

FEATURE ARTICLES

Rethinking Warrior Ethos: Developing (Not Selecting) Leaders

Robert D. Reimer, United States Air Force Academy

Maximillian Bremer, North American Aerospace Defense Command

Hans Larsen, United States Air Force Academy Preparatory School

Training, developing, and inspiring innovative leaders with warrior ethos to fight and win the Nation's wars is a noble, necessary, yet decidedly complex enterprise. The Nation requires leaders who are highly effective in the face of uncertainty. Warrior ethos, which we define as *that mastery of character which blends passion and caution in the face of physical and moral adversity while pursuing noble goals*, serves to meet this need, but requires intentional development. Warrior ethos is both an individual character quality and a shared cultural norm. As a character quality, warrior ethos is what sets Airmen, Guardians, Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers (henceforth collectively referred to as leaders) apart from civilian counterparts. A shared warrior ethos is what binds together those who serve in the profession of arms. Additionally, the foundational elements of warrior ethos are frequently innate in a volunteer force, but require deliberate awakening, development, and cultivation. Challenges, like those faced in early military life, are a natural catalyst for awakening a military leader's warrior ethos, but are often insufficient to develop this character quality to full stature. Military organizations conspicuously lack a well-ordered approach to equip leaders for increasingly challenging professional work, to enhance unity, and to inculcate the force with

Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Reimer, Ph.D., U.S. Air Force is an Associate Professor at the United States Air Force Academy in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. Bob leads the team that designs and delivers the leadership core curriculum for fourth-class, third-class, and second-class cadets at the Academy. He shares leadership with two other course directors and a faculty team from the Athletic Department, the Cadet Wing, the Center for Character and Leadership Development, and the Dean of the Faculty. Bob holds a Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the Pennsylvania State University and studies organizational performance. He is an awarded educator with experiences leading individuals, teams, and organizations in educational, professional, and austere environments. He has applied experiences advancing the performance of global companies, government organizations, professional associations, and educational institutions.

a mature warrior ethos culture. Formative experiences should be deliberately planned and adaptively executed, with the goal of developing elite, diverse leaders who exhibit a unifying warrior ethos.

Our nation relies upon leaders as a “solution to the problem of collective effort—the problem of bringing people together and combining their efforts to promote success and survival” (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008, p. 96). Yet, the rate of leader failure is gravely concerning. Incidents of civil unrest, racial disparity, and manifested national divide in 2020 serve as unmistakable indicators that some leaders did not simply fail, but were directly responsible for substantial negative consequences. Contrasted with the definition of warrior ethos, adversity has the upper hand, opportunities are being missed, and decisions appear self-serving rather than noble. In a recent report on urgent needs and challenges, 71% of global citizens reported experiencing the lowest point in their respective national histories (Milken Institute &

Harris Poll, 2020). Nearly two thirds of respondents reported that their leaders are out of touch and really don’t care about people. These examples are illustrative of high-ranking leaders who are failing late in their careers and failing big.

Conflicts of the early 21st Century indicate that warfare is rapidly evolving. Whereas traditional warfare involved massed armies, industrial networks, and projecting power across expansive distances to decrease an enemy’s will to fight, modern warfare emphasizes the strategic qualities of participants. Ideas and culture increasingly account for the emergence of conflict, rather than massive reserves of arms. Whereas traditional efforts to amass reserves of weaponry could involve years and even decades of effort, technology makes it possible for information to rapidly evolve and spread (McChrystal, Silverman, & Collins, 2015).

Warriors desire the most modern, effective weapons at their disposal. It is easy to become enamored with

Colonel Maximilian K. Bremer, U.S. Air Force is the NORAD & U.S. Northern Command liaison officer and Chief, Space Command Integrated Planning Element at the U.S. Transportation Command. A 1997 distinguished graduate of the Air Force Academy, he has an MPP from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and an MAAS from the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. His experience includes over 600 combat and combat support hours in the KC-135, command in combat of the world’s largest tanker squadron, and multiple other staff, instructor and operational assignments. Additionally, he has deployed as the Title 10 Deputy Commander to multiple National Guard Dual Status Commanders for Defense Support to Civil Authorities operations.

Lieutenant Colonel Hans J. Larsen, Ph.D., U.S. Air Force, is the Dean of Academics at the United States Air Force Academy Preparatory School in Colorado Springs, CO, where he leads the faculty in preparing a diverse group of candidates to succeed and lead at the Air Force Academy and beyond. A 1999 distinguished graduate of the Air Force Academy, he holds a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, in educational leadership, a Master of Arts degree in counseling and human services from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and a Master of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He is a scholar-practitioner whose research and writing has been informed by both his leadership experiences in the Air Force and his academic studies, addressing leadership, leadership development, and education. He teaches courses in leadership, leadership development, organizational culture and behavior, and communication.

technology, and in doing so overlook the most critical weapons in any arsenal: leaders and those they lead. We expect, and even demand, military members to be technical experts in their career fields. Specialized, rigorous, and continuous training ensures the Nation's warriors establish and maintain mastery of the most technologically advanced and complex weapons in the history of warfare. In the arsenal of democracy, however, it is humans who wield these weapons. Humanity is immeasurably more complex, diverse, and crucial than the technology it wields. Success and survival require nothing less than the systematic development of leaders who are exceptionally prepared to fight and win in highly uncertain environments.

Reconceptualizing Warrior Ethos

Considering that leaders set themselves apart and exist as a narrow subset of society, additional range restriction within the subset of leaders creates conditions where leaders are increasingly less likely to understand or represent those that they lead. Leadership development in today's military organizations overly relies on assortative processes that reproduce a narrow set of desirable leadership qualities. Using a term borrowed from biological science, assortative processes emphasize qualities that are of perceived value to address known challenges. In assortative processes, selection and promotion systems reward leaders with similar leadership styles and qualities, and thus perpetuate those styles. By discouraging the cultivation of deep and functional diversity of leadership traits and styles within junior ranks, assortative processes contribute to leader capabilities that are increasingly homogenous at senior levels. This can be a very effective strategy when challenges are predictable and problems can be resolved with known processes. When problems are novel and processes must be created, however, lack of a diverse leadership pool limits organizational adaptation, and

thus limits success and survival. Observations of the problems assortative problems present are not the authors' alone. Sounding the alarm for organizational change in the Air Force, Colonel 'Ned Stark' observed that, "The most successful high-potential officers are those who make their seniors look good in shallow pursuit of the latest fad, thereby avoiding potential mistakes that could result from taking actual risks to advance the mission" (2018).

Today, in the Information Age, increasingly unrelated conditions interact and result in divergent outcomes (e.g., a novel virus serving as a catalyst for civil and political unrest). The Information Age marks a departure from work that is specific and repetitive; organizations require leaders who can adapt as novel challenges arise (Cascio, 1995; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Organizations that persist with assortative selection and promotion processes not only reduce valuable diversity in senior leaders necessary to succeed and survive in the face of uncertainty, but also unwittingly inhibit the development of diverse qualities amongst aspiring leaders.

The problem of assortative processes has been further exacerbated by portions of the multibillion dollar leadership industry (see also Hogan, Curphy, Kaiser, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018; Kaiser & Curphy, 2014; Pfeffer, 2015; Sørensen, 2017). The pressures of the Information Age, where radical uncertainty is a constant and strong cultural expectations assume leaders have solutions to problems, have served to intensify organizations' eagerness to improve their leaders. The benefit of this realization has been a proliferation of the scientific leadership literature and accompanying best practices. At the same time, the industry has witnessed an avalanche of alluring, faddish, yet user-friendly products and services that do

little if anything to improve leaders or organizational performance. Leadership development products and services must be tested and evaluated not on their own merits, but with respect to organizational performance. As a starting point, organizations should demand that providers offer evidence that demonstrates how products and services actually contribute to clearly defined performance objectives. Absent such proof, leadership industry providers are incentivized to deliver well-orchestrated interventions and products that are entertaining and make bold promises, but produce no quantifiable changes to the way work is done in the organization.

Service academies have long been criticized for costs that far exceed other commissioning sources (e.g., Fleming, 2017). There is simply a dearth of empirical evidence that academy graduates are better prepared than counterparts who graduate from public and private

...academies are in the advantageous position to serve as the Nation's authorities on the creation of evidence-based programs, practices, and policy that guide the broader defense enterprise.

universities. Recent national interest demonstrates that society holds exceedingly high expectations of service academies. These expectations persist years after graduation and continue even when military members depart military service and return to private citizenship (Weinstein, 2021). Social expectations and critiques signal a clear demand. Service academies currently maintain a privileged position in two ways, a position which should not be squandered. First, they are in the unique position to create and establish comprehensive programs that promote the future security of the United States. Employing evidence-

based practices must reliably produce the intended outcomes in graduates. Additionally, academies are in the advantageous position to serve as the Nation's authorities on the creation of evidence-based programs, practices, and policy that guide the broader defense enterprise. Success and survival are inextricably tied to the reliable development of a warrior ethos that encompasses moral and physical strength, freedom of action, and firmly established convictions that motivate service to the Nation.

The Significance of Moral Courage in Addition to Physical Courage

A modern warrior ethos requires prioritization of individual moral courage, while sustaining the need for physical courage. As the 21st Century and the Information Age mature, the nature of uncertainty continues to evolve, and organizations are experiencing indisputable consequences from failing to understand

what is taking place and what is at stake. In this vein, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wrestled with the idea of unknown unknowns when justifying the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (CNN, 2002). President Obama, likewise, struggled with the uncertainty of the identity of the unknown man in the Abbottabad compound (Kay & King, 2020). In

both cases, the potential risks and outcomes were not only unknown, but also unquantifiable. The decisions had to be made without the certainty of hindsight or bounded outcomes. Additionally, a significant challenge we face in promoting moral courage is that unlike physical courage where those who demonstrate it are lauded in both success and failure, morally courageous individuals are often excoriated in success, and rarely celebrated in failure, at least in the near term. It is only in hindsight we appreciate the valor—this is the elusive nature of moral courage.

Conceptual progress on the idea of unknown unknowns evolved into what Kay and King (2020) now call radical uncertainty. Radical uncertainty captures the idea that there are unmeasurable prospects and subsequent unpredictable effects. As a nation, the United States places a moderate amount of effort into establishing norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability (GLOBE 2020, n.d.). Viewed in combination with a very high performance orientation, the United States places exceptional demands on leaders to perform regardless of conditions. As the aforementioned examples illustrate, these demands increasingly challenge leaders to face the realm of conscious action (e.g., sensation, desire, emotion, cognition, rationalization, and making decisions). In an information intensive world, we must develop leaders who express physical courage but are increasingly morally courageous in ambiguous contexts.

Fear of failure, in contrast with moral and physical courage, is not simply an individual quality that stops leaders from doing what they can and should do. Fear of failure is also a cultural and organizational norm. Organizational culture is a pattern of shared assumptions where organizational members learn acceptable responses to adaptive challenges (Schein & Schein, 2017). Since failure is a natural outcome of trying new things, and trying new things is necessary for innovation to occur, innovative organizations are those which promote a culture that accepts and even encourages some level of failure. Organizations that espouse beliefs about innovation and collaboration often maintain structures that reward immediately successful individual performance and punish any individual or collective failure. In this manner, many organizations unwittingly teach leaders maladaptive strategies that result in avoiding challenges or testing innovative solutions that could result in failure. Leaders who embrace the organization's espoused

values (e.g., contributing to innovation) take positive steps to stretch their leadership capacity, and as a result are more likely than their peers to fail. When their efforts are not rewarded, and, moreover, when leaders who don't take risks are rewarded, organizations create conditions that are counter to the stated goal of innovative and morally courageous leadership. Warrior ethos in the Information Age requires developing moral courage.

The Significance of Shared Leadership over Hierarchical Leadership

Leaders who embrace the modern perspective on warrior ethos are rarely, if ever, heroic representations of the archaic prototype who save the day with unnatural talent. Modern contexts require reformulation of leadership behaviors to invite and encourage maximum participation. In industrial systems, outcomes are achieved on the basis of applying known solutions to known problems, and the leader is the focal point for selecting and bringing about the desired outcomes. At the dawn of the 20th Century, Taylor (1911) predicted that managers would become efficiency experts, driving success from the top down. In individualistic cultures and the modern Information age, leaders are expected to be adaptive and collective problem solvers, elevating solutions from the bottom and middle up.

As modern organizations face challenges and consider how to prepare and employ leaders, the association between shared leadership and team effectiveness cannot be overlooked. For challenges that must be met with change and development, shared leadership has specific benefits, in contrast to earlier leadership structures resembling the industrial processes they were designed to support (Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter, & Keegan, 2012). Researchers, therefore, argue the association between shared leadership and team effectiveness will become increasingly important to

team goal achievement (Pearce & Conger, 2003). This prediction is particularly relevant to outcomes that are complex (e.g., guiding and influencing attitudes and behaviors). There is a growing body of evidence that supports the positive relationship between shared leadership and team effectiveness (Wang, Waldman, & Zhang, 2014), where the effects of shared leadership are stronger when the work that teams accomplish becomes more complex. Embracing a warrior ethos to achieve goals through collective effort requires sharing authority, even to the lowest levels of the organization.

As work becomes increasingly complex, leaders who overly rely on authority and their past experiences are at a substantial disadvantage. Leaders who routinely practice micromanagement, overly emphasize task completion, and tend to tell others how to do tasks fail to appreciate the creative potential of their people. In contrast, leaders who invite others to invest deep-level qualities (e.g., psychological characteristics like personality, values, and attitudes) and functional expertise bring about improved team performance, team creativity, and innovation (Mathieu, Ghallagher, Domingo, & Klock, 2019). The uncertainty of modern conflict requires leaders who can see through complexity and focus others' attention on what matters most. Such leaders provide mission-type orders that are based on clear and simple statements of intent (Fischer, 1995). Leaders who establish intent and invite others to contribute the depth and breadth of their personal qualities into the generation of solutions play an important role in bringing about collective outcomes. Developing leaders for the Information Age must reward team-builders over individual performers.

The Significance of Creating Commitment over Demanding Compliance

In the Industrial Age, commitment was simply not all that important. Workers worked for pay and were

readily replaced. Labor was often highly skilled, but not unique. In the Information Age, laborers are increasingly valued for their deep (e.g., individual differences) and functional diversity (e.g., educational and experiential qualities) that serve to generate unique ideas and innovations. Laborers in the Information Age are incredibly unique, and not readily replaced.

Key to the success of modern leaders is the creation of reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers. As conceived by Burns (1978), transformational leaders encourage followers to set aside personal interest for the good of achieving shared outcomes. Whereas exchanges in the Industrial Age involved work for pay, exchanges in the Information Age increasingly involve work for satisfaction, opportunity, and development. A key mechanism to providing development is empowerment (Bass, 1985). Empowerment is a means to create intrinsic motivation. Leaders who empower followers produce conditions for followers to experience influence and control over work activities. Interpersonal processes that emerge from and contribute to how organizational members think, feel, and act about work experiences are a fertile area for leaders to cultivate commitment.

In contrast, leaders who demonstrate hubris create substantial, negative effects on how organizational members think, feel, and act in reaction to work experiences. Leaders who hold high, unrealistic perspectives of their personal worth on the basis of past success are simply incompatible with the demands of modern conflict. Such leaders are at risk of suppressing processes that contribute to adaptability. These same behaviors make it less likely that organizational members will speak up (e.g., offer observations and suggest solutions) for fear of ridicule or reprisal. No leader can think of themselves above reproach simply because of an untarnished record. At executive levels, past success can be detrimental to current performance

(Hamori & Koyuncu, 2015), evidence that runs counter to generally held perceptions of what traditional military selection and promotion systems reward. Past success is not only insufficient as a safeguard against future failure, but may also result in interactions with others that undermine performance.

With an eye towards building commitment, organizations need to observe and recognize collective achievements that result from an advantageous learning orientation (Dweck, 2017; Sosik, Godschalk, & Yammarino, 2004), a commitment to leadership performance (Chan & Drasgow, 2001), and involve efforts to develop future leaders (Lapierre, Naidoo, & Bonaccio, 2012). Leaders must prioritize efforts so that organizational members can more readily convert individual and shared efforts into outcomes of value. For the Information Age, military organizations must create leaders who create commitment, rather than relying on directed compliance to meet and exceed standards.

The Significance of Team Orientation over Task Orientation

Teams are the essential organizational building blocks, the amino acids of organizational proteins. Industrial age teams were formed, trained and led for specifically defined, even if somewhat flexible, tasks. From a KC-135R crew conducting a highly complex, night, communications-out air refueling mission in combat conditions to a small recreational soccer league, teams are configured to meet specific requirements. The KC-135R crew and the soccer team both serve as examples of teams that are able to meet a wide range of needs within specific functional domains. The Information Age, however, is fundamentally different and requires the addition of new types of teams. Working in conditions that are characterized by rapid

and unpredictable change, modern teams deal with knowledge and information that must be examined from a variety of perspectives to identify, analyze, and solve emerging, ill-defined challenges.

Rapidly changing conditions require organizations to realign teams to solve novel problems. Teams are rapidly assembled, changed, and dissolved to maximize the value of organizational members. These rapid shifts require organizations to consider what it takes to effectively lead dynamic teams. Within the human domain, available resources are expressed as knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs). When led well, teams have the potential to not only outperform individuals, but to produce results

...or the Information Age, military organizations must create leaders who create commitment, rather than relying on directed compliance to meet and exceed standards.

that exceed the sum of individual contributions. By extension, leaders who are competent at configuring teams to meet emerging and ill-defined requirements have an adaptive advantage over leaders who do not. Consequently, instilling traditional qualities like tough mindedness are of scant value if leaders persist in overvaluing individual contributions when interdependence and synergy are needed. The advantage belongs to organizations who develop and inspire leaders who are skilled at uniting people and configuring them to work interdependently. The importance of team orientation over immediate task accomplishment emerges as a critical quality of warrior ethos.

Toward an Integrated Model of Warrior Ethos

Warrior ethos is a psychological construct that represents a broad domain of human behavior. As we have started to illustrate, a modern perspective on warrior ethos supplements traditionally held values. The modern perspective comprises a range of individual qualities and interdependent processes (courage, shared leadership, motivational processes, and team leadership) that combine in complex ways. Additional research is required to achieve the ends of this effort. Leaders and researchers must close the gaps between the practice and science of leadership with a specific emphasis on the Information Age. The current distance between science and practice is justification for opening dialogue and taking action to address the value of tried-and-true solutions and creating new solutions for emerging challenges. Objectively specifying the knowledge, skills, motivation, and attitudes required of modern leaders to demonstrate courage, share leadership, create commitment, and lead as active participants of teams is the next step.

In the same way that an athletic coach must possess a clear understanding of what elite athletic performance looks like, developmental organizations must establish behaviorally anchored descriptions of warrior ethos. Additionally, developmental organizations must shift focus from outcomes (e.g., subjective ratings of performance and stratifications) to the behaviors that produce outcomes. Comparing warrior ethos to a swim stroke, lap time is not the objective measure we are after. A swim coach needs to pay attention to what is going on above and under the water before attending to lap time. Lap time is the outcome of diverse interdependent factors that can be observed, measured, analyzed, and corrected through targeted drills that are refined through repeated practice.

Adapting the developmental enterprise against the foreground of increasingly unpredictable modern contexts involves creating and sustaining a culture that cultivates leaders who securely hold essential beliefs and aspirations that form the modern warrior ethos. These beliefs and assumptions are not simply ideals and values, but must be evidenced through thoughtful and practical application by individuals, teams, and the organization.

Preliminary Recommendations

It is surprising that given all of the leadership qualities that have been described in the leadership literature over the last 100 years, warrior ethos emerges as a unique construct that has received little-to-no research attention. Military organizations, especially service academies, must plan and organize developmental efforts to produce elite leaders with this indispensable leadership quality. Nonetheless, additional work is required to fully define and validate warrior ethos before future research can take place.

The traditional operationalization of warrior ethos overly emphasizes control and task achievement and conspicuously espouses ends justifying means. However, authoritative leadership styles have long been critiqued as unethical (Machiavelli, 1961, introduction by Bull; Allen, 2020). Scholars (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008; Mathieu, Gallagher, Domingo, & Klock, 2019) have proposed that performance is best understood as a blend of process (i.e., how organizational members interact and function together) and ends (i.e., the goals or objective results an organization accomplishes). Maintaining a strategic advantage in the face of uncertainty requires due attention to the pursuit as well as the achievement of objective results. The major contribution of our review is to provide a practically-oriented perspective to start

answering the following question: “How can we best prepare leaders who are highly effective in the face of uncertainty?” This paper has been written to point out the substantial ways that leaders are falling short in the modern era, to convince our readers that the solution lies in adapting perspectives and behaviors from what worked in the past to what is required today, and to illuminate foundational principles of scientific leadership that promise to meet the need. This research stream is essential to informing and advancing the outcomes military organizations hope to achieve. Be this as it may, we offer five recommendations and accompanying risks/benefits to guide efforts that can start serving today’s practical needs.

First, military organizations need to intentionally create a cycle of assessment, challenge, and support (Deal & Yarborough, 2020). Likened to efforts to produce elite athletes, coaches continually scrutinize athletes’ performance and adapt practice regimens to stretch the capacity of athletes’ strength, endurance, and technique. As athletes’ demonstrate performance gains, they are tested in increasingly challenging competitions. Athletes who achieve personal bests or who set records of human performance represent a complex developmental system. Intentional leadership development stands in contrast with experiences that provide a context to lead, but fail to provide necessary developmental support. Just because someone is in the pool and moving their arms doesn’t mean they are swimming; they may actually be drowning. Coaching someone to lead requires development of specific KSAOs which lead to better leadership in support of quantifiable goals. These include building competency in fundamental knowledge and skills, practicing effective learning strategies, being comfortable in front of people, persisting despite setbacks, using appropriate training aids, and building confidence but not recklessness as increasingly difficult concepts,

skills, and responsibilities are introduced. Beginning these practices in the shallow end of the pool before venturing into the deep end is common sense.

Second, military organizations need to attend to the contextual conditions that support development. Developmental teams work because of factors like regular interaction, shared work and goals, interdependence, and role differentiation (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Like any elite training regimen, development starts with the proper selection criteria to ensure that foundational qualities exist. Development, however, is decidedly more complex. Special attention is required to avoid unproductive emphases on cross-sectional measures of knowledge, skill, and attitudes that immediately privilege certain leaders. Leadership development is not about achieving performance outcomes per se, but is better represented by continual and incremental development. While considerably more complex to measure, an inclusive approach to assessment accounts for how individuals develop over time while accounting for factors that affect developmental achievement (Anderson, 2012).

Like athletes, leaders require assistance in understanding their baseline, how to vary workouts, how and when to rest, and finding joy in the process of setting and achieving developmental goals. Consider an inexperienced, but motivated leader who is working on their own and is overly focused on using power to achieve objective results. A coach (someone who is providing personal and professional guidance and training to achieve goals) could start by helping the leader discover missed cues with respect to what motivates others. Once the leader begins to understand the fundamentals of influencing followers, the coach can stretch the leader’s capacity as they explore increasingly diverse opportunities to practice influence (e.g., with peers and with other leaders).

Key leadership experiences, however challenging, are of little developmental value if they are experienced, but not explored. Like athletes, leaders also require periods of recovery. Leadership requires substantial efforts to organize, behave, and align with organizational structures and culture through

When continual assessment, challenge, and support are lacking, individual leaders are at risk for specializing in leadership styles and behaviors based on innate personal qualities. Specialization is particularly dangerous in the Information Age where it creates counterproductive extremes...

self-regulation and social interactions (see Hobfoll, 2011). A coach must closely monitor the need for a leader to step back and receive instructive feedback. Structured reflection is a promising exercise to support developing leaders (DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, & Workman, 2012). Additionally, research suggests that interactions of leadership experiences (e.g., challenging settings, developmental programs, and interpersonal support) have supplemental and synergistic effects (Seibert, Sargent, Kramer, & Kiazad, 2017). It is simply not enough to provide a leadership laboratory; experimentation must be repeatable and the results verifiable.

Third, scaling developmental efforts from one-on-one to one-on-many requires special consideration. Regardless of scale, the leader developer and the leader must serve as willing sponsors and benefactors of a shared, encompassing system. Developing world-class leaders requires dedication and an adaptive,

rigorous development program that accounts for the leaders as they are today, the rate of individual development, and provides milestones to track progress. When continual assessment, challenge, and support are lacking, individual leaders are at risk for specializing in leadership styles and behaviors based on innate personal qualities. Specialization is particularly dangerous in the Information Age where it creates counterproductive extremes: leaders simultaneously neglect deficiencies and overuse strengths (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2006). This approach also serves as fertile, but unproductive ground contributing to poor leadership habits like micromanagement, which retard and restrict development of followers. No one becomes physically strong, fast, or tough by continually doing the same, limited workout. In the same way, leaders who practice limited skills lack the critical breadth

of leadership competencies to succeed in complex and uncertain environments. More worrisome is when they teach young leaders to do the same through assortative selection.

Fourth, as with athletes, a leader's workout needs to be tailored to the sport and the desired outcome. If we desire Information Age leaders who address volatility, uncertainty, confusion and ambiguity (VUCA) with a firm warrior ethos, these should be perpetual elements in the leadership training and development program. Eliminating VUCA from leadership development, in the interest of making it supposedly objective (or measurable) and fair, actually hamstring those who need the most practice in the challenging aspects of leadership. Introducing VUCA into leadership development programs is essential to making development universally accessible. Inclusive design provides experiences, challenges, and support so everyone has the opportunity to engage in the

developmental venture, where experiences are available to all, and every leader emerges from experiences better prepared for future roles. Organizations must identify and support leaders who lack strong implicit leadership models and provide opportunities to practice and develop leadership KSAOs. Leadership habits are incredibly important and become ingrained over time, so leaders must practice (train) like they are going to lead in a fight. They must exercise team-building and team-maintaining skills regularly to keep in leadership shape, just as athletes keep in top physical shape for competition.

Fifth, failure is always an option. Adherence to this unpopular adage serves two purposes. In leadership development, early and frequent small failures can prevent big failures later. If we let developing leaders fail small and often, they also learn to deal with commensurate consequences and how to recover. Notably, leaders who learn these lessons at low personal and organizational cost are more likely to impart similar expectations upon followers. Failure, restitution, and recovery lead to humble leaders who learn to accept the right amount of risk (of failure) and press onward, a critical aspect of warrior ethos. Permitting and creating situations that result in failure allows for selection of those with the potential (if not the immediate skills) to make great strategic leaders. Unfortunately, not every leader makes the cut. Thus, having clearly defined goals and objective standards remains important. It is essential to conduct these decisions to maintain the highest standards of respect and dignity. When failures of sufficient magnitude or duration (moral or physical) are identified, there is a right way to dismiss leaders from their roles and even from the organization. Unclear standards create conditions that lead to uncomfortable wait periods and require guessing on who gets to stay and who should go. Over time, as leaders fall further behind, their failures

become increasingly apparent to organizational members and a broader audience. It is far better for the organization to have objective standards to make decisions before institutional investments become too high or the private or public fallout too great.

Finally, and probably most crucial to the future of Air Force leaders, our leadership programs must deliberately focus on development, not selection. This is especially important for those future leaders who would otherwise be underprivileged in our legacy leadership systems due to their diverse backgrounds. The developmental needs of a top-tier high-school, varsity football captain are going to substantially differ from an emancipated minor who grew up in the foster care system. Both have experiences that can serve them well as leaders, just as both require support to develop and expand their leadership capacity. Leaders from diverse communities, cultures, and social backgrounds arrive with a wide array of experiences. Leaders who arrive with a portfolio of traditional leadership experiences must be pushed harder and past their limits, rather than allowing them to coast on inherent skills. For leaders who have had fewer opportunities to lead in sports, local communities, or school, the organization has a responsibility to establish foundational qualities (e.g., self-efficacy) and then similarly push these leaders past their limits. Every leader has unrealized potential and can benefit from a deliberate development plan.

Conclusion

General Douglas MacArthur (*The Officer's Guide*, 1942) summed up the history of military failure in two words: "Too late" (p. v). Time is the pernicious adversary that applies when leaders fail to recognize a threat or seize an opportunity. Now is the time to develop leaders with warrior ethos. Moral courage drives leaders to embrace challenges and failures. Shared leadership allows leaders to invest in every

Table 1

Leading for Warrior Ethos

Leading for Warrior Ethos		
<p>In the historical context, developing Warrior Ethos has largely been treated as an individual quality or pursuit, as something a person does or does not have. Our position is that leaders create the conditions that cultivate warrior ethos by influencing individuals and teams to passionately contribute to and take appropriate risks furthering organizational goals. This table provides an executive summary of key takeaways for anyone charged with fostering warrior ethos outcomes for their organization.</p>		
What? Leadership Principles	Why? Outcomes	How? Representative Competencies
Lead with culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve and promote shared assumptions (strong organizational culture) where principles, norms, and values are widely held, practiced, and become self-reinforcing • Encourage innovation while keeping failures small to demonstrate the value of learning over appearances of perfection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create conditions to develop diverse leaders, not just select for them • Understand how organizational culture relates to organizational performance • Establish, communicate, and protect ideals, goals, and aspirational values • Measure success by development instead of merely completing tasks
Lead the people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational work, goals, and performance are inherently interdependent • Organizational members selected and promoted on the basis of deep and functional diversity are valued for who they are, not just what they do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define performance in terms of processes (how the game is played) as well as objective results (if the game is won) • Focus on bringing people together to collectively, and willingly, to work on organizationally valued tasks
Connect people to the mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A highly skilled and motivated workforce provides a competitive advantage • Increased self-efficacy and satisfaction leads to commitment and promotes innovation that serves the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower organizational members to grant autonomy and responsibility for organizational performance • Align organizational practices to the desired culture

organizational member to achieve collective outcomes. Commitment replaces self-interest with a perspective that values the good of the team and organization. Teams provide leaders of large organizations with infinite options to configure (and reconfigure) human talent to meet emerging challenges. By the time service academy graduates serve in command roles, these elemental shifts will have strategic effects.

The Information Age creates an increased need to focus upon the humanity implicit in leadership processes. For all of the talk about the changing character of war, however, approaches to developing leaders and warriors have changed little. The Nation's success and survival are at risk if educational, training, and developmental processes and systems do not reliably produce leaders who are fully prepared to lead in uncertain situations. Emergent challenges in complex environments require military organizations to intentionally focus on preparing high-quality leaders. Derived from research on leadership effectiveness, this paper identified limitations of current development approaches, evaluated shortfalls, and proposed solutions to meet modern challenges.

Leadership development is the responsibility of the whole organization. The selection of team members at all levels, the creation of effective developmental efforts, and the emphasis on the interactive processes that produce team members' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are critical. Each affects the other, so each is always evolving. Likewise, leaders must pay close attention to the patterns of assumptions shared by organizational members, especially differences within and between espoused beliefs and established norms. Leader developers must understand and use these ideas to create elite leaders. Organizations should select faculty and staff not only for their technical expertise or academic backgrounds, but also for a

variety of demonstrated leadership skills and, crucially, the ability to mentor and coach developing leaders. Both formal assessments and informal forums are important platforms providing evidence of success and failure, and promulgating new techniques and organic solutions to emerging challenges. For these reasons, leadership development and the inculcation of warrior ethos cannot simply be relegated to any

Now is the time to develop leaders with warrior ethos. Moral courage drives leaders to embrace challenges and failures.

single role or department, but must rather be an institution-wide campaign. Although the physical nature of warrior ethos endures, individual and organizational strength of character in the face of moral adversity and uncertainty hold even greater promise for the challenges of today and those yet to come.

♦ ♦ ♦

References

- Allen, S. (Host). (2020, September 21). Dr. John Dugan--Praxis (No. 22) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Phronesis: Practical Wisdom for Leaders*. Buzzsprout. <https://www.buzzsprout.com/979897>
- Anderson, D. (2012). *Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM): An introduction to key concepts within cross-sectional and growth modeling frameworks*. (Technical report #1308). University of Oregon. Behavioral Research and Teaching. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED545279.pdf>
- Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. The Free Press.
- Bell, S. T. (2007). Deep-level composition variables as predictors of team performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(3), 595-615. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.3.595>

- Machiavelli, N. (with Bull, G.). (1961). *The prince*. Penguin.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Carson, McChrystal, S., Silverman, D., Collins, T., & Fussell, C. (2015). *Team of teams*. Portfolio Penguin.
- Cascio, W. F. (1995). Whither industrial and organizational psychology in a changing world of work? *American Psychologist*, 50(11), 928–939.
- Center for Disease Control (n.d.). Previous U.S. COVID-19 Case Data. Retrieved January 14, 2021, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/previouscases.html>
- Chan, K., & Drasgow, F. (2001). Toward a theory of individual differences and leadership: Understanding the motivation to lead. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.481>
- CNN. (2002, February 12) Rumsfeld /Kknows [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REWcBzGuzCc>
- Colonel 'Ned Stark' (2018, May 14). *A call for senior officer reform in the Air Force: An insider's perspective*. War on the Rocks. <https://warontherocks.com/2018/05/a-call-for-senior-officer-reform-in-the-air-force-an-insiders-perspective/>
- Contractor, N. S., DeChurch, L. A., Carson, J., Carter, D. R., & Keegan, B. (2012). The topology of collective leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(6), 994–1011. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.10.010>
- Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(1), 113–126. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.44.1.113>
- Deal, S. T. & Yarrow, P. (2020) Higher education student leadership development: 5 Keys to success [White paper]. Center for Creative Leadership. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/white-papers/higher-education-student-leadership-development/>
- DeRue, D. S., Nahrgang, J. D., Hollenbeck, J. R., & Workman, K. (2012). A quasi-experimental study of after-event reviews and leadership development. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(5), 997–1015. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0028244>
- Dweck, C. (2016). What having a “growth mindset” actually means. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2016/01/what-having-a-growth-mindset-actually-means>
- Fischer, Michael E. (1995). *Mission-type orders in joint air operations*. [Thesis, School of Advanced Airpower Studies]. <https://media.defense.gov>
- Fleming, B. (2017, June). Naval Academy graduates no better than the civilians they defend. *The Baltimore Sun*. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-cd/bs-cd-naval-graduation-20170605-story.html>
- Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2017). Psychological safety: A Meta-Analytic review and extension. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 113–165. <http://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12183>
- Glick, P., Berdahl, J. L., & Alonso, N. M. (2018). Development and validation of the masculinity contest culture scale. *Journal of Social Issues*, 74(3), 449–476. <http://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12280>
- GLOBE 2020. (n.d.). *Results--United States of America*. Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness. <https://globeproject.com/>
- Hamori, M., & Koyuncu, B. (2015). Experience matters? The impact of prior CEO experience on firm performance. *Human Resource Management*, 54(1), 23–44. <http://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21617>
- Haskins, C. (2013). Do teams' leaders really matter? In Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S., Cohen, D., Latham, G. (Eds.), *Developing and enhancing teamwork in organizations: Evidence-based best practices and guidelines* (pp. 6–10). Jossey-Bass.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2011). Conservation of resource caravans and engaged settings. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 84(1), 116–122. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.2010.02016.x>
- Hogan, R., Curphy, G., Kaiser, R. B., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2018). Leadership in organizations. In D. S. Ones, N. Anderson, C. Viswesvaran, & H. K. Sinangil (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of industrial, work & organizational psychology: Organizational psychology* (p. 269–288). Sage Reference.
- Hu, J., Wang, Z., Liden, R. C., & Sun, J. (2012). The influence of leader core self-evaluation on follower reports of transformational leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(5), 860–868. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.05.004>
- Ilgen, D. R., Hollenbeck, J. R., Johnson, M., & Jundt, D. (2005). Teams in organizations: From input-process-output models to IMOI models. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 56(1), 517–543. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070250>
- Kaiser, R. B., Hogan, R., & Craig, S. B. (2008). Leadership and the fate of organizations. *The American Psychologist*, 63(2), 96–110. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.2.96>
- Kaplan, B. & Kaiser, R. (2006). *The versatile leader*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Kay, J., & King, M. (2020). *Radical uncertainty: Decision-making beyond the numbers*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Kozlowski S. W., Ilgen D. R. (2006). Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 7(3), 77–124. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1529-1006.2006.00030.x>

- Lapierre, L. M., Naidoo, L. J., & Bonaccio, S. (2012). Leaders' relational self-concept and followers' task performance: Implications for mentoring provided to followers. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(5), 766-774. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.01.001>
- Mathieu, J. E., Hollenbeck, J. R., van Knippenberg, D., & Ilgen, D. R. (2017). A century of work teams in the Journal of Applied Psychology. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 452-467. <http://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000128>
- McChrystal, S., Silverman, D., Collins, T., & Fussell, C. (2015). *Team of teams*. Portfolio Penguin.
- Merton, R. K. (2009). The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. *Sotsiologicheskii Zhurnal*, (2), 5-17.
- Milken Institute & The Harris Poll. (2020, October 12). The listening report. <https://milkeninstitute.org/reports/listening-project>
- Pearce, C. L., & Conger, J. A. (2003). *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership*. Sage Publications.
- Pfeffer, J. (2015) *Leadership BS: Fixing workplaces and careers one truth at a time*. Harper Business.
- Reimer, R., Charlton, R., and Lindsay, D. (2017). Getting what you inspect not what you expect: Leveraging technology to enhance leadership assessment methodologies. In D. Watola & A. MacIntyre (Ed.), *Technology and Leadership: International Perspectives*. Canadian Defense University Press.
- Schein, E. H., & Schein, P. A. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership* (5th ed.). John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Seibert, S. E., Sargent, L. D., Kraimer, M. L., & Kiazad, K. (2017). Linking developmental experiences to leader effectiveness and promotability: The mediating role of leadership Self-Efficacy and mentor network. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(2), 357-397. <http://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12145>
- Sorensen, P. (2017). What research on learning transfer can teach about improving the impact of leadership-development initiatives. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, 69(1), 47-62. <http://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000072>
- Sosik, J. J., Godshalk, V. M., & Yammarino, F. J. (2004). Transformational leadership, learning goal orientation, and expectations for career success in mentor-protégé relationships: A multiple levels of analysis perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(2), 241-261. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.02.003>
- Tesluk, P. E., & Jacobs, R. R. (1998). Toward an integrated model of work experience. *Personnel Psychology*, 51(2), 321-355. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1998.tb00728.x>
- The officer's guide*. (9th ed.). (1942). The Military Service Publishing Company.
- Taylor, F. (1911). *The principles of scientific management*. Harper & Brothers Publishing.
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(4), 298-318. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.04.002>
- Wang, D., Waldman, D. A., & Zhang, Z. (2014). A meta-analysis of shared leadership and team effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(2), 181-198. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0034531>
- Weinstein, M. L. (2021, January). Open Letter to Air Force Academy: "MRFF Told You So". *LA Progressive*. <https://www.laprogressive.com/retired-air-force-officer-in-capitol-riot/>