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Retention, Mentorship, and Servant Leadership: An analysis for Retaining 2050's Generals in Today's Army

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Retention, Mentorship, and Servant Leadership: An analysis for Retaining 2050's Generals in

Today's Army

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore existing research involving why junior officers are choosing to leave the Army, the benefits of mentorship, and the use of servant leadership. The intent is to show that if the Army were attempt to use a servant leadership lens to develop junior officers through mentorship, more junior officers would be willing to make the Army a career. It is important to note that the mentorship cannot be mandatory, it must happen organically for it to be successful. For the mentorship to happen organically, senior leaders must be more willing to identify junior leaders they would like to mentor and be willing to invest time developing the next generation of Army leaders. For the purposes of this paper, junior officers are defined as officers that have not yet reached the rank of Major (or Officer grade 4).

Attrition, Mentorship, and Servant Leadership: An analysis for Retaining 2050's Generals in
Today's Army

The United States Army is a unique organization going through unprecedented challenges. Since September 11th, 2001, the Army has fought the longest war our country has ever been involved in, and it is taking its toll on the men and women that volunteered to fight. After 16 years of non-stop combat deployments, it is becoming increasingly more frequent for talented junior officers to choose to leave the military and move on to different career fields. While the retention rates of junior officers are always a concern for the Army, a larger concern it faces is ensuring that the *right* junior officers decide to stay within the ranks. While *quantity* is necessary throughout the military, it is especially vital that *quality* is what is sought when it comes to the retention of those in leadership positions

The Army is a closed promotion system, meaning that to raise through the ranks you must start at the bottom and then work your way up; in effect, meritocracy at its finest. While there are some exceptions within the medical, law, and Chaplain fields, leaders from outside organizations cannot start in the Army at anything higher than a lieutenant. While this promotion system might not make sense at first, it is likely structured as such to ensure that leaders within the military have lived the military lifestyle, fully understand the culture, and have a fundamentally-sound and working knowledge of how the Army is supposed to work. While this model is great in ensuring that officers understand what is expected of them at all the ranks, it also means that the junior officers of today are the inevitable generals of 2050. This is what creates the need to ensure that good officers choose to stay in the military as if they choose to leave early, instead of selecting the leaders of the Army from among the best and the brightest, you are forced to just choose from what is left around.

The structure for the current promotion system was created by the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1980, which utilizes an “up or out” promotion system, meaning officers are either promoted to the next rank or kicked out of the military after being a non-select for promotion twice (Rostker, Thie, Lacy, Kawata, & Purnell, 1993). The intent behind this structure is that the Army will only maintain the highest performing officers at the higher ranks as the lower-performers find themselves marginalized and eventually weeded out of the system. While likely not the anticipated result of the DOPMA, it resulted in the creation of a rigid structure for career advancement that requires officers to do jobs for short periods of time (no longer than two years) and, depending on what specialty you perform, hold certain types of leadership positions. This in turn means that regardless of how much an officer might enjoy their current position, it is understood that it is just temporary. Furthermore, the current process also means that you switch jobs so frequently that it is impossible to ever become a true subject matter expert in any part of the expected duties.

The attrition of officers from the ranks is nothing new, but the problem has reached a critical point in the last few years. As an example, a 2015 study by the Army acknowledged that from the three commissioning sources, West Point, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and Officer Candidate School (OCS) had a retention rate of 38 percent, 43 percent, and 55 percent respectively (Lopez, 2015). That is an astonishingly low retention rate and raises the question, why are junior officers choosing to leave the ranks at such high numbers? The rate that the Army is losing its junior officers is not sustainable and must be addressed for the United States Army to remain a formidable and functional military in the future.

I joined the Army three days after I graduated high school in June 2000 at the age of 17 and have now spent 17 years serving in the military. I was fortunate enough to be selected to

cross over from being enlisted to being an officer in 2008 and have seen an entirely different side of the military in the past nine years. Of my platoon of 54 Soldiers that graduated basic training with me in the summer of 2000, to the best of my knowledge only five of us are still in the Army and from my 12-officer cohort in 2008, only three of us are still actively serving. Since the wars started in 2001, this level of attrition is not unusual, it is the norm. Time after time I've seen gifted officers who were phenomenal leaders of Soldiers as well as great at accomplishing the task choose to leave the service for a plethora of reasons and I fully recognize a lot of that is due to the uniqueness of the military profession.

The military places unique demands upon the people that choose to serve within their ranks that are unheard of in the civilian workforce. Upon joining the military, due to restrictions placed upon Soldiers by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, certain rights are altered; namely Freedom of Speech, Right to Bear Arms, Lawful Search and Seizure, as well as Trial by a Random Jury of Your Peers (Rush, 2001). Not only that, but the military, also places restrictions upon who you date, the way you style your hair, what kinds of tattoos and where you can have them, and the way you dress. Outside of rights there is also understanding that at any given time it is possible that a Soldier will become engage in combat and engage in life or death struggles and be forced to make choices they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Fortunately, even though the overall mission of the Army is to "fight and win our Nation's Wars", very little of the daily routine involves shooting at people (United States Army, n.d). I say this all not to be unduly critical of the Army, but to instead I see an opportunity to try to address some of the shortcomings I've noted within my time so the organization can continue to flourish.

Question and Purpose

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the current analysis as to junior officer retention, mentorship, as well as servant leadership. These three areas of analysis are guided by the question: can the Army address the issue of junior officer retention through an increased reliance on mentorship as well as focusing on senior leaders utilizing servant leadership to enrich junior officer's experience within the Army? While junior officer retention, mentorship, and servant leadership are all topics which are discussed frequently within military circles, no author discusses how mentorship and servant leadership could potentially solve the issue of junior officer retention. While junior officer retention, mentorship, and servant leadership are all topics which are discussed frequently within military circles, no author discusses how mentorship and aspects of servant leadership could potentially solve the issue of junior officer retention. Each section will assess the current literature on the topic, critique and highlight current relevant gaps within existing literature, and make recommendations for how to improve upon current research. This paper does not seek to present a quick fix for how to increase the retention of junior officers within the Army, but instead intends to better understand *why* the current leadership climate within the military has created a culture and atmosphere that junior officers do not want to be a part of. While I do not claim I will be able to stem the tide of junior officers leaving the Army myself, the intent of this paper is to guide future research study for how to ultimately improve junior officer retention within the Army.

Why junior officers are leaving the Army

Before examining why junior officers are choosing to leave the military, it is important to first understand the process of becoming an officer and the reasons why people choose to commission in the first place. People become officers for a plethora of reasons although their

experience is truly what guides whether they continue to serve. Some Officers join to have their college paid for or to pay off their college loans (Liberto, 2013), some join because it is a generational family business (Junell, 2017; Trares, 2016), while others join for the job prospects after they get out (Luckwaldt, 2016). Regardless of their reasons for choosing to join, their experience colors their desire to continue to rise through the ranks, look for employment either in the private sector, or pursue a job as a government employee. While attrition naturally happens at this point, the level of attrition the Army has experienced since the War on Terror began is uncommon.

When contracting to become an officer in the United States Military, there is a mandatory term of Active Duty ranging from three years to five years, depending upon the form of commissioning. In addition to the mandatory Active Duty, there is an additional period of Inactive Ready Reserve (IRR), in which it is explained that should the need occur, you will be recalled back to active service. That secondary period is an eight-year timeframe from the day you commission as officer meaning that regardless of your Active Duty obligation, you are ultimately required to serve for at least eight years. This means that most Active Duty officers will make it to the rank of Captain before their eight-year service obligation expires. Depending upon their job specialty, they would likely spend about six months to one year in training and their other seven years would be likely be split between two or three different duty assignments as well as several different jobs. They would understand what they like about their job field, what they don't like, and more importantly, they would have enough time to decide whether the Army is something they are interested in pursuing as a career. Regardless of their reasons for joining, skills gained, or life experiences, it is at between the four through eight-year Active Duty mark that junior officers decide to leave Active Service.

There are several schools of thought for why junior officers choose to voluntarily leave the Army, and for the purposes of this paper they will be broken down into lack of an effective personnel management system and the operational tempo. While there are many different aspects of the military system which impact all officers to varying degrees, depending upon the individual officer, personnel management and operational tempo are the two most commented topics by far.

The concern with the personnel management system is not just unique to officer management, but is a systemic problem across the board for enlisted Soldiers, warrant officers, and officers alike. Best summarized by Tim Kane, a former officer in his book “Bleeding Talent”, “In terms of attracting and training innovative leaders, the U.S. military is unparalleled,” he writes. “In terms of managing talent, the U.S. military is doing everything wrong.” (Kane, 2010). The Army being the largest of the services, is a large, unwieldy, bureaucratic machine that makes it difficult to accomplish even the simplest of requests. Whether those requests are duty station, job preference, or even requests for receiving mandatory training, the process for getting submitting requests and receiving feedback is unnecessarily cumbersome and does not allow for individual officers to feel like they are having their needs met.

Another issue with the personnel system comes from its basis upon the DOPMA of 1980, once again described by Kayne as the “root of all evil in the ecosystem” (Kayne, 2012). The Army touts itself as a “true meritocracy” where only the best and brightest can flourish and the rest will be forced to find themselves a new job, but that is unfortunately just a pipe dream. Due to the structuring of the DOPMA, there exists a very rigid timeline for promotion, with early promotion only possible one year prior to the regularly scheduled date (Rostker, Thie, Lacy, Kawata, & Purnell, 1993). Additionally, pay is based off rank and years of service, meaning

regardless of the skills (or lack thereof) displayed by any officer, pay will always be equal to their peers. The structure DOPMA modeled itself after allowed the Army's core structure the flexibility to swell to 16 million in World War II from an original force of a few-hundred thousand before the war (Barno and Bensahel, 2015).

While some officers will take this as an opportunity to attempt to be that lucky 3% which *may* get promoted a year early and work hard to compete for that chance, a significantly larger portion of officers will do only what is asked of them with the knowledge that no matter what they will be paid the same as the highest performers. While seeing this once or twice may not be enough to discourage a high-performer from striving for excellence, it creates an atmosphere where in each office there are a few officers who shoulder the burden for the rest of the office. One of my previous mentors described the phenomenon to me as "Be careful not to work too hard, for those who take more than their fair share of objectives, will eventually find themselves assigned more than their fair share of objectives to take." More simply put, hard work in the Army is rewarded by being assigned more hard work while others get to skate by knowing that their pay and likely their promotion won't be impacted by it.

Due to the lack of meritocracy within the personnel system, some officers choose to leave to find a true meritocracy, where their hard work will be rewarded. This also negatively impacts other officers' opinions about officers who choose to stay in. When presented with the statement "The current military personnel system does a good job of retaining the best leaders", only six percent of Active Duty Army officers polled agreed (Barno and Bensahel, 2015). When officers feel that only the worst stick around in the Army, likely because they could not be successful anywhere else, many talented officers quickly choose to leave and pursue employment elsewhere.

There is also a mismanagement of skills and expectations due to the personnel system. There are individuals who would love to deploy to a warzone and want nothing more than to go to combat who are denied the opportunity, while their peer, who is a new parent or is going through other issues in their lives are instead given the billet to deploy. There are Officers whose native language is Korean or Japanese, who try their entire careers to get stationed in a place where their language skills can be put to good use, only to find out the Army would rather fill one of the 38,000 Korea billets or 50,000 Japan billets with other people from the same job field that don't speak the language or know the culture. There are some opportunities to attempt to do a "compassionate reassignment" to consider personal or family needs, but that is submitted through the same personnel chain which didn't heed the requests in the first place.

The personnel system also forces most officers onto a rigid track for promotion that officers understand they can only deviate from with great personal risk. For all officers of all branches, officer development and promotion tracking is guided by Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management. This provides the list of job assignment necessary for further promotion to the next rank, as well as showing the expected timelines for those promotions, explaining what Army schools are necessary, and what kinds of continuing civilian education are also recommended. While the jobs vary from branch to branch, the outline for the diagram is similar. For illustrative purposes, we will look at the Military Intelligence diagram (see Figure 1). Figure 1 lays out in the assignment portion what jobs are possible and likely to be completed by lieutenants, captains, majors, etc., but the important part to know is that there are certain jobs that to *must* be completed to get promoted. A military intelligence captain is required to have at least 12 through 24 months of "Key Developmental" time, selected from the list of jobs of Battalion

Section 2 (BN S2 or Battalion Intelligence Officer), company or detachment commander, targeting officer, as well as the others on the list. The situation then arises that everyone at the

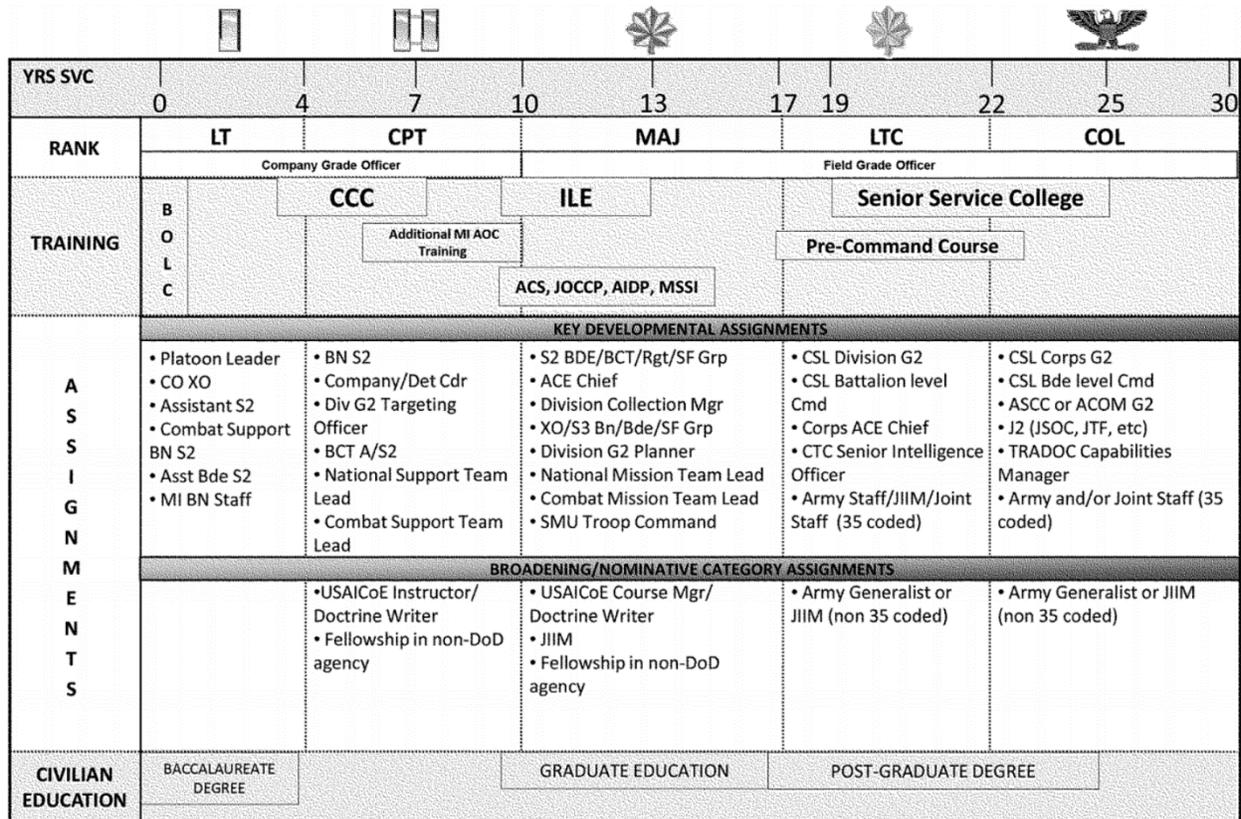


Figure 1. The military intelligence officer professional development model, used in to lay out job assignments, military schools, and civilian education necessary for promotion. Taken from the U.S. Department of the Army. Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management. Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 3, 2014, p. 266.

Captain-level are competing for those very few jobs with the understanding that they must wait their turn for their opportunity to do a job that really matters for their careers. This structure also means that Officers who, for reasons outside of their control, who are not provided the opportunity to complete those jobs, are not eligible for promotion and dismissed from service.

By necessity, those Key Developmental positions are high stress positions that not every officer excels at, but they are the positions that are given the most weight when it comes to promotion. This structure is stifling in so much that it forces all officers to do jobs that they may not like and might not be well suited for (Kayne, 2012). There are a plethora of other jobs that officers will do during their times that are equally vital to the daily operation of the Army, but as officers quickly recognize that those other jobs are not valued as well as the Army venerating people in Key Developmental positions, there is a common feeling that officers are forced into jobs they do not like to remain competitive for promotion (Brooks, 2013; Falk and Rogers, 2011). This is unfortunately reinforced by higher-level officers as they understand the promotion system and are therefore likely to tell their subordinates to only focus on key developmental jobs, which dangerously oversimplifies career tracks as well as stifling any desire to deviate the “proper path” for promotion (Matthews, 2015; Scout, 2014).

Operations Tempo (OPTEMPO) which is defined by the Army as the *operating tempo*, or the level and frequency in which operations are currently being conducted, is the second-most cited reason for junior officers leaving the Army (Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms Joint Publication 1-02, 2017). Since 2001, the Army has borne the brunt of the combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, with their deployments, until 2012, lasting significantly longer than the other services. The long durations of Army deployments, coupled with their frequency, is concerning as deployments “maintained over long periods of time are known to adversely affect training, morale, and discipline” as well as negatively impacting personnel retention (Castro and Adler, 1999, Conetta, 2006). Average Air Force deployments last three to four months, Marine and Navy deployments are an average of six to seven months, and Army deployments were an average of nine to 15 months. During the height of the “Surge”

in 2007, there were Army units spending 24 months deployed, and I know of at least one unit that did 18 months in Iraq just to be picked up and immediately moved to Afghanistan for another nine months. Additionally, the additional exposure to combat also helps to explain why Army Soldiers are more prone to exhibiting signs of PTSD (Shen et al., 2010).

The deployments also end up shaping Army life and activities before and after the actual event. Units prepare and are certified for deployment through multiple exercises and training events in the 18 months preceding a combat deployment, and enter a reset cycle in the year following a deployment in which equipment is serviced and officers leave to go to other units (Hemmerly-Brown, 2009). This cycle means that in combat-deploying units, officers are subjected to the stresses of constant training in preparation for deployment and are rarely afforded time to be with their families outside of the rest cycle (Falk and Rogers, 2011). The constant stress on the families as well as on the individual are yet another reason why even outside of the actual deployments, the OPTEMPO remains an ever-present concern for junior officers as well as their family support networks.

Critiques and gaps in the literature

The main critique from most of the literature reviewed is how junior officers from different branches (job specialties) are assumed to have similar experiences. The military is a vast organization and there are multiple differences between the different officer branches beyond job requirements, whether they actively engage in combat, or translatability of skills to jobs outside of the military. The culture and expectations of each of the branches are different and therefore the types of issues faced by a junior infantry officer are likely markedly different from a military intelligence or a logistics officer. With so much variation between the branches and even within different units and duty stations, it is important to not lump all officer

experiences in together. Trends can still be found within the different branches or even duty stations, but stating that most junior officers had similar experiences is an oversimplification.

The largest gap within the literature is how not all officers who get out are represented in the literature as the military does not conduct a formal exit interview with outgoing junior officers and then consolidate the data to learn trends. This is best highlighted by Barno and Bensahel (2015) when they mentioned:

Unlike its private-industry counterparts, the U.S. military does not track the levels of quality among those who are leaving the force, nor does it have any insight on why they are choosing to leave. There are no exit interviews for departing leaders, no accumulation of data on who is staying or going, no statistical rundowns provided the service chiefs on the percent of each performance quintile by rank (or IQ, or any other measure) who are choosing to leave or stay. The military does not even gather such information.

Without a centralized system of record, there is no way to truly know why junior officers are choosing to leave the ranks. That leaves large gaps in the officer experiences as it is likely that those officers that had an exceptionally negative experience would be unlikely or unwilling to respond to private interviews. Falk and Rogers attempted to address this in their research, but they noted that those who did choose to respond to their survey all self-reported as being on the more-successful side of the job performance continuum (Falk and Rogers, 2011). Moreover, this means that the experiences of the smaller branches, such as chemical or air defense artillery, are likely not included in the literature that does exist as to why junior officers are choosing to leave.

Recommendations

Until the Department of Defense understands the importance of conducting exit interviews with junior officers and indeed officers at all ranks, little more can be done to know

why junior officers are leaving the military. Once those interviews are captured in a system of record, then the Army can begin to decide whether it wants to attempt to make some fundamental changes to address the cited reasons as to why officers are leaving or just carry on with business as usual. I would hope the Army would be able to use that information to improve upon the issues addressed at the lower-levels of command and enhance the experiences of those who choose to serve.

Mentorship in the Army

Mentorship has always been rather difficult to define as every organization has a slightly different interpretation of what mentorship, a mentor, and a mentee are. Before discussing the relevant literature on mentorship, it is important to define what the Army understands mentorship, mentors, and mentees to do and be. The Army defines mentorship as “the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2007, p. 3-17). A mentor as a leader who “assists personal and professional development by helping a mentee clarify personal, professional, and career goals and develop actions to improve attributes, skills, and competencies” (U.S. Department of the Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015, p. 3-17). A mentor gains various responsibilities while developing mentees through the use of four different roles with the understanding that mentorship is focused on the needs and goals of the individual mentee (U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015, p. 3-18) (See Table 1). A mentee is someone who not only receives that development, but also recognizes that they “must be an active participant in the relationship”, and continues that mentees must prepare for the meetings, work to develop professionally, be willing to accept

input, take initiative to engage the mentor when necessary, as well as remain goal focused (U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015, p. 3-18).

Role	Responsibility
Provides	Encouragement and motivation. Candid feedback about perceived strengths and developmental needs. Advice on dealing with obstacles. Guidance on setting goals and periodically reviews progress.
Shares	Experiences that contributed to personal success. An understanding of the Army, its mission, and formal and informal operating processes.
Encourages	Appropriate training and developmental opportunities. Sense of self-awareness, self-confidence, and adaptability. Efficient and productive performance.
Serves	As a confidant, counselor, guide, and adviser. As an advisor for career development ideas or opportunities. As a resource for enhancing personal and professional attributes.

Table 1. Mentor roles and responsibilities. It describes the four major functions a mentor should provide to a mentee through the various roles and responsibilities. Taken from U.S. Department of the Army. Army Leadership. Department of the Field Manuel 6-22. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, June 30, 2015, p. 3-18)

The Army goes to great lengths to define the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees and is also careful not to mandate *how* mentorship is supposed to be done. The Army does highlight the needs of each individual mentee, the skills of the mentors, and the varying situations mentors will find themselves. This was best highlighted by Nieberding (2007) when he highlighted what is by far the most important part of being a mentor:

To be an effective mentor, you need the experience and wisdom of your years. You also have to care. If you really care about your soldiers, then you will devote the necessary time and attention to guiding them. Mentoring can take place anywhere. It is a key way to lead and to strengthen Army values. (Nieberding, 2007).

More than just caring about your Soldiers, Nieberding (2007) highlights the nested nature of Soldier care as he draws the connection between developing Soldiers, accomplishing the mission and improving the Army.

Outside of the personal responsibilities of the mentor and the mentee, it is also important to discuss the nature of the relationship between the two of them. The Army highlights the importance of senior leaders building a relationship of trust with their subordinates to create the kind of command climate in which all members of the organization feel appreciated and valued for their contributions (Kirklin, 2015; U.S. Department of the Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015). More than the mutual respect and trust, it is also noted by most authors how mentorship is necessary for the development of all officers although it “should be fostered, not forced” (Johnson et al., 1999) and how the relationship must be organic instead of mandated (Nieberding, 2007; Shell, 2015; Johnson & Anderson, 2009). Most leading authors about mentorship agree that “formally assigned mentorships result in a greater frequency of what some experts refer to as *marginal mentoring*—lousy, disengage mentoring that in many cases is worse than no mentoring at all” (Johnson & Anderson, 2009, p. 28).

There are many advantages for informal, organic mentorship programs with regards to promotion, job satisfaction, and overall performance. Mentorship with an effective senior-mentor increases junior officer early promotion rate by 29%, as well as vastly increasing the possibilities that the mentored officer will have a more successful career (Lyle & Smith, 2014). Furthermore, research indicated that “having a mentor is associated with more rapid promotion, greater productivity, and professional confidence, less job-related stress, and even a better chance at becoming eminent in one’s field.” (Johnson & Anderson, 2009, p. 26). Additionally,

almost 70% of retired general officers claimed to have had at least one mentor, were “extremely satisfied” with the mentorship they received (Johnson & Anderson, 2009, p. 27).

With everyone singing the praises of mentorship within the military it begs to question why so few leaders receive mentorship. A study conducted of Active Duty junior officers (Lieutenant through Captain) and field-grade officers (Major through Colonel) found that only 49% of junior officers identified as having a mentor while only 32% of field-grade officers identified as having a mentor (Bagnal, Pence, & Meriwether, n.d.). Even more troubling were the findings about how ill-prepared field-grade officers felt they were prepared to be mentors through formal Army schooling, with most officers not reasonably prepared to mentor until they had been officers for at least 19 years (Bagnal, Pence, & Meriwether, n.d.). This means not only is there a distinct lack of senior officers eligible to serve as a mentor, but even those that are eligible may not feel comfortable being a mentor (Bagnal, Pence, & Meriwether, n.d.).

Critiques and gaps in the literature

There are few concrete examples of the successes of Army Leadership and the Army Leadership field manual and many of the authors discussed the same famous example of Major General Fox Conner and the mentorship he provided for the (future generals) Marshall, Eisenhower, and Patton (U.S. Department of the Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015, p. 3-20). While this is a great case study which highlights how Conner understood and developed the strengths of each of them entirely differently, with how many great and notable leaders that have emerged in the military since them, I don't understand why there aren't more contemporary examples of great Army mentorship with something after World War II. Additionally, because of the volume of literature focusing on Conner, while the Army field manual is clear there is no

proscribed way to mentor subordinates, the model used by Conner lacks sufficient information that could help mentors be beneficial and successful.

Another issue with military mentorship literature is how long it takes for the data to be made available for research purposes. It seems that the vast majority of research data was pulled from retired general-level officers and what it took to get them into the positions they attained, without really focusing on the types of mentors that could interact with a larger number of mentees. It seems like there would be a wealth of data coming from unit commanders at all levels as they have the largest amount of influence within their ranks but none of that seems to be nearly as valued as the experiences of generals. I recognize that it is difficult to evaluate the overall success of an officer's career, but the metric of final rank achieved may not be as important as overall career satisfaction and accomplishments they have within the time they serve.

Recommendations

More research needs to be done with currently-serving Active Duty officers of all ranks to better track those individuals that receive mentorship, when in their career they receive/need it the most, as well as how that relationship is generally initiated. That is the only way the Army can try to accurately assess who is receiving mentorship during their career instead of waiting until officers have retired to ask them and thus losing the opportunity to potentially recommend certain officers request mentorship or consider becoming mentors. Finally, while it is mentioned time and time again that mentorship programs must be voluntary to be effective, something must be changed within the culture of the Army to make both the idea of receiving mentorship more palatable as well as convincing and preparing more senior officers to be effective mentors to others because without mentorship the Army will not continue to be a sustainable organization.

Servant Leadership

Although the concept of servant leadership has been around since the biblical era with the notions of Jesus and the care he shows toward his flock, the idea was recently popularized by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970’s. Originally expressed in his essay, “The Servant as Leader” and then expanded upon in his book “Servant Leadership” Greenleaf explains that servant leadership is about the desire to serve first, which eventually blossoms into an aspiration to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). The difference between Servant leadership and other leadership models is the idea that the leader is a “first among equals” who strives to cater to the needs of their subordinates, versus more traditional leadership models in which the leaders use their subordinates as a means to an end (Nahavandi, 2015). To better understand what a servant leader does to serve their followers, it is easiest to look at functions of servant leadership through the core competencies stressed and the characteristics servant leaders exhibit (see Table 2).

Performance Area	Strategic Servant Leadership		Operational Servant Leadership	
Function	Set, translate, and execute a higher purpose vision	Become a role model and ambassador	Align, care, and grow talent	Continuously monitor and improve
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set a higher purpose vision Translate the vision into a mission, strategy, and goals Execute the vision by serving others Stand up for what is right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-knowledge Self-management Self-improvement Self-revealing Stay within the rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align followers Care for and protect followers Grow followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good stewardship Monitor performance Improve systems, policies, processes, product, and services
Characteristics	Courage Altruism	Authenticity Humility Integrity	Listening Compassion	Accountability
Competencies	Compelling vision	Personal Capability	Building Relationships Empowerment	Stewardship

Table 2- The functions of a servant leader. It illustrates the different aspects of servant leadership and the interplay of core competencies and characteristics (traits) aligned with how they are used to accomplish objectives while growing subordinates. Taken from Coetzer, M. F., Bussin, M., & Geldenhuys, M. (2017). The Functions of a Servant Leader. Administrative Sciences (2076-3387), 7(1), p. 18.

The four main leadership competencies commonly attributed to servant leaders are empowerment, stewardship, building relationships, and compelling vision (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017). Those four competencies are the core tenants of what a servant leader must utilize to accomplish tasks while serving their subordinates (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017). While there are up to 40 characteristics of a servant leader, the main eight that are constant through the literature are authenticity, humility, compassion, accountability, courage, altruism, integrity, and listening (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017). These characteristics are the personality traits generally exhibited by servant leaders which overall dictates how servant leaders “think, feel, and behave” (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017; Kazdin, 2000, p. 7).

While servant leadership seems like it should be more appropriately used more in flatter organizations, rigid hierarchies benefit considerably through its use. The adoption of servant leadership at higher levels of management is directly attributed to increasing feelings of belonging and follower acceptance (Sousa & Dierendonck, 2017; Lacroix & Verdorfer, 2017), increasing job satisfaction for all members of the organization, and increasing organizational performance (Liden et al., 2014). It greatly assists in obtaining the buy-in of subordinates as they recognize they are valued members of the team at the point that their leaders are willing to invest time and energy into their development. When individuals feel like they are truly part of an organization they are more willing to work harder and engage in dialogue more with leaders, thus increasing the knowledge base leaders can use to formulate solutions to issues that arise (Stanley, 1995).

Critiques and gaps in the literature

There are few empirical examples of uses of servant leadership – especially with regards to the Army. While servant leadership does not run contrary to the ideals expressed in the Army leadership manuals regarding “influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation...”, (U.S. Department of the Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015, p. 1-3) servant leadership as a leadership technique not mentioned as even an option in the manual and therefore is unlikely to be used by Army professionals. Servant leadership is therefore seen as a form of “soft leadership” and not a form of direct leadership from the front, servant leadership is never really provided the opportunity. Because most Army leaders’ mental models don’t include the idea of “first among equals” or perhaps because western culture does not traditionally espouse the virtues of this kind of leadership (Nahavandi, 2015), it is a form of leadership conspicuously absent from the mainstream concepts used within the military.

Recommendations

More research is necessary in to demonstrate to both the military and the business world that organizations do not all have to grow and operate the same ways to be successful. Until there can be more empirical examples of successful servant leaders within the realms of military and business, it is unlikely that it will be accepted into the mainstream conversations. It will have to take a significant culture shift within the military to see leaders as the developers and nurturers of subordinates versus the person who use their subordinates to accomplish tasks. As servant leadership has already proven to be effective within rigid hierarchies, perhaps using aspects of servant leadership when possible would be an easier transition from the current mental model as well as allow the integration in of additional skills and competencies.

Personal Leadership philosophy

Through my 17 years in the Army, I've had great examples of what good leadership looks like and some cautionary tales about what good leadership should never be. These leaders have shaped my idea of leadership, either by providing traits or techniques I wanted to emulate or traits and techniques I wanted to studiously avoid. I've seen leaders in combat, garrison, teaching environments, enlisted and officers, and various social settings and feel comfortable at this point I've seen most of the different scenarios through which leadership can be exercised within the military. Of all the leaders I've worked with in the Army, Brian Deihl really stood out and had the greatest influences on my leadership style.

When I arrived in Monterey, California to learn Korean in September of 2000, the only experiences I had with formal authority within the Army was that of drill sergeants. Drill sergeants exist within basic training and all enlisted Soldier's Advanced Individual Training (AIT), where we learn how to do our specific jobs within the Army. Their function is to help transition civilians into the military culture through a combination of teaching basic Soldier skills, improving our physical fitness, and fear. As my transition into the military was not a smooth one, I learned mostly through fear of the drill sergeants. Moving from California to South Korea, I had no idea what to expect or even what was expected of me beyond following orders and doing my job. My first day in my unit, I met the leader that would go on to shape the way I've conducted leadership for the rest of my career.

When I first saw him, I saw a gray-haired older looking Staff Sergeant with an easy demeanor. Deihl introduced himself to me formally, and then reached his hand out, smiled, and shook my hand. Before telling me anything about the unit or what to expect, he sat me down and asked questions about me as a person, what I wanted to do with my life, and what goals I had

while I was in Korea. This was the first time in my (albeit short at that time) career in which a non-commissioned officer asked my opinion on anything, and I could easily tell that he genuinely cared about my answers. We sat and talked for an hour about what kind of options I had and what was possibilities for my career, and before I had even checked into my barracks, I had the plan for my career and my life that I've followed to this day. More than just listening to what I had to say, once I'd been working for him for a few weeks he recognized my potential to do more than just be a Korean linguist. During his own time, because he recognized it would benefit me, he signed me up for night-time college classes and bought the necessary books for my first semester. He even sat with me for the first classes as he knew it would make me more comfortable with the idea of getting a degree.

What I remember most about him was how well he treated all the junior enlisted. A married man with kids of his own, he would go out of his way to take me and a few other younger Soldiers he had taken an interest in out to dinner once a month. He would sit and listen to our gossip, address our concerns when necessary, and explain why we were given certain orders that didn't make sense to us. He also knew that we could not afford the places he would take us out to, and would pay for our meals. I remember asking him why he always insisted in paying for us, and he explained that it was his pleasure to do his best to take care of the next generation of Soldiers in the Army. He said he was investing in all of us and when I asked him how the investment would pay off, he laughed and said, "it will pay off when *you* are willing to invest in the next generation after you". That comment and his comportment have stuck with me my entire career and I have since always tried to instill the notion of "paying it forward" with my subordinates as well. In retrospect, this was the first servant leader I'd ever come across and this in turn also helped for me to understand what real leadership could be.

The Army defines leadership as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization” (U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22, 2015). While that is a very broad definition, it tends to get at the crux of most operations, as it covers motivating, inspiring, and explaining to your peers and subordinates what needs to be accomplished and why with the overall purpose of not only specific task accomplishment but also to make the overall organization better. While this covers most aspects of what goes on, it misses the point when it comes to the responsibility of the leader to grow and develop their subordinates. While mission accomplishment is great in the short term, the development of subordinates is what prepares the next generation of followers to become leaders in their own rights. Therefore, for my own personal definition, I add a little more so it now reads as follows: Leadership is the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission, improve the organization, *and while developing the individual*. While that may not seem like a large difference, it fundamentally shifts the way leadership is conducted from the focus being on the leader to the focus being on those that are led. Anyone can accomplish a mission, and some can accomplish the mission while improving the organization, but it takes a real leader to be able to also grow their subordinates personally and professionally at the same time.

It can be difficult to balance subordinate development with mission accomplishment as it means you must be willing to accept risk that the mission may not be accomplished to the standards you would like although the rewards of using a servant leadership lens far-outweigh not using it. You must accept that your subordinates will make mistakes when trying new things, or that things might not be done the same way you would have done it, but the result is infinitely

more impactful than just doing the work yourself. It allows you to grow and challenge your subordinates to become better, not only at their jobs but also as people. This will push your subordinates to constantly learn more and strive to be better, while also doing whatever other tasks are required of them. This in turn also pushes you harder as a leader, due to the additional workload necessary, but in the long-term that additional struggle grows not only your capacity but also that of your subordinates much faster than the traditional Army leadership model.

Conclusion and Future Study

Direct and complex research needs to be done into whether having a good mentor who utilizes the lens of servant leadership helps to address the needs and concerns of junior officers and impact them positively to stay in the service. Based upon existing knowledge in the fields of mentorship and servant leadership, it would have a positive impact upon increasing the likelihood that junior officers would be enticed to stay within the ranks. The most important thing about that would be to find a way to introduce mentorship in such a way that it is not mandatory, but is something that junior officers are excited to receive as well as senior officers being willing to provide.

Additionally, for servant leadership and mentorship to be successful within the military, there are some culture shifts that need to occur and mental models that must be adjusted. Within the military, we are taught frequently about military history but it tends to only focus upon leaders during times of war. We speak frequently about combat commanders and combat leaders, without really focusing on what leadership means on a day to day basis. While fighting and winning our nation's wars is our main mission statement, the vast majority of our careers are spent out of combat dealing with rather mundane tasks. If we as an Army could find some way to teach about great leaders *outside of combat*, we as a military could start to appreciate the

amount of work that goes into developing subordinates and growing future generations of Soldiers. Until that really becomes a focus however, I'm afraid that no amount of research supporting the importance of servant leadership or mentorship will persuade Army leaders to change the ways they are going about leading Soldiers.

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