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BREAKING THE BATHSHEBA SYNDROME: BUILDING A PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES MISSION COMMAND

Curtis D. Taylor

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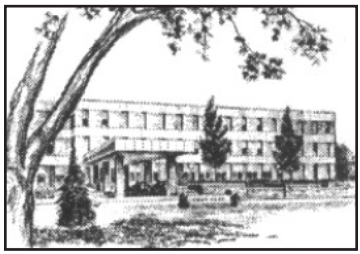

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, U.S. Army War College, 47 Ashburn Drive, Carlisle, PA 17013-5010.

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FOREWORD

Survey after survey across the U.S. Army continue to reveal broad concern about the Army's top-down performance evaluation system. Many claim that it drives behavior in organizations that not only inhibits the exercise of mission command, but also rewards image management over organizational leadership.

Colonel Curtis Taylor takes a hard look at this system, its benefits and its cultural incentives. More importantly, he asks if the current system promotes or impedes the exercise of mission command. After examining the history of the Army's performance evaluation system and alternative models outside the military, Colonel Taylor concludes that a more holistic system that combines top-down evaluations, peer and subordinate evaluation, and objective testing might be a better approach.

The Strategic Studies Institute offers this monograph to enable its readers to assess whether the recommended system may balance incentives more carefully, ensuring that the very best organizational leaders are easier to identify, assign, and promote.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute and
U.S. Army War College Press

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CURTIS D. TAYLOR is an active duty U.S. Army Armor Officer with 21 years of experience in operational and training assignments including four tours to Iraq and Afghanistan as a strategic planner, battalion operations officer, brigade operations officer, and battalion commander. Most recently, he served as the Director of the Commander's Initiatives Group for the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, responsible for drafting an integrated strategy for investment in human dimension programs such as leader development, education, and talent management across the Army. In 2015, Colonel Taylor is slated to assume command of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado. Colonel Taylor holds a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Military Academy, and two master's degrees from the Command and General Staff College in military art and science and in strategic studies.

SUMMARY

In 2014, the National Defense Authorization Act directed the Department of Defense to reconsider the way the Army evaluates and selects leaders. This call for reform came after repeated surveys from the Center for Army Leadership suggested widespread dissatisfaction with the current approach. The U.S. Army today is seeking to inculcate a philosophy of mission command across the force based on a culture of mutual trust, clear intent, and decentralized initiative. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask if our current performance evaluation system contributes or detracts from such a culture.

This monograph seeks to answer this question by considering the essential leader attributes required for the exercise of mission command and then considering practical methods for evaluating this behavior. It then reviews the history of the existing Army performance evaluation system and analyzes how well this system conforms to the attributes of mission command. Finally, it examines other methods of performance evaluation outside of the Army to determine if those methods could provide a better model. This examination included a variety of best practice models in private business and the public sector and identified alternative approaches to performance evaluation. Three alternative models were chosen for scrutiny because they demonstrated an ability to specifically identify and select for the leader attributes essential to mission command.

The monograph concludes that the U.S. Army's current officer evaluation system is ill-suited to evaluate mission command attributes. The author's findings suggest that our current system is not wrong,

but rather is incomplete. The research suggests that a combination of top-down evaluations, peer and subordinate reviews, and objective testing of critical skills might equip U.S. Army boards to identify better the best practitioners of the mission command philosophy. Two specific proposals are suggested for further research in the appendix. The first proposes to conduct background investigations for command select positions modelled after the single scope background investigation security clearance interviews. The second proposes the creation of assessment centers within the U.S. Army to evaluate potential to perform in future assignments.

BREAKING THE BATHSHEBA SYNDROME: BUILDING A PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES MISSION COMMAND

INTRODUCTION

> [The] greatest challenge facing your Army and my main worry [is]: How can the Army break up the institutional concrete, its bureaucratic rigidity in its assignments and promotion processes, in order to retain, challenge, and inspire its best, brightest, and most battle-tested young officers to lead the service in the future?
>
> Secretary of Defense Robert Gates,
> February 2011,
> Address to U.S. Military Academy Cadets

A recent series of press reports describing senior officer misconduct have tarnished the image of the Army profession in the eyes of the American public. These incidents caused Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to speculate in a press conference on February 5, 2014, that the military may suffer from systemic problems in the way it selects and promotes leaders.[1] Recognizing these systemic problems, the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act directed the Department of Defense (DoD) to assess the feasibility of fundamentally changing its performance evaluation system by including peer and subordinate evaluations in the promotion, assignment, and selection of its leaders.[2]

These two externals calls for change combine with growing pressure within the Army to reconsider performance evaluation. Three recent surveys conducted by the Center for Army Leadership suggest growing

distrust among junior leaders in the ability of the Army as an institution to promote and select the best leaders.[3] These studies indicate widespread belief among officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) that the skills and abilities required to succeed before a promotion board are not the ones most valuable to the organizations that they lead. These pressures come at a difficult time for the military when the identification of talent is of paramount importance.

Because of the Budget Control Act of 2011, the Army faces a 20 percent reduction in forces over the next 5 years.[4] As a result, the Army must cut deep into its talent pool while retaining its very best. The situation suggests that the time is right for the Army to reconsider its approach to talent management.

The Army currently evaluates leadership potential primarily through an annual Officer Efficiency Report (OER) prepared by the officer's immediate supervisor and a senior officer. The OER has evolved over time, and the 10th version is slated to go into effect this year.[5] While each version of the OER has taken a slightly different approach to how information is organized, the fundamental premise behind Army performance evaluation has remained unchanged. This premise holds that superiors in the immediate chain of command are the best observers with both the position and experience necessary to evaluate the leadership abilities of an officer.

Re-evaluating the Army's approach to performance evaluation requires an understanding of the leader attributes and behaviors that the Army seeks within its future force. In June 2013, the Chief of Staff of the Army directed that the philosophy of mission command would serve as the cornerstone of the Army leader development strategy. Mission command has

been used as a formal military concept at least since the Prussian Army reforms in the early-19th century following the Napoleonic wars. The Prussians used the term *Auftragstaktik*, literally "mission tactics," to define a philosophy of command that emphasized intent-based orders and subordinate officer initiative.[6]

A White Paper on mission command from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey further elaborated the desired cultural attributes of this philosophy. Summarizing Dempsey, disciplined initiative demands the artful combination of two often-competing character traits: creative ingenuity and a rigid adherence to specified intent. Balancing these two competing requirements demands a culture of trust and candor between senior and subordinate officers. Leaders must have confidence in the technical competence of their subordinates. Subordinates likewise, must feel empowered to take reasonable risk and pursue the overall best interests of their mission even at the cost of short-term performance.[7]

If the mission command philosophy defines the culture that the Army seeks to promote, then a well-structured performance evaluation system should assess the Army leader's ability to adhere to this philosophy. As the Secretary of Defense and others consider changes to performance evaluation in the Army, it is useful to determine how well the current system assesses the critical leader attributes and behaviors of mission command. Specifically, can the current Army performance evaluation system properly assess and select officers suited to exercise mission command?

Answering this research question required six steps. First, it was necessary to understand the essential leader attributes and behaviors necessary for the exercise of mission command. These attributes were

well-documented in relevant Army doctrinal publications. It was also useful to consider the history of the mission command concept itself and how this concept influenced the evolution of performance evaluation in the military profession. Second, having established the types of leader behavior most valuable to the exercise of mission command, it became necessary to consider methods for evaluating this behavior. Doing so requires a review of the research in the field of talent management to identify appropriate evaluation methods. These two steps established the outline of a performance evaluation system optimized to measure mission command attributes.

The third step required a review of the history and design of the existing Army performance evaluation system. Understanding how the existing system evolved into its present form clarified the leader attributes it was originally intended to assess. In the fourth step, it was necessary to evaluate how well the existing system conformed to the attributes established earlier. This required a review of the extensive research done by the Army into the effectiveness of its existing performance evaluation model. A careful examination of the existing structure of this system and its cultural effects revealed that the current system, as it stands, detracts from the exercise of mission command.

Fifth, having established that the existing system failed to assess critical elements of mission command, it was necessary to investigate other methods of performance evaluation outside of the Army to determine if those methods could provide a better model. The research examined a variety of best practice models in private business and the public sector and identified alternative approaches to performance evaluation. Three alternative models were chosen for scrutiny

because they demonstrated an ability specifically to identify and select for the leader attributes essential to mission command. These leader behaviors were poorly evaluated under the Army's existing single-source performance appraisal system. A cursory examination of alternate approaches did not conclusively prove that the Army would benefit by adopting any particular model. It did suggest, however, that other models or a combination of models might improve the Army's proficiency in assessing the attributes it believes are most important.

Finally, any change to the performance evaluation system in a large government bureaucracy like the military will face both legal and cultural obstacles. It was necessary to evaluate these obstacles and consider the potential pitfalls associated with reforming the existing system. Judging the feasibility of such reform required a review of the statutory framework under which the Army promotes its officers. In addition, it was useful to consider the lessons learned from other organizations that have attempted similar reforms to assess if any of those lessons are appropriate to the Army.

The research ultimately showed that the current evaluation system, centered on the OER, cannot fully assess the fitness of officers for mission command. Furthermore, the alternative models examined in this research provide insight into methods already prevalent in the civilian world that may improve the Army's ability to assess mission command oriented leadership. Talent management models that combine the top-down, senior leader evaluation with subordinate evaluations and objective testing appear to provide a more holistic view of performance and potential. A broader approach to performance evalua-

tion eliminates blind spots inherent in a single-source evaluation system and can assess a leader's impact on internal organizational climate better than the current system. This evidence suggests that the Army must carefully investigate alternative evaluation processes if it is to consciously identify and select officers that meet the requirements of mission command. Finally, as an appendix to this monograph, two specific proposals are offered for further research that seek to operationalize this broader approach in a coherent and prudent manner.

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF MISSION COMMAND

Mission command is defined as the "the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders."[8] Effective mission command, therefore, demands specific behaviors on the part of both the superior and subordinate. Because virtually every officer in the Army is simultaneously a superior and a subordinate, an effective evaluation must assess both sets of behaviors.

Army doctrine identifies the first principle of mission command as "the building of cohesive teams through mutual trust."[9] Stephen M. Covey, in *The Speed of Trust*, identified mutual trust in an organization as a crucial factor that reduces costs, increases agility, and enables the organization to adapt to complexity or adversity. Dr. Covey argues that high-trusting organizations enjoy a "trust dividend" that allows them to perform better in the market place, react better to adversity, and retain a larger portion of their best talent.

Likewise, organizations with low-trust cultures pay a "trust tax" that drains profits through costly regulation and high personnel turnover rates.[10] It is this trust dividend that, according to Dempsey, lies at the heart of the Army's pursuit of a mission command culture.[11]

Since trust is such an important component of the mission command philosophy, it is useful to explore its meaning in greater detail. While researchers have offered definitions for trust, the one most applicable to its usage in mission command is suggested by Roger Mayer, James Davis, and F. David Schoorman in a 1995 research paper for the *Academy of Management Review*. They define trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the outcomes of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor."[12] It is this vulnerability that distinguishes trust from mere cooperation. In effect, trust is defined by a willingness by the trustor to accept risk.

The research by Mayer and others goes on to identify three factors most important in influencing the perceived trustworthiness of a potential trustee. These factors are ability, benevolence, and integrity.[13] Ability is the measure of a trustee's physical and mental capacity to meet expectations. Benevolence is the measure of the trustee's perceived willingness to do good to the trustor. Integrity is the measure of the trustee's adherence to an agreed set of principles and priorities.[14] Trustworthiness is therefore, a combination of technical competence and demonstrated commitment to others and to universally agreed principles.

Simply being trustworthy, however, is not sufficient. An effective practitioner of mission command must likewise possess the capacity to trust others. Colonel Tom Guthrie, when Director of the Center for

Army Leadership, pointed out the all-too-common phenomenon of leaders demanding trust from their superiors and then denying it to their subordinates. "If leaders only want mission command to exist above their level, then we will be limiting its intended and desired effect."[15] While it could be argued that a senior leader can evaluate effectively the trustworthiness of his subordinates along the lines proposed by Mayer, evaluating their ability to trust and empower others is much more problematic.

Before turning to the literature on performance evaluation methods and practices, it is useful first to look closer at the historical antecedent for the modern concept of mission command. This review is helpful because it shows how previous attempts to inculcate mission command into organizational culture demanded both increased professionalism and a broader approach to performance appraisal.

A History of Mission Command.

The modern concept of mission command first emerged in Prussia following the Prussian Army's rapid defeats at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806. Prussian leaders recognized that the only plausible response to Napoleon's genius was to develop a warfighting organization that could out-think and out-maneuver its opponent by radically decentralizing battlefield decisionmaking. As the Prussian leadership sought to formalize this new decentralized approach, its detractors gave it the pejorative moniker "*Auftragstaktik*" to distinguish it from traditional methods of command known as "*Normaltaktik*."[16]

Perhaps more than any other leader, Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke was most responsible for insti-

tutionalizing the concept of *Auftragstaktik* in Prussian military doctrine.[17] Moltke observed that the increased dispersion of forces driven by the improvement in the accuracy of firearms demanded a change to the way small unit leaders behaved on the battlefield. He believed that orders given to subordinates in combat should define a desired military outcome and the absolute minimum boundary conditions necessary to achieve that outcome. The details of achieving the end state should be left to the initiative of the subordinate commander.[18] This allowed subordinate commanders to exploit fleeting battlefield opportunities without having to consult with the higher command. Implementing this concept required changes to both doctrine and culture within the Prussian military. Subordinate commanders could no longer simply execute rote drill procedures as they did in the days of Frederick the Great. They now needed to foster a culture of professionalism and trust within their organizations to encourage the junior officer initiative and independent judgment that was the foundation of *Auftragstaktik.*

The shift from rote execution of orders to a culture of subordinate initiative led to changes in the way the Prussian War College known as the *Kriegsacademie* trained and prepared its officers. The *Kriegsacademie*, established in 1810, the Prussian Army's nadir, had emerged by 1860 to become the premier military educational institution in Europe if not the world.[19] Officers were nominated for attendance after 5 years of service and had to undergo a grueling 10-day entrance examination prior to admission.[20] For Von Moltke, the link between the academic rigor of the *Kriegsacademie* and the execution of *Auftragstaktik* was self-evident. The only way to ensure disciplined initiative was for

field grade and flag commanders to arrive on the battlefield already experts in the tactical employment of their forces. Education alone was not enough. These officers had to be fully certified through a rigorous professional examination process not unlike a lawyer or doctor is today. This ensured that when fleeting tactical opportunity presented itself, they would be equipped with the judgment to exploit it. Without professional certification, *Auftragstaktik* was merely a recipe for creative disorder.

As Prussian and subsequent German military traditions were subsumed by Nazi ideology in the 1930s, the role of *Auftragstaktik* in German doctrine and praxis waned.[21] However, the traditional belief persisted that effective combat leadership demanded a culture of trust within and between military organizations. The *Wehrmacht* recognized that the organizational climate necessary for a culture of trust was difficult to assess from outside the organization. As a result, the *Wehrmacht* developed the first documented use of subordinate and peer evaluations.[22] In the 1950s, several civilian corporations studied this practice and adopted it within their own corporate personnel systems.[23]

While the modern concept of mission command embodied in Army doctrine today differs in some significant ways from the 19th century concept of *Auftragstaktik*, its core tenant of disciplined initiative based on mutual trust, remains the same. This review of the Prussian experience demonstrates how the move toward *Auftragstaktik* promoted a need for greater professional competence at lower levels in the chain of command and a desire to look outside traditional methods of performance evaluation to find ways to assess a leader's impact on organizational culture and process.

The Army's recent move toward mission command philosophy suggests that it, like the Prussian Army of the 19th century, is placing increasing value on internal organizational process rather than on organizational output. Where the Prussians were reacting to the need to fight outnumbered on an increasingly dispersed battlefield, American Army leaders today must deal with complex battlefield conditions. Further complicating this complexity is the gradual evolution in the nature of warfare in the information age. Several authors have shown that events on the 21st century battlefield can now have strategic consequences that far outweigh their tactical effects.[24] In this context, how a leader accomplishes his mission is increasingly important. A rifle company is no longer a black box that produces combat effects. How a military unit produces those effects can often have tremendous strategic impact. As a result, the internal dynamics of a military unit are increasingly relevant to the overall organization. Evaluating and selecting leaders based on their impact on the internal dynamics of their organization rather than their organizational output demands a different approach to talent management. Fortunately, the science of performance evaluation has expanded greatly since the Army published its first version of the OER in the early-1970s. A survey of the considerable body of research on performance evaluation will show what methods of talent management are suited to assess the leader's contribution to the internal dynamics of his unit. Specifically, this survey will consider the benefits and liabilities of various performance evaluation methods to help identify those methods that might align better with a philosophy of mission command.

A LITERATURE SURVEY ON PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Research in the field of talent management has shown that an effective performance evaluation system must provide both the means and the metrics to measure the attributes deemed most valuable to the organization. This process is described in the literature as the alignment of business strategy to talent management strategy.[25] The preceding section established that mission command, like its predecessor, *Auftragstaktik,* can only function effectively within a specific organizational climate. That climate must exhibit two primary attributes: First, mission command thrives in a culture where trust is both given and received; and second, there must exist a culture of professional competence based on demonstrated ability.

Research by Gregory Kesler, among others, has examined the relationships between appraisal systems and organizational culture and concluded that top-down, single-source evaluation methods tend to promote a results-oriented culture in which output is valued over process.[26] Senior leaders are best positioned to evaluate the relative value of a subordinate leader's organizational output and its contribution to the larger enterprise, but they are often poorly positioned to assess the internal organizational dynamics of subordinate teams. This is particularly true in cases, often seen in profit-oriented businesses, where organizational output is relatively objective and measurable. Over time, the incentive structure shapes organizational behavior to value the cultivation of loyalty from senior managers over all other modes of performance. A Vice President of Capital One echoed this sentiment when he stated:

> In my former company, we paid lip service to decentralized, rapid decision-making but never rewarded the people who did it best. Top-down evaluations simply aren't perceptive. The 360 degree system highlights the truly independent thinkers, and we're a better company because we identify and reward them.[27]

Some studies have even suggested that less than 25 percent of an individual manager's effectiveness is observable by his boss.[28]

Tracy Mallet, Chief Executive Officer for the management consulting firm DecisionWise, opined that a large majority of companies that rely exclusively on single-source evaluation techniques find those methods lead to an inaccurate perception of performance.[29] Single-source evaluation methods create an opportunity for an individual leader to adapt so well to the incentive structure that he essentially creates two separate worlds—one for his superiors and one for his organization. This conclusion is supported by exhaustive statistical analysis by Emily Lai, Edward Wolfe, and Daisy Vickers, who argued that single-source assessment systems are uniquely vulnerable to the halo effect and confirmation bias.[30] A well-documented cognitive bias, the halo effect, occurs when a high-performer in one well-observed domain is assumed to perform equally well in other unobserved domains. Employees who can successfully orchestrate positive interactions in highly-observable activities, such as briefings before superiors, benefit from this cognitive bias.

Recent scholarship on single-source performance evaluation systems, such as the infamous "rank and yank" system promoted by General Electric under Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jack Welch has sug-

gested that forced distribution based solely on leader impressions promotes dysfunctional behavior in an organization. Most significantly, it encourages a culture in which mid-level leaders seek foremost to cultivate the loyalty of their superiors, often to the detriment of loyalty among their subordinates and within creative teams.[31] This discovery explains why many large corporations, most notably Microsoft, have moved away from this method in recent years.[32]

A report completed by the Army's Chief of Staff Leader Development Task Force in 2013 found, "a large part of the force is functioning, or perceived by a large part of the force to be functioning in a command environment that is not guided by the principles of mission command."[33] The report recommended educating raters and senior raters on how to use the OER to evaluate officers on mission command.[34] While this sounds like a simple and straightforward task, the research here shows that top-down, single-source evaluation systems are inherently handicapped in their ability to evaluate effectively a subordinate's ability to conduct mission command.

Another undesirable artifact of a single-source evaluation system is its tendency to promote functional anonymity in organizations. In 1993, Clinton Longenecker and Dean Ludwig published a study in the *Journal of Business Ethics* on prominent leadership failures.[35] They suggested that unethical and toxic leader behaviors could be explained best as byproducts of success rather than a response to the stress of leadership. Borrowing from the biblical story of King David's infidelity with the wife of one of his military officers,[36] they described this effect as the "Bathsheba Syndrome." Their research suggested that the functional anonymity experienced by leaders with large

amounts of autonomy was a major risk factor in the emergence of dysfunctional behaviors. They observed that detection is the primary factor that deters unethical conduct. They concluded their report with advice to corporate boards on different techniques for maintaining leader accountability. Their advice included unannounced audits and the use of ombudsmen to query employees about organizational climate.[37]

Research across the talent management field continues to indicate that investments into a rigorous assessment process can yield substantial improvements in the quality of the workforce. For example, 90 percent of Fortune 1000 companies now include multiple source assessment tools in their performance evaluation system.[38] In addition, a growing number of public and private organizations employ objective assessment centers to evaluate potential in a wide variety of skills.[39] Successful corporations like General Electric, International Business Machines, and The Limited have reoriented their business priorities to focus significant resources on the development of executive selection and succession management strategies.[40] Douglas Bray, author of an exhaustive multidecade study of human resource practices at American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) came to the conclusion that, "If you have only one dollar to spend on either improving the way you develop people or improving your selection and hiring process, pick the latter."[41] Research by Nowak in 1992 likewise concluded that organizations that make this investment, employing an appropriate methodology that accounts for multiple perspectives on performance, tend to realize significant gains in productivity.[42]

In the 1990s, Jim Collins and Jerry Porras conducted an exhaustive 6-year study of 18 visionary corpora-

tions that consistently had outperformed their peers across multiple business cycles. One of their conclusions was that great corporations focus "first on who, and then what."[43] They concluded that, in a complex and changing business world, good talent is more important than good strategy. The results of their study showed that corporations that invested heavily in talent by studying their leaders in great detail and getting "the right players in the right seats on the bus"[44] were the ones that ultimately survived in a chaotic business environment.

This brief survey of the research in performance evaluation has shown that top-down, single-source evaluation methods have a distinct disadvantage in measuring the internal dynamics of an organization. In situations where internal climate and culture are a critical component of organizational success, the literature suggests that a more holistic and resource intensive approach is necessary. With this in mind, it is useful to consider the history of the Army's performance evaluation system. This investigation will reveal what the existing system was originally designed to assess as it first evolved in the interwar period.

THE HISTORY OF THE ARMY PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

The Army leadership development model in use today emerged from the late-19th century Army reforms and proposals made by Major General Emory Upton. In the 1870s, he conducted an exhaustive survey of military organization and doctrine in the armies of France, Germany, England, Persia, China, and India. Upton identified the primary challenge facing the U.S. Army as the need to create and foster a profession of arms in a society that had long valued

the citizen soldier as the centerpiece of its national security. Borrowing heavily from the models he found in Prussia, Upton proposed the creation of a standing general staff, a formal process for officer examination and promotion, and the creation of a number of professional schools to teach military science. One of the most important reforms that Upton proposed was the concept of lineal promotion.[45]

Since the Revolutionary War, officers had been generally recruited, assessed, promoted, and retired within a single regiment. That practice had the advantage of providing senior leaders in each regiment deep insight into the abilities of the officers in its population. It also fostered rampant parochialism and led to wide differences in the promotion opportunities in various regiments. Upton believed that lineal promotion hindered the performance of Union Armies in the Civil War and inhibited the creation of a professional army.[46] Upton proposed changing the system by reassigning an officer to a different regiment, preferably in a different part of the country, at each grade in his career.[47] For his plan to work, he knew that the Army would need to develop a centralized promotion system to replace the regimental system in effect. His proposed solution was a formal examination process for company grade officers. A board of officers would review an officer's recent fitness reports from superiors and peer evaluations by other officers in his regiment. The board would then administer both an oral and written exam to the officer.[48] In Upton's model, then, the ideal way to evaluate officers as they moved from regiment to regiment was to combine three inputs. These inputs were the standard rater efficiency report, a peer evaluation, and an objective examination by an outside board. All three inputs would be considered in the promotion process.

Unfortunately, Major General Upton underestimated the power of the military bureaus. The bureaus had held, for almost a century, near exclusive control over the promotion and selection of officers within their respective areas of specialty. Many of his other reforms eventually were adopted by Secretary of War Elihu Root, following the Army's disappointing performance in the Spanish-American War. However, his recommendations regarding a rigorous promotion board based on both leader and peer evaluation and formal examination were largely ignored.[49]

At the same time that Secretary of War Root was considering Upton's recommendations, an important transformation was occurring in American society. This was the progressive era of American politics, and the nation was consumed with the optimism that scientific progress could cure social ills and promote the common welfare. The high confidence in the power of science led to the application of scientific study to the fields of both human behavior and business. As the industrial revolution propelled the American workforce from a collection of cottage industry trade-crafts to a mass-production society, the field of Human Resource Management began to emerge as a formal science.[50]

One of the most influential thinkers in the field at this time was Frederick Taylor. Taylor began his working life as a machinist and then a supervisor in the steel industry, where he observed that most workers did not work as hard as their potential permitted. In fact, he concluded that most of his peers would operate machinery at the slowest rate that went unpunished by management. In 1913, he published a paper entitled, "*The Principles of Scientific Management*," in which he argued that production methods could be optimized and standardized with worker compensa-

tion directly tied to the achievement of production goals.[51] Taylor's scientific management theory transformed life in the American factory. Floor managers subdivided complex tasks into routine and standardized actions. Hyper-specialization allowed factories to replace skilled artisans with hourly workers who performed only one or two routine actions at a constant rate over the course of a workday. The result was the modern assembly line and the explosion in productivity that came with it.

While Taylor's methods undoubtedly had a major impact on the ability of the nation's factories to generate higher levels of productivity, it had several negative effects on the nature and structure of the American workforce. Because of the detailed scientific study that went into the optimization of each of these routine tasks, workers were not encouraged to innovate but merely implement established procedures. Additionally, specialization ensured that hardly anyone in the organization had a full understanding of the end-to-end process. Effectively integrating the various work functions performed on the factory floor required a new breed of middle managers previously unknown to the manufacturing industry. With very clear standards of performance, a manager could patrol the factory floor and assess the performance and relative value of his workers based on their ability to meet production quotas while adhering to established procedures. Since the procedures required little exercise in judgment at the operator level, workers essentially became interchangeable parts in the machinery of the factory and could be retooled from one task to another in order to optimize productivity.[52]

Donald Vandergriff has argued in *Path to Victory* that the success of "Taylorism" had a profound

effect on the ongoing efforts to professionalize the military.[53] In particular, the theory of scientific management heavily influenced Secretary of War Root as he attempted to implement many of Upton's proposals. One of the most obvious influences was the centralization of personnel functions at the Army staff level.[54] In the National Defense Act of 1920, Congress mandated sweeping reforms to the organization of the Army, creating a peacetime General Staff with a centralized office for personnel management and establishing a centralized promotion list for each grade. This greatly reduced the power of the bureaus to control the promotion of their officers. It also eliminated the perennial infighting among various bureaus competing for promotion quotas. The Act also sought to preserve the expansibility of the Army by maintaining an active-duty force of 17,726 commissioned officers—three times the pre-war number.[55]

To handle the vast responsibility of managing the performance evaluation records for such a large population of officers, the newly formed General Staff created the Personnel Office. Employing Taylor's management theory, the Army Personnel office established a standardized method for assembling the promotion list based on time in service and medical fitness. Like cogs in a vast machine, all officers with equivalent time in service and shown to be fit for duty by a medical panel were deemed equally deserving of promotion. It is worth noting that the Army maintained a formalized system of routine performance evaluation during this period with fitness reports that, at one point, stretched to 24 pages.[56] Despite the exceptional detail of these reports, they appeared to play only a minor role in the promotion of officers.

The centralized promotion board process that emerged from the Defense Act of 1920 was designed primarily to examine officer records to identify any disqualifying trait rather than identify the very best qualified officer. Those early boards generally consisted of three officers chosen from different bureaus, along with two medical officers. While the bureau officers did apply some judgment to the review process, their primary purpose on the board was to represent the parochial interests of their bureau.[57]

This history is important because it provides insight into how the Army melded a cultural aversion to self-promotion and a respect for long and honorable service with the principles of scientific management emerging in the business community. The result was the centralized promotion board process that is still in place today. The Army of the interwar period employed merit as a basis for retention rather than promotion, and culled only the least desirable from the profession. Seniority and honorable service were seen as the primary basis for promotion to higher rank. This attitude reflects Taylor's classic principles because it assumed that the best a worker can achieve is to meet the standards of his assigned task. Those that did were rewarded with promotion in due course, while those that failed to meet the minimum standard were eliminated.

Herein lies the crux of so much frustration among junior officers today. The Army has sought to incorporate some element of *Auftragstaktik* into its warfighting doctrine at least since the publication of *Field Manual (FM) 100-5* in 1941.[58]

The officer manning and promotion system, however, fights against this aspiration because it was constructed on a fundamentally different organizational

concept. This concept is founded on Taylor's vision of a commoditized labor pool. This model may have had some utility in conflicts where extremely high casualty rates demanded a near continuous churn of small unit leaders. More recent experience has shown that small unit leaders on the modern battlefield are highly specialized individuals who must exercise broad judgment in unstructured and unpredictable situations. This operational ethos, founded on the experience of the modern battlefield, diverges from an institutional one founded on the practices of a managerial philosophy that still regards Army leaders as interchangeable parts. The result of this clash of ethos is a cognitive dissonance within the officer corps that pits the Army's leader development strategy against the historical legacy of its manning and personnel structure.

SYMPTOMS OF A FAILING SYSTEM

The evidence of our discussion thus far has established three compelling conclusions: First, a philosophy of mission command demands an increased emphasis on a unique set of organizational dynamics centered on the concept of mutual trust. Second, research across the field of performance management has shown that single-source evaluation methods are poorly suited to assess a leader's ability to create the unique environment necessary for mission command. Third, the Army performance evaluation system, along with its personnel system, emerged as derivatives of a corporate management philosophy that sought to maximize efficiency by regarding small unit leaders as interchangeable parts of the military machine. These three conclusions strongly suggest that the Army performance evaluation system will struggle to assess

leaders on their exercise of mission command. The next step, then, is to evaluate the Army's own recent research into the effectiveness of its performance evaluation to look for symptoms of the difficulties predicted by these conclusions.

In June 2013, the Army Leader Development Task Force published its most exhaustive study yet of leadership attitudes across the Army. The study based its findings on detailed interviews with over 550 officers ranking from lieutenant to colonel and over 12,000 responses to an Army-wide survey. One of the study's most surprising findings was that only about half of Army leaders believe personnel evaluations and promotion decisions are accurate.[59] Additionally, 19 percent of survey respondents claimed that they never received performance counseling, even though performance counseling is a mandatory component of the Officer Evaluation System and the centerpiece of the Army's performance appraisal system. A separate survey of 250 West Point graduates, both inside and outside the military, found that only 30 percent believed that the Army does a good job promoting the right officers.[60] A full 78 percent believed that this failure has a direct and negative impact on our national security.[61]

Not only does the current evaluation system undermine confidence in the efficacy of Army promotion decisions, it also engenders dysfunctional behaviors in the officer corps as ambitious officers seek to game the system. A recent review of selectees for infantry battalion command showed an average of 36 months of field grade key and developmental (KD) time. This is a significant departure from the 24 months typically expected of officers at this grade. Since performance in KD assignments is weighted heavier than perfor-

mance in other broadening assignments, officers naturally expect that their reports will receive special attention from their senior raters while they occupy these choice assignments. The key to gaming the system is to maximize the time spent in KD assignments since they enjoy a special advantage over those within the senior rater's pool who are not in these positions. Additionally, not all senior raters are created equal. A senior rater with a broad profile of Army officers and a wide reputation across the Army is considered better than one working in a small niche organization, or worse, a joint officer from another service.

The net effect has been to discourage talented officers from pursuing truly broadening assignments in the joint community or unique staff positions where the population of peer Army officers is necessarily limited. For example, the most common broadening assignment for infantry battalion command selectees in 2012 was the position of aide-de-camp to a General officer.[62] Examined purely based on promotion board results, the most valuable service that an officer can provide outside of KD or command duty is to serve as an aide to a senior leader.

Empirical evidence also suggests that the writing skill of the rater on an OER often carries nearly equal weight to the merit of the officer being rated. A 2013 study of over 4,000 Army officers revealed a surprising correlation between rater and rated officer promotion rates. The study showed that company commanders stood a 29 percent greater likelihood of promotion below the zone to major if they served under a battalion commander who was likewise promoted below the zone to major.[63] While this evidence can suggest that effective mentorship by a high-performing leader provides an officer with a strong competitive advantage,

a different interpretation of the data is also possible. Promotion below the zone to major is based heavily on the strength of officer evaluation reports written during company command. The previous data suggests that an officer who has the good fortune to serve under a high-performing mentor during this critical period may benefit from the increased proficiency of the mentor's writing and the increased opportunity for the mentor to advocate for the officer to his senior rater. The significant difference in promotion rates found in the study confirms one of the primary criticisms of single-source evaluation techniques. The quality of the report is often as much an assessment of the report's author as its subject.

In addition, surveys within and outside the Army repeatedly have suggested that the single-source approach to performance evaluation is a leading cause for talented junior officers to depart the military.[64] A 2,000 Army Research Institute Study on captain attrition interviewed 161 students of the Combined Arms Staff School and found that eight of the 20 factors most likely to cause officers to resign their commission were related directly to the structure of the performance evaluation system and its perceived effects.[65] A similar study by the Army Training and Leader Development Panel conducted that same year concluded that junior officers observed, "diminishing direct contact between seniors and subordinates . . . evidenced by leaders that are focused up rather than down."[66] They also cited "the OER as a source of mistrust and anxiety."[67] In addition to these challenges, evidence continues to mount that senior leaders, no matter how capable, struggle to detect evidence of toxic leadership within their subordinate commands.

In 2010, the Navy conducted an exhaustive investigation into all 80 incidents in which a field grade level

commander was relieved for cause in the preceding 5-year period. Only 11 of these incidents were attributed directly to a toxic or dysfunctional command climate in the organization. In all but one of these cases, however, the relief came because of pressure from an external agent such as the Navy Inspector General or Congress. The commander's direct supervisor identified and took action in only a single incident. The study concluded that in 10 of 11 cases, the toxic behaviors that led to the relief were invisible to the superior officer charged with evaluating the leader.[68]

This evidence is reinforced by two recent studies on toxic leadership at the U.S. Army War College in 2003 and the Command and General Staff College in 2009. Both studies concluded that the vast majority of toxic leader behavior was essentially invisible to those in positions of authority over the leader in question.[69] In view of these findings, the authors of the study recommended to the Secretary of the Army that the supervisor centric leader evaluation process be augmented with input from peers and subordinates.[70] This additional information, while not superior to a senior leader's evaluation of his subordinate leaders, would serve as a hedge against the harmful consequences of the halo effect. The Army's emphasis on performance as evaluated by a distant superior presents a moral hazard to an aspiring officer by placing him in a situation where his self-interest demands he focus his attention up the chain of command while his concept of duty demands that he focus downward. Recognizing that the vast majority of his leadership behavior will go unobserved and unevaluated, a purely self-interested officer has great incentive to script and shape engagements to produce a desired illusion at the expense of the long-term health of the outfit he leads.

The Curious Case of Major General Lloyd Fredendall.

History provides a powerful example of the limited ability of any leader to accurately assess the internal dynamics of subordinate formations. In 1943, Major General Lloyd Fredendall, then Commander of U.S. II Corps, was assigned to lead his Corps into the Army's first major battle in the European theater. In an Army so focused on leader development and so full of promising officers at the time, Fredendall proved a curious choice to lead such an important command. Kicked out of West Point twice for poor grades and possessing very limited World War I combat experience, Fredendall had a terrible reputation as a harsh disciplinarian, a detached leader, and an uncooperative partner. General George Marshall, however, was impressed by Fredendall when Fredendall was an instructor at the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, GA. As a result, Marshall encouraged General Dwight Eisenhower to place him in command.[71] In February 1943, as II Corps occupied positions in the Atlas mountain range of Tunisia, Fredendall quickly lived up to his reputation. He alienated both his French and British allies as well as his subordinate commanders with a mixture of confusing and conflicting guidance to his division commanders and was nearly insubordinate to the British First Army commander. He directed his most capable fighting formation, the 1st Armored Division, to dissipate its strength in small packets of combat power across a wide front.[72] Perhaps most puzzling was his directive, issued from his command bunker almost 100 miles from the front, for the 168th Regimental Combat Team to divide its combat power

on two isolated hilltops near a potential axis of enemy advance.

The night before the German attack, Eisenhower toured the front lines with the 1st Armored Division commander, Major General Orlando Ward. Ward was deeply concerned with the defensive dispositions directed by Fredendall but declined to express his reservations directly to Eisenhower. Eisenhower left believing all was well. That evening, only hours before the disastrous battle, Eisenhower sent a note to Marshall that he was impressed with Fredendall's "thorough knowledge of his battlefront," adding that, "he seems keen and fit and I am placing a lot of confidence in him."[73]

When Rommel's forces struck on February 14, the results were both predictable and tragic. The two infantry battalions defending the high ground were rapidly isolated and overwhelmed. With most of the armored forces spread across the Corps front, counterattacks were piecemeal and ineffective. By the end of the first day, U.S. forces were in full retreat in the face of the German combined arms onslaught, with nearly all of the Corp's tanks and over 1,000 lives lost. Fredendall's behavior during the battle was as puzzling as his preparations. When Eisenhower sent forward his deputy, Major General Ernest Harmon, to assess the state of the command, Fredendall handed over the command of the battle to him and quickly retired to his quarters. As the Kasserine Pass fell on February 20, Fredendall became increasingly despondent and was observed sitting on a crate sipping bourbon with his head in his hands focused on who would bear the blame for the tragedy.[74] Eisenhower, despite traveling through the Corps area only hours before the fight had been unable to observe the toxic climate developing among the senior leaders of II Corps.

Leaders do not arrive on the battlefield as an accident of history. Today's professional military officers come to lead large formations in combat only after successfully navigating a complex institutional bureaucracy that both shapes them and selects them from a large pool of talented peers. Their behavior in command is not an accident of chance but rather the specific and deliberate choice of an institution whose very purpose is to ensure they possess the skills to succeed. When a leader such as Fredendall so significantly departs from the stated behaviors encouraged by that institution at such a consequential moment, it demands investigation into the process that selected him for the enormous responsibility he bore.

In 1943 the U.S. Army was brimming with talented leaders. Both George Patton and Omar Bradley waited patiently in Casablanca for their shot at command. The Operations *Field Manual 100-5* published 2 years earlier borrowed heavily from the Prussian *Auftragstaktik* concept and emphasized decentralized mission type orders based on trust between commanders.[75] This command philosophy, however, did not materialize on the battlefield of Tunisia where it might have served the II Corps well. It failed to emerge because the Army at the time did not fully integrate its warfighting philosophy with its leader selection and performance evaluation policies. Fredendall's shortcomings were not a failure of doctrine or of the Army's leader development program at the time. The failure lay in the process of leader appraisal and selection. It was this faulty process that allowed two of the nation's finest strategists, Eisenhower and Marshall, to select a man who was manifestly unprepared for the task to lead the nation's first major battle against the armies of Adolf Hitler.

Fredendall's unfortunate story suggests that even the very best senior leaders struggle to gain an accurate assessment of their subordinates as leaders. It also suggests that a leader, widely regarded as incompetent by those in his organization, is still able to stage-manage his interactions with senior leaders in such a way as to create and maintain an illusion of competence. While history largely has forgotten Fredendall, his tragic story provides a powerful lesson for a military that must continue to prepare for the unexpected and identify talented leaders to command our formations under conditions of incredible stress and uncertainty. Unfortunately, this Fredendall syndrome continues to plague the Army today because we have not adequately addressed its root cause. Specifically, the Army has failed to provide a systematic means for a senior leader to augment his own subjective judgment about his subordinates with a more objective evaluation of their individual abilities. Army leaders are asked to make tremendously important leadership selection decisions based on very limited subjective information gathered from infrequent interactions with subordinates. Not only does this fact lead to suboptimal leader selection decisions, but also more importantly fosters an environment where external measures of performance outweigh effective organizational leadership. This environment directly threatens the creation of a culture of mission command across the force.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Having examined the shortcomings in the Army's approach, it is useful now to consider alternatives from the business community and the public sector

that may better serve the goal of identifying and selecting mission command behaviors. In 1990, Lex Wexner was one of the most successful business leaders in America. As the founder of the retail chain The Limited, he had witnessed his business grow from nothing in 1963 to over 3,800 stores and $5 billion in sales. In the early-1990s, The Limited's stock price plummeted. Puzzled by this sudden turn of events, Wexner sought the advice of some of the brightest CEOs in business, specifically Steven Spielberg and Jack Welch. What he observed in both of these leaders was a detachment from the day-to-day dramas of the business cycle and an obsession with the identification, selection, and development of the best and brightest leaders in their organization. Both leaders had multiple overlapping systems for assessing and evaluating their best talent and invested a large percentage of their personal and organizational capital into their hiring and promotion processes. Wexner returned to his company and immediately set out transforming his talent management system. He hired outside consultants to evaluate his leaders and instituted a process requiring each division to track its top 50 employees. Wexner began chairing his own talent review process. Over time, his stock slide arrested, and then rebounded. Wexner observed, "I used to pick sweaters; now I pick people."[76]

The Army's mission and culture are radically different from a clothing retailer so there is a danger in drawing too many parallels from Wexner's experience. On the other hand, a careful review of talent management literature reveals some consistent best practices from successful corporations that diverge from the Army's approach. To better understand how the Army evaluation practices compare with the best practices of the personnel assessment field, the

research examined the talent management processes at several large and successful private corporation and a major public sector enterprise. These institutions face unique circumstances and cultural imperatives but share the same challenge to assess and manage their talent in a way that optimizes performance and organizational stability.

Example #1: Data-Rich Talent Management at International Business Machines.

In 2011, Fortune magazine conducted a detailed review of 470 global companies to determine which ones best recruited, developed, and retained talent. *Fortune* ranked International Business Machines (IBM) as the top corporation out of all 470 in this list.[77] With just under 400,000 employees, IBM is only slightly smaller than the total Army active duty population. Compared to the Army, the company offers a radically different approach to evaluating and selecting leaders in the organization. Most notably, IBM invests a significantly larger level of institutional energy into the study and evaluation of its mid-level managers. Instead of relying solely on the annual performance review common in large corporations, IBM pulls data from across the company to develop a holistic picture of its managers. The corporation maintains detailed reports on managers, to include personality assessments, peer reviews, objective performance metrics, and records of developmental experience. IBM's data analysis is not just confined to senior executives but extends deep into the organization including its top 50,000 employees.[78] Additionally, IBM specifically tracks employee retention rates as a key measure of manager performance evaluation.[79]

IBM uses the collected data to inform compensation plans based on a forced ranking of employees within job categories. It also uses the data to map out succession planning strategies for key assignments within the organization. This rich data pool provides a deep reservoir of information from which to draw conclusions about talent management decisions. Furthermore, the extensive database of peer and subordinate evaluations coupled with standard performance metrics allow managers to predict the likely impact of personnel decisions on the organizational dynamics of their subordinate teams. The data rich process is the heart and soul of the IBM leadership philosophy. As a senior IBM executive commented:

> We couldn't get good business results without good leadership. We employ a heavily data-driven talent review process using a leadership talent database that has dozens of metrics on leaders. We use it heavily all year long to access detailed facts on people, experiences, potential, development scores, assessment center, performance, etc. We look at empirically based business results and review feedback on leadership approaches and facts about their leadership approaches (e.g., number of mentees, talent they've exported, talent audits, and climate).[80]

There is no empirical way to demonstrate that IBM's rich data model is superior to the Army's centralized board process. However, the fact that IBM bases personnel decisions on a broad spectrum of complementary inputs on leadership performance suggests that it may have a better sense of how leaders impact the internal dynamics of the teams that they lead.

Example #2: Peer Evaluations at CEMEX UK.

A much smaller corporation, CEMEX UK, is notable in the field of performance evaluation for being one of the early adopters of formalized 360-degree performance evaluations for use in succession management decisions. CEMEX UK is the British subsidiary of a large building materials company headquartered in Mexico City, Mexico. With just over 4,000 employees CEMEX UK is 1 1/100th the size of IBM. Each year, every staff member is required to select up to six persons to complete their evaluations. At a minimum, this must include one peer, one internal supplier, and one external supplier. The rated individual's supervisor must approve the pool prior to the start of the assessment. What is notable in this method is the design of the assessment tool. The peer and customer evaluations are narrowly focused on those behaviors and dynamics assumed to be invisible to the supervisor, such as group dynamics and customer relations.[81] The intent of the evaluation is not to provide a second opinion of the supervisor's assessment but a complementary review focused specifically on those behaviors invisible from the top. As a result the CEMEX method serves as an effective complement to the blind spots inherent in top-down, single-source evaluation systems.

Like most large corporations, salary at CEMEX UK is based largely on organizational output while the results of the 360-degree reviews serve primarily to inform succession management decisions.[82] This is a second important insight. Focusing the 360-degree reviews on succession management decisions rather than salary minimizes the temptation by peers to overinflate reports but ensures that senior manage-

ment has a three dimensional view of those leaders that have otherwise shown a potential for greater responsibility in the company. The CEMEX UK experience offers two insights that should inform the search for alternate models in the Army. The first is that peer and subordinate feedback should remain focused on behaviors considered invisible to the primary evaluator. The second insight is that 360-degree assessments appear more useful for informing succession management decisions than those related to promotion or retention. The CEMEX UK model demonstrates that top-down performance reviews and peer evaluations can work together if they are carefully designed to serve complementary rather than redundant roles.

Example #3: Assessment Centers at Municipal Fire Departments in the Southeastern United States.

The two examples thus far have examined alternative ways to assess organizational dynamics through broader inputs. In contrast, the final example illustrates a second important component of mission command defined earlier. A culture of trust can best exist in an environment where technical competence is assured through a rigorous certification process. Trusting untrained amateurs to execute complex tasks is a formula for disaster rather than excellence. Most professions have, therefore, sought to protect their autonomy by imposing rigorous certification standards for each successive level of the profession. These standards serve as gate keepers to prevent amateur practitioners from undermining public or organizational trust in the certified members of the profession.

Assessment centers serve the same certification role by providing an objective outsider an opportunity to thoroughly validate a candidate's potential to demon-

strate the skills and abilities needed at the next level of the profession. The concept of the modern assessment center emerged in the 1950s with the AT&T Management Study. The AT&T study assessed the ability of 137 college graduate applicants to Bell subsidiaries to perform a series of oral, written and situational exercises. The study then used applicant performance to predict the likelihood they would achieve different levels of leadership within the company's seven-tiered hierarchy. Without revealing any information to the applicants or management, the research team then followed these employees for the next 20 years as they progressed through the company. The results of the assessment proved surprisingly accurate with a moderate correlation ($p= 0.37$) between predicted and observed results.[83] Since that time, assessment center researchers have refined their techniques to produce highly accurate results.

Because of their need for sound decisionmaking in complex and ambiguous situations, many fire departments across the country increasingly have relied on the assessment center as a form of performance evaluation both for initial entry candidates and for positions up to and including senior management. Since assessment centers are designed to measure future potential more than current competence, they are most often used at career inflection points. For example, a senior firefighter seeking the position of station fire chief must undergo testing at an assessment center. The testing includes a number of tests such as an "in-box" exercise where candidates must rapidly prioritize a number of simultaneous tasks. Other testing includes mock tactical scenarios and written tests on legal procedures. Two independent evaluators score each exam. Results are normalized and then forwarded to the fire chief selection board.[84]

The Orange County Fire Department in Central Florida has employed this assessment center method to aid in the selection of mid-grade leaders for several years. With just under 900 full-time employees and approximately 69,000 service calls per year, this department is about the size of a large Army battalion. In 2000, the department conducted a detailed survey of its performance appraisal system to determine if the reliance on external assessment centers was a worthy investment.[85] The study also solicited feedback from 48 other metropolitan fire departments spread across the southeastern United States. The research concluded that use of assessment centers improved fire department hiring and promotion decisions. This resulted in a general decrease in performance-based terminations. Additionally, the use of an external assessment center was shown to reduce legal protests of management decisions and to reduce the effectiveness of those protests when they did occur.[86] Simply put, the data suggests that most firefighters regarded the assessment process as a fair, nonpolitical, and objective evaluation of their abilities. The result was a growth in confidence in the talent management system within the organization.

It is interesting to note that a large cottage industry has developed around helping firemen to prepare for and to pass these challenging exercises. Numerous businesses offer study guides and practical exercises to help candidates prepare. Thus, the effect of the move toward assessment centers in the fire prevention industry is the gradual professionalization of the field.

The examination of the three civilian personnel evaluation practices here indicate that alternate performance evaluation systems may be better suited to evaluating leadership in a mission command environ-

ment than the system currently in place in the Army. The examples also suggest that the Army's search for an alternative performance evaluation system should begin by considering a mix of these practices. These may include 360-degree evaluations from peers and subordinates, objective testing at career inflection points, and a broader database on individual performance metrics beyond the OER.

LEGAL AND CULTURAL OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTATION

An *Army Times* article published in October 2013 suggested that, while the Army might want to adopt a 360-degree performance appraisal system, current legal roadblocks rule this out.[87] An examination of the policy documents governing military promotions indicates that this concern is unfounded. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1980 established the modern process of performance assessment in the military. Among many other reforms, that Act established the "up or out" promotion system. In the up or out system, officers twice not selected for promotion are subject to separation from the Service. In addition, the Act mandated fixed ceilings for field grade strengths and formalized the centralized promotion board procedures.[88] While a detailed discussion of DOPMA and its effects is beyond the scope of this research, a basic understanding of the Act is necessary to appreciate the legal framework of the performance appraisal process.

Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1320.14 is the regulatory guideline that governs the conduct of centralized Army promotion boards and summarizes the statutory parameters established by DOPMA and

other sources. The instructions exhort board members to ensure the sanctity of the process by considering "all eligible officers without prejudice or partiality."[89] Additionally, Section 2c(2)(c) specifies that the Secretary of the Army may designate for consideration by the board "substantiated and relevant information that he or she considers might reasonably and materially affect the deliberations of the promotion selection board" only if that information is provided for all officers considered. The section also stipulates that the officer must be afforded the opportunity to see this information and submit written comments relevant to its content. Current policy, therefore, does not preclude the use of alternate feedback tools in board proceedings as long as all eligible promotion board candidates are subject to the same evaluation and are afforded an opportunity to review and appeal any results.[90] Beyond these two requirements no other legal obstacle prevents the use of 360-degree feedback in either promotion or selection boards.

Allan Mohrman, Susan Resnick-West, and Edward Lawler conducted a detailed review of legal considerations in the civilian world for the implementation of 360-degree performance evaluation tools. As a result of their research, they developed four guidelines to help companies avoid legal challenges to this method of evaluation: First, companies should carefully define the behaviors that the tool is intended to measure and then ensure that the tool's design strictly follows that intent. Second, the evaluation process should remain confined to those behaviors that the rater population is qualified to evaluate. For example, it would be inappropriate for entry-level employees to evaluate a manager on business strategy if they have no formal training in this area. On the contrary, the tool should

evaluate the leader on those behaviors that the rater can directly observe and reasonably judge. Third, to eliminate discrimination, the process should include an objective audit by an outside party to ensure that evaluations remain oriented specifically on work related behaviors. Finally, the data should be open to the rated employee and provide a mechanism for appeal.[91]

An effective multisource assessment tool must balance two competing and potentially contradictory concerns. The first is the requirement to protect the anonymity of the subordinate rater to ensure candid evaluations and mitigate the possibility of retribution. The second concern is to protect the legal right of the rated officer, explicitly guaranteed in DoDI 1320.14, to review data used in his own performance evaluation and appeal that data if he believes it to be substantially false. Balancing these two concerns requires a creative approach to data collection so that the act of collecting feedback does not undermine the integrity of the chain of command. A potential solution to this dilemma is proposed in the appendix to this research.

The examination of both DoD policy and relevant experience above indicates that the legal challenges to implementing a multisource assessment tool are not insurmountable. Instead, current policy allows for centralized promotion boards to consider substantiated performance data from sources other than supervisors so long as similar data is available on all candidates. The challenge, then, is designing a methodology that provides the candidate officer free access to the data but preserves the anonymity of the source in order to prevent both retribution and inflation.

In addition to legal obstacles, research on multisource assessment methods provides many cautions

on the often unanticipated cultural hazards of using an assessment tool designed for employee self-development for evaluation.[92] Many organizations report unfavorable results during the initial implementation of peer and subordinate evaluations due to poor execution, instrument design, or lack of executive buy-in. A detailed examination of these hazards will inform a discussion of how the Army could incorporate multisource feedback into performance evaluation.

In 1998, research by Clive Fletcher of the Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK, noted a growing trend in the 1990s among organizations to graft 360-degree development programs onto their existing performance evaluation systems in order to combat perceived bias in top-down appraisal systems. He also noted that, while these programs often were effective in providing access to subordinate behaviors that were otherwise invisible to senior management, there were risks. Most notably, he observed that the candor of 360-degree-evaluations was often diminished as existing developmental tools were adapted for appraisal purposes. Specifically, his research indicated that 35 percent of respondents would change their assessment of a peer if they believed the information would be used for evaluation rather than self-development.[93] Maury Pieperl has studied the effects of peer evaluation in 17 different organizations and noted the paradox inherent in asking co-workers and subordinates to serve as both a helpful coach and a hard-nosed judge.[94] Considerable research into the actual practice of peer and subordinate evaluation outside the military suggests that the use of assessment tools originally intended for developmental purposes can lead to unintended consequences. The better alternative would be a sepa-

rate program that places a seasoned and experienced interviewer between the rater and rated officer.

Tracey Mallett has demonstrated that the overwhelming weight of scholarship on the subject suggests that the mixing of multi-source tools for development and performance evaluation can lead to difficulty in practical implementation.[95] This conclusion is echoed in a 2012 study of the Navy's pilot multisource development program named SMARTS360. Like the Army's Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback forum (MSAF), SMARTS360 is an online database where leaders can nominate peers and subordinates to evaluate their leadership styles. The program was discontinued after 3 years in large part because Navy senior leaders suggested that some of the feedback provided may eventually be used to inform leader selection decisions. The study noted a significant decline in voluntary participation after this announcement.[96] These findings suggest that any 360-degree evaluation program used by the Army should remain separate and distinct from existing programs such as the MSAF that seek to use peer and subordinated feedback for leader development.

CONCLUSIONS

Both the U.S. Congress and the Secretary of Defense are seeking a change to the way the Army selects leaders. Exhaustive survey data from the force suggests that such a change is long overdue. The research here demonstrates that the Army performance evaluation system, as it is currently designed, is ill-suited to evaluate and select leaders best adapted to mission command. This does not mean that leaders selected under the current system are incapable of effective mission command. It merely implies that the system

is not optimized to find those leaders who execute the style of command most prized by the Army.

Because mission command requires a culture of trust, effective practitioners must possess the competence to deliver what is expected of them and the moral capacity to be both worthy of trust and willing to trust in others. Evaluating a leader's ability to trust his subordinates requires more than just an OER. Many other researchers have come to this same conclusion. For example, Colonel Tim Reese observed in a paper in 2002 that "the OER simply does not provide the Army an evaluation of an officer's ability to lead a unit or organization in a way that fosters cohesion, teamwork and long-term health of the unit."[97] The review of the Prussian military experience has shown that previous attempts to inculcate a mission command philosophy required a fundamental change to the way officers were certified for their commands and a closer look at the impact they had on unit climate through subordinate evaluations.

The review of the history of the centralized promotion system showed how Upton's early attempts to bring *Auftragstaktik* into the U.S. military were sidetracked by a corporate managerial philosophy that optimized efficiency above all. This philosophy saw leaders as interchangeable cogs producing measurable outputs rather than the architects of a subjective unit climate conducive to bold initiative. While *Auftragstaktik* has slowly entered Army doctrine, the vestiges of Taylorism remain in the personnel and promotion system. This system evaluates officer potential based on an extremely narrow slice of overall performance in an effort to mass-produce promotion decisions across a large formation with minimal investment.

The example of Fredendall and the more recent data presented earlier cautions that the current system of top-down evaluation does not detect and, therefore, cannot screen for toxicity within subordinate organizations. This evidence suggests that, absent a fundamental change to the way officers are evaluated and selected, toxic leaders will continue to make their way into positions of tremendous influence where they will do great harm to the soldiers they lead. A true commitment to the mission command philosophy requires more than just a change in doctrine. Colonel Tom Guthrie posed this challenge in an article in *Army Magazine:*

> If we intend to truly embrace mission command, then we should do it to the fullest, and that will require commitment to changing a culture from one of control and process to one of decentralization and trust. We cannot afford to preach one thing and do another.[98]

To develop a new model requires first the development of a new perspective. A detailed examination of best practices in the field of talent management has provided that perspective. It suggests that the Army could improve the exercise of mission command if it provided a greater investment into its talent management system. This investment should include a broader set of perspectives into leader performance. Multisource performance evaluation methods have worked well in organizations of similar size, and the data suggests that they might succeed in the Army if properly implemented.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that performance evaluation systems have a profound effect on organizational culture. To move from a results oriented culture to a process oriented one requires

a change to the way the Army evaluates its leaders. Augmenting the supervisor-centric evaluation process with input from peers and subordinates may help to eliminate the functional anonymity that has allowed a few leaders to develop destructive Bathsheba Syndrome behaviors that have so damaged the Army's prestige. It will also promote greater trust in the system by providing another venue for professional accountability.

Professional athletes, real estate agents, doctors, and lawyers all must undergo a rigorous and objective assessment of their abilities in order to enter and then continue in their careers. This accreditation process is foundational to the very idea of professionalism as the life-long pursuit and exercise of a body of expert knowledge.[99] The use of assessment centers in the business world and the public service sector have been shown to improve confidence in talent management decisions and accurately predict those who are best able to transition to new levels of management. Providing an equally rigorous assessment process in the Army might provide another effective tool for commanders and boards to evaluate potential.

The research presented in this monograph has shown that the current Army top-down performance evaluation system lacks the capacity to evaluate effectively the practice of mission command embodied in Army doctrine. Research across the field of performance assessment has shown that multisource ratings remain the most effective means for providing a nuanced three-dimensional view of the performance necessary for effective succession management decisions.[100] This is supported by the examination of best practices in the field of talent management. The research indicates that expanding the Army perfor-

mance evaluation system to include alternate perspectives of leader performance may improve internal organization dynamics. The data also suggests that a multisource approach will specifically target two contemporary problems facing the Army: First is the growing lack of faith in the fairness of the performance evaluation process. Second is the functional anonymity of small unit leaders that has been shown to contribute to the "Bathsheba Syndrome" effects described earlier. This evidence provides a compelling argument for a significant change in the way the Army evaluates the performance of its leaders.

When future historians study the Army of the early-21st century, they will no doubt take considerable interest in the way the Army transformed itself in the post-war period following the conclusion of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Parallels will abound between this period and a similar one a century earlier when the Army withdrew from its expeditionary stance and downsized in the face of extreme financial austerity. How the Army manages this transition will have a decisive impact on the future conflicts of the 21st century that are sure to come. While the outline of those conflicts is difficult to discern, we do know that war in the information age demands a highly skilled and professional force officered by a very talented cadre of agile and adaptive leaders. These leaders must be able to exercise initiative based on a culture of trust that runs up and down the chain of command. The challenge is not predicting the exact shape of future conflicts but ensuring that we have the right talent on board and ready to adapt when that shape emerges. Retaining and promoting the very best demands that the Army abandon the industrial age procedures of performance appraisal and embrace a new level of

organizational investment in its people. If people are the centerpiece of the Army, then the Army must study them in great detail. Promoting a culture of mission command demands that the Army as an institution focus its energies on the exhaustive study of the quality and character of its men and women, not merely on the outputs of their labor.

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APPENDIX

PROPOSALS SUGGESTED BY THE RESEARCH

The research has established that the Army model of performance evaluation was not designed to assess a leader's mission command attributes and cannot easily be adapted to make that assessment. It has also established that alternative models in use in the civilian world hold the potential to address this shortcoming but only if they are carefully implemented. Dramatic change to the performance evaluation system in an organization can often do more harm than good. While any change to the promotion and selection board process should involve careful evaluation and pilot testing, the research suggests that two specific proposals may hold promise as a basis for a future study.

Proposal #1: Formal Investigations for Candidates to be Considered by Leadership Boards.

The uneven performance of peer reviews warns the Army to move cautiously if it seeks to include 360-degree subjective reviews in Army selection board files. The evidence shown earlier has established that effective 360-degree appraisal should adhere to four guidelines: First, it should be separate and distinct from any developmental tools such as the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF). Second, it should be focused narrowly on the behaviors that subordinates are qualified to assess. Third, it should protect the privacy of the evaluator while respecting the rights of the evaluated officer. Fourth, an effective 360-degree performance appraisal is best used as a tool for succession management rather than routine promotion.

An implementation strategy that respects these guidelines and yet provides an effective tool for selection boards will not be easy or inexpensive to design.

In 2013, the Chief of Staff's Leader Development Task Force recommended examining 360-degree feedback already compiled in the existing MSAF database for use in the selection of Brigade Commanders.[1] While this recommendation suggests senior officer enthusiasm for 360-degree appraisal methods, the specific implementation strategy is flawed for the reasons outlined earlier. The MSAF available today has been sold from its inception as a developmental tool only. For almost a decade, the Army has assured both recipients and evaluators that the data they submit is purely confidential for the benefit of the recipient. Any attempt to open that database to wider scrutiny, no matter how carefully done, has the potential to appear as a breach of trust.

The Center for Army Leadership is currently exploring a program called "Commander 360" that will require subordinates to appraise battalion and brigade commanders during their first and last six months of command.[2] Set to roll out in pilot form in 2014, these feedback reports will take the form of online queries derived from randomly selected subordinate leaders in the organization. The evaluated commander's rater and senior rater would then have access to the results.[3] Even though the results of the survey will go directly to the officer's chain of command, Army leadership argues that Commander 360 is intended primarily as a developmental tool.[4] Senior officers would presumably use the 360-degree feedback when counseling the officer in question.

While Commander 360 will remain wholly separate from the MSAF program, the experience of the

Navy provides cautionary insight. The Commander 360 concept runs the risk of confusing assessment and development as the Navy did in their SMARTS360 program.[5] Since the authors of the feedback are still in the organization, it will be difficult to protect their identity in any meaningful way. The likely effect of this risk will be to dampen the candor of assessments given in Commander 360. In an extreme case, a form of *quid pro quo* may emerge whereby subordinates and commanders trade favorable or unfavorable ratings.

A better way is possible. The Department of Defense already has in place a large peer evaluation system that may serve as a useful model for a truly effective performance evaluation tool. The Single Scope Background Investigation program investigates over 90,000 servicemen and women each year to determine if they qualify for access to information classified Top-Secret.[6] It does this by conducting face-to-face interviews with co-workers who can attest to a candidate's good character and fitness to handle highly classified data. Typically, these investigations involve a short interview with three to five co-workers. The face-to-face interaction provides an opportunity for the interviewer to assess the interviewee in ways that are impossible in a written review. It also provides the opportunity for the interviewer to clarify important issues and more accurately steer the assessment process.

A peer and subordinate investigation might follow a similar approach. Under this concept an investigator, potentially a retired military officer, would select a handful of officer and noncommissioned officer efficiency reports (OERs and NCOERs) written by the officer in question. These reports could be chosen to reflect a balance of above average (ACOM) and aver-

age reports (COM). The investigator would then contact the recipient of each report and arrange an interview. After signing a strict confidentiality agreement, the interviewee would be asked to comment on the investigated officer's leadership style and impact on the organization during the rated period. Since subordinates are not qualified to assess all aspects of their leader's performance, the questioning would focus narrowly on the climate created by their leadership and their effect on organizational dynamics. While ethical issues would certainly be appropriate to discuss in this forum, any specific accusation of misconduct should be directed to the appropriate Inspector General for investigation.

After concluding the interviews and reviewing the quality of some number of OERs and NCOERs written by the candidate, the interviewer would then draft an investigation summary. This summary would omit any specific information attributable to the interviewees but would provide a broad assessment. This assessment would address the officer's professional reputation as determined from the interviews and his stewardship of the profession as shown by the quality of his written reports. For example, a pattern of reports from the officer that were consistently over-inflated would not reflect effective stewardship. The summary would then be filed in the officer's restricted Office of Military Personnel File for consideration by the appropriate command selection board. Since the written report reflects only the interviewer's impressions and not the assessments of individual subordinates, the anonymity of those subordinates is protected. As an additional protection, candidate officers could be given the right to view the investigation summary and request a re-investigation if they could demonstrate bias in the report.

The legal challenges to using peer feedback for evaluation purposes have centered on concerns about the proper balance between rater anonymity and the right of the rated officer to see his own report. Replacing the online written survey commonly used in the civilian world with a face-to-face interview by an experienced leader changes this dynamic considerably. Interviewers would be free to ask follow-up questions as required or to disregard unfounded or baseless allegations.

Wide-spread use of interviews for every promotion board is both cost prohibitive and unnecessary. Instead, officers choosing to compete for centrally selected command billets at the lieutenant colonel and colonel level could deliberately opt-in for this level of scrutiny. If this population set was still too large, the Human Resources Command could consider a nomination process of highly competitive files that would then undergo the full investigation. To comply with the legal constraints identified earlier, this nomination board would require the regulatory authority to serve as an independent selection board itself since it would serve the function of reducing the number of officers eligible for consideration.

In addition to improving the accuracy of command selection decisions, a second important effect of this process would be the impact it might have on organizational politics within units. Since leaders cannot predict who among their rated population will be selected for the investigation at some point in the future, it eliminates the functional anonymity that so often leads to Bathsheba Syndrome behaviors. Additionally, it provides a tangible incentive to encourage leaders to invest in the development of their rated subordinates. Consider the impact on counseling programs Army-

wide, if it were widely known that the first question of the subordinate interview was, "Were you effectively counseled by this officer?" This question, combined with an in-depth review of efficiency reports written by the candidate would provide the interviewer with a perspective on the candidate's stewardship of the Army profession.

Asking those officers who wish to compete for command to submit to additional scrutiny follows a long established tradition of investigating candidates for major offices throughout the Federal government. Such a process has three clear effects: It reduces the chances of bad leader decisions and the resultant cost to the institution and its soldiers. It promotes the credibility of those who ultimately are selected. Finally, it encourages and incentivizes ambitious officers to create the organizational climate that the Army is looking for within their formations.

Proposal #2: Including Objective Performance Data in Academic Efficiency Reports.

The 2013 Army Leader Development Task Force study recommended adopting assessment center practices in the Army.[7] As demonstrated earlier, an effective assessment center is not so much a place as it is a process.[8] The focus of that process is to provide objective measures to assess a candidate's ability to perform the tasks necessary in a new position. As such, assessment centers measure potential more than performance. They focus not on what the candidate has done, but how he will do in a future assignment. For this reason, they are best employed at points in a leader's career when he is transitioning from one level of management to another. At these leader inflection

points, the skills that made a manager successful at the lower level are often not the ones that will ensure success at the next. An effectively designed assessment center can fill the gap by helping an organization assess how the leader would perform at the next level.

The Officer Education System (OES) was designed originally to develop leaders at these same inflection points. For this reason, it provides the ideal periods in an officer's career to perform assessments. Under the current OES, officers leave their field assignments four times in their career to receive training to prepare them for leadership at the next level. If the Army were to apply the civilian world's practices, then the Army would inject rigorous and detailed assessment activities into the culminating exercises of these four training periods. Officers preparing to graduate from the Basic course, Captain's course, Staff College, or War College would undergo a comprehensive evaluation, using a number of the techniques described earlier. These might include tactical scenarios or in-box exercises presented before a panel, and oral and written exams. These assessment exercises would employ the best practices of the field but would be uniquely tailored to the skill sets required in likely assignments following graduation. The officer's Academic Efficiency Report (AER) would reflect their performance in the comprehensive exam, along with their relative class rank. This AER would then accompany the officer to his next duty station where his new commander would use it to inform assignment decisions in the organization. This would allow commanders to identify those officers who are prepared to immediately take on tough assignments and those who require more development.

To maintain consistent standards across the force, the Training and Doctrine Command could then maintain an accreditation board to assist the various branch schools in the development of their comprehensive assessment process. Full implementation across all the schools in the OES program may take many years given cost constraints. However, a pilot program at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth using the assessment center already standing up there would provide a feasible first step. Additionally, adopting the Leader Development Task Force recommendation to administer the Graduate Record Exam at the Captain's Career Course is another low-cost, first step in this direction.[9]

One of the key findings of the research into assessment centers was the degree to which their use promotes a sense of fairness within an organization. The most recent Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) showed that less than half of junior officers thought that promotion decisions were accurate.[10] This survey suggests a disappointing lack of confidence among junior officers in the ability of the existing performance appraisal system to identify and recognize the most qualified leaders. The success of external assessment centers in the fire and rescue community described earlier suggests that their wider use in the Army may help to promote confidence in the objectivity of Army performance appraisals.

When Major Dwight Eisenhower graduated first in his class from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in Ft. Leavenworth, KS, in 1926, one of the most important pieces of information in an officer's personnel file was his Staff College class rank. This rank was based on a rigorous and highly com-

petitive set of exercises and exams that tested an officer's tactical skills, intuition, and judgment. General George Marshall and other senior officers considered class rank and performance at CGSC to be a critical determinant of command potential.[11] One of the results of this emphasis was a clear incentive for midgrade officers to develop the professional skills and knowledge that would make them successful on the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific. Implementation of an objective and rigorous assessment at CGSC may go a long way toward promoting a similar commitment to the knowledge and skills at the heart of the Army profession.

Both of the proposals listed here will require further research to validate rigorously their feasibility. However, the research has shown that aligning Army performance evaluation and the Army's mission command philosophy will require an approach to talent management that falls along these lines. Implementing a rigorous and objective certification program modeled after an assessment center will create the presumption of professional competence necessary to build organizational trust. Likewise, a process of peer evaluations that makes leaders directly accountable for the climate they create in their organization will enable future boards to select those officers best suited to the exercise of mission command.

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