails patronage and sexual relations between young boys and privileged, powerful men. This chapter illustrates that the moral dimensions (and the related values) of situations are not always recognized, which seems to make it even more difficult for soldiers to come to a conscious choice on how to act. It appears that military personnel often avoid taking action because they do not want to offend their Afghan colleagues or local leaders, who are the main perpetrators of sexual acts against the 'dancing boys.' The non-recognition of bacha bazi as a moral issue or the normalization of bacha bazi through the blurring of moral standards or keeping a moral distance could be seen as a way of coping with the bacha bazi. However, the danger of moral blindness lurks.

In **Chapter 5**, several challenges and tensions are identified that are at play during ethics education in a military context. Tensions between military and personal values, and challenges related to fostering moral competence. These tensions and challenges are explored by elaborating on various aspects of the military organization during the training (i.e. being a soldier, group bonding, uniformity, hierarchy, lack of privacy and masculinity). Furthermore, it is demonstrated how moral competence can be addressed and fostered during the training by introducing specific interventions.

Chapter 6 deals with a specific challenge in fostering moral competence during ethics training courses, namely safety dynamics during ethics training. There is considerable support for the idea that an atmosphere of safety and trust can mitigate the interpersonal risks inherent in learning. Safety and trust take time to build in groups, but may be destroyed in an instant. In order to assess these dynamics, we introduce a four factor analysis model. Finally, we discuss a number of practical implications with regard to how trainers can foster safety during ethics training courses.

Chapter 7 focusses on the question of how participating in ethics training courses assist military personnel in dealing with the complex moral dilemmas they face in their daily practice. Through qualitative inductive analysis, it is shown how participants evaluate the training, how they view the development of their moral competence, and how they see the impact of the training on their own training practice. We show what sticks and what works well during ethics training. Moreover, we identify several aspects that remain challenges, such as diversity and safety within groups.

The discussion chapter, **Chapter 8**, brings together the insights of the earlier chapters. Thereafter the central research question and its sub-questions are answered. We reflect upon the findings and discuss the question of whether training soldiers to be reflective soldiers, to engage in autonomous, critical thinking and to foster active reflection on practices and moral dilemmas is feasible in a military context. How exactly does this attitude relate to the military's 'can do' mentality?

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Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Strengthening moral competence: a ‘train the trainer’ course on military ethics

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Abstract

If one of the most important aims of education on military ethics is to strengthen moral competence, we argue that it is important to base ethics education on virtue ethics, the Socratic attitude and the process of 'living learning'. This article illustrates this position by means of the example of a 'train the trainer' course on military ethics for Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), which is developed at the Netherlands Defence Academy, and uses a number of examples both from its structure and from experiences from its actual use.

Keywords: Military ethics, moral competence, virtue ethics, Socratic attitude, 'living learning'

Introduction

Military personnel often encounter moral dilemmas during deployments and in their work environment at home. Moral dilemmas are situations where conflicts arise between two or more values. Being able to deal with moral dilemmas requires moral competence. If one of the major objectives of ethics education is to strengthen moral competence, that will have methodological consequences in practice. Little has been published in this area until now. In this article, we want to explicitly identify the consequences. We shall do that on the basis of three premises: virtue ethics, the Socratic attitude, and the process of 'living learning'. That will then be elaborated with the help of a case study, a 'train the trainer' course in military ethics,¹ which has been developed for NCOs who are already teaching ethics themselves. We shall begin by defining the concept of moral competence and by showing why it is important for dealing with moral dilemmas.

Moral competence

Moral competence can be defined as:

... the ability and willingness to carry out tasks adequately and carefully, with due regard for all of the affected interests, based on a reasonable analysis of the relevant facts. A competence is an interplay of attitude, knowledge and skills. (Karssing 2000: 39)

¹ The 'train the trainer' course was developed at the direction of the State Secretary for Defence (Quadrennial Defence Review 2000) and designed by the Military Behavioural Sciences and Philosophy (MGF) Section of the Faculty of Military Sciences (FMW) and the Netherlands Institute for Military Ethics (NIME) of the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA). The group that developed this course comprises Prof. Dr D. E. M. Verweij, Dr Th. A. van Baarda, Lt Col F. G. W. P. Ramakers (drs.), J. Bosch (drs.) and E.M. Wortel (drs.).

Moral competence refers to situations in which people know what is expected of them *and* in which they (are willing to) act accordingly. Moral competence is therefore not restricted to the knowledge domain. The very idea of 'willingness to act' shows that it concerns a particular attitude. An important distinction to be made here is that between schooling and education. Schooling (in German: *ausbildung*; in Dutch: *opleiden*) refers to the teaching and learning of cognitive and practical knowledge, while the central focus of education (in German: *Bildung*; in Dutch: *vorming*) is the mastery and internalization of that knowledge (van Baarda & Verweij 2006: 11). As noted by van Baarda and Verweij, the primary concern of education is not only at the cognitive level, but also at the affective level (i.e., concerning morally relevant feelings) and the voluntary level – the level of the will.

American philosopher Shannon French emphasizes that what she refers to as 'the warrior's code' entails more than schooling. She describes the warriors' code as a code of honour: a shield that guards our warriors' humanity (French 2003: 242). Referring to Osiel (1999) she argues that:

... the best way to ensure that a young... Marine will not commit a war crime even if given (illegal) orders to do so by a superior officer is not to drill the said Marine on the provisions of International War and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), but rather to help him internalize an appropriate warriors' code that will inspire him to recognize and reject a criminal direction from his officer. (French 2003: 14)

The important feature is not a list of rules, but the internalization of specific rules, a culture and tradition which combine to determine what it means to be a true soldier. That code helps military personnel both during deployments and when they are back home (ibid.: 243). When those values are internalized, they become part of a person's identity and form their character. Many of these ideas seem to be rooted in virtue ethics, which we shall be examining in more detail below.

Edgar Karssing (2000: 39) breaks moral competence down into five elements, slightly adapted by Verweij (2005: 5). It is necessary to be aware of the fact that Karssing identifies this as a pragmatic approach (2000: 39), which basically deals with applied ethics. There is also a more fundamental ethics at stake: Being able to identify the moral dimension of a situation and thereby identifying the values at risk assumes that people are already aware of their personal values. That does not always appear to be the case, however. Verweij defines this situation as 'moral blindness' (2005: 5). To underscore the importance of becoming aware of one's personal values, we have chosen to make that element explicit. Moral competence can be made specific by breaking it down into six elements: (1) becoming aware of one's personal value and the values of the military organization; (2) being able to identify the moral dimension of a situation and the values that are at risk of infringement or violation; (3) being able to make a judgement concerning a moral question or dilemma; (4) being able to communicate that judgement; (5) being willing and able to act on the basis of that judgement

in a morally responsible way; (6) being willing and able to account for that judgement and action to oneself and others.

The Importance of moral competence in moral dilemmas

Military personnel are often confronted with moral dilemmas. The essence of a moral dilemma is the conflict between different values and the fact that a choice must be made between them. As we mentioned above, this assumes that one is aware of one's personal moral values and the values which are important to the military organization. This can be stimulated through fundamental moral education which focuses on character building.

In the current climate of ethics education in the Netherlands Defence Academy, the default position is to automatically place dilemmas in a deployment situation. It is equally possible, however, for moral dilemmas to arise on the work floor in the Netherlands.

Regardless of how complicated dilemmas may be, a choice ultimately has to be made. It is therefore understandable that ethics education often favours a solution-oriented approach, which can be illustrated by instructors providing participants with decision-making models. These models, such as the 'Ethical Awareness Model', ask a number of questions² which enable the person who has to make a decision to consider all aspects and to be better able to arrive at the best decision. While there is nothing wrong with these models in themselves, they are sometimes (mis)used as a 'technician's model' with little room for reflection. It may not even be clear which values are actually at stake in the moral dilemma. The implicit danger is that the technician's method seems to entail that there is exactly one fairly straightforward answer – an approved solution – to every moral problem (Miller 2004: 208).

Another disadvantage of such models is that they generally do not take the person who is confronted with the dilemma into account. While the moral involvement (of the individual with a problem or dilemma) is of great importance in dilemma training, students should learn to stand up for their own point of view. Making choices means standing for something, and standing for something means making yourself vulnerable. It requires courage (van Baarda & Verweij 2006: 297).

Moral competence begins with the identification of the moral dimension of a situation. In the first place, the dilemma and the values that are at risk have to be identified. That is only possible if the person in question is aware of the values that are important to himself or herself for the organization and, furthermore, if they are aware of the values at stake of other people in a specific situation.

² The Ethical Awareness Model asks the following questions: (1) what are the facts and which parties are involved? (2) What are the solutions and also their possible consequences? (3) Is my solution legal? (4) Have all interests been considered? (5) Is it acceptable? (van Baarda & van der Heijden 2006: 155).

Consequences for ethics education

Moral competence begins with the recognition of the moral dimension of a situation. That requires people to be aware of the values that are at risk. Therefore, we should consider the examination of one's personal values to be the starting point of ethics education (Reynolds 1993: 33). Only when in-depth contact has been made with one's personal values will it be possible to take the next steps, such as identifying the values of others or of the organization.

One of the first consequences of this is that ethics education requires such a personal approach. As noted above, we are concerned here about education and not about schooling. In schooling, one is concerned with learning objectives that can be achieved by the end of a lesson or a course. In education, one is concerned with a permanent learning process that goes on after a lesson or course has been completed. In ethics education, it is therefore more appropriate to speak of development objectives rather than learning objectives (van Baarda and Verweij 2006).

The next phase, strengthening the moral competence, is concerned with making a judgement and being able to communicate with others about it. Once again, the participants are encouraged to 'think for themselves'. That makes it difficult to provide a clearly defined blueprint for a lesson in military ethics. A great deal depends on the person who is 'teaching' the ethics education. He or she should be able to ask the right questions at the right time, and thereby give the course participants the opportunity to think for themselves.

The second consequence for ethics education is that the strongly solution-oriented approach – e.g., by only giving participants decision-making models, which is done in many ethics lessons – should be avoided. The disadvantage of such models is that they generally do not take the person who is confronted with the dilemma into account (van Baarda & Verweij 2006: 297).

In addition, the emphasis given in ethics education to the final two elements of moral competence – 'being willing and able to act' and 'being able to account for decisions and actions' – should be sufficient to make them resonate strongly with participants. This, too, is an important task for the instructor: to encourage the participants to engage with one another concerning their views and behaviour and to conduct interventions that, in effect, hold a mirror up to the participants.

The final consequence for ethics education that we want to refer to here is the need for the person who is 'teaching' ethics education to be flexible. He or she should also have worked through the various elements of moral competence with respect to himself or herself. Our basic concept in this respect is that everyone who is engaged with military ethics education is an example to others. We shall discuss this point in more detail when we elaborate upon the case study of the 'train the trainer' course in military ethics below.

Starting points of ethics education

To (make it possible to) enable participants in ethics education to really begin working on their moral competence, it is important for attention to be paid to three starting points: virtue ethics, the Socratic attitude, and implementing a process of 'living learning'.

Virtue ethics

This section defines virtue ethics, discusses its importance for moral competence and the relationship between a value and a virtue.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle was one of the founders of virtue ethics. He developed this philosophical ethical theory in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle defines virtue as excellence or virtuosity, an attitude that makes it possible for us to achieve happiness (*eudaimonia*). Virtuous behaviour is functional excellence; the excellence of the human being is associated with growth towards some final realization of one's true and best nature. The final goal is happiness: 'we choose everything for the sake of something else – except happiness, happiness is an end' (1176b; in Aristotle 1998: 261). This English rendering causes some difficulties if we do not remind ourselves that to the Greeks happiness meant much more than the experience of pleasure or satisfaction; the notion includes the proper conditions of a person's life, what we might more properly call 'well being', 'living well' or 'the life of excellence' (Mintz 1996: 828).

Moral virtues are values that are so internalized that they are truly part of us; they have become character traits. Examples of virtues include prudence, honesty, generosity, moderation, courage and loyalty. According to Aristotle, many of those virtues are the centre point between two vices. Generosity, for example, lies between miserliness and magnanimity. The just mean is not a mathematical average, however; moral or practical wisdom, *phronesis*, is required to determine what is honest, friendly or generous in each individual situation. The consequence of practical wisdom is that, in each situation, one is able repeatedly, on the basis of experience, to weigh the variable and individual factors that could have an impact on the decision of whether to carry out an action.

While virtues and values are related, there is also a difference between values and virtues. A value can be defined as something that is valuable to you, an ideal or something that one strives for. That does not have to mean that one actually acts on that basis. One speaks of a virtue when a value has been completely internalized and one's actions are based on it. Righteousness, for example, could be a value, but it is only a virtue when one's actions are repeatedly righteous. One cannot be both virtuous and be 'unrighteous just for a bit' because you don't feel like it at a particular point in time.

Virtue ethics is primarily concerned with people and with questions such as 'what kind of person do I want to be?' and 'what kind of person am I?' and not so much with questions

such as 'what should I do?'. In that, it is different from both rule or duty based deontology and consequentialism (utilitarianism). According to virtue ethics, one must act morally because it is part of what one has chosen. Virtue ethics is the pre-eminent example of an ethics of being; it tries to answer the question that preoccupies everyone: 'how should I live?' and especially, 'how can I live to ensure that I am happy?' If we extrapolate that into the military context, the question then becomes one of how a soldier who is confronted with moral dilemmas can deal with them in such a way that he can still look himself in the mirror.

One may ask whether this implies that virtues are relative. It is important, however, to emphasize that moral education is not merely 'values clarification or value communication'. Not all opinions are equally good. As Martha Nussbaum argues, there are different values and virtues and they may change over time. Does this imply that virtues are simply a reflection of local traditions and values? We agree with Nussbaum that such a relativist approach is incompatible with Aristotle's virtue theory. He has identified spheres of human experiences that figure in more or less every human life, and in those situations we all have to make some choices rather than others and act in some ways rather than others (Nussbaum 1987: 5).

The fact that there are different values and virtues does not imply that all of them are equally valid and altogether non-comparable. Certain values and virtues can still be criticized. This is inherent in the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics, since *phronesis* is deliberation on values and interests with reference to specific cases.

Virtue ethics is concerned with the development of inner discipline, with people beginning to look critically at themselves. It is not something that can be taught by cramming or drilling (Osiel 1999: 55; Wortel & Schoenmakers 2006). One could say that having a critical attitude and self-reflection is at odds with the interests of the armed forces, where people are expected to follow regulations and, if necessary, orders. The question is whether a loyal, critical attitude is even possible. Can one have soldiers who are loyal but, at the same time, critical in situations where that is required? I believe that it is definitely possible. Ethics education arguably does not undermine authority; on the contrary, it will reinforce an authority that is legal and ethical (Wakin 2000: 67). In addition, it provides a firm foundation in situations where the orders or rules are unclear or inadequate (Toner 1993: 33; French 2003: 242).

Recent years have seen increased interest in dealing with moral problems in military practice by means of rules and codes of conduct. Such value-oriented regulations are usually a response to specific abuses. Codes of conduct comprise a list of commandments and obligations. The problem with those regulations and codes of conduct is that it is not possible to provide general guidelines – unless they are extremely general – to cover all of the different situations and dilemmas that military personnel may encounter. There are no checklists that can guarantee one becoming a good soldier. As Richard Gabriel argues:

... a code of ethics is... meaningless for a soldiery that did not possess some military virtues... a code of military ethics and the education and training of the soldier in the military go together in producing an ethical soldier. (Gabriel 2007: 159)

Values that are not supported and internalized by individual soldiers will not be very effective. According to virtue ethics 'being a good human being (or being a good soldier)' means primarily being able to analyze important aspects of each situation adequately and to find the just mean for one's actions among the numerous emotions and inclinations (van Tongeren 2003: 29). A good soldier is someone who has learned through repeated practice, in heart and soul, and as second nature, to do what is expected from a 'good' soldier. He has the right virtues at the right time with respect to the right person in the right way.

The key point of virtue ethics is arguably the idea of development. That also assumes that people want to develop themselves and therefore also want to reflect on their personal values.

We are assuming that all people, and therefore all military personnel, regardless of rank, have the capability to develop virtues and therefore also to develop and to strengthen their moral competence. This involves taking the self to be always in process, rather than static and unchanging or containing an inner 'core' around which reasonably superficial changes are made (Cox, La Caze & Levine 2003: 41).³

Socratic attitude

For people to become aware of their personal values and virtues, they must enter into dialogue with one another (and with themselves). How the Socratic attitude and the Socratic dialogue can be of assistance in this regard is discussed below.

The Greek philosopher Socrates was convinced that the best way to acquire knowledge and insight was to conduct dialogues. Through critical questioning, the participants in the dialogue are compelled to think for themselves. Socrates, who only asked questions, saw himself as a midwife in those dialogues. His role was to assist in the birth and thereby, help his interlocutors to become aware of values and of knowledge and insight (Nelson 1950).

In the first instance, a Socratic attitude is one of questioning. In the dialogues that he participated in, Socrates was not the person with all the answers. The investigation and interrogation of his interlocutors was central. Critical questioning can force people to examine their own assumptions and possibly expose blind spots.

³ This does not exclude the possibility that there are differences between personality traits among people; one person may be more impatient than another, for example. That, however, does not mean that such a person is compelled by his impatience to act impatiently (van Tongeren 2003). It is important that 'the virtue' arise though a process of development, and personal choices have an important part to play in this respect. This relates to actions that an individual chooses and therefore not to reflexes or inclinations. Moral competence could help to achieve those virtues.

Time and space are important prerequisites for people to stop to examine their personal values. A dialogue begins with taking time and making space by setting one's own 'strategic' attitude to one side for a while, thereby creating distance from one's own fixed objectives and to free oneself from the problems that preoccupy everyone constantly (Kessels, Boers & Mostert 2002). Only then will it be possible really to think, to harmonize ideas with one another and to examine what is truly important to you.

In addition to asking questions and taking time and space, being able to listen well is also important in a Socratic attitude. A good listening attitude is also known as active listening or empathic listening. The essence of a conversation or dialogue is very different from a debate or discussion whose purpose is to persuade the other party of the rightness of one's own position. A dialogue is, in fact, a joint examination of an issue between a person who asks questions and another who answers. The person asking the questions must be able to suspend his or her own judgement and to look at things from the perspective of the other person. The person giving the answers must have an open attitude. A dialogue must be based on rational discussion. Such a discussion is impossible unless the parties acknowledge the possibility that they might be wrong and the other right. 'We all know this attitude of mind does not come easily' (Wiredu 2007). The different elements of the Socratic attitude reinforce each other; the whole process benefits from taking time to reflect on what is being said.

We want to emphasize here that being able to recognize and identify emotions is also important. Emotions and values are closely interwoven. Emotions provide information and are often an indication that an issue has been raised that is important to someone; it could relate to a moral value.

One of the methods that can be used here is the Socratic dialogue in which values that are at issue for the participants in the conversation are explored with the help of a case study (Kessels 1997). A moderator (trainer) leads the conversation, just by asking questions and thereby following the specific structure of the Socratic dialogue. The added value of the Socratic dialogue (and therefore of the structure of the dialogue and the consistent questioning attitude of the moderator) is that the participants arrive at a shared answer to a general question of principle with the help of a concrete example from their own daily lives.

In that way, the result of a Socratic dialogue is exactly what Socrates intended: 'practical wisdom'. The purpose of Socratic dialogues is to develop insights into one's own values and standards, into how one thinks and therefore also into any prejudices and errors in reasoning. Socratic dialogues are in-depth examinations of one's own mental world; they are also a shared learning process in which one's own insights are tested against the insights of other people (Wortel & Verweij 2008). It has been shown in the past that a very important element is that the question really be important to the group of participants, who, in turn, must have had sufficient practical exposure to the Socratic attitude. Another important aspect is that the moderator be able to bring any disruptions to the centre if they arise, for example by calling a time-out.

By showing how virtue ethics and the Socratic attitude assist in achieving moral competence, we now turn to ‘living learning’.

‘Living learning’

First, we examine the importance of ‘living learning’ for strengthening moral competence. Secondly, we explain the added value of Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI), this is a system based on an active, creative and discovering process of ‘living learning’, which has been developed by Ruth Cohn (1975). TCI is on the one hand a training method for personal development and on the other hand an effective intervention instrument for working with group dynamics especially to reveal concealed power mechanisms in the interaction between people.

A learning environment in which the opportunity is offered to make a link between theory, one’s own actions in the group, daily working reality and reflecting on all of those elements is essential for the (further) development of moral competence. In ancient Greek, the word *scholē* was used, meaning ‘free space’. Our modern word ‘school’ is derived from *scholē*. Kessels, Boers and Mostert (2002: 15) explain that a school was originally a free space, a sanctuary for thinking, with others, about how the world works, what we and others should do, and what ‘the good life’ means. The modern didactic principle that meets those conditions is called ‘living learning’ (Cohn 1975, 1989; Callens 1983).

‘Living learning’ is juxtaposed with ‘dead learning’, which is characteristic of teaching situations where the auditors passively undergo the teacher’s presentation and try to absorb it. ‘Living learning’ could also be defined as ‘learning with the three H’s’ – the head, the heart, and the hands. Those three H’s are equivalent to thinking, feeling, and acting. ‘Living learning’ invites participants explicitly to make contact with and to express one’s own thoughts and feelings about the material. The participants are also stimulated to reflect on themselves as learning persons and on the experiences associated with the learning activity. In this process, one actively exercises learning to recognize and identify one’s own feelings, which lie under the surface. That benefits specific development objectives that are important for strengthening moral competence, such as creating a balance between reflection and reaction, and being able to critically reflect on one’s own first judgement.

As stated earlier, strengthening moral competence begins with becoming aware of one’s own personal values and those of others. That is also an important principle of TCI. TCI’s vision of people and the world is linked to values. Humanity and freedom, for example, are important values in TCI.⁴ The tension between autonomy and interdependence is emphasized repeatedly. TCI proceeds on the basis that a person is more able to make independent choices

(i.e., display autonomy) based on his or her own responsibility when (s)he is more aware of the connection with the world and with others (interdependence). One of the principles of TCI expresses this by asking that everyone ‘Be their own chairperson’. That principle is an explicit invitation to all participants in a group (including the moderator) to take their own responsibility for what they do and do not do in the group, with each person asking what is going on with himself or herself, in his or her surroundings, and with other people and keeping focus on the task that the group has taken upon itself.

A situation in one of the groups in the ‘train the trainer’ course in military ethics is illustrative in this respect. The group was questioning a participant in a Socratic way about a moral dilemma that he had brought into the group. While answering the questions about the dilemma, the person who had brought up the issue became visibly emotional. It soon became clear that it was a dilemma. Before it had become clear how the person who had brought the case in had acted, the other participants began to react and to tell how they would have responded in such a situation. Only one participant said: ‘I don’t want to give a reaction now, because I don’t want to harm the person who brought this dilemma in with my reaction’. In the examination of moral dilemmas (the task), this participant was not only occupied with his own response, but also with what was going on in his environment: in this example with the feelings of the person who had brought the dilemma up.

TCI proceeds on the basis that every individual can decide freely to stay within borders that could be expanded. A person has the free space to decide for himself or herself to expand the borders. For that, too, each individual bears his or her own responsibility. Every person has power. Individuals are not powerless by definition, but neither are they all-powerful. The awareness that everyone has power to act or not to act in every situation is important when a person is confronted with moral dilemmas. That fits with the fifth component of moral competence (being willing and able to act on a judgement in a morally responsible way).

A third key aspect in the vision that lies behind TCI is respect for growth and development. That fits with our view of virtue ethics. Personal development is essential. Recognizing and examining one’s own resistance can be very helpful here. In TCI, this is expressed in a second principle: ‘Disruptions take precedence’. This ‘disruption postulate’ includes the invitation to participants to state when they are no longer able to continue in the group because of disruptions, tensions or intense emotions. To illustrate, Cohn (1975) uses the metaphor of a big stone in the middle of the road. There are many things that you can do to get around it or climb over it. One thing that you cannot do, however, is pretend that the stone is not there! Cohn uses that image to illustrate that there are many obstacles that could prevent someone from taking part in the learning process. ‘Living learning’ is not possible without the acknowledgement of any disruptions that are present.

⁴ The founder of TCI is Ruth Cohn, a Jewish psychoanalyst who was born in Berlin in 1912. Her experiences in Nazi Germany motivated her to search for an answer to the question of how psychoanalytical knowledge could be put to use in creating a more humane world.

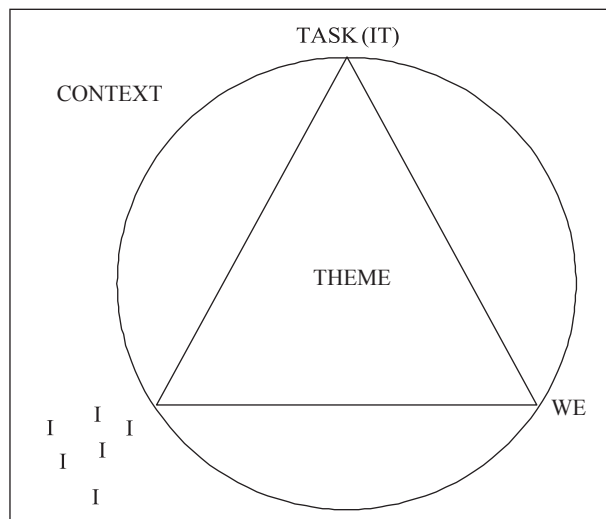


Figure 1: The four-factors model of Theme-Centred Interaction

In addition to its values-oriented vision, TCI is also a concrete methodology for mediating within groups. To promote the ‘living learning’ process in a group, a dynamic balance is deliberately created in TCI among the four factors that arise in a group or team in every learning or working situation: the task (the IT), the group (the WE), the individual (I), and the global (social CONTEXT).

Placing too much emphasis on any one of the four factors interferes with the ‘living learning’ process. Too much attention to the IT, for example, leads to a strong task and results-orientation and gives too little attention to how the participants are feeling. A result could be that the participants lose interest and temporarily switch off. If a participant is very dominant or destructive, however, and demands too much attention (in TCI terms, too much attention for an I), it could generate rivalry, uncertainty or irritation in a group, which stands in the way of a healthy learning climate. The four factors offer a variety of ways to keep the free space that is necessary to learn, think and reflect freely (see, e.g., Van den Braak 2004).

TCI is also an excellent methodology for learning in the here-and-now. That fits with our view of virtue ethics and the development of moral competence. It is not just something that you talk about; it is also something that you can *do*. Empathic capability and the courage to stand up for one’s own values are some of the elements of the moral competence that can be demonstrated in the here-and-now in the group. TCI makes it possible to respond very flexibly with what is happening in the group here and now. That is possible because TCI uses themes. By formulating a theme, the focus is placed on something that is topical within the group at a particular moment. TCI offers many possibilities ‘at the cutting edge’ for working on moral competence.

The structure of the ‘train the trainer’ course in military ethics

What does ethics education in which the focus is on strengthening moral competence and the underlying principles are virtue ethics, the Socratic attitude and the process of ‘living learning’ look like in practice? We shall use the ‘train the trainer’ course in military ethics to illustrate this.

Aim and target group

The aim of the course is to strengthen the moral competence of the individual participants. The basic concept is that everyone who is engaged with military ethics education is an example to others. For that reason, the course is aimed in the first place at the non-commissioned officers (NCOs)⁵ who are themselves instructors in military ethics or will be in the near future.

The fact that the course aims first at NCOs is somewhat unique. International comparative research shows that this is not common (Robinson, de Lee & Carrick 2008). Most ethics education in military settings concentrates on officers. Carrick even talks about an ‘officer bias’ (2008: 191). It is our contention, however, that strengthening the moral competence of NCOs is crucial. This is the group with a very important, perhaps even the most important, role in the moral development of the soldiers. That makes NCOs key personnel (Romses 1998: 19).

The NCOs who participate in the course come from all Services and an all-Service approach was chosen deliberately. The aim is for the participants to learn from one another and be aware of different perspectives. Experience has shown that each of the Services has tried to develop its own approach to moral dilemmas (van Baarda et al. 2006).

Course structure

As noted previously, working on the basis of virtue ethics, improving the Socratic attitude and activating the process of ‘living learning’ assumes the existence of the so-called ‘free space’ (scholē). To maximize the free space for the participants, we deliberately chose an outside, non-Defence site for the programme. Our experience and the responses in the evaluations show that the context that we chose inspired the participants; gave them the opportunity to put some distance between themselves and their daily work, and provided space for reflection. Participants also wear civilian clothes during the course. That makes the military service, branch and rank of the participants invisible.

⁵ Participants are not always NCOs; some of them are officers.

The course has also been structured to support the ‘living learning’ process. After all, the learning process arguably makes it possible to link theory with one’s own actions in the group and in daily working life, and to reflect on all of those elements is essential for strengthening moral competence. For that reason, we have chosen to run the course over three non-consecutive blocks of three days each, giving the participants the opportunity to put the knowledge and experiences into practice between the blocks. This is further stimulated by assigning so-called ‘homework assignments’.

Furthermore, the course days are structured to alternate the focus between the I, the We, the Task, and the Context. The module ‘ethics and emotions’, for example, covers two half-days. The module starts with a short introduction of the aims, which are to develop insight into and knowledge about the relationship between ethics and emotions. Time is then spent on the subject of one’s own emotions (I), after which the link is made between emotions and moral dilemmas during deployments by means of video material (Context), and everything up to that point is discussed in pairs. The module concludes with a group discussion during which conclusions are drawn (We).

After having completed the course, the participants are given the opportunity to participate in so-called inter-vision days. On those days, experiences and problems in daily life are discussed and additional workshops are provided.

Two trainers are always present throughout the ‘train the trainer’ course in military ethics. They monitor and assist the individual participants in their personal development, the group process and, if necessary, help to bridge the gap between (academic) content and military practice. At several times during the course, guest lecturers present their own perspectives in various areas where military ethics has played or could potentially play a part.

The content of the ‘train the trainer’ course in military ethics

The principles of virtue ethics, the Socratic attitude and the process of ‘living learning’ are also comprehensively explored during the course, as well as serving as the common thread that links the other subjects with one another. The other subjects are personal mastery, integrity, power, human rights, ethics and emotions, and the blurring of moral standards.⁶ In addition, a Socratic dialogue is conducted, exercises are carried out with the ‘flow model’ (Bos 1974; van Baarda and Verweij 2006), and time is provided for demonstrating ‘one’s own lessons’. Three of the more substantial subjects are elaborated on below.

⁶ The flow model is a model for making judgements; it is a dynamic and reflective model which focuses on reflecting on one’s own actions during the judgement forming process (van Baarda and Verweij 2006).

Personal mastery

The question of ‘What do I stand for?’ is raised very explicitly early in the course. Above, we have made clear that virtue ethics is concerned with the attitude that motivates action. The leading question is ‘what kind of person do I want to be?’. Answering that question requires knowledge and insight into one’s own values and convictions. Obviously this is part of fundamental moral education. The participants begin by bringing in their own life and learning history, an ingredient that comes from the theory and practice of ‘living learning’ (Callens 1983). On that basis, they determine their own personal development objectives in relation to strengthening their own moral competence. Each of the participants is personally responsible for their own development process. The participants are expected to create an inventory of their own development objectives and over the course of weeks will record and evaluate their progress.

In addition, we look both theoretically and practically at the concept of ‘personal mastery’ (Senge 1990, 2004; Ramakers 2009a, b). That invites the participants to critical self-reflection. They are asked about their personal vision and to explain the values behind that vision. The potential tensions between their own values and the reality of their lives and the organization in which they work are also examined. The participants are then asked how they deal with those tensions. The point is to develop awareness of their own values *and* knowledge of the values and moral conventions in the organization and in society at large. Participants also investigate the obstacles that they encounter in the organization in terms of acting in accordance with their own values, making critical judgements and being able to call others to account for their conduct. Given a tension between one’s own values and those of the organization, one may ask to what extent an individual is prepared to or capable of accepting this tension. What is the lowest limit? What does one person find acceptable and the other person unacceptable?

And finally, in keeping with the fifth part of moral competence –being willing and able to act on the basis of one’s own judgement in a morally responsible way – the participants are invited to indicate what they are going to do themselves when dealing with the obstacles in the area of military ethics in the organization. An underlying principle of the course, after all, is that each individual has power in every situation to act or not to act. Interestingly, not all participants are aware of this perspective, they seem to have resigned themselves to the perception that they are powerless vis-à-vis the organization. This powerlessness may be related to the military (hierarchical) organizational structure and culture. The subject of power is therefore explored in more detail during the course.

Power: How does it work?

Power is a factor in every situation, especially in situations in which values are at issue and at risk of being infringed on or violated. In the 'train the trainer' course in military ethics, we begin by increasing the knowledge of and insight into the working and meaning of the concept of 'power'. To do so, we use the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault, especially with regard to the concepts of discipline and normalization.

In Foucault's view, a new type of power developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: discipline. That is defined as a power technique that subjects people to detailed and permanent compulsion and thereby increases their economic utility and political submissiveness. The techniques that are used are the same as those which already existed in military barracks, for example: hierarchical oversight combined with normalizing sanctions by means of punishment and reward.

According to Foucault, power is everywhere: every social area is infused with power relationships. That does not mean that freedom does not exist. The only time there is no freedom is in situations of dominance: power is then so petrified that it has become fully asymmetrical and the margin of freedom is extremely limited (Foucault 1978: Vol. I, 121–2).

Following the in-depth discussion of the theoretical aspects, we explore the meaning and working of the concept of power in the living and working context of the participants. We examine the role of power in society, within the Defence organization and in one's own group. A primary question is what visible and invisible power mechanisms are operational within the group. It is not easy to make the participants aware of the invisible workings of power, although they certainly exist, as the following examples will show.

Although during the course members wear civilian clothes and their military position is, in principle, invisible, the participants are highly skilled in identifying one another's military background and rank. This results in some of the participants, who are very aware of their position in the military hierarchy, easily giving the floor to a fellow course member whom they know has a higher rank.⁷ The reasoning is that 'being a lieutenant or captain, you know better'.

The presence of course members who are in the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the military police corps, has also caused some participants to censor themselves. The investigative authority of the personnel of the military police corps has influenced the hesitation of some participants to bring up examples of moral dilemmas that potentially involve violations of military discipline.

In order to make those mechanisms clear and to give the participants the opportunity to make a judgement that is based on morality and to communicate it, the following interventions are necessary.

In the first place, the concept of 'safety within the group' is raised at the start of the course. The issue of each participant's requirements to be able to speak openly and freely

⁷ Participants are not always NCOs; some of them are officers.

is raised explicitly. If those mechanisms arise as the course progresses, we identify it as a dilemma and discuss with the entire group how we are to proceed.

Secondly, the participants are always reminded of the basic TCI rules of 'Be your own leader' and 'Disruptions take precedence'. That means that all of the participants are always watching what is going on, in themselves and in their environment, and are always attentive to the task that the group has taken upon itself. The participants are regularly encouraged not only to think about this, but at various times to talk about it, too.

In addition to these explicit reflections on the group process, film material is used. In the 'power' module, the film *Das Experiment*⁸ is shown. We have participants react to several concrete examples of the workings of power and abuses of power in the film. The film also serves as the transition point to the module 'blurring of moral standards'.

Blurring of moral standards

'Blurring of moral standards' refers to the process in which the conduct of a specific group gradually, and sometimes imperceptibly to the people involved, becomes unacceptable (Vogelaar & Verweij 2009). Being able to identify the moment when values are at risk of being infringed or violated is crucial for moral competence. It is also very difficult because it often happens on a sliding scale and the single moment is elusive. 'Blurring of moral standards' is a complex and slippery subject; a great deal of time is therefore spent on that subject during the course. The aim is to help participants understand the causes of the blurring of moral standards so that they can identify it when it occurs, and to have the participants reflect on what they can do to prevent moral standards from becoming blurred. The bystander effect is given a great deal of attention in this area.

The presentation of the theory begins with Philip Zimbardo's infamous Stanford Prison Experiment and Milgram's study of obedience,⁹ after which we have the participants make a comparison with the Abu Ghraib prison abuse incident in Iraq in 2004 where extreme cases of the blurring of moral standards (torture and even executions) took place. We then draw up an inventory of the causes of the blurring of moral standards, using the experiences with the blurring that course participants have had, and after that go on to discuss the theory of moral disengagement of psychologist Albert Bandura, who identifies nine reasons for people exhibiting morally incorrect behaviour (van Baarda and Verweij 2006: 51–6).¹⁰ The

⁸ The German movie 'Das Experiment' (2001; directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel) is inspired by the events of the Stanford Prison Experiment which was conducted in 1971 by a team of researchers led by Psychology Professor Philip Zimbardo at Stanford University. See also George Mastroianni's article in this issue of *Journal of Military Ethics*, for more on Zimbardo.

⁹ Both studies were carried out in the early 1970s. See Vogelaar and Verweij (2009) for details.

¹⁰ (1) Self-justification; (2) Euphemistic language; (3) The favourable comparison; (4) Shifting the responsibility; (5) Creating confusion as to who bears (ultimate) responsibility; (6) Ignoring the consequences of a particular decision; (7) Dehumanizing the enemy; (8) Blaming the victim; (9) Gradual loss of loyalty to norms and values (becoming numb, callousness).

participants then take another look at their experiences and we discuss what actions could have been taken to counter the blurring of moral standards in those situations.

Experience

At the time of writing, the course has been held six times, two refresher sessions have been held and a trainers' pool has been set up for trainers. On the basis of those experiences, we present some of our lessons learned from the perspectives of the participants and the trainers.

Participants' experiences

The evaluations thus far have been positive. The participants appreciate being given additional substance. One of the major points that has come out has been that the participants find it important and satisfactory to have their own input be taken seriously, that they are listened to and that they are given space to reflect on personal experiences during deployments and at home. In the normal course of events, there is little space and time for reflection in their daily working lives.

Participants also state that 'finally' they understand what military ethics is about. That makes them feel more secure when they are presenting military ethics lessons to military personnel. The course gives the participants a solid foundation. The participants also indicate that when they have completed the course, they realize that they have to create their own materials for ethics education. They do not have a link with the lesson objectives that they receive from higher up. The participants state that the content and the structure of ethics education in the Services are still in their infancy. We conclude further that there is a great need for additional training for people developing the military ethics course materials.

Finally, the evaluations also show that the all-Service structure of the course presents many new insights. Former participants in the course, from the different Services, exchange material and audit the lessons that others give. They find this to be 'very inspiring'.

Trainers' experiences

Our experience shows that it is very important for a team of two trainers to be present throughout the course. Together they can monitor and assist the individual participants in their personal development, the group process and, if necessary, help to bridge the gap between (academic) content and military practice. To really do justice to the development objectives that the individual participants have drawn up with respect to strengthening their

moral competence, individual interviews and feedback during the course are necessary. This type of assistance is so (labour) intensive that it is important to ensure that sufficient personnel is available to do it.

The experience of the trainers is that it is useful to be able to consult with each other about the interventions that are necessary to keep the group as a whole and each participant individually sharp. After all, the participants are being encouraged to provide feedback to themselves and to others about how each of them is applying his or her moral competence in the group and in the here and now.

We have also found it necessary for trainers to reflect critically on themselves. In that sense the trainers of the course are also an example. Characteristics that are useful in such training include: sharing power, being transparent, creating free learning space, coordinating content with the participants, being involved, asking many questions (in which the Socratic attitude is important for the trainer), reflection (including self-reflection) and the courage to admit when one is wrong.¹¹

A final conclusion is that the tempo of the course should not be set too high. Thinking, reflecting and allowing everyone to be heard takes time. This requires patience on the part of the trainers.

Discussion and conclusion

In this article, we have examined the consequences of centralizing the strengthening of moral competence in ethics education. We have argued that it is important to base ethics education on virtue ethics, the Socratic attitude and the process of 'living learning'. We have illustrated that position by means of the example of the 'train the trainer' course in military ethics as presented in the Netherlands Defence Academy. We want to close with the following discussion points and conclusion.

Discussion points

The first discussion point concerns the discrepancy between working on strengthening moral competence, which is about 'doubt' and 'asking questions', and the work context of the participants, which is oriented, both literally and figuratively, towards 'defence'. Thinking within a framework of legality, standards, regulations and obligations is so common within the culture of the (Netherlands) Defence organization, that sometimes there is very little room for 'doubt' and 'asking questions'. 'Just tell me what to do!' is an oft-heard comment. This demands a great deal of patience and explanation from the trainers. Although we believe that the culture of a military organization underscores the importance of working from

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¹¹ These are characteristic of being a group-leader in the theme-oriented interaction (Cohn 1989; Langmaack 2001).

the perspective of virtue ethics and the Socratic attitude, the military environment may pose a challenge to engaging with this methodology. However, we believe that the importance of strengthening moral competence in the military sphere outweighs this, and that the methodology we put forward can meet such a challenge, as the success of the case study arguably shows.

The second discussion point concerns compulsory versus voluntary participation in the 'train the trainer' course in military ethics. Given the personal approach of the course, participants should actually take the course voluntarily. People will only be able to work on their personal development on the basis of willingness. It also requires being able to make one's self vulnerable. The participants do not always sign up voluntarily for the course. Some of them are 'sent' by their superiors. That is a difficult point for the course trainers. Raising that issue with the participants, we have found that those 'who had to come' do adopt a willing attitude. The question, nonetheless, is how far the organization can go in requiring an individual to work on his/her moral competence.

The third point concerns the role of emotions in ethics education. Focusing on personal values regularly leads to an emotional response. It should be clear that the intent is not to deliberately provoke an emotional response, but during the course a lot of emotions could be stirred up. Alertness is also required when participants become emotional when discussing a moral issue. In any case, it is important for trainers to make an assessment at the end of the course as to whether anyone has any 'unfinished business' in terms of dealing with emotions. The precise emotional impact for participants of exploring their morally charged experiences is still fairly unknown. More research should be done in this area.

Fourth, we realize that reflecting on moral dilemmas and talking about personal considerations require a certain level of verbal capability. Not everyone is equally gifted in this respect. It is worth investigating other methodologies.

The fifth discussion point concerns the homogeneity of the group in terms of rank. Speaking freely is important, and this is easier to achieve in groups of the same rank. However, in order for participants to become aware of dilemmas that are faced by other ranks or to practice communicating about moral issues when rank differences are a factor, it could be an advantage in the future to work with mixed groups of NCOs and officers. The final discussion point concerns the measurement of effectiveness of moral education. While our evaluations so far have been positive, it is too early to draw definite conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the course. In order to do that we would need more research on the long-term effects of the 'train the trainer' course in military ethics.

Conclusion

Working with personal values is relatively new in a military setting. Arguably, such an approach should be embedded in ethics-education policies. Course developers should be informed of the developments where such courses have been tried, as in the Netherlands. Explicit opportunities should be offered for self-study, personal development, independent thinking, being able and willing to make judgements, reflecting critically and thereby recognizing and identifying one's own resistance.

This requires time and focused, continuous attention, because moral competence also has to be maintained after the course. Time and space to do so are not always available, but it is always necessary. As one of the participants in the 'train the trainer' course in military ethics passionately expressed:

'Certainly in the military context, where we are confronted with complex dilemmas and have to deal with them, and can also completely lose our way, the important thing for me is the care for those men and women. That's why I'm teaching military ethics. That is where my commitment lies.'

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Chapter 3

Chapter 3

The relevance of Foucauldian art-of-living for ethics education in a military context; theory and practice

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Abstract

How can ethical decision-making in organizations be further reinforced? This article explores the relevance of Michel Foucault's ideas on art-of-living for ethics education in organizations. First, we present a theoretical analysis of art-of-living in the work of Foucault as well as in the work of two philosophers who greatly influenced his work, Friedrich Nietzsche and Pierre Hadot. Next, we illustrate how art-of-living can be applied in ethics education. In order to examine some of the benefits and challenges of applying the art-of-living in the practice of ethics education, we discuss an example of how the art-of-living concept has been used in a train-the-trainer course on military ethics. We suggest that Foucauldian art-of-living may foster awareness of power dynamics which are in play when military personnel face moral dilemmas.

Key words: Foucault, ethics, education, art-of-living, military

Introduction

Ethics education in organizations is not limited to teaching ethical theory such as deontology and utilitarianism (Crane 2008). It includes, for example, attention to pragmatism (Rorty 2006; Rosenthal & Buchholz 2000), Habermasian discourse ethics (Metselaar & Widdershoven 2015; Rudnick 2007; Scherer & Palazzo 2007), dialogical ethics (Molewijk et. al. 2008), moral imagination (Werhane & Gorman 2005), narrative ethics (Nelson 2014; Wilks 2005) and virtue ethics (Moore 2005; Olsthoorn 2008). These approaches aim to investigate what it means to act in a morally responsible way when faced with a moral dilemma. Yet, the organizational context of moral reflection tends to be neglected and this implies a similar neglect for the consequences thereof. To what extent do organizations affect the ability of individuals to engage in autonomous, critical thinking, to recognize and to actively reflect on practices and moral dilemmas?

Ethics education is important in the armed forces (van Baarda & Verweij 2006; Coleman 2013; Cook 2013; Robinson, de Lee and Carrick 2008): its core function is 'to assist professionals to think through the moral challenges and dilemmas inherent in their professional activity and, by helping members of the profession better understand the ethical demands upon them, to enable and motivate them to act appropriately in the discharge of their professional obligations' (Cook & Syse 2010). Yet, when military personnel deal with moral dilemmas, there may be occasions when tensions arise between acting in accordance with personal values and acting as a professional, in this case: 'a soldier' (van Baarle, Bosch, Widdershoven, Verweij & Molewijk 2015). Elements which can influence this tension in the military organization include: group bonding and loyalty; uniformity; hierarchy; lack of privacy and masculinity. As Martin Cook notes, the ability to recognize that there are ethical aspects

worthy of consideration in the situation before us (referred to as 'ethical sensitivity') may seem obvious, but this ability is even more important 'in a military environment where there is so much reliance on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and such a strong pressure toward conformity and risk of group-think, this is an aspect of moral development we should perhaps reflect on more deeply' (Cook 2013, p.81). While reflection and fostering self-awareness can be regarded as general aims of ethics education, strived for in many ethics programs, using insights from Foucault can be helpful to raise awareness of the tensions involved in situations of conformity pressures and hierarchy.

This is in line with the work of Thornborrow and Brown (2009) who analyzed paratroopers' discourse on work identities in a military organization, in an elite military unit. Thornborrow and Brown show how paratroopers are 'manufactured' (Thornborrow & Brown 2009, p.355). Conceptions of being a paratrooper and the techniques of paratroopers production form a tight web of discursive constraint. The idea that paratroopers are professional, elite and macho/combat-ready was, according to the soldiers, 'manufactured' in three principal ways:

... through 'rites of becoming' that restricted entry to the Regiment; storytelling (especially in using Regimental history); and through the maintenance of an informal culture of suspicion and surveillance (Thornborrow & Brown 2009, p.355).

This raises important questions with regard to the possibility of ethics education within these institutional disciplinary forces. What are the organizational factors that might impact the ability of employees to think for themselves? Are they able to recognize the relevant power relations at stake in moral dilemmas and do they experience the possibility of choice? We will examine Foucault's suggestions that power relations are always present and produce or manufacture subjects, while at the same time 'these power relations only seem possible insofar as the subjects are free' (Foucault 1997, p.292).

Interestingly, for Foucault, this freedom implies 'the possibility of ethics' (Foucault 1997, p.284) because this freedom involves the opportunity to reflect upon and perhaps modify these power relations.

Several authors claim that Foucault's theory provides a rich conceptual framework for ethics education in organizational ethics because it frames the employee as an 'active' ethical subject who is responsible for his or her own self-creation in contrast to a docile or normalized self-creation and mere obedience to rules and values set forth in a coherent doctrine. It focusses on the importance of a critical attitude to processes of normalization (i.e. judgments about what is considered normal and what is not in a given population) and expert authority, while acknowledging the reality of processes of normalization in organizations (Barratt 2008; Iedema & Rhodes 2010; Munro 2014; Starkey & Hatchuel 2002). However, Foucault's work still seems to have had little impact on the actual practice of applied ethics education in organizations (Coleman 2013; Crane & Matten 2007). Various authors have proposed to formulate organizational ethics in terms of a 'care of the self', that

requires an active self-disciplined attention of the self to develop and transform oneself, to actively reflect, choose and act upon one's moral compass (Munro 2014, p.1127) and new ways of 'acting and being' (Ibarra-Colado et al. 2006; Iedema & Rhodes 2010; Munro 2014, p.1127; Randall & Munro 2010). The idea that the self can be transformed is one of the most popular themes taken up by management scholars (Munro 2014; Kosmala & McKernan 2011; Loacker & Muhr 2009). Foucauldian art-of-living can be defined as a kind of self-direction and self-development within existing power relations and the ability to learn to think critically. In contrast to ethical codes and pre-determined values, Foucauldian art-of-living requires us 'to attend effectively to the self, and to exercise and transform oneself' (Foucault 1984b, p. 73). Equally, in educational theory, a Foucauldian art-of-living is regarded as relevant and fruitful (Biesta 1998; Biesta 2008; Gunzenhauser 2007; Infinito 2003; Nicoll, Fejes, Olson, Dahlstedt, & Biesta 2013; Pignatelli 2002). These contributions are, however, mostly theoretical in nature. This article is a theoretical exploration of the possibilities of applying a Foucauldian art-of-living approach in ethics education, reflecting on a Dutch train-the-trainer course on military ethics. What is the relevance of Foucauldian art-of-living for ethics education and does it assist personnel in dealing with concrete moral dilemmas?

The first aim of this article is to better understand Foucauldian ideas on art-of-living and their relevance for ethics education. In order to do so, we focus on the work of Foucault as well as on the work of two philosophers who greatly influenced him, Nietzsche and Hadot (Foucault 1984c; Foucault 1988). After having elaborated on this philosophical foundation, we explore how the ideas of Nietzsche, Foucault and Hadot regarding art-of-living might be applied in education practice. We do so by introducing the train-the-trainer course on military ethics and show how several elements of this course are related to ideas on art-of-living. We focus on fostering awareness as an important element of the course. In the discussion we relate the example to the theory on art-of-living and the practice of ethics education.

Art-of-living in the work of Nietzsche, Foucault and Hadot

This section describes art-of-living in the work of Nietzsche, Foucault and Hadot. We start by describing Nietzsche's concept of *Bildung*. It provides a background for understanding what Foucault was aiming at with the notion of art-of-living. We subsequently turn to the work of Foucault himself. In order to better understand Foucault's work, it is important to interpret Foucault's early and late works as a critical continuum (Deleuze 1994). This shows that art-of-living and 'the relation to oneself' should be understood in terms of power relations. Finally we will look at what Hadot identifies as spiritual exercises. Like Nietzsche, the work of Hadot greatly influenced and inspired the work of Foucault. Yet, at the same time, Hadot also criticized Foucault, emphasizing the importance of being part of a community, rather

than focusing only on the self. What all three philosophers have in common is their critique on academic philosophy and its inability to address the 'art-of-living'.

Nietzsche's concept of *Bildung*

About 130 years ago Nietzsche proclaimed the 'death of God'. This metaphor implies the loss of absolute principles regarding truth and fundamental values. How do we educate students without the existence of an absolute moral, an absolute measure? Nietzsche's views on *Bildung* (education and formation) are relevant in this respect. His views on *Bildung* were presented for the first time in a narrative that formed an integral part of six subsequent lectures at the 'Academic Society' in Basel in 1872. We will take a closer look at the most relevant elements in this narrative with regard to both *Bildung* and the art-of-living.

The story Nietzsche tells is about a conversation between a philosopher and his companion that was overheard by Nietzsche and his friend when they were young students. At first the young students only listened, later on they participated in the conversation that took place on a hill in the woods, during an afternoon and an evening. The setting is interesting, Nietzsche not only meticulously describes the "warmth of the sun endlessly mixed with blue autumn freshness" (Nietzsche 1981b, p.180), he also makes clear that he and his friend and the philosopher and his companion all came to this place to discuss philosophical issues. In the case of the two young students this meant becoming philosophers themselves, discussing the existential issues related to their future lives, as Nietzsche points out (Nietzsche 1981b, p.184). The narrative presented as a conversation, not only shows the importance of dialogue as a pedagogical instrument for Nietzsche, but also the need for space and time in order to learn to reflect and the inspiration coming from people who can actually teach you something and can thus contribute to your *Bildung*.

The conversation starts with the philosopher's critical statements about the 'pedagogic poverty' of his time (Nietzsche 1981b, p.197). Education at the gymnasium used to be about *Bildung* and development, however this focus has been lost. The gymnasium educates people for 'bookishness', and sometimes not even that. "Bookishness is for scholarly people, but a scholarly person is not the same as a developed and *bilded* person. There is a big difference between the two" (Nietzsche 1981b, p.200). The philosopher points to the sterile study of antiquity by the majority of the scholars and refers to 'Bookishness' being a 'hypertrophic swelling up of an unhealthy body' (Nietzsche 1981b, p.224) and gymnasia as educating for 'bookish obesity' (Nietzsche 1981b, p.224) and not for humanitarian *Bildung* as used to be the case.

The philosopher continues that everything is focused on becoming a money earning being and education is focused on realizing this goal as fast as possible. So what should be done? What is needed? One of the things mentioned is the importance of a naïve, trustful and personal relation to nature. A young person needs to be able to mirror himself in nature;

to recognize himself in what he experiences in nature. In this way he will be able to learn to understand the connectedness of all things and reflect on who he is. This is also present in the description of the goal of Bildung as 'Humanitätsbildung' (Nietzsche 1981b, p.210) which refers to the connectedness to other people.

This idea of Bildung is quite contrary to what modern learning implies, according to the philosopher, namely learning how to manipulate nature. As such, Bildung is the opposite of the calculating, economized attitude towards one's surroundings. The nature metaphor with regard to Bildung is also present in Nietzsche's text '*Schopenhauer als Erzieher*' (Schopenhauer as educator) (Nietzsche 1981a). Development and Bildung, imply freeing a person, which means, as Nietzsche maintains, 'clearing away the ill weeds and garbage and the worms that corrode the soft core of the plant' (Nietzsche 1981a, p.290). This metaphor of Bildung as care for the young plant is an old Greek metaphor. Care and nourishment form the basis of human flourishing. The more fertile the ground, the better the roots can grow and branch off in all directions, laying a solid basis for flourishing.

The elements that form the metaphor of the plant are explicitly discussed in Nietzsche's text on Bildung. The importance of inspiration (nourishment) provided by good teachers (philosophers) is underlined, as is the importance of learning to listen and to speak (present one thoughts) and subsequently learn to reflect and think in a critical way, refraining from a too premature judgment. It is made clear that the goal of Bildung is not science, as such, it is the ability to answer the existential questions of one's own life and practice.

Bildung as education aims at freeing and helping people to flourish in and through connectedness with communities, and nature, of which they are an inalienable part. It implies openness and willingness to learn, acknowledging diversity and difference, which starts with acknowledging the diversity and difference that is in us, within ourselves.

This insight contributes to ethics education based on the art-of-living, for acknowledging diversity and difference in ourselves is a prerequisite for respecting the difference and diversity around us and thus the different values that people can adhere to. Dialogue can be viewed as an important pedagogical tool in achieving this.

On the basis of Nietzsche's insights with regard to Bildung, we will now focus on the work of Foucault, who introduces several ideas for applying the art-of-living concept in ethics education, that are clearly inspired by Nietzsche.

Foucault on techniques of the Self

In his earlier books, *Madness and Civilization* (1965), *the Birth of the Clinic* (1973) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault examines how power operates in our society. While we may be inclined to consider power as sovereign, in the hand of the government, and exerted by institutions such as local governments, the police and the Army, Foucault states that complex power relations are always present and are widely exercised and reproduced in institutions. Power

relations are implicitly present in disciplining institutions, for instance our educational systems, in hospitals and in psychiatry. These implicit power relations are often not made explicit in laws and the enforcement thereof, yet they construct the subject.

Foucault maintains that, due to these power relations, there is no external referent for certainty or truth. This also holds for the 'truth' about the subject that is produced by science. Foucault argues that both truth and the subject are constructed. 'Human beings are made subjects' (Foucault 1982, p.208). He examines how truth games (a set of rules and procedures by which truth is produced) were set up and how they were connected to power relations, in processes of objectification and categorization. In this context he introduces the term 'normalization', which refers to judgments about what is considered normal and what is not in a given population. The term is closely related to another Foucauldian term: 'disciplinary technology' which aims at forging a 'docile body, that subsequently may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault 1984a, p.180).

In *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault introduces the terms normalization and disciplinary technology to show how subjects are produced (Foucault 1977). His architectural example of the panopticon illustrates that when surveillance is permanent, 'the perfection of power should render its actual exercise unnecessary' (Foucault 1977, p.200). Accordingly, if participants are disciplined in a similar way, they might be 'caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers' (Foucault 1977, p.201).

One of the examples Foucault introduces to illustrate what he means by implicit power relations in disciplining institutions is the example of a soldier:

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit (Foucault 1984a, p.179)

Systematic surveillance, classification, hierarchy and military drill or the routinization of actions, are techniques aimed to the formation of a trained, docile body. As such, military personnel is produced, its normalization takes place through the sharing and internalization of explicit and implicit norms during the military socialization process which aims for a perfect fit of military personnel in the military institutions and its culture.

While soldiers are constructed and produced by power relations, the later work of Foucault makes explicitly clear that due to these power relations there is always also space for freedom and therefore for the possibility of ethics:

These power relations are ... mobile, reversible, and unstable. It should also be noted that power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one of them were completely at the other's disposal and became his thing, and object on which he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there wouldn't be

any relation of power [but rather a state of domination]. Thus, in order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides (Foucault 1997, p.292)

In the *History of Sexuality* (1984b) and in several interviews, Foucault stated that he tried to understand the way in which the human subject fits in these power relations, also referred to as 'critical activity' (Foucault 1984b, p.336) and 'games of truth' (Foucault 1982, p.281). Through the work of Hadot, Foucault discovered the importance of the 'techniques of the self' in the Greco-Roman world (Foucault 1984c, p.342). The concern for the self and care of the self was required to the proper practice of freedom. The Greeks had a specific word to describe this: '*epimeleia heautou*', which means working on or being concerned with something (Foucault 1984c, p.359). The care of the self is not purely an individual exercise; one always remains part of practices of power and truth games (Foucault 1997).

One has to attempt to decide how to shape power relations. Power relations sometimes appear to be forms of domination that seem immobile, yet, most of the time these power relations can be modified, influenced or changed by individuals or social groups. Foucault uses the notion of modifying power relations, rather than liberating oneself from power relations (Foucault 1997). According to Foucault, we have to be careful not to fall back on the idea that there 'exists a human nature or base that ... has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression' (Foucault 1997, p.282). In a military context, codes of conduct and underlying military values can be regarded as such power relations. A freedom practice does not exist apart from power relations, but 'it paves the way for new power relationships' (Foucault 1997, p.284). Nevertheless, Foucault acknowledges that liberation is sometimes the political or historic precondition for freedom practices. One needs to be free from certain forms of repression in order to be able to use this freedom in a constructive way. Modifying these power relations, when necessary, Foucault states, is a practice of freedom (Foucault 1984c). These freedom practices include taking care of the self, an exercise of the self to develop and transform oneself, to actively reflect, choose and act upon one's moral compass. Foucault suggests that we can create our life by deciding how to give style to it and make a 'work of art' of our own life (Foucault 1984c, p.350). However, he does not provide a blueprint with respect to creating these practices nor does he mention explicit values or virtues one should strive for.

If we translate Foucauldian ideas into ethics education, it implies that fostering an ethics of art-of-living should first of all focus on awareness. Education should advocate a way of life in which people become more self-aware (Vintges 2001). This implies that we discover ourselves in our concrete situation, in other words, we become aware of the power relations which we are part of. Important questions are: What kind of power relations do we recognize, which institutions are involved, what effects do they have? Becoming aware of power relations might enable people to judge, and choose, how to shape these power relations. Instead of being a passive subject, an 'active subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self' (Foucault 1997, p.291). Becoming aware of power relations, underlying

values and possibly colliding values does not guarantee moral decision-making. However, it can be viewed as a pre-condition for morally responsible decision-making. Without the awareness of choice, it seems impossible to carry out the techniques of the self, to defend and enlarge the space for freedom-practices within the disciplinary structures in our society at large and within organizations.

Foucault provides several techniques to put the art-of-living into practice, he introduces the importance of walking exercises determining one's motives, meditation, silence, listening to others and *hypomnemata*, a copybook or a notebook (Foucault, 1984c, p.363). Writing for oneself and others, can function as a means to struggle with defects, such as anger, fear and envy. Following Foucault, ethics education can assist people to work on what Foucault refers to as 'the relationship with oneself' (Foucault 1984c, p.352).

Hadot on spiritual exercises and the relationship with oneself

According to Hadot, the relationship with oneself is fostered by 'spiritual exercises', which involve all aspects of one's existence and can lead to a transformation of our 'vision of the world and a metamorphosis of our personality' (Hadot 1995a, p.83). These exercises, or techniques, include attention, concentration on the present moment, which increases our vigilance; meditation, a mental exercise focusing on, for instance, suffering and death, which allows us to be ready for these circumstances; reading, and taking time to pause, return into ourselves.

For Hadot, the feeling of belonging to a whole is an essential element of these exercises. It implies belonging, both to the whole constituted by the human community and to that constituted by the cosmos (Hadot 1995b, p.208). Hadot uses the term 'spiritual' to stress the importance of transcending oneself: re-placing oneself with 'the perspective of the Whole'. One 'attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace and freedom' (Hadot 1995a, p.83). Nietzsche also mentions such a trustful and personal relation to nature in order to understand that we are part of it.

Philosophizing should be about learning how to have a dialogue with oneself (meditation) as well as with others. 'The Socratic dialogue turns out to be a kind of communal spiritual exercise' (Hadot 1995a, p.90), an examination of conscience and of attention to oneself, 'to know oneself in one's true moral state, that is to examine one's conscience' (Hadot 1995a, p.90). As such, a Socratic dialogue provides insight into one's way of thinking, the values that one holds and the preconceived opinions one might have. We often believe things that, once we learn to critically think about them, turn out to be incorrect. Following Hadot, a guideline for working on the art-of-living might focus on engaging in these dialogues in order to reflect on our own thinking, the thinking of others and to construct our own moral compass, learning to prioritize values, in order to become 'the helmsman of our own existence' (Nietzsche 1981a).

To summarize, for Nietzsche education should be aimed at *Bildung*. *Bildung* is not aimed at bookishness, but at freeing a persons, enabling him or her to flourish and learn to think in a critical way; it aims at receptivity for change and acknowledging diversity and difference in oneself and others. Foucault's work on ethics focuses on the importance of discovering oneself in one's situation, to gain self-awareness of the power relations one is part of. This may empower people, to consciously choose and prioritize between values. Hadot stresses the importance of being and remaining part of a community, and being able to have a dialogue about this with oneself as well as with others.

In the following section we examine how the ideas of these philosophers with regard to art-of-living might be applied in practice. We investigate an example from a train-the-trainer course on military ethics and discuss some of the benefits of working with this approach.

Case example: Art-of-living in the train-the-trainer course on military ethics

In order to explore how the ideas of Foucault regarding art-of-living as influenced by Nietzsche and Hadot, might be applied in practice, we examine a train-the-trainer course on military ethics. As awareness of power relations is a key element in the work of Foucault we focus on stimulating awareness in this course.

The example is based on notes of the trainers of three different train-the-trainer courses, which are organized by the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defense Academy. We chose an example which shows the relevance of using the concept of art-of-living as a basis for ethics education in this context.

Translating ideas on art-of-living in the train-the-trainer course on military ethics

The train-the-trainer course on military ethics is a nine-day course organized four times a year by the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defense Academy. The course participants are commissioned and non-commissioned officers who already teach military ethics to military personnel or plan to do so in the future. The participants work within the four Dutch armed forces Services (i.e. the Army; the Navy; the Air Force and the Military Police Corps).

The aim of the course is to train participants to become ethics trainers in their own military work environment and at the same time foster their own moral competence. Fostering moral competence is not restricted to the knowledge domain. The willingness to act upon one's judgement is part of moral competence and shows that it concerns a particular attitude. A distinction to be made here is that between schooling and education. Schooling (in German: *ausbildung*; in Dutch: *opleiden*) refers to the teaching and learning of cognitive and practical knowledge, while the central focus of education (in German: *bildung*; in Dutch:

vorming) is the mastery and internalization of that knowledge (van Baarda & Verweij 2006, p. 11; see also, Wortel & Bosch 2011).

For the majority of the participants taking this course is a formal requirement for teaching military ethics at their respective military education establishments within the Netherlands armed forces. More than half of the group had been asked by their superiors to attend the course, the other participants applied for the course themselves.

The theoretical ethical approach underlying this course has gradually moved from a focus on a virtue ethics approach (Wortel & Bosch 2011) to a focus on, what we would reconstruct as a Foucauldian art-of-living approach to ethics education. There are certainly parallels between a virtue ethics approach and Foucauldian art-of-living approach to ethics education (see for instance, Kekes 2002), as both approaches focus on character education. However, Foucault's approach is different from a virtue ethics approach. Foucault emphasizes the role of power relations in practices, whereas virtue ethics stresses the importance of developing excellence in a practice (for instance, being courageous in military combat). Foucault sees the need for awareness of the power relations involved and reflection on moral dilemmas. If we regard the subject as being constructed and produced, as Foucault argues, we have to discover ourselves in our concrete situation and understand how we are constructed in terms of power relations and related values in order to be able to think for ourselves when we are confronted with moral dilemmas. As such, Foucauldian art-of-living approach not only invites participants to reflect on themselves but also to take a critical look at their environment, the norms and structures of the military institution they are part of. A sole focus on character is sometimes regarded as a limitation of a virtue ethics approach since it overlooks the fact that unethical behavior can also be 'the product of deficiencies in institutions or practices' (Robinson 2007, p. 31; see also, Cook 2015).

During the training, trainers assist participants to practice and discuss freedom practices by encouraging a reflective relation to the 'here and now'. Ethics courses themselves also imply power relations, a pervasive operation of power associated with disciplinary processes and ultimately moral regulation. It is naive to propose that practices of reflection are separate and different from discursive practices (Gilbert 2001). With regard to power relations participants are explicitly invited to be co-responsible for the learning process during the training. While 'training' in a military context can sometimes be regarded as inducing certain behavior, our concept of training implies an interactive way of education. During so called 'co-directing sessions' participants can actively influence the program of the course by reflecting on the training and the group-process. This approach presupposes that trainers are willing to share power, to adapt the course to learning needs of each individual participant, to be transparent in their choices and able to engage in self-reflection.

The content of training is based on theoretical notions on art-of-living by Foucault as influenced by Nietzsche and Hadot. The training includes the following elements:

First, participants of the course are made familiar with a dialogical approach. They are provided with a list of dialogue-guidelines, including: taking time, listening carefully,

suspending judgment, asking critical questions that make you and the other person think, thinking ‘with’ the other person, not ‘against’ the other person, analyzing underlying values and not fixating on solutions, and finally reflecting critically on one’s initial opinion, one’s moral intuition, impression and emotion. During several exercises, participants learn to engage in a dialogue with each other by putting these guidelines into practice. This element is particularly inspired by Hadot’s view that philosophizing is engaging in dialogue with oneself as well as with others.

Secondly, during the course, space is created for ‘counterstories’ (Nelson 2001, p.1) with regard to the military profession. These stories may include doubt, uncertainty and vulnerability and as such they are not in line with stereotypes of ‘military heroism’ (Thornborrow & Brown 2009, p.368). This element of storytelling, recognizing diversity and values in stories, may broaden the discourse, acknowledging diversity and difference with regard to what it means to be a soldier. This element can be seen as a translation of what Nietzsche aims at with *Bildung*, to foster openness and the willingness to learn, acknowledging diversity and difference, which starts with acknowledging the diversity and difference within ourselves.

Thirdly, a key element of the course is a focus on Socratic thinking. The Socratic dialogue resembles what Nietzsche refers to as *Bildung* and Hadot as philosophy as a dialogue with oneself as well as with others. One full day is devoted to engaging in a Socratic dialogue, by means of the ‘hourglass model’ method introduced by Jos Kessels (Kessels 2001), in which participants are first invited to formulate a fundamental ethical question based on their experiences in the military organization (such as ‘What is integrity?’ or ‘What is good leadership?’). This question is examined within the context of a personal, concrete experience of one of the participants (i.e. ‘the case’), in which ‘integrity’ or ‘leadership’ is at stake. Subsequently, the participants develop answers and identify values or principles which are related to the fundamental question and the concrete experience. These values or principles not only apply to this specific experience but may also be valid in a broader sense. The direction within this moral inquiry, from the broad and abstract fundamental question, to the concrete case and back to answers and general values or principles, resembles the figure of an hourglass. Biases, assumptions and values that direct the experience are reflected upon. This is also referred to as *elenchus*, the process of ‘approximation, refutation and reformulation’ (Miller 2007, p.66). The answer to the question, although relevant, is not the most important part of the dialogue; most important is experiencing the process of engaging in a dialogue together and reflecting on the presented values and the ability to think together and develop openness to new ideas and suggestions.

Fourthly, inspired by Foucault, recognizing and discussing power relations is a crucial element of the course, focusing on tensions with regard to the power relations participants themselves experience in their daily practice. A short introduction on the work of Nietzsche, Foucault and Hadot is followed by a session in which the participants are asked if they recognize the power relations discussed by Foucault in their own practice. Participants

reflect on how they regard freedom and the possibility of freedom practices in the military organization. This element of the course will be elaborated on in the example below.

Example: Working on awareness

In this section we present an example of how art-of-living might be applied in the practice of ethics education. In this example Foucauldian concepts regarding the art-of-living are translated and applied to the daily practice of participants who participate in ethics education. For instance, during this session participants are asked if they recognize the power relations discussed by Foucault in their own practice. They are invited to reflect on Foucault’s notion of freedom and the possibility of freedom practices in the military organization. Every participant is asked to think about the following question: ‘*Am I imprisoned or can I use my freedom within this organization?*’ This question relates to a previous session which includes both an introduction to Foucauldian art-of-living and the experience of watching the movie *Das Experiment*. This movie shows that power relations, even inside a prison, remain mobile. The question mentioned above aims to motivate all participants to reflect on power relations and freedom practices based on their own experiences, in order to allow for an in depth-discussion while at the same time providing focus. Based on previous interaction with the group, the session is structured by asking each individual participant to express their first reaction with regard to the question posed, followed by a group discussion.

Anna is the first one to respond. She states: ‘I feel free inside this prison but I know that I am not. The prison bars are the agreements we made, I don’t really mind’. Hank, who sits next to her, continues: ‘power is indeed important in our organization, in fact the clear rules within our organization are a good thing. I may be imprisoned, but isn’t that also what is needed in a military organization? Frank agrees with this point, he argues ‘we need these clear frameworks even though it implies a loss of freedom and thus a possible obstacle to freedom practices’. Josh adds ‘the clear structures in the organization provide me with a sense of security, there is structure and hierarchy I know where I am at’. Peter argues that: ‘I know I am imprisoned but joined the organization myself, it doesn’t worry me. I’m in prison but am fine with it’. Max states: ‘I feel like I wear an ankle monitor, I have some freedom, as long as I display the required conduct.’ Roy argues that: I believe that I can use freedom to make my own choices on important occasions, or when it is necessary. Hank asks: ‘what kind of occasions are you referring to?’ Roy: ‘for instance with regard to the situation I described earlier in Afghanistan, I received an order but I trusted my own judgement’. Rob argues: ‘I think that in the gaps between the prison bars, I can free myself, which I do heavy-handedly, if necessary’.

Following this first round, the participants engage in a plenary conversation about the statements. Peter starts, ‘perhaps we are, to some extent, like the prisoners in the prison, the panopticon, who have internalized the disciplinary power and the military values. We feel free, but if we think about it, we know we are not’. Roy asks the other participants:

‘what impediments do you encounter in the organization when you try to exercise your own freedom and make your own choices?’. Hank answers, ‘It is not easy, I recognize that there are situations when these (freedom) practices are needed. ... While I definitely consider myself as very loyal to the organization, there may also be limits to loyalty. For instance, why did I accept shortages of equipment and material, which can put our safety at risk?’. Roy notes: ‘We have this ‘can do mentality’, we are all very loyal, that is what is expected of us’. Hank adds: ‘Perhaps we should be instructed that we have a personal responsibility, this will make it easier to use freedom’. The other participants seem to agree with this point of view. This in turn makes Anna pose the question: ‘by whom should we be instructed? Do we need someone else in order for us to engage in freedom-practices?’

During this session participants recognize Foucault’s concepts of normalization (e.g. judgements about what is considered normal and what is not) and disciplinary technology (e.g. the production of the behavior of individuals by techniques of control such as hierarchical observation, normative judgements and examination) within the military organization by addressing concrete experiences. In fact, as some participants argue, these power relations also produce security and safety. Does this make it hard to engage in freedom practices? Some participants argue that they feel free but know they are not. Although the power relations are regarded as strong, some participants mention that rules need not always be followed blindly. Roy explicitly refers to a situation in which he trusted his own judgment instead of following orders. Hank starts a discussion on the limits of loyalty and the need for instructions on personal responsibility. In the end, Anna highlights the ambiguity of this very idea, questioning whether responsibility can be the result of processes of instruction. The discussion can make the participants aware that power relations cannot be ignored or put aside, but that some room for freedom-practices is needed.

Discussion

In this section, we reflect on the case presented above, considering two sets of issues. First, we focus on the military socialization process and the internalization of power relations by soldiers. This leads us to elaborate on the tensions participants experience between existing power relations, internalized through the military socialization process, and the possibility of ethics by engaging in freedom practices. Second, we turn to the relation between awareness of power relations and freedom practices, following the distinction between ‘being free’ and ‘willing oneself free’ made by Simone de Beauvoir (1947), in order to understand the challenge for military personnel to engage in freedom practices and the relevance of Foucauldian art-of-living for ethics education in a military organization.

Military socialization and the internalization of power relations

The military organization is known for its strong hierarchy, uniformity and lack of privacy and conformity to authoritarian interpretation of rules. Within such an organization there seems to be little room for agency or autonomy (Hardy & Clegg 2006). Are participants in the train-the-trainer course on military ethics able to modify power relations on ‘important occasions’? With reference to Foucault, to what extent are they different from the inmates in the panopticon with their internalized gaze? Today, it is quite common for (Western) armed forces to pay attention to military ethics and integrity in education and training programs. This includes empowering people to say ‘no’ when it is legally and, or ethically appropriate (Robinson 2008; Coleman 2013). Notably, power is an interesting concept in this context. It is often seen as something you can have, as the ability to get other people to do what you want them to do, even against their will (Weber 1978). Foucault introduced a different concept of power, which he refers to as power relations. Power relations are ways in which we become normalized through routine aspects, which are in play in the society at large but equally in our organizations. Supervision, routinization, formalization and legalization result in control of employee behavior, dispositions and identity formation (Hardy & Clegg 2006). All of us operate within a web of power relations. These power relations are not easily modified by saying ‘no’ when it is legally and, or ethically appropriate, as it is difficult to even become aware of the influence and workings of these power relations in the first place.

In general, the socialization process in the military organization is aimed at forming soldiers to be subjected to the will of their superiors and obey orders. The military training and instruction program aims to ‘transform’ young civilians—often nicknamed ‘denims’—into soldiers. A uniformed profession, such as that of a soldier, not only literally means learning to wear a uniform, but also pertains to a ‘uniform for the inner self’ (van Baarle et. al. 2015).

Socialization in the armed forces generally takes places in a residential context. For example, in the Netherlands, officers’ training programs comprises more than four years of internal training. Upon entrance, the self is, through the socialization processes, at least partly, mortified (Goffman 1961) and substituted by military morality. For instance, group loyalty is a key value in the armed forces, which is ‘often emphasized to military personnel’ (Coleman 2013, p. 48). This loyalty does not primarily concern loyalty to personal values, but rather ‘loyalty towards one’s peers, one’s group, one’s organization or nation’ (Olsthoorn 2011, p.69). In that sense it is internally focused on the ‘we’ rather than on the ‘I’, or on others. The example shows that this kind of loyalty is felt so deeply, that it is rather difficult to recognize situations which may demand going against this feeling.

Each military unit has its own rituals and practices and unwritten traditional values that the unit conveys through initiation rituals. As Foucault states, during this socialization period, military personnel are produced and power relations are internalized. During their socialization process, they learn to incorporate existing power relations into their sense

of self. These power relations are focused on the importance of group bonding rather than valuing one's autonomy and the ability to think for oneself. Operational deployment requires teamwork. Military training therefore aims to develop both horizontal and vertical cohesion (Kirke 2009; Winslow 1999). Horizontal cohesion involves liaising with colleagues and vertical cohesion involves allegiance to the commander.

Foucault states that power relations are only possible insofar people are free; as long as there is not a situation of domination, power relations remain mobile and therefore open to the possibility of change (Foucault 1997). As the example shows, there are indeed situations that participants of the train-the-trainer course mention, that illustrate their ability to recognize 'important occasions', where they were able to address the moral dimension of situations and subsequently decide and act upon their moral judgement (see also, van Baarle, Hartman, Verweij, Molewijk, & Widdershoven 2017). However, participants do experience tensions between the culture and characteristics of the military organization on the one hand and acting upon their moral judgement on the other hand. Within the armed forces it is common to think in a framework of legality, hierarchy and loyalty, standards, regulations and obligations (van Baarle, Hartman, Verweij, Molewijk, & Widdershoven 2017). These elements can turn into power relations which are perceived as 'normal', which might make it difficult to recognize them in moral dilemmas and that, in turn, might make it difficult to deliberate and to act upon one's judgement.

To determine when it is appropriate to break with communal norms and expectations is not always easy. It may be clear in a situation in which for instance unlawful orders are given, yet in many other cases, freedom practices, making choices and modifying power relations, are not self-evident. In order to further explore the relevance of freedom practices in a military context, we will briefly elaborate on the distinction between 'being free' and 'willing oneself free', introduced by Simone de Beauvoir.

From 'Being free' to 'willing oneself free'

For Foucault, ethics is the practice of freedom, informed by reflection (Foucault 1997). In order to reflect on power relations and on how to practice one's freedom, the first step is to become aware of existing power relations. What is the relevance of becoming aware of power relations during ethics education?

The example described above illustrates that participants recognize what is expected of them in the military organization. Several participants argue that, for them, power relations within the organization are a good thing, even though it may limit the possibility of freedom practices. The example shows that existing power relations have a positive effect as it provides participants with a sense of safety and structure. Freedom practices, on the other hand, seem to be marked by uncertainty.

In the essay '*Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*' (1947), De Beauvoir distinguishes between *être libre* (being free) and *se vouloir libre* (willing oneself free). Being free can be viewed as the release from the 'chains' of the restricting and confining dogmas of for instance the church and repressive political systems. Yet, being free says nothing about what to do with this freedom. De Beauvoir acknowledges that the freedom to shape one's own life, to will oneself free, is not self-evident, but difficult. When engaging in freedom practices, the options are overwhelming. Everything is possible; many roads can be taken. Yet, since two or more roads cannot be taken simultaneously, the question which way to choose arises. The choice between available paths has to be contemplated, discussed, considered and reconsidered, for the choice one makes will have an impact on all subsequent choices. But, what option should be chosen from the dazzling myriad of possibilities? Moreover, what can be expected of one's ability to choose when the chains of the past have been the only focus point? Can one make an adequate choice, a responsible choice? Especially for people who have worked most of their lives in a hierarchical and highly structured organization, engaging in freedom practices is challenging.

Becoming aware of the power relations does not necessarily imply being able to choose and to 'will oneself free' (de Beauvoir 1947, p.133). Fostering freedom practices assumes a will and ability to modify existing power relations, if necessary. This presupposes that participants of ethics training courses have the courage to leave the security and safety of existing frameworks behind. Ethics education may help to find free space, to experiment with a different type of behavior. By openly discussing the fact that power relations produce positive effects, but also have limitations, it may become possible to engage in a dialogue about the challenges of freedom practices in a military context and the way in which one can deal with them. The techniques used in the training course, focusing on delaying judgments, listening to others and fostering dialogue, can in themselves provide room for experiencing the possibility of not merely accepting given rules, but creating room for inquiry about what is good in a specific situation. Thus, the training course may create a context in which participants become acquainted with what 'willing oneself free' might entail.

Ethics courses based on the art-of-living aim at fostering self-awareness and a reflexive attitude towards power relations and the exploration of freedom practices. Without advocating that reflection and deliberation should be practiced on the battlefield or in situations that favor decisive and quick action, techniques fostering openness and dialogue may help participants to experience the possibility of choice with regard to moral dilemmas and to open up ways and alternatives for decision-making. Ethics education based on Foucauldian art-of-living is relevant for ethics education as it aims at fostering the ability to reflect critically on what happens in term of power relations and related values during 'socialization processes' as well as in daily work practice. As such, it can assist participants to understand their own values as well as those of others as they are embedded in the power relations that are part of social practices, and foster the willingness of participants to learn

to think for themselves, to make adequate conscious decisions and as such to engage in freedom practices, leading to morally responsible decision-making.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore how Foucault's ideas on ethics can be used as a foundation of ethics education. First, ideas regarding art-of-living were explored in the work of Nietzsche, Foucault and Hadot. Secondly, by means of a concrete example taken from a train-the-trainer course on military ethics, we examined the relevance of working with this approach.

Nietzsche's concept of *Bildung* can be viewed as a key element in the Foucauldian foundation for ethics education as art-of-living. As illustrated it aims at freeing a person, learning people to critically reflect on themselves as well as on others. Foucauldian art-of-living aims at fostering awareness of power relations by which we are constructed. It also aims at empowering people to use space for freedom-practices, to actively choose and act upon certain values. Hadot states that philosophy is not purely an academic exercise, but rather, an education in living. Education should thus be practical; it requires effort and training. Hadot's work further stresses that the art-of-living is never a purely individual exercise, as one always remains part of complex power relations with others.

A Foucauldian art-of-living seems to be relevant for ethics education because it assists people to discover themselves in their concrete situation, in other words, to become aware of the power relations which they are part of. Such reflections assist people to see the 'whole' of a moral dilemma and their place in it: which will help them to come to a morally responsible decision (i.e. a decision that takes the different points of view of the stakeholders in question into account). Power relations imply the possibility of ethics, of choice and the possibility of modifying these power relations through freedom-practices. Soldiers may be produced by power relations but they can also be stimulated to think for themselves, to become aware of tensions between values (such as loyalty and safety), and to form their own morally responsible judgment.

If the aim of ethics education is to assist professionals to carry out the task entrusted to the profession as honorably and correctly as possible, the first step might be to develop moral self-awareness or moral sensitivity (Cook 2013). The work of Foucault can be of help in understanding the complexity of fostering this self-awareness. 'The appreciation of individuals as sophisticatedly agentic includes recognizing that their 'choices' are made within frameworks of disciplinary power which both enable and restrict their scope for discursive manoeuvre' (Thornborrow & Brown 2009 p.355).

Foucauldian art-of-living does not provide a clear structure through which one can arrive at a morally responsible decision. However, techniques with regard to reflection, listening and dialogue may enable people to become aware of power relations and to investigate

alternative and possibly more adequate options, enlarging the space for freedom-practices within organizations. Acknowledging and discussing power relations and tensions, can be regarded as both a pre-condition for choosing how to deal with moral dilemmas and as part of ethical deliberation and decision-making.

In this article we have examined an example from a training based on Foucauldian art-of-living. The example shows that participants can become aware of existing power relations, which opens the door to the possibility of individual empowerment. Even though, it is important to acknowledge that the freedom to shape one's own life is not self-evident, ethics education based on Foucauldian art-of-living assists in fostering awareness of existing power relations in order for participants to engage in freedom practices and adequate decision-making. Ethics education focusing on awareness of and reflection on power relations and active self-formation within existing power relations can offer an opportunity for organizations and their employees to understand how they have come to believe what they value, to help them understand their own values as well as those of others and assist employees in active reflection and decision-making when faced with complex moral dilemmas in their daily practice.

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Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Dancing boys and the moral dilemmas of military missions; the practice of bacha bazi in Afghanistan

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There he [lieutenant of the Afghan National Army] was, in bed with a “chai boy” in the spoons position. I thought: “Bloody hell, with a child? Is that normal?” But in their eyes it is normal. It is their culture, so you just close the door, because what else can you do? You can’t really pull that guy out of bed, but those are the moments when you really want to do something (Major in the Marine Corps, serving as a member of an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team)

Introduction

In 2010, the *Frontline* news program of PBS in the United States brought the harrowing situation of the dancing boys in Afghanistan to worldwide attention by broadcasting a documentary entitled “The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan.” In the documentary, Afghan journalist Najibullah Quraishi sketches the lives of these often impoverished young “entertainers,” who live in the service of affluent and influential Afghans. The boys are dressed as women and wear makeup in order to perform dances for their masters. This is, however, not as innocent as it seems, as the boys are then taken to the home of the highest bidder. This practice, in which an adult man (*bacha baz*) has a sexual relationship with a preadolescent boy (*bacha beeresh*, boys without beards) is called *bacha bazi* (Persian for “boy play”). The boy is taken into the family or social circle of the man and is sometimes given some form of special payment and/or financial support for his family. The boy is a status symbol and sexual partner to the influential men in question.

The dancing boys of Afghanistan documentary gave rise to significant responses. The documentary was, however, not the first time that Western media channels had highlighted this practice.² In 2009, Travis Schouten, a former corporal of the Canadian Armed Forces, reported on the rape of an Afghan boy by members of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) on a Canadian compound just outside Kandahar. The events, reported in the *Ottawa Citizen* of September 21, 2009, had taken place in 2006.³ While the Canadian Armed Forces tried to keep a lid on the incident and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ignored the affair, Schouten endeavored to bring the issue to the public’s attention. Moreover, he wanted clear guidelines to be drawn up on what action military personnel should take and whom they should report to in the event of witnessing sexual abuse.⁴ He was not the only one to express concern. NATO personnel in Afghanistan have similar stories to tell. They talk of catamites or “chai boys” (tea boys), that is, boys wearing makeup who are the servants of,

1 “The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan”; Aroussi, “Women, Peace and Security,” 589.

2 *The Kite Runner* (2003), a book by Khaled Hosseini, also delves into the practice of *bacha bazi*. The main character, Amir, sets out to search for Sohrab, the son of his best friend, who was taken by the Taliban. Amir finds Sohrab in a soldier’s house, where he is forced to dance while wearing women’s clothes. After Amir has rescued Sohrab from the Taliban, he says: “I’m so dirty and full of sin. The bad man and the other two did things to me” (278).

3 Pugliese, “Former Soldier Still Fights to Protect Afghan Boys from Abuse”; Pugliese, “Sex Abuse and Silence Exposed.”

4 “T Schouten.”

among others, police and army commanders and who do more “chores” than just making the tea. These stories inspired us to study the practice of *bacha bazi*.

There are some studies and more documentaries highlighting the practice of *bacha bazi*.⁵ However, little attention is given to how international military personnel operating in this region approach the issue, which in their eyes is a morally and culturally critical situation. In her work on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and war crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Milli Lake specifically addressed the issue of sexual and gender-based violence, including that against boys.⁶ However, her work dealt with sexual and gender-based violence typically committed by combatants and the prosecution of those crimes under international law. Her work does not address the roles of international forces or their responsibility and efforts to prevent the crimes. Our work examines the responsibility and efforts of international forces in Afghanistan to deal with sexual violence against boys.

Since there is a remarkable lack of gender-specific data on sexual violence toward men in the international military operations literature, our aim is to contribute to the discourse on the responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine, concentrating on gender-based violence toward boys in the armed conflict in Afghanistan.⁷ In Afghanistan, large sections of vulnerable civilians are exposed to moral dangers, including sexual violence, which can be explained by the complete collapse of the state and society after decades of war. The focus in this chapter is on how Dutch military personnel act when faced with sexual violence regarding young boys, having the responsibility to protect and at the same time also having to maintain good relations with their local partners. First, we describe a number of theoretical notions. Secondly, we examine the background of *bacha bazi* in Afghanistan and the Dutch and international guidelines regarding *bacha bazi*. Finally, we discuss what Dutch military personnel did when faced with *bacha bazi* and give a number of recommendations for future international missions.

Moral dilemmas: Morally and culturally critical situations

The practice of *bacha bazi* contradicts the legal standards and moral values of most individual members of the Dutch military on how to behave toward children. Moral and cultural values are considered to be relative, in terms of both time and place. Values define what is important and right and serve as the basis of norms within societies.⁸ While moral values can be personal or group-based, cultural values belong to a specific group of people. Cultural values deal not only with morals, but also with “knowledge, art, belief and any other capabilities

5 Jalalzai, *Child Sex, Bacha Bazi and Prostitution in Afghanistan*; Leatherman, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict*.

6 Lake, “Ending Impunity for Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes,” 1–32.

7 Carpenter, “Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations,” 97.

8 Frey, *Eye Juggling*; Verweij, “Morele Professionaliteit In de Militaire Praktijk,” 126–138.

and habits acquired by man as a member of society.⁹ In the eyes of our respondents, sexual contact with children, both girls and boys, is unacceptable. Dutch military personnel experienced bacha bazi as a morally and culturally critical situation.¹⁰ These are defined as situations in which the conduct of the local population in a deployment area (i.e., a different culture) is experienced as conflicting with one's own personal moral and cultural values. The issue of bacha bazi is one of the morally and culturally critical situations most mentioned by our respondents, members of the Royal Netherlands Army with deployment experience in Afghanistan.

Some members of the Dutch military experience these situations as a moral dilemma, owing to the fact that some of their local counterparts may be involved. We define a moral dilemma as a situation in which there is a conflict between two or more moral values that cannot be respected simultaneously.¹¹ Dealing with moral questions requires moral competence.¹² Moral competence involves people knowing what is expected of them and being prepared to act accordingly. Six elements are important for moral competence. First is becoming aware of your own values and the values that may be at stake in a given situation. One can gauge the moral dimension of a situation only if one is capable of recognizing the values that are being violated. The next step is to make a judgment about the situation and communicate it. Finally, is the preparedness to act upon the judgment and be accountable for the choice made in the given situation.¹³

Although a number of military personnel feel that values clash in the case of bacha bazi, they are not clear on what action they should take. Some respondents indicated that the chai boys are part of Afghan culture and used this argument as a reason for taking no action. A particular view of Afghan culture and the difference with Western culture is constructed, in which the phenomenon of chai boys are viewed as normal in the context of Afghanistan.¹⁴ This can be framed as orientalism, which according to Edward Said has "less to do with the regions and people they essentialize, exoticize and objectify than with the conditions under which the discourses were produced."¹⁵ This is also a clear culturally and morally relativist point of view. Moral and cultural relativism is based on the observation that different cultures have different moral standards, which is merely descriptive. Normative moral relativism holds that because nobody is right or wrong, we ought to tolerate the behavior of others even when we disagree with their morality.¹⁶ There are several important drawbacks to moral relativism. For example, you can never criticize cultures (including your own, even if slavery

9 Frey, *Eye Juggling*; Verweij, "Morele Professionaliteit in de Militaire Praktijk."

10 Maas, "Confrontaties Met Moreel Kritische Situaties."

11 Statman, *Moral Dilemmas*, 32; Baarda and Verweij, "Military Ethics", 2.

12 Karssing, *Morele Competentie in Organisaties*, 39; Widdershoven, "Reflectie als Interventie"; Wortel and Bosch, "Strengthening Moral Competence," 17-35; Van Luijk and Dubbink, "Moral Competence," 11-17.

13 Verweij, "Het Belang Van Militaire Ethiek Voor de Krijgsmacht," 28-30; Wortel, "Strengthening Moral Competence."

14 Stanski, "So These Folks are Aggressive," 73-94.

15 Said, *Orientalism*, 95. Also see Stepputat, "Knowledge Production in the Security-Development Nexus," 440.

16 Levi, *Moral Relativism*; Lukes, *Moral Relativism*; Whetham, "The Challenge of Ethical Relativism in Coalition Operations," 302-316.

or genocide takes place), making moral change very problematical.¹⁷ As Russell Blackford notes, it is important that we do not tolerate everything, nor should we adopt a quietism about moral traditions that cause hardship and suffering. Equally, we should not passively accept the moral norms of our own societies, when they are ineffective, counterproductive, or simply unnecessary.¹⁸

Method

Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with Dutch military personnel on morally and culturally critical situations they encountered during their deployments. Of the twenty-nine respondents, twenty-two had been deployed to Afghanistan (to Kabul, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Deh Rawod, and Mazar-e Sharif, among other places) for at least one term (three to six months). During the interviews only open questions were asked, such as, "Can you give us examples of cultural differences which conflict with your values?" The Dutch respondents mentioned young boys who were sexually assaulted in Afghanistan. Although we did not ask about sexual violence explicitly, it was mentioned as a morally and culturally critical situation with great regularity. Based on the data we decided to focus on this particular morally and culturally critical situation. As described, we followed the grounded theory approach.¹⁹

During lessons organized by the military in dealing with dilemmas and moral judgments, Dutch military personnel are asked to identify a moral dilemma that they have encountered in their military practice.²⁰ Course participants often refer to bacha bazi as a moral dilemma. As in the interviews we conducted, course participants were not asked explicitly about bacha bazi, yet they often mentioned it. On the basis of this information, five additional in-depth interviews were conducted with Dutch military personnel who had been deployed to Afghanistan and who had specifically referred to the practice of bacha bazi during the military lessons. Furthermore, sixteen interviews about morally and culturally critical situations were held with Dutch police trainers in Kunduz. Of the total of fifty interviews, forty-five of the interviewees were men and five were women, varying in rank from private to colonel and being from all four services of the Royal Netherlands Army. The interviews were recorded and the transcriptions sent to the interviewees for a member check. Names and other means of identification were changed in order to guarantee anonymity of those interviewed.

17 Levi, *Moral Relativism*; Lukes, *Moral Relativism*; Rachels and Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Europe.

18 Blackford, "Book Review: Sam Harris' *The Moral Landscape*," 53-62.

19 Strauss and Corbin, "Grounded Theory Methodology," 191-210; Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*.

20 Given during the "Train the Trainer" Course in Military Ethics for Non-Commissioned Officers and during lessons on ethics that are part of Intermediate Defence Studies.

Furthermore, a study was carried out into the literature available on bacha bazi in general and on specific Afghan, Dutch, and international guidelines regarding bacha bazi. It is striking that scholarly literature on the subject is restricted to research from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Currently, the issue is receiving attention mainly from international and nongovernmental organizations. In addition to the available literature, a short field study was conducted in the Kunduz area in October 2012. Observations were made at the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) training areas and two group discussions were held with patrolmen of the AUP in Kunduz, representing various ranks, age groups, and ethnicities. Nine in-depth interviews were held with various parties. Six interviews were conducted with officers of the ANSF working at the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Afghanistan or for various police services, such as the Afghan National Civil Police in the Kabul region. Permission was not given to record a number of these interviews on account of Afghan Ministry of Defense restrictions and the protection of privacy. Two interpreters from the Kunduz area, working at that time for NATO, were also interviewed. Finally, an Afghan humanitarian aid worker, who had been active in both the United Kingdom and Afghanistan, was also interviewed. We also spoke to a NATO interpreter. Detailed notes were made during all of these interviews. All of these interviews were about respondents' views on bacha bazi and the reactions of international military personnel confronted with bacha bazi situations.²¹

The field study was hampered by the unstable security situation. As a result, conducting interviews with the local civilian population was too dangerous, and the first author could travel outside the base only with the help of the Dutch military. The quality and kind of data collected is also influenced by the complex relationships resulting from the different aspects of our identity in different contexts.²² We are aware that our "multiple positionalities" (i.e., gender, nationality, and civilian status) influenced our research process.²³ As female civilian researchers in a masculine military context, we are also aware of our own position, in Afghanistan as well as in the Netherlands defense establishment. For example, Dutch military respondents sometimes assumed that we as civilian women (one of us being a mother) would find it shocking to hear that the practice of bacha bazi gradually becomes more or less normal to them.

It is a fact that that our work was to a certain extent facilitated by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The translators we used were working for NATO and physical access and safety was provided by the Dutch military. All of these unavoidable factors may have influenced our data.²⁴ On the ground, we were automatically associated with, and even perceived to be, Western peacekeepers. Moreover, Afghan respondents were giving their answers on the question of bacha bazi to a female Dutch researcher from their positions as

²¹ Apart from four of the five additional in-depth interviews, all interviews with Dutch military personnel and with Afghan respondents were conducted by the first author, Michelle Schut, in the context of her Ph.D. research on morally and culturally critical situations in the interaction with the local population during military deployment.

²² Loftsdóttir, "Never Forgetting?," 303-317.

²³ Schön, *The Reflective Turn*, 164; Henry, Higate, and Sanghera, "Positionality and Power," 467-482.

²⁴ Henry, "Positionality and Power."

security officials. It is possible that they simply gave politically correct answers. A further complicating factor is that the practice of bacha bazi is an open secret in Afghanistan and it is not talked about in public.²⁵ This was vividly demonstrated during a group interview with AUP officers in Kunduz. After one young policeman in the group, who had seen the bacha bazi phenomenon during a party in a rural area, responded that "it is OK," the rest of the group immediately reacted by saying "no, it is not OK" and then quickly started talking about something else, avoiding the subject.

Bacha bazi

In Afghanistan, young boys are sometimes kidnapped, taken as orphans, or sold by their parents to be used for entertainment and sex. Over half of our Afghan respondents indicate that these boys are abused. The boys, who are sometimes no more than eleven years old, are selected for their height and beauty. The young boys are valued for "their beauty and, implicit in this . . . , the promise of erotic fulfilment and pleasure."²⁶ The more attractive the boy, the more prestige the adult man (bacha baz) "owner" receives. To the bacha baz, the boy is a status symbol. Boys who are good performers are respected and often have the chance to give dancing lessons, earn a reasonable wage, and, in some cases, become a bacha baz themselves. It is a vicious circle.²⁷ For most of the other boys, however, future prospects are less rosy. They are left without education or money. Moreover, they are stigmatized, which makes it even harder to earn a living.

The issue of bacha bazi should be understood in its context, most notably the state of the Afghan security sector, civil-military relations in Afghanistan, Afghan history, and the social conditions in Afghanistan. Violence against civilians, including sexual violence, tends to be more common in armed forces or armed groups and in societies with dysfunctional accountability and command structures.²⁸ It is also important to note that attention for men and boys as victims of sexual and gender-based violence is relatively new. Recent reports indicate that the problem might be dramatically underestimated.²⁹

In the existing literature on the subject of bacha bazi, various explanations are mentioned. Afghanistan's turbulent history is quoted as one of the main reasons for large numbers of boys being vulnerable to sexual abuse. In general terms, the protection of boys by the family is reduced, and large numbers of boys are out in the open looking for work or become

²⁵ At the beginning of the interviews, respondents were reluctant and careful in their answers.

²⁶ De Lind van Wijngaarden and Bushra, "Male Adolescent Concubinage in Peshawar, Northwestern Pakistan," 1068.

²⁷ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, 133.

²⁸ Baaz and Stern, "The Complexity of Violence"; Horwood, *The Shame of War*.

²⁹ Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence," 83-103; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Issues Guidelines on Protection of Male Rape Victims*; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Working with Men and Boy Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Forced Displacement*; Stor, "The Rape of Men."

migrants.³⁰ The distinction between the private and public domains in Afghan culture, particularly regarding showing affection, is another explanation given for the existence of bacha bazi.³¹ As noted by John Frederick, “While affectionate behaviour between males and females in public is not tolerated, between males it is openly demonstrated.”³²

Another notable explanation in literature for bacha bazi is that it could be viewed as an Afghan custom owing to the fact that it is said to have been practiced as early as the Middle Ages.³³ There are various expressions of the beauty of boys in old poems, songs, and texts, proving that the practice has existed for centuries.³⁴ For example, there is a written text dating back to 1041 C.E. describing the adoration of young boys: “You know how deep was the love in your eyes kindled within my soul, or how great was my suffering! Bless my beloved! He wished to visit me but could not come near me because of his tear-drowned eyes . . . wine made him obedient to all my wishes.”³⁵ Presently, statements concerning the beauty of young boys are also made in public, as can be seen in a documentary called *Taliban Country*, where Jan Mohammed, at that time governor and chief of police, says the following about the photographs of young boys found at a suspect’s house: “Where did you find these boys? O Allah, what good looks! Aren’t they heavenly creatures? What beautiful boys they are. I wish I was young again. They are more beautiful than ten women. . . . We will take him [the suspect] along with us and for a few nights he will keep us entertained.”³⁶ Although the literature and examples show that the practice exists, we would be hesitant to refer to it as Afghan culture. First of all, it is likely that the practice is not an accepted social norm, nor is it the main culture in Afghanistan. It can simply be a subculture of wealthy and influential men. Moreover, this can be a practice that they can continue due to the security gap and disintegration of the state and society after decades of war. Above that, this practice also seems to contradict Islamic norms in Afghanistan. For example, the boys may often be considered to have breached their family’s honor, or commit suicide, which suggests that the practice is far from being well accepted in Afghan culture.

Bacha bazi is not called homosexuality in Afghanistan. Homosexuality is sex between men, but young boys are not yet men. These boys have a feminized role in terms of appearance and conduct.³⁷ The male perpetrator is masculinized as the practice gives him (more) power.³⁸ As stated by Charli Carpenter, “The violence is gender-based owing to configurations of gender

30 Slugget, *Mapping of Psychosocial Support for Girls and Boys Affected by Child Sexual Abuse*; Khan, *Everybody Knows, but Nobody Knows*, 19; Frederick, *Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Boys in South Asia*, 32; Lee-Koo, “Not Suitable for Children,” 478.

31 Khan, *Everybody Knows, but Nobody Knows*; De Lind van Wijngaarden, “Male Adolescent Concubinage.”

32 Frederick, *Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Boys in South Asia*.

33 Jenkins, *Male Sexuality, Diversity and Culture*; Leatherman, *Sexual Violence*; Khan, *Rapid Assessment of Male Vulnerabilities*.

34 De Lind van Wijngaarden, “Male Adolescent Concubinage.”

35 Khan, *Rapid Assessment of Male Vulnerabilities*.

36 “Taliban Country.”

37 Khan, *Rapid Assessment of Male Vulnerabilities*; De Lind van Wijngaarden, “Male Adolescent Concubinage.”

38 Skjelsbaek. “Sexual Violence in Times of War,” 69–84.

ideas that justify or naturalize it.”³⁹ Since pederasty and pedophilia are not applicable to boy play in Afghanistan, we will continue to use the term “bacha bazi” or “boy play.”⁴⁰

Perception of bacha bazi in Afghanistan

Currently, there is no legislation in force that explicitly refers to bacha bazi, but there are regulations concerning anal sex, pederasty, sexual abuse, and the exploitation of children, including the Rome Statute of the ICC.⁴¹ Although Afghan legislation does not specifically mention the term “bacha bazi,” it does state that child abuse and pederasty are punishable offenses. Furthermore, Afghanistan has signed international treaties and has a policy to protect children, including the National Plan of Action against Child Trafficking 2004, the National Strategy for Children at Risk 2008, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. Though it is clear that bacha bazi is against Afghan law, in practice the law is often not enforced.

According to the Afghan respondents, the big problems are that the numbers of police personnel are too low and the authorities are unable to mete out the applicable punishments. This is characteristic for a fragile state such as postwar Afghanistan, where security sector reform has failed to facilitate good governance and police reform.⁴² The security gap and weakness of government make the arrest and punishment of the bacha bazi by ANSF personnel and the Afghan authorities difficult. Currently, the practice of bacha bazi is said to be on the rise again, owing to the fact that the bacha bazi is not prosecuted by the Afghan government, since most government organizations are still mainly located in urban areas and provincial administrative centers.⁴³ A further factor is that the safe shelters for these boys are located only in the major city. Respondents pointed out that shelters do help the boys make a better future. Since the boys typically cannot return to their families because their own honor and their families’ honor has been tarnished, it seems that shelter would be the best solution for dealing with the current problem.

A critical question that came out in our study is whether the practice is accepted by a broad segment of the population or whether it is accepted only by male local leaders. According to Shivananda Khan, in some parts of Afghanistan bacha bazi is normal: “Sexual exploitation and/or abuse of adolescent males by older men . . . can, in some parts of the country, be considered a social norm within certain segments of Afghanistan society, particularly

39 Carpenter, “Recognizing Gender-Based Violence.”

40 Jenkins, *Male Sexuality, Diversity and Culture*; Khan, *Rapid Assessment of Male Vulnerabilities*.

41 Penal Code 1975, Section 427; Civil Code, Section 249; Labour Code, Constitution of Afghanistan, Section 49.

42 Sedra, “Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan,” 94–110; Murray, “Police-Building in Afghanistan,” 108–126; Friesendorf, “Paramilitarization and Security Sector Reform,” 79–95.

43 Barfield, *Afghan Customary Law and Its Relationship to Formal Judicial Institutions*, 26.

among certain populations”.⁴⁴ However, Catherine Norman’s report on the Afghan police in Helmand shows that families actively complain about the behavior of the Afghan police, who are known to rape boys.⁴⁵ Furthermore, some modern Afghan songs explicitly demonstrate that many Afghans find the practice disgusting. A clear example can be found in the lyrics of a song by Suhell and Umaira Sadiqzadah simply entitled “Bacha Bazi”: “Enough with this boy play / Our country’s name has gone bad / You have taken the boys’ respect and honor away / With this nasty act you are not getting anywhere.”⁴⁶ Just as the aforementioned lyrics to modern popular songs, the servants of the law also speak out against bacha bazi. Moreover, 80 percent of the Afghan respondents in our study stated that bacha bazi is an immoral practice. They indicate that it contravenes the Islamic religion and that the practice goes against Islamic law and Afghan law. One of the respondents was particularly firm and fierce in his reaction to this practice among people he described as “bad people, who act like beasts.”

Boy play is not restricted to Afghanistan. Some versions of the practice have been noted in other Asian countries such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.⁴⁷ The practice was, for centuries, also institutionalized in ancient Greece, particularly in Athens and Thebes.⁴⁸ Although our study is not about boy play as it was practiced in Ancient Greece, it is interesting to note that there are quite a number of similarities between boy play in ancient Greece and the practice of bacha bazi in Afghanistan. Boy play remained quite common for thousands of years in Ancient Greece, even though the practice was criticized. It seems that it was only after the rise of Christianity and St. Paul’s strong criticism of homosexuality and pederasty that a major social shift against boy play took place.⁴⁹ How boy play is really perceived is dependent on the zeitgeist. As Foucault has pointed out both in the *History of Sexuality* (1976) and in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), we should be aware that, roughly since the nineteenth century, we have been not only influenced but also disciplined by the proliferation of the modern categories of anomaly--delinquents, the pervert--which “the technologies of discipline and technology are supposed to eliminate but never do.”⁵⁰

Bacha bazi and international military personnel guidelines

While there is no official policy regarding bacha bazi for international military personnel, several guidelines have been issued on how to behave during missions in Afghanistan. In this section, we look briefly at the primary tasks of ISAF military personnel in Afghanistan,

■ 44 Khan, *Everybody Knows, but Nobody Knows*.

45 Norman, *What Do Afghans Want from the Police?*

46 “Bacha Bazi By Suhell & Umaira Sadiqzadeh.”

47 Frederick, *Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Boys in South Asia*; De Lind van Wijngaarden, “Male Adolescent Concubinage.”

48 Percy, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece*.

49 Ibid.

50 Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*.

the legal framework of the mission in Afghanistan, and the current guidelines regarding bacha bazi. These tasks, mission goals, and legal framework are closely related to the considerations and the actual behavior of military personnel in the field including when they are faced with morally and culturally critical situations.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the appointment of Hamid Karzai as president of Afghanistan, the Netherlands has been part of ISAF. ISAF operates with the consent of the Afghan government of Karzai. The mission was authorized by the UN Security Council based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter. As part of ISAF, the Royal Netherlands Army has carried out a number of different missions in various provinces in Afghanistan. Its primary tasks are to assist the Afghan government in extending its authority throughout the country, carry out security operations in concert with the Afghan National Army in order to promote stability in the country, and support the Afghan National Police by disarming illegal combatants.⁵¹

UN resolutions give ISAF a role in protecting human rights and civilians. UN Security Council resolution 2011, for example, states, “Reaffirming that all parties to armed conflict must take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians, especially women, children and displaced persons, calling for all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and for all appropriate measures to be taken to ensure the protection of civilians.”⁵² However, ISAF troops are also guests in a sovereign state that has a police force at its disposal for law enforcement. The Afghan police have authority in the area of criminal investigation, which Dutch military personnel do not have. The reality is that there is a security gap in Afghanistan, which is one of the reasons why Western military personnel were recently training Afghan police officers.⁵³ A case of bacha bazi will, in the first instance, be judged by Afghan law. This was also the message the commander and the legal adviser gave to one of the teams of the Netherlands Police Training Group in Kunduz. He stated that “as Dutch nationals, and more specifically, as military personnel with a police observing, mentoring and liaison task, we do not have the right to take action if activities take place that are against Afghan law. It is our task to observe how the Afghan police deal with the situation and then to discuss their approach with them and provide them with further training.” Although this was a clear description of the task in hand, the commander also had some clear advice for his personnel: “If you catch them red-handed, I will back your intervention.”

In the Netherlands, all persons being deployed to another country are given information about the deployment area during mission-specific training, which is provided by the Cultural and Historical Background and Information Section of the Royal Netherlands Army. In these kinds of trainings, participants are told that bacha bazi occurs in Afghan society

■ 51 Ducheine and Pouw, *Research Paper Operaties in Afghanistan*, 332.

52 UN, “Approving Extension of International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.”

53 A security gap exists if, in a postconflict situation, there are no or insufficient numbers of security troops in place to restore and maintain public order. Dziedzic, “Introduction,” 3-18.

and are also shown footage from, among other things, the dancing boys of Afghanistan documentary. Despite this mission-oriented information and other initiatives taken by individual commanders, the Royal Netherlands Army has not drawn up specific guidelines for Dutch military personnel on what action to take when they encounter bacha bazi. The senior leadership within the defense establishment now also recognizes the moral dilemma posed by bacha bazi, particularly when a member of personnel witnesses sexual abuse. Bacha bazi is now seen as an important issue, which is one of the reasons why attention was given to it during the recent police training mission in Kunduz. The issue was discussed during in the workup period of Dutch military personnel and in the training program for Afghan police personnel. In the police training program, Afghan police personnel were given lessons on investigative procedures and Afghan legislation regarding sexual abuse of women and children.⁵⁴

The failure of the Royal Netherlands Army to provide guidelines for military personnel has shifted the responsibility for how to act in bacha bazi situations to the men and women in the field. As we gathered from both the literature and our contacts with various colleagues in the United States and Canada working in the field of ethics at the various defense academies, all coalition partners have failed to provide adequate policies for dealing with bacha bazi. In the United States, the subject seems to be avoided. American soldiers and marines have been instructed not to intervene, in some cases, even when their Afghan allies have abused boys on military bases.⁵⁵ Canada has a similar policy of “don’t look, don’t tell.”⁵⁶ In 2011, a study was published on the crisis in trust and cultural incompatibility.⁵⁷ According to this study, reports have been received from United States and Canadian military personnel regarding Afghan security personnel raping young boys.⁵⁸ In Canada, there was a great deal of media exposure for the case reported by Schouten in *Ottawa Citizen*. In 2008, the Canadian minister of defence, Peter Mackay, announced that “troops will not turn a blind eye to the abuse of children. Let us be clear: in no way, shape or form have Canadian soldiers and certainly the Canadian government ever condoned or excused allegations of sexual abuse against children in this country or anywhere else.”⁵⁹ Given the fact that bacha bazi is illegal in Afghanistan and the international forces are there to support the local forces in the development of law, one could argue that there appears to be no moral dilemma. However, there is a clash of values between supporting the development of law and addressing the violation of the physical integrity of the boys on the one hand and on the other hand, the military mission’s need to maintain good relations with local leaders, who may be involved in bacha bazi.

■ 54 Trainer’s Guide, Chapter 4.3 “Sexual abuse of women and children”. This is a guide constructed by the Netherlands Armed Forces for Dutch police trainers in Afghanistan, in possession of the authors.

55 Goldstein, “U.S. Soldiers Told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Allies.”

56 Westhead, “Don’t Look, Don’t Tell, Troops Told.”

57 Bordin, “A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility.”

58 Ibid.

59 Freeze, “Report Cites ‘Crisis in Trust’ between Afghans and NATO.”

Bacha bazi still poses a critical question for the military intervention in Afghanistan. In particular, how should military personnel be prepared for dealing with bacha bazi? Should they be expected to intervene? Up until now, we have been unable to find concrete guidelines on these relevant questions. Guidelines could, for instance, include the recommendation to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence to local or international humanitarian organizations. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has developed several guidelines for its own personnel on how to access survivors, facilitate reporting, provide protection, and deliver essential medical, legal, and social services.⁶⁰ By this failure to provide guidelines, moral responsibility seems to be shifted to the individual members of the military who encounter this practice and are consequently faced with a moral dilemma.⁶¹ That demands much of the moral competence of military personnel. However, it is clear that Afghan laws, including those relating to sexual contact with boys, must be enforced and adhered to by all persons in Afghanistan.

Understanding bacha bazi: The perspective of Dutch military personnel

The main question in this chapter is how Dutch military personnel act when they encountered bacha bazi during their deployment in Afghanistan. We address this question by examining the views of Dutch military personnel, as a case study, on what international forces experienced and their responses to the bacha bazi problem. In particular, we seek to know whether Dutch military personnel see bacha bazi as a moral dilemma and the actions they typically take when faced with bacha bazi.

Bacha bazi is one of the critical situations frequently mentioned by Dutch respondents in discussions of culture and morality during their service in Afghanistan. Dutch soldiers call the boys involved in bacha bazi chai boys, catamites, or flower boys. The local term, bacha bazi, was not used by any of the Dutch respondents. A colonel who had been deployed to Uruzgan recounted: “We had a clear case of it in the Afghan Security Guard, a boy wearing nail varnish and the rest, with a voice to match.” According to all Dutch respondents, these well-kept boys of approximately nine to ten years of age, not only make tea for senior police officers and dress up and dance for elderly men, but also are sexually abused. One Dutch female major tried to sum up the “positive” side of the bacha bazi phenomenon. She noted that “It is an honor for a boy to be selected, as it increases their status. They are given beautiful clothes and are paid. So there are some advantages for the boys. Unfortunately, they have to do something in return. I imagine that it is not very nice for chai boys working at police stations, because they have to be available to the whole group.” Most respondents from the Royal Netherlands Army see the practice in a more negative light. A lieutenant colonel who

■ 60 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Issues Guidelines*; UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *Working with Men and Boy Survivors*.

61 Although Dutch military forces will start leaving Afghanistan this year, they are likely to continue to encounter (similar) morally and culturally critical situations during future deployments to foreign countries.

had served in Kandahar and Uruzgan said, “After a party, the big shots take the boy away with them and have him sit on their laps, followed by the rest of it.” Often, the sexual abuse of these boys is only a supposition, as the lieutenant colonel further indicates: “I saw boys wearing makeup and dancing during a party, but anything else was no more than suspicion on my part.” However, there are accounts of Dutch soldiers who certainly have observed abuse taking place, such as a major who heard boys screaming during the night.

Dutch soldiers emphasized that the boys are a status symbol to the men they work for. Several Dutch respondents went on to say that the Afghans they had spoken to had told them that the practice is a result of the difference between men and women. As also noted by one of the respondents: “Women are for reproduction, men are for love and pleasure.” The strict separation of men and women was also referred to: “The stricter the division between men and women as prescribed by religion, the more often you will see this kind of thing happening.” A number of the military personnel we interviewed thought that bacha bazi is a legal practice in Afghanistan, but the majority knew that it is illegal. According to them, the problem is that many Afghans are illiterate and are consequently ignorant of the legislation in place. These examples can be interpreted as orientalist archetypes. Afghans are portrayed by our Dutch interviewees as “starkly different from and utterly inferior to Westerners.”⁶²

A number of military personnel experience the bacha bazi phenomenon as a shock or as a moral dilemma. This results not only from the practice clashing with their personal values, but also from the fact that they were unprepared by the Dutch military to deal with this phenomenon. From the start, little attention was given to the subject during pre-deployment training for Afghanistan. As a Dutch respondent stated, “During mission-specific training, we didn’t discuss this subject at all. But we did learn that we must respect local culture.” Consequently, for a number of personnel, an encounter with bacha bazi becomes a moral dilemma because they are unsure how best to deal with it. During one lesson on ethics given by one of the commanders at the Police Training Group in Kunduz, a captain raised the issue. He had personally experienced the dilemma while deployed in another part of Afghanistan and had wished to see the Royal Netherlands Army put a number of guidelines in place on how to deal with bacha bazi.

Handling the bacha bazi moral dilemma

Dealing with bacha bazi can prove to be a dilemma in terms of what action to take. Dutch soldiers often had to deliberate the values that are important to them. One commander gave an account of how he had gone with a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) to attend a meeting on power supply. On that occasion, a roughly ten-year-boy, who was under the influence of drugs, started to dance for them. As the Dutch commander stated:

He had a lot of scarfs with him and during his dance he started to throw them towards us. The interpreter explained that the one who gets the most scarfs is allowed to go with the boy. . . . Suddenly, I noticed that all of the scarfs had been thrown towards me. I found this an embarrassing situation and said, via the interpreter, that I respected their culture, but this is not the way we treat children. Fortunately, this worked out OK. Later, I was told that I had done nothing wrong and that we could carry on with our business there. Personally, I felt quite powerless as any action you take might have serious consequences.

In terms of moral competence, this soldier is aware of the clash of values such as the humane treatment of children and good relations with local commanders. Therefore, he experienced this situation as difficult and even as a moral dilemma. He communicates his judgment, that he rejects this way of treating children, but at the same time is uncertain about the consequences on the relations with the local commanders.

Cultural difference has been a frequently mentioned reason by Dutch military personnel for not intervening in bacha bazi situations. As one respondent stated, “It is a custom there, a fact of life. It is their culture. I won’t be able to change it on my own.” Another lieutenant from the Marine Corps noted, “You have to put your Western views aside.” During the course of time, soldiers started to see the custom, initially perceived as “strange,” as a normal event. As a respondent stated, “The peculiar thing is that it becomes more and more normal, which is a phenomenon known as mission creep. . . . After six months, you start to adjust and start to assimilate local customs” and “we practically never talked about it, you get used to it.”

In addition to the value of respecting local culture, other values are given as a reason for not intervening. Such reasons include consideration of the safety of Dutch troops, maintaining good relations with important and powerful men in the mission area, and the need to focus on the overall mission. As indicated by a respondent: “You have to break through a certain barrier. You have to think: ‘OK, this is too disgusting for words, but he is the police commander with jurisdiction in this area and I need information . . . so don’t think about the little boy, don’t do it!’” Dutch soldiers developed strategies for when to respond or not respond. As one respondent summed it:

When they [the Afghans] all seem to get together, such as on Thursday evenings . . . don’t get involved in that, particularly if there’s only three or four of you. If there are about a hundred of you, you would probably say something about it. . . . It might be a different story if we saw it happening in our camp, because then they would be on our territory, but now, we are on their ground. You have to work with them, carry out tasks with them and there was also some kind of threat in the air, so you don’t want to disrupt relations with them.

Soldiers learn to define the limits of their action. In the case of the above respondent, it is the location where the practice takes place and the mandate given to him. Others also have a clear idea of when they would intervene, namely if, as stated by a respondent, “he starts to play dirty games in my presence, I will certainly speak out” and “if you see someone

■
62 Stanski, “So These Folks Are Aggressive.”

being abused or see someone bleeding owing to others getting too romantic with them, then you have a right to say ‘Look at this blood! Why don’t you stop this? The boy is going to the medical post and he won’t be coming back. Go and make your own tea.’” Other members of the military were unaware of their own moral limits, until they were asked about them in the interviews. In some cases, Dutch or coalition soldiers did intervene. As a captain from the Marine Corps who was acting as force protection for the Americans stated:

We received a message saying that there was a chai boy at a police post. We went over there and I really thought that the American officer was going to execute someone. . . . We had caught him red-handed, he really had a boy there. I thought it was all over for the police commander. . . . I was pleased to see the boy being taken away and returned to his family.

In some cases, stories like these had unhappy endings, as some boys were murdered on account of having tarnished their families’ honor, while other boys committed suicide.

Another interesting matter is how the Afghan security troops think that foreign forces who witness bacha bazi should respond. According to the Afghan respondents, the law and the religion of Islam forbid this practice and action should be taken, but both the aid worker and the Afghan security officers remarked that it is not the responsibility of military personnel to intervene in the local system of social values. The Afghan respondents stated that even if military personnel witness a case of bacha bazi, they are not permitted to intervene directly, but must call the 119 emergency phone line or inform the local police and subsequently support the action that the local police take. A lieutenant colonel of the Afghan National Civil Order Police quoted an example of complaints received at the Afghan Ministry of the Interior about a certain colonel, who was dismissed from his post—even though the case was not proven. Although the criminal investigation and judicial chains are still being built up in Afghanistan, international military personnel may not take over criminal investigation and judicial tasks. At most, they may only support the local police when encountering a case of bacha bazi, as they do not have enough capacity. The Afghan respondents have a clear vision of how international forces should respond when confronted with bacha bazi, which is reflected neither in guidelines of the Royal Netherlands Army nor in NATO policy.

As already mentioned, NATO and the Royal Netherlands Army have not put any guidelines in place regarding what actions should be taken in bacha bazi situations. According to one interviewee, who had been the commander of Multinational Base Tarin Kowt (MNBTK), there was only one way to proceed:

Act on the basis of common sense. Because there was no specific instruction in place on how to deal with it [the bacha bazi phenomenon], I began to discuss the subject with my colleagues during the workup period. . . . One thing we wanted to avoid at all costs was a press report on the subject. We amended the Standard Operating Procedures and Standard Operating Instructions for MNBTK (regarding access to the base etc.)

to include a line stating that minors are not welcome at MNBTK. We subsequently also requested the OMLT to ensure that no children entered the ANA and ANP camps.

During the decompression phase at the end of the mission, the Royal Netherlands Army does little about its personnel’s experiences with bacha bazi. According to a number of military personnel, the workup and decompression periods are not geared toward other cultures. As noted by a respondent:

“All of your standards and values are called into question there. . . . You have to be prepared for that kind of thing. . . . It is extremely tough, dealing with your own standards and values in a totally different culture such as Afghanistan. You have to be continually aware of local culture. I thought it poor that this type of thing is not discussed after the mission: there is no debriefing.”

Conclusions

The practice of bacha bazi is common in Afghanistan. Although this practice is forbidden by Afghan law, owing to the weakness of the security sector and government enforcement, perpetrators are not punished. Guidelines from NATO or the Royal Netherlands Army on how to act when confronted with bacha bazi during military deployments do not exist. During the pre-deployment training, there is only a short explanation of bacha bazi. This could be one of the reasons why Dutch military personnel, and more broadly international military personnel, feel uncertain, some even shocked, when faced with this situation during deployment.

The Dutch soldiers who took part in this study specifically named bacha bazi as a morally and culturally critical situation when asked about behavior of local people in Afghanistan that conflicted with their personal moral values. A number of military personnel experienced it as a moral dilemma, but are unable to explain which particular values clash with their values. Values such as safety and respect for culture, which lean toward non-intervention, are often mentioned. Values that lean toward intervention, such as human dignity and the physical integrity of young boys, are only named by one or two of the interviewees. As a result they are not able to make a morally responsible and conscious consideration for which they could take full responsibility and be accountable for to both themselves and to others. They therefore lack a number of crucial skills regarding the moral competence required to deal appropriately with moral dilemmas.

Both the Royal Netherlands Army and individual members of the Dutch military refer to bacha bazi as a deep-rooted practice in Afghan culture that is seen as normal. This assumption is not entirely correct as, despite its long history and widespread exposure, the practice is prohibited from both the religious and legal points of view. Furthermore, some Afghans themselves publicly speak out against bacha bazi and are also making efforts to combat the

practice. The reason mostly cited by many members of the military for not intervening in bacha bazi situations is cultural and moral relativism (i.e., “it is the culture”). Dutch military personnel also assert that they would not be able to change anything just by themselves, and therefore chose to do nothing to address bacha bazi. However, cultures are not static and can change, as evident from the boy play practice in ancient Greece.

The nonrecognition of bacha bazi as a moral issue or the normalization of bacha bazi through the blurring of moral standards or keeping a moral distance could be seen as a way of coping with the bacha bazi.⁶³ However, for people with that attitude, the danger of moral blindness lurks. This means that the moral dimensions (and the related values) of situations are not recognized, which makes it difficult for them to make a conscious choice. In other words, the soldier is not capable of acting with moral competence. This might also be said of NATO and the Royal Netherlands Army, which have not issued guidelines to their military personnel. Both of these state entities, seeking to build a safe and democratic Afghanistan, have shifted an important human rights responsibility of state actors to their individual soldiers. NATO and the Royal Netherlands Army failed to adequately recognize or respond to bacha bazi. Both institutions do, however, have a duty to train their military personnel and deliver on the core principles of human rights embedded in their international mandate to intervene in Afghanistan.

As many respondents suggested during our study, we draw attention to the need for more concrete policies to be developed to address these kinds of situations during deployment. This should include training on understanding sexual and gender-based violence, without “ignoring the fact that, in conflict situations, adult men and adolescent boys also face major risks of abuse and violence based upon culturally constructed notions of gender roles.”⁶⁴ This may also consist of additional training on military ethics as well as guidelines and support before, during, and after missions with regard to various morally and culturally critical situations and moral dilemmas that arise owing to differences between local practices on the one hand and on the other hand the moral values of intervening forces and the human rights principles underpinning their mandate to intervene in other countries.

63 Bandura, “Selective Activation and Disengagement of Moral Control,” 27–46; McAlister, Bandura, and Owen, “Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in Support of Military Force,” 141–165.

64 Carpenter, “Recognizing Gender-Based Violence,” 95.

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Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Moral dilemmas in a military context. A case study of a train the trainer course on military ethics

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Abstract

Moral competence is important for soldiers who have to deal with complex moral dilemmas in practice. However, openly dealing with moral dilemmas and showing moral competence is not always easy within the culture of a military organization. In this article, based on analysis of experiences during a train the trainer course on military ethics, we will describe the tensions between military and personal values on the one hand and the challenges related to showing moral competence on the other hand. We will explain these tensions and challenges by elaborating on various aspects of the military organization, such as being a soldier, group bonding, uniformity, hierarchy, lack of privacy and masculinity. Furthermore, we will demonstrate how moral competence can be addressed and fostered during the training by introducing specific interventions.

Keywords: moral competence, moral dilemmas, military organization, military ethics, train the trainer course, theme-centred interaction

Introduction

The fact is: we simply need clear mental frameworks. This is the way we work, we cannot constantly engage in reflection; 75% of what we do as soldiers is set in stone. (Participant in the train the trainer course on military ethics)

We have established a number of frameworks, that's our strength. We should not under- mine those frame- works. (Participant in the train the trainer course on military ethics)

In professional practice, soldiers regularly face situations in which they must decide what is the right thing to do and what is not. Often these situations contain a moral component involving a clash of values. A decision can sometimes only be reached if one abandons certain values that at the same time deserve to be upheld. In such a situation, we face a moral dilemma. Although moral dilemmas will continue to emerge, dealing with moral dilemmas and moral questions in general can be trained and the moral competence of soldiers can be fostered (Baarda & Verweij, 2006).

Consideration for ethics, and fostering moral competence in particular, is especially important in the armed forces. Moral competence can help soldiers to deal with moral dilemmas in a responsible manner. Exercising violence is rarely without controversy and a democratic society requires the armed forces to deal responsibly with the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence granted to it by society.

Another important reason for devoting attention to ethics and moral competence is the internal moral damage soldiers might suffer if they fail to deal with moral challenges

they encounter (Drescher et al., 2011; Litz et al., 2009). 'The critical elements to moral injury are the inability to contextualize and justify personal actions or the actions of others and the unsuccessful accommodation of these potentially morally challenging experiences into pre-existing moral schemas' (Litz et al., 2009, p. 705). The nature of the warrior's calling places him or her in peculiar moral peril. 'The power to kill with impunity and possibly even to dominate entire foreign cultures could certainly corrupt character and promote hubris' (French, 2004, p.7).

Nevertheless, military ethics is not a contradiction in terms. 'Being a soldier does not mean to sell out [...] one's ethical values' (Toner, 1993, p. 33). Soldiers have a legal obligation to refuse illegal and unethical orders. History has shown that it is essential that a member of the military uses his or her moral competence to recognize an illegal or immoral order when he or she receives one. 'Clear-cut violations of the law have to be dealt with unequivocally. However, moral competence is most needed in "grey" areas, where the law is insufficiently clear, silent, outdated or perhaps even contradictory' (Baarda & Verweij, 2006, p. 1). 'The issue of how to strike a balance between discipline and respect for the chain of command, while maintaining moral competence at the same time remains topical' (Baarda & Verweij, p. 3).

Tensions exist between the culture and characteristics of the military organization on the one hand and efforts to foster reflection and moral competence on the other. While soldiers are invited to consider, reflect and question their actions, they are at the same time required to operate in a working environment focused on taking action and following strict orders and policy guidelines. Within the armed forces thinking within a framework of legality, hierarchy, standards, regulations and obligations is of paramount importance. In a previous publication, we therefore consequently qualified ethics education in a military setting as a 'challenge' (Wortel & Bosch, 2011, p. 31). We are not the first to draw attention to this difficult relationship between ethics education and the military context (Bordin, 2002; Fonsberg, Eidhamar, & Kristiansen, 2012; Olsthoorn, 2010; Robinson, de Lee, & Carrick, 2008; Wakin, 2000). In this article, we take a closer look at what constitutes these challenges. We will examine whether and how reflection can be improved and moral competence can be fostered. As a case study we do this within a train the trainer course in military ethics. We will examine how the tensions between the military organization and moral competence unfold in day-to-day practice, and which interventions within the course can address these tensions.

Before doing so, we start with a description of the notion of moral competence and a characterization of the military context.

Moral competence

Based on literature which focuses especially on competence in organizations (Karssing, 2000; Sherblom, 2012; Verweij, 2005), we describe moral competence with the following

six elements: (1) becoming aware of one's own personal values and the values of others; (2) the ability to recognize the moral dimension of a situation and identify which values are at stake or are at risk of violation; (3) the ability to adequately judge a moral question or dilemma; (4) the ability to communicate this judgment; (5) the willingness and ability to act in accordance with this judgment in a morally responsible manner; and (6) the willingness and ability to be accountable to yourself and to others (Verweij, 2005; Wortel & Bosch, 2011). Reflection is important for each individual element of moral competence (Abma, Molewijk, & Widdershoven, 2009; López & López, 1998).

The six elements influence each other and at times presuppose each other. All six are important when it comes to fostering moral competence. Drawing on the philosophical, hermeneutical body of thought (Gadamer, 1960; Widdershoven, Abma, & Molewijk, 2009 & Widdershoven & Molewijk, 2010), it can be asserted that moral competence arises from experience. After and in the course of an experience, individuals can reflect upon their personal convictions and values and examine a situation in dialogue with others in order to ultimately make a judgment, for which they can be held accountable. These various elements constitute a non-linear dynamic entity (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Moral competence

The military organization

Every organization (aiming at fostering moral competence) has its own characteristics, which influence not only personnel, but also interactions in the workforce and in the end the way moral competence can be fostered. Therefore it is important to acknowledge the organization's key characteristics. Some key characteristics of the military organization are hierarchy, uniformity and group bonding (Caforio, 2006; Segal & Burk, 2012).

To gain an understanding of an organization's characteristics, it is important to recognize why the organization was created or established (Schein, 2004). Numerous aspects of a military organization are rooted in the word 'defense'. It refers to resistance, protection, covering, security, guarding and safeguarding. A military organization is engaged in defending the territory of its own country and that of its allies, protecting and promoting the international rule of law, and stability. It additionally supports the civil authorities in enforcing the law, in disaster relief efforts and in providing humanitarian aid, both at home and abroad. All of these tasks involve the deployment of military capability. The use of violence, sometimes in an atmosphere of secrecy because of security reasons, typifies the military organization and the people within it (Soeters, Shields, & Rietjens, 2014).

In this article, we will examine the following questions: (1) What are the tensions between military and personal values, and how can these be explained by the culture and the characteristics of the organization; and (2) how can these tensions be addressed while aiming at fostering moral competence? Before discussing the research method, we first outline the context of the case study below.

Context of the study: a train the trainer course on military ethics

The train the trainer course on military ethics is a nine-day course organized four times a year by the Netherlands Defense Academy¹. The aim of the course is to train participants (i.e. military personnel of the Netherlands Armed Forces) to become ethics trainers in their own military work environment and at the same time foster their own moral competence. The topics covered are: views on ethics (utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics), integrity, the effects of power, undesirable behavior and sexuality in the organization, the blurring of moral standards, making moral judgments, law and ethics, ethics and emotions, and military ethics in daily teaching and working practice.

The course runs over three non-consecutive blocks of three days each, giving the participants the opportunity to put the knowledge and experience acquired into their work practice in between the blocks.

¹ The train the trainer course on military ethics was developed at the direction of the State Secretary for Defense (Quadrennial Defense Review 2000) and designed by the Faculty of Military Sciences (FMW) of the Netherlands Defense Academy (NLDA).

The course participants are mainly non-commissioned officers who already teach military ethics to military personnel or plan to do so in the future. Two trainers (the first two authors) are present throughout the whole course. They follow and supervise the individual participants in their personal development (by providing individual feedback), intervene in the group process and, where necessary, translate the academic content into military practice.

During the course, the six elements of moral competence mentioned above are of fundamental importance, combined with insights from virtue ethics, the Socratic method and the notion of 'living learning' (Wortel & Bosch, 2011).

Virtue ethics focuses on developing virtues, spurring the individual to think critically. It is not something you can teach people by drumming or drilling it into them (Osiel, 1999). To make people aware of their personal values and virtues, they need to engage in dialogue with each other and with themselves. This is done by means of the Socratic dialogue in which the developing of a Socratic attitude in the dialogue is highly beneficial for the participants. Critical questions can serve to confront people with their own thoughts and may reveal blind spots. A Socratic dialogue begins by making time and room, by temporarily setting aside your own 'strategic' attitude in regular communication and by developing an open and curious, not-knowing attitude. This attitude creates distance from your own fixed goals and solutions. It detaches yourself from your pre-defined problems, including their presuppositions that preoccupy us all (Brownhill, 2002; Kessels, 1997; Kessels, Boers, & Mostert, 2002). In this way it is possible to actually critically think things over, reconcile ideas and examine what you stand for (Heckmann, 1981; Knezic, Wubbels, Elbers, & Hajer, 2010; Nelson, 1929).

Ideally, a learning environment offers an opportunity to link theory, one's own actions in the group, day-to-day practice and reflection on all of these elements. The modern didactic principle of 'living learning', which is used during the training, meets all of these conditions (Callens, 1983; Cohn, 1989; van den Braak, 2011). Living learning invites participants to make contact with and to express one's own thoughts and feelings about the material. Working with themes, based on theme-centred interaction, stimulates the living learning process. This method has some similarities with care ethics. In care ethics it is deemed important that the trainer needs to know the participants well enough to understand their motivations and needs. This enables the trainer to develop caring relations and an ethical climate in which participants feel safe enough 'to take the risks that real learning requires' (Rabin & Smith, 2013, p. 168). The main risks for participants are to be (morally) judged and treated as weak or an outcast among the participants (or by colleagues in the organization at large). Therefore it takes courage to be open about one's opinions and emotions when facing moral dilemmas.

Method

Our research method is based on qualitative research in which we use the data from a train the trainer course on military ethics as a case study. Below, we describe the participants in the case study group, our work procedure during the research (including the data analysis), the informed consent procedure and, lastly, we reflect on our own role as both trainers and researchers.

Participants

The group comprised 14 participants from the four armed forces Services (i.e. the Army; the Navy; the Air Force and the Military Police Corps), ranging in rank from Sergeant 1 to Major. Four servicewomen and 10 servicemen attended the course. The two trainers (the first two authors) are women who are not military personnel, but civilians working for the NLDA. Another servicewoman attended the course in order to become a trainer in the train the trainer course on military ethics herself. Ages within the group varied between 26 and 48. The participants themselves were military ethics trainers or were involved in developing ethics courses. More than half of the group had been asked by their superiors to attend the course, the other participants applied for the course themselves.

Informed consent

The participants of the train the trainer course were informed about the fact that part of the training experiences also functioned as research. It was made explicit that the experiences were processed anonymously. All participants gave oral informed consent.

Procedure and data analysis

To preserve the sense of openness and security of the group, the first and second author opted not to work with tape recordings but with detailed notes. The first author drew up thick descriptions from specific moments based on the initial notes of the whole training (Denzin, 1989; Geertz, 1973):

Thick description refers to the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behavior) within its particular context [...] thick description leads to thick interpretation, which in turn leads to thick meanings of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves, and for the report's intended readership. (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 543)

By reading through the thick descriptions of the first author and then discussing the thick descriptions based on the notes taken by the second author, as well as the notes from a the trainer-trainee who shadowed the course, further additions were made to the initial thick descriptions. This enabled us to add different perspectives. These occasionally gave 'rise to other interpretations and information to capture thoughts, emotions and the web of social interactions among the participants' (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542).

The first two authors looked at situations within the notes, which exemplified 'critical incidents', that is, 'events that either highlight the normal operation (i.e. one that exemplifies what is central to the social context) within the organization, or events that contrast sharply with it (i.e. one that identifies the boundaries of the context)' (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 103). The course was designed with the aim of fostering participants' moral competence. Whenever any one of the six elements of moral competence was at stake and a participant indicated that the moral competence step to be taken was problematical in a military context, a critical incident was constituted. The data were then analyzed for greater understanding of how elements of the military context influenced moral competence (Chell, 1998). Working inductively with the data, the first two authors initially independently coded the data. Both authors identified six aspects of the military context which seemed to influence whether moral competence can be fostered or not.

Reflection on our own role as trainers and researchers

The first two authors have been trainers for the train the trainer course on military ethics since 2006. By taking a critical look at the course and examining the tensions between reflection, moral competence and the military context, the aim is to continuously improve the course and further foster participants' moral competence. These two authors also wish to gain a greater understanding of the moral dilemmas involved in working in a military organization. Our approach followed the tradition of action inquiry: 'Action inquiry is seen as the cyclical process whereby knowledge is created in and for action' (Ellis & Kiely, 2000, p. 83). Since the first two authors acted as both trainers and researchers during the course, the research method was guided by the principle of participant observation (Erlandson et al., 1993; Yin, 2003).

As authors and trainers, the first two authors were aware that they formed part of the context of the topic we researched (Gadamer, 1960; Schön, 1991). Schön describes this as a process of reflection-in-action and refers to the importance of 'double vision' (Schön, 1991, p. 164). By this, he means an attitude where you act in a specific way of attributing meaning to the situation while remaining conscious of the fact that other meanings can also be attributed. In other words, that it is important to continue to reflect on your own interpretation of the situation, approaching it not dogmatically but remaining open to the possibility of looking at the situation from a different perspective (Widdershoven

& Molewijk, 2010). Reflection about the roles of being researcher and trainer was further stimulated through the interaction and critical reflection with the research group (i.e. the other authors).

Describing and identifying the characteristics of a military organization is complex and potentially controversial as other people may take an entirely different view. By highlighting certain aspects within situations, the trainers change those situations and new meanings emerged (Schön, 1991). For example, by introducing theory on power by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1977), the participants also became more aware of power dynamics within the group.

The trainers of the train the trainer course on military ethics also reflected on their own actions and the fact that their actions during the course also influenced the process. Their own history and place in the military organization play a key role in this. Owing to the fact that they have been working for the Netherlands Defense organization as non-military personnel for some time (nine years and 20 years, respectively), they have, to an extent, been shaped by the organization. The first two authors feel involved with the staff, speak their language and understand military customs and statements. Yet as non-military personnel, they will both also remain, partly, outsiders.

Results

We will describe two critical incidents in which tensions existed between showing moral competence on the one hand and being part of the military context on the other. We will analyze these critical incidents, focusing on concepts which may explain the tension between military and personal values. Next, by focusing on the second critical incident, we describe a specific intervention method through which these tensions can be addressed and moral competence fostered.

Critical incidents: a human being or a soldier?

The first incident demonstrates a tension between being both a human being and a soldier. The second incident describes an intervention during the course to address this tension, with the aim of fostering the moral competence of the participants.

First critical incident

The tension between being a human being and a soldier came up when discussing the topic of *bacha bazi*. We linked this topic to the blurring of moral standards and discussed

it, knowing that several participants had encountered it during their overseas deployments (stated during the intake interviews prior to the start of the train the trainer course).

Some of the Dutch soldiers deployed to Afghanistan returned with stories about dancing boys, flower boys, rent boys or *chai boys* (tea boys)—dressed-up boys who run errands for people such as police and army commanders in Afghanistan. They are also forced to perform sexual services (in Persian *bacha bazi* literally means ‘boy play’) (Aroussi, 2011; Carpenter, 2006; Leatherman, 2011; UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2012).

This session was themed around: ‘A confrontation with *bacha bazi*: which values are at stake and what is my judgment?’ A guest lecturer held a presentation during the course and the participants asked questions. One of the participants wanted to share his personal experience:

This was the biggest dilemma that I faced during my deployment to Afghanistan: this [the *chai boys*] conflicts with everything you stand for. A village chief wanted us to build a water well. When I went to him I saw a small boy walking out of his hut. I say walking, but he was barely able to walk. It was crystal clear what had happened. I wanted nothing to do with it [i.e. he did not want to go back to the village chief—authors’ note]. But my platoon commander told me that I had to go back to the village chief and comply with his wishes. He was not willing to discuss it. I knew that this was part of the job. You need to adapt to a culture and simply learn to deal with it. It’s not our culture or religion, so it should just be allowed to happen. It all sounds OK when you’re reading about it in the brochure or information about overseas deployments, but it’s not something you can grasp at that stage. It’s absolutely impossible, improbable and disgusting. When I returned the boy had gone. So in the end I carried out my orders. I still have difficulty with this [participant had tears in his eyes].

Recalling his own experiences, another participant said:

One Afghan proudly showed me explicit images on his mobile phone [i.e. sexually explicit images of young boys—authors’ note].

Does that fall within your sphere of influence?

No, if you can’t exert any influence it’s no longer a dilemma. I’m doing a “pain versus gain” analysis: if I might be able to get information about IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], the gain wins from the pain. I am a political asset. Information about an IED could potentially save the life of my colleagues.

A colleague from the Navy asked:

How far do you go in order to get information that might save the life of a Dutch soldier?

The participant answers:

I don’t know, I’ve never encountered a situation in which gaining information that possibly could save the lives of Dutch soldiers did not take priority.

We invited the participants to state which values were at stake in this situation and to make a judgment with regard to this dilemma and to investigate that judgment in a group discussion. The participants were invited not only to reflect on their personal values, but also on their personal responsibility.

When expressing judgments, most participants stated that this practice might conflict with everything you stand for personally, but at the same time you’re in Afghanistan with a goal—‘You’re there as a soldier with a duty’. And ‘safety of your own troops take priority’. One participant appreciated the scope for dialogue on this topic, but explicitly stated: ‘But it also raises questions about whether you’re a human being or a soldier. I’m more than a soldier. I have doubts about the work I do; as a human being can I stand by the work I do?’

Second critical incident

The example on *bacha bazi* does not stand on itself. The tension between being a human being and a soldier also came up several times during the course itself. We have also recognized it as being an issue of importance in several other courses on military ethics within the NLDA. Participants sometimes experience a tension between military frameworks, a situation in which you are a soldier and receive clear instructions—versus the questions ‘who am I?’ and ‘who do I want to be?’

During a theoretical module of the course we looked at military ethics from three different angles and discussed utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics. In our discussion on virtue ethics, in which we also asked participants questions about which virtues they find important and which they would like to strengthen, one participant asked:

Is it really possible to develop virtues as a soldier? As a human being I want to, yet in some situations I have to be a soldier.

Another participant chimed in, stating:

When coming face-to-face with the enemy, can I still be a human being?

Other participants said:

Sometimes you simply have to do your duty

And:

Occasionally, you have to put being a human being on hold and adapt your mindset to being a soldier.

The program of the course was adjusted in order to discuss this tension, which seemed to be relevant for several individual participants. We used the method of living learning in order to formulate a theme which would encourage the participants to reflect on the tension. The working format of using an inner and an outer circle to some extent offers an opportunity to experience the intimacy of a small group and to share delicate, personal information.

The trainers introduced the following theme: 'Being and continuing to be a human being as a soldier: what have I retained, what have I let go and what has it brought me?' We worked in the format of an inner and outer circle, with four rounds in which participants from one of the four armed forces Services sat in the middle to discuss this question. We began with the Navy. The participants in the outer circle remained silent and wrote down their observations, associations and any questions.

Participants in the first group stated that they had joined the Navy when they were young and some had lost the group of friends they had had before becoming soldiers. One participant said:

Certain things were forced down your throat.

Another added:

What I learned is tolerance; 100 men in a dormitory certainly affects you.

And:

You don't always have room to be your own person, you're always required to work in a system where your own opinion doesn't really count.

After about ten minutes, a group from another of the armed forces' services took the places in the inner circle. Participants in this group stated that, 'the mold you're cast into does affect you', and that personal values 'are modelled on the organization'. They also stated that the organization provides security. The majority said they had thought they 'would stay with their employer until the end of their military service, but that this has now changed due to reorganizations.'

Participants also indicated that they had sacrificed a lot, as having been deployed abroad meant they had seen very little of their families. When the next armed forces' service was in the inner circle, a participant stated that, as a soldier:

[she] had gained togetherness with colleagues.

But that she had:

... to let go of my emotions, and for a very long time pushed them aside [silence ... tears]. We didn't do emotions. I did have difficulty with the way I was treated.

There was a moment of silence. One participant stated that he was rather shocked by this and was unsure about how to react to her emotions.

When the last group took their seats in the inner circle, one participant said:

Working for Defense provided me with more security. I was forced to stand on my own two feet from a young age and do everything for myself. But I was forced to give up my freedom, with all of those rigid structures. I feel I haven't been able to shape my own career.

Another participant stated that he was particularly proud of his job as a soldier and said that 'everyone should envy me.' In the plenary round following the sessions with the inner and outer circles, one participant characterized it as 'surprising' that 'everyone has such a personal take on it.' He hadn't expected that the other participants would have different views of 'being a soldier'.

Crucial aspects of military practice

Analyzing the two critical incidents back and forth within the research group, we found aspects which are essential to military practice and lead to moral tensions. These aspects seem to both influence participants' way of dealing with moral issues and dilemmas and create moral challenges. The aspects also seem to be related to the ability of showing and fostering participants' moral competence. The following elements appeared specifically relevant: being a soldier, group bonding, uniformity, hierarchy, lack of privacy, and masculinity. We first describe these aspects, and then show how they were addressed in the training.

Being a soldier

The participants stated that they view themselves as political assets—soldiers carrying out their duty. Both in the first and second critical incident, they make a distinction between being a soldier and being a human being.

Soldiers have taken an oath, which stresses loyalty to the head of state and military law. Also the military requires that soldiers carry out orders, especially in combat situations. However, as mentioned above, at the same time it is required from soldiers to think for themselves and refuse illegal or immoral orders.

Viewing oneself as a political asset can be interpreted as a self-protective decision, a psychological process by which the soldiers adaptively hide behind the military identity: 'an adaptive response to cope with one's [...] immoral treatment of others' (Bastian et al., 2013, p. 157). Even if you personally are not the aggressor, it is easier to justify that you cannot do anything about it, as you are there to carry out a different task based on the idea that you are first and foremost a soldier.

The idea that one is a soldier first and a human being second may offer some kind of protection in executing tasks, but it may also encourage the blurring of moral standards: 'moral agency is manifested in both the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely and the proactive power to behave humanely' (Bandura, 1999, p. 193). According to Bandura, moral disengagement not only arises as a result of sanitizing language and advantage comparison, but also as a result of a 'disavowal of a sense of personal agency' (Bandura, 1999, p. 193). Identifying oneself as a soldier with a duty to carry out your orders, implicates a risk of displacement of responsibility (Bandura, 1999). As such, soldiers may not feel personally responsible for their actions.

One can ask the question whether soldiers would be better off without the ability to make judgments, if that ability renders them powerless. Verweij (2010) argues that powerlessness is the result of a self-dialogue, leading to doubt: Is this something I should do? What are the consequences for me and other people? Verweij asserts that it is precisely such self-dialogue that makes a person a human being. Without it, one may lose touch with oneself and lose one's humanity (Verweij, 2010). In addition, soldiers may risk internal moral damage if they fail to deal with moral dilemmas they encounter (Litz et al., 2009). Being aware of one's personal moral values and the values of others, independent of the question whether one should follow these values, may make soldiers more sensitive to the moral dimension of situations. It may also strengthen their ability to communicate and justify to themselves and others why they choose to prioritize and act upon a specific value (Litz et al., 2009).

Group bonding

The element of group bonding is important, as can be seen from statements in the first critical incident: 'The safety of our own troops take priority'; 'I'm doing a "pain versus gain" analysis: if I might be able to get information about IEDs (Improved Explosive Devices), the gain wins from the pain. [...] Information about an IED could potentially save the life of my colleagues.'

In a military organization, training, learning, working, and often also living, takes place in groups. Soldiers have to develop confidence not only in themselves, but also in their own team. Operational deployment requires teamwork. Military training works to develop both horizontal and vertical cohesion (Kirke, 2009; Winslow, 1999). Horizontal cohesion involves liaising with colleagues and entails questions such as: What are the members of this group willing to do for one another? How can we as a team cross the finish line all together? Vertical cohesion involves allegiance to the commander. A good relationship between the superior and personnel and the provision of good information is crucial for ensuring good collaboration, and mutual trust is vital. Military operations involve operating in a team in extremely tough and perilous situations, in which every member depends on the other. Group loyalty is a central value in such situations. This does not primarily concern loyalty to personal or other principles or values, but rather 'loyalty towards others, a group, an organization or a nation' (Olsthoorn, 2011, p. 69).

During the course most participants do seem to recognize the moral dimension of the situation, the values of carrying out one's duty as a soldier and loyalty to one's colleagues (gaining information on IED's might save their lives) are considered to be most important for the majority of the participants.

Uniformity

Since the values of carrying out one's duty as a soldier and loyalty to colleagues are of such vital importance, one may ask to what extent the values of others, in this case the human dignity of the young boy, are really recognized. There is a serious risk of not recognizing the moral dimension of situations. This risk can be further increased due to the uniform character of the organization.

A uniformed profession, such as that of a soldier, not only literally means learning to wear a uniform, but also pertains to a uniform for the inner self. Personal and group development therefore feature prominently. Socialization generally takes place in a boarding school context. For example, in the Netherlands, officers' training programs comprises more than four years of internal training. Upon entrance, the self is, through the socialization processes, at least partly, mortified (Goffman, 1961) and substituted by military morality. Which unit, specialization or Service soldiers belong to is clearly signaled time and again. Each military unit has its own rituals and practices, with the traditions of the unit being conveyed through initiation rituals.

More diversity in units could make a difference. A study of American troops in Somalia in the early nineties showed, for example, that mixed units (in terms of race and gender) were more empathetic with local population than homogeneous units (Miller & Moskos, 1995).

Uniformity may lead one to believe that everyone shares the same thoughts regarding certain situations. This can make it difficult to recognize other perspectives, or values, and

therefore it could affect the moral competence of soldiers. Being able to recognize values of others is crucial in order to recognize the moral dimension of a situation.

Hierarchy

Military organizations have a strong hierarchical structure with a distinctive ranking system that is linked to a command structure. Military action involving arms deployment requires an organizational model with a clearly defined structure, leadership and planning. Whilst in recent years flexible organizational formats offering room for self-management by the individual soldier have increasingly been sought, it is a rather bureaucratic organizational model that predominates in military organizations (Kramer, 2007). In a military hierarchy, it is always clear who is the commanding officer authorized to impose punishment if necessary. If an individual soldier has failed to observe the rules, they may face a penalty or even sentencing by a military court for more serious offenses. The hierarchical structure of the organization clarifies statements such as: 'Sometimes you simply have to do your duty' and 'my platoon commander told me that I had to go back to the village chief and comply with his wishes. He was not willing to discuss it. I knew that this was part of the job'. Moreover, asserting that one simply has to execute a task seems to presuppose that as a human being one no longer has freedom to make choices and take responsibility for those choices.

Due to the ranks system, everyone's place in the organization is clear and it is clear who is in command. This structure impedes the lower ranks from critically questioning a person occupying a higher rank. It is presupposed that you will obey your superior and, moreover, it is felt that there is not always room to broach the subject of moral dilemmas.

Lack of privacy

In addition to these concepts, a lack of privacy in the military also seems important. Because soldiers undertake many group activities, they generally have a limited amount of privacy. Soldiers being in close physical proximity characterize military missions and exercises. Furthermore, everything they do (or don't do) whilst carrying out military operations is often also observed in real-time via audio and video recordings, and is always retrospectively evaluated in-depth. In other words, the individual soldier has scarcely any 'room for manoeuvre' and few opportunities to even temporarily escape the observation of colleagues. This also means that the 'gaze of the other' (Hale, 2008, p. 322) is ever present.

This lack of privacy makes individuals more dependent on the group. Making a critical remark could have serious repercussions if the group fails to accept it. This may hamper individuals from being willing and able to act according to their own judgment and rather conform to the group norm.

Masculinity

Military organizations can still be identified as masculine institutions because they are predominantly populated with men, but also because the military practices construct all kind of different meanings of masculinity (Barrett, 2001; Connell, 1995; Kovitz, 2003; Woodward & Winter, 2007; Sasson-Levy, 2008). The figure of the 'warrior hero' is one of the dominant symbols of military masculinity (Duncanson, 2009; Morgan, 1994). This symbol refers to toughness and stoicism, which can be associated with values such as independence, the willingness to take risks, aggression and rationality (Barrett, 2001; Godfrey, Lilley, & Brewis, 2012; Hopton, 2003). The ideal of the 'warrior hero' has a lot of profound consequences for the mutual interaction in the military.

One specific element of the ideal of the 'warrior hero' is to be 'in emotional control'. Sasson-Levy states: 'Militarized masculinities seem particularly 'obsessed' with emotional control' (2008, p. 307). Male and female soldiers alike frequently endorse the norm that 'real men don't cry', which hampers the display of insecurity and vulnerability and can hinder reflection during the training as well as in the military daily practice.

The statements of a participant in the second critical incident illustrate this element of emotional control: 'I had to let go of my emotions, and for a very long time pushed them aside' and 'We didn't do emotions. I did have difficulty with the way I was treated'. This could be interpreted as an example of what Woodward and Winter (2007, p. 74) call 'a masculinizing strategy, where women comply with the masculine norms and adopt masculine discourse and practice'. The subsequent inconveniency and hesitation that the other participants showed in their reactions to the silence and tears of their colleague can also be related to this ideal of being in emotional control. One of them stated that he was 'rather shocked by this and was unsure how to respond to her emotions'.

Addressing crucial concepts and fostering moral competence

We have examined how the tensions between the military organization and moral competence unfold in day-to-day practice. Below, we will introduce a specific intervention method through which these tensions can be addressed.

The topic of *bacha bazi* was first mentioned by individual participants during intake interviews. The trainers decided to link this topic to three specific elements of moral competence: the ability to recognize the moral dimension of a situation and identify which values are at stake, the ability to make a judgment and to communicate this judgment. The theme was formulated as: 'A confrontation with *bacha bazi*: which values are at stake and what is my judgment?' When the participants stated which values were at stake, the tension between being a human being and being a soldier was explicitly mentioned by individual participants. One participant stated: 'it [the confrontation with *bacha bazi*] raises questions

about whether you're a human being or a soldier'. As outlined above, crucial aspects of military practice (the context) seemed to be of importance here.

In order to make the participants aware of and reflect on this apparent tension, the trainers introduced the theme: Continuing to be a human being as a soldier: what have I retained, what have I let go and what has it brought me? During the discussion of this theme, participants showed awareness of the role of military values.

'What I learned is tolerance; 100 men in a dormitory certainly affects you'. And: 'You don't always have room to be your own person, you're always required to work in a system where your own opinion doesn't really count', 'The mold you're cast into does affect you', and that personal values 'are modelled on the organization'.

To foster expression of and reflection on the tensions participants experienced, several techniques were used. By discussing issues in an inner circle, with the outer circle² watching, an opportunity was created to experience the intimacy of a small group and to share delicate, personal information. Notwithstanding limitations—the inner circle participants obviously being aware of the outer circle—this technique has the advantage that all participants hear the information which is shared, and they can use the others' input for their own development process (Klein, 2013, Söderhamn, Kjølsvædt, & Slettebø, 2014). This format encourages a learning process, mutual trust and a safe learning environment (Smith & Berg, 1987).

The outcome of the intervention made participants aware of differences between military and personal values. Several participants stated that the session was surprising, since they had thought that the majority would hold the military view. The participants found it 'unusual that things were perceived differently'. The participants also concluded that they should be more aware of and express their emotions, although this can be difficult in a masculine context. Participants stated that, 'Soldiers are more diverse than I always assumed', and 'I have to get out of my tunnel vision.' This intervention mostly addressed the aspect of uniformity.

In order also to address other aspects of military practice and the tensions between the military organization and moral competence, other themes could have been introduced.

Another follow up theme on *bacha bazi* for this group of participants could be: Acting as a human(e) soldier? A necessary contradiction? Participants could discuss personal experiences in small groups and share conclusions in a plenary session. In such a theme, both the aspect of being a soldier as carrying out one's duty as well as the element of moral

² This is a variation of the 'fish bowl method', in which representatives from the entire group or subgroup talk about a theme (such as the results of the group session) in the inner circle while the others listen (Klein, 2013, p. 211, n. 11).

competence, which stresses of the willingness and ability to act in accordance with one's judgment in a morally responsible way can be addressed.

As the participants experienced a difference between being a soldier and a human being, it may be worthwhile for them to reflect on this difference. An important element might be to allow human emotions as soldiers. The ability to experience and reflect on emotions is significant for understanding values (Nussbaum, 2003) and recognizing the moral dimension of situations.

By paying attention to four factors: the task (fostering moral competence), the individual participants, the group process and the context, specific themes can be introduced to assist participants to reflect on their moral competence. As such, introducing themes can be viewed as an intervention method within groups. A theme ideally aims at a 'dynamic balance between these four factors' (van den Braak, 2011, p. 82) (Figure 2).

Placing too much emphasis on the task, without paying attention to the specific context, the individuals or the group process may result in participants losing interest in the task and not achieving the objective of, in this case, fostering moral competence.

Ideally, information about all four factors should be taken into account by the trainers. Information about the context, in which elements such as uniformity and hierarchy play a role, is just one of the four factors. Information about the individual participants and their specific context can be obtained and analyzed by trainers during the training itself but also through intake interviews. These intake interviews can lead to initial themes. During the training, so called 'co-directing sessions' can be organized at the end of each day, in which two or three participants participate, in order to reflect on the training, on what they have observed in the group process and on possible themes which could be introduced. The group process can be linked to the task (fostering moral competence) as well. What happens in the group, in terms of moral disengagement, or the willingness to give feedback to each other, can also be linked to taking personal responsibility. All these elements presuppose a certain flexibility and free space to include new themes in the program of the training itself.

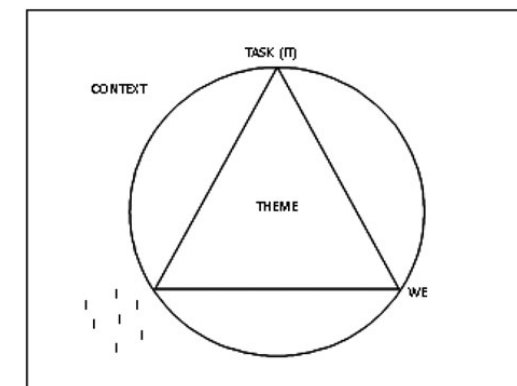


Figure 2 The four-factors model of Theme-centred Interaction

Limitations of the study

A possible limitation of the study is that participants were military *ethics* trainers or instructors, or were already involved in developing ethics courses. This implies that they are more likely to be interested in moral issues and in reflection than soldiers who take ethics courses as part of their regular training programs.

A second limitation is the emphasis on individual moral competence. Various social psychologists such as Milgram (1974), Zimbardo (2007) and Asch (1956) have pointed out that education concerns not only individual dispositions or individual moral competences, but that the situation in which people find themselves, the institution and the ethical climate are equally, if not more important. In his book *The Lucifer Effect, How Good People Turn Evil*, Philip Zimbardo compares his study with the events in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (2004), where US soldiers degraded inmates. Zimbardo asserts that this is not a case of just a few bad people (bad apples) but rather of a situation, an organization, external factors—a bad barrel—that causes people to behave this way. If you give people power without monitoring them, it seems to be a recipe for abuse. For this reason, it seems important to combine strengthening moral competency of individual participants with a training method which also focuses on group dynamics and makes power relations within the group explicit.

Conclusion

Moral reflection is not easy in a military context. Based on our data from a train the trainer course on ethics, we conclude that certain characteristics of the organization indeed exert an influence on moral competence in a military context. It is important to address the influence of the characteristics of the military organization in moral education within that context.

In this article, we have examined examples of critical incidents from our case study: the train the trainer course on military ethics, in which the tension between being a human being and a soldier is at stake. Aspects of military life which seem to be of influence in this tension are: being a soldier; group bonding; uniformity; hierarchy; lack of privacy and masculinity.

Adapting your mindset to being a soldier with a duty or viewing oneself as a political asset, may make it more difficult to take personal responsibility. Group bonding and hierarchy impede military personnel from asking critical questions. Uniformity makes it difficult to recognize other people's values. Lack of privacy leads to pressure to conform to the group standard and little room for individual reflection. Finally, the masculine ideal of the warrior hero, and to be in emotional control, does not make it easy to engage in reflection as this could simply be interpreted as being weak or vulnerable.

By discussing situations connected to the existing tensions and the moral dilemmas that arise as a result, the training made the participants aware of different perspectives. It

helped the participants to recognize dilemmas and to understand which values were under pressure. The participants were invited to reflect on their personal values as well as on their personal responsibility. In this way, we endeavored to broaden the reflective process and to foster their moral competence.

Moral competence enables participants not only to view their context differently and to ask moral questions about that context but also to learn to deal with often burdensome moral challenges which are an inherent part of working within a military organization.

In the end, stimulating the moral competence of soldiers by means of paying attention to existing moral dilemmas and moral competence through ethics courses can lead to a gradual change in the military context itself, leaving more scope for reflection on and dealing with moral dilemmas.

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Chapter 6

Chapter 6

The safety paradox in ethics training; A case study on safety dynamics within a military ethics train-the-trainer course

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Abstract

There is considerable support for the idea that an atmosphere of safety can foster learning within groups, especially during ethics training courses. However, the question how safety dynamics works during ethics courses is still understudied. This article aims to investigate safety dynamics by examining a critical incident during a military ethics train-the-trainer course during which safety was threatened. We examine this incident by means of a four-factor analysis model from the field of Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI). We show that during ethics training courses a safety paradox can occur, involving a tension between honesty and openness to other perspectives and values. Finally, we discuss how trainers can foster safety during ethics training.

Key words: safety, ethics training course, group dynamics, military ethics

Introduction

Research on ethics training courses shows that an atmosphere of safety within groups is important during ethics training courses, particularly during those courses based on a dialogical, reflective and interactive approach in which participants practice with ethical reflection and deliberation themselves (Smith & Berg 1987; Knapp & Sturm 2002; Tucker, Nembhard & Edmondson 2006; Molewijk et al. 2008; Abma et al. 2009; Wortel & Bosch 2011; Stolper et al. 2012; van der Dam et al. 2012; Solum et al. 2016). However, the question of how a safe atmosphere within groups can be fostered during dialogical ethics training remains understudied (Boers 2003; Weidema et al. 2011). As Edmondson and Lei state: 'Additional research is needed to expand our understanding of how safety works' (Edmondson & Lei 2014, p. 37). Although safety is crucial for learning, it is also precarious, and can easily be threatened.

The aim of this article is to better understand dynamic aspects of safety within ethics training courses, specifically when safety is endangered. By means of a four factor analysis model from the field of Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) (Cohn 1976; van de Braak 2011) we reflect on a specific instance in which honesty by a participant resulted in conflicting or colliding views which challenged safety and mutual openness between participants. We explore how safety was threatened in this situation and what would be needed to foster it. We offer practical recommendations on how this challenge to safety can be met.

Ethics training, in a variety of contexts and organizations, can be characterized as a form of learner-centered education that focuses on educating self-critical thinkers (Hansen & Stephens 2000). This type of training includes, among other things, the processes of recognizing personal values and the values of others and assessing and judging moral dilemmas. Such a setting requires participants, who are willing to contribute to dialogues,

appreciate mutual differences and are curious to learn from each other, and to allow possibly conflicting, views and personal values (Foldy 2004; Foldy, Rivard & Buckley 2009; Weidema et al. 2011; Sims 2004; Sims & Felton Jr. 2006). To achieve this, an atmosphere of safety is required.

Safety within a group can be defined as the feeling of a student that he or she can contribute to a dialogue or ask a critical question without fear or negative consequences, for instance to be embarrassed. These negative consequences may have an influence on self-image, social status and future career (cf. Kahn, 1990). Amy Edmondson defined this as psychological safety, in groups and teams, as a shared belief that a team is safe for taking interpersonal risks. It encompasses a sense of being valued and comfortable in a specific setting (Edmondson 1999; 2004).

It has been argued that safety within groups has a dynamic character, coming and going (Sims 2004; Edmondson & Lei 2014). 'It seems reasonable to assert the likelihood of an asymmetry, in which safety takes time to build, through familiarity and positive responses to displays of vulnerability and other inter-personally risky actions, but can be destroyed in an instant through a negative response to an act of vulnerability' (Edmondson & Lei 2014, p.38). It is perhaps particularly in those situations when safety is threatened or eroded that one becomes aware of the importance of safety during ethics training courses. The dynamic process of safety should be taken into account when trying to foster an atmosphere of safety during ethics education. For instance, by acknowledging and taking responsibility for less constructive behavior and by talking about it in the group, which 'can make the inevitable human foibles much less destructive and offer potent teachable moments' (Sims 2004, p. 206).

In the following, we first provide a description of the study context, methods, data collection and data analysis and subsequently introduce the four-factor analysis model. We then explore the dynamic nature of safety by analyzing a critical incident in which safety was threatened according to the participants of a military ethics train-the-trainer course. We conclude this article with a discussion of our findings, and practical implications for ethics trainers regarding safety dynamics.

Methods

Study context

The ethics training central to this case study is a military ethics train-the-trainer course. The objective of this course is to prepare the participants to give ethics training courses to military personnel, within the Netherlands defense organization, while at the same time fostering their own moral competence (Karssing 2000; Sherblom 2012; Wortel & Bosch 2011). The course includes topics such as different ethics theories (utilitarianism, deontology and

virtue ethics), law and ethics and dilemma training or moral case deliberation (van Baarle et al. 2015). There is a strong emphasis on creating a joint dialogue within the training in order to foster personal development, on gaining (self-)awareness and being able to identify personal moral values and the moral values of others.

The military ethics train-the-trainer course is a nine-day course spread out over a six week period, consisting of three three-day units. It is an in-company training, the two trainers and participants of each group work within the Netherlands armed forces (i.e. either in the Royal Netherlands Army, the Royal Netherlands Navy, the Royal Netherlands Air Force or the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee).

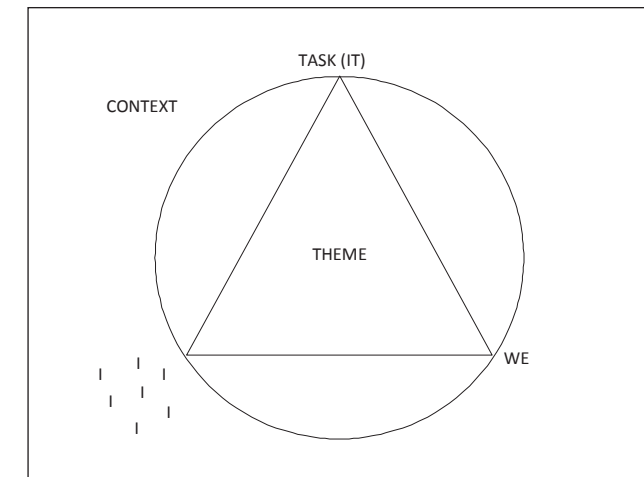
Each group consists of 11 – 16 participants, which can be considered a relatively small group size. Before the start of the training, individual intake interviews are held with all participants. Participants are asked if they are in a hierarchical relation with other participants. If this is the case, trainers will discuss with the participant how to deal with this. Trainers also discuss this issue during the training. Participants are invited to have an open attitude during the training and to take on a vulnerable position and to put forward personal moral dilemmas in order to subsequently reflect on those dilemmas. This creates a learning environment which offers an opportunity to link theory, one's own actions in the group, day-to-day practice and reflection on all these elements. During the course, the trainers work with Theme Centered Interaction (TCI) as a didactical method (Cohn 1976; Jaques & Salmon 2007; Stollberg 2008; van de Braak 2011).

Selection of the critical incident

In order to better understand how safety dynamics work, how safety can be endangered, and how trainers can deal with this, a critical incident during the military ethics train-the-trainer course was selected. The selection was based on a previous study based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants of the train-the-trainer course with regard to the effects of this train-the-trainer ethics course (van Baarle et al. 2017). Participants mentioned the topic of safety in the group, even though the interviewers did not explicitly address this topic. Several specific moments during the course were referred to. It appeared that 10 out of 11 interviewees, who were all participants of one particular group, perceived a decrease of safety in the second block of the training (van Baarle et al. 2017). The interviewees all referred to one particular situation which caused this change. They mentioned it either in the context of safety in the group or as a situation that they found challenging.

Data collection and analysis

The first author, who was also one of the trainers during this course, drafted a thick description (Ponterotto 2006) of this critical situation, based on notes taken during the training. To analyze the critical incident, the four-factor analysis model from Theme Centered interaction was used. As mentioned above, TCI is a didactical method in professional training and organizational development (Cohn 1976; van de Braak 2011; Stollberg 2008). It can also serve as a tool for analyzing processes during the training. As every training situation is singular, no general recommendations can be given for dealing with situations in which conflicts arise. Yet, the TCI's four-factor model can serve as a framework within which factors can be analyzed that play a part in interaction processes. Systematically reflecting on the four factors can provide insight into which element or elements need further attention in order to foster safety within a particular group.



The model distinguishes four factors relevant in interaction processes. First, the individual, each single participant with his or her interests and needs, including the leader, in this case the trainers (I). Second, the group, the interaction and relational pattern between all participants (WE). Third, the task, the purpose on behalf of which the individuals get together (IT). And fourth, the context, the environment, conditions, constraints and circumstances in which cooperation takes place (GLOBE). The context includes elements such as the size of the group, the room or the arrangement of the furniture but also externally driven factors like organizational, political or social backgrounds (Cohn 1976; Jaques & Salmon 2007; Langmaack 2004; Spielmann 2009; van de Braak 2011).

A four-factor model analysis applied to safety dynamics in ethics training
I, the individual, each individual participant, including the trainer
Questions regarding the perspective of the participants
What is the perspective of each participant in this situation, what are reasons for different perspectives?
What characteristics of participants are at play in this situation with regard to safety (background, personality structure, education, experiences, competencies, values)?
What effect do specific participants have on each other with regard to safety?
Which participants need special attention, with regard to safety?
Questions from the perspective of the trainer
What is my responsibility regarding safety within this group?
What is my own experience of safety within this group/situation?
What effect do specific participants have on me, and vice versa, with regard to safety?
How are my own characteristics (values, education, and personality) at play in this situation?
WE, the group, the interaction and relational pattern between all participants
How would you, as a trainer, describe the group atmosphere and safety within the group?
What group development stage has the group reached? How does this influence safety?
What are the challenges in the group to foster safety?
What power-relations are present within the group and what are the effects of these power-relations on safety?
IT, the task, the purpose on behalf of which the individuals get together
Does the course objective itself influence the experience of safety? How?
Does the task of this specific moment or situation in the group influence the feeling of safety?
Does the commitment of the participants towards the course objective and concrete tasks influence safety?
How is safety influenced by the way that participants are working on the course objective?
GLOBE, the context
Does the context of the training itself have any influence on safety within this group?
What is the influence of the current learning environment on safety (space, time, materials et cetera)?
Are there elements of the specific (work) context of the participants at play in this situation with regard to safety?
Are there aspects of the wider environment that influence the experience of safety within this group?
(Adjusted from Van de Braak 2011: p. 152)

Research ethics

The interviews were recorded and the transcriptions were sent to the interviewees for a member check. It was made explicit to the participants that the data from the interviews would be processed anonymously and used in a scientific article. When referring to the interviewees in the thick description, pseudonyms are used for reasons of anonymity.

Results

In this section we describe a critical incident in which safety was threatened according to the participants of a military ethics train-the-trainer course. In doing so, we apply the adjusted four-factor analysis to this incident in order to give a more structured and nuanced description of the critical incident.

Critical incident

The incident took place during the first session in the second block of the train-the-trainer course on military ethics. This session is themed around the question ‘how do I act when dealing with moral issues?’ One of the participants shared his personal experience:

Ed: ‘I sometimes have a habit of ‘levelling with others’, which makes me put aside my own values, but I wonder whether this is what I really want? Daring to act on the basis of my own moral terms is also important. I want to focus on that during this training. For example, when I had just returned from a tough mission to Afghanistan for which I’d only had two weeks of preparation time, one of my colleagues started complaining that he was also going to be deployed (going on a mission) to Afghanistan. He was complaining whilst knowing my story. Knowing what a tough mission I had in Afghanistan. He was saying how he wasn’t given enough time to prepare for his deployment. While his posting meant he was up for a more or less ‘Club Med experience’ though (a relatively safe mission, without leaving the military compound or staying at the headquarters). Above that, he didn’t have a wife and children. In my eyes, he wasn’t a real military man. And I simply don’t want to work together with someone like that. He was a real good-for-nothing. People like that don’t belong in the organization’ Participants moved restlessly in their seats, not knowing how to react. One participant asked how this colleague was functioning. Ed stated: ‘He functioned okay but it didn’t take much energy to influence the director in the right direction: to get rid of this colleague ... And indeed, this colleague ended up leaving. I’m outspoken when it comes to those types of time wasters. It gave me a good feeling and made me feel proud. I know I have a bit of a dark side, perhaps a bit extreme edge. But I want to be true to myself. I think it’s a good thing, to be your own judge.’

After a long silence a few people started to ask questions: 'Why did this make you feel proud?' Ed: 'I stood up for my group of 'real' military personnel, I have made sure that this rotten apple was now gone.' One of the participants remarked that he could also imagine being in that situation. However, most of the other participants who spoke up seemed to openly disapprove of the case contributor's behavior, shaking their heads. A participant stated to another participant:

'Isn't this exactly why we have procedures for this from the Human Resources department?'

At this moment the two trainers doubted whether or not to continue with the next session on the program. On the one hand, there was a guest lecturer who was already waiting outside the classroom to start with the next session. On the other hand, the group was still in the middle of this discussion and there were still a number of participants who also wanted to reflect on the initial question of how to act when dealing with moral issues. One of the trainers stated:

'While this example clearly raises a lot of questions, we will come back to this example in depth later on during the course, for instance with regard to the blurring of moral standards. For now, we will have a short break of 10 minutes and continue with the next session by our guest lecturer ...'.

By applying the four-factor model of TCI to this critical incident, we explore how safety was threatened in this situation and how it could have been fostered. Afterwards, we will discuss a number of practical implications for trainers when aiming for safety during ethics courses.

A four-factor analysis

Individual characteristics (I)

Looking at the first factor of the four-factor analysis of the critical incident, we examine how the perspectives of the participants as well as the trainers with regard to the critical incident influenced safety dynamics during the training. During the interviews, the majority of the participants of the training explicitly indicated that the incident described above negatively influenced safety during the training: They considered it inappropriate to talk about, and behave towards a colleague the way Ed did, but did not experience room to express this view. For them, values such as a respectful, honest and humane approach to colleagues appear to have been at stake in Ed's example.

Anna: 'I remember thinking, he has an entirely different outlook on life and I realized that I didn't really feel comfortable sharing things with him. At that moment I thought, he is really extreme and I think he has become that way because of his experiences.'

Caroll: 'I was in a hierarchical situation with Ed, because I depended on him for my evaluation, I wasn't going to tell him what I thought of his actions during the course.'

Paul: 'I think it was this intense because it [the contributed example, clarification by authors] really touched people, it touched on their core values.'

There were also participants who stated the opposite: that the case contributor was very honest to share a personal experience and that the reactions by other participants created unsafety.

Leo: '(...) if you just hear that without any kind of context, it's absolutely not done, but once you hear the reasoning behind it I feel more understanding, I think people are often too quick to judge. He opened up, because that's what we said, you have to be open and then when he is, boom, he is heavily criticized. I don't think that is fair, you should also make an effort to understand where he's coming from.'

Ted: 'It [the critical incident, clarification by authors] definitely left a mark on the course. A mark that made people feel unsafe within the group. Not me in particular, I more or less understood where he was coming from, but I sensed it in the others.'

Eventually, the reactions of the participants also influenced how the case contributor himself experienced safety in the group. He was criticized and felt that the other participants were unable to be open towards his perspective. He was left with the feeling that the other participants were not open to his perspective. As a consequence, Ed asked himself how safe the course environment was.

Ed: 'During the course, I noticed that certain other participants didn't appreciate my way of handling things. (...) I didn't expect them [the group, note by authors] to form an opinion of me straight away, that this would still influence their perception of me days later. (...) I feel this undermined my position within the group, and it made me question how safe this environment actually was. I shared my experiences and thoughts, which may have seemed extreme to some group members, and as a result they didn't empathize with me.'

What were the perspectives of the trainers at this moment? Based on the notes the trainers took during the training, they seemed shocked and surprised by the behavior of the contributor.

Reaction by trainer I:

'The words 'extreme edge' sent a shiver down my spine and immediately put me on my guard. Right there and then, I decided to be extra cautious with this participant for the rest of the training.'

Reaction by trainer II:

'I am shocked by this example, it came out of nowhere and I wonder whether I know the colleague who was forced out.'

The trainers first tried to gauge the participant's reactions; they perceived this as a situation that should be dealt with adequately. On the other hand, there was a quest lecturer waiting to start with the next session. Values held by the trainers that were at stake in this situation are responsibility towards the participants and their professionalism, as for the trainers, this seemed as a situation which was directly related to the objective of the course (fostering moral competence). The trainers didn't have (or took) the time to analyze this situation immediately.

Group dynamics (WE)

When focusing on the WE, the influence of various group dynamic elements such as the group atmosphere, challenges in the group and the development stage the group has reached, are examined. Understanding which phase of group development the group has reached can inform our analysis with regard to expectations of group members (Tuckman 1965; Weisfelt & van Andel 2005; Remmerswaal 2013; Rubner & Rubner 2016). A new group may seem very safe because nobody disagrees and conflicts do not seem to arise, whereas in fact participants may be keeping their distance and do not experience enough safety to actually reflect on moral issues and personal experiences. Most group development phase models indicate that this behavior is followed by a phase of struggle and conflict in which participants attempt to find out to what extent they can be themselves in the group. After this 'crisis phase' comes a phase of increased and more in-depth trust, as well as a greater willingness to work together closely, to open up and to learn. Not all groups go through every group phase as intensively, nor is this always a linear process (Remmerswaal 2013).

The critical incident took place on the first day of the second block of the training course. There was approximately one week in between the first and the second block of the course. The group appeared to be in the formation and orientation phase, in which most participants were still undecided between approaching one another and acting reservedly. While most participants were still hesitant to share personal experiences, the critical incident shows that the case contributor did share a personal experience in the group. This disclosure made some participants feel unsafe, while at the same time these reactions also influenced the perceived safety of the case contributor. In terms of development stages, this seemed to lead the group to a crisis phase. In crisis phases, there is a risk of participants pulling out, leading to a decrease of safety (Rubner & Rubner 1992).

In the situation described above, a risk was that the group could be split into three parts: two kinds of 'moral crusaders', those who condemned the reaction by the case contributor, and those who approved of his reaction and were proud of the reported behavior, and third, the bystanders: the participants who found it hard to reach a judgement at all (Rubner & Rubner 1992). If not handled adequately, such a situation might evoke a parallel process, in which the participants who seemed to have believed that were not accepted by the majority of the group, were subsequently 'cast out'. The reaction of the case contributor seems to head in this direction, as he stated that the reactions of the other participants to his example undermined his position in the group.

The course objective (IT)

Turning to the course objective, the question is how the critical incident is related to the aim of fostering moral competence (i.e. the course objective of this train-the-trainer course on military ethics).

Within the course moral competence is defined as becoming aware of one's own personal values and the values of others; the ability to recognize the moral dimension of a situation and identify which values are at stake or are at risk of violation; the ability to adequately judge a moral question or dilemma; the ability to communicate this judgment; the willingness and ability to act in accordance with this judgment in a morally responsible manner and the willingness and ability to be accountable to yourself and to others.

In order to achieve the course objective, honesty is necessary. Yet, honesty can be at odds with being open towards each other. The example brought up by the case contributor shows that he was honest about his values, but not open towards other possible values. His honest expression of his views furthermore made it difficult for other participants to be open; they regarded the way in which the case contributor expressed his views as offensive, which made it impossible for them to be open to the views of the case contributor. Thus, views collided, which negatively influenced the experience of safety of all participants.

A confrontation between values of participants seemed to be at stake. For the case contributor, his main focus seemed to be on working with fully capable members of the military, and this colleague, in his eyes was not a 'real' military man. At the other end of the spectrum, for some participants, values such as the respectful and fair treatment of colleagues seemed to be at stake. This led to a tension between perspectives and different sets of values voiced by the contributing participant on the one side and a number of participants on the other side. Being confronted with a diversity in values and opinions, and eventually with a clash of values in a group, is related to the core objective of the course: to foster moral competence in dealing with different moral perspectives.

The critical incident shows that differences with regard to core values participants hold can evoke strong negative feelings and can result in feelings of insecurity or a perceived

lack of safety. Working on the course objective asks from participants to be open to other perspectives of other participants in order to be able to fully examine and understand the underlying values at stake in a particular situation.

The context (GLOBE)

A number of elements in the critical incident are directly related to the context in which the training took place. We distinguish between on the one hand the influence of the learning environment in which the training took place, cultural characteristics such as formal and informal rules that directly originate from the military context, and on the other hand the fact that this was an in-company training.

In the context of the training itself, in the first block of the course, safety had been addressed. During the second day of the course, the topic of safety was brought up by one of the participants. She asked how safety would be dealt with in this group. Two participants stated that as trainers in their own courses they simply state that 'the setting is a safe learning environment'. Since the training is a train-the-trainer course, participants were asked to reflect on their previous experiences with safe and unsafe learning environments as participants and as trainers. Eventually participants agreed that in this group they would be responsible themselves to identify boundaries of safety. Some participants stated that safety is also a feeling which they expected would 'grow' over time during this course.

We might also consider the wider context and its influence on the experience of safety. In a military context, rules are important, codes of conduct, mandates, Rules of Engagement, the law of armed conflict, Human Rights, are all examples of this. Not obeying these rules can have serious consequences for others, as well as for soldiers themselves. The participants are well aware of these rules and this is the precise reason why the critical incident is interesting. In stating that it felt good 'to be your own judge', the contributing participant did not adhere to the formal rules. The Netherlands Ministry of Defense Code of Conduct (2007) refers, among other things, to the duty not to bully, discriminate or sexually harass colleagues. This participant did not choose the easy way out by complying with political correctness and avoiding the risk of being challenged by other participants (Hansen & Stephens 2000).

The example given by the case contributor is less uncommon than one might think. In the context of the military academy, this phenomenon is known as 'internal clean-up' [*interne sanering*]. It is based on the idea that some military personnel are unfit for service and do not belong at the academy, let alone in a military operation: 'Those who are militarily proficient and, therefore, good comrades are lauded, while those who have failed to contribute to collective goals are ridiculed, defaced, and ultimately, excluded' (King 2006, p.509). In order to also make the discussion of these kinds of informal rules possible, it is important that a sufficient level of safety is maintained to enable the group to look into these situations and to not instantly label certain contributions as extreme or pathological.

Participants and trainers all work in the same organization. As a consequence, there might be formal hierarchical work relations between participants in the course. In the critical incident one of the participants appeared to be dependent on the case contributor for her evaluation. She felt that she could not tell him what she thought of his actions during the course. The trainers were unaware of this hierarchical relation. Apart from this example, participants may foresee that they will come into contact with one another again in the future. This can act as a brake on the willingness to share experiences and to openly respond to each other during the course.

Discussion

How do safety dynamics work during ethics training? How can safety be threatened and what can be done to foster an atmosphere of safety? In order to explore these questions, we analyzed a critical incident in which safety was under pressure during a military ethics training course, according to both the trainers and the participants of the course. By using the four-factor model we analyzed safety dynamics in a broad sense, taking into account the perspectives of the participants and the trainers, the group process, the relation with the course objective and the specific military context.

We consider two issues for the discussion. First, we go into the safety paradox, which involves a tension between honesty and openness. Second, we discuss how to deal with situations where safety is threatened during ethics training courses.

The safety paradox

Existing research acknowledges the importance of safety in dialogical, reflective and interactive approaches to ethics training (Knapp & Sturm 2002; Abma et al. 2009; Wortel & Bosch 2011; Stolper et al. 2012; van der Dam, 2012). The experience of an atmosphere in which participants feel free to share opinions and feelings, even if these contradict the point of view of the majority of the participants is considered to be valuable.

Safety can be regarded as a precondition for dialogue and reflection as it creates room for a more in-depth approach to the majority viewpoint and room to rethink this viewpoint and to appreciate the views held by others. Reflecting on different insights and values may lead to new and broader insights. In light of the course objective, dealing constructively with disagreement by using a reflective and dialogical approach to the differences and disagreements (e.g. asking questions to better understand the view of the other instead of stating and arguing for one's own position'), again may also have the result that it contributes to experiencing more safety (Widdershoven & Molewijk 2010). As such, differences of opinions are valuable for ethics training courses. Homogeneity of opinions may initially

create safety within groups (Dixon 1994), but at the same time homogeneity may also create blind spots and 'group think' (Argyris 1990).

The critical incident described above supports the idea that safety can indeed 'be destroyed in an instant through a negative response to an act of vulnerability' (Edmondson & Lei 2014, p.38). Our results show that safety dynamics can be paradoxical: The course objective invites participants to engage in dialogue and reflection and to be vulnerable and honest about one's own considerations. Yet, the case shows that honesty is not only a requirement for, but can also be a threat to safety. Being honest implies expressing different perspectives and values. However, honesty can result in a clash of values and make it more difficult for participants to be open towards other perspectives and underlying values. As a consequence safety may decline and be threatened. A group which is able to deal productively with this safety paradox can develop and come to a group phase of increased and more in-depth trust, as well as a greater willingness to work together closely, to open up and to learn (Remmerswaal 2013).

In the heat of the moment, it seems that neither the trainers, nor the participants, clearly identified the situation in the group as an example of a clash of values. Instead of enabling an open investigation of different values, the presentation of the case and the reaction of the participants resulted in a confrontation of viewpoints. Providing space for feelings of vulnerability, inequality or even reluctance (Weidema et al. 2011) is not self-evident; rather it demands time, courage and moral competence. The ability to identify a situation on the spot as an example of a clash of values and the willingness to understand the perspective of participants with different values seems to presuppose that participants are able to reflect on their own opinions, to examine contradicting opinions and react to each other with curiosity rather than debate and defensive behavior.

When participants experience a lack of safety in the group, the trainer can be left with the feeling that all sorts of things have gone wrong; that they have not performed well as a trainer or that perhaps it was 'simply' a difficult participant or a difficult group. A different approach would be to view this setting as active, both in terms of interaction and group dynamic, with the group development process being in full swing and the trainer having the responsibility and possibility to support this process. This requires knowledge and skills in interaction and group dynamics. As such, safety dynamics, including situations which may seem threatening to the experience of safety, can be viewed as an ongoing process and as an opportunity to work on the objective of ethics training courses rather than as a problem to achieve this. In the following section we will examine how safety might be fostered in the here-and-now.

Dealing with situations where safety is threatened

Situations during an ethics training in which safety is experienced as threatened by a number of participants can be challenging and disturbing. Sometimes trainers might be surprised or

overwhelmed by such situations; they have a program to follow and limited time to reflect on situations in the here-and-now. More importantly, they may lack a clear strategy on how to tackle a situation in which safety is threatened.

While there are no guarantees in terms of results or success, Smith and Berg argue that the key may be not to learn how to avoid these situations but rather to learn how to progress and avoid remaining stuck in these situations (Smith & Berg 1987). Since fostering moral competence is the main objective of many ethics training courses, situations such as described above might provide an opportunity to exercise moral competence at that very moment. The critical incident may be viewed as a concrete example of a situation where different perspectives and values collide. As such, this challenging situation can be seen as desirable. It may provide an opportunity for learning in the here-and-now (van Staveren 2007; Schruijer 2016).

Learning in the here-and-now attempts to integrate interaction, actual behavior by participants and reflection on underlying values. How can this be achieved in practice? How to use a situation as an opportunity to deal productively with the situation and work on the objective of the course at the same time?

Learning from situations where safety is threatened is well known in the tradition of the Socratic dialogue, a dialogical method often used during ethics training courses. At any time within the dialogue the facilitator or participants can propose a 'time out' in order to direct the attention of the group to any problems that may have arisen which prevents participants from focusing on the moral inquiry within the dialogue (Heckman 1981; Loska 1995; Saran & Neisser 2004). For example, it may be that a participant is upset with the way the dialogue has developed; the group may have lost its way and need to review the structure or content of the dialogue. This is referred to as a 'meta-dialogue', which can be called for at any time (Boers 2003, p.79). Within the meta-dialogue the actual situation in the group becomes the case for the moral inquiry (for as long as the meta-dialogue takes).

The idea of a time out or a meta-dialogue in the tradition of the Socratic dialogue is similar to the 'disruption postulate', in the methodology of TCI (Boers 2003). This disruption postulate implies that participants are invited to state when they are no longer able to continue the moral inquiry of the training or Socratic dialogue because of disruptions, tensions or intense emotions (Boers 2003, p. 84; see also Cohn 1976). Such an approach attempts to value differences, and conflicts between values among participants as opportunities to investigate these conflicts in the here-and-now. Such a time-out may be regarded as a moment which demands effort but an effort which is worthwhile (Wierdsma 1999, p. 130).

Trainers can use an intervention such as a meta-dialogue, or address a specific theme to work with, fitting to the situation. TCI can help to define a theme, in line with the development of a specific group. In the case described above, that could have been: 'how can we deal constructively with other perspectives and conflicting values in this group?'. By addressing this theme, based on a TCI-analysis, all the participants are invited to share

their experiences and their point of view on the issue that is at stake (Cohn, 1976; Schneider-Landolf et al. 2009).

To overcome challenges and tensions of the learning process, such as a safety paradox, scholars have addressed the importance of creating a climate of support (Winnicot 1986). Creating a climate of support may be fostered by paying attention to relevant structures or procedures. For instance, procedures indicate step by step how exactly participants will be working together to facilitate contributions from all participants. The mutual influence of structure on safety and process, in opposition to: chaos, unsafety and stagnation, is often stressed (Cohn 1976, p. 134). Specifically, for groups facing crisis phases, that may imply a risk of participants pulling out, supporting procedures may assist in reducing anxieties and feelings of unsafety (Cohn 1976; Schneider-Landolf et al. 2009).

While the trainers did sense that the critical incident described above was an important situation, they did not create time and space at that specific moment to discuss the situation in the here-and-now. Obviously, taking time and creating space immediately may not always be possible; neither will it always lead to the desired results. Nevertheless, we argue that it is important for trainers of ethics courses to learn to recognize these moments in which safety is at stake. Almost intuitively they will have to decide whether or not to create time and space to explicitly discuss a situation in which safety is at stake within the group. This can be described as the competence of a trainer to understand how different factors distinguished in the TCI approach, that is; individual characteristics, group dynamics, the course objective and the context are at play with regard to a specific situation. Moreover, the trainer should be able to make integrate experiences, emotions and thoughts in an intuitive hunch. Cohn refers to this competence as 'trained intuition' (Cohn 1976). This intuition may be strengthened when trainers regularly take time to reflect on safety dynamics in during training courses and analyze the situation in terms of the four factors.

Conclusions

We argue that safety is an important precondition for ethics training courses. Safety is, however, precarious, and can be threatened. We showed that a safety paradox may occur during ethics training. This involves a tension between honesty and being critical on the one hand and openness to other perspectives and values on the other. Honesty may result in expressing conflicting or colliding views, which may challenge safety and mutual openness between participants. Approaching this paradox as a dynamic process requiring time and reflection in the here-and-now may assist to foster safety in those situations in which participants or trainers experience threats to safety. We argue that these situations offer an opportunity to learn during the training. Dealing constructively with other perspectives, conflicting values and remaining able to learn can be seen as key elements of ethics education. While it may not automatically lead to success, the four-factor analysis model

can assist trainers in different contexts in both reflecting on these situations, as well as in preparing interventions and dealing with this paradox productively.

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Chapter 7

Chapter 7

What sticks? The evaluation of a train-the-trainer course on military ethics and its perceived outcomes

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Abstract

Ethics training has become a common phenomenon in the training of military professionals at all levels. However, the perceived outcomes of this training remain open. In this article, we analyze the experiences of course participants who were interviewed 6-12 months after they had participated in a train-the-trainer course on military ethics developed by the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defence Academy. Through qualitative inductive analysis, it is shown how participants evaluate the training, how they perceive the development of their moral competence, and how they see the impact of the training on their own training practice.

Key words: moral competence, military ethics, qualitative study, outcomes, ethics education

Introduction

Professional ethics plays a critical part in professional practice in various contexts, including military organizations, health care organizations and different business corporations. Consequently, many different types of training programs or ethics curricula and courses are being offered (as a part of the curriculum or as on-the-job training) for the purpose of fostering moral competence and promoting ethically responsible conduct.

Professional ethics in these domains is “of service to professionals who have to carry out the tasks entrusted to them as honorably and correctly as possible” (Cook and Syse 2010, 119). Military personnel often have to carry out tasks in a “dynamically complex environment” (Kramer 2004) in which there is a necessity to act. This involves situations in which the rules and “laws are insufficiently clear, silent or even contradictory” (Van Baarda and Verweij 2006, 1). Dealing with this complexity requires “thinking instead of rule-following” (Kramer 2004, 27). The military organization has a responsibility to prepare military personnel thoroughly for a wide range of situations, and to consider the ethical aspects that are in play (Wakin 2000; Van Baarda and Verweij 2006; Robinson et al. 2008; Lucas 2015).

How does one teach moral competence and ethically responsible conduct? Different types of ethics education can be distinguished. Following Lynn Sharp Paine (1994), we distinguish compliance strategies and values or integrity strategies; between courses focusing on a set of moral rules (codes of conduct) and interdictions and courses that do not attempt to provide universal rules or principles for ethical decision-making (Robinson 2007; Moore 2005) but rather try to stimulate reflection, ethical decision-making and accountability (Birden et al. 2013; Knights et al. 2008; Mueller 2015). The latter can be called “learning-based” approaches. Compliance strategies can be viewed as concretely normative; there is a given set of moral rules and interdictions with which one must comply. Values or integrity strategies are

normative in a more general sense and more process-oriented, focused on reflection and fostering moral competence.

The above-mentioned distinction between learning-based and compliance-based approaches has consequences for the way these courses can be evaluated. A compliance-based approach to an ethics course teaches “a set of rules” and can be considered effective to the degree to which professionals start behaving according to these rules. In contrast, a learning-based approach needs to be evaluated according to the degree to which professionals learn a set of skills or are able to reflect on their moral motivation and ability to foster their moral competence.

The train-the-trainer course on military ethics, which is investigated in this article, belongs to the learning-based approach. The course aims to train military personnel of the Netherlands armed forces in teaching ethics to their military colleagues, not by providing rules and guidelines, but by fostering a learning process.

There are relatively few qualitative evaluation studies on the outcomes of ethics courses within the military context (Mumford et al. 2015). In other sectors, particularly health care, quite a number of evaluative studies can be found (Verkerk et al. 2007; Molewijk et al. 2008; Van der Dam et al. 2013; Weidema et al. 2013; Birden et al. 2013; Janssens et al. 2015; Hem et al. 2015; Mueller 2015). The same can be said of business ethics (Cameron and O’Leary 2015; LeClair and Ferrell 2000; Nicholson and DeMoss 2009; Sims and Gegez 2004).

In our interpretation, ethically responsible conduct is strengthened by fostering moral competence. Moral competence entails the ability to be aware of one’s personal moral values and the values of others, the ability to recognize the moral dimension of situations, the ability to judge adequately a moral dilemma, to communicate this judgment, the willingness and ability to act in accordance with this judgment in a morally responsible manner, and the willingness and ability to be accountable to yourself and to others (Karssing 2000; Sherblom 2012; Verweij 2005; Wortel and Bosch 2011; Van Baarle et al., 2015).

The aim of this article is to investigate the development of moral competence during and after attendance of the train-the-trainer course on military ethics. Therefore, we pose the following important research questions. First, with regard to the content of the training: how do participants evaluate the training? Second, how do participants perceive the development of their moral competence? And third, how do participants see the impact of the training on their own teaching?

In the following, we first provide a description of the context of the study and the methods used. Next, findings are presented. We present how the participants of the train-the-trainer course on military ethics evaluate different elements of the training. We then describe how the participants perceive the development of their moral competence and subsequently address their perceptions on the influence of the training on their own way of teaching. We conclude the article with a discussion of our findings, the practical implications, and the limitations of this study.

Context

The military ethics train-the-trainer course was launched in 2006 by means of a five-day pilot¹. Since then, it has developed into a nine-day course consisting of three non-consecutive blocks of three days in order to give participants the opportunity to put their newly acquired theory and tools into practice in between the blocks.

The aim of the course is to train participants to become trainers in military ethics and, at the same time, strengthen their moral competence. The assumption is that a person who engages as a trainer in ethics and moral competence is an example to others. The course participants are commissioned and non-commissioned officers who already teach military ethics to military personnel or plan to do so in the future (without having had any proper education to do so). Two trainers are present throughout the course. Intake interviews are performed with each participant before the beginning of the course.

To foster moral competence, the participants are invited to choose two personal development objectives to work on during the training. The participants are provided with a list of 17 “development objectives” based on the six elements of moral competence (Wortel and Bosch, 2011).

The participants are not provided with a clearly defined blueprint for ethics training. Rather, several topics and work formats are offered that they can use as inspiration for their own courses and training.

¹ The train-the-trainer course on military ethics was developed at the instigation of the State Secretary for Defence and designed by the Faculty of Military Sciences (FMW) of the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA).

Figure 1

The train-the-trainer course on military ethics	
Development objectives	Elements of the training
Taking your time	Introduction military ethics (key concepts)
Listening carefully	Views on ethics: utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics
Suspending judgment	Dilemma training
Asking critical questions that make you and the other person think	The effects of power (Michel Foucault)
Thinking ‘with’ the other person, not ‘against’ the other person	Moral disengagement (Albert Bandura, Solomon Asch, Stanley Milgram and others)
Analyzing underlying values and do not fixate on solutions	Sexuality in the organization
Being able to give an opinion based on critical reflection	Ethics and the law of armed conflict
Reflecting critically on your initial opinion, moral intuition, impression, and emotion	Military ethics in the participants’ daily teaching and work practice
Further developing your capacity for empathy	Ethics and emotions
Making sensitive issues open for discussion	Integrity
Talking openly, but being selective	Socratic dialogue
Learning to balance autonomy and interdependence	Living learning and theme-centered interaction
Recognizing, examining, and overcoming resistance in yourself and others (also in the here and now)	Fostering moral competence (deciding and reflecting on personal development objectives)
Recognizing and reflecting on personal responsibility	Free space sessions (issues brought up by participants, related to topics, development objectives and group process)
Taking personal responsibility, acting in accordance with your judgment	Psychological safety within the group
Having the courage and will to defend your own values	Co-directing evening sessions (reflection on the training and group process)
Strengthening practical wisdom: to be able to find the right balance in each individual case	Evaluation sessions (reflecting on personal development objectives, topics and the group process)

Methods

In this section we describe the collection and analysis of our qualitative data, and the role of the researchers.

Data collection

The first two authors each performed semi-structured in-depth interviews, using an interview guide (Patton 2002), with participants who had taken part in two train-the-trainer courses on military ethics. Each interview lasted about one hour and took place at a location of the interviewee's preference. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. We included two different groups of the military ethics train-the-trainer course on order to increase the reliability and authenticity of this study (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 301). The data collection period was 6-12 months following the train-the-trainer course. Of a total of 22 interviewees, 13 are men and nine are women, aged between 26 and 50, varying in rank from sergeant to major, and originating from all four armed forces services (i.e. the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Military Police Corps). Eighteen of the interviewees are trainers and four of them are managers and policymakers who are responsible for designing ethics education and do not teach military ethics themselves.

In the interviews, the participants were asked to describe what they had learned, how they evaluated the training, how they perceive the development of their own moral competence, and how this affected their daily work, including their training practice. In our questioning, we focused on concrete examples with regard to their moral competence, instead of directly asking them whether or not they perceived growth or a lack of growth with regard to their moral competence, thus fostering the emergence of individual experiences (Patton 2002). We aimed to capture the interviewees' accounts of change, how they made sense of what to change, how to change, and their subsequent actions (or non-actions). We asked questions such as: *What did you learn and retain? What made an impression on you? What did you find difficult? Were you able to work on your development objectives? Why? If yes, what contributed to the development of your development objectives? What is the training's impact on your daily practice as an ethics trainer? What were you able to strengthen? What is still an obstacle for you?*

Research ethics

The interviews were recorded and the transcriptions sent to the interviewees for checking. It was made explicit to the participants that the data from the interviews would be processed anonymously and used in a scientific article. For that reason, we do not refer to specific ranks or gender when quoting statements made by interviewees. All participants gave oral

consent. Some examples were considered sensitive by the interviewees and were given off the record during the interviews. These examples are not referred to in this article.

Data analysis

Data analysis took place between June 2014 and January 2015 and was conducted through framework analysis, in which we included deviating cases (Green and Thorogood 2014). After familiarization with the interviews, the first two authors independently and inductively coded four transcripts. Our aim was to inductively develop labels by adhering faithfully to informants' terms relating to the three research questions. We refrained from coding the data based on existing theory and terminology, as we wanted to prevent "imposing our preordained understandings on their [the participants'] experiences" (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013, 16).

Subsequently, we compared, discussed, and refined the labels and in the end agreed on a set of 22 labels. (For instance: *"elements of the training that are recollected by the participants"* and *"actions that are done differently after the training"*.) After this step, the first and second author applied the established 22 labels to the whole data set by charting the data in a framework with the 22 labels in the horizontal axis and the 22 participants on the vertical axis. The first and second author both coded half of the remaining transcripts. The final combined framework contains a summary (or a short quote) of the content under that label with a reference to the transcript in order to be able to retrieve the original source quickly.

Through this framework, we were able to see the full range of data across the labels (vertically) and across participants (horizontally). For instance, we were able to see what kind of elements of the training were easily recollected by the participants by viewing the chart vertically under that label and we were able to view the coherence between the development objectives a participant had chosen for him- or herself during the training and the kind of impact they indicated the training had on their own way of teaching.

Subsequently, we focused on themes by interpreting the framework and looking at connections among participants and labels. We discussed possible explanations for deviant cases, thus nuancing our findings (Gale et al. 2013).

The role of the researchers

The first author, who conducted half of the interviews, is also a trainer and one of the developers of the course. Given this double function, the research may be labeled as action inquiry or action research where knowledge is "created for and in action" (Ellis and Kiely 2000, 83). In order to prevent bias, the second author conducted the second half of the interviews. To foster a self-reflective process, including challenging one's theories and

assumptions, the first and second author regularly met for peer-debriefing sessions about the findings, to uncover taken-for-granted biases, perspectives and assumptions on the researcher's part (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The second author works within the context of health care ethics support (i.e. training and research) and has no previous experience with the military and can therefore be considered as an outsider to the military context and the train-the-trainer course. During the interviews, both researchers asked the participants how they experienced the interview and whether it would have made a difference if the interview had been conducted by a researcher in another position (either a trainer involved in the training or an outsider to the military context). The participants stated that they felt that they had already established a relationship of trust with the first author (e.g. knowing each other and working together for nine days during the training.) They also stated that talking with an «insider, someone who understands the military culture and the cultural and moral dilemmas» is easier than working with an «outsider.» On the other hand, several participants also indicated that:

if I really did not have a good feeling about the military ethics course, I would be more likely to tell a stranger [the second author] than someone who is involved in it him- or herself. If I was being really critical, it would be easier to deal with an outsider

Besides this, it was easier for the second author to adopt a “naïve attitude” when following up on and “delving more deeply” into the shared background. Some aspects were considered self-evident, but were in fact specific to the military context and the training. During the data analysis, reflection on the themes was stimulated by interaction with the research group (i.e. the other authors).

Findings

In this section, we will first present the participants' evaluation of the training. Secondly, we focus on the participants' perception of the development of their moral competence. Thirdly, we present the experiences of the participants regarding the impact of the training on their own teaching.

How do participants evaluate the training?

First, we address the importance participants attach to practical elements of the train-the-trainer course (e.g. cases experienced by colleagues, film fragments) and the theoretical elements of the train-the-trainer course. Next, we focus on elements that are related to attitude development and, finally, we highlight two group dynamic elements that

were experienced as a challenge by the participants during the training. These elements nevertheless resulted in opportunities for the participants to learn.

Case examples, film fragments and theory

During the course, participants were asked to present personal moral dilemmas. The participants were impressed by the dilemmas of their colleagues. Almost all participants indicated that they clearly remembered the examples of the presented moral dilemmas and the group discussion about those examples: Examples that were often mentioned were mission-related moral dilemmas experienced by colleagues in Afghanistan.

The Chai Boys² in Afghanistan [...] how would I respond if I had to deal with people [Afghan (police) officials who sexually abuse young boys] like these?

The participants retained not only mission dilemmas, but also dilemmas in the workplace in the Netherlands:

What affected me was [...] that she believed that she felt she had to behave like a man, so that she could not in fact be herself.

Furthermore, the film fragments shown by the trainers kept a number of participants preoccupied for quite a while, particularly the clips from the movie *Attack on Darfur*:

[...] a UN commander has to decide whether or not to go back to a village. If not, the village would have fallen in the hands of the Janjaweed [...] “if it had been me, what would I have done?”

[...] what would I have done? On the one hand, there are the journalists who want to return and, on the other hand, there is the matter of your safety and that of your group.

Striking examples include film fragments that appear realistic to the participants in the sense that they can imagine themselves being confronted with the moral dilemma being depicted. This sometimes also evoked an emotional response. The involvement and interest in such examples seem to ensure that the participants are also truly willing to analyze dilemmas and to reflect on the values that are under threat for the purpose of ultimately forming an

² In Afghanistan, *Chai boys* are young boys who serve tea but are sometimes also exposed to sexual violence. Confrontation with this practice (which is also referred to as *bacha bazi*) is often experienced as a moral dilemma by Dutch military personnel deployed to Afghanistan (Schut and van Baarle 2017).

opinion on such moral dilemmas. A number of participants did this not only during the course, but continued to do so after it had finished.

The theoretical parts of the training were mentioned far less by the participants as being important. These parts included: different normative theories (utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics), the concept of integrity, theories of power (Michel Foucault), and law and ethics:

Not during the lectures, no, I really had to make quite an effort then [...]

I gained more from the practical examples than from the theory. I am also unable to recall the theory.

However, for some participants, particularly those who had already been teaching ethics themselves, these more theoretical parts were indeed interesting and useful:

I think that I now have a different perception of decision-making in ethical processes. You can then understand why someone does something from an ethical point of view. I am much more aware of this, even when watching talk shows on TV, I assess why they are saying what they are saying and where that originates from.

The theory of Foucault is what I remember almost daily. The fact that power is everywhere, I have researched this further and read more about it. That fact that our entire society is permeated by it and depends on it.

Case examples and film fragments are considered important by the participants to assist them in fostering their moral competence. The majority of the participants cannot recall or describe the theoretical parts of the training, these parts of the training are mentioned far less by the participants.

Elements contributing to attitude development

Nearly all participants explicitly mentioned that working with the Socratic attitude contributed to their development. The Socratic attitude as it is presented in the train-the-trainer course includes: taking time; adopting a listening attitude, especially active or empathic listening; asking (critical) questions; suspending one's judgment; and examining underlying values without immediately focusing on solutions (Nelson 1950; Heckmann 1981; Knezic et al. 2010). By practicing this Socratic attitude in exercises (both in plenary sessions as well as in smaller groups), the participants gained more awareness of their own values, as well as of those of others. The listening exercises, in which participants worked in pairs and in which only questions could be asked, were perceived as especially meaningful:

During the walk [in pairs], I learned to have deeper conversations with, and not argue with, my walking partner, to suspend my judgement, but also to delve more deeply and really ask about what makes you see this the way you do.

Practicing the Socratic attitude during the course made it easier for participants to recognize dilemmas, and to see which of their values or those of others were actually under threat by listening to each other. In addition, it made it easier to get to the essence of dilemmas during dilemma training:

Taking a more detailed look at yourself and assuming that critical attitude [...] in the discussions we had with each other, enabled me to analyze what my values are and what I need to be able to work on my development objectives.

Continuing to ask questions, that makes you think, which is essential to get to the heart of the matter.

Several participants pointed out that the Socratic attitude does not fit well with the military culture:

I believe that this is in direct contrast to how people in the military communicate with each other (laughs), in other words instantly forming opinions.

The participants enjoyed working on their development objectives. The time provided for reflection feedback from other participants was seen as helpful:

I enjoyed developing something specific [a development objective], which I believe I have difficulty with.

It really was during the discussions we had with each other that I was able to analyze what my values are and what I need for working on my development objectives.

Yet, working on personal development objectives and strengthening one's moral competence was also perceived as a difficult task. We asked the participants during the intake interview whether they were prepared to do so. This also served to prepare the participants. The one participant with whom we could not conduct an intake interview had some difficulty with this. He had anticipated that we would be dealing only with theory and indicated during the course itself that he preferred not to reflect on his own moral competence in a group setting:

I have experienced too much one-sidedness [i.e. reflection on own moral competence and not so much on theory]. If this had not been the case for a few participants at the time, I would have expected more differentiation, instead of including the entire group in lengthy conversations.

This participant was not the only one who found this aspect difficult to deal with, even though the other participants were prepared for it during the intake:

The course is not one that I would have selected on the basis of my own interests. So, I found it quite difficult to be open and to reflect on my own views.

Yet, the reflection on one's moral competence, selecting personal development objectives and working on them, did lead to certain insights:

It did provide me with more insight into myself and showed me why I deal with things the way I do.

Being critical, yes, I find that difficult but necessary, as it makes me think about what I do. I am often a poor listener, but I am able to substantiate matters very well, in a very dominant style [...] People are then reluctant to ask me my reasons for saying or thinking what I do. But they do during the course, and I am more than happy with it.

In conclusion, elements contributing to attitude development work with the Socratic attitude, specifically through the listening exercises, and reflecting on one's moral competency, by working on personal development objectives, which includes receiving feedback from other participants.

Group dynamics

The groups were quite diverse, as far as rank, branch of the armed services, age, and civilian or military status were concerned. A number of participants found diversity to be an obstacle. The various branches of the armed forces can be very different and it seemed the participants had certain perceptions of what a real soldier is. Combat experience, more specifically, Afghanistan experience, is valued highly in the groups. This potentially creates a power imbalance between insiders (those with deployment experience) and outsiders (those without deployment experience) amongst the participants:

There were a few people there from the soft sector of the Navy in particular, people not in combat positions, who think very differently about certain decisions that maybe for soldiers [...] are easier to do. But if things fit in with your ROEs [Rules of Engagement] and you have your orders, then it is military obedience, that is part of it. The diversity of people participating in the course, who are thus part of this organization, introduces very different points of view [including not obeying your orders], which I find very difficult to accept.

What I found difficult was the diversity of the people in the group during the train-the-trainer course. They are all so different from each other; why are they there [...] there's also such a range of personalities. The course did not always have the depth that it should have had.

However, it seems that it was precisely this diversity that caused many participants to gain insights into the values of others, particularly those of other soldiers. Not all soldiers are the same. It is possible that in fact the diversity makes it easier to present a different view during the course, to have an opinion that is different from the rest, and to feel less pressured to conform to the group. Later in the interview the participant who made the second statement above also indicated that:

That we see as "normal" things that 80 percent of the people who were there did not see as "normal" [...] that was an eye-opener for me. During the course, I noticed that I was thinking, well, why are we making such an issue of this subject? This is the world of grown-ups, and that is what they call Afghanistan and there are a whole bunch of things happening there that we, from our Western perspective, would like to see changed. Maybe it is impossible to understand it if you have never been involved in it. This could be risky, as it is possible to start seeing things as "normal" when they are not at all "normal" for other people [...] If you do not keep an eye on that, there is a risk of standards blurring [...] and if that happens, when do you then see something as abnormal?

More than half of the participants mentioned the topic of safety within the group, even though we did not explicitly address it. Participants saw safety within the group as a difficult, but important topic. The notion of safety seemed to have various meanings. Such as:

We have very specific casuistry and you cannot talk about everything.

What I remember is the moment that I was not sure [...] whether I wanted to be open about my own experience in the group. You cannot know what will happen, whether people will condemn you and such [...]

I found myself in a hierarchical situation [...] because I still depended on her for my job appraisal. I was not going to tell her what I thought of her, but I had to restrain myself towards her [...]

There were quite a number of people from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee [Military Police] in my group and I think that this had an impact on people when talking about their dilemmas in confidence. If their story involved a criminal offense, they will have thought twice before proceeding. You can win people's trust, people can change their perception, trust can be won. That is why I am happy participants are allowed to attend the course in civilian dress. I think this certainly influenced people from units such as the marines or the Commando Corps, as they generally have the idea that Marechaussee personnel are [...] evil (laughs).

The fear of condemnation by other participants when revealing personal issues, and the hierarchical lines linking the participants in the group, had an impact on the extent to which participants felt free to talk to each other about their personal moral dilemmas.

Group dynamic elements, diversity, and safety within the group are perceived to have influence on the course. They are sometimes regarded as complicated and difficult elements but they are also considered important for the course.

How do participants perceive the development of their moral competence?

In this section, we present five main findings with regard to the impact of the training on the moral competence of the participants after the training.

Reflecting on personal dilemmas

Some participants mentioned that the new vocabulary helps them to rethink moral dilemmas they experienced in the past, while others more easily recognize moral dilemmas in their personal lives. They argued that it is now easier for them to discuss these experiences and indicate the values that were under threat and why they made certain decisions:

I gained a better grasp of why I made certain choices. I also enjoyed it. I was able to put my own decisions into words.

In part due to the train-the-trainer course, I believe I would now react differently to certain situations. I would have opted more for my own values. Certainly, I was very much surprised at that time. It really was a culture shock. I would be more likely to defend my own values knowing what I now know.

I was uncomfortable with abuse in the mission area. People were taking this somewhat lightly, but I now think that I would rather have said something like "I am uncomfortable with this, please do not do that."

Recognizing dilemmas sooner and describing better why they are uncomfortable in a certain situation

Participants reported that, due to the training, they perceive and recognize the moral dimension of a situation faster and more easily:

It seems as if a door has been opened, as I am much more aware than before of certain issues and what they can do to people.

The participants also indicated that they have become aware of the extent to which they are aware of ethics in their daily lives. While ethics was initially associated with the «usual suspects» of military ethics, such as intense life-or-death dilemmas during missions, participants are now better at recognizing the moral dimensions of other situations, not just in their daily professional practice, but also in their personal lives (just to mention some diverse examples: whether to have their child baptized, bullying, failing students, etc.):

I have become more aware of ethics and how much we in fact encounter ethics every day.

If you think about it often enough, you begin to recognize situations in which certain aspects clash with each other and how to deal with them to avoid fallout for yourself at a later date.

I have also gained more insight into myself, why I deal with things the way I do.

In addition to recognizing the moral dimension of their work, the ability of the participants to put this into words had also improved:

I am better able to put my gut feeling into words. I think that I already had a good idea of what is good or bad, thanks to my training and upbringing, but I am now better able to identify why something is good or bad.

I am more aware of when a dilemma is occurring and I will more consciously step up to defend values.

The participants said they have gained more insight into the values that are under threat when confronting moral dilemmas. They also mentioned that they can now put moral dilemmas into words, meaning that they can name their own values that are at stake and express why they are uncomfortable in a certain situation.

Ability to empathize, recognize, and understand values of others

Participants also indicated that they are able to understand the (divergent) values of others, allowing them to better empathize with others, to listen, and to gain insight into which of the other person's values are being threatened. This insight also enables the participants to better identify the problem or the difference of opinion:

I now also better understand that people can have certain dilemmas that are not only related to our profession, but are also personal. That you have to make certain decisions that you actually do not support personally.

I was not very receptive to it the training, but the most important lesson I learned was experiencing the differences between people [...] I was forced to face facts.

It is sometimes difficult to empathize in practical situations.

Ability to address the moral dimension of situations (including those regarding superiors) and to act upon own judgements

The above-mentioned insights and vocabulary with regard to recognizing and addressing the moral values that are at stake in moral dilemmas make it easier to address comparable situations (even with superiors). The majority of the participants indicated that they are more likely to address situations with which they were uncomfortable and also mentioned examples of doing so:

I can set limits for myself [...] that certain jokes are inappropriate.

My mind now produces warning signals. The course did embed something in me. It's not like I assess everything in that way every day, but I do think of the lessons when tensions come to the surface.

I have noticed that I can now open a discussion and that I can indicate the consequences. Did you consider this or that? I used to accept that we only did things a certain way because there was no other way.

Instead of an initial (strong) moral intuition or an uneasy gut feeling, the respondents can now put into words a potential difference of opinion, making it possible for them to begin a more constructive discussion and to take action when they recognize a moral dilemma and are able to identify the values that are under threat. A number of participants provided recent examples from their own daily practice in which they seemed to get into conflict with their superior, yet continued to adhere to their values and acted accordingly:

So, actually, on the basis of the same interests [...] he thought that it was OK, while I thought that we should not do it, based on my values regarding safety. Although my initial reaction was to dig in my heels, we began a discussion with each other and we ultimately decided not to proceed. Even though my value was being threatened, I was able to defend it without causing a conflict with my superior.

Being able to recognize moral dilemmas and identifying moral values, does not necessary lead to prioritizing personal moral values. In certain situations, participants can also consciously step back from holding on to their personal values, thereby prioritizing other values:

I draw a line at criminal offenses, rules, but otherwise [...] I can step back fairly easily [i.e. obeying orders].

In a number of cases, reflection on specific situations creates room for thought about the question of whether certain rules within the organization were actually adequate rules. By reflecting on these rules, and by discussing them, rules (and policy) are ultimately changed:

Before I attended the Military Ethics train-the-trainer course, I thought that when the law and regulations are as such, then we should act accordingly. Although it may have troubled me somewhat, we had to do it. After the train-the-trainer course, I thought: what we are doing here is actually just too ridiculous, I had that growing awareness of the rules actually contradicting integrity and honesty. Within the organization, and for my superiors, it was also a big step to really acknowledge this and to act upon it.

Some participants experience tension between the culture and characteristics of the military organization on the one hand and moral competence on the other. Within the armed forces, it is common to think within a framework of legality, hierarchy, standards, regulations, and obligations. In this specific context, group bonding, loyalty, uniformity, and hierarchy can make it challenging to act upon one's moral judgment and foster the moral competence of one's colleagues during ethics training:

Loyalty and honesty are strong values that are very important to me, but they sometimes clash. To what extent do you go along with someone you are loyal to, your superior or commander, for example, when you are also thinking what we are doing now is wrong?

Participants also indicated feeling alone within the defense culture. At some defense institutions, the number of colleagues who have taken the train-the-trainer course or another form of ethics training is still small:

There are still only a few people who have been involved in ethics training at any level and I find that really unfortunate. The people who have completed a course are your sparring partners, but to then promote ethics further, something else needs to be done. I think that this would have a very positive impact on our customers, the passengers in this case, but also internally on relationships at work.

Awareness that fostering moral competence requires constant attention

Most participants indicated that they are aware that working on their development objectives and on moral competence requires constant attention. Once the participants return to their workplace and their day-to-day routine, they must actively devote attention to it:

Once you have completed the military ethics train-the-trainer course, you are completely hyper. You start to assess everything, everywhere, don't you, for conflicting values and values under pressure. And then the summer vacation begins [...] I am simply a line manager, the work is never finished. But I had formulated an action point at the end of the course, which remained here on the whiteboard for a long time. It was about improving the implementation of ethical dilemmas in the final exercise. I considered that question for about four months in the sense of how are we going to give shape to that [...] I asked the trainees to think in advance about a value that is important to them individually, to write that value on a card, and to put that card in an envelope. We spent nine weeks outdoors and did four exercises, one of which was very demanding. The evaluation of each of the exercises entailed the question: what was the value that you noted down and had that value been threatened?

Participants are aware that they still have a long road ahead of them. You do not become morally competent overnight:

The Socratic attitude has taken root, but I am still learning, as I find simply conducting conversations a difficult thing.

I feel that I am at the beginning and that I am developing my moral competence as time progresses. You could say it is an initial qualification that I obtained, which I now have to develop further through experience, by acting, by committing errors. It is an area that requires attention again and again. At school, there are several people who have completed the train-the-trainer course and we talk about such things informally. There is an annual refresher day, maybe that is also a good time to talk about certain matters with others. The subject needs my continuous attention.

The participants also frequently mentioned that it was important to anchor the learning effect, as there was a risk of it simply drifting away:

I fear that if you ask me again a year from now, I will still have that feeling, but that it will have faded into the background a little. Not entirely, but that shared thinking, et cetera, that anchoring of information, it almost makes you think of peer supervision and the like.

Participants argue that their moral competence still requires attention after completing the course; they emphasize the importance of peer supervision after the training.

Impact of the course on participants' own teaching of military ethics

In this section, we show how, according to the participants, the training has impacted their practice as ethics trainers or instructors. The majority of the participants were still to begin training and teaching military ethics in their own daily practice. The subject of the training

and teaching practice of the participants consequently surfaced frequently in the interviews. We present three main findings.

Attitude of the ethics trainer: questioning, group dynamics and the role of emotions

Participants state that they have changed their view on teaching and training military ethics. Rather than using PowerPoint Presentations they now aim to engage in dialogue with their students:

I am even more certain that this is about coaching and educating, and not about conventional teaching.

They are also more aware of the significance of maintaining a listening attitude. The exercises in the Socratic attitude are said to provide the participants with guidance in their own classes. This is specifically the case for the questioning attitude:

I am better able to be more thorough in my questioning.

It is important for people to reach a conclusion themselves instead of my having to suggest it to them.

The Socratic dialogue and the listening exercises really benefited me a lot, not just for my classes, but also for the coaching of the groups, the students.

Apart from this listening attitude, as trainers, the participants are also more aware of the importance of group dynamic elements, and the role emotions may play during ethics training:

I see the importance of the insights into group dynamics when teaching my own courses.

I no longer avoid emotions.

Self-confidence

The participants indicated that the course provides them with more self-confidence to give ethics training themselves. Every participant seems to have derived those aspects from the course that are most important to him or her as far as preparing their own teaching was concerned:

I have more knowledge, am more self-assured when teaching.

The participants also indicated that they consider the practical examples of the other participants' dilemmas useful for their own classes:

I find the experiences of other students that I can still remember [...] particularly the practical experiences, really useful.

Situations with a moral dimension that arise in the classes are also recognized; a number of participants indicated being able to address those too:

And nor do I avoid difficult situations or topics as I have various methods available to me that enable me to deal with issues without immediately ending up in a situation in which I act as the superior who dictates things, not in a setting like that.

Dealing with resistance

The participants indicated that ethics is a challenging topic to teach in a military context. It is intangible and has a "tree-hugger" or soft image within the organization. During their ethics training they experience a lot of resistance in the group on the topic of military ethics:

It remains a challenging topic because it is intangible. And what I continue to find tricky is that ethics training always represents a barrier to the standard soldier. It is not cool, but boring, there they are again, you always start at minus 2. That is what I find annoying about ethics, it is not a sexy topic that people are happy to have on their schedule. That is what I find to be the challenge in the case of ethics. We are all tough soldiers [...] Ethics is of course a tree-hugger topic, it's wishy-washy, it's not cool, it doesn't give you a kick, you have to chat about values, gee man, I will do that at home... that's the sort of talk you get, but just by drawing attention to it [i.e. ethics], you can be more proactive and prevent having to look back with regret and it enables you to prevent things like the blurring of standards.

With my Navy background, I now have to try to teach something to a group of marines who already think that I am really weird and who want to keep everything within the group as much as possible. It's a very strong cover-up culture and everything that makes you think or could give rise to a difference of opinion is just tree-hugger material. But that is precisely the group where there were two incidents [...] For me, it's the group I can least get to grips with, and to which I devote the most effort to finding the right way of creating awareness among group members.

The participants indicated that after the training they teach courses with more self-confidence. Participants reported making use of examples of their colleagues' dilemmas and are applying the Socratic attitude. They do experience ethics as a challenging topic in a military context. Ethics is considered intangible or even boring by their students, and

trainers are aware that fostering moral competence may be a challenge within the context of a military organization in which group bonding, loyalty, uniformity and hierarchy are important.

Discussion

We posed three research questions in this article. First, with regard to the content of the training: how do participants evaluate the training? Second, how do participants perceive the development of their moral competence? And third, how do participants see the impact of the training on their own teaching?

In our data, the participants reflect on their own moral competence as well as on what they have learned as trainers. These two levels overlap, since participants will use what they perceived as relevant during the training, both in their daily practice and also during their own ethics training and education courses. We think the close relationship between both can strengthen the impact of the training.

With regard to our first research question, we found that concrete and realistic (personal) moral dilemmas served as a motivation for participants to engage in reflection on moral issues; to try to understand which values are at stake and what would be a morally acceptable judgement. The more theoretical parts of the train-the-trainer course were hardly mentioned during the interviews. Nevertheless, the result that participants do not remember the theory as such, does not necessarily mean that participants did not grasp the importance of some of these theoretical notions when dealing with moral dilemmas or that ethical theories didn't help to reflect on practical moral dilemmas within an ethical framework.

Participants positively evaluated the elements of the training aimed at developing attitudes. Particularly, the Socratic attitude was regarded as helpful in identifying their own moral values as well as those of others. Working on personal development objectives in relation to fostering moral competence is seen as beneficial. It presumes that participants are willing to engage in personal reflection on their moral competence. This specific form of ethics training is not primarily concerned with acting in accordance with predefined norms or virtues, but rather with examining "how we construe ourselves as active moral agents" (Knights et al. 2008, 10). Reflecting on personal moral values, values of others, and the moral dimension of a specific situation, presumes that participants are willing to engage in these reflective practices, which may not always be the case. Some participants may find it difficult and would rather not engage in these practices. Participating in a learning-based course where one has to reflect on personal experiences or experiences of colleagues may trigger uncertainty, doubt, and (unwanted) emotions.

Diversity and safety within the group, also referred to as psychological safety in organizational literature (Catino and Patriotta 2013; Edmondson 1999; Edmondson et al. 2004; Edmondson and Lei 2014; Ron et al. 2006), are experienced by the participants as

challenging, but also as beneficial to learning. Trainers must be aware of the importance of safety within groups. If there is no openness, the training will not work. Moreover, trainers should actively work on providing safety, in the sense that participants do not suffer adverse consequences of participating in the training. In future research, it would be interesting to gain more insight in how safety unfolds and builds, decreases, or is even lost in a training (Edmondson and Lei 2014, 38), and how safety is related to diversity in groups. Diversity in the group is sometimes found to be awkward, but it can also contribute to creating more insight into the diversity of values. It can lead to a “more other-centered and cognitive complex way of viewing themselves and the world in which they live” (Garcia 1994, 429).

One way to address and stimulate safety within the group is by referring to what Molewijk et al. (2017) call the inherent epistemological uncertainty within the domain of ethics itself: there seems to be no universal source of knowledge or “evidence” in order to determine the moral rightness of our actions. If participants in the group realize that dealing with ethics and ethical reflections inherently involves experiencing moral doubt and disagreement, then diversity of values and seeing things differently can perhaps be seen as both appropriate and positive (Molewijk et al. 2017). Subsequently, dealing constructively with the disagreement by using a reflective and dialogical approach to the differences and disagreements (e.g. reacting with curiosity instead of debate) again may contribute to experiencing more safety (Widdershoven and Molewijk 2010).

Many of the participants report that after the training they have a better, or different, understanding of ethics. They also mention specific aspects of our teaching methodology, such as making dilemmas explicit, the underlying values, and having a dialogue about them. We therefore conclude that this change cannot solely be put down to the fact that they are exposed to ethical issues during the training, but that the specific methodology of fostering moral competence assisted them in learning to put moral dilemmas into words and identifying conflicting values. Participants mentioned that they have attained a new moral conceptual framework, insights, and vocabulary to describe and interpret their experiences, which in turn also serve as a means to act upon their interpretations and judgments.

This newly attained moral conceptual framework can also be relevant for reduction of moral distress (Corley et al. 2005; Jameton 1992) and moral injury (Drescher et al. 2011; Litz et al. 2009). Soldiers may risk internal moral damage if they fail to deal with the moral dilemmas they encounter (Litz et al. 2009). While the relationship between fostering moral competence and moral injury is still understudied, and should be explored in greater detail, there is literature suggesting that ethics training is of assistance in treating soldiers suffering from moral damage (Bica 1999). In addition, based on our findings, we would argue that ethics training may also be helpful in preventing moral injury. Being aware of one’s personal moral values and the values of others, recognizing situations where these values are at stake, and being able to put the moral dimension of these situations into words, seem to strengthen the ability of the participants to communicate and justify to themselves and others why they choose to prioritize and act upon a specific value. The ability to be accountable for one’s

actions when faced with a moral dilemma, to consciously choose between conflicting values while knowing that some values will have to be violated, may help to avoid the feeling of having failed morally or falling in to an overwhelming feeling of guilt. Participants experience two main challenges in their daily work practices. First, the specific context of the military organization, in which group bonding, loyalty, uniformity, and hierarchy are important, can be experienced as a challenge for moral competence. This shows the importance of addressing the influence of the military organization in moral training (Van Baarle et al. 2015). The second challenge is the realization that learning objectives require continuous attention. Since it is unknown how long the effect of the training will last, it is important to organize continuing peer supervision after the training.

Within the context of a military culture, characterized by hierarchy, military discipline, and obeying orders, there may be a tendency to teach ethics as rules one simply has to comply with. Sound and well-articulated rules provide important boundaries within which military personnel are supposed to act. However, our findings show that the learning-based course we evaluated enables and empowers participants to reflect, shape, and communicate moral judgements to others, and to foster their own moral competence. Listening carefully, suspending judgment, and asking critical questions that make you and the other person think, can be regarded as skills needed in a compliance culture, where acting upon a morally sound judgement, including when a superior disagrees, requires these kind of skills.

Because our findings are based on a learning-based course, and not on a compliance-based course, we cannot draw conclusions concerning the relationship between the two. Our findings indicate that fostering moral competence and reflection can help participants to act upon rules once they understand why these rules are valuable. Therefore, we think it is probable that rules teaching and learning processes can be mutually supporting, as the first provides knowledge of the rules, and the second motivates their use in practice. Reflection on rules during the learning process creates room for thought about the question of whether the rules are adequate and whether these should be changed. Good rules are critical; they provide the framework for actions. Also, as Shannon French argues, it is likely to be more effective if soldiers are not drilled on the provisions of International War and military codes of conduct, but rather helped to “internalize appropriate warrior codes that will inspire them to act upon these rules and regulations” (French 2003, 14).

Limitations of the study

Firstly, this study is based on the evaluation of two similar courses in ethics, both in the sense that they use the same methodology (learning-based approach) and that they are given by the same training team. We encourage further research regarding the outcomes of ethics education based on different methodologies.

A second possible limitation of this study is that the participants are themselves trainers in military ethics. Being aware of the resistance they meet when teaching ethics, the participants might have been more likely to be interested in moral issues and in reflection than soldiers who take ethics courses as part of their regular training programs (i.e. the students of the participants). At the same time, our participants are also part of that context, and they teach ethics only for a couple of years. As one participant argued:

people are 'touring', you just go and teach military ethics for some time, but if you do not want to fall into the same old song, then you need to have some background regarding this specific subject and that is exactly what this course provided me with.

Conclusion

In this study, we analyzed the experiences of participants within a train-the-trainer course on military ethics, and clarified how they evaluate the training, how they perceive the development of their moral competence, and how they see the impact of the training on their own training practice.

What sticks (what participants remember clearly from the course) are realistic examples of moral dilemmas experienced by their colleagues. These examples served as a motivation for reflection on moral issues. Participants reported a growing awareness of their personal moral values and the values of others. To recognize another person's moral values is an important element of moral competence. It implies being capable of empathizing with someone else, and of identifying those personal values that are at stake in certain situations. By including the other person's values in one's assessment, one's view is broadened. Through concrete examples, participants show their ability to recognize the moral dimension of situations, to analyze a moral dilemma and justify a choice, and to communicate and act on this judgment. We conclude that, although challenges remain, participants regard the course as contributing to their moral competence and improving their own teaching practice.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Chapter 8

Chapter 8

Discussion

Introduction

This thesis examined how moral competence can be fostered during ethics education in a military context. The train-the-trainer course on military ethics developed by the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defense Academy was used as a case study for this research. Within this course trainers work with a virtue ethics approach. The course aims at fostering moral competence of non-commissioned officers who are themselves trainers or instructors in military ethics, or will be in the near future. In this final chapter we will answer the research questions presented in the introduction. We will first present our main findings with regard to: the theoretical foundations of ethics education aimed at fostering moral competence; the challenges of fostering moral competence in a military context; and the effects of ethics training courses in a military context. Next, we will reflect on these findings, present our conclusions and give recommendations for the practice of ethics education as well as set out avenues for future research.

In the discussion of our findings we focus on the question of whether training soldiers to be 'reflective soldiers', to engage in autonomous, critical thinking and to foster active reflection on their practices and moral dilemmas is feasible in a military context. Does this fit in with military culture? A recent report from the *Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid* [Dutch Safetyboard] with regard to the death of two Dutch soldiers in Mali and the subsequent public debate on this incident indicates that this is indeed a challenge. The report states that carrying out the mission had been prioritized over weapon safety and medical facilities. A sense of responsibility to carry out the mission and a 'can do mentality' meant that risks were underestimated, and usual checks and procedures were not followed. The report recommends stimulating an organization structure and culture in which leadership is receptive to critical questions of employees, and explicitly criticizes the military can do mentality (Dutch Safetyboard 2017). A 'can do' mentality, can be viewed as a mentality focused on the willingness to take on the challenges one is confronted with, without hesitation, doubt or discussion (Soeters 2016). To what extent is the approach to ethics education, aimed at fostering moral competence, feasible in a military context?

Research questions

The following question was addressed in this dissertation:

How to foster moral competence by means of a train-the-trainer course on military ethics?

The subsequent sub-questions were examined:

- a. **What are relevant foundations for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence?**
 - What are potential theoretical starting points for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence? (*Chapter 2*)
 - What is the relevance of Foucauldian 'art-of-living' for ethics education? (*Chapter 3*)
- b. **What are challenges in fostering moral competence by means of ethics training in a military context, and how can these challenges be met?**
 - What are challenges in dealing with concrete moral dilemmas in a military context? (*Chapter 4*)
 - What aspects of military culture may influence ethics education in a military context? (*Chapter 5*)
 - What is the relevance of safety during ethics training and how can an atmosphere of safety be fostered during ethics education? (*Chapter 6*)
- c. **What are perceived outcomes of the train-the-trainer course?**
 - How do participants perceive the development of their moral competence? (*Chapter 7*)
 - How do participants perceive the impact of the training on their own training practice? (*Chapter 7*)

Main findings

What are relevant foundations for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence?

What are potential theoretical starting points for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence? (Chapter 2)

In the second chapter we presented our case study, the train-the-trainer course on military ethics.

In examining the notion of moral competence, we differentiated between six elements: (1) The awareness of one's own personal values and the values of others; (2) The recognition of the moral dimension of a situation and identify which values are at stake or are at risk of violation; (3) The ability to adequately judge a moral question or dilemma; (4) The ability to communicate this judgment; (5) The willingness and ability to act in accordance with this judgment in a morally responsible manner; and (6) The willingness and ability to be accountable to yourself and to others. These elements are also described by other authors (Karssing, 2000; Verweij 2005; Sherblom 2012).

Furthermore, we identified three core requirements for developing moral competence. The first is recognition of the moral dimension of a situation. This requires awareness of values that are at stake in the specific situation. These values are always personal, and related to one's identity. Thus, ethics education aimed at fostering moral competence requires a personal approach. A second requirement is dialogue. In order to become aware of personal values and the values of others, dialogue with one another (and with oneself) is crucial. A third requirement is a learning environment in which participants are challenged to relate ethical theories to actions and concrete experiences from daily work. By actively linking theory to concrete experiences, participants learn to understand the practical meaning of theoretical notions and to contextualize their experience in the light of ethics theories. Thus, we identified three requirements for ethics education aimed at fostering moral competence: virtue ethics, focusing on the development of personal values and identity; 'the Socratic attitude', enabling a person to enter in a dialogue; and 'living learning', providing tools for reflection on experiences in practice. We will briefly explain how we used each of them as theoretical starting points for the training.

To foster a personal approach to ethics education, we made use of concepts from virtue ethics. This ethics theory is explicitly concerned with the agent, with motive and intention, emotion and desire, as well as with character (Nussbaum 1999: 538). According to Aristotle, particularly in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, virtuous character is concerned with choice; a choice for the right mean between two extremes (vices), that entail either an excess or a defect of the virtue in question (Aristotle 1106b36–1107a3). For example, a professional soldier can be viewed as someone who has learned through repeated practice to analyze and reflect on aspects of a situation and to find the 'right mean' for action among various options, fitting to the specific context. Consequently, in the training we fostered reflection on situations in which choices have to be made, and on personal involvement in these choices.

As a prerequisite for engaging in a dialogue with regard to a moral question or moral dilemma, with each other (and with themselves), we identified the Socratic attitude (Kessels, Boers & Mostert 2002; Saran & Neisser 2004; Kessels 1997). This entails the ability to listen carefully, to postpone one's judgement and to ask questions (instead of engaging in a debate where the primary concern is to convince the other). Fostering such abilities is considered an important ingredient of training moral reflection and deliberation.

To create a process of living learning, we used a pedagogical method known as Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) (Cohn 1976; Jaques & Salmon 2007; Stollberg 2008; van de Braak 2011). To promote a 'living learning' process within a group, trainers seek to create a dynamic balance among four factors that arise in groups in learning situations: the task, the course objective or theory which is presented (the IT), the group (the WE), the individual (the I), and the context (the CONTEXT). In this approach, participants connect theory with their own point of view and their experiences in practice (Cohn, 1976; Schneider-Landolf, Spielmann & Zitterbarth 2009). This method served as a tool to foster personal moral learning.

What is the relevance of Foucauldian art-of-living for ethics education? (Chapter 3)

This chapter explored the notion of 'art-of-living' in the work of Michel Foucault. By means of a concrete example taken from our case study, we also examined the relevance of working with this approach in ethics education.

We have shown that participants recognize Foucault's concepts of 'normalization' (e.g. judgements about what is considered normal and what is not) and 'disciplinary technology' (e.g. the production of the behavior of individuals by techniques of control such as hierarchical observation, normative judgements and examination) within the military organization. One of the examples mentioned in this chapter is a participant reflecting on internalized disciplinary power in terms of military values, such as loyalty to the organization and a 'can do' mentality.

The Foucauldian notion of art-of-living aims at fostering awareness of power relations, and at empowering people to use space for 'freedom practices', to actively choose and act upon certain values. It can be used in ethics education to foster participants' insight in themselves in their concrete situation, to become aware of the power relations which they are part of, and how these power relations influence situations and the prioritization of values. Such reflections are helpful in reaching a morally responsible decision (i.e. a decision that takes the different points of view of the stakeholders in question into account). According to Foucault, power relations imply the possibility of ethics, of choice and of modifying these power relations through freedom practices. Soldiers may be produced by power relations, but at the same time room can be created for freedom practices, since soldiers can be challenged to think for themselves, to become aware of tensions between values and to consider alternative options.

We have shown how participants can become aware of existing power relations, which opens the door to the possibility of individual empowerment. Even though freedom to shape one's own life is not self-evident, ethics education based on Foucauldian art-of-living can assist in fostering awareness of existing power relations in order for participants to engage in freedom practices and adequate decision-making. Soldiers can be stimulated to think about the meaning of values and to form their own morally responsible judgment.

Ethics education focusing on awareness of and reflection on power relations and active self-formation within existing power relations can offer an opportunity for organizations and their employees to understand how they have come to believe what they value. It can help them understand their own values as well as those of others. Finally, it assists employees in active reflection and decision making when faced with complex moral dilemmas in their daily practice.

What are challenges in fostering moral competence by means of ethics training in a military context, and how can these challenges be met?

What are challenges in dealing with concrete moral dilemmas in a military context? (Chapter 4)

A number of Dutch soldiers deployed to Afghanistan have returned with stories about *bacha bazi*, dancing boys or *chai boys* (tea boys)—dressed-up boys who run errands for people such as police and army commanders in Afghanistan. This practice, in which an adult man has a sexual relationship with a preadolescent boy is called *bacha bazi* (Persian for “boy play”). Due to the fact that some of their local counterparts may be involved in this practice, Dutch soldiers report they are faced with a complex situation. On the one hand they want to denounce this abuse and feel a responsibility to protect civilians, in this case the young boys. On the other hand they have to maintain good relationships with their local partners. The focus in this chapter was on how Dutch military personnel act when faced with these situations.

The findings show that although military personnel feel that values clash in the case of *bacha bazi*, they are not clear whether, for them, this is a moral dilemma and what action they should take. Most respondents argue that it ‘is a custom there, a fact of life, it is their culture’ and ‘you have to put your Western views aside.’ Soldiers came to see the custom, initially perceived as strange, as a normal event, a phenomenon also known as mission creep. In their words, ‘we practically never talked about it, you get used to it.’

The hesitation to consider the confrontation with *bacha bazi* as a moral dilemma or the normalization of *bacha bazi* can be regarded as an example of moral disengagement (Bandura 1990) or keeping a moral distance. This is a passive response strategy; to relativize the situation at hand (Whetham 2008). However, the danger of moral blindness lurks. We have shown that the ability to recognize that there are ethical aspects worthy of consideration in the situation one is confronted with (also referred to as ‘ethical sensitivity’) is not self-evident. In fact, this can be considered a challenge for dealing with and responding to concrete moral dilemmas in a military context. In order to deal with moral dilemmas, one first needs to recognize the moral dimension of situations.

What aspects of military culture may influence ethics education in a military context? (Chapter 5)

As indicated in the third chapter, openly dealing with moral dilemmas is not always easy in a military context. In the fifth chapter we describe the tensions between military and personal values, on the one hand, and the challenges related to showing moral competence, on the other hand.

The moral dilemma with regard to the *bacha bazi* phenomenon in Afghanistan, described in the fourth chapter, is again referred to in this chapter. Several participants of the training experienced a tension between the perception of themselves as a ‘human being’ and as a ‘soldier.’ The participants state that they view themselves as ‘political assets’—soldiers carrying out their duty. As soldiers they have taken an oath. This oath stresses loyalty to the head of state and military law, which implies that they carry out orders unquestioningly, especially in combat situations.

Participants reported that specific aspects of military culture influence this tension. They mentioned being a soldier, group bonding, uniformity, hierarchy, lack of privacy and masculinity. Adapting one’s mindset to being a soldier with a duty or viewing oneself as a political asset, may make it more difficult to acknowledge one’s personal responsibility. Group bonding and hierarchy may impede military personnel from asking critical questions. Uniformity makes it difficult to recognize other people’s values. Lack of privacy leads to pressure to conform to the group standard and leaves little room for individual reflection. Finally, the masculine ideal of the ‘warrior hero,’ who is in emotional control or preferably without any emotions, does not make it easy to engage in reflection as this could simply be interpreted as being weak or vulnerable.

What is the relevance of safety during ethics training and how can an atmosphere of safety be fostered during ethics education? (Chapter 6)

A particular challenge for ethics training courses, especially in a military context, is how to foster an atmosphere of safety within a group. In chapter six, we examined how safety dynamics works and how an atmosphere of safety can be fostered during ethics training.

We showed that during ethics training courses a safety paradox may occur, which involves a tension between honesty and being critical, on the one hand, and openness to other perspectives and values, on the other hand. Honesty may result in expressing conflicting or colliding views, which may challenge mutual openness between participants. Subsequently, we discussed how trainers can foster safety during ethics training.

Research shows that safety is an important precondition for a dialogical, reflective and interactive approach to ethics training courses (Smith & Berg 1987; Knapp & Sturm 2002; Tucker, Nembhard & Edmondson 2006; Molewijk, Abma, Stolper & Widdershoven 2008; Abma, Molewijk & Widdershoven 2009; Wortel & Bosch 2011; Stolper, Metselaar, Molewijk & Widdershoven 2012; van der Dam 2012; Solum, Maluwa, Tveit & Severinsson. 2016). However, safety is precarious and can be threatened. During ethics training courses participants are invited to engage in dialogue and reflection as well as to be vulnerable and honest about their own considerations. That said, this invitation for openness can lead to paradoxical effects. Honesty can lead to a collision of perspectives and values, resulting in less mutual openness towards other perspectives leading to a decline in safety. Approaching this paradox as a dynamic process requiring time and reflection in the here-and-now, may assist to foster

safety in those situations in which participants or trainers experience threats to safety. These situations, while challenging, offer an unforeseen opportunity to learn during the training. Indeed, dealing constructively with other perspectives, conflicting values and remaining able to learn can be seen as a key element of ethics education.

What are perceived outcomes of the train-the-trainer course?

How do participants perceive the development of their moral competence? (Chapter 7)

In this chapter, we analyzed the experiences of course participants who were interviewed 6 to 12 months after they had participated in a train-the-trainer course on military ethics.

Participants mentioned that they acquired a new vocabulary that helps them to both rethink moral dilemmas they experienced in the past, as well as, enables them to more easily recognize moral dilemmas. They stated that it is now easier for them to discuss their experiences, to actually name the values that were under threat and indicate why they made certain decisions. Participants experience that this vocabulary assists them in putting an uneasy gut feeling into words, and in identifying the values that are under threat. This enables them to start a constructive discussion and to take action when they recognize a moral dilemma.

What participants remember clearly from the course are realistic examples of moral dilemmas experienced by their colleagues. These examples served as a motivation for reflecting on moral issues. Participants also reported a growing awareness of their personal moral values and the moral values of others. They recognized understanding another person's moral values as an important element of moral competence. This implies that they were capable of empathizing with someone else and of identifying the personal values of the other person that are at stake in specific situations. By including the other person's values in their assessment, their view was broadened. Moreover, participants reported having the ability to recognize the moral dimension of situations, to analyze a moral dilemma and justify a choice, and to communicate and act on this judgment. They also cited concrete examples of these abilities.

How do participants perceive the impact of the training on their own training practice? (Chapter 7)

The participants indicated that after the training they teach ethics courses with more self-confidence. They reported making use of examples of dilemmas discussed in the training and making use of the Socratic attitude in exercises. With regard to their own teaching, participants noticed a change from more conventional teaching (such as using PowerPoint Presentations and a focus on the teacher and no or little interaction) to coaching and

interactive teaching. They were more aware of the significance of maintaining a listening and questioning attitude in order to stimulate reflection and deliberation as part of a virtue ethics approach to ethics education. Particularly, exercises in the Socratic attitude, aimed at fostering a learning attitude, were said to provide the participants with guidance in their own classes. Participants stated that they now ask their students to reach conclusions themselves instead of suggesting or teaching what the conclusion should be.

Participants of the train-the-trainer course do experience ethics as a challenging topic in a military context. Ethics is considered intangible or even boring by their students, and trainers are aware that fostering moral competence may be a challenge within the context of a military organization in which group bonding, loyalty, uniformity and hierarchy are important.

We conclude that, although challenges in ethics education remain, participants regard the train-the-trainer course as contributing to their moral competence, both as military ethics trainers and as soldiers.

Discussion

Is fostering moral competence really feasible in a military context?

In the introduction we argued that the ability to reflect, to ask critical questions, to recognize the moral dimension of situation and the ability to resist peer pressure are valuable characteristics in a military context. Ethics is regarded as foundational to the military profession and organization: 'It sets the environment of trust between a nation's military and the government and the people it serves that allows military members to serve as true professionals' (Cook 2015: p.104). Ethics education includes empowering people to say 'no' when it is legally and/or ethically appropriate (Robinson 2008; Coleman 2013).

Our findings show that asking critical questions, recognizing other people's values, reflecting on moral issues and being able to resist peer pressure - all important aspects of fostering moral competence - are not easy in a military context (cf. Cook 2013). Several specific aspects of military culture (i.e. being a soldier, group bonding, uniformity, hierarchy, lack of privacy and masculinity) appear to create a challenge with regard to showing moral competence.

One may argue that these aspects of military culture will always remain part of the military context. Soldiers indeed need to be trained for specific situations, such as combat, in which they have to be able and willing to take on the tasks that are set to do without much hesitation. It is likely that military organizations will always remain excellent examples of how disciplinary power works. Indeed, one slowly becomes 'a soldier', an identity which is transmitted by and reproduced through structures of the organization on a day-to-day basis. Disciplinary mechanisms and institutional processes lead individuals to regulate their own

conduct, turning them into self-disciplining subjects. As Foucault argues, under the panoptic gaze an individual 'becomes the principle of his own subjection' (Foucault 1977: 202–203).

This raises the following question: To what extent is ethics education aimed at fostering moral competence really feasible in a military context?

As Foucault suggests in his later work (1984a; 1984b; 1985; 1988; 1997) individuals create their own selves and realize their desires through discipline. That is, 'individuals/groups can free themselves from the overarching disciplinary power of knowledge and realize their own desires in a framework of self-discipline and self-knowledge of their own making' (Starkey & McKinlay 1998: 231). Soldiers are not merely political assets (soldiers carrying out their duty) without agency. Within the discursive bounds imposed by membership of the armed forces, they remain individuals who can construct their own self. As such they 'may shift the limits that define who they are, modifying and reconstituting themselves in other ways' (Thornborrow & Brown 2009: 359). However, constituting oneself within a military context is not self-evident, it demands not only reflection, but also evaluation, training and education. Ethics education can play an important role in this ongoing learning process of both soldiers and their organizations.

In order to stimulate a culture in which leadership is receptive to critical questions of employees, techniques fostering openness and dialogue may be helpful to assist employees experience the possibility of choice with regard to moral issues and to become aware of alternatives in decision-making. Ethics education that pays attention to the person who is confronted with the moral question or dilemma, can play a crucial part in achieving this goal. Next to education, other contexts can be relevant for practicing openness and dialogue. For instance, more inclusive ways of policy making (Romme 1999; Bushe & Marshak 2009; Powley, Fry, Barrett & Bright 2004), and (operational) teams that prepare and evaluate actions to learn from errors (Catino & Patriotta 2013). Our findings show that employees asking critical questions and engaging in freedom practices is not self-evident. As de Beauvoir maintains, the freedom 'to will oneself free', the will and ability to deal with doubt, uncertainty, and the willingness to stand up for certain values is rather difficult (de Beauvoir 1947: 133).

We aim to encourage a participative, learner-centered approach to ethics education that places an emphasis on learning by experience, reflection on experiences, direct engagement, interaction and learning in the here-and-now. In this way, soldiers will be stimulated to think for themselves, to become aware of tensions between values, to foster their moral competence and to form their own morally responsible judgment.

Obviously, for instance during combat, there are situations when executing orders under high pressure and limited time makes engaging in reflection impossible. In such 'split second' situations it seems strange and even inappropriate to expect soldiers to engage in a dialogue and reflect on what action should be taken. In these kinds of situations, soldiers need to put their training into practice and take on their assigned tasks without much hesitation. However, in many situations, during deployment as well as in peacetime, time and space are available to reflect on previous actions, to prepare for future actions and to

learn from experiences. In these situations, we need soldiers who are trained in such a way that they are able to critically reflect, recognize different perspectives and values, and form their own morally responsible judgement. As there will never be a rule or guideline that covers all future events, we will constantly need to reflect and review our existing guidelines and policies (Wakin 2000; Kramer 2004; van Baarda & Verweij; Robinson et al. 2008; Lucas 2015). Reflection on rules creates room for thought about the question as to whether certain rules are adequate or should be changed.

Our findings suggest that it is possible to foster Foucauldian freedom practices by working with techniques fostering reflection. Listening and dialogue enable us to question the 'normality' (Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips 2006) in the military organization, to acknowledge its power, and to investigate alternative options.

Conclusions

In the studies presented in this dissertation we focused on a train-the-trainer course on military ethics for the Dutch armed forces. We elaborated the foundations of ethics education, investigated challenges in ethics education in a military context, and put forward suggestions on how to overcome these challenges with regard to ethics education. Finally, we explored the perceived impact of the ethics train-the-trainer course and identified several aspects that remain challenging.

While ethics training courses aimed at fostering moral competence imply dealing with challenges related to military culture and an atmosphere of safety in the group, our findings indicate that during ethics training courses these challenges also offer opportunities to discuss moral issues and develop moral competence. The key to unlocking these opportunities seems to lie in embracing instead of avoiding these challenges. In doing so we can progress towards a better understanding of moral competence in practice. In fact, discussing these challenges can help participants to recognize concrete moral dilemmas and conflicting values.

Our findings indicate that the train-the-trainer course, through fostering reflection and dialogue on different values and stimulating the Socratic attitude, contributes to the development of moral competence. Participants state that by acquiring a new vocabulary, they more easily recognize moral dilemmas and are able to see and put into words which values, including the values of others, are under threat. The interviews showed that after the train-the-trainer course, participants are more likely to address situations in their daily practice in which they recognize a moral dimension, including those situations that involve their superiors. The fact that the participants in our case study consider the train-the-trainer course important and relevant for their own ethics teaching is an indication of its efficacy.

Our studies support the idea that moral sensitivity, defined as the recognition of ethical aspects worthy of consideration in the situation one is confronted with, is not self-evident.

We therefore recommend further developing and implementing ethics training courses that address this aspect of moral competence and train participants accordingly. In order not to be naive, ethics education should acknowledge power relations, and aim at understanding and learning to deal with the ways in which these relations influence values, moral sensitivity and decision making. A Foucauldian perspective provides an opportunity to reflect on these elements and to support employees when faced with complex moral dilemmas in daily practice, and develop a culture of reflection and dialogue in military institutions.

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Summary

Summary

Military personnel encounter moral dilemmas during deployments and in their working environment at home. We define moral dilemmas as situations in which a choice has to be made between two actions, embodying different values. Dealing with moral dilemmas requires moral competence. There is a growing awareness of the need to address ethics during training in the armed forces. This dissertation provides insight into how moral competence can be reinforced by means of ethics education.

Our research is based on a qualitative research approach allowing us to reflect on experiences and learning processes during ethics education as well as to develop and improve the theory and practice of ethics training and education. The train-the-trainer course on military ethics, developed by the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defense Academy, was used as a case study for this research. Within this case study, in each chapter, we use different sources of data: semi-structured interviews with participants; participant observation and detailed notes by trainers. In the studies presented in this dissertation, we use a specific notion of 'moral competence' that includes six different elements. We assume the following elements to be relevant in fostering moral competence: (1) The awareness of one's own personal values and the values of others; (2) The recognition of the moral dimension of a situation and identify which values are at stake or are at risk of violation; (3) The ability to adequately judge a moral question or dilemma; (4) The ability to communicate this judgment; (5) The willingness and ability to act in accordance with this judgment in a morally responsible manner; and (6) The willingness and ability to be accountable to yourself and to others.

The following research question and sub-questions were addressed:

How to foster moral competence by means of a train-the-trainer course on military ethics?

- (a) What are relevant foundations for ethics education and training aimed at fostering moral competence? (*Chapter 2 and 3*)
- (b) What are challenges in fostering moral competence by means of ethics training in a military context, and how can these challenges be met? (*Chapter 4, 5 and 6*)
- (c) What are perceived outcomes of the train-the-trainer course? (*Chapter 7*)

In the **second chapter**, we present our case study: the train-the-trainer course on military ethics. We identify three requirements for ethics education aimed at fostering moral competence. First, virtue ethics, focusing on the development of personal values and identity. Second, the 'Socratic attitude', enabling a person to enter into a dialogue. And third 'living learning', which provides practical tools for reflection on experiences.

To foster a personal approach to ethics education, we make use of concepts from virtue ethics. This ethics theory is explicitly concerned with the agent, with motives and intentions, emotions and desires. In the training, we aim to foster reflection on situations in which choices have to be made, and on personal involvement in these choices.

As a method for engaging in a dialogue with regard to a moral question or a moral dilemma with each other (and with themselves), we identify the Socratic attitude. This entails the ability to listen carefully, to postpone one's judgement and to ask questions (instead of engaging in a debate where the primary concern is to convince the other).

To create a process of living learning, we use a pedagogical method known as Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI). Trainers seek to create a dynamic balance among four factors that arise in groups in learning situations: the task, or the course objective or theory which is presented (the IT), the group (the WE), the individual (the I), and the context (the CONTEXT). In this approach, participants connect theory with their own point of view and their experiences in practice. This method serves as a tool to foster personal moral learning.

In **Chapter 3**, we explore the notion of 'art-of-living' in the work of Michel Foucault. By means of a concrete example taken from our case study, we examine the relevance of working with this approach in ethics education. We show how participants can become aware of existing power relations, which opens the door to the possibility of individual empowerment. Participants recognize Foucault's concepts of 'normalization' (e.g. judgements about what is considered normal and what is not) and 'disciplinary technology' (e.g. the production of the desired behavior of individuals by control techniques such as hierarchical observation, normative judgements and examination) within the military organization. One of the examples mentioned in this chapter is a participant reflecting on internalized disciplinary power in terms of military values, such as loyalty to the organization and a 'can do' mentality. The Foucauldian notion of art-of-living aims at fostering awareness of power relations, and at empowering people to use space for 'freedom practices', to actively choose and act upon certain values. This approach can be used in ethics education to foster participants' insight into themselves with regard to their concrete situation, to become aware of the power relations which they are part of, and to see how these power relations influence situations and the prioritization of values. Even though freedom to shape one's own life is not self-evident, ethics education based on Foucauldian art-of-living can assist in fostering awareness of existing power relations and assist participants to engage in freedom practices and morally responsible decision-making.

Chapter 4 examines the moral dimension of the military context by reflecting on a specific moral dilemma faced by military personnel deployed to Afghanistan. This moral dilemma is known as the 'dancing boys', 'bacha bazi' or 'chai boys' phenomenon. The practice entails sexual relations between men in positions of power and young boys. Due to the fact that some of their local counterparts may have been involved in this practice, Dutch soldiers reported

that they were faced with a complex situation. The moral dimensions (and the related values) of these situations were not always recognized by Dutch soldiers. We show that the ability to recognize that there are moral aspects worthy of consideration in the situation one is confronted with (also referred to as 'ethical sensitivity') is not self-evident. In fact, this can be considered a challenge for dealing with and responding to concrete moral dilemmas in a military context. In order to deal with moral dilemmas, one first needs to recognize the moral dimension of situations.

In **Chapter 5**, we identify several challenges and tensions that are at play during ethics education in a military context: challenges related to fostering moral competence and tensions between military and personal values. Several participants of the training experience of tension between the perception of themselves as a 'human being' and as a 'soldier'. Participants state that they view themselves as 'political assets'—soldiers carrying out their duty. As soldiers they have taken an oath. This oath stresses loyalty to the head of state and adherence to military law. According to several participants, this implies that they carry out orders unquestioningly, especially in combat situations.

The thick descriptions based on detailed notes made by the trainers, show that participants describe specific aspects of military culture that influence tensions between fostering moral competence and the military context. These aspects include: being a soldier; group bonding; uniformity; hierarchy; lack of privacy; and masculinity. Adapting one's mindset to being a soldier with a duty or viewing oneself as a political asset may make it more difficult to acknowledge one's personal responsibility. Group bonding and hierarchy may impede military personnel from asking critical questions. Uniformity may make it difficult to recognize other people's values. Lack of privacy leads to pressure to conform to the group standard and leaves little room for individual reflection. Finally, the masculine ideal of the 'warrior hero,' who is in emotional control or preferably without any emotions, does not make it easy to engage in reflection and doubt, as this could simply be interpreted as being weak or vulnerable.

In **Chapter 6**, we examine the relevance of safety during ethics training courses and investigate how an atmosphere of safety can be fostered. By means of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) we analyze a specific critical incident in which safety was threatened. Safety can be viewed as an important precondition for a dialogical, reflective, and interactive approach to ethics training courses. At the same time, safety is precarious and can be threatened during ethics training courses. We show that a safety paradox may occur during ethics training. This involves a tension between honesty and being critical on the one hand and openness to other perspectives and values on the other. Honesty may result in expressing conflicting or colliding views, which may challenge safety and mutual openness between participants. Approaching this paradox as a dynamic process requiring time and reflection in the here-and-now may assist to foster safety in those situations in which participants or trainers

experience threats to safety. We argue that these situations offer an opportunity to learn during the training. Dealing constructively with other perspectives, conflicting values and remaining able to learn can be seen as key elements of ethics education.

Chapter 7 examines the perceived outcomes of the train-the-trainer course. We show how participants view the development of their moral competence, as well as the impact of ethics training on their own training practice. Participants assert that they acquired a new vocabulary that helps them to both rethink moral dilemmas they experienced in the past, as well as enables them to more easily recognize moral dilemmas in the present. This enables them to start a constructive discussion and to take action when they recognize a moral dilemma. Participants report a growing awareness of their personal moral values and the moral values of others. They recognize understanding another person's moral values as an important element of moral competence. This implies that they are capable of empathizing with someone else and of identifying the personal values of the other person that are at stake in specific situations.

With regard to their own teaching practice, participants notice a change from more conventional teaching (such as using PowerPoint presentations, a focus on the teacher and no or little interaction) to coaching and interactive teaching. They are more aware of the significance of maintaining a listening and questioning attitude in order to stimulate reflection and deliberation as part of a virtue ethics approach to ethics education. Particularly exercises in the Socratic attitude, aimed at fostering a learning attitude, are said to provide the participants with guidance in their own classes.

In **Chapter 8** we reflect on the findings of this thesis, focusing on the question of whether training soldiers to be 'reflective soldiers', to engage in autonomous, critical thinking and to foster active reflection on their practices and moral dilemmas is feasible in a military context. A recent report from the *Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid* [Dutch Safety Board] with regard to the death of two Dutch soldiers in Mali and the subsequent public debate on this incident indicates that this is indeed a challenge.

The studies in this dissertation show that fostering reflective practice and moral competence assists participants of a train-the-trainer course on ethics to recognize the moral dimension of their daily practice and to form their own morally responsible judgements. Our research shows that fostering moral competence is not always easy in a military context. Asking critical questions, recognizing (one's own and other people's) values, reflecting on moral issues and being able to resist peer pressure can be challenging. We offer practical ideas to show how these challenges can be met.

We argue that within the limits imposed by membership of the armed forces, soldiers remain individuals who can construct their own 'self'. However, developing oneself within a military context is not self-evident; it demands not only reflection, but also evaluation, training and education. A participative, learner-centered approach to ethics education that

places an emphasis on learning by experiences and learning in the here-and-now can play an important role in this ongoing learning process of both soldiers and their organizations.

We recommend further developing and implementing ethics training courses that address moral sensitivity as an important aspect of moral competence and training participants accordingly. In order to be effective, ethics education should acknowledge power relations and aim at understanding and learning to deal with the ways in which these relations influence values, moral sensitivity and decision-making. In order to stimulate a culture in which leadership is receptive to critical questions from employees, interventions fostering openness and dialogue may be helpful. Next to ethics education, other contexts can be relevant for practicing openness and dialogue, for instance more inclusive ways of policy-making and (operational) teams that prepare and evaluate actions in order to learn from errors.

Samenvatting

Militairen worden regelmatig geconfronteerd met morele dilemma's, zowel tijdens uitzendingen als in Nederland. Een moreel dilemma definiëren wij als een situatie waarin een keuze moet worden gemaakt tussen verschillende elkaar uitsluitende handelingsalternatieven, waarbij waarden met elkaar in conflict zijn. Het omgaan met morele dilemma's stelt de morele competentie van Defensiemedewerkers op de proef. Binnen Defensie is aandacht voor de morele dimensie van het werk van belang. Dat komt onder andere tot uitdrukking in het ethiekonderwijs voor militairen. In dit proefschrift onderzoeken wij daarom de vraag: hoe kan de morele competentie van militairen bevorderd worden door middel van ethiekonderwijs?

Dit onderzoek is gebaseerd op een kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethode. Dit stelt ons in staat om kritisch te reflecteren op specifieke ervaringen en leerprocessen tijdens het ethiekonderwijs en al doende de theorie en praktijk van ethiekonderwijs en trainingen verder te verbeteren. De *case study* met betrekking tot ethiekonderwijs die in ons onderzoek centraal staat is de 9-daagse Verdiepingscursus Militaire Ethiek (VME) (in het Engels: *train-the-trainer course on military ethics*). In de verschillende deelstudies—die corresponderen met artikelen en hoofdstukken in dit proefschrift – gebruiken we verschillende vormen van empirisch materiaal: semigestructureerd interviews, *participant observation* en notities gemaakt door verschillende trainers tijdens de training.

Een centraal begrip in de verschillende deelstudies is het begrip 'morele competentie'. We veronderstellen dat voor het bevorderen van morele competentie de volgende zes elementen van belang zijn: (1) Bewust worden van de eigen, persoonlijke waarden en de waarden van anderen; (2) In staat zijn de morele dimensie van een situatie te herkennen en kunnen zien welke waarden op het spel staan, en overtreden of geschonden dreigen te worden; (3) Kunnen oordelen over een morele vraag of dilemma; (4) Over dit oordeel kunnen communiceren; (5) Willen en kunnen handelen naar dit oordeel op een moreel verantwoorde manier; (6) Verantwoording af willen en kunnen leggen aan jezelf en aan anderen.

De volgende onderzoeksvraag en sub-vragen staan centraal:

Hoe kan morele competentie bevorderd worden door middel van een verdiepingscursus militaire ethiek?

- a) Wat zijn relevante uitgangspunten voor ethiekonderwijs en training gericht op het bevorderen van morele competentie? (Hoofdstuk 2 en 3)
- b) Wat zijn de uitdagingen bij het bevorderen van morele competentie tijdens ethiek training in een militaire context en hoe kunnen deze uitdagingen worden aangegaan? (Hoofdstuk 4, 5 en 6)
- c) Wat zijn de resultaten van de verdiepingscursus militaire ethiek volgens de deelnemers aan de training? (Hoofdstuk 7)

In **hoofdstuk 2** presenteren we de *case study*: de VME. We beschrijven drie theoretische uitgangspunten voor ethiekonderwijs en training. Ten eerste, de deugdethiek, gericht op het ontwikkelen van persoonlijke waarden en identiteit. Ten tweede, de ‘Socratische houding’, een manier om met een ander in dialoog te gaan. Tot slot, ‘levend leren’, als methode om te reflecteren op (eigen) praktijkervaringen, ook ten tijde van de training zelf.

Morele competentie begint met het herkennen van de morele dimensie van een situatie. Om de morele dimensie van een situatie te kunnen herkennen, is het van belang te zien welke waarden er op het spel staan. Dit veronderstelt dat mensen zich bewust zijn van hun persoonlijke waarden. Het onderzoeken van persoonlijke waarden is daarom een startpunt in de VME. Een deugd-ethische benadering is relevant voor onderzoek naar persoonlijke waarden. In deze benadering gaat het namelijk over motieven, intenties, emoties en verlangens. In de training reflecteren deelnemers op situaties waarin keuzes gemaakt moeten worden en vervolgens op hun rol in die keuzeprocessen.

De Socratische houding is een voorwaarde om over een morele vraag of dilemma in dialoog te kunnen gaan. Dit houdt in: goed kunnen luisteren, het uitstellen van je oordeel en het stellen van vragen. Dit in contrast met een debat waarbij het overtuigen van anderen het doel is.

Om processen van levend leren te bevorderen werken trainers met Thema-Gecentreerde Interactie (TGI) als pedagogische methode. De trainers zijn er op gericht een dynamische balans te creëren tussen de vier factoren die in iedere leer- of werksituatie in een groep onderkend worden: de taak, het doel van de training of een bepaald element daarin (het HET), de groep (het WIJ), het individu (het IK), en de context (de CONTEXT). Deze benadering beoogt deelnemers in staat te stellen (soms abstracte) theorieën te verbinden met hun eigen ervaringen in de praktijk. Op die manier ondersteunt deze methode het bevorderen van de morele competentie van de deelnemers.

In **hoofdstuk 3** verkennen we de betekenis van ‘levenskunst’ in het werk van Michel Foucault. Aan de hand van een concreet voorbeeld onderzoeken we de relevantie van deze benadering tijdens ethiekonderwijs. We laten zien dat deelnemers zich bewust kunnen worden van bestaande machtsrelaties. Dat bewustzijn kan vervolgens leiden tot de mogelijkheid van individuele vrijheid om zelf actief vorm te geven aan deze machtsrelaties. Verschillende concepten in het werk van Foucault blijken voor deelnemers van de VME herkenbaar en relevant voor hun militaire praktijk. Deelnemers herkennen bijvoorbeeld ‘normalisering’— oordelen over wat als normaal wordt beschouwd— en ‘disciplinaire technologie’— het produceren en beheersen van gedrag door verschillende technieken zoals hiërarchische observatie, normatieve oordelen en het examen— als opvallende onderdelen van hun dagelijkse praktijk. Een van de voorbeelden in dit hoofdstuk gaat in op de geïnternaliseerde disciplinaire macht in termen van militaire waarden, zoals loyaliteit aan de organisatie en een ‘*can do*’ mentaliteit. Vanuit het perspectief levenskunst is de eerste stap tijdens ethiekonderwijs het bevorderen van het bewustzijn van bestaande machtsrelaties.

Vervolgens richt levenskunst zich op het in staat stellen van mensen om zelf ruimte te creëren, om zelf actief te kiezen voor waarden en daarnaar te handelen. Wij concluderen dat de levenskunst benadering bruikbaar kan zijn tijdens ethiekonderwijs. Aan de hand van een concreet voorbeeld laten we zien dat deelnemers aan de VME meer inzicht krijgen zichzelf en hun context, en leren hoe zij machtsrelaties bij morele dilemma’s of in andere concrete situaties kunnen beïnvloeden.

Hoofdstuk 4 behandelt een concreet moreel dilemma van militair personeel tijdens een uitzending naar Afghanistan. Dit morele dilemma staat bekend als het ‘dansjongens’ fenomeen, ‘*bacha bazi*’ of ‘*chai boys*’ zijn andere namen voor hetzelfde verschijnsel. Het gaat om een praktijk waarbij er sprake is van een seksuele relatie tussen jonge jongens en machtige mannen. Nederlandse militairen vinden het een ‘lastige situatie’ wanneer zij moeten samenwerken met Afghaanse collega’s die een actieve rol hebben in deze praktijk. De morele dimensie—en de waarden die op het spel staan— van dit soort situaties wordt niet altijd herkend door Nederlandse militairen. We laten zien dat ‘morele sensitiviteit’—het vermogen om te herkennen dat er morele aspecten aan de orde zijn in een bepaalde situatie niet vanzelfsprekend is. Dit is een complicerende factor bij het omgaan met en het reageren op concrete morele dilemma’s in een militaire context. Wij veronderstellen dat het hanteren van morele dilemma’s vereist dat je eerst de morele dimensie van een bepaalde situatie moeten (leren) herkennen.

In **hoofdstuk 5** gaan we in op uitdagingen en spanningen die een rol spelen tijdens de VME. Verschillende deelnemers aan de cursus ervaren een spanning tussen de perceptie van zichzelf als ‘mens’ en als ‘militair’. Deelnemers geven aan dat ze zichzelf beschouwen als ‘*political asset*’— als militair met een opdracht. Als militair hebben zij een eed of belofte afgelegd waarin zij trouw zweren of beloven aan de Koning en aan de militaire wetten en plichten. Volgens een aantal deelnemers impliceert dit dat zij opdrachten kritiekloos uitvoeren, zeker in gevechtssituaties.

Uit de rijke beschrijvingen blijkt dat deelnemers aangeven dat een aantal aspecten van de militaire cultuur van invloed zijn op spanningen tussen ethiekonderwijs en de militaire context. Bijvoorbeeld: het militair zijn; groepsbinding; uniformiteit, hiërarchie, gebrek aan privacy; en masculiniteit. Als je jezelf beschouwt als ‘militair met een opdracht’ of als *political asset*, blijkt het lastiger voor deelnemers om hun persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid te onderkennen. Groepsbinding en hiërarchie kunnen het moeilijker maken voor militair personeel om kritische vragen te stellen. Uniformiteit kan ertoe leiden dat het lastig is om waarden van anderen te herkennen. Een gebrek aan privacy leidt tot druk om je te conformeren aan bepaalgroepsnormen en laat weinig ruimte voor individuele reflectie. Ten slotte, het masculiene ideaal van de ‘*warrior hero*’, die zijn emoties onder controle heeft of liever nog geen emoties heeft, maakt het lastig om te reflecteren en te twijfelen. Zeker als dat geïnterpreteerd wordt als zwak of kwetsbaar.

In **hoofdstuk 6** onderzoeken we het belang van veiligheid tijdens ethiek onderwijs en hoe veiligheid in de groep kan worden vergroot. Aan de hand van de *Critical Incident Technique* (CIT) analyseren we een concrete situatie tijdens de VME waarin veiligheid in de groep in het geding was. Veiligheid in de groep wordt gezien als voorwaarde voor een dialogische, interactieve benadering van ethiekonderwijs waarbij de nadruk ligt op reflectie. Tegelijkertijd is veiligheid lastig te garanderen en daarmee onzeker. Veiligheid kan dan ook in het geding komen tijdens een ethiek cursus. We laten zien dat tijdens een ethiek training een paradoxale situatie kan ontstaan. In deze situatie is er een spanning tussen eerlijkheid en kritisch kunnen zijn aan de ene kant, en jezelf open stellen voor andere perspectieven en waarden aan de andere kant. Eerlijkheid of openheid kan resulteren in conflicterende visies. Dat kan tot een onveilige situatie leiden waarin het voor sommige deelnemers lastig kan zijn om zichzelf open te blijven stellen voor een ander perspectief. We laten zien dat juist door deze paradox te benaderen als een dynamisch proces, waarbij in de groep periodiek op deze veiligheid paradox wordt gereflecteerd, de ervaren veiligheid kan worden vergroot. We geven aan dat een dergelijke situatie een kans biedt om op een constructieve wijze om te leren omgaan met situaties waarin er verschillende perspectieven en waarden met elkaar botsen. Zoals ook aan de orde is bij morele dilemma's in de militaire praktijk. Op een constructieve wijze omgaan met elkaars perspectieven en waarden én in staat blijven om te leren is dus een belangrijk element van ethiekonderwijs.

In **hoofdstuk 7** onderzoeken we wat de resultaten zijn van de VME volgens de deelnemers aan de training. Aan de hand van interviews analyseren we hoe de deelnemers de ontwikkeling van hun morele competentie ervaren én wat volgens hen de impact van de training is op hun eigen onderwijs praktijk.

Het belangrijkste effect is dat deelnemers zich een nieuw vocabulaire hebben eigengemaakt dat hen in staat stelt om morele dilemma's uit het verleden te duiden en dilemma's in het heden te hanteren. Dit maakt dat zij zich samen met anderen kunnen verhouden tot deze dilemma's en kunnen komen tot nieuwe vormen van handelen. Verder geven deelnemers aan zich meer bewust te zijn van hun persoonlijke waarden en van de morele waarden van anderen. Ze zien het begrijpen van de morele waarden van een ander als belangrijk element van morele competentie. Ze zijn in staat om zich in te leven in een ander en kunnen de morele waarden die mogelijk in het geding zijn benoemen.

De VME heeft daarnaast effect op hun eigen onderwijspraktijk. Hun oude stijl van onderwijzen noemen zij zelf 'conventioneel'. Daarmee bedoelen zij bijvoorbeeld veelvuldig gebruik van PowerPoint Presentaties, focus op de docent en beperkte interactie met studenten. Na de VME geven zij aan dat zij als docenten een meer coachende stijl gebruiken en zoeken naar interactieve manieren van lesgeven. Ze geven aan luisteren en vragenstellen meer te waarderen als een methode om studenten te stimuleren tot reflectie en dialoog. Deelnemers zien het oefenen met de Socratische houding tijdens de VME als een impuls voor het vernieuwen van hun eigen onderwijspraktijk.

In het discussie hoofdstuk (**hoofdstuk 8**) reflecteren we op de uitkomsten van dit onderzoek. We richten ons op de vraag of het versterken van kritische reflectie op morele dilemma's in de praktijk echt haalbaar is een militaire cultuur. Een recent onderzoek van de *Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid* uit 2016 naar het mortierongeval in Mali benadrukt dat de militaire cultuur het stellen van kritische vragen bemoeilijkt. Het rapport geeft aan dat de organisatiestructuur en –cultuur bij Defensie moeten veranderen, waarbij men open moet staan voor kritische signalen van medewerkers en voorvallen moet benutten om van te leren.

De studies in dit proefschrift laten zien op welke manier het versterken van reflectie vaardigheden militairen moreel competentier maak. Het helpt ze om de morele dimensie in hun werk te herkennen en om een moreel verantwoorde beslissing te nemen. Ons onderzoek laat ook zien dat het bevorderen van morele competentie complex is in een militaire context. Het stellen van kritische vragen, het herkennen van de waarden van jezelf en anderen, het reflecteren op morele kwesties en het weerstaan van groepsdruk blijkt weerbarstig. Met concrete suggesties demonstreren wij hoe hier ook in complexe contexten aan kan worden gewerkt.

We laten zien dat militairen binnen het dominante discours altijd individuen blijven die een zekere ruimte hebben om 'vorm te geven aan zichzelf' en zelf voor bepaalde waarden te staan. Dit is echter niet vanzelfsprekend in de militaire context en vereist reflectie, evaluatie, training en onderwijs. Participatieve, interactieve methoden van ethiekonderwijs ondersteunen de ontwikkeling van deze competenties.

Onze aanbeveling is om bij het veranderen van een organisatiestructuur en –cultuur aandacht te hebben voor het ontwikkelen en implementeren van ethiek trainingen en onderwijs dat zich richt op morele sensitiviteit als onderdeel van morele competentie en deelnemers daarin traint. Daarnaast vinden wij het voor de effectiviteit van ethiekonderwijs van belang dat er aandacht is voor het begrijpen van machtsrelaties en de invloed daarvan op waarden, morele sensitiviteit en besluitvorming. Het is zaak om, naast ethiekonderwijs, te investeren in een Defensie cultuur waarin het stellen van vragen als positief wordt gezien. Methoden en methodieken die gebruik maken van dialoog zijn daarbij een goed startpunt. Kansrijke toepassingsmogelijkheden zien wij in meer inclusieve manieren om beleid te ontwikkelen. Ook kan leren in het operationele proces worden versterkt door naast operationele (de)briefings periodiek dialoog te voeren.

About the author

About the author

Eva van Baarle (Wortel) (1980) obtained her master's degrees in Philosophy (2004) and International Relations (2004) from the University of Amsterdam. In 2004 her master thesis *Business ethics in conflict areas, the Congo case* was published by Stichting Maatschappij en Onderneming.

Since 2004, Eva has been working as an assistant professor military ethics and philosophy at the Netherlands Defence Academy. She teaches several national and international military ethics courses. This includes ethics training courses for Dutch military personnel at different levels: from cadets and midshipmen to officers during mid-career courses. Eva also participated in international military courses on ethics and the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) for African officers in Rwanda.

Eva started this PhD project in November 2013 under supervision of Professor Dr. Desiree Verweij (NLDA), Professor Dr. Guy Widdershoven (VUmc) and Dr. Bert Molewijk (VUmc). She has presented her work at national and international conferences, including the annual global conferences of the International Society for Military Ethics in Europe (Euro-ISME), the International Society for Military Ethics (ISME) and the European Association of Centres of Medical Ethics (EACME).

Since January 2016, Eva works one day per week at the VU university medical center on Clinical Ethics Support (CES). She is a member of the NEON project, a national network on CES, which aims to stimulate ethical reflection within healthcare organizations. Eva participates in research aimed at fostering the quality of clinical ethics support in the Netherlands.

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