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Characteristics of Army Reserve Officer Training Corps Leader Development

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The Institute of Land Warfare
ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

AN INSTITUTE OF LAND WARFARE PAPER

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Contents

Preface.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
History and Philosophy of the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps.....	2
Contemporary Army Leader Development Training.....	3
Army ROTC Programs in the 21st Century.....	4
Commitment – Taking the Oath.....	5
Culture – The Profession of Arms.....	5
Values – <i>LDRSHIP</i>	7
Experiential Learning – Operation Orders.....	7
Academic Study of Leadership Theory.....	9
Mentoring/Coaching/Counseling.....	10
Assessment – Self, Peer, Cadre and Institutional.....	10
Analysis.....	11
Army Leader Development Program.....	12
Higher Education Research Institute’s <i>A Social Change Model of Leadership Development</i>	14
Summary.....	15
Endnotes.....	17

LAND WARFARE PAPER NO. 111, November 2016

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by Steven Estes, Joel M. Miller and Marcus D. Majure

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Preface

American college-age students enter ROTC programs to begin the process of becoming Army officers. One of the primary outcomes of ROTC training is the development of officers with leadership skills; it is arguably one of the most effective university programs that develops these skills. The reasons for the effectiveness of the ROTC curriculum are discussed in light of two models of leader development: the Army Leader Development (ALD) program and the Higher Education Research Institute's (HERI's) *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development: Guidebook Version III*.

Two ROTC programs—the Pony Express Battalion in northwest Missouri and the Blue Raider Battalion at Middle Tennessee State University—were observed over an eight-year period to determine leader development characteristics and to assess leader development effectiveness. It was observed that these programs operate according to the guidelines in the ALD. Additionally, the observed characteristics of commitment, values, cultural orientation, experiential learning, intellectual self-development, mentoring and leader assessment all align with the guidance provided in the ALD, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership* and Army Regulation 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*. ROTC curriculum also meets HERI's best practice characteristics for leader development by providing opportunities for emerging leaders to complete leader initiatives successfully through collaboration, consciousness of self, commitment, congruence, common purpose, controversy with civility and citizenship.

In sum, by combining the characteristics of the ALD program and HERI's best practices for college student leader development, it is arguable that Army ROTC leader development curriculum is meeting the needs of both Army officer training and higher education leader development goals.

Characteristics of Army Reserve Officer Training Corps Leader Development

One of the more salient lessons learned from the last decade is how quickly our adversaries adapt and counter our tactics, techniques and procedures. . . . That is why leader development is my number one priority. It is a critical investment and the most important task to shape the future Army.

General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff, Army¹

Introduction

Scholars of leadership have long noted that military officers join the civilian world with significant leadership skills, and that these officers began learning about leadership in their initial military training in colleges and universities. United States Army military training traditionally begins in one of three ways: at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, New York; through Officer Candidate School (OCS); or through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). All of these training programs have leader development as one of the primary learning outcomes of their curriculum, and scholars of leadership laud their effectiveness.

This monograph focuses on ROTC leader development training. In the first issue of *The Journal of Leadership Education (JOLE)*, founding editor Tom Gallagher noted,

An additional group that I hope will participate in *JOLE* is our military. I have had the pleasure of working with several military leaders over the past few years and have found their leadership to be of a high order. Indeed, my observation is that military leaders “walk their talk” when it comes to leadership, more than any other organization with which I have contact. Certainly, the military has offered leadership training for years, such as through ROTC (often as the only leadership courses on campus). The result may be that the military is ahead of the rest of us and we have much to learn from them. All anecdotes so far suggest they have taken the lead in leadership, at least relative to universities.²

As Donald Horner noted, the leader skills that military officers possess are no accident; these skills were purposefully developed and honed.³ The business world and academics agree that

the military provides many opportunities to develop leader skills; consequently, business leaders and scholars frequently study military training programs to understand the processes that cadets encounter in their officer preparations.⁴ To make a finer point, while many organizations argue for the idea of leader development, few organizations actually commit the time and resources to develop young professionals into leaders who will guide the organization in the future.⁵

The Army explicitly trains for leadership and commits significant resources to this goal as part of the Army Leader Development Program.⁶ Army ROTC programs successfully begin the process of developing college students into Army officers who possess a foundation of skills and abilities that will allow them to continue their leader development throughout their careers. An intellectual understanding of leadership developed through a formal course of learning and a background of experiential learning opportunities help them develop leader skills and an understanding of the need for self-development throughout life. All of these are components of the Army's Leader Development Program (LDP), a model that divides leader development into three domains—institutional, operational and self-development.

There are numerous studies of Army, Navy and Air Force military leader development programs in the academic leadership literature, some of which focus on ROTC leader development.⁷ This paper focuses on the framework of Army ROTC curriculum and asks two specific questions:

- What are the characteristics of Army ROTC leader development training, and are these characteristics consistent with Army doctrine?
- Is Army ROTC leader development training consistent with the guidelines and best practices of leader development in leadership literature?

History and Philosophy of the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps

Prior to 1819, there was no systematic or institutionalized program to develop basic military knowledge, leadership or officership in the United States Army. The most common methods of selecting leadership in colonial and early America were by recruitment, through election by peers or, as in the British military tradition, by the “purchase” of a commission from an authorized seller such as a colony or state governor.⁸ In the first case, if an individual possessed enough personal charm or charisma to recruit a large body of men, his superiors also assumed he had the requisite leadership and motivational skills to train and lead it in combat and thus awarded him a commission. With election by peers, a community in need of military leaders would nominate and elect individuals who were thought to be up to the task and then award those individuals a commission.⁹ In the case of the purchase of the commission, the “purchaser” would be awarded the commission based on the assumption that if the individual requesting such a position had the abilities to earn or raise the money required, he must be a prominent member of the community and thus deserving of a commission. However, none of these methods supplied any real standards, rigor or development to the process of leadership and officership. Rather, these methods are representative of the “great man” theory of leadership prevalent in those times.¹⁰

This situation began to change in 1819 when Alden Partridge, a United States Army captain and former Superintendent of the United States Military Academy, formed the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy in Vermont.¹¹ This academy, which would be renamed Norwich University in 1834, became the model for several other state and private military academies and has come to be known as the “Birthplace of ROTC.” Norwich created a system that argued that

leadership and military skills could be developed in college-age men. Through Norwich, and the handful of others that emulated it, Partridge established a curriculum that taught the basics of tactics and military science. In addition to a broad liberal arts education, this system ensured that at least rudimentary military knowledge would be available for the militia and its citizen Soldier leadership; Norwich laid the roots for a process to develop future leaders that applied basic standards and rigor. This is similar to what the United States Military Academy at West Point, founded in 1802, did for the Regular Army and its professional military leadership.

Alden Partridge's system of military instruction and leader development prevailed until President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Defense Act of 1916, creating the Reserve Officer Training Corps, commonly known as ROTC.¹² The National Defense Act, among other important changes, consolidated the individual training that was conducted at these several institutions under one federal system. This step completed, a standardized system of training and development was crafted and implemented.

World War II provided the first real test for the new ROTC system and its graduates, a test in which the system and the leaders it produced performed admirably. Despite the still somewhat decentralized nature of the curriculum and instruction, which could vary from university to university, the fundamental concept proved sound. ROTC produced approximately 120,000 officers in support of the war effort, and Army ROTC officers were essential to the defeat of the Axis Powers.¹³

The Cold War following World War II emphasized the continued need for ROTC, while the wars in the Middle East, counterterrorism efforts and deployments throughout the world continue to call for a healthy supply of quality commissioned officers. As of this writing, approximately 60 percent of commissioned Army officers are trained through Army ROTC programs at 275 colleges and universities, the largest of the three mechanisms for commissioning Army officers.¹⁴ More than 40 percent of current active duty Army general officers were commissioned through ROTC, and approximately 5,350 second lieutenants are commissioned every year. Each of these programs produces officers trained to a rigorous, centralized standard of leader development and proficient in the six Army Learning Areas, thus ensuring the continued strength and diversity of the officer corps.¹⁵

Contemporary Army Leader Development Training

As described above, the United States Army and its ROTC cadre have studied and taught leadership since ROTC's inception in 1819, and ROTC has worked assiduously to produce quality leadership experiences for its cadets by adjusting curriculum and programming to meet Army needs and to reflect Army doctrine. ROTC training in the 21st century reflects significant changes made at the end of the Vietnam War. At that time, perceived failures in Army training were observed by Army leadership; the revamped training process is understood to have contributed significantly to the success of the first Gulf War in 1991 by improving the overall quality of the Army officer corps.¹⁶

In the 1970s, Army officers who had served "in country" returned to garrison determined to systematize a process of training college-age students to become the next generation of Army leaders. Thus greater attention was given to studying leadership. The process of applying lessons learned in the field was developed and implemented, adapting and transitioning the existing ROTC curriculum into the one currently in use. A key step in this process was the establishment of the U.S. Army Cadet Command (USACC) at Fort Monroe, Virginia, in

April 1986.¹⁷ This command structure organized the more than 400 semi-independent and decentralized ROTC programs, greatly facilitating the standardization of training through pre-commissioning preparations.

USACC also provided a mechanism to reflect upon and assess leader development and training to continuously improve the process of candidate selection and training. The current practice aligns with Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, a publication outlining a model of leader development that focuses on attributes and competencies. Following this model, ROTC strives to recruit individuals who have displayed outstanding potential in the areas of scholarship, athleticism and leadership—crucial components or attributes believed to be central to developing a capable and effective Army officer. In addition to a leadership-focused selection process, the candidates are immersed in a rigorous experiential learning environment that focuses on leadership, values and ethics, personal development and tactics, techniques and tenets of officership, all of which train the candidate in the desired competencies of leading, developing and achieving.¹⁸ The desired outcome of this process is a trained, capable junior officer proficient in the six Army Learning Areas and ready to lead Soldiers in training and combat as they arrive at their first units of assignment.

Army ROTC Programs in the 21st Century

This study began with eight years (2007–2015) of observations of what occurs in practice in Army ROTC programs. Two programs were studied: the Pony Express Battalion, composed of nine colleges and universities in the northwest Missouri/Kansas City region; and the Blue Raider Battalion, composed entirely of cadets attending Middle Tennessee State University. The Pony Express Battalion, composed of approximately 15 cadets in 2007, grew to as many as 150 cadets during the four years that the program was observed. From 2011 through 2015, the Blue Raider Battalion ranged from 100 to 150 cadets, depending on the time of observation during the academic year. These two battalions at their peak commissioned between 12 and 20 second lieutenants each academic year during the eight years of observation.

Cadre in both battalions consisted of, at minimum, a professor of military science (PMS)—an active duty lieutenant colonel in the United States Army who also holds the rank of professor and department chair at the university; an active duty major or captain in the United States Army who also holds the rank of assistant professor of military science (APMS) at the university; a recruiting officer, often an officer in the Army National Guard or Army Reserve assigned to work with ROTC; and at least one noncommissioned officer (NCO), holding the rank of master sergeant in the Army and the rank of instructor at the university. Over the eight years of observation, these programs were assigned additional cadre at both officer and NCO rank. The ideal staffing ratio of cadre/cadets is considered to be approximately 1:10, consistent with Army learning standards for small-group instruction which, depending on the nature of the instruction, can vary between 1:6 and 1:16.¹⁹

Ideally, cadets enter as freshmen, graduate from university in four years and earn their commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, the Army National Guard or the Army Reserve. As is the case for students at most colleges and universities, however, a wide variety of academic situations exist at any one time. For instance, it is possible to enter ROTC as a graduate student, attend a summer Cadet Initial Entry Training Course and commission as a second lieutenant upon completion of ROTC requirements. Regardless of academic rank, cadets proceed through the ROTC program in cohorts by class, designated Military Science

(MS) I through IV, essentially corresponding to the freshman through senior years. Cadets earn each designation by completing competencies at each level and hold rank within the battalion up through cadet battalion commander and cadet sergeant major.

Commitment – Taking the Oath

The first action for a college student entering ROTC is to take the Oath of Enlistment, swearing to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.²⁰ The Oath of Enlistment is similar to, but a bit shorter than, the oath taken by commissioned Army officers:

I, (state your name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.²¹

The purpose of taking the oath at the beginning of one's studies is to commit publicly, through the ritual of swearing an oath, to the process of becoming an Army officer. As with any oath taken publicly, the cadet enters into the community of the Army and swears to his or her peers, community and cadre that she or he will become part of that community without reservation. In swearing the oath, the cadet begins the process of earning the *commission*. It is the commission that authorizes an Army officer to issue orders on his own, or on behalf of his superiors. The "chain of command" extends from the Army's "newest second lieutenant," a phrase frequently used at commissioning ceremonies, up to the President of the United States as the Commander in Chief. From a legal perspective, the commission is critically important to the Army profession. As Samuel Huntington noted in *The Soldier and the State*, "The legal right to practice the profession is limited to members of a carefully defined body. His commission is to the officer what his license is to the doctor."²²

Commitment is considered critical to leadership success; it is the measure of the cadet's investment in entering the Army profession. Psychometric measures confirm that organizational commitment is positively related to leadership performance among Army officers.²³ Army Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, distinguishes between two types of leadership influence: compliance-focused and commitment-focused.²⁴ Compliance-focused influence is based on the authority of the leader, where subordinates follow the orders of their superiors simply because of their rank relationship. Compliance-focused influence, however, does not meet the standard of commitment-focused influence, where the leader inspires Soldiers to that cause for which one would give "the last full measure of devotion." FM 6-22 notes, "Commitment grows from an individual's desire to gain a sense of control and develop self-worth by contributing to the organization."²⁵ ROTC asks cadets for this level of commitment from the very beginning, and the public oath of the contracting ceremony is a ritual demonstrating the cadet's eagerness—mere willingness is deemed insufficient—to become an officer. The contracting oath is second only to the commissioning oath in cementing the individual's commitment to the Army and the profession of arms.

Culture – The Profession of Arms

The process of *committing* begins the cadet's training, and the nature of the culture to which the cadet commits is emphasized from the start of the process. Civilians easily see the

uniforms—and the uniformity—of the military; dress and conformity are certainly an observable part of military culture. What is not as noticeable to the outsider is the acculturation that cadets experience as they are initiated into a *profession of arms*. There is some debate within the Army as to the nature of the profession, especially recently as it relates to the nature of military bureaucracy, but there is no argument that the Army considers itself a profession.²⁶ As Don Snider argues in *The Future of the Army Profession*, “The conviction remains that, for a number of reasons . . . the Army must be a vocational profession—a calling—rather than just a big government bureaucracy, and it must be recognized as such by its client, the American people.”²⁷

The American military has long discussed the culture of *officership* as the means by which the character and behavior of effective Army leaders is molded. It has been understood since the 18th century that to develop a civilian into a Soldier who possesses the character to lead others requires indoctrination into the culture of officership. Leaders of the American military in the Revolutionary War urged Congress to create an institution dedicated to the arts and sciences of warfare where future officers could be trained, thereby ending the reliance on foreign professionals, who had been trained at such institutions for decades. Thomas Jefferson signed legislation founding the United States Military Academy in 1802; the discussion of the nature of the Army as a profession can be traced back to that point. It has continued since that time.

The realization that a profession can be studied with the advances in social science research led to a landmark study by Samuel Huntington and his classic work, *The Soldier and the State*, wherein he declared, “The modern officer corps is a professional body and the modern military officer is a professional man.”²⁸ Well-known studies on the culture of the Army profession include “Study on Military Professionalism,” an effort by the Army to combat the problems of leadership during the Vietnam War era;²⁹ two editions of *The Future of the Army Profession*, monographs that renewed the debate during the wars in the Middle East and sought to clarify the emerging problem of distinguishing the Army *profession* from the Army *bureaucracy*;³⁰ “An Army white paper: The profession of arms”;³¹ and ADRP 1, *The Army Profession*, the most recent in the series of discussions of doctrine being conducted Army-wide.³² In all cases these efforts seek to define the nature of Army culture that the cadet is entering.

There are several critical actions that facilitate the cadet’s acculturation process. After contracting, one of the first events the new cadet will encounter is physical fitness training, or PT. Through the conduct of physical training within a unit, the cadet learns the values of personal fitness, teamwork, shared hardship and the accomplishment of a mission. PT seems a simple thing on the surface—its explicit purpose is to physically train the cadet and to teach him or her *how* to possess the strength and stamina necessary to be a Soldier. However, in going through PT with peers, the cadet shares the physical distress that all members of the program share. Consistent with processes that go back to Plato in *The Republic* and have been studied in American physical education since the 1930s, the cadet begins the process of becoming a *citizen* of the profession by being physically active. Simply put, by training the body one also trains the character.³³ The cadets learn to appreciate the virtues needed to accomplish PT by observing these virtues both in themselves and in their peers. Discipline, courage, duty and respect are personally and socially experienced in something as simple—and as complex—as PT and all of the *experienced* components of ROTC curriculum. And these values, which are representative of Army culture, can be introduced, trained and reinforced through both individual and group aspects of the Army Physical Readiness Training (PRT) program.³⁴

Values – *LDRSHIP*

Throughout his or her tenure in ROTC, each cadet is increasingly immersed in the culture of the profession of arms. Key aspects of the ROTC curriculum at all Military Science levels include classroom instruction and labs that continuously address the Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor, Integrity and Personal courage—values that make up the acronym *LDRSHIP*. Classes and labs include military customs and courtesies, drill and ceremony, uniform inspections and vehicle safety inspections, all of which emphasize *LDRSHIP*. Understanding Army Values is further emphasized during major experiential events such as uniform and equipment layouts and inspections, award and recognition ceremonies and the conduct of an annual military formal banquet. The cadet is expected to exhibit these values in his or her behavior at all times. In short, ROTC programming continuously exposes and draws the cadet further into the Army/military culture and helps him or her to internalize Army Values.

All Army units are continuously exposed to these same values, and what is notable about the Army as an institution is the consistency with which it promotes a common set of values in all areas of Army life. As Jeffrey Thomas et al. noted in “Values predicting leader performance,”

As you drive onto the grounds of Fort Sam Houston, you are greeted by a series of road-side signs, somewhat akin to old Burma-Shave signs. Rather than being an amusing rhyme, however, these signs say Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honesty, Integrity and Personal courage. At the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, seven of the main hospital building’s structural pillars are inscribed with these same seven values, which form the acronym *LDRSHIP*. Many other Army facilities have similar displays. In other words, every time a Soldier or visitor goes to an Army post or facility, he or she is likely to be reminded of the core leadership values of the U.S. Army.³⁵

ROTC is the first exposure to Army Values for most cadets, and it will not be the last. Through repeated exposure to the acronym *LDRSHIP*, the process of embedding Army Values into one’s actions is begun and continued throughout the officer’s career.

Experiential Learning – Operation Orders

Perhaps the most significant component of ROTC leader development training occurs during the experiential learning components of the curriculum. Cadets are immediately introduced to an environment where their peers are planning, preparing, executing and assessing “operations”—Military Science projects of varying importance and complexity. Most activities in the battalion are organized in an operations fashion, the exceptions being those duties such as formal personnel evaluations or other military duties that must be carried out by cadre.

Discussions of an operation order (OPORD) may seem mundane to experienced officers, but for purposes of understanding ROTC curriculum as pedagogy it is helpful to dissect and analyze how ROTC utilizes experiential education. Going back to the progressive era in education, scholars and theorists such as John Dewey and Kurt Hahn argued that planning, then doing and finally reflecting on what occurred in an activity is the best way to learn about it.³⁶ Consistent with this epistemological process, cadets are taught that operations begin with an operations order, or OPORD, where the instructions for the operation are provided. OPORDs are generally authored by third- and fourth-year cadets and are distributed through the cadet battalion chain of command to all cadets. The planning for each operation is reviewed in a manner consistent with practices of Army units in garrison and deployed, with the goal of

showing both the authors and those receiving the OPORDs just how this process is initiated and executed. “Warning Orders,” or WARNOs, are given in advance to prepare cadets for a pending operation; “Fragmentation Orders,” or FRAGOs, are given throughout the process to alert cadets of pending changes in the operation. Once the date of execution arrives, the plan is put into effect, and cadets learn the lesson that any experienced leader knows to be true: no OPORD survives its execution. The plan is used as a guide, and adjustments are made in the operation according to the developing needs of the mission. Once completed, the operation is reviewed through a process known as the after-action review, or AAR. The AAR sometimes happens immediately following a mission: a “hotwash” can be conducted where the effectiveness of the operation is reviewed with needed changes, and “improves” and “sustains” are summarized for future discussion and implementation. The formal AAR occurs on a regular basis: the more complex and important the operation, the longer the AAR.

It is during the planning, preparation, execution and assessment processes that cadets learn the most about leadership, and comparison with other university learning experiences provides insights as to why. Most college students do not have the opportunity to engage in activities or projects that require such extensive planning and feedback. In fact, much college curriculum focuses on the *idea* of the content being studied, and this aspect of university curriculum is used by ROTC when appropriate. The humanities and much of the social sciences focus, as they should, on the written word and discussion for the dissemination of content. In contrast, the sciences and the professions are able to use experiential learning to convey critical lessons; ROTC cadre as faculty are masters of the use of the operations “laboratory” or “clinic” to convey knowledge of Army processes and to train for leadership in the execution of the mission. For many cadets this is the first time in their lives where concerns for performance, logistics, personnel, budgets, facilities and space, equipment, protocol and politics all meet in a coherent process. More important to Army training, all of this occurs with the focus on the performance of the operation’s leader. The leadership of the operation, always the author of the OPORD, is being reviewed by subordinates, peers, senior cadets and cadre. At the conclusion of the operation, the cadet’s performance is reviewed by a senior cadet and cadre with a focus on the leader characteristics that the Army deems important. Leader effectiveness for the operation is summarized on either a “Blue Card” (a condensed and concise summary of the observable leadership moments in the operation) or, more recently, a Department of the Army Form 4856 (DA4856), Developmental Counseling Form.³⁷

During the MS III year a cadet will lead five to six operations, including events such as a Field Leader Development Exercise (LDX), PT sessions or the annual Military Ball. Smaller events—such as conducting personal vehicle safety inspections prior to campus holidays, collecting equipment at the end of the semester or planning a ruck march—are also conducted in this manner. In all of these events, cadets are practicing and (ideally) improving their leader abilities through experiential learning and by getting feedback from peers, senior cadets and cadre on what was good about their performance as leaders, what simply needed to be sustained and what needs improvement.

Cadets spend significant time and effort preparing for operations to be planned, in their execution and in their informal and formal reviews. Indeed, the operations are the most significant part of cadet training for leadership. Cadets learn important aspects of both followership and leadership, how to take and receive orders, and how to plan, prepare, execute and assess. All of the principles of Army leadership “come alive” in operations; the behavior of each cadet is reviewed, shaped and molded as much as can be hoped for in a college environment.

Academic Study of Leadership Theory

As noted above, many social science and humanities curricula focus on the *idea* of the content being studied.³⁸ Leadership theory comes alive when discussed in the context of the experiences in the “laboratory” of the OPORD. Cadets enroll in coursework equivalent to an academic minor, usually between 15 and 27 credit hours depending on the host college requirements. Included in the minor is an average of 9–12 hours in cognate courses that emphasize the intellectual aspects of military science. These courses, generally organized by MS level, focus on the six Army Learning Areas and include lessons on the theories of leadership, values-based decisionmaking, counseling techniques and military history. As Tom Gallagher noted, for many years the only college courses focusing on leadership were those offered in Army ROTC.³⁹ However, more recently colleges and universities have begun to offer additional coursework in leadership in business, psychology and other academic disciplines—and cadets are encouraged to study in these areas as part of their majors or as electives.

There is some debate in the Army about the culture of intellectualism—or, more accurately, a culture of *anti-intellectualism*—that exists in the military, especially as it relates to military promotion.⁴⁰ However, this debate from an outside observer’s perspective appears to be one of degree rather than one of kind. The ROTC programs observed both offered well-stocked libraries on many military and leadership subjects. Cadets are expected to maintain a high grade point average (GPA) as a component of the formula used to determine branch selection and whether the cadet will be selected for Regular Army, Army National Guard or Army Reserve. Academics account for 40 percent of cadet ranking upon graduation. In short, the emphasis on academic performance within the ROTC units observed was certainly comparable to that within an academic major and was quite often superior to that of non-ROTC peers.

This emphasis on *intellectual* development, combined with experiential learning, is consistent with Army priorities for promotion throughout one’s career. Army officers are expected and encouraged to earn graduate degrees as part of their professional development, and are encouraged to consider themselves “lifelong learners.” Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 350-58, *Army Leader Development Program*, calls for three domains or “pillars” of development in its Leader Development Model: Training, or the Operational Domain; Education, or the Institutional Domain; and Experience, or the Self-development Domain. The Education pillar focuses on institutional training and education, wherein intellectual development is encouraged.⁴¹ As an institution the Army encourages officers to be familiar with information and knowledge generated by all disciplines and professions, but especially in what it considers important literature on leadership in the Army. To facilitate personal development, personnel are encouraged to read literature suggested by the *U.S. Army Chief of Staff’s Professional Reading List*.⁴² This list encourages officers to continue their leader development throughout their career.

It is common for an officer achieving the rank of major to have earned a master’s degree in his or her discipline of choice, and it is not uncommon for general officers to have earned a doctorate. In addition, the Army sends its most promising officers to the Command and General Staff College/Intermediate Level Education (CGSC/ILE), highly recommended for an officer seeking senior rank. Finally, officers who hope to obtain the rank of general will attend the Army War College.⁴³ Rarely do civilians see this level of institutional support for intellectual development as a requirement for personal advancement—and the focus on this intellectual development begins at the ROTC level.

Mentoring/Coaching/Counseling

Another critical component of ROTC leader development is the introduction of the cadet to the mentoring process. Mentoring is the process through which a less formal kind of feedback is given to a cadet, usually in a one-on-one environment. As a general rule, senior cadets will counsel third-year cadets, and third-year cadets will counsel first- and second-year cadets. Often the relationships that develop are even less formal than as described here, but they are no less important and valuable. In all cases the advice and counsel given are critical to the development of a cadet's leadership skills. Cadets are first mentored, but as they move through the program they become mentors themselves.

Mentoring is the process of receiving feedback from one's titular senior peer. Cadets are taught to receive this feedback and take it seriously. Some of the most important feedback the cadet will receive, it usually involves the day-to-day details that are necessary to be effective in a leader role. As Horner noted with respect to the Army Leader Development Model,

Organizations serious about developing subordinates demand that senior leaders serve as farmers and help "grow"—or mentor—junior leaders. Senior leaders must nurture junior leaders by giving them proper amounts of training, education and other behavioral and intellectual nutrients.⁴⁴

The value of being mentored is instilled in cadets as soon as they enter ROTC. Mentoring, coaching and counseling are introduced early in the ROTC curriculum, and within Cadet Command these processes are part of the Leader Development Program (LDP). Specifically,

The LDP is standardized in all ROTC campus and summer training environments. The LDP provides cadets with personalized, individual leadership development opportunities from the time they enter ROTC until they receive their commissions. It includes basic leadership instruction, periodic assessments and counseling at both the team and individual levels . . . ROTC instructors serve as observers and mentors who observe and evaluate cadets' performance, identify trends and provide correction retraining and retesting in a constant cycle.⁴⁵

Less obvious is the skill that is developed in *providing* mentoring advice when the cadet assumes a more senior role in ROTC. The cadet quickly learns that how this advice is given, when it should be given and in what situation it is given will determine its effectiveness. Put simply, giving *and* getting counseling are skills that require empathy and practice. Cadets are put into environments where they are evaluated both on their ability to adjust to peer criticism and on their ability to provide criticism and achieve success through indirect leadership.

Assessment – Self, Peer, Cadre and Institutional

An important part of leader training in ROTC is the manner in which cadets' leader skills are assessed. Until 2015, there were three forms that cadets used in the course of their training: a Yellow Card that served as a means of self-assessment; a Blue Card used by peers to assess and be assessed by their peers and cadre in an operation; and the Cadet Evaluation Report (CER) wherein cadre formally assess the cadet's overall ability to lead. To bring this process more in line with current Army practice in the field, these forms are being replaced by the DA4856 and the Cadet Officer Evaluation Report. Regardless of the changing nature of the form, the overall goal of assessing cadets is to provide developmental feedback on their leader skills.⁴⁶

The DA4856 is one of the important devices used in leader training. As stated earlier, cadets will be tasked with leading an operation and will develop the WARNO, OPORD and FRAGO(s)

if necessary, will lead the operation and will lead the AAR. Every aspect of the operation is evaluated, along with the cadet's leadership of it. The focus is on the leader attributes and competencies (character, presence, intellect, lead, develop, achieve) as discussed in ADRP 6-22.⁴⁷

At the end of the third year, the cadet attends a 28-day formal assessment at what was formerly known as the Leader Development Assessment Course (LDAC) and is now referred to as the Cadet Leader Course (CLC). During LDAC/CLC the cadet will undergo continued training and leader experiences. Performance at LDAC/CLC is critical to the development of the cadet in ROTC; it is the premier training and developmental event of the ROTC experience. Further, LDAC/CLC is consistent with one of the three dimensions of the Army Leader Development Program that values the *experience* of leading. LDAC/CLC provides each cadet a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the on-campus leader experiences. Following the LDAC/CLC summer experience, cadre can create, implement and monitor a detailed and tailored plan to complete the cadet's preparation for commissioning in his or her final year of ROTC.

Leader performance is the point of any evaluation, and the evaluation of a particular cadet is recorded in the DA4856. But equally important to being evaluated is that cadets learn both to give evaluative information and to receive it. Learning to take constructive feedback is part of becoming an officer; cadets learn early on that they will continually be receiving formalized feedback from their superiors. Understanding how to do this well, and to take feedback and put it to constructive use, is a learned skill. Cadets are also put into leadership roles, and in these roles are assigned the task of providing feedback to their direct reports. Senior cadets find that it is easy to provide advice on what should happen in an OPORD that did not go as planned; they also quickly find that if they are impolitic, insensitive or careless about their comments in an AAR, their peers are willing to return the favor. Ideally, at the end of several missions, moving from OPORD to AAR, cadets begin to associate the feedback they receive regarding their performance with performance of their units in achieving the mission. With practice, the cadet becomes adept at the process of associating feedback with his or her own thoughts and behaviors, and developing a consciousness of his or her leadership style—of what works and what does not—and using this personal sense of leadership style to achieve mission success. By the end of four years of the process, having been provided feedback and having given it in formal and informal assessment settings, cadets are familiar with both sides of leader assessment.

Analysis

Any analysis of Army ROTC leader development should begin with the acknowledgment that ROTC has achieved its primary goal of training college students to become Army officers who possess leader skills. If ROTC had not met this goal, the Army would have (1) radically restructured Army ROTC; (2) deemphasized or eliminated ROTC and scaled up the alternative programs of Officer Candidate School or the United States Military Academy; or (3) some combination of these two options. That ROTC continues in its present form is, to a great extent, an affirmation of the success of the curriculum to meet its leader development goal. This is, of course, not to say that the current curriculum will not change in the future. For instance, in the 1980s ROTC underwent significant revision to reflect the change to the All-Volunteer Army. But something has clearly “gone right” with the current program, and a review of academic leadership literature provides indications of just what works in ROTC leader training and why.

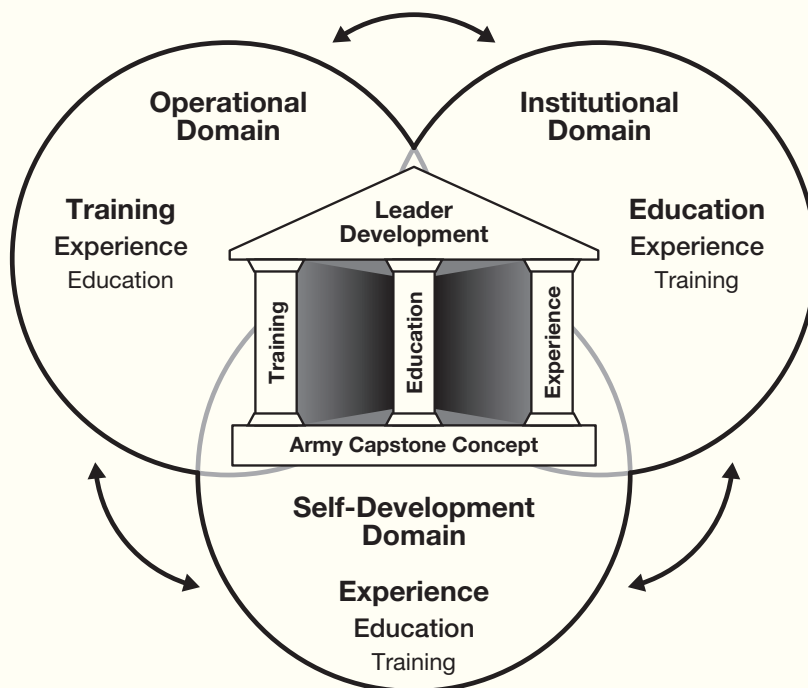
The above observations of ROTC can be understood by studying them in light of two leader development models: the Army Leader Development Model (LDM)⁴⁸ and the Higher

Education Research Institute's (HERI's) *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development*.⁴⁹ ROTC's approach to organizing leader development processes is consistent with the overall plan of both of these models. There are other models of leader development that could be used to analyze ROTC leader development, but for the most part other models are not as specific to Army needs as the LDM, or to higher education as is the HERI *Social Change Model*. James Kouzes and Barry Posner, for instance, focus on experiential learning when assessing leader skills in the Student Leader Development Inventory, certainly an important component in developing leader skills.⁵⁰ Similarly, Kathy Kram focuses on how mentoring is useful in developing leader skills.⁵¹ But for our purposes here, both of these approaches to understanding leader development are included in the two models discussed.

Army Leader Development Program

The first question asked at the beginning of this monograph was, "What are the characteristics of Army ROTC leader development training, and are these characteristics consistent with Army doctrine?" The answer to this question is a resounding "yes" as ROTC follows the Army's Leader Development Program closely. The LDP calls for leader development to begin and continue in one of three ways: through a formal educational process of schooling (Institutional Domain), experiential education that occurs as part of regular Army training (Operational Domain) and a self-development program designed to fill any learning gaps that may occur throughout the Soldier's service (Self-Development Domain).⁵² Clearly, ROTC as an educational program falls into the Institutional Domain, although incorporating the concepts inherent in the Operational and Self-Development Domains demonstrates how these three domains can overlap. All three domains are discussed frequently in ROTC, and each is a critical component of developing leader skills in cadets.

Army Leader Development Model



The LDP is designed with an understanding that all three “domains” are “pillars” that support and overlap with one another. ROTC leader training is the first formal educational program experienced by cadets (one pillar), a university program that uses significant aspects of experiential learning (a second pillar) and which initiates and encourages the self-development component (the third pillar) within the formal educational experience of the ROTC cadet. According to ADRP 7-0, the Army LDP is based on the following philosophy:

Leader development is a continuous and progressive process, spanning a leader’s entire career. Leader development comprises training, education and experience gained in schools, while assigned to organizations and through the individual’s own program of self-development. The Army capstone concept—[which] describes future armed conflict and how the Army will conduct future joint land operations—drives leader development. With limited time in the schoolhouse, the majority of leader development occurs in operational assignments and through self-development. The Army leader development model [on page 12] illustrates how the Army develops competent and confident military and Army civilian leaders through these three mutually supporting training domains.⁵³

Army Regulation 350-1 elaborates:

Leader development instills and refines desired attributes and competencies in Soldiers and Army civilians through an appropriate combination of formal education, experience, training, assessment, counseling and feedback, remedial and reinforcement actions, evaluation and selection. This integrated, progressive and sequential process occurs in schools, units and civilian education institutions and organizations.⁵⁴

ROTC, as the first *institutional domain* experienced by cadets, provides the platform for cadets to learn “the key competencies, values, warrior ethos and Army Profession mindset needed to succeed in any circumstance. The institutional training domain also provides training support products, information and materials needed by individuals for self-development and by unit leaders in the operational training domain to accomplish training and mission rehearsal/assessment.”⁵⁵

The *operational training domain* emphasizes the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through experiential learning. According to AR 350-1,

The operational domain encompasses training activities that unit leaders schedule, and individuals, units and organizations undertake. Unit leaders are responsible for the proficiency of their subordinates . . . subordinate leaders, teams/crews, and the unit as a whole.⁵⁶

AR 350-1 does not prescribe how unit commanders are to meet the leader development goal; rather, it is understood that the unit commander has the leeway to design activities and exercises that will meet the standards within the guidelines of the regulation.

The *self-development training domain* is consistent with the guidance that Army officers continue the process of self-improvement begun in ROTC, beginning with the requirement that cadets obtain the baccalaureate degree prior to commissioning.⁵⁷ Cadets begin the process of lifelong learning in university, and continue their self-development throughout their career as the Army . . .

recognizes that Army service requires continuous, life-long learning and that structured training activities in Army schools and in operational units often will not meet

every individual's need for content or time. Self-development enables individuals to pursue personal and professional development goals. Leaders help subordinates identify areas where self-development will improve performance of current assignment and areas that will prepare them for future career assignments.⁵⁸

The observations of ROTC leader development described in the first part of this paper are consistent with the characteristics of the Army LDP, especially with regard to experiential learning, lifelong learning through formal and informal education, counseling and mentoring, and assessment. Specific to the initial observations of ROTC programs in this paper, throughout Army leader development literature there are references to the culture of a *profession of arms*, describing the Army's awareness of the need to indoctrinate civilians into the culture of the Army. Similarly, references to the Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor, Integrity and Personal courage are continually repeated in the Army LDP.⁵⁹ In sum, ROTC appears to be executing the guidance of the Army Leader Development Program as designed, with numerous observations of cadets demonstrating the LDP characteristics of commitment, Army Values, cultural indoctrination, experiential learning, mentoring, ongoing intellectual self-development and leader assessment.

Higher Education Research Institute's *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development*

The focus on the training of Army officers almost allows one to forget that ROTC cadets are also college students. Consequently, examining cadets as students enables one to study ROTC using a curricular model that promotes college student leadership development. Specifically, we compare the leader development processes in ROTC with best practices of leader development in the college and university setting. In doing so, one can see why ROTC leader training is so effective. The leader development model created by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), titled *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development*, summarizes a well-regarded approach among higher-education academics and professionals.⁶⁰

The HERI model begins with key assumptions that are observed in the training for leadership in ROTC and uses language that is remarkably consistent with the language in ADRP 6-22, AR 350-1 and the Army LDP.⁶¹ In the HERI model, leadership is concerned with effecting change on behalf of others and society, is collaborative, is a process rather than a position and should be value-based; all students (not just those who hold formal leadership positions) are understood to be potential leaders; and *service* is understood to be a powerful vehicle for developing students' leadership skills.⁶² The model has two primary goals: to enhance in each student participant greater self-knowledge and leadership competence, and to facilitate positive social change. The model looks at leadership from three different perspectives: individual, group and community/society. It is understood that there is continual feedback among these three perspectives, or aspects, of the life of the emerging leader; each perspective informs the others and shapes competencies and self-knowledge in the leader.

The HERI model articulates and elaborates key components found in ROTC leader development. As noted from the HERI *Guidebook* (words in bold below are the authors' emphasis):

In our many hours of discussion and debate, it became clear to each of us in the Ensemble that **values** were at the core of what we considered to be the critical elements in our leadership development model. In addition to **change**, the "hub" around which our evolving model was being developed, there were seven other critical values about which we could agree:

- collaboration;
- consciousness of self;
- commitment;
- congruence;
- common purpose;
- controversy with civility;
- citizenship.⁶³

It is noteworthy that collaboration (which implies community), commitment, consciousness of self and common purpose are readily observed in ROTC OPORDs. The possession of specific values guides the development of the emerging leader to be a working member of the community and also to ensure that the nature of the community is socially positive and beneficial to all.

Following the outline provided above of the observed characteristics of ROTC programs, it is notable that the HERI model defines *commitment* as one of its key values. HERI defines *commitment* in this context as “the psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort.”⁶⁴ As observed in the two programs described above, ROTC cadets demonstrate the possession of commitment by swearing an oath affirming to support and defend the Constitution.

In taking an oath of commitment, the cadets demonstrate the value of *citizenship*, expressly in this case to the United States of America but also to their fellow cadets and cadre. Citizenship is defined by HERI as “the process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity.”⁶⁵ In the case of ROTC, cadets become *citizens* in the *profession of arms*, swearing to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States by becoming a member of the culture of Army professionals.

The HERI model addresses experiential learning by noting that leader development occurs by participating in collaborative activities. Specifically, the HERI model notes,

We believe that activities that serve the institution and/or the larger community provide an especially rich and appropriate context for engaging students and for developing collaborative action strategies that benefit others. This model does not purport to be appropriate for all purposes or tasks. That is, it is **action oriented** [author’s emphasis] with a goal of helping the institution or community to function more effectively and humanely.⁶⁶

It is through experiential learning, then, that the leader becomes aware of his or her relationship to the group and begins to understand how one’s “salient values, talents and other individual characteristics, personal integrity, self-renewal, openness to learning and establishing a personal focus or purpose” can be developed.⁶⁷

Summary

There is no “perfect” leader development program. The differences in environment, personal psychology and institutional mission preclude the ability of any organization, including the Army and higher education, to design “the” perfect leader development program. Having said this, it seems clear that Army ROTC is meeting its mission of training college students

to acquire leader skills according to the guidance developed in AR 350-1, ADRP 6-22 and the Army LDP.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Army ROTC is successfully operating within the domain of American higher education, being sensitive to the nuances of that culture and taking advantage of the environment, curriculum and educational values inherent in higher education. As such, it is performing a valuable curricular role on more than 900 college campuses that feed into 275 ROTC programs.

ROTC as a curriculum successfully emphasizes the need for the emerging leader to self-consciously commit to becoming a leader in programs with a significant social purpose; it understands the role that institutional values play in providing a sense of purpose for the emerging leader; and it socializes college students into a well-defined, socially-accepted subculture, specifically that of the *profession of arms*.

The emphasis on lifelong self-development, the presence of counselors and mentors and continual assessment of one's leadership skills are introduced to cadets, who are encouraged to focus on self-development throughout their careers. Finally, again and again and again, the Army uses experiential learning to "bring to life" the lessons learned regarding leadership. Both the Army LDP and the *Social Change Model* agree that all of this experience and training must be present for an individual to learn to lead and to practice one's leadership. In sum, ROTC is successfully engaging in leader development both for the Army and for higher education.

Endnotes

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- ³⁷ The move to the DA4856 reflects the effort to use the same developmental forms and processes that the cadets will actually use once commissioned.
- ³⁸ The authors recognize that social science research is grounded in empirical observation. For the purposes of this paper, though, we emphasize how the cadet’s personal leader development is informed by the literature of the social sciences rather than by the collection of empirical data as social scientists.
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- ⁴² General Raymond T. Odierno, *U.S. Army Chief of Staff’s Professional Reading List*, CMH Publication 105-5-1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2014), <http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/105/105-1-1/index.html>.
- ⁴³ Note Matthews’ argument about the eventual need for two military science degrees—one strategic studies and one civilian; Matthews, *The Future of the Military Profession* (2002).
- ⁴⁴ Horner, “Leader Development and Why It Remains Important,” p. 78.

- ⁴⁵ Leadership Development Program, *MSL III: Adaptive Team Leadership* (New York: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2008), p. 16.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership*.
- ⁴⁸ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2012); DA PAM 350-58, *Army Leader Development Program*; Dean A. Nowowiejski, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army, “A New Leader Development Paradigm,” *Military Review*, July–August 1995, pp. 70–75, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll1/id/446/rec/17>.
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- ⁵⁰ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI): Observer Third Edition* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2003).
- ⁵¹ Kathy E. Kram, “Phases of the mentor relationship,” *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1983, pp. 608–625, <http://amj.aom.org/content/26/4/608>.
- ⁵² ADRP 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders*; DA PAM 350-58, *Army Leader Development Program*; Nowowiejski, “A New Leader Development Paradigm.”
- ⁵³ ADRP 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders*, p. 1-8.
- ⁵⁴ AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, p. 1-17.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1-11.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3-31.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1-11.
- ⁵⁹ FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*; ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership*; ADRP 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders*; DA PAM 350-58, *Army Leader Development Program*; AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*.
- ⁶⁰ HERI, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development*.
- ⁶¹ ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership*; AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*; DA PAM 350-58, *Army Leader Development Program*.
- ⁶² HERI, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development*.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*; ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership*; and the Army LDP.