

Question:

2. What forms of leadership inspire or create the greatest amount of trust? How does a leader earn and strengthen mutual trust and cohesion within the team?

Inspiring Trust and Developing Character through Servant Leadership

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- The Armed Forces Officer (1950)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to address the relationship between leadership and trust, and the role of character in the development of an Army professional. The 8 January 2016 Center for the Army Profession and Ethic White Paper entitled *The Army Concept for Character Development of Army Professionals* determined that

The Army lacks the capability to identify attributes of character and to assess the success of efforts to develop character so that Army professionals consistently demonstrate their commitment and resilience to live by and uphold the Army Ethic.²

As an organization entrusted with the protection of the United States and her interests, we are comprised of a volunteer population who willingly swore an oath to this cause. Those who serve must be persons of character dedicated to living the Army Ethic. Currently, there is no way to quantify or evaluate character development efforts in oneself or subordinates. This paper seeks to explore the issue of character development as it relates to leadership and trust and propose a measure of effectiveness for evaluation. Given the established definitions of an *Army leader* and *leadership*, coupled with the *Army Leadership Requirements Model*, the theory of

¹ US, Department of Defense, *The Armed Forces Officer*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, (1950), 84.

² Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE). *The Army Concept for Character Development of Army Professionals White Paper*, (8 January 2016), 5.

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Servant Leadership will be explored as a foundation to build trust and develop character. Six leadership styles will be analyzed for the best method through which leaders can strengthen mutual trust and cohesion within teams.

LEADERSHIP AND TRUST

The Army defines *leadership* as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”³ As the conductor of this process, the *Army leader*

is anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals. Army leaders motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization.⁴

Leaders use different methods, tools, and skills to influence others and build successful organizations. Trust enables leadership to function effectively. “When high levels of trust exist, people are more willing and naturally accepting of influence and influence is more likely to occur in multiple directions.”⁵ Building trust is the responsibility of all leaders. “Leaders build trust with their followers and those outside the organization by adhering to the leadership competencies and demonstrating good character, presence, and intellect.”⁶ Noted business ethicist Robert Solomon (2004)

³ Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, Army Leadership (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, Army Leadership (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 6-7.

⁶ Ibid.

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describes leadership as an “emotional relationship of trust.”⁷ Skill in relationship and trust building sets the conditions for leadership to flourish.

What is trust? The Army surmises, “Trust encompasses reliance upon others, confidence in their abilities, and consistency in behavior. Trust builds over time through mutual respect, shared understanding, and common experiences.”⁸ Kouzes and Posner (2007) suggest that building trust is a process involving risk. The risk lies in which party shows vulnerability and relinquishes some level of control first. As a leader, one must first show a willingness to trust others, which will empower subordinates to demonstrate trust.⁹ Northouse (2016) surmises that “leaders built trust by articulating a direction and then consistently implementing the direction even though the vision may have involved a higher degree of uncertainty.”¹⁰ By all definitions and actions, the resultant relationship is one defined by reciprocal trust.

FORMS OF LEADERSHIP

For the purpose of this paper, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee’s (2002) six forms of leadership will be discussed. The first four leadership styles inspire commitment to an organization, its vision and goals, and to the leader. They build mutual trust and create effective teams. The last two leadership styles only build compliance

⁷ Robert C. Solomon, “Ethical Leadership, Emotions, and Trust: Beyond Charisma,” in *Ethics, the Heart of Leadership*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 94.

⁸ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-22, Army Leadership (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 6-7.

⁹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 243-244.

¹⁰ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016), 173.

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within and organization, and weaken trust because each individual is concerned with self-preservation.

- **Visionary** leaders inspire organizations by focusing on the true purpose of the work, communicating a shared vision, empowering subordinates, and sharing information.¹¹
- **Coaching** leaders focus on the personal development of others. They delegate projects to challenge subordinates, rather than assign tasks to accomplish.¹²
- **Affiliative** leaders value relationship building, empathy, and the needs of employees as the essential elements of organizational leadership.¹³
- **Democratic** leaders are strong communicators, consensus-builders, and value collaboration rather than top-down direction.¹⁴
- **Pacesetting** leaders set high standards of excellence, do not tolerate poor performance, and are willing to take over the work themselves when they see fit.¹⁵
- **Commanding** leaders demand compliance, seek control not delegation, and motivate by threatening.¹⁶

¹¹Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2002), 54-59.

¹² Ibid., 59-63.

¹³ Ibid., 63-66.

¹⁴ Ibid., 67-69.

¹⁵ Ibid., 71-75.

¹⁶ Ibid., 75-80.

THE SERVANT LEADERSHIP MODEL

Servant leadership and the characteristics espoused by its practitioners align with the Army Leadership Requirements Model and builds organizational trust.

Northouse (2016) summarizes

Servant leaders make a conscious choice to *serve first* – to place the good of followers over the leaders’ self-interests. They build strong relationships with others, are empathetic and ethical, and lead in ways that serve the greater good of followers, the organization, the community, and society at large.¹⁷

Sipe and Frick (2009) define a servant leader as “a *person of character who puts people first*. He or she is a *skilled communicator, a compassionate collaborator who has foresight, is a systems thinker, and leads with moral authority*.”¹⁸ Spears (2010) proposes the ten characteristics of a servant leader¹⁹, which align with the attributes/competencies (in parentheses) of the Army Leadership Requirements Model, as see in Figure 1:

• Listening (Interpersonal Tact)	• Foresight (Innovation, Influence, Prepares Self, Sound Judgement)
• Empathy (Empathy)	• Stewardship (Stewards the Profession)
• Healing (Interpersonal Tact, Empathy)	• Commitment to the growth of people (Develops Others, Builds Trust)
• Awareness (Communicates, Mental Agility)	• Building Community (Builds Trust, Creates a Positive Environment, Interpersonal Tact)
• Persuasion (Confidence, Interpersonal Tact, Extends Influence, Builds Trust)	
• Conceptualization (Innovation, Mental Agility)	

Figure 1: 10 Characteristics of Servant Leadership applied to the Army Leadership Requirements Model

¹⁷ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016), 253.

¹⁸ James W. Sipe and Don M. Frick, *Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership: Practicing the Wisdom of Leading by Serving*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009, 4.

¹⁹ Larry C. Spears, “Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders,” *Journal of Virtues and Leadership* (Vol. 1 Iss. 1, 2010): 25-30.

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Leaders who espouse the characteristics of servant leadership, and effectively utilize the suggested forms of leadership, inspire the greatest amount of trust. Leaders develop the attributes and perform the competencies of the Army Leadership Requirements Model by practicing the tenets of servant leadership, and in turn, build successful organizations.

PRACTICAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The USS BENFOLD struggled for many years with the same issues that confound all US Navy commands: mission readiness evaluations, sailor retention, and command climate. CDR Michael Abrashoff turned these traditional weaknesses into strengths based on a radical (for the military) leadership style, postulating, “innovative practices combined with true empowerment produce phenomenal results.”²⁰ CDR Abrashoff developed and implemented his vision of servant leadership by focusing on purpose rather than chain-of-command. “When you shift your organizing principle from obedience to performance, the highest boss is no longer the guy with the most stripes — it’s the sailor who does the work.”²¹ CDR Abrashoff’s leadership style and philosophy directly parallels Spears’ (2010) characteristics of a servant leader. “And I realized that my job was to listen aggressively — to pick up all of the ideas that they [sailors] had for improving how we operate. The most important thing that a captain can do is to see the ship from the eyes of the crew.”²² Though seemingly counterintuitive in a rigid hierarchical military organization, a commander dedicated to servant leadership

²⁰ Fast Company. Fast Company Magazine. *The Agenda – Grassroots Leadership*. (April 1999 Issue). <http://www.fastcompany.com/36897/agenda-grassroots-leadership> (accessed 14 April 2016).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

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*reversed the fortunes of ship and crew in a matter of months. USS BENFOLD maintained the highest readiness numbers in the fleet earning the Spokane Trophy, returned \$1.4M in maintenance and repair budget funds due to redesigned practices suggested by the sailors (FY98), and enjoyed 100% retention of sailors who completed their second tour of duty compared with 54% Navy-wide.*²³

Servant leaders possess the ability to alter the mindset of their organizations through service to others. Greenleaf (1977) summarized the test of servant leadership thus, “The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”²⁴ Servant leadership results in a high level of mutual trust through empowerment and demonstrates character-in-action.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Professional journals, books by leadership scholars, Army doctrine publications, and contemporary business magazine articles comprised the research for this paper. I synthesized the information and applied it to the CAPE study under my own thesis.

Additional data, collected from a 2014 JAMRS survey of new recruits, cited three-quarters of respondents as reporting their reason for joining the military was pride/self-esteem/honor and nearly half reported a call to serve the country.²⁵ With a strong sense of pride and honor, and a more temperate, but not inconsequential penchant for

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 27.

²⁵ JAMRS DoD New Recruit Survey, Spring 2014.

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service, the population of junior service members should respond favorably to servant leadership. This framework provides a way to achieve pride and honor through service to others.

CHARACTER AND TRUST

Leaders build trust and develop character through their everyday actions. Yukl (2013) suggests that a leader's integrity - consisting of honesty, fairness, and consistency between values and actions - plays a significant role in building trust with subordinates.²⁶ Living the Army Values and Army Ethic through servant leadership enables leaders to demonstrate this link between values and actions, thus developing character in themselves and others, and building trust at the same time.

This trust through service approach applies to the civil-military relationship as well. "The American people have entrusted the Army to provide for their defense. As Army professionals, it is our duty to continue to serve them in an effective and ethical manner, preserving the trust that we earned, throughout our history and into the future."²⁷ Assuming the mantle of service to the citizens of the nation, as well as to subordinates, functions as another conduit to trust building and character development.

What affects character? Character is not finite. It is a continuously developing trait that receives inputs every day. Each decision a person makes affects their character development. The risks associated with decisions make some more challenging and consequential than others, thus, shaping one's character a bit more.

²⁶ Gary, Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2013), 411.

²⁷ CAPE. Information Papers Site. America's Army – Our Profession Education and Training program: Trust, (2013). <http://cape.army.mil/infopapers.php> (accessed 8 Apr 2016).

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Decisions are affected by a combination of environmental (religion, values of parents, siblings), educational (type/level of school, teachers, personal study), and experiential (past events) values. Therefore, character is a product of decision-making, as influenced by environmental, educational, and experiential values.

How do we develop character? The Army outlines its values as loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. What an organization spends its time and resources on define its true values. In order to focus on character and the development thereof, the Army must commit the time and resources necessary to display authenticity in this effort. Character cannot be developed only in a classroom or by attending a training brief. This is one part of the previously stated equation. In order to institutionalize character development, it must be emphasized on the same level as other issues, and there must be a measure of accountability. For character development to permeate all levels of the organization, it cannot be solely pontificated from the highest strategic levels of leadership. It must be inculcated within all levels of the organization. Specifically, every leader has an obligation to take ownership of it. Incentive is a motivator for action. Therefore, I propose *Subordinate Character Development* be an evaluated block on OERs. This makes all leaders accountable for developing the character of their subordinates. It will inspire creativity and personalized character development initiatives at small unit levels.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The military serves the citizens by defending them and the interests of the country. However, the organizational structure and rank system is strictly hierarchical

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and driven by top-down, often-coercive leadership. The main weakness in implementing a servant leadership approach in the military is the possibility that it is wrong for the established system. In combat and contingency operations, where Army leaders seemingly value swift and decisive decision-making, the perception that servant leaders are “soft”, may prove it an unpopular theory. However, the primary function of leadership is placing the needs of subordinates ahead of oneself, according to servant leadership doctrine. Leaders accomplish this through discipline, self-awareness, foresight, and humility – all desired traits of an Army leader. Interestingly, the very argument against the perceived softness of servant leadership, may in fact be its biggest advocate.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Where it leads:

The demographic of people eligible and entering the military is and has changed. We are a volunteer force with a new generation of participants. Since leadership is based on people and relationships, it should adapt to the current and future human environments. Further research should focus on *measuring* individual character and how leaders influence its development. Additionally, servant leadership is a growing trend in law enforcement agencies and training academies, fire service organizations, and multinational corporations; this shift should be researched for its success rate and applicability for the military.

The Army (military) can lead and guide the nation by building a servant organization, both internal and external. However, the goal of this paper is not to

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institute a required leadership method that each soldier must abide by. Rather, I advocate for the theory of servant leadership to be the underlying theme in Army leadership training courses and schools. This service mentality can bridge the widening gap between the civilian and military populations. Military leadership influences business and civil leadership, and will continue to do so. By creating a servant organization, over time, the mindset of the civil sector will evolve, thus inciting a shift in the representative government whom they elect. Albert Camus linked the daily actions of disciplined souls around the world and believed them part of the continued advancement of the organization of humanity,

Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps, then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation, others, in a man. I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for them all.²⁸

If the human terrain is the new operating environment, then trust, character, and relationships are our weapons. By shaping, developing, and unifying these capabilities, we can foster cohesion and build a powerful national spirit based on service. As

²⁸ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 25-26.

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President Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”²⁹

²⁹ John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

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