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Technical Report 969

Leader Development Training Needs Assessment of U.S. Army Battalion Commanders

Steven R. Stewart
U.S. Army Research Institute

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November 1992

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United States Army Research Institute
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 1992, November	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
		Final Jun 87 – Jun 88

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5. FUNDING NUMBERS
Leader Development Training Needs Assessment of U.S. Army Battalion Commanders	63007A 792 2403
6. AUTHOR(S) Stewart, Steven R.	H01

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences ATTN: PERI-RO 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600	ARI Technical Report 969

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER
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11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

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12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	--

13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

This report documents a research project undertaken to identify the training needs of U.S. Army battalion commanders. Twenty-nine battalion commanders and their immediate supervisors (19) participated. Researchers used a structured interview to obtain information about the strengths and weaknesses of battalion commanders from their own perspective and that of their supervisors. Questions were also asked about "mentoring" and "life experiences" that had resulted in significant changes in outlook on life and the issues surrounding it. These questions were asked to determine the extent and nature of mentoring as a method for human resources development and to shed some light on the human development process in general. Major findings were (1) many battalion commanders did not appear to have been conceptually prepared for the requirements of their job, (2) decentralization of control is one of the most difficult battalion and brigade command requirements, (3) risk aversion caused by high levels of insecurity leads to inability to decentralize control, (4) failure to decentralize at battalion level may not result in disaster, but failure to do so at brigade level will, (5) battalion commanders need more preparation in how to

(Continued)

14. SUBJECT TERMS		15. NUMBER OF PAGES
Leader development Precommand training		26
Mentoring Leadership		**16. PRICE CODE**
Battalion commands		--

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	Unlimited

13. ABSTRACT (Continued)

conduct collective training than in how to conduct individual training, (6) mentoring is a poorly understood concept often confused with related activities--coaching, counseling, and sponsoring, and (7) conceptual and emotional development appear to be major and interacting components of the maturation process--they should be given equal attention in any training designed to promote human development.

Technical Report 969

Leader Development Training Needs Assessment of U.S. Army Battalion Commanders

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November 1992

This report describes the results of an effort to identify the leader development needs of U.S. Army battalion commanders. To a lesser extent, such needs were also identified for brigade and company command levels.

This effort, and a related one, were designed to determine if an intensive leader development experience before assuming command at battalion level would prove valuable in the short or long term. The data presented here and in the companion report provide the basis for policy decisions about leader development training at senior field-grade levels.

The research described in this report was carried out by the Strategic Leadership Technical Area (SLTA) of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences Manpower and Personnel Research Division. The SLTA mission is to develop and test concept materials for doctrine development at the strategic level, formulate a strategic leader development system, and formulate and test methods for restructuring Army organizations to achieve gains in productivity, effectiveness, and esprit. This work was conducted for the Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in accordance with a Letter of Instruction dated 17 June 1985. The findings contained in this report have been briefed to the sponsor and approved for distribution. They should assist the Training and Doctrine Command's Combined Arms Center in its continuing effort to provide meaningful and relevant precommand instruction to battalion and brigade commander selectees.

EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Acting Director

LEADER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF U.S. ARMY
BATTALION COMMANDERS

<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>

Requirement:

To document the leader development training needs of
battalion commanders. This information provides the basis for
developing improved battalion precommand leadership training.

Procedure:

Twenty-nine battalion commanders and 19 of their immediate
superiors participated in the project. Researchers used a struc-
tured interview to obtain information about perceived weaknesses
and strengths of battalion commanders and about "mentoring" and
"life experiences" that resulted in changes in perspective or
outlook on other people and related factors. Mentoring and
changes in perspective or outlook were examined as a way of
shedding some light on general developmental issues. Several
questions were also designed to give insights about differences
in leader requirements between brigade and battalion and battal-
ion and company level commands.

Findings:

● On average, battalion commanders have not been adequately
prepared conceptually to deal with their job demands. Many
lacked the ability to put their operations in the context of pre-
vailing doctrine's focus at the operational level. This finding
suggests that the educational/training process needs to be
examined.

● One of the most difficult tasks faced by battalion com-
manders is decentralization of control. This involves establish-
ing feedback loops that will make it possible to maintain control
while at the same time decentralizing it. This is a paradox
every commander should thoroughly understand and be capable of
managing.

● Battalion commanders must be able to strike a balance
between individual and collective training. Collective training
is more difficult for commanders. Thus, it should be a major
focus in leader development training.

- Insecurity is indirectly the archenemy of the commander's ability to decentralize control because it is indirectly related to risk-taking propensity. Failure to take risk as part of the decentralization process is, in the words of one brigade commander, "an invitation for disaster."

- There are qualitative differences in command between the battalion and brigade levels. At the brigade level, the ability to decentralize becomes critical and the planning horizon for operations becomes substantially longer.

- Centralization of control and close monitoring of operations is much more pronounced at the company level. The data suggest that the transition between "all hands-on" to mostly "hands-off" (company to battalion) is very difficult to make. It accounted for most of the shortcomings noted in battalion commanders. Failure to decentralize will not necessarily result in disaster at battalion level, but failure to do so at brigade level will. Transition from battalion to brigade, in relative terms, is probably more difficult than from company to battalion.

- Mentoring as a human resource development tool is a poorly understood concept. For it to be more effective, emphasis will have to be given to distinguishing it from related concepts, such as coaching and counseling.

- Two maturational processes appear to be involved in developing officers for successively higher responsibility. These are the intellectual and emotional sides of the self. Because of the apparent close interactive relationship between these two factors, both should be the focus of leadership development training.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF U.S. ARMY BATTALION COMMANDERS

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LEADER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF U.S. ARMY BATTALION COMMANDERS

Background

In the spring of 1986, discussions were held among the Department of Army (DA) Chief of Staff and Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) and Operations (DCSOPS) and Commander, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) concerning professional development needs within the Army. Two major issues emerged from these discussions. These were (1) when or at what stage(s) of an Army officer's career should an intensive leader-development assessment be received? and (2) what should the nature of the experience be? The DA DCSPER, the proponent for leadership policy issues, requested that the Army Research Institute (ARI), in conjunction with the DA DCSPER's Leader Policy Division, conduct research to assess the utility of leader development training. This research would be designed to provide information relevant to answer these questions.

Two related research projects were initiated. Both focused on field-grade commanders because it was thought that pre-command leadership development training could have the most impact Army-wide for individuals occupying these key positions. However, it was unclear whether such training would be most useful at battalion or brigade or at both levels. One project therefore focused on brigade commanders and the other on battalion commanders. Two groups of each were selected to attend the leader development course offered by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) located at Greensboro, NC.[1] This was done on a one-time basis to provide exposure to training akin to what might be eventually utilized Army-wide. It gave participants a basis for making comments about its value and the relevance of its content to their perceived needs. A report on the brigade commanders' evaluation of their CCL experience is documented separately (Stewart and Hicks, 1987).

As part of the battalion commanders' evaluation, the participants and their brigade commanders were asked to provide assessments of current weaknesses and strengths of battalion commanders. These two perspectives were sampled, and the focus narrowed to battalion because Stewart and Hicks (1987) found the battalion level to be the one more needful of attention. This level is pivotal; it begins the transition from direct to indirect leadership performance requirements.

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[1] CCL's program lasts for one week. The following topics are covered or activities take place: decision making, situational leadership, utilizing the group as a resource, innovative problem-solving exercises, presentation and preparation of goal setting, goal-setting exercises, and presentation of peer and staff feedback to individual participants.

Opinions were solicited from brigade commanders concerning differences in leader requirements at brigade versus battalion. Battalion commanders were asked to describe differences at battalion versus company level. These data were gathered to provide information on differences in developmental needs from company through brigade level. But, the focus of this investigation remained at battalion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to document the strengths and weaknesses of battalion commanders from the perspectives specified. Thus, the contents of this report can be used as one source for identifying battalion leader development training needs. They also provide, along with a companion report (Stewart and Hicks, 1987), a fairly detailed account of developmental needs at brigade level. Some indication of training needs at the company level is provided as well.

Method

Participants

There were two groups of participants. The first consisted of 29 battalion commanders who had volunteered to participate in the CCL evaluation. The 19 respective brigade commanders of these battalion commanders participated. All participants were either Infantry or Armor.

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the data. It consisted of five parts tailored to the position of the respondent. The first part asked respondents to identify the strengths and weaknesses of battalion commanders. They were asked to rely on their knowledge in general and the experience they had acquired in their current command. The second section asked respondents to outline the "critical" differences between company and battalion command. The third section dealt with "mentoring" -- what they thought it was, and if and how they went about doing it. Mentoring was not a major focus of the effort, but it was explored to shed some light on leader development in units -- a topic of general interest. The fourth section also dealt with a second general interest topic, personal "life changes" -- changes in outlook or perspective that occurred either since they assumed command or during their life in general.

The intent of these general questions was to explore the experiences of battalion or brigade command that might reveal pre-command development needs. But, the intent was also to determine if major shifts in thinking had occurred over the

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course of a career (e.g., as reflected in problem-solving strategy, foresight, self-interest motivation, and sense of responsibility for others). A third objective was determination of factors contributing to any changes that had occurred. This information has implications for development in general.

Finally, the fifth set of questions concerned significant differences between brigade and battalion leadership requirements. Battalion commanders were asked these question hypothetically. They were requested to specify what training they would need if they were ever promoted and selected to command a brigade.

Procedure

In the spring of 1987, letters were sent by the DA DCSPER to the battalion commanders providing detailed information about the CCL evaluation. Included was a request for additional time both with them and their brigade commanders to discuss leader development needs in general. They were requested to contact their brigade commander, apprise him of the project, and request his active participation.

Three interviewers conducted the needs assessment. One interviewer covered the Eastern Continental United States -- Forts Bragg, Campbell, Benning, Polk, and Stewart. The second visited the Western/Mid-Western continental Unites States at Forts Lewis, Bliss, Knox, Riley, and Hood. The third interviewer visited units in U. S. Army Europe. These locations were Boebligen, Baumholder, Ilesheim, Bindlach, Schweinfurt, Kisengen, and Swabach, Federal Republic Germany and Vincenza, Italy. All interviews were conducted during the summer of 1987.

Results

A description of the strengths and weaknesses of battalion commanders as seen through their eyes and those of their brigade commanders is presented in the first part of this section. Frequency of response is indicated where available or applicable, and representative quotes about significant strong and weak points are provided to enhance understanding.

Next, a description of perceived differences between brigade and battalion leadership requirements is provided. This was addressed directly by brigade commanders and indirectly by battalion commanders. This second section provides some indication of unique leader development needs at brigade.

The third section describes differences between battalion and company, providing clues about company leader development needs as assessed by battalion and brigade commanders. The final section is about the two general issues -- the mentoring process,

and "personal life changes" together with possible reasons for their occurrance.

Battalion Commander Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths. A number of characteristics linked to effective battalion leadership were cited by battalion and brigade commanders. These characteristics are identified and discussed in the following paragraphs from the perspectives of commanders at both levels.

Technical and Tactical Competence. The commanders were asked not to address this issue, but a large number said it was impossible to avoid. At battalion level, it was said to be the most important indicator of effectiveness. It was nearly the most frequently cited requirement (eight of 29 battalion and 10 of 19 brigade commanders). One battalion commander expressed it in this way: "A battalion commander must be able to do what soldiers do." A brigade commander expressed it as "experience and demonstrated ability." Though not always made explicit, the importance of gaining and maintaining the respect of subordinates -- subordinate commanders, NCOs, and troops alike -- was the basis for these comments.

Breadth of Perspective. Technical and tactical competence was considered a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective leadership. Another important requirement, as expressed by nine of the battalion commanders, was what they called "maintaining perspective." This involves planning ahead, having a proactive orientation, and effectively managing daily actions as they progress toward calculated ends. In three instances it was referred to as "vision and philosophy," "setting up programs," and "focusing." Needless to say, without this ability there can be little effective organization of activities within the unit in garrison or in combat.

Six of the 19 brigade commanders made comments falling into this category. One commander specifically mentioned planning ahead and proactive orientation as key battalion leadership requirements. Other brigade commanders spoke of "ability to prioritize," "grasping an understanding of Army organization (context)," and "having a singularity of focus on mission."

Standards Setting. While maintaining focus, battalion and brigade commanders stated high standards must be established. Such standards must be maintained by establishing a system of rewards and sanctions. Seven battalion commanders explicitly mentioned this as a requirement. Other comments along these lines were "setting rules and expectations" and "commitment and discipline." One brigade commander mentioned "commitment and discipline" and a second commented on the necessity of establishing high standards.

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People Orientation. This characteristic was described as consisting of two parts. One is a focus on the individual and the other is on the unit. An individual focus meant sensitivity to and appreciation of the usefulness of individual differences. It represents a commitment to unit members as individuals. Two battalion commanders made specific reference to "people orientation" in these terms. Others spoke of it in less precise ways. For example, two battalion commanders referred to "accessibility" as a virtue. An open-door policy does show concern for people and a willingness to deal with them one-on-one. Other battalion commanders described it as having "people instincts," "human concerns," "commitment to subordinates," "compassion for people," and "getting along with people."

Three brigade commanders used the term "caring" to describe this form of people orientation, and two others referred to it as "sensitivity to individual differences." Other brigade commander comments were "treating others as human beings," "love of soldiers," and "putting soldiers first."

The second aspect of people orientation that the successful battalion commander must focus on is developing unit members into a cohesive whole. The "building of teamwork" was specifically identified by one battalion and one brigade commander. However, six others made statements reflecting the same thing. Two battalion commanders expressed this as "subordinate collective confidence." Another used the phrase making "cohesion runs." Two brigade commanders called it developing "team players" and two others described it as "organizing people" and "getting everyone involved."

The commanders believed this task could best be carried out by "building a team spirit and focus" from the top down, through the entire chain of command. For example, one battalion commander promoted the concept within his unit by identifying himself and his immediate subordinates as the "A Team." Subordinates of the company commanders were also part of this team, just as were their subordinates until the whole battalion identified itself as A Team members. The "A Team" TV series was used to promote the development of cohesiveness within the entire unit.

Self-Knowledge. Although self-knowledge was not the most frequently mentioned, it was felt by those who did mention it to be one of the most important knowledges a battalion commander should have. It was assessed as being as important as tactical and technical proficiency. It is highly related to aspects of "people orientation" and "delegation/risk-taking" because both require substantial self-knowledge. The respondents stated that without a high degree of self-knowledge, it is not possible to accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of others. Stated another way, it is not possible to assess others

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unless you have an accurate perception of yourself. Possessing a high level of accurate self-knowledge will, for example, make it possible to seek out and make maximum use of individuals who can compensate for one's own inadequacies, and others who can assist in creating the conditions within which one's strengths can be maximized.

Effective delegation also requires accurate assessment of others to know to whom and how much work can be delegated. Delegation of too much or too little can have deleterious systemic effects on unit performance. This becomes critical at battalion because the commander is supported by a staff and a number of subordinate commanders. It is also the level where combined arms integration comes into play, compounding the complexity of operations far beyond what they are at company level and below. For these reasons working with and through others (as opposed to "hands-on") becomes a salient leadership feature at this level.

Five battalion commanders spoke at length about the importance of self-knowledge. The most frequent comment was "know oneself." One brigade commander expressed it as being "self-critical."

Delegation/Risk-Taking. Possessing a high degree of self-knowledge appears to be a necessary pre-condition for effective delegation of responsibility and authority. This involves taking varying degrees of risk.

The battalion commanders had various ways of expressing the need to delegate and accept the risk associated with it. As many as seven made specific reference in these terms. Others discussed it in relation to the value of "allowing mistakes" to "develop people." Two others described it as the ability to "take the heat" and having the "courage of their convictions."

Brigade commanders used different terminology to describe the same thing. Representative examples are "powering down" and "decentralizing," which were viewed as being very desirable for operating in fluid environments. One spoke of the importance of "accepting responsibility for actions" and a second expressed it as "the buck stops here," regardless of what happens. Another went so far as to say he "couldn't afford to make General" because then you can't let yourself or others make mistakes -- reflecting the zero defects mentality perceived as prevalent at some levels within the Army. Another brigade commander underscored the virtues of delegation by suggesting the Army could do without a Chief of Staff. These remarks indicate a concern about human resource development, the importance of delegation to unit effectiveness, and the risks one must take to accomplish it.

Another aspect of risk-taking involves communication. This was constantly referred to as "candor." Being candid, especially in communicating up the chain of command, involves risk-taking. It also implies the need to develop trust as a precursor to open and honest communication. Open communication, especially upwards, is required to decentralize control. Superiors will lose control of what is taking place within the unit unless subordinates actively communicate upwards.

There were many ways battalion commanders expressed the need for candor. Examples were "not pulling punches" (telling it like it is), "having patience (with subordinates) but still being decisive", being "personally courageous" (having the fortitude to listen), and having "a thick skin and plenty of frustration tolerance."

Brigade commander comments on candor differed somewhat, but they clearly had the same concept in mind. One did express it directly, while another commented at length about "communicative ability." Related remarks pertained to "influencing people," "arguing and debating," and "willingness to learn from subordinates."

Although most brigade commanders stated they promoted candor in their unit, they reported their division commander did not. By and large, these respondents suggested that communication up and down the chain of command is relatively good from brigade downward. Communication from brigade upwards was said to be not nearly as good, between either commanders or staffs. While communication between commanders at brigade and battalion appeared to be relatively good, communication between staffs was not. The commanders offered no reasons for these discrepancies.

Weaknesses. While it was not immediately clear what responses these questions might elicit, as the interviews progressed it became clear that the obverse side of the coin was being obtained. Thus, the basic categories presented above are repeated. Each is described in terms of the consequences of a capability being less than optimal. Battalion and brigade-level perceptions are presented when data were available. Less was said about "weaknesses" because respondents tended to focus more on strengths.

Technical and Tactical Competence. Being at various levels of competence below optimum implied various things. In general, such comments as lack of "systems management" skills, "combined arms proficiency," and "understanding of large-scale operations" implied the training some commanders have received in combined arms operations has been inadequate. They also reflect a commander's being unable to put his battalion operations within an operational level of war context -- the focus of current doctrine (FM 100-5).

Other factors mentioned were lack of familiarity with major end items; the inability to effectively use equipment because of poor mechanical aptitude; poor writing ability; poor appearance and lack of physical fitness; and lack of administrative ability, implying deficiency in knowledge of procedures.

Breadth of Perspective. Two battalion commanders described the lack of this capability as "inability to prioritize." Another described it as a "lack of focus." One brigade commander expressed it as having "too narrow a focus." Another brigade commander discussed at some length a battalion commander who did a superb job on individual training, but lacked any perspective on the contribution of collective training to unit effectiveness. As a whole, these comments and those above imply the lack of a systems perspective among less effective battalion commanders.

Standards Setting. Two battalion commanders described "leniency" as a leader fault. This meant "backing-off" established standards which, in effect, depreciated expectations of unit members regarding them.

People Orientation. This category will not be broken down because too few comments were made about weaknesses. One battalion commander expressed the difference between those who are and are not people oriented quite well. The distinction was between those who "had fun" and those who were concerned about "ticket punching." Those who were there to "have fun" were genuinely concerned about the well-being and development of their subordinates. They would go to great lengths to insure their subordinates received the attention and training needed to perform well and necessary for continued advancement. "Ticket punchers" were much more "self" than "other" oriented. They used unit members as tools to reach personal ends, in almost all instances to "look good" and to have a "successful" battalion command. Four battalion and brigade commanders discussed lack of "people orientation" as a leadership fault.

Self-Knowledge. Possessing too little knowledge of self and how one is perceived by others does cause problems from the perspective of the interviewees. Two battalion commanders indicated it resulted in "distancing from soldiers." Four others spoke of "inability to listen" and a "communication gap." Two battalion commanders commented that subordinates will not provide relevant feedback if the commander lacks approachability. Other comments by battalion commanders included being too desk-bound, too introverted, doing too little counseling, losing touch with young people, not knowing how they were being perceived by others, giving inadequate guidance, and being poor motivators.

Lack of understanding of human behavior and the need for

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more behavioral science training were factors mentioned by three brigade commanders. One commander mentioned the "lack of negotiation skills" and another suggested the need for training to "implement change." Another related comment was from a brigade commander who remarked at length about the Army's shortage of "warriors"--those who in his mind are strongly intuitive and instinctively decisive. Admiral Spruance was cited as a prime example of this type of individual.

      Delegation/Risk-Taking. Micro-management, associated with risk-avoidance, quickly surfaced as a cardinal weakness of battalion commanders. Seven battalion commanders spoke about this problem as did a similar number of brigade commanders. Other terms used to describe it included: "staff tyranny;" "over-controlling;" "a tendency to bypass NCOs, especially the command sergeant major;" and "trying to do it all," even under conditions where this is impossible because "too much is being pushed down from above." This attribute is closely aligned with the "self-knowledge" category discussed above. One brigade commander summed it up this way: "We should place insecure, smart guys in think tanks." "Insecure" was the key word. Insecure individuals were described as tending to be "self" rather than "other" oriented and as being unwilling to take the risks necessary to allow effective delegation of responsibility and authority.

Table 1

Summary of battalion commander strengths and weaknesses: Frequency of mention by battalion and brigade commanders

Behavioral Category	Strengths		Weaknesses	
	BN Cdr (n=29)	BDE Cdr (n=19)	BN Cdr (n=29)	BDE Cdr (n=19)
Tactical/Tactical Competence	08	10	04	08
Breadth of Perspective	09	06	03	01
Standards Setting	07	02	02	00
People Orientation*	08	13	04	04
Self-Knowledge	05	07	12	04
Delegation/Risk Taking	12	07	07	07

* Individual and organizational foci have been grouped for summary purposes.

Table 1 presents an overall summary of the quantitative findings presented in this section. It shows frequency and percent/proportion of strengths and weaknesses mentioned by battalion commanders as assessed by them and by brigade commanders.

Differences in Command at the Brigade and Battalion Levels

Only brigade commanders were directly asked about these differences and their nature. The specific question asked was: "What do you think are the critical differences in terms of leadership skills between battalion and brigade command?" Although the interviewers asked battalion commanders to comment, the findings were not reported because they were considered to be relatively unreliable. But general impressions of differences between the two, based on the discussions with the two groups, are reported.

The most frequently mentioned difference was that the brigade commander, in relation to his immediate subordinates, is much more a resource manager. He is significantly less "hands-on." Half of the brigade commanders made comments to this effect. The job of the brigade commander is more involved with planning and resourcing of the subordinate units where the actual fighting is taking place.

Not all of the commanders interviewed were totally comfortable in this role. Some felt frustration at being removed from direct contact with troops and were struggling with "letting go." Yet, most freely admitted "letting go" was mandatory. Trying to directly influence the operation of subordinates was perceived as an invitation to disaster.

There were other ways this was expressed. Most agreed the brigade level was significantly more complex, necessitating more flexibility, fluidity and "loosening of the reins." Several mentioned that they were dealing with much more mature and experienced subordinates than when they were commanding at lower levels -- lessening the need for intervention into their activities. They would loose the respect of their subordinates if they tried to intervene. Some said they acted as a "buffer" between the division and their subordinates and suggested this was one of the major requirements of their position.

Physical fitness was mentioned as a general requirement. At the battalion level the commander is expected to display a macho leadership image. Brigade commanders, on the other hand, perceived they should maintain fitness and good health, but are not expected to show the same level of strength and stamina needed at battalion.

Finally, general impressions of the differences observed by

the researchers between the commanders at the two levels are that the brigade commanders were a much more mature group. On average, they displayed a substantially greater service orientation and were less concerned with self. They appeared to be much more sensitive to the implications of personnel actions, especially adverse ones, on the careers of subordinates down to the troop level. This is exemplary of the generally broader perspective brigade commanders seemed capable of taking on all the issues discussed.

Differences in Command at the Battalion and Company Levels

Brigade and battalion commanders were asked a direct question regarding this difference. The question was: "What do you think are the critical differences in terms of leadership skills between company and battalion command?"

The most frequent response was the need for greater decentralization at the battalion level. Eleven battalion commanders and one of the brigade commanders specifically spoke of this. Six more battalion commanders and one of the brigade commanders expressed this requirement as "being less hands-on." Yet, they were quick to point out that battalion commanders were still expected to "get dirty." Decentralization meant the effective use of staff and subordinate commanders. But this did not mean remaining "above" operations.

The battalion commander was expected to be "in the middle of" planning for and the actual conduct of tactical operations. He was expected to: (1) be the master planner -- outlining the concept for an operation; (2) communicate the concept personally to insure it is understood; and (3) be intimately involved in monitoring the execution phase to make corrections required as contingencies (either anticipated or not) developed.

Determining an appropriate level of involvement in the execution phase was described as requiring a thorough knowledge of subordinate commanders, the state of the troops, and the particular tactical situation being faced. It also implies the ability to take a relatively broader and long-term view of the situation and to anticipate change before becoming overcome by it.

There were numerous comments about relations with subordinates, which are not unrelated to "perspective taking." Three battalion commanders and one brigade commander emphasized the importance of "keeping one's cool" and "patience." In general, such comments suggest the battalion commander must possess a time perspective beyond that of subordinates to understand their frustrations when situations or requirements cannot be solved as quickly as they would like.

There was general consensus that company commanders must be "involved in everything." They are the real "doers," the ones who truly must "lead by example." They are closer to the troops and conduct more centralized operations. One brigade commander stated "micro-manager" was an apt term to describe company commanders. They were expected to be highly energetic and motivated, physically fit, and not afraid to get "dirty" and engage in soldiering. The company commander executes a segment of battalion plans, and does not make decisions other than those required by immediate battlefield exigencies. They are expected to make effective use of their NCO's (to guard against doing the NCOs' jobs), but do not seem to perform this task well.

Findings on General Interest Topics

Mentoring. This is a time honored procedure for enhancing professional, intellectual, and social-emotional development. A mentor is a loyal, trusted advisor and teacher, usually older and wiser than the individual under his or her tutelage. In structured organizations, this is normally considered to be part of the superior-subordinate relationship, whether the superior is immediate or one further removed. There have been attempts in recent years (instigated by the leadership community as the result of officer professional development studies) to promote the use of mentoring as a major human resource development tool in the Army.

To determine if and how this process was working, brigade and battalion commanders were asked what the concept meant to them, whether they mentored their subordinates and, if so, how they went about implementing it, with which ones, and why.

As Stewart and Hicks (1987) had already discovered, there is a great deal of confusion about what the concept means and how it is used. In fact, there were almost as many definitions of the concept as there were respondents. Still, their responses can be grouped into four categories: Coaching; Counseling; Sponsoring; and Mentoring. The meanings of these terms, with the exception of mentoring which we already have outlined, is taken from Jaques, Clement, Rigby, and Jacobs (1986):

> Coaching is the process of on-going, on-the-job training carried out regularly by an immediate superior with each immediate subordinate. It is a part of regular performance appraisal and involves not only performance feedback but also constructive modeling and skill development.

> Counseling is specialist advice given to an officer by a career counselor or other specialist engaged in career development, assessment, or psychological work.

Sponsoring is the process whereby higher-level officers with special interest in more junior officers (not necessarily under their command) provide advice and see that the officer sponsored is considered for appropriate assignments.

There was a tendency for the respondents to use these terms interchangeably with the exception of Counseling. This meant providing career advice to subordinates about what kinds of assignments could lead to successive career progression.

Some exemplary comments illustrate the confusion. Some commanders saw mentoring as "role modeling" or "setting the example," which are positive associations. Others saw it as "coat tailing," a form of "sponsoring," quite a negative association. There was some agreement that helping to steer high caliber subordinates upstream was the proper role of a mentor. Helping the subordinate to "do the job better" was also mentioned, but is more reminiscent of "coaching" than of "mentoring." "Footlocker counseling" was another term used to describe what amounted to a coaching role. One commander described mentoring as "stimulating officers to think on a larger scale than is necessary for their current position," a definite purpose of the mentoring process.

There was no consensus about who should be mentored. Brigade commanders generally did not feel that battalion commanders should be. Battalion commanders were described as being too close in age and experience to make mentoring a useful enterprise for them. Company commanders, on the other hand, were viewed as being viable mentoring candidates. One brigade commander commented at length about the strategy he used to accomplish this. It involved picking one company commander per week to jog with. During the run the senior would explain "how things really are."

"Mentoring" of battalion commanders usually took the form of coaching. Brigade commanders would provide advice about "getting successfully through" battalion command. A number of the brigade commanders felt this to be an obligation to insure the subordinate at least made full colonel as a career termination point.

Battalion commanders felt company commanders should be the focus of their mentoring. Decided differences in age and experience appeared to be the reason. Company commanders were viewed as needing a great deal of development before they would be ready for increased responsibility. As a group, they were described as being relatively immature.

Significant Life Experiences. Respondents were asked about changes in outlook on people and world events and issues --

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either since assuming command or during their careers in general. They were asked to specify the event(s) precipitating changes in outlook (if a discrete event or period of time could be identified) and why the particular event/time period brought about the change.

There was general admission among battalion and brigade commanders that changes in outlook had taken place. The tenor of the changes described amounted to a "mellowing effect," one of increased patience and forbearance. It appeared changes of this nature were more or less forced upon the respondents by requirements of the positions they occupied over time. Being successively more removed from the "firing line" requires more and more "letting go," and developing trust in subordinates and supporting staff. Becoming accustomed to increases in time line between the initiation of action and observation of outcome is required as one moves up the chain of command.

For brigade commanders, Army War College (or equivalent) attendance was described as being a significant "mind broadening" experience. In this particular school environment, they were given the time and encouragement to think and reflect. They rarely have this luxury in the everyday action-oriented military environment.

Respondents also made comments about emotional maturation. Discrete events were mentioned more often than not as triggering emotional growth. Such events included combat, heart attack, divorce, the death of a loved one, or a deep religious experience or transformation. Growth seemed to occur because these events stimulated an in-depth self-examination. The changes which took place were usually positive, allowing the individual to cope more successfully with their emotions in a variety of situations. Many described the nature of the change to be from a focus on the self to more of a focus on others and doing things that would contribute to the collective good. These changes, coupled with intellectual growth, may be responsible for the "mellowing" effects (a less serious posture coupled with a decreased need for control of individuals and situations) that were observed[2]. These findings are consistent with those of Lewis and Jacobs (in press) that emotional and cognitive growth are related and appear to be interdependent (emotional maturation probably precedes and stimulates cognitive development).

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[2] These processes were not equally discussed by the respondents. Emotional development was less frequently mentioned, but when it was, the interviewees indicated certain incidents had greatly affected their outlook. It had caused them to make significant and far reaching changes, especially in the way they treated others and the outlook (more positive) they had about life in general.

Summary and Conclusions

The bulk of the conclusions outlined below are about the primary objective of this effort -- leader development training needs of battalion commanders. The remainder are about such requirements at brigade and company levels. Some summary comments about findings on general topics of interest are also presented.

● Our data suggest that battalion commanders generally may benefit from training that will better prepare them to deal with the abstractness and complexity in thought processes demanded by their jobs. Exceptions to this generalization were noted where the individual had engaged in self-development activities and/or had had assignments (e.g., on a Department of Army or Joint staff) which significantly broadened their knowledge and experience bases. This suggests that the leadership educational/training process needs careful examination to identify likely deficiencies and to correct them.

● One of the most difficult tasks a battalion commander faces is the ability to decentralize control -- to "let go." This involves distancing oneself from the immediate situation far enough to maintain a perspective while at the same time not losing sight of immediate goals and expectations. Being able to strike a balance between immediate, mid, and longer range objectives is a requirement at this level. This ability is probably related to level of emotional development. Our data suggest that this may spell out the difference between those who know what to do, but who are not yet emotionally able to carry out the task, from those who both know what to do and have the wherewithal to do it.

● Battalion commanders must be able to build cohesion, motivation, and trust within the unit. This requires being able to deal with subordinates one-on-one and as a collective. In turn, this demands a through knowledge of self -- an understanding of strengths and weaknesses -- to understand the same about others. Thus, thorough self-awareness is required. Developing trust requires good communication to create the feedback loops to maintain control while at the same time decentralizing it. This is a paradox all commanders should thoroughly understand.

● Battalion commanders should set high standards and develop a supporting system of rewards and sanctions related to them. These are the bases for establishing and maintaining desirable behavior patterns and discouraging undesirable ones.

● At all levels within a battalion, a balance must be struck between a focus on individual and collective training. Too much focus on either will usually result in poor unit

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performance. Collective training is the more difficult of the two and emphasis should be placed upon it in leadership development training.

● Personal insecurity appears to be inversely related to risk taking propensity. Thus, it is indirectly the arch enemy of the ability to decentralize control, a requirement for effective battalion operations. This appears to be tied to the issue of "self" versus "other than self-interest motivation" -- insecurity runs high with high levels of career interest motivation. This is probably in part a systemic problem.

● There are qualitative differences between command at the battalion and brigade levels. The requirement to decentralize control and place trust in subordinates to carry out their assigned missions becomes critical at the brigade level. Thus, brigade commanders must be comfortable in taking risks in relative terms. Their planning horizon has to be appreciably longer also.

● Centralization of control and the close monitoring of operations is much more pronounced at the company level. The data suggest that making the transition between "all hands on" and mostly "hands off" (company versus battalion) is very difficult and accounted for many of the shortcomings noted in battalion commanders' performance. Failure to adopt a decentralized mode of operation at battalion may not result in disaster, but the inability to do so at brigade will. The transition from battalion to brigade may be the more difficult one to make.

● Mentoring as a method for human resource development is only somewhat understood by both the brigade and battalion commanders surveyed. There is a lack of discrimination between this concept and related ones -- coaching, counseling, and sponsoring. Greater attention must be given to distinguishing the nature of mentoring in relation to related concepts if the technique is to be truly useful for human resources development purposes within the Army. It will also require rewarding those who use it effectively as a developmental tool.

● At least two related maturational processes appear to be involved in developing officers for successively higher leadership positions. These are the intellectual and emotional sides of the self. They appear to interact closely with one another. Thus, both should be the focus of leader development training.

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