VETERAN AS LEADER: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH ARMY LEADER DEVELOPMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

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WITH ARMY LEADER DEVELOPMENT

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Under the Supervision of Barbara J. Daley, Ph.D.

This phenomenological study examined the lived leader development experience of Post 9/11 Army veterans while serving in the armed forces. At least $10-$15 billion is spent annually on leadership development in the United States and human resource executives claim developing leaders is their number one priority over the next five years. Simultaneously, companies actively hiring veterans claim the former service member's leadership abilities are their most desired quality. Inspection of the Army's leader development program offers an opportunity for employers to integrate revised approaches in their own leadership development initiatives.

A purposive sample of ten Army veterans—six males and four females—ranging in age from 18 to over 21 upon enlistment completed a leadership autobiography about their pre-military leadership experience. The former service members were subsequently interviewed about their leader development experience while serving in the Army. Four primary themes emerged and outlined the lived Army leader development experience: (a) consistent first Army experiences, (b) impact of observing, (c) performing is essential, and (d) we are all leaders despite not understanding the process. A discussion about the study's purpose, review of pertinent literature, data collection and analysis process, and findings are presented. The paper

concludes with an examination of the findings; offers implications for the Army, veterans, and employers; and proposes future research.

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Dedication

From high school coaches and teachers to the office managers, program directors, and C-level executives, great leadership is not an inherent trait or behavior. This study is for those who intentionally develop their capacity to lead.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Training to develop workforce leaders remains one of the most sought after initiatives, as chief executive officers continue to increase leadership development program expenditures. The rising investment reflects the growing need for qualified, trained, and prepared leaders in today's workforce. Despite $50 billion being spent annually by employers around the world, only 37% of leaders rated their organization's leadership development program as "effective"—a percentage that has remained stagnant over the past seven years (Development Dimensions International, 2014). The primary methods of developing effective leaders have endured, with employers offering classroom-based training, on-the-job experiences, and coaching over varying lengths of time (Petries, 2014) and upwards of 75% trusting classroom-based learning (Hay Group, 2014). Perhaps not surprising, these programs have been viewed as events rather than processes, and ultimately result in minimal behavior change (Petries, 2014).

Companies who employ and train top leaders avoid performance shortfalls. Limitations faced by organizations with poorly-performing leaders include reductions in ability to: meet revenue growth goals, design innovative approaches, attain profit targets, and deliver desired customer service levels (Adler & Mills, 2008). These shortages are similar to concerns that leaders anticipate having over the next five years (Development Dimensions International, 2014). Organizations must understand their leadership talent shortages and take action to identify, assess, develop, manage, and retain the right talent (Adler & Mills, 2008). Compounding the leadership gap, the United States is entering a period where many leaders are planning to retire.

Adler and Mills (2008) noted the increasing shortage of leaders as baby boomers reach retirement age. Cook (2015) offered there are 44 million adults over the age of 65 in the United

States. On average, 10,000 Baby Boomers (1946-1964) retire each day in America (XYZ University, 2012). The aging generation is being replaced by the younger members of Generation Y (1982-1995) (2012). In 2015, those born after 1981 began outnumbering Baby Boomers in the workplace (2012). The generational shift has led to an increase in the number of promotions for Millennials. While Millennials are being promoted at a faster rate than any other generation, they have a greater opportunity for advancement because of their entry-level starting points (Development Dimensions International, 2014). As a result of their faster promotions, Millennials do not possess the same level of experience as compared with prior generations. Employers need to consider how their advancement programs correspond to leadership development efforts.

Traditional leadership development initiatives are well-intentioned but are not generating the intended impact (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014). Leadership programs are designed to develop skills and knowledge, produce behavior and attitude changes, and/or clarify values (Reinelt, Foster, & Sullivan, 2002). However, the context of the environment, failure to connect training with real-life scenarios, underestimates of the impact behavior changes can have, and neglect to measure program results are all contributing factors to the on-going struggle organizations have with leadership development **(**Gurdjian et al., 2014**)**. Each factor plays a misunderstood or overlooked role in planning leadership programming. The lack of understanding and failed measurement attempts suggests organizations are likely not generating the highest possible return on leadership development investments.

Today's workforce faces challenges unique to those of previous generations. Research from Development Dimensions International (2014) suggested organizations that have leaders prepared to meet the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) workplace of today

are 3.5 times more likely than other organizations with unprepared leaders to have a strong leadership bench. At the same time, organizations in the top 20% of performance financially are three times more likely to have VUCA-capable leaders than the bottom 20% (2014). Globalization, rapid change, and technological advances may be contributing to an even deeper need for leadership than ever before. Less than 2/3rd of organization leaders describe themselves as highly- or very-confident in their ability to meet the VUCA challenges in the workforce, while only 18% of human resource employees claim their leadership is capable of leading in a VUCA environment (Development Dimensions International, 2014). The disparity demonstrates that even leaders who believe they are prepared do not have support from their employees. While the traditional workforce admittedly struggles with their leadership development programming, another employment sector has been developing their workforce with prolonged effectiveness for generations.

The United States Army has trained millions of civilians to become qualified soldiers and leaders. Service members receive countless hours of professional training and one aspect, leader development, is incorporated into the daily regimen. The Department of the Army (2012b) argued unit training and leader development are inextricably linked. Good training supports leader development while good leaders develop strong training (2012b). Within weeks and sometimes days of donning a uniform, soldiers are often placed into leadership roles, whether leading training sessions, other soldiers, or components of missions. The Army's willingness to empower and develop soldiers at an early age and continue to do so until the service members' enlistment is complete likely plays a contributing role in why veterans are often identified by civilians as strong leaders (see Harrell & Berglass, 2012). This research study examines the U.S. Army's approach to leader development. Findings from the study may reveal how the Army,

through opinions and experiences of Post 9/11 Army veterans, has maintained consistent development of leaders while possibly providing alternative mechanisms to leadership development in the traditional workforce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the Post 9/11 veteran's lived experience with Army leader development. While leader development training manuals contribute toward understanding the Army's approach to grooming soldiers into leaders, it seemed likely additional factors contribute toward a veteran's growth. An Army veteran's experience with leader development is personal and thus loosely-defined, ensuring the former service member autonomy to define their background. Elements of the leader development experience which are not detailed in manuals may include influential leaders, subordinates, training exercises, classroom trainings, or leadership opportunities. Section chiefs, officers, company leadership, and new soldiers are a few of the people who also could have contributed to the experience veterans who agree to participate had with leader development. By allowing veterans to articulate their experiences with Army leader development while serving, underlying influences may be revealed.

Additionally, this study examined the veteran's experiences and exposure to leadership development prior to serving. The Army treats enlisted soldiers alike when they proceed through basic training, even though they come from diverse backgrounds. Alternatively, there may be significant similarities between civilians when they decide to enlist in the military. Plausible shared examples include prior work experience, sibling order, level of responsibility assumed prior to enlisting, and pride for country. By examining the demographical information and

experiences of service members prior to enlisting, findings may be substantiated through a set of commonalities.

Research Question

Question: *How do Post 9/11 Army veterans describe their lived leader development experience while serving in the U.S. armed forces?*

Need for Study

Challenges facing today's workplace have led to a demand for improvements in leadership development programming. Employees have likely either spent years working in a relatively stable environment or are new entries to the workplace and are pressed to learn how to perform in a rapidly-evolving atmosphere. The work environment of today is more complex, volatile, and unpredictable, demanding a skills change in leaders (Petrie, 2014). Approaches to leading that were effective in the past are now outdated and may be irrelevant. To address the challenges of today's workplace, employers must begin emphasizing the growth of capable, qualified leaders.

The need to understand and enhance leadership development is not a novel idea. Companies invest significant capital in their leaders yet lack an in-depth understanding of leadership development (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014b). Amagoh (2009) suggested these programs should focus on knowledge and skills that will enhance leader effectiveness, though "effectiveness" remains undefined. The lack of understanding does not suggest a lag in research. The last 30 years have seen spiking interest of leadership development in the workplace (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Between the 1980s and 2000s, the proliferation of leadership development methods was prominent, coinciding with the increasingly evolving workplace (2004). Employers began recognizing the distinctions between employees who were strong

leaders and those who were unsuccessful leading others. The interest has led to new methods of developing workplace leaders and expanded interest on the topic. Still, the methods used to develop leaders have not changed much (Petrie, 2014) and a universal definition of leadership development does not exist (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014b).

Programming related to leadership has historically been under assessed, lacked clarity, and offered little direction. As Abel, Ray, Roi, Nair, and Lannquist (2013) noted, leadership development is a complex, multifaceted approach to developing organization employees. Without clear beginning points and established outcomes, the impact of a leadership development program becomes unclear. Employers need to consider that employee participation in leadership development programming does not guarantee behavioral changes. Employees require on-going, focused development aimed toward promoting certain behaviors, skills, and knowledge, while reducing or eliminating conflicting attitudes and actions.

Improving leadership development continues to be a priority for employers. The speed at which organizations are changing, the complexity of the challenges faced, the redistribution of higher-level tasks assigned to lower level employees, and employee recruitment and retention demonstrate why leadership development is a concern (Day, 2007). The complexity of the new, rapidly evolving workplace suggests it is not possible for one person to identify problems and produce solutions (Petries, 2014). Organization employees are frequently challenged to be stronger leaders and to participate in leadership development programming, creating an opportunity to disperse responsibilities amongst employees. Companies need to understand the variety of development methods does not necessarily mean the quality of programs has improved (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). The establishment of leadership development needs to coincide with the needs of employees as well as integrate developmental experiences (2004).

Leadership development does not mean one-time, event-based programming with a finite conclusion. While elements of a program may have end points, the overall development of an employee's leadership capacities should not. Programs implemented outside of the day-to-day business environment rarely bring long-term change (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). These efforts reflect the lack of understanding companies have about leadership development programming. An organization committed to developing leaders recognizes that efforts must be on-going and integrated with one another (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). In order to develop leadership capacities, employees need the opportunity to learn and reflect on experiences and apply their learning in real-life scenarios. Incorporating leadership development into the workplace as part of an organization's business strategy is an emerging and likely necessary evolution of current practice (Alldredge, Johnson, Stolzfus, & Vicere, 2003). Interesting enough, employees share a growing interest in leadership development.

The demand for leaders matches the interest employees have in becoming more-effective leaders. According to Development Dimensions International (2014), employees receive an average of 5.4 hours of leadership development per month while having a desire for an average of 8.1 hours over the same time period. In other words, employees are actively requesting approximately one workday per month be allocated toward leadership development. Even more interesting, these same study participants requested additional formal learning and learning from others (76% and 71% respectively), as opposed to only 26% requesting more on-the-job training (Development Dimensions International, 2014). The call for additional leadership development demonstrates the recognition employees have regarding the impact of leaders in the workplace. Despite the somewhat overwhelming amount of resources allocated toward developing leaders each year in the United States, this research suggested additional training would be welcomed.

Organizations cannot view employing strong leaders as simply good fortune as effective leadership is commonly viewed as central to organizational success (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Leaders provide direction, guide organizations through change, and support employee development. Best practice organizations recognize leadership is a core component of jobs at all levels and commit to developing leadership competencies throughout an employee's tenure (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). To facilitate programming, companies are directing resources specifically at employees who can lead the initiatives.

Companies are increasingly committing personnel to developing leaders. More than 60% of human resource professionals identified at least one person in their organization as being designated to improving leader development (Society for Human Resource Management, 2008). A Google search of "leadership development jobs", conducted August 2015, revealed over 31,000 openings for positions related to leadership development in the United States. The staggering number suggests a possible shortage in individuals adequately prepared to take on the growing number of leadership development position openings. Expanding the knowledge base employees have about leadership development in diverse sectors can only enhance their capacity to work effectively with others.

After decades of research, managers have a greater understanding of what leadership is, though an effective approach to developing leaders remains cloudy. Avolio, Avey, & Quisenberry (2010) noted that although interest in leadership has been rising, little research exists related to leadership development. Many managers of today are experts on what leadership is but possess minimal understanding of the how to develop aspect (Petrie, 2014). Genis (2008) suggested knowing what to do to develop leaders is different from knowing how to develop leaders. Leadership traits such as intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, determination, and

sociability (Northouse, 2010) have repeatedly been identified by scholars but methods for attaining the desired traits—whatever they may be—has not been adequately addressed. A next step to understanding leadership is to learn how one progresses toward becoming a better leader.

The U.S. Army's approach to leader development has been overlooked by scholars and practitioners. Leadership is heavily emphasized and "expected from everyone in the Army regardless of designated authority or recognized position of responsibility" (Department of the Army, 2012c, pg. 3-11). As a result, "all soldiers must have a basis of understanding of what leadership is and does" (Department of the Army, 2012c, 1-1). U.S. Army officers have been studied and numerous discussions related to their leadership and training has taken place (see Bartone, Kelly, & Matthews, 2013; Reed & Craig Bullis, 2009; Useem, 2010) with apparent disregard for the leader development of lower-enlisted soldiers. Though no research exists about how former enlisted service members were developed into leaders, the most cited reason by employers to hire veterans and the aspect that makes them most employable is the leadership skills they possess (see Harrell & Berglass, 2012; Kropp, 2013; Robinson, 2013). If employers claim they hire veterans because of their leadership abilities, a reasonable next step is to begin understanding how they were developed as leaders.

Human resource managers who claim veterans are leaders likely have an argument. Unlike most traditional organizations, the Army trains all of its personnel to be leaders. The Department of the Army (2012a) presented that "unit training and leader development are the Army's life-blood" (p. 1). The development of leadership attributes, skills, competencies, and attitudes may be transferable across workforces. Companies often invest in external resources to provide leader development to its employees and the Army's approach could prove substantial.

Significance of the Study

Employers in the United States and around the globe are facing a readily-identified leadership shortage (Adler & Mills, 2008; Developmental Dimensions International, 2014). A survey of 13,701 managers and HR professionals across 76 countries found that individuals' confidence in their leaders declined by 25 percent from 1999–2007, and that 37 percent of respondents believe those who hold leadership positions fail to achieve their position's objectives (Howard & Wellins, 2009). Petrie (2014) goes further to suggest a war for leadership talent may be on the horizon as the only constant in leadership is that it makes a difference (Boatman & Wellins, 2011). According to a survey of 1,100 U.S.-based organizations, 56 percent of employers report a dearth of leadership talent, and 31 percent of organizations expect to have a shortage of leaders that will impede performance in the next four years (Adler & Mills, 2008). This jostling for leaders results from rapid change and advancements in economic, political, technological, and social sectors (Amagoh, 2009), demanding an increase in capable workplace leaders. These factors cloud the future while companies invest staggering resources into underwhelming leader development programs. Findings from the research may guide the reformulation of current leadership development programming.

Scholars, corporate executives, and human resource professionals have studied and attempted to establish leadership development program guidelines where positive, long-term behavioral changes occur. The plethora of approaches to developing leaders suggests the search for a universally-effective leadership training program has not yet been created. Research presented by Reinelt, Foster, and Sullivan (2002) demonstrated that there are still no well-developed theories for leadership development, grounded in program evaluation. Recent research on leadership development strategies continues to offer little clarity for how best to prepare

employees to be leaders within their own organizations. Sixty percent of organization leaders and human resource professionals revealed that formal workshops, training courses, and seminars are one of the most effective methods of leadership development available (Development Dimensions International, 2014) yet coaching, feedback, simulations, and other strategies are cutting into the traditional approach. Additionally, these same workshops and training courses do not appear to be particularly effective at increasing leadership capacities (Myatt, 2012). This discrepancy is concerning for an initiative that consumes such a high number of resources annually.

The large percentage of leaders and professionals who believe formal workshops and training courses are effective seems to contradict the 70:20:10 model, which suggests 70% of a leadership learning stems from performing one's job; 20% from developmental relationships; and 10% from coursework and training (Rabin, 2015). Long considered the primary form of leadership development, classroom type trainings are becoming a single component to developing workplace leaders (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Classroom trainings introduce concepts but may be the least critical component of leadership development (2004). Still, the significant portion of leaders and human resource professionals that believe in formal training suggests the need for further exploration. A qualitative research study on the leader development experiences from Army veterans may offer clarity on what the Army perceives as the most effective means to developing leaders and present unanticipated findings about leader development.

Leadership development has been one of the critical issues faced by companies over the last decade. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (2008), companies identified managing talent and leadership development as the top priorities in 2007 as well as

their top issues moving forward. Today's globally competitive environment demands organizations prepare leaders through leadership development and succession planning (Day, 2007). While training budgets were slashed during the great recession, leadership development programming dollars were retained (Mattiolli, 2009). Retention of leadership development programs is justifiable as a growing body of research suggests investment in leadership development fiscally makes sense (Boatman & Wellins, 2011).

Leadership development requires a substantial annual investment from employers. For example, in 2009, almost a quarter of the $50 billion that U.S. organizations spent on learning and development was targeted at leadership development (O'Leonard, 2010). In 2013, $15.5 billion was spent on leadership development—a staggering increase of 14% for the second consecutive year (Bersin by Deloitte, 2014). Estimates suggest up to $60 billion dollars have been spent on leadership development in the United States over the last five years (Bersin by Deloitte, 2014; Zenger, 2012). When considered across all organization training and development dollars, management and leadership development consumed 35 cents for every dollar in 2013—a higher percentage than any other training initiative (Bersin by Deloitte, 2014). Not surprising, high-performing companies spend more than their peers on leadership development (2014). These costs can be extrapolated across industries, as well as countries. Leadership development programs, when implemented successfully, can yield significant returns.

Research has suggested that companies with effective leaders outperform other organizations. Of employees who rated their leadership quality as excellent, 78% worked in organizations that outperformed their competition in metrics (Boatman & Wellins, 2011). Organizations are designating leadership as a top strategic priority and potential source of

competitive advantage, and are investing in its development accordingly (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009).The dependence organizations have on leadership is demonstrated by the lack of confidence employees have in the company when led by poor leaders. Though the correlation could be the result of leaders being confident because their company currently performs well, consideration for how the organization was able to outperform their competition should be given.

The lack of prepared leaders in today's workforce is not exclusive to the United States. Forty percent of leaders around the globe are marginally or entirely unprepared to lead over the next few years (Abel, Ray, Roi, Nair, & Lannquist, 2013) and only 15% of organization leaders rated their future bench strength as strong (Development Dimensions International, 2014). While the financial efforts are apparent, perceived improvements in the number and quality of leadership in the workforce remain uninspiring. Leaders grow through their practical experiences and learning from past practices; they do not grow through sitting in a classroom (Genis, 2008). This research aims to reveal how the Army develops soldiers into leaders, from the perspective of recently-discharged veterans, allowing employers an inside view of Army training and development. Findings will provide employers an opportunity to assess and critique their own leadership development beliefs, approaches, and programming.

An oversight through history is the impact of negative, toxic, or dark leaders. Furnham (2010a) noted that over 50,000 books have been published with leadership in the title and almost none have discussed the impact of failed leaders or leadership derailment. Leadership derailment—a term discussed by Inyang (2013)—represents a significant challenge for employees and is a major concern of employers. First presented by Leslie and VanVelsor (1996), leadership failure is conceptualized as a part of career failure and relates to when an appointed individual fails to deliver the set objectives from their job (Furnham, 2010b). Perhaps the

strongest argument demonstrating the effect of failed leadership was the global economic crisis of 2008, when corporate failures, scandals, and bankruptcies resulted in colossal business failures (Inyang, 2013). It seems unlikely that leadership failures will not continue without extensive, career-long emphasis on the development of leadership skills, abilities, and behaviors.

The speed at which employees are developed is also a concern. Even with new methods of developing employee leadership capacity, managers are not developing their employees fast enough or using the 'right' methods to match the environment (Petrie, 2014). Companies face immense challenges in the near future as globalization, retirements, and a motivated generation of Millennials begin moving in. The rapid turnover, coupled with expanding markets and increasing instability in the world, demand organizations be prepared and guided by capable leaders. Leaders of today and tomorrow must be able to handle what is happening both outside their organization as well as within.

Effective leaders contribute more than just added revenue. Strong leaders have the ability to nurture and develop followers, positively affect employee behavior, and impact an organization's values (Rooney, 2010). Even more important, leaders directly impact employee retention (Boatman & Wellins, 2011). These often overlooked details further demonstrate the detriment an organization without prepared leadership experience. Until research establishes how to effectively establish, implement, and evaluate leadership development programs, organizations will continue to suffer from low employee morale, high turnover, and costly ineffective organization interventions (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014b). Learning from the military's approach to leader development may benefit employers interested in yielding higher returns on their investment into employees.

Participants

Clarity for who should participate in workplace leadership programming is also a cause for concern. Current leadership development programs are often aimed at those already in leadership roles or employees identified as 'high potential'. Genis (2008) called for a culture shift from offering professional development to those faltering or new in their role to development aimed at the future pipeline of leaders. This does not suggest employees floundering in leadership roles do not need support or are incapable of learning. Rather, organizational issues are not resolved by addressing one or two employees' leadership deficiencies. Behavior changes take long periods of time to before becoming engrained in organizations. These company-wide culture shifts are the result of many employees engaging in learning and development. To ensure companies maintain a steady pipeline of future leaders, leadership development for all employees needs to be deemed critical to organization success (Genis, 2008)—something the U.S. Army argues is essential (Department of the Army, 2012b).

The structure of the Army is set that promotions only come from within. Service members progressively work their way up the chain of command and new unit leaders are only transfers from other units. As a result, all soldiers are intended to proceed through a similar type of leader development experience. The Army leader development process will not be identical for all soldiers; however, the institutional, operational, and self-development approaches to developing leaders are present. This approach to developing personnel exclusively from within is a critical distinction between workforces.

Talent management is a term often used in the traditional workforce and is comparable to the Army's training and leader development. Talent management is the implementation of

strategies and systems designed to increase productivity by developing, retaining, and utilizing people with required skills to meet current and future needs (Lockwood, 2006). Similar to the Army, organizations capable of attaining high retention levels are able to train and develop their employees to company-wide standards. Organization success is often dependent on talent management (Lockwood, 2006). When turnover is high, more resources are required to maintain a steady-performing workforce. A foundational understanding of veterans' experiences with leader development can aid talent management in the workforce. The U.S. is also facing an unavoidable loss of workers.

An aging workforce is threatening to leave the workforce in the near future. Baby Boomers are in the midst of their retirement now that all who were born during that generation (1946-1964) are over the age of 50. Additionally, forty four million people in the United States are now over the age of 64 (Cook, 2015). This cohort will remove decades of skills, knowledge, and competencies from the workplace upon retirement, thrusting younger adults to fill their roles. Of the responding HR professionals, 34% claimed managing demographics as the greatest future challenge for organizations (Society of Human Resource Management, 2008). Organizations need to be targeting and preparing the next generation of leaders if they are serious about development (Genis, 2008).

Though human resource managers are often tasked with leadership development, senior leadership, i.e. C-level executives are also part of the intended audience. Building and maintaining enough workforce leaders is not only a human resources problem (Gallo, 2010). For example, senior leaders and the CEO at GE are expected to spend significant portions of the time at the company's leadership university training and preparing future leaders (Petrie, 2014). Senior organization leaders provide direction, influence, and establish organizational culture

through their practices and approach. These leaders need to lead by example and demonstrate a willingness to examine new approaches to leadership development (Petrie, 2014). Their investment and commitment to establishing a truly developmental organization offers human resource managers and company employees opportunities to identify new training and development initiatives. Support from organization heads can redirect all training and development initiatives.

Return on Investment

Though return on investment is rarely assessed after leadership development initiatives (Hannum & Martineau, 2008), the impact of having strong leaders commands attention. According to Fulmer and Bleak (2008), less than half of leadership development programs are assessed on business impact and results. At the same time, 88% of HR professionals agreed they will need to do a better job of demonstrating the value of executive education moving forward (2008). The lack of adequate assessments challenges employee assumptions about what is effective leadership development, further contributing to the cloudiness of programming. Research on the Army's approach to leader development may also reveal assessment strategies that can be transferred across workforces.

Intent

Research from this study was not intended to address multiple related issues. Though Army veterans learn many skills, the study was not an examination of any technical skills or their contribution to leader development. Individuals who have the necessary technical skills to be successful within corresponding fields are often granted a prescribed leadership role, though beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, the research was not intended to examine the possible relationship between soldiers and deployments in relation to leadership capacities.

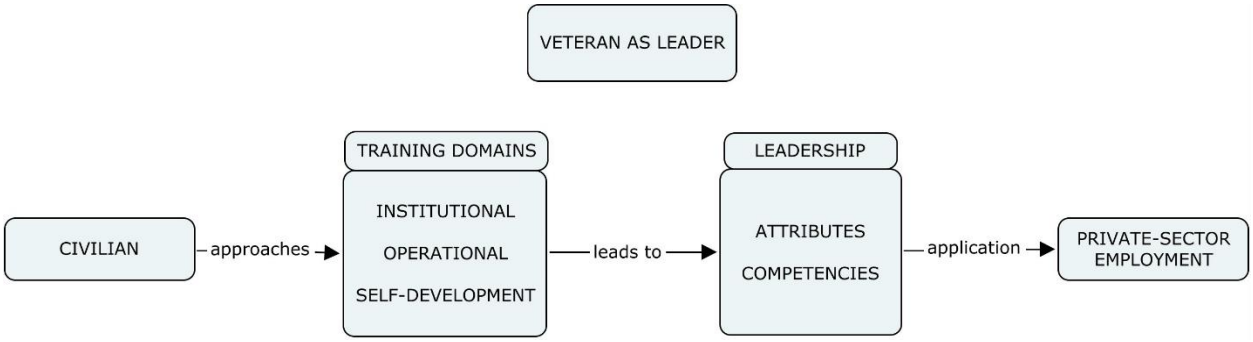
Though experiential learning is heavily-emphasized in Army leader development doctrine, human resource managers do not claim combat veterans demonstrate strong leadership abilities, and instead make an overarching statement about all veterans and their leadership.

This study also negated the Army's advanced leader development offerings. Sergeants are the lowest-level noncommissioned officer and they, along with soldiers ranking as low as private first class, are afforded opportunities to attend focused leader development programming. The Warrior Leader Course (WLC) is the first of the advanced Army leader development programs. Beyond WLC, Army soldiers who progressively rise in rank may also attend the following leadership trainings: Advanced Leader Course, Senior Leader Course, First Sergeant Academy, Army Sergeants Major Academy, and Command Sergeants Major Academy. Outside of WLC, each school is offered exclusively to noncommissioned officers and prepares soldiers for higher-level leadership responsibilities. Again, employers make the claim veterans are leaders. As such, this study inspected how Army veterans experienced the leader development programming that is intended to be offered to all soldiers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study indicates how civilians, through the Army's leader development programming, learn to become soldiers while simultaneously learning to become leaders. Participants in Army leader development receive comprehensive training aimed to develop attributes and competencies throughout the soldier's term of service (Department of the Army, 2014). The process is an integrated, sequential program that takes place in schools, the field, and civilian-led education institutions (2014). Upon transitioning out of the Army, soldiers bring key leadership qualities to the civilian-sector workforce.

The framework begins where all soldiers start—as civilians. In this preliminary stage, civilians have likely heard of leadership but may have little exposure to leaders or performing as one. The new soldier also has not been immersed in the culture, values, and training of the Army. The average age of soldiers, upon enlistment, is 22, according to the Department of the Army (2013b). As a result, leadership development in the traditional workforce is likely minimal. The first weeks of basic training are a crash course towards becoming soldiers and represents the first time these individuals become exposed to Army leader development. The development process is a sophisticated, interwoven system combining Army education, field operations, and self-development.



Two learning theories, one related to experiential learning and another through social interactions, contribute to the conceptual framework for this study. Kolb's (1984) four-stage experiential learning theory (experience; observation and reflection; forming abstract concepts; and testing in new situations) supports how adults learn to lead. Soldiers learn about operations and leadership through observing and interacting with leaders on a daily basis. They reflect on the situations, develop an approach based on their own interpretations, and apply in similar contexts. Learning through challenging, unfamiliar experiences is identified as one of the most effective methods for soldiers to develop as leaders (Department of the Army, 2012b). Soldiers learn from their mistakes and are expected to experiment with non-textbook solutions to

problems (2012b). The four stages do not have a starting point but rather are circular and continuous. Soldiers also learn to lead through their social interactions.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory suggested learning occurs in the context of observing and internally processing our surroundings. The Army expects leaders to lead by example (Department of the Army, 2012a). Leaders must serve as constant role models, maintaining Army standards and providing examples of effectiveness through their actions (2012a). After observing and processing, soldiers model behaviors that generated positive responses and avoid ineffective tactics. The approach is continuously refined until subordinates garner the respect and support needed to be effective leaders.

Leadership Definitions:

Abilities—an acquired or natural capacity or talent that enables an individual to successfully perform their job.

Army leader—anyone who, by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility, inspires, and influences people to accomplish organizational goals.

Army leadership—the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.

Army leader development—a deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process grounded in the Army values.

Army officer—those of the rank lieutenant and above.

Army veteran—any person who has served in the U.S. Army, regardless of deployment or active-duty status.

Army warrant officer—one who holds rank by virtue of warrant.

Attributes—desired internal characteristics of a leader.

Competencies—skills and learned behaviors that contribute to superior performance.

Enlisted soldier—member of the Army who ranks below a commissioned officer and executes the mission.

Institutional domain—generally all organizations and activities in the Army that provide initial and subsequent functional training and professional education for soldiers and Army civilians.

Knowledge—the accumulation and organization of information over time.

Leader—a person who influences a collective group working toward common goals.

Leader development—emphasizes the individual, their personal power, knowledge, intrapersonal relationship, and skills including self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation.

Leadership—a finite or on-going process of establishing purpose and providing direction for a collective working toward common goals.

Leadership development—a process of expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles; a process of growth and capacity expansion that inherently involves multiple individuals.

Leadership knowledge—theoretical or practical understanding of a topic.

Leadership skills—applied knowledge developed through practice.

L*eadership traits*—personal characteristics commonly-associated with leaders.

Manager development—the process by which individuals improve their capabilities and learn to perform effectively in managerial roles.

Operational domain—encompasses all training and education in deployable units and is where leaders undergo the bulk of their development.

Self-development—includes planned and goal-oriented learning that reinforces and expands the depth and breadth of an individual's knowledge base and self-awareness.

Service member/soldier—a person who serves in an Army.

S*kills*—one's ability to use their knowledge and competencies to achieve a set of goals or objectives.

Traditional workforce- collective group of for-profit businesses and respective employees in the United States.

Training—the skill, knowledge, or experience acquired through practice or education.

Limitations

This research study had four clear limitations which may have influenced the findings. Limitations identified are a *small sample size, representative sample pool, responses based off memory,* and *researcher's prior Army experience.* Each limitation is discussed below.

A small sample size and representative sample pool are inter-related. Qualitative research often is labor intensive and large sample sizes can be impractical (Mason, 2010). The intent of this study was not to generalize to all veterans' experience with leader development but rather propose a base understanding of leader development experiences across military occupations and job categories. Ten Army veterans, representative of diverse job categories, participated and provided an introduction to the overarching Army leader development process. Five of the ten job categories and seven military occupation specialties were represented in the study.

The study asked veterans about their leadership and leader development experiences prior to enlisting and during their military service. Veterans were requested to recall specific and general experiences related to their interactions with leaders, instances of leading others, and influences on their perceptions of leadership. Long-term memory is information acquired over the course of an experience and persists so it can be retrieved long after occurring (Smith & Kosslyn, 2006). While some experiences can be remembered with incredible accuracy, others are

less accurate. Smith and Kosslyn (2006) described the 'generation effect'—a concept suggesting people learn best by doing. For Army veterans and leadership research, people develop their leadership capacities by performing as leaders. Although memory recall about particular instances of leader development may not be entirely accurate, participants likely recollected the instances they feel most directly impacted who they are as leaders today. The accuracy of their memory was less important than the subsequent interpretation of what was recalled and the corresponding influence on the veterans' leadership style today.

A fourth limitation was the researcher's own experience with Army leader development. The researcher spent six years in the Army National Guard and experienced a one-year deployment. This background likely enhanced the quality of interview questions while unintentionally impacting the findings. Though the researcher conducted multiple data quality checks, the military background may have influenced the analysis process. The traditional workforce suggests veterans are leaders and, as the researcher is a veteran, quality checks were important. To reduce researcher bias, the researcher reviewed findings with study participants and received feedback from three colleagues who had no prior experience in the military.

Assumptions

The research included several assumptions, one being veterans believe they have participated in leader development. Army leadership doctrine is abundant, suggesting veterans have been exposed to significant leader development. This assumes veterans (a) know they have participated in leader development and (b) can articulate those experiences. Three domains are used to develop Army leaders, though training is not conducted for lower-enlisted soldiers detailing how the Army will develop their leadership behaviors, styles, and capacities. Study participants were afforded the opportunity to define their own leader development experience and articulate beliefs about their own capacities.

Veteran participation in leader development also assumed there would be some share experiences. Each veteran had a unique experience as a result of the countless prior influences on their leader development and during their time in service. Unit leaders, active duty time, job responsibilities, and deployment lengths were anticipated to contribute to how the veteran perceived leader development. Though no relationship was identified between job category and leader development beliefs, additional research is needed with a larger sample size.

This study's intended goal was to understand Army leader development through the experience former members had while serving in the armed forces. Findings may contribute to future leadership development programs in the traditional workforce. The assumption may or may not be realistic as leadership training in the Army likely consumes more hours than available in the business environment, while also providing a more forgiving learning environment (Department of the Army, 2012b). Employers may not be willing or have the capability to invest additional time and financial resources into the development of their employees. The purpose of the Army is to defend the nation and the requirements of military service are quite distinct from those of employees in the non-military workforce. This assumption did not impede the research; however, consideration of the transferability and applicability between workforces is discussed in chapter five.

Participants in the study were identified under strict criteria, including Army veterans did not participate in a leadership development program offered by an employer. Leadership development is a personal experience and many factors can and do influence one's leadership style. The veteran's family, friends, professional background, and community involvement are likely to contribute to leadership perspectives. During the study, participants were asked about their prior leader development experiences through questions related to the stated influences.

The strongest assumption is that Army veterans are in fact leaders. The Army expects all soldiers to develop into leaders but all soldiers are not effective leading others. A pilot study conducted by the researcher found many soldiers in leadership roles were argued to be poor leaders, as described by study participants. The influence poor leaders had on participant leader development experiences supports the argument that though the development training should be similar for all veterans, the intended outcome is not always met. Additionally, a 2010 study found nearly each of the Army's institutional education course characteristics had less than 66% favorability, part of a downward trend (Hatfield, Steele, Riley, Keller-Glaze, & Falleson, 2011). Findings from the same research suggested leader development training was not expected to improve (2011). The dichotomy between veterans and the traditional workforce's perceptions about veterans as leaders presents an interesting distinction.

Conclusion

The consistent theme from leadership studies suggests organizations with strong leadership outperform organizations with average or poor leaders (Theleman, 2011). Traditional leadership development programs have not led to intended increases in workforce leaders (Boatman & Wellins, 2011). Though overwhelming amounts of financial contributions have been allocated toward leadership development programming, organizations still identify a lack of leadership as their greatest challenge today. Relatively new developmental approaches, including executive coaching, developmental assignments, rotational assignments, and global assignments have all been reviewed and researched by scholars though few appear to directly and immediately enhance the quality and capacity of leaders in the workforce. Examining Army leader development has not been previously conducting and rarely been considered, even while

employers continue to identify the veterans' top strength is their leadership abilities. This study begins contributing to an under-assessed organization's approach to developing leaders.

Chapter one introduced leader development, a statement of the problem, the research question, significance of study, conceptual framework, identified limitations, and offered assumptions. Chapter two is a review of the literature on leadership development. The chapter begins with leadership and leadership development origins, examines leadership theories throughout history, provides a brief overview of recent leadership development discussions in organizations, and offers a comprehensive examination of the Army's leader development program. Chapter three presents the philosophical framework guiding the research, data collection techniques, data analysis, data quality check, and the study's anticipated timeline. The researcher offers four themes from the data collection and analysis process in chapter four. Chapter five is a review of the themes, a discussion about the implications as a result of the identified themes, and presents suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

This chapter offers a review of research and key terms related to leadership development. Beginning with a historical analysis, the chapter will examine the definitions of *leader, leadership, and leadership development*. Following, the author will introduce leadership development in today's workforce and critique the terms *management development*, *leader development,* and leadership development. The chapter will transition into U.S. Army leader development for a discussion about the primary types and levels of Army leadership, the role leader's play, the core competencies of Army leaders, and the methods used to develop civilians into soldiers who are leaders. Readers will be introduced to leadership development, the Army's approach to leader development, key Army leader development terms and models, as well as types and levels of leadership within the Army. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the issues and significance related to leader development research.

Method

Two areas of study contributed to this literature review. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's online database was used to identify key moments in leadership development history and research in the workplace. Search terms *leader* and *leadership development* were combined with the following criteria: English-written peer-reviewed articles and reviews, research, and post-1999. Research and reviews of leadership development have greatly expanded since 1999 and provided sufficient material. A total of 764 periodicals were returned and abstracts perused for content. Articles, books, and book chapters were primarily used though applicable webpages contribute to the review. In addition, manuscripts referenced from the initial search were browsed for content.

A separate search of U.S. Army leadership doctrine and research was also conducted using the military and government collection through Ebscohost. The term *Army leader development* was searched with a filter on academic journals, books, and reviews written since 2001. The search yielded a return of 105 manuscripts. Abstracts and chapter titles were reviewed for content. Leader development papers describing the Army's approach, methodology, models, and application were included. Documents examining leader development from an officer, warrant officer, or non-commissioned officer perspective were included though often outside the scope of the review.

Additional sources were identified through the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center website, the Army Research Institute, and the *Military Review Journal*. The terms *leadership* and *leader development* were searched on each organization's search bar. The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center is the basis for Army training, the Army Research Institute includes a Leader Development Unit, while the Military Review is the Army's foremost publications leader with articles distributed by scholars, civilian contractors, and military leaders. Army doctrine and training publications provided by the Combined Arms Center for Army Leadership were thoroughly inspected. For both searches, manuscripts written after 2000 were prioritized as leader development has evolved since the September 11, 2001 attacks. Still, the Army has undergone extensive revisions over the past 150 years. As a result, publications written prior to 2001 contributed to both portions of the Army leader development and leadership development literature review.

This literature review was an examination of the research, articles, books, and doctrine related to leadership, as well as leader- and leadership development in both the Army and contemporary workforce. Priority was given to manuscripts with focus on leadership

development in the corporate sector of the United States—as opposed to other formalized organizations. Documents emphasizing leadership development in education or healthcare were largely ignored as they were outside the scope of this review. The review excluded research from non-profit organizations and emphasized work completed in the United States, however, critical research and historically-significant contributions to the field of leader and leadership development were included. Though educators, non-profit employees, and members of other branches of service may benefit, the target audience is human resource managers and senior organization leadership in the traditional workforce, as well as current Army leaders and veterans. This review provides a brief history of leaders, leadership, and leadership development, while considering leader development beliefs and training over the history of the U.S. Army.

Leaders and Leadership

Leaders are individuals who possess and execute their ability to lead others. Winston and Patterson (2006) defined a leader as someone who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more and provides focus for followers toward the organization's mission and objectives. A leader does not have to be appointed by promotion or singled out; rather, a leader may be pre-identified or grow from a particular project where others are influenced as a result of an individual's actions. Leaders achieve influence by conveying a vision of the future in clear terms that resonate with followers in a manner they can understand, interpret, and process into future action (Winston & Patterson, 2006). At the same time, leaders recognize the diversity in groups, achieve unity of common values without destroying elements of individuality, allow for innovative flexibility, and demonstrate commitment to particular values (2006). From a historical perspective, individuals identified as leaders have been studied for generations though factors that make them effective remain a significant discussion topic.

Though leaders have been identified, voted on, idolized, and followed for thousands of years, a comprehensive understanding of the distinguishing factors that make people 'leaders' remains relatively novel. Thomas Carlyle is generally accepted to be the first scholar to propose distinctions between followers and leaders through his publications about heroes, hero-worship, and heroics in history (see Carlyle, 2008). His work suggested that leaders were born, though heroes both shaped and were shaped by their times (Sorenson & Kinser, 2013). John Stuart Mill continued the discussion about heroes and their backgrounds (2013) until Francis Galton proposed the first leadership theory--the *great man theory*—in 1869 (Galton, 1869). The theory argued "personal qualities defining effective leadership were naturally endowed [and] passed from generation to generation" (Zaccaro, 2007, p. 6). It was not until the 20th century that the term *leadership* began to be more-deeply explored.

The great man theory led to persistent research by scholars attempting to isolate traits possessed by leaders. Building off Galton's great man theory, the *trait approach* was proposed and subsequently disregarded by Ralph Stogdill in 1948. Stogdill suggested a universal set of traits could not be identified to distinguish leaders and followers (1948). Early in the 20th century and throughout, leadership traits were assessed as one of the first systematic attempts to understand leadership (Northouse, 2010). Through examining the traits of those identified as "great", including social, political, and military leaders, scholars believed they could distinguish leaders from followers (Bass, 1990). Scholars were determined but unsuccessful in their attempts to identify traits that distinguish leaders. Still, Bass (1990), Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), and Zaccaro's (2007) more recent research demonstrate continued interest in understanding the relationship between leaders and traits.

Since the ‘great man’ and leadership traits theories, numerous others have been proposed. The following diagram outlines 11 of the most prominent leadership theories through history.

Leadership Theory	Primary Researcher(s)	Year Proposed	Premise
Great Man	Carlyle/Galton	1849/1869	Leaders are born; possess unique attributes; destined to be leaders
Traits	Stogill; Kirkpatrick and Locke; Zaccaro	1948	Personal characteristics associated with leader effectiveness; emphasizes certain set of traits critical to effective leadership
Skills	Katz	1955	Effective leadership depends on a set of skills as opposed to particular traits
Style/Task	Blake and Mouton	1964	Leadership behaviors and actions contribute to accomplishment of goal; leaders have dominant though unrefined styles of leadership
Contingency	Fiedler	1964	A leader's effectiveness depends on relationship between leader style and context; certain styles are effective in particular situations
Situational	Hersey and Blanchard	1969	Type of leadership required depends on the situation; what works in one situation may or may not be effective in another
Servant	Greenleaf	1970	Leaders first and foremost want to serve others; focus on development and well-being of the community and those they serve
Path-goal	Evans/House	1970/1971	Considers the approach leaders take to motivate followers to accomplish goals
Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)	Dansereau, Graen, and Haga	1975	Relationship between leader and subordinates is the centerpoint and determination of effective leadership
Transformational	Burns	1978	Emphasis on positive development of others through coaching, mentoring, enhancing moral standards and intrinsic motivation
Authentic	George/Avolio and Gardner	2003/2005	Leaders are genuine/real, their actions based on personal values, and relationships formed with followers are based on trust and integrity

Leadership literature has become one of the more studied components of training and development initiatives, though the term itself remains stubbornly abstract. In 1978, Burns argued leadership as being one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. Fiedler (1996) noted that while the 40 years prior had seen considerable strides in our understanding of leadership, there remained a great deal of moaning about a lack of knowing

anything worthwhile. A study by Winston and Patterson (2006) revealed over 90 variables of leadership and argued much discussion about the topic seems to be "a lot of blind men describing a moving elephant" (p. 7). For the 50 years prior, leadership was generally conceptualized as an individual skill someone possessed (Day, 2000) while Fiedler (1996) observed pre-1945 leadership research was concerned with identifying the traits, behaviors, and personality patterns persisting in those already identified as leaders. Since the 1960s, researchers have explored the knowledge, competencies, behaviors, attributes, and abilities leaders are expected to possess, as well as the interactions, environments, and situations leaders may find themselves in.

As originally proposed, leadership as an individual skill ignored the complex, multidimensional phenomena of leadership as social and environmental factors contribute to one's ability to effectively lead (Algahtani, 2014; DePree, 1989; Fiedler, 1996). Leadership is part of a dynamic and ever-evolving pattern of behaviors and interactions among organization stakeholders (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008). The many factors contributing to our understanding of leadership have presented a difficult challenge. Over 350 definitions of leadership were offered by the 1980s (Bennis & Nannus, 1985); a number that has continued to grow over the past 30 years. Northouse (2010) concisely argued "leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p.3)—a definition that appears to have gained wider acceptance (eg. Algahtani, 2014; Peterson & Kim, 2012; Shuck & Herd, 2012). The Northouse definition suggests an end-point as well as a single goal—a dilemma when considering the influence of leadership on an organization. A revised, updated definition seems appropriate. For the purpose of this leader development study, *leadership* is a finite or on-going process of establishing purpose and providing direction for a collective working toward common goals.

Consensus appears to have been reached in one area of leadership research—people are not born with the tools necessary to be strong leaders; instead, they are developed over time through their experiences and various forms of education. Leadership can be learned and taught (Brungardt, 1996), whether through classroom education or on-the-job experiences. Though leadership research has primarily focused on adults, Brungardt (1996) and Whitehead (2009) have explored leadership development of those under the age of 18. As Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010) noted, leadership development does not begin at adulthood; rather, an individual's character and qualities can begin to be developed in the home environment through interactions with parents. Brungardt's (1996) and Whitehead's (2009) research provides support that all employees, regardless of experience, education, or age level, are likely capable of learning how to lead.

Still, the field of leadership has primarily focused on the leader and neglected other equally important aspects of the process (Rost, 1991). The environment a leader works in, the level of knowledge an organization and employee possesses, the situation where leadership is needed, and the people one leads represent some of the contributing factors. Coworkers, subordinates, friends, family, clergymen, high-profile figures, teachers, and a host of others can contribute to one's understanding of leadership (Whitehead, 2009). To further advance leadership development programming, scholars need to consider all of the factors simultaneously influencing leaders.

Leadership Development

Training employees to be stronger leaders has only existed since around the turn of the 20th century. At that time, educationists and statesmen began to believe the real rulers of the modern world would be the business men who were capable of managing large industry

(Oldham, 1909). The education of American businessmen articulated the interest universities were having in the relationship between businessmen and education. For the first time, people began considering that strong leadership contributed to an organization's success. Oldham (1909) went on to note that the greatness of nations would depend more and more on their capacity to produce "capable masters of large enterprises" (p. 327). As a result, universities began questioning how to leverage their capabilities to prepare leaders in the traditional workforce. The interest, however, did not immediately translate to an area of research.

It was not for another half-century that the discussion of developing leaders was reintroduced in the literature. Worthy (1955) credited progressive business organizations for turning to business schools to recruit their prospective employees because the students were more likely to be serious about being in business. At the same time, schools did a poor job of developing leaders because they did not know what and how to teach leadership (Worthy, 1955). A connection was being made about the lack of communication between schools and businesses, which crippled education providers' ability to prepare leaders. Worthy's piece was a call for business leaders and school administrators to take responsibility for the need to prepare students to be capable leaders through advancing research. From then on, interest in leadership development has steadily risen with nearly 600 peer-reviewed articles published in the 1960s through the nearly 20,000 since 2010.

Leadership development has grown as an area of interest for researchers and practitioners--particularly over the last 10 to 15 years (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). Still, leadership development may remain the least understood component of leadership research and theory (Avolio, 2007). Though several scholars have proposed characterizations, a universally-agreed upon definition of leadership development does not yet exist (Kirchner &

Akdere, 2014b). Jennings (1961) may have written the first manuscript about how to develop organization leaders, arguing leaders need time to develop their intellectual capacity through time off, where they can focus on study and self-awareness. Some time later, scholars began presenting their own arguments about what it means to be developed into a leader. McCauley, Moxley, and VanVelsor (1998) defined leadership development as expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles. Day (2000) argued leadership development involves an interaction between the individual leader and the social-cultural environment they reside. Hart, Conklin, and Allen (2008) added that leadership development means expanding an organization's capacity to generate leadership potential within the organization to achieve goals. It is a process of growth and capacity expansion that inherently involves multiple individuals (Day et al., 2014; Dixon, 1993). Today's "leadership development literature needs to explain how these collective leadership processes develop and evolve over time" (DeRue & Myers, 2014, p. 834).

Practitioners and scholars alike need to understand the purpose and goal of leadership development. Leadership development programs can impact retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, and workplace safety (Abel et al., 2013). Theleman (2011) suggested that the first step for an organization's leadership development plan is to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needing further refinement. The understanding provides employees and facilitators a shared perspective of the program's goal and focus. Effective leadership development is not based on a single intervention; rather it is the consistent implementation of any leadership development practice (Day & Halpin, 2001). Though no simple models of leadership development exist, employees develop fastest when they feel and can take responsibility for their progress (Petrie, 2014). By providing reasons for participating in leadership development

programs, employees can develop their own level of buy-in as opposed to feeling forced to participate.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Leadership development aims to improve the capacity one has with leading others. Though leadership attributes, traits, qualities, and competencies have been discussed within the contemporary workforce, the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) a leader possesses is most-often linked in today's organizations. The use of at least seven overarching and poorly distinguished terms presents a need for examination amongst the list of leadership factors. Northouse (2010) suggested abilities falls under a leader's individual attributes whereas skills and knowledge rest under leadership competencies. His organization of the terms is one of many possible models of leadership. A brief discussion of KSAs is offered below.

The knowledge a leader has is the first of three identified contributing factors for effective leaders. Knowledge is defined as the accumulation and organization of information over time (Northouse, 2010). The knowledge possessed by leaders directly influences their capacity to define and solve organizational problems (Mumford, Zaccarro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). Northouse (2010) went on to argue knowledge results from the development of complex schema for both learning and sorting information. Prior experiences and areas of expertise enhance a leader's ability to address future problems. Each leader will have a unique knowledge base upon which to draw from based their past experiences. Still, Petrie's (2014) research suggested many of today's leaders are expected to have an understanding of cultural values, new technology, and the interconnectedness of systems and business communities as part of their foundational knowledge. In addition, the method used by leaders to incorporate their knowledge into an organization is significant.

Lakshman (2008) stressed the important role a leader plays in organizational knowledge management. While the knowledge a leader possesses is important, ineffectively disseminating knowledge or oversharing may be even more critical. The knowledge leaders have "is a prized asset, some of which needs to be protected at any cost, while some has to be shared for it to flourish and thrive or be forever lost" (Lakshman, 2008, p. 3). Leaders with knowledge know how to describe and articulate an organization's processes, products, people, certain tasks, policies, and the interrelatedness of each (Northouse, 2010). The knowledge possessed is used to enhance the organization as opposed to being withheld from others. Perhaps most interesting, very little research exists on the relationship between effective leadership and the knowledge possessed—and dispersed.

Effective leaders are also expected to have a series of skills. Katz (1955) first presented the skills approach to leadership and researchers have been examining since (see Bass, 1990; Mumford et al., 2000). Leadership skills are defined as one's ability to use their knowledge and competencies to achieve a set of goals or objectives (Northouse, 2010). Katz (1955) identified three types of skills expected of leaders: technical, human, and conceptual and argued they are different from traits or qualities of leaders. Technical skills involve the proficiency in a specialized area, analytical abilities, and ability to use tools and techniques (Katz, 1955). "Human skill is knowledge about and ability to work with people" (Northouse, 2010, p. 40). Finally, conceptual skill aligns with one's ability to work with ideas and concepts (Northouse, 2010). Though dependent on the field of practice, the set skills a leader has contributes to their capacity to lead. For today's workforce, Petrie (2014), and Mumford et al. (2000) identified the following necessary skills for effective leaders: adaptability, creativity, problem-solving, social

judgement, perspective taking, social perceptiveness, behavioral flexibility, and social performance.

Leadership abilities are the third element of effective leaders in the contemporary workforce. Abilities are an acquired, natural capacity, or talent that enables an individual to successfully perform their job (Business Dictionary, n.d.). Leadership abilities identified include general cognitive abilities and crystallized cognitive ability (Northouse, 2010). General cognitive ability is similar to intelligence, involving perceptual processing, information processing, general reasoning skills, creative and divergent thinking, and memory (2010). Crystallized cognitive ability is the intellectual ability learned and acquired over time, including ability to comprehend complex information, learn new skills and information, and communicate in oral and written forms (Connelly et al., 2000). As was noted earlier, the knowledge and skills of a leader are incorporated into descriptions of leadership abilities—an issue for leadership studies.

Leadership Development in Human Resource Development

Organizations have demonstrated a growing interest in developing their employees' leadership capacities since the 1960s (see Jennings, 1961; Odiorne, 1962). Noel and Charan (1988) highlighted GE's Management Development Institute and the potential for it to lead to an additional $200 million in annual sales. The company's approach to developing leaders was unique in that the program ran through the company and used a combination of real world problems and action learning. Jack Welch, then CEO of GE, recognized the impending era of global competition and suggested a transformation was needed to develop employee leadership capacities (Noel & Charan, 1988). The comprehensiveness and impact of the program led to immediate success and widespread interest from other organizations.

The terms “leadership development” and “leader development” have been used interchangeably. Day (2000) presented an important distinction between leader and leadership development in his review, suggesting leader development emphasizes the individual, their personal power, knowledge, intrapersonal relationship, and skills including self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation. Alternatively, leadership development is a social aspect bringing in the relational commitments leaders have to followers, and stresses social awareness and social skills in order to be effective (2000). DeRue and Myers (2014) added that “leadership development refers to building the mutual commitments and interpersonal relationship that are necessary for leading-following processes to unfold effectively within a given social context” (p. 835). Over the years, much research on leadership development has actually been studies on leader development (VanVelsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010).

Distinguishing best practices between the two has not been well-addressed, as quite often leadership development includes coaching, mentoring, and skills development—approaches that would traditionally seem to emphasize the individual (see Development Dimensions International, 2014; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Lord & Hall, 2005). Similarly, development approaches such as experiential learning and new job assignments could fall under both leader and leadership development (see McCauley, DeRue, Yost, & Taylor, 2013). The poor distinction between the two fields of thought contributes to the insufficient understanding scholars have on developing leadership within organizations (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Whether simplifying or further confusing the terms, DeRue and Myers (2014) combined leader- and leadership development, defining leadership development as a process of preparing individuals and collectives to effectively engage in leading-following interactions. Even more perplexing,

management development has also been used interchangeably leaving practitioners stumbling for clarity or overlooking the issue entirely.

Management development has served as a synonym with the preceding terms. While leaders and managers share some similarities, i.e. working with people and goal management, leadership and management are distinguishable (Northouse, 2010). One of the first distinctions came when Zaleznick (1977) suggested managers should be rational, bureaucratic, dutiful, and practical individuals, whereas leaders are visionaries, experimental, and twice-born dynamo. Yukl (1989) noted that managers have a responsibility to maintain a smoothly functioning workplace while leaders should be testing current positions and examining long-term goals. Kotter (1990) further added that management provides order and consistency to organizations. Management was created as a way to reduce chaos in organizations by helping them run more efficiently (Northouse, 2010). One could simplify that management development emphasizes the process and daily functioning of an organization while leaders offer influence and direction. Thus, management development may be best defined as the process by which individuals improve their capabilities and learn to perform effectively in managerial roles (Baldwin & Padgett, 1993).

Leadership development in the traditional workforce has contributed to the Army's approach to developing soldiers and vice versa. While Day and Halpin (2001) considered industry best practices in their technical report on Army leadership, Duffy (2006) reported on the link between veterans and CEOs in the traditional workforce. Each institution recognizes the value of leadership within their organization though approach the development of personnel differently. In the case of the United States, leadership is synonymous with the armed forces

(Kirchner & Akdere, 2014a). An examination of the Army's history and methodology toward developing leaders seems appropriate.

Army Leader Development

Leader development in the United States Army is a core component of a soldier's training and growth. Rather than offer leadership training to high-potential soldiers or underperforming leaders, the Army embeds leader development into its regimen. The training soldiers participate in is emphasized greatly, challenging all members to develop their leadership skills (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014a). From day one through the end of an enlistment, soldiers participate in leader development training (Wong, Bliese, & McGurk, 2003). Though the approach taken by the Army has evolved through history, the values soldiers are expected to attain and clear prescriptions for how soldiers are expected to act have remained consistent (Wong et al., 2003). The Army has and continues to view leadership as an integral part of a successful unit and emphasizes the need to develop soldiers into leaders capable of handling complex, difficult, and often stressful missions.

History of Leader Development

This brief review of historically significant times in the establishment of leader development in the U.S. Army is not intended to be comprehensive but rather offer a foundational understanding of the growth and development of leadership training. The U.S. Army has not always valued leadership, much like the traditional workforce. During the late 1700s and early 1800s, militias were formed and maintained across colonies to protect against Indians and European rivals (Millet & Maslowski, 1994). At the time, training documents were rare, leaving little in place to describe how soldiers should be trained (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014a). Instead, soldiers were expected to participate in infrequent training days with other unit

members (Millet & Maslowski, 1994). The lack of established training complimented the irregularity within unit sizes and structures. Whereas some regiments ranged in size from 590 to 649, Connecticut allowed up to 1,000 (Ganoe, 1942). There were stories of one company consisting of two officers for 59 men while another group of 15 was led by a single officer (1942). These officers were appointed their title based on ability to enlist a set quota (1942). Not surprisingly, a great deal of frustration often resulted from the nonexistence of a consistent structure. The lack of uniform training and policy did not last long.

Until the Revolutionary War, soldiers were trained with few standards in place. Around 1778, a leader began to emerge who recognized the impact of formalized training (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014a). Friedrich von Steuben, a Prussian volunteer, served as George Washington's Inspector General during the Revolutionary War. Von Steuben was appointed to oversee training efforts of soldiers at Valley Forge ("Steuben Society of America," n.d.). He determined that training would be most effective with consistent practices across the troops. "Eventually, von Steuben translated his work into the Army's first official document and established uniform practices for each service member" (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014a, p. 356).

The first extensive set of training manuals were released beginning around 1907. James A. Moss, a high-ranking officer in the Army, began writing a series of at least 38 periodicals and books on topics ranging from the *Privates' Manual* to the *Noncommissioned Officers' Manual,* to an *Officer's Manual* from 1907-1920. In his *Manual of Military Training*, Moss discussed the value of military training and its contribution to teaching loyalty, respect, and self-confidence (1917). The content often emphasized how following protocol contributed to a stronger Army, as leader development was not yet recognized as a part of soldier development. Still, the manuals provided much guidance for unit leaders when providing training to their soldiers.

The Army developed their first leadership program in 1962—the U.S. Army Leader Preparation Program (Hood, 1967). The program was created to begin offering focused leadership training to potential noncommissioned officers and develop their skills while still participating in basic training and advanced individual military training (Showel, Taylor, & Hood, 1966). Participants were identified through their aptitude area scores, interpersonal skills, adaptability to Army living, and willingness to participate (1966). The purpose of the program was to build confidence in high-potential soldiers through developing their leadership skills in both classroom and field settings—thus identifying two of the three pillars used by the Army today to develop capable leaders.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) was established in 1973 for training reform and leadership development. Since then, the command has evolved to identify four primary functions: recruit and train soldiers; develop adaptive leaders; guide the Army through doctrine; and shape the Army by building and integrating formations, capabilities, and material (Training and Doctrine Command, 2014). At the center of it all is developing innovative, agile leaders through the Army profession, leader development, professional education, and mission command (2014). These areas of emphasis demonstrate how leader development is an integral component of a strong Army. TRADOC is integrated into nearly everything within the Army and has become the birthplace of Army leaders (McCauley & Bohman, 2012). The TRADOC now executes its mission through six major subordinate centers and commands as well as 32 Army schools organized under eight Centers of Excellence (Training and Doctrine Command, 2014). Over the last 15 years, at least 568 manuscripts have been published, while at the same time, TRADOC has at least 89 doctrines currently being used

that include the term leader development. Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development* has been updated repeatedly over that time and is the primary doctrine used for developing Army leaders.

Defining Army Leaders and Army Leader Development

The definition of an Army *leader* remains consistent, regardless of command level. An Army leader is anyone who, by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility, inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals (Department of the Army, 2006; Michelson, 2013). Army leaders establish a learning environment that includes treating people the way they would want to be treated and is based off core values (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). Soldiers can be assigned to a leadership role or choose to lead during opportune times. Leaders are found at all three levels of leadership currently identified by the Army: direct, organizational, and strategic, and assume progressively broader responsibilities (Department of the Army, 2015). Successful leaders demonstrate control of their emotions, empower soldiers, accept failure as a part of learning, build a positive climate, show care, and provide feedback to subordinates (Keys-Roberts, 2014). The time invested in developing soldiers into leaders likely contributes to the perception many civilians have about the leadership qualities veterans bring with them when transitioning into the traditional workforce. The researcher asserts a leader is anyone who, with or without an authoritative role, influences others to perform in a manner conducive to a soldier's responsibility and who effectively leads the accomplishment of missions.

Similar to the contemporary workforce, leadership is a complex phenomenon in the Army and can be difficult to understand (Fallesen, Keller-Glaze, & Curnow, 2011). Still, Army doctrine has projected its current beliefs about leadership. For Army soldiers, whether on active or reserve status, *leadership* is a process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization (Department of the

Army, 2012a; Michelson, 2013). In addition to influencing, leadership is about providing interpretations to what is important to an organization's functioning for each of the constituencies (Department of the Army, 2012a; Department of the Army, 2006; Paparone, 2004). Leadership in the Army is an on-going process where leaders are expected to continuously evaluate personal and unit performance. Army leaders are responsible for the fundamental principles of leadership and instill leadership in others (Department of the Army, 2012a). All soldiers, no matter their rank, are expected to demonstrate their leadership (Department of the Army, 2006). In this study, Army leadership is defined as the process of influencing others through purpose, guidance, feedback, and character—all contributing to the accomplishment of the Army's mission.

The Army uses *leader development* in doctrine when discussing its approach to developing soldiers as capable leaders, differing from the more commonly-used leadership development in alternative traditional career fields. While leadership development involves multiple individuals, leader development is primarily aimed at the individual (Day et al., 2014). The approach assumes mid- and long-term commitments to improve leader qualities by merging the influences of factors including military education, self-study, experiences, feedback, reflection, and coaching (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). Leader development is a deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process grounded in the Army's values (Department of the Army, 2015; Department of the Army 2013b; Department of the Army, 2012a; Schroeder, 2003). It is not the outcome from a series of classes or the role of an individual (Crissman, 2013) but rather a holistic, comprehensive approach of building leadership capacities in the Army. Leader development involves recruiting, accessing, developing, assigning, promoting, and retaining leaders, while challenging them with greater responsibility (Department of the Army,

2012a). Soldiers are continuously developed to be more competent, be experts within their profession, and be stronger leaders through all stages of their term of service (Department of the Army, 2012a; Department of the Army, 2006).

The process leads to lifelong synthesizing of the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from education, training, and experience (Department of the Army, 2013a). Leaders must recognize that leader development is a balanced process between various components (Ozmer, 2014). Army doctrine provides fundamental principles for developing innovative leaders prepared for today's challenges (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). These principles guide the comprehensive, long-term leader development program experienced by soldiers. Though the Army emphasizes teamwork, each individual is expected to learn, empowered to lead, and challenged to develop.

Types of Leadership

The Army identifies formal and informal as the two types of leadership available to soldiers. Formal (or legitimate) leadership is designated by rank or position (Department of the Army, 2012a). In this setting, formal leaders have authority, are likely responsible for subordinates, and have earned a position or rank based on distinguishing factors such as time of service or military schools completed. Formal Army leaders can be broken down into three categories: commissioned and warrant officers, noncommissioned officers, and Army civilians. The level of responsibility varies widely between positions—as well as within elements—though each represents a form of formal leadership.

Informal leadership is distinguishable as all soldiers can take on an informal role as leaders. Informal leadership occurs when a soldier takes initiative and applies expertise, when appropriate (Department of the Army, 2012a). The individual demonstrates leadership without

actually having any authority over others (Department of the Army, 2006). An individual soldier, although not highest ranked, may have expertise over other soldiers on particular weapon systems or military skill sets. As a result, the soldier may choose to train others—an example of informal leadership. Assuming other soldiers follow, the soldier taking on a leadership role has demonstrated informal leadership. Even soldiers who have attained a rank to fill a formal leader role can exhibit informal leadership when contributing to discussions in areas of sufficient expertise.

Levels of Leadership

The Army identifies three levels of leadership: direct, organizational, and strategic. The direct level of leadership occurs with first-line leaders where subordinates are accustomed to seeing their leaders (Department of the Army, 2006). Direct-level leaders can be responsible for a squad of eight or a unit of a couple hundred (2006). Soldiers identified as direct-level leaders regularly interact with their subordinates and are the primary entity to develop members within a particular unit through trainings and providing individualized feedback. Leaders at this level have the greatest capacity to build a trusting and caring unit, through learning about their soldiers as well as their families (Department of the Army, 2012b). This level of leadership is the most widely-used with the U.S. Army.

The second level, organizational leadership, involves a broader spectrum of leading soldiers. Operational leadership involves more complex decision-making and can influence a few hundred to several thousand personnel (Department of the Army, 2006), though the number of direct contacts with soldiers is likely reduced. These individuals participate in their unit's two-ten year development plan (2006). The opportunity to move into an operational-level leadership position generally requires serving for an extended period of time and reaching a level of

expertise within a particular field. Additionally, the degree of responsibility increases from the direct level of leadership, though pales in comparison to the highest level.

Strategic leadership is the third and pinnacle level for leaders to reach. In fact, today's Army identifies only about 600 senior strategic leaders—a level of responsibility that can influence hundreds of thousands of soldiers (Department of the Army, 2006). Strategic leaders are responsible for developing training and guiding the entire institution into the future (2006). Strategic leaders possess expertise in areas of strategic management and creation of and implementation of a vision (2006). These soldiers face the most-complex and difficult decisions Army leaders face.

Role of Leaders

Leaders in the U.S. Army are expected to perform tasks outside of exclusively leading missions or training. Army leaders influence, provide purpose, give direction, and motivate subordinates (Department of the Army, 2006; Department of the Army, 2012a). Strong leaders encourage and inspire their subordinates, while also building trust within the organization (Department of the Army, 2012a). Most who have served will likely admit times their experience was challenging and demanding. Training can go throughout the night and soldiers may not be offered a full night of sleep for weeks. The unit leader is thus expected to continue inspiring his/her team to maintain discipline and move forward with the mission.

Each leader is responsible for developing subordinates (Department of the Army, 2012a). Soldiers in leadership roles are expected to challenge their subordinates with more expansive and complex roles, while concurrently allocating time for feedback (2012a). Soldiers need to hear how they are performing in order to advance their skills and knowledge. An additional aspect of the developmental process includes increasing soldiers' ability to adapt, think critically about

situations, and to be creative (Department of the Army, 2012b). As noted, the developmental process is on-going and consistent. Soldiers never complete their leader development and instead find themselves facing unfamiliar obstacles if they commit to both the process and have a supportive leader who creates impactful growth opportunities.

A potentially overlooked role of Army leaders is their ability to be a follower. Being a good follower is a part of being a good leader (Department of the Army, 2006). The traditional view suggests Army leaders tell subordinates what to do without question. Today's Army expects leaders to allow subordinates to lead at various times, as part of their developmental process. All soldiers are both leaders and followers at any given moment in time (Department of the Army, 2006). The hierarchy of the military supports the need for leaders to understand what is required to be a good follower. Without knowledge and embodiment of followership, leaders are unlikely to be effective and may actually be toxic within their organization (Department of the Army, 2012a).

Attributes and Competencies

The Army suggests an effective leader will maintain a set of competencies and attributes, as described in the Army's *leadership requirements model*. Together, competencies and attributes lead to trust between leaders and the unit, while laying a foundation of trust for mission command and effective teamwork (Department of the Army, 2015). First, Army leaders need the following three attributes: strong character, maintain a 'presence', and demonstrate high levels of intellect (Department of the Army, 2012a; Department of the Army, 2006). Each of the three attributes can be developed throughout one's time of service. Attributes are desired internal characteristics of Army leaders and clarifies what the organization expects its leaders to know and be (Department of the Army, 2015). The three attributes are features critical to developing

and sustaining high-performing teams (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). The following paragraphs further explain the three attributes.

A strong character is the first and possibly most difficult of the three attributes expected of Army leaders. As Michelson (2013) argued, character is essential to effective leadership and is the sum of an individual's moral and ethical qualities. Character is the outward appearance of oneself and how they portray themselves (Department of the Army, 2012a). A leader with character will demonstrate discipline, warrior ethos, empathy, and the Army values (Department of the Army, 2012b). The Army core values—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity, and personal courage provide guidance to leaders as they develop their character (Department of the Army, 2006; Department of the Army, 2012a; Paparone, 2004). Leaders who demonstrate the core values contribute to a positive atmosphere for their subordinates and have an understanding of the ideal Army character.

The second attribute expected of an Army leader is maintaining a presence. To have a presence, leaders must recognize the way they carry and portray themselves to others (Department of the Army, 2012a). A soldier with a wrinkled uniform, unkempt grooming, and a bad attitude is unlikely to be viewed favorably. Alternatively, the soldier who builds trust within their unit, maintains a positive attitude, and establishes a standard of excellence will inherently earn support from their peers, subordinates, and leadership (Department of the Army, 2006; Department of the Army, 2012a; Department of the Army, 2012b). Those who have served undoubtedly can describe the worst times and days of their experience. Army training and service in general is filled with countless stressful situations that would make the untrained cave. Even high-performing soldiers experience times of difficulty while serving and it is those leaders who positively garner the attention of subordinates that have established their presence.

A strong intellect is the third distinguishable attribute of a U.S. Army leader. The easiest to develop and assess, organization leaders require tactical, technical, organization, and resource management expertise (Department of the Army, 2006). Soldiers are trained to learn weapon systems, how to operate vehicles, perform first-aid, and land navigation. Afterwards, service members are both assessed for comprehension and will eventually be charged with leading similar trainings. Prescribed leadership is more likely to be granted to soldiers once intellect has been demonstrated, as these individuals have passed informal and formal reviews of such skills. At the same time attributes are being developed and maintained, Army leaders need to meet core leader competencies.

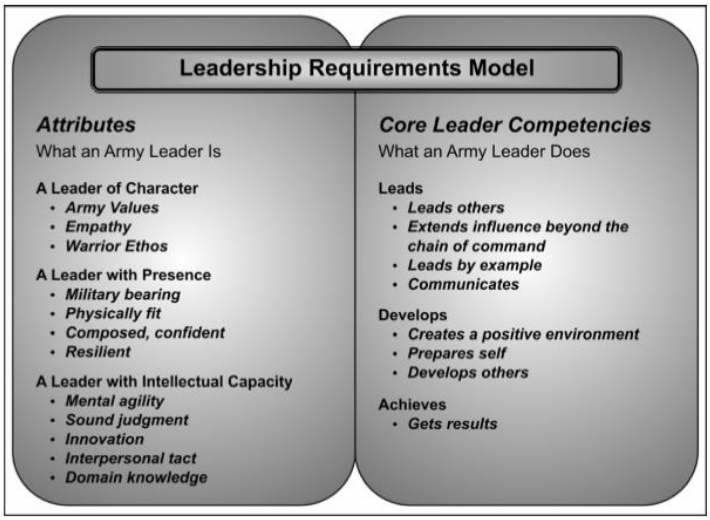
Competencies are the second aspect of the Army leadership requirements model and argue Army leaders will lead, develop, and achieve (Department of the Army, 2015). Competencies are the skills and behaviors the Army expects leaders to demonstrate and develop (2015). The first competency--to lead—is described below.

Leading others is one competency of Army leaders. They must balance the needs of subordinates with mission requirements (Department of the Army, 2015). Leaders extend influence through building consensus, resolving conflict, and creating a positive environment that fosters teamwork, all while demonstrating the Army values (2015). The authority afforded soldiers in formal leadership roles demands they are trained and prepared to make sound decisions based on the information available. Simply put, Army leaders influence soldiers, build units, and accomplish missions (Department of the Army, 2012a).

Developing soldiers is the second of the three competencies. Army doctrine clearly demonstrates the role leaders have in developing subordinates (see Department of the Army, 2012a; Department of the Army, 2012b; Department of the Army, 2013a; Department of the

Army, 2015). Modernization and experimentation of new technological and warfare tactics, coupled with complex and ambiguous operating environments demands Army leaders develop leader-soldiers (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). The Department of the Army (2012b) noted developing others is one of the most important roles a leader fills. Leaders train subordinates to be tactically and technically successful, as well as prepared to fill progressively higher-level positions with more responsibility (2012b). Soldiers are also developed by leaders through performing missions, being assessed, and reflecting on recent operations (Department of the Army, 2012a). By integrating development into daily training through a systematic approach, leaders can expose their subordinate to a variety of experiences over time (Crissman, 2013). Though this is an area leaders have historically scored poorly, slight increases in the competency rating from surveys suggest the Army may be improving in this area (Hindes & Steele, 2012).

No matter how effective a leader is at leading or developing, they need to achieve results—the third competency. Soldiers must perform and rapidly integrate skills no matter the environment (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). Achieving results means executing plans to accomplish the mission in the right manner (Department of the Army, 2015). There is a balance between delegation, empowerment, and trust all aligned with mission success (Department of the Army, 2012a). The leader must ensure their unit is well-trained and capable of accomplishing their missions (Department of the Army, 2012b). The volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous setting leaders must lead challenges training tactics to ensure soldiers perform (Development Dimensions International, 2014; Moilanen & Craig, 2000).



Army Leadership Traits, Knowledge, Skills

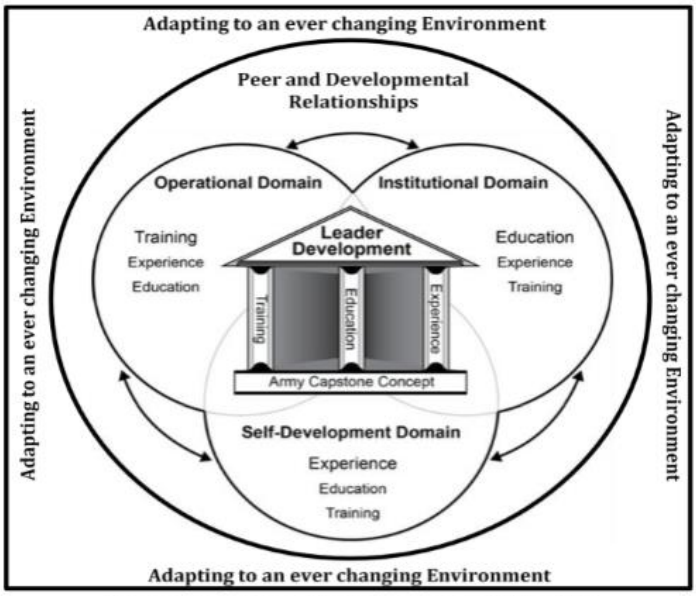
The training to mold soldiers into capable leaders includes an emphasis on living the Army core values. These *traits* become a part of the soldier and are best remembered through the acronym, *LDRSHIP*. Army soldiers are loyal, demonstrate duty to their country, respectful, are selfless in service, honorable, show integrity, and have personal courage. Army leader *traits* include being a motivator, demonstrating care for subordinates, being adaptable, innovative, and resilient (Department of the Army, 2013; Key-Roberts, 2014). These traits are developed through training and the strength of the Army's culture.

The Army emphasizes the need for soldiers to possess particular types of *knowledge*. Knowledge is the theoretical or practical understanding of a particular subject or topic (Lauby, 2013). For Army leaders, knowledge consists of organizational familiarity, resource management, an understanding of how to motivate others and build a positive climate, and empowering soldiers to learn and lead (Department of the Army, 2012b; Key-Roberts, 2014). Among other competencies, soldiers understand interpersonal tact, how to lead others, how to prepare themselves, manage stress, and adapt (Department of the Army, 2012c).

Army leaders also need military-oriented *skills*. Skills suggest someone can actually perform the task as opposed to simply understanding it (Markiewicz, 2014). Requirements of being a leader include having tactical skills and knowing how to train others to think critically and creatively (Department of the Army, 2012b). Skills are applied knowledge and developed through training and practice. Land navigation, combat operations, and weapons operation are examples of tactical skills a soldier must possess in order to lead others (Department of the Army, 2006). Leaders develop and implement plans, counsel and evaluate, and provide direction to operations (Department of the Army, 2012c). All of the required skills of an Army leader are learned and can be taught through instruction.

Leader Development Model

The Army suggests three distinct training domains when developing soldiers into capable leaders. Each civilian who enlists in the Army is exposed to the same development techniques aimed to enhance the leadership attributes and competencies of all soldiers. The three pillars—training, education, and experience—are incorporated into the operation, institutional, and self-development domains offered in the Army leader development model. Though the domains are distinct, they are complements of one another (Department of the Army, 2014). The diagram below demonstrates the on-going relationship between the three pillars and domains. Each training domain is further explained below.



Army Leader Development Model

Domains of Learning

Three training approaches can be used by soldiers to develop their leadership abilities. The *institutional* domain is initiated by Army leaders to help soldiers learn how to perform tasks through one of the Army's institutional training and education systems (Department of the Army, 2012b). Prior to performing a particular job or task, soldiers must learn how within one of the Army's institutional training and education system (2012b). The training includes methods for guiding troops, tactics to motivate subordinates, and provides a foundation of leadership capabilities (Kreie, 2014). Development as a leader through the institutional domain includes the centers, schools, and courses offered by the Army—also known as professional military education (Department of the Army, 2014; Kreie, 2014). The institutional method is first experienced by new soldiers in basic training during classroom instruction and courses offered are the result of lessons learned in the field (Department of the Army, 2014).

The second domain, *operational*, is less-directed and more interactive. The operational domain is where leaders undergo the bulk of their development (Department of the Army,

2013a). Soldiers, upon learning a new skill, are empowered to perform their jobs within a structured learning environment (Department of the Army, 2012b). This type of leader development occurs concurrently with soldiers performing their jobs, often in the field (Kreie, 2014). The operational domain is an effective method of learning and builds off what has been learned in the classroom (Department of the Army, 2012b) where soldiers can implement their learning and see firsthand the effectiveness of what they have learned. Operational activities include training conducted at the home station, regional training centers, mobilization centers, and during joint exercises (Department of the Army, 2014). Practical application of institutional learning provides leaders an opportunity to build confidence and develop further leadership competency (Moilanen & Craig, 2000). The soldier is able to explore their leadership abilities and afforded an opportunity to examine personal effectiveness. By combining the operational and institutional approaches, service members establish a foundation for deploying leadership tactics.

The third domain of the Army leader development model is *self-development***.** Self-development constitutes any educational training in which a soldier participates for the purpose of developing oneself without being required to do so (Department of the Army, 2012b). One year later, the Department of the Army (2013a) added structured self-development as mandatory in learning modules to meet outlined objectives. The Army recognizes that life-long learning in schools or operational units will not meet everyone's needs (Department of the Army, 2014). Self-development includes partaking in college courses and earning professional licenses that contribute to the advancement of soldiers (Kreie, 2014). Hindes and Steele (2012) noted self-development is consistently rated high in its ability to prepare leaders for future roles. The

Department of the Army (2012b) suggested self-development is the responsibility of the individual and thus could be used as a criterion in understanding a soldier's level of commitment.

Methodologies

Research on Army leader development from the soldier's or veterans' perspective is rare, though available. Veterans are a protected class, making it more difficult for scholars to access and learn about their leadership experiences. The Center for Army Leadership has unique admittance to soldiers serving in the Army and provides findings and technical reports from research conducted over the past five years on their website. Report topics include military leaders, Army civilian leaders, toxic leadership, and Army leader, as well as Army civilian, perceptions of Army leaders and leadership practices. The reports are assessments of the Army's successfulness (or lack thereof) in preparing soldiers to be leaders but do not critique the manner in which the Army chooses to develop leadership. Rather, the research offers insight into the beliefs actively-serving soldiers and Army civilians have about leaders.

Surveys were used in each of the studies conducted by the Center for Army Leadership and provide Army personnel an opportunity to connect with thousands of soldiers globally in a timely and relatively inexpensive manner. One example, the 2014 Center for Army Leadership *Annual Survey of Army Leadership: Military Leader Findings*, provided a basis of understanding about Army leader effectiveness. As was the case with each report provided, surveys were used and distributed across the globe for military members all between the ranks of sergeant through colonel. Surveys provide a quantitative description of trends or opinions of a population through studying a sample from that population (Creswell, 2014). The ability to generalize results from a sample to a population is a benefit of using surveys in research. Though the research did not disclose validity or reliability, the surveys appear to have remained consistent for ten years (see

Riley, Hatfield, Freeman, Fallesen, & Gunther, 2015) and the confidence intervals reported in each study.

Surveys appear to be the most-frequently used method when conducting research on Army leader development and have allowed researchers to connect with thousands of soldiers during a given study. In total, seven studies conducted since 2005 by the Center for Army Leadership were reviewed—all of which were conducted through the use of surveys. The Center for Army Leadership is able to generalize findings from surveys to the population of service members and make refinements based on the results. Surveys present a low-cost method of researching members of the armed forces who are scattered around the world. Further, participants may feel more comfortable offering responses if they feel their responses are truly confidential and will not negatively impact their own performance assessments. One dissertation about Army leadership development was conducted in 2011 (Sampson, 2011) using a case study, though the author's use of leadership development is not reflective of the term used by the Army. Similar to the Center for Army Leadership, Sampson's (2011) dissertation involved participants between the rank of sergeant and colonel. An additional case study was conducted about the transformation of the 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (Tiger Squadron) between 1994 and 1996 (see Kopser & Trujillo, 2014). Again, the study was conducted with service members in formal leadership roles. The use of surveys does include trade-offs as quantitative studies are less likely to offer an in-depth understanding of active phenomena.

Findings from research using interviews of Army veterans can contribute to both the traditional workforce and Army leadership. Interviews allow researchers to ask follow-up questions, seek clarity in responses, and gain a more comprehensive understanding of a participant's experience. Regardless of methodology, veterans from this study experienced leader

development in a manner unique from how the Army intended. The shortage of interviews and absence of any research on the leader development all soldiers experience is striking, particularly when considering Army doctrine and the emphasis placed on developing all soldiers, regardless of rank, into leaders.

Contradictions and Considerations

The Army invests significant resources toward developing soldiers into leaders and it seems likely most veterans would claim they are more capable at leading others today than they were when enlisting. Perhaps most surprising, in a study of Army leader perceptions of other leaders and leadership practices, only 59% of respondents rated their immediate superiors as effective in creating or calling attention to leader development (Center for Army Leadership, 2011). Three years later, the number barely moved as only 62% of respondents believed leaders were either effective or very effective at developing others (Riley et al., 2015).

Army doctrine claims all soldiers are expected to develop themselves as leaders; however, the research has been limited to include only those of sergeant rank or higher. Noncommissioned officers receive additional leadership training than their lower-enlisted counterparts, reasonably supporting the methodological approach taken in the research. At the same time, the operational domain has and continues to receive, with a 79% rating, the highest score from active and reserve component leaders for preparing soldiers to assume new levels of leadership (Riley et al., 2015). Many soldiers, while performing their jobs, serve as an informal leader in at least one point in their military career. Still, though the Army claims all soldiers are expected to be leaders, little is offered on how lower-enlisted personnel are developed, as compared to noncommissioned officers.

Within each domain of the leader development model resides three pillars of learning to lead—training, education, and experience. The pillars offer the platforms upon which learning occurs in each context. Unfortunately, the Army appears to use the term training interchangeably while never offering a comprehensive definition respective to each pillar. The domains are often referred to as "training domains", suggesting that within each training domain resides a distinguishable training, education, and experience element (see Department of the Army, 2012b). A clearer explanation of the relationship each pillar has on the leader development model would strengthen its effectiveness and applicability.

The traditional workforce has not yet distinguished veterans who were noncommissioned officers from officers or lower-enlisted soldiers. Employers argue veterans are leaders and that factor contributes to their employability (Kropp, 2013). This seems to negate the impact of more-extensive leader development training created by the Army for noncommissioned officers and officers. Still, the generalization may in fact demonstrate the impact of Army leader development over the first few years of a soldier's service. Though research remains limited, early findings suggest veterans generally outperform their civilian counterparts by a small but significant margin (Kropp, 2013).

Further, employers identify "veterans", without distinguishing branch of service or military occupation specialty (MOS), as strong leaders. The Army provides a leadership requirements model distinguishable from other organizations within the Department of Defense. Similarly, the experience an Army soldier has will vary depending on their unit or job. The generalizability of 'veterans are leaders' suggests employers may know very little about military service and blindly offer credit. The other possibility is the military culture is in fact offering a

particularly effective approach to developing leaders which employers may be able to leverage in their own workforce.

This research does not suggest any of the following:

- Army veterans are more-effective leaders than civilian counterparts because of their military service;
- Army veterans, regardless of rank or MOS, experience the exact same leader development training;
- Army leader development training is more-effective than traditional leadership development programming;
- Army leader development would be easy to integrate into the traditional workforce.

However, findings from this research may provide a clearer understanding of the active ingredients that have contributed to a lower-enlisted, now-veteran's development as a leader. The findings may also challenge human resource managers to consider how elements of the Army leader development experience may support or enhance current practices.

Significance

Research on veterans' perceptions of Army leader development after having served in the U.S. Army has not occurred. Blogs and newspaper articles have been written about the strength of veterans' leadership capacities though support for the argument lacks (see McGregor, 2012; Meyer, 2014). Veterans have not been asked about their general training experiences--an oversight that likely contributes to the roughly 80% of civilians and veterans who believe there is a gap in understanding military culture between those who have and those who have not served in the U.S. armed forces (Pew Research Center, 2011). At the same time, human resource managers claim their number one reason for hiring veterans is their leadership abilities. These

claims circulate the civilian workforce and should challenge HR representatives to question how the Army develops leadership. The Army and corporate America are two distinct sectors with vastly different missions; however, because the approach to leader development in the Army is comparable regardless of MOS, region, and rank, the contemporary workforce may find success in implementing similar approaches.

By emphasizing the need to understand U.S. Army training, HR representatives can gain perspective on the leader development process that has contributed to who veterans are while at the same time challenging existing leadership development practices. Soldiers who have undergone the extensive training provided by the U.S. Army can offer a unique viewpoint on their experience with leader development. Veterans across branches are called out by employers because of their leadership abilities while organizations are concurrently fighting to rapidly improve their employees' leadership. Human resource managers may be able to apply findings from the study in their own leadership programs.

The training involved when developing civilians into soldiers capable of leading others is extensive, on-going, and process-driven. Throughout the duration of a soldier's time in service, development of oneself is both encouraged and expected. While each individual enlists in the military with varying levels of leadership experience, the Army training process molds soldiers into the personnel they desire. The training occurs across three platforms and leads to a set of attributes and competencies for Army leaders. The process is on-going during military service and only complete when soldiers transition out and reintegrate back to civilian society.
Upon leaving the military, veterans have been exposed and immersed in years of leader development unlike any other training program. The combination of institutional, operational, and self-development training creates a comprehensive package distinguishable from other

leadership development programs. While civilians participate in leadership development on a short-term, program outcome basis, the Army operates with a broader lens and incorporates leader development into each component of training. The training presents future opportunities to use the traits, knowledge, and skills gained.

While veterans have transitioned out of Army, their leadership traits, knowledge, and demonstrable skills remain intact. The strength of the Army's culture is its ability to mold civilians into highly-proficient and trained professionals prepared to take on many roles. Unlike leadership development programs traditional workforce employee's experience, leader development in the Army is a daily-recurring initiative aimed to engrain leadership capacities in veterans for extended periods of time—a distinction from the short-term changes sometimes associated with traditional leadership development.

Though the intent of this research is to develop a greater understanding of Army leader development, one unintended but no less meaningful outcome is the possibility employers gain a greater understanding of veterans. Companies are facing significant leadership shortages and veterans may be able to alleviate some of the gaps. Though performing in a corporate office may represent the opposite side of the spectrum for soldiers used to working in a field, leadership appears to be a transferable quality. As opposed to identifying only veterans who have the technical skills sought for filling current openings, HR managers may want to consider the possibility for success of hiring veterans for their leadership and educate them on the technical skills needed to be successful within a new career field. For employers who seek out veterans, they garner the benefits of hiring a well-trained individual with extensive leader development experiences.

Conclusion

This review of Army leader development demonstrated a structured approach to developing leaders. The process of becoming a leader begins early in a soldier's term of service but never concludes. All soldiers are not only encouraged but expected to develop their leadership abilities. Developing oneself as a leader is argued to be important not only for soldiers filling their current role but also as a way of preparing for future, more intricate positions (Department of the Army, 2013a; Department of the Army, 2013b). Soldiers grow as leaders through experience, education, and training, and are assessed through the feedback received from their immediate superiors (Department of the Army, 2013a; Schroeder, 2003). The strength of the Army will continue to fall on Army leaders, as effective leadership remains the key to achieving the Army's vision (Department of the Army, 2013a.). At the same time, the strength of organizations will rely on the capabilities of their leaders.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The process used by the Army to develop soldiers into leaders is outlined in leadership doctrine and guided the research process. The Army's leader development model includes three domains or platforms for soldier learning: institutional, operational, and self-development. Additionally, the interactions veterans have had with leaders, both pre-military and while serving, as well as while acting as leaders contributed to the study. Two qualitative methods were selected—an online, pre-military leadership autobiography; and face to face interviews about veterans' leader development while enlisted. Qualitative research enables researchers to understand the phenomenon experienced by subjects and distinguish shared patterns of behavior and beliefs (Deniborin, 2010). Chapter three details the philosophical framework used, sampling strategy and rationale, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and data quality checks.

Philosophical Framework

The researcher argues knowledge is socially constructed—perhaps an even stronger case for those serving in the armed forces. Social constructionism suggests people make meaning of the world by the individual phenomena they encounter while taking into account the culture with which the individual is in (Crotty, 2013). The socially-lived worlds are essentially interpretive nets cast of surroundings and interactions with society (Marshall, 1994). The 'social' element does not assume social interactions with other people are the sole contributors to one's understanding of the world; rather all interactions with any stimuli contribute to one's perspective. Thus, all meaningful reality, no matter the interaction, is socially-constructed (Crotty, 2013).

This phenomenological study sought to understand Army veterans' leader development experiences while serving in the armed forces. Phenomenological studies are interested in the

way people make sense of their thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and social activity from past experiences (Klenke, 2008). Whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study explores and describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Findings from a phenomenological study are structured to present commonalities amongst participants related to a particular experience or concept (2007). Phenomenology is essentially the study of past experiences as lived through individuals (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989).

Phenomenology is often used in social science research. Phenomenologists recognize the objects of their research are particular human experiences that can be analyzed (Creswell, 2007). Hermeneutical phenomenology—a type of phenomenological approach—is a dynamic interplay involving a phenomenon, a reflection on essential themes, and what constitutes the nature of the experience (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990). The approach allows researchers to make interpretations of a shared experience (van Manen, 1990). For the particular study, the 'object' or phenomenon of interest was Army veterans' leader development experience.

A phenomenological study was selected because of its emphasis on the lived experience of participants, as opposed to other qualitative approaches. Leader development is difficult to assess and sometimes entirely overlooked by organizations because of the difficulty in generating quantitative data to support the need. The intended outcome of the research was to understand a particular experience as opposed to identifying a 'correct' method or approach toward leadership development. Phenomenologists "use purposive or theoretical sampling in an effort to identify informants who can illuminate the phenomenon of interest and can communicate their experiences" (Klenke, 2008, p. 226). The sampling of a select veteran group provided a diverse, representative sample of the Army leader development experience.

Qualitative methods were selected and address the study's needs. Qualitative research attempts to identify the why, how, and what is occurring (Yin, 2002). Leader development is a personal experience difficult to quantify. Each soldier who has served in the Army constructs their view of leadership based on who and what was in their environment. Though the Army makes claims about its approach to developing leaders, assuming soldiers learn how to lead solely through reading Army doctrine is insufficient. The leader development model suggests soldiers are developed into leaders through exposure to institutional, operational, and self-development domains. While each of the domains are contributing factors, each soldier will experience leader development in their own unique manner. Additionally, the influences on a veteran's leadership beliefs and competencies depend on their own claims. While the training domains likely impact leader development, exposure to other leaders, learning from experience in an array of contexts, contact with leadership prior to serving, and performing as leaders will all play a role. By allowing veterans to speak about their leader development experiences candidly, former service members were able to openly examine and offer insight into their own understanding of Army leader development.

Quantitative methods would not have been appropriate for this study. Quantitative research investigates the what, where, and when using numeric data (Jones, 2004). The approach explains phenomena by collecting and analyzing data using mathematical methods (Muijs, 2004). The absence of numerical data, coupled with unknown patterns of development, provides clarity in the best approach to understanding the veterans' leader development experience. This research was not intended to hypothesize or identify correlations between variables. Additionally, the research lacked intentional results, rather seeking to understand a phenomenon as experienced by a select group (Neuman, 2003).

As Doh (2003) noted, anyone can learn to be a leader as long as they are empowered to lead, offered mentoring, coaching, and witness patterning from leadership. These development procedures are extensively used in training soldiers—at least according to Army doctrine (see Department of the Army, 2006; Department of the Army, 2012a; Department of the Army 2012b; Department of the Army, 2013a). Doctrine produced by the Army suggests leader development is embedded in the day to day lives of soldiers. Observing leader development in the Army does not seem practical, as each veteran interprets the outcome of training through their own lens. Rather than attempt to define and observe situations where leader development may be taking place, this research sought to understand leader development through the judgments of the veteran. Participants were enabled and encouraged to present situations they feel contributed to their leadership while serving.

Research Question Restated

Leader development is a fundamental aspect of Army training and outcomes of the experience from formal Army leaders have been studied through case studies and surveys. Still, the actual leader development experience Army veterans had while serving has largely been ignored. Developing oneself as a leader is a unique experience and each veteran has accompanying backgrounds and perspectives. Interviews with Post 9/11 Army veterans about their leader development presented participants an opportunity to share their experiences with leaders and leadership. The research question sought to understand an experience, as opposed to addressing a hypothesis, thus supporting the selection of qualitative methods.

Question: *How do Post 9/11 Army veterans describe their lived leader development experience while serving in the U.S. armed forces?*

Sampling Strategy and Rationale

Veterans needed to meet an exhaustive set of criteria to participate. The criteria provided a balance between identifying participants who were able to discuss their experience with Army leader development while reducing a set of external factors that could have blurred research findings. First, participants had to join and serve in the United States Army after September 11, 2001. The impact of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were significant and soldiers who joined after September 11th, 2001 enlisted facing a seemingly imminent deployment. Though constant through the Army's history, training has been refined to reflect operational needs in Iraq and Afghanistan. By interviewing Post 9/11 veterans, as compared to veterans of previous generations, their ability to accurately recall particular leader development influences and experiences increased. Historically, service members operated under a 'do as they are told' paradigm. While performing upon command still exists, today's Army has shifted to support the development of critical thinking skills, particularly under high-stress situations, and expects soldiers to perform in ambiguous environments. Completion of basic training, military occupational specialty school, and one year of active duty service were requirements, though deployment to a combat zone was not mandatory. The participation guidelines ensured a consistent minimal level of training completed, and allowed military culture, leadership interactions, and introductory leader development efforts to be relevant factors.

All participants were screened and eliminated if receiving a less-than-honorable discharge as these individuals may not reflect the leadership attributes and competencies often associated with a veteran. Screening included review of discharge papers, veteran identification cards, education records, or related documentation. Since September 11, 2001, the Army has varied enlistment requirements to meet the needs of the organization. Employers are likely more

inclined to hire a veteran who met the requirements of the Army and thus the criterion seemed appropriate.

A high school diploma or equivalent requirement was enforced, though not an issue as the vast majority of Post 9/11 veterans had to meet the education requirement to be eligible for Army enlistment. Enlistment in the military within five years of graduating high school was part of the criteria in order to reduce the amount of leadership development exposure from the traditional workforce prior to military service. Respondents were also required to have been discharged within five years of the time of participation for two reasons. The first was intended to reduce the number of training instances veterans may have inaccurately remembered or forgotten entirely. Clear and accurate memories were important to the quality and rigor of the research. Additionally, the restricted timeline minimized the amount of influence the traditional workforce's approach to leadership development has on current perspectives.

Participating veterans must have been enlisted soldiers, thus eliminating officers and warrant officers from consideration. Though training can overlap between enlisted soldiers and officers, this research focused on the leader development process enlisted soldiers experience during their term of service. Enlisted soldiers all complete basic training as well as a military occupational specialty school (MOS). Officers do not necessarily participate in the same form of basic training as enlisted soldiers, immediately changing their experience. This study on enlisted soldiers offers a foundation and opens the door for future research into the leader development experiences of officers, warrant officers, noncommissioned officers, particular training schools, as well as the experiences of demographical subgroups serving in the Army.

The final element of participation criteria for this study was that Army veterans must not have attained a rank above sergeant. Sergeants represent the first level of formal leadership for

Army soldiers and additional leader development training begins within the ranks of private first class and sergeant, beyond that of training already offered to lower-enlisted soldiers. As veterans could have feasibly completed their term of service wearing the sergeant rank while not actually completing the first leadership school—the Warrior Leader Course (WLC), their inclusion seemed appropriate.

The following diagram outlines participation criteria:

Inclusion	Exclusion	Justification
Enlisted after 2001	Enlisted prior to 2001	Training refinement; time of conflict
Completion of basic training, military cccupational speciality (MOS) school, and initial term of service	Failure to complete each of basic training, military-occupation speciality (MOS) school	Leader development is a long-term process; substantial exposure and experience
Active duty for at least one year	Served less than one year on active duty	Leader development is a long-term process; substantial exposure and experience
Honorable discharge	Less than honorable or dishonorable discharge	Veterans without an honorable discharge may be less likely to be hired by employers
Attainment of high school diploma	Failure to attain high school diploma	Nearly all soldiers who enlisted since 2001 were required to attain a high school diploma--the criteria eliminates outlying participants
Enlisted within five years of earning high school diploma	Enlisted more than five years after earning high school diploma	Reduce exposure to leadership development pre-military
Fulfilled service contract within the last five years	Fulfilled service contract more than five years ago	Reduce exposure to leadership development post-military; increase likelihood of accurate recollection levels
Served exclusively as an enlisted soldier	Served as an officer or warrant officer	Training varies for enlisted soldiers versus officers
Never achieved rank of staff sergeant or higher	Achieved a rank above sergeant	Advanced exposure to Army leader development begins at staff sergeant rank
Did not complete Warrior Leadership Course (WLC)	Completed WLC	Completion of WLC may impact veterans' beliefs about leadership and Army leader development

Data Collection Methods

Two data collection methods were used for this study—participant leadership autobiographies and face to face interviews. The two methods were included to gain information about related but different phenomena (Maxwell, 2013). Participant autobiographies provided insight into the leadership development and perspectives veterans had about leadership prior to enlisting in the Army, while addressing demographical information. The second method, face to face interviews, allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the lived Army leader development experiences from participants. Combined, the two provided a holistic data set and revealed a shared leader development path.

Though more qualitative research on the topic of leadership is being published, the use of qualitative methods to study leadership has been contested (Klenke, 2008). As Bochner (2001) argued, the use of people's life stories can stand on their own as important data. Klenke (2008) added that story telling is a natural way of recollecting past experiences. In telling and relating experiences, people can make meaning out of their experiences. For this research, two narratives—a written text and face to face interview—detailed participant accounts with leader development prior to and during military service (Czarniawska, 2004). Researchers in turn can draw on the information provided to guide future questions and make sense of responses provided (Klenke, 2008). Part one of this study requested participants to complete a self-reflection of their leadership experiences and beliefs prior to serving in the military.

The leadership autobiography asked participants to address questions about their leadership experiences prior to serving in the Army. Though the criteria in place for participants reduced the likelihood that anyone would have had an extensive leadership development experience, each contributor maintains an assortment of more-general experiences that

influenced the veteran's perceptions of Army leader development while enlisted. Examples of possible factors included the role of parents, number and age of siblings in relation to the participant, prior work experience, and level of involvement in school and the community—each of which was asked. The autobiographies were scrutinized and complimented the face to face interviews. Responses from participant autobiographies contributed to follow-up questions asked during the interview process.

Development of the autobiography's structure transpired through two influences—findings from a pilot study conducted by the researcher on Army leader development and prior leadership development studies. Participants in the pilot study unanimously reported little to no leader development experience prior to enlisting, even though they maintained part-time employment, were active in school, and found themselves in informal leadership roles. The findings guided autobiographical questions about leadership development in school, at home, and in the workplace. Prior research on leadership development suggests experiential learning impacts the perceptions learners have of leadership. As such, participants were asked about possible leadership roles they filled prior to military service and the subsequent learning that may or may not have resulted. Leadership autobiography responses were reviewed prior to participant interviews and contributed to the analysis.

Participants were asked to complete the autobiography through email. A survey using Qualtrics software was created and emailed to participants (see Appendix C) after they reviewed and signed the consent to participate form. Research participants were offered up to two weeks to complete the autobiography. Questions were presented using either multiple choice or short answer methods. Information provided was coded, analyzed with data provided from the

interviews, and contributed to the findings. All participants completed their leadership autobiography prior to being interviewed.

Interviews were conducted to gain insight into the leader development experience of Army veterans. Interviews are one of the most widely-used techniques for conducting a systematic social inquiry, and this includes leadership research (Gombrium & Holstein, 2002). The method of inquiry represents a collaborative process involving the interviewer and interviewee in meaning-making (Alasuutari, 1995). "Qualitative interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world of informants by asking them to talk about their lives" (Klenke, 2008, p. 120). The approach goes beyond fact-gathering and attempts to construct meaning and interpretation (Kvale, 1996), and allows for rigorous examinations of social worlds (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Further, face to face interviews are considered the optimal method for researchers to maximize efficacy and equality of the data collection process (Seymour, 2001).

The semi-structured interview questions were guided through the researcher's pilot study on Army leader development as well as the Army leader development model. Findings from the pilot study suggested Army veterans learned about leadership through experience and the leaders they observed while serving. Questions about each, along with inquiries about the institutional, operational, and self-development domains provided a foundation for each interview. Follow-up questions were asked, when needed, for clarity or additional concepts were presented.

Ten Army veterans who met stringent guidelines participated in the study. The participants provided a unique data collection, as five of the Army's ten job categories were represented. The purpose of the study was not to generalize leader development experiences for all of the millions of soldiers who have served in the military since 2001. Rather, the findings

being presented identify the key influences a sample of Army veterans claim influenced their development as leaders today. The diverse population challenges claims from Army doctrine regarding the consistency of leader development across the entire service branch and offers perspective about the plausibility of implementing Army leader development into the traditional workforce.

The study used a purposive sample of Post 9/11 Army veterans located in a large, urban, Midwestern community of the United States. Veterans of the U.S. Army are scattered throughout the country and have been stationed around the world. After enlistment is complete, veterans are free to choose where they live. Still, because the Army claims to be intentional about their leader development process, themes were anticipated to emerge. A purposive sample was appropriate and factored cost with reliability of findings.

Veterans were notified of the opportunity to participate in the study with fliers and email notifications distributed through a large, urban university's veteran email list. The emailed research announcement included information about the study's purpose, criteria for participation, intended outcomes, as well as the risks and benefits associated for participants. The recruitment process involved distributing an information sheet about the study and a consent to participate form. Army veterans consented to both the leadership autobiography and participation in a 60 to 90 minute face to face interview regarding their Army leader development experience and beliefs about leadership. Participants were informed of the type of questions they would be asked, including their leadership background and beliefs about leader development. Dates and times of the interviews were scheduled through collaboration with participants to ensure a timeframe that would not cause contention or a possible distraction.

Veterans who agreed to participate were provided the consent to participate form prior to completing the leadership autobiography and verbally reminded of the study's purpose and their consent to participate prior to the interview. Informed consent is important because researchers are required to guarantee rights and permission from participants to complete a study (Creswell, 2008). Informed consent for the research included information about: the purpose of the research, procedures and possible risks involved, selection criteria, the informed consent form, and what will be done with the information collected. The consent form also included benefits of the research, a statement of confidentiality, a statement confirming participation is voluntary, and a notification that participants could withdraw at any time. The study continued once informed consent was obtained.

Prior to beginning the interviews, the researcher strove to develop rapport with the participants. Rapport was developed or enhanced by reviewing the purpose of the study, the interviewer's interest in the topic, intended nature of the interview, and the anticipated outcomes (Klenke, 2008). Participants were offered the opportunity to ask additional questions at this time and throughout. Though the research was less sensitive than other more-traditional military topics, including mental health and familial problems, the researcher's ability to gain trust and buy-in from participants likely contributed toward gaining meaningful Army leader development insight. The process included a request for consent to audio record the interview, which no participants opposed.

Interviews were semi-structured with 28 pre-written questions serving as the foundation, along with follow-up questions asked as needed—see Appendix D for list of research questions. Participants were provided the pre-arranged interview questions prior to beginning the interview. After reminding participants of their consent to participate and ability to withdraw at any time,

veterans were asked to discuss their decision to enlist in the Army, their first leadership experience, the Army leaders they have been exposed to, and their development as people and leaders over the course of military service. This study examined Army leader development all veterans are exposed to, thus eliminating the organizational and strategic levels of leadership and instead emphasizing direct level leadership. The prewritten questions offered a structured flow, while follow-up questions enabled an opportunity to revisit discussion points, delve deeper into issues, and/or refocus on initial responses. Questions about the institutional, operational, and self-development domains were reviewed prior to starting the interviews to ensure participants were clear about the inquiries. The questions were preemptively reviewed beginning with the second participant as the first participant struggled to understand the context of the questions and required further explanation. In addition, consecutive questions were asked about the veteran's knowledge gained, skills gained, and abilities gained after serving, in that order. Participants were free to answer each question in order or combine the questions if they were unable to differentiate between any of the three criteria. Upon completion of both the leadership autobiographies and interviews, the manuscripts were coded, combined, and analyzed.

Interviews were completed between December 2015 and February 2016. Ten to fifteen minutes was spent with each participant prior to beginning the interview. During that time, the researcher addressed questions, reviewed the purpose of the study, and discussed consent to participate. Simultaneously, the researcher strove to develop rapport and trust with participants. The interviews ranged from 37 to 76 minutes, with 51 minutes being the average amount of time participants spent answering questions. Eight of the ten interviews were conducted in a private, quiet office, while the final two at the participants' home. Interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reported finding and transcribed within one week. Notes were used sparingly

during the interviews but allowed the researcher to recall follow-up questions and highlight particular themes. The chart below outlines the participating veterans using pseudonyms, the length of their interview, the total word count from the question and answer session, and transcription pages required.

Manifest Content Analysis

Participant	Interview Duration	Word Count	Transcription Pages
Mike	39 minutes	5,008	11
Dennis	76 minutes	14,503	23
Chris	46 minutes	5,151	9
Brian	53 minutes	5,650	11
Leo	65 minutes	8,552	14
Andrea	59 minutes	5,747	11
Rachel	52 minutes	6,520	12
Mark	45 minutes	5,370	11
Jan	39 minutes	4,376	9
Carol	37 minutes	4,483	11

Data Storage and Confidentiality

Autobiographies and interview responses were stored and backed-up in several manners. First, all electronic data was stored on a central, password-protected computer. Access to the laptop required a username and password. Hard copies of document drafts, notes, and correspondences were stored in a safe. All data collected was backed-up on an external hard drive and kept in a separate, secure location.

The following steps further detail data confidentiality:

1) All data collected during qualitative data collection was de-identified. A unique pseudonym was assigned to each subject, which was used for all data organizing, coding/scoring, and entry of interview data.
2) A pseudonym dictionary and attribute table was also created and kept separate from corresponding data.

3) All printed notes and information derived from the autobiographies and subsequent interviews was stored in a combination safe, only accessible by the researcher.

4) All audio data was secured from the point of data collection in the field. Upon completion of recorded interviews, the recording device and password-protected laptop were secured. Audio recordings were backed-up on protected laptop and the recording device secured in a safe.

5) All recorded and transcribed data will be destroyed three years after the dissertation is published.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process integrated data from both the leadership autobiographies and face to face interviews. The leadership autobiographies were inspected for keywords, word repetitions, emerging themes, distinct categories, and statements of interest. A combination of participant autobiographies and face to face interviews reduced the amount of time directly spent with participants and allowed veterans to express their development through two platforms.

The first four interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher through playback of the audio recording device. The remaining interviews were transcribed by a trained transcriptionist. Interviews were transcribed within one week and reread while the interview was played aloud to ensure accuracy of the transcripts. Methodological notes were taken during and after interviews

to provide guidance as interviews proceeded. The notes were also impactful in sorting through the data.

After the first four transcriptions were completed, the researcher scrutinized each manuscript. The initial round was used to gain a general understanding of the participant's leader development experience without adding codes or notes. A second reading of each allowed the researcher to begin identifying and pulling keywords, phrases, and influences on the veteran's development. An analytical page was created in Microsoft Word and continued to develop over the remaining data analysis period. The analytical page was used to sort through emerging codes and ideas. Patterns, beliefs, and comments of interest were pulled from the first transcript and contributed to the development of the analytical page. From there, the subsequent three transcripts provided support for initial concepts, offered contradictory comments, and presented new themes. A third and fourth read-through of the initial transcriptions resulted in codes being assigned and a coding dictionary initiated. Methodological comments were also added and served as placeholders for the researcher to refer back.

The coding dictionary was created on a separate Word document based on identification of repeatedly-used terms (military and civilian); leader development experiences, as described by participants; leadership qualities and traits discussed; and reflections on both effective and ineffective leaders from both the interviews and leadership autobiographies. Additionally, influential leaders and comments prescribing Army leader development were identified and coded. Particular attention was directed toward the development experience of participants from pre-military to completion of enlistment as clear influences on leader development began to emerge. Corbin and Strauss (2007) described 'open coding' as a process of reading and developing coding categories through the collected data that seem important to the research. This

open coding process was used and allowed the data to develop a dictionary. Through coding, themes emerged and provided clarity in the Army leader development process for veterans.

A trial session of coding was completed in NVivo 9 software using the first two transcripts. Three levels and a total of 35 codes were uploaded in the program. The researcher attempted to code each of the two transcripts using the established codes. This process led to further refinement of the dictionary and a new NVivo project was started. Each of the ten transcripts were then uploaded into NVivo 9 and the coding dictionary was created using nodes. The transcripts were again read and nodes assigned throughout. The process continued until all transcripts had been read and coded. Thirty codes comprised the final dictionary from interviews.

The coding process included analytical and methodological reviews from each data set. The analytical reviews provided clarity in how participants tended to respond to questions. This allowed the opportunity to assess the frequency of which questions yielded similar or distinctive responses and assisted in the creation of categories. The methodological review provided a basis of understanding where unanticipated gaps may exist in the questions asked and ensure future interview questions were understood and addressed the inquiry's intent. By incorporating the analytical and methodological reviews in the coding process, the data became less arduous to sort.

Coding the data was a multi-step process. The first attempt distinguished two established time frames: pre-military and military. These organizational categories are the distinct areas of interest. The pre-military and military sections then included theoretical categories developed from the data. While coding for patterns, the researcher sought frequently used terms, similar responses, and examples of causation (Saldana, 2013). Descriptive and/or content-laden pre-military codes included but were not limited to *family influence*, *work experience*, and *personal*

leadership beliefs. The military section had a higher number of categories because of the Army leader development emphasis. Though not exhaustive, *performing*; *respect; observing; KSAs unclear*; and *institutional, operational,* and *self-development* became descriptive codes. Theoretical categories captured ideas that did not fit into the prescribed organizational categories and ensured substantive ideas are not lost (Maxwell, 2013).

A pre-military leadership development matrix was created and organizes data from the sample of participants. The pre-military leadership development matrix was formed using data provided from the online leadership autobiographies. Developed using Microsoft Word, ten demographical and pre-military leadership beliefs are offered, including information such as year of enlistment, enlistment age, rank attained, and job category. The information was scrutinized for emerging themes, contradictions, and prospective new relationships and is presented in chapter four.

Once transcripts were coded, the researcher began searching for themes related to the Army leader development. Creswell (2007) proposed that data analysis consists of organizing, then reducing data into themes through condensing codes, and presenting the data in tables or discussions. Moustakas (1994) recommended that phenomenological inquiry commence with a period of reflection. The researcher actively listened to participant responses and reflected throughout the analysis about the information being portrayed by the former service members. In addition, transcriptions were repeatedly read and content within each code scrutinized. Once codes were nearly set, a second stage of grouping codes into categories occurred. The categorizing analysis began with identifying units or segments of interest or important data (Maxwell, 2013). Codes chosen from the data were used to summarize or reduce information into distinct chunks or segments (Saldana, 2013). Through the process, six categories were

revealed: *starting point*; *Army LD feedback*; *influential individuals; observations*; *performing as leaders*; and *KSAs, attitudes, and beliefs*. Again, the researcher considered, "what is the story? what is the process?"

From the six categories identified through second cycle coding methods (Saldana, 2013), the researcher sought broader themes. A straight, horizontal line was drawn and provided further direction by offering a prospective start and end point. The third level of analysis combined the central core of the study—Army leader development experience—with the influences Army veterans described during their time in service. Through analysis and further collapsing of the six categories, four primary themes emerged: *consistent first Army experiences*, *observed leadership, performing is essential,* and *we are all leaders despite not understanding the process*. The analysis process combined autobiographical and interview data leading to 37 total codes which were categorized and ultimately revealed the four themes diagramed below.

Theme Development Process

Codes	Categories	Themes
Diverse backgrounds Siblings Age Year of enlistment Family influence Friends influence Work influence Additional influences Pre-military leader Pre-military leadership	*Starting point*	***Consistent First Army Experiences***
Drill sergeants Tough great leadership Other influential leaders	*Influential individuals*	
Direct Organizational Strategic Favoritism	*Observations*	***Observed Leadership***

Fear Learn leadership jobs Worst Army leader		
Performing Classroom a waste Institutional Failing Never great leader Self-development	*Performing as leaders*	***Performing is Essential***
Army LD feedback Unclear Contribution Leading civilians transition	*Army LD feedback*	
KSAs same Protecting Respect Physical fitness Standards Mission Understand why tough or yelling	*KSAs, attitudes, and beliefs*	***We Are All Leaders Despite Not Understanding The Process***

Data Quality Control

Data quality control was emphasized throughout the research process. Qualitative research involves collecting and interpreting others' meaning making and the primary instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher. To increase trustworthiness of the findings, researchers need to learn to understand their data as the participants do rather than impose their own assumptions or biases (Stake, 1995). The researcher implemented three strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to decrease threats to the study's trustworthiness. A member checks and a colleague review was conducted, while an audit trail has been provided (Merriam, 2002).

The first data quality check utilized member checking to present findings and receive feedback. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested researchers solicit views from participants about the findings and interpretations. During member checks with five of the ten participants, veterans were asked to provide feedback and insight as a method of supporting the findings. Each of the four findings were validated by the participants, with two noting their belief that the findings were, "pretty obvious." Support from participants about the findings offers credibility to the study.

In addition, the researcher asked a colleague with no military background to review data collected and the corresponding findings (Merriam, 2002). This quality check allowed for identification of conflicting interpretations or overlooked findings. The reviewer agreed with the codes and emergent themes while providing feedback to enhance clarity of the reported findings. Feedback from the reviewer supports the presented findings and contributed to the final analysis.

Trustworthiness of this study is increased through the provided audit trail. An audit trail has been provided and details how participants were identified as well as how data was collected, analyzed, and reported (Merriam, 2002). The audit trail provides readers a platform for future research and analyzing the findings.

In addition to the three detailed strategies, Merriam (2002) recommended the following guidelines for credible and trustworthy researchers and studies—each of which were implemented.

- Reflexivity—engaging in critical self-reflection regarding assumptions, biases, and relationship to the study which may impact findings.
- Engagement—allowing for adequate time to collect data, such that it becomes saturated.

- Maximum variation—purposefully seeking variation or diversity in sample selection to allow for greater range of application of the findings by consumers of the research.
- Rich description—providing enough rich, thick description to contextualize the study, such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situation matches the research context (p. 31).

Qualitative research assumes that researcher biases and values impact the outcome of any study (Merriam, 1998). Researcher bias suggests the researcher identifies data that conveniently fit pre-existing theories or goals (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To enable any audience to evaluate a study's findings, the researcher should state their biases explicitly and in their entirety (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). The following outlines relevant personal experiences of the proposed research.

The researcher is a combat veteran of the War in Iraq, and served six years in the Army National Guard. Though leader development was not considered a significant aspect of the researcher's military experience, readings and personal interactions post-service have contributed to the belief that veterans, through their service, have gained leadership traits and abilities. In reflecting, many Army soldiers were placed into leadership roles, whether to lead trainings, discussions, or physical fitness sessions, including the researcher. The relatively small roles, combined with at least one year of active duty service, likely contribute toward a soldier's overall development as a leader. At the same time, the researcher interacted with leaders from all spectrums and backgrounds, which contributed toward current perceptions of 'good' leadership.

The researcher also serves as the director of a veteran resource center at a large, urban university. Nine of the ten participants for the study were identified through their interactions

within the resource center or through referral by other participants. The responsibility and constant interaction with veterans, as well as service as an advocate for current and former service members, intersects with the intent of the research. One important distinction is that the researcher does not intend to argue veterans are leaders; rather, the researcher sought to understand the lived leader development experience of veterans who have served in the Army. As previously discussed, veterans are argued to be strong leaders upon transitioning out by civilians. Expanding, the research question is not intended to address if veterans are leaders. Instead, the researcher sought to understand the contributing factors of Army leader development for Post 9/11 veterans.

The possibility exists that participants of the study volunteered their time because of the power differential between researcher and participant. The researcher has been introduced to many of the veterans on campus through orientations and regular interactions. Additionally, the researcher sends out a weekly email with pertinent information for student veterans attending the university. These emails become a unique opportunity to continue connecting with the veterans on campus. To reduce the power differential, participants were notified that their decision to participate in the study in no way impacted their relationship to the researcher, the veteran resource center, or the university. Prospective participants were also reminded that there were no correct or desired answers, enhancing the likelihood that participants felt comfortable providing open and honest responses.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology that was used to understand how Army veterans experience leader development while serving. A qualitative approach was selected to allow participants to express their beliefs and personal experiences prior to and during military service.

A purposive sample of ten veterans representing five of the Army's ten job categories was selected. The method provided veterans from diverse backgrounds an opportunity to share their unique leader development experience. The intent of the leadership autobiographies and face to face interviews was to identify themes in which the Army has intentionally or unintentionally developed soldiers into leaders so human resource managers can consider transferability of methods into the traditional workforce.

Chapter Four: Findings

Findings from the research are presented in this chapter and followed the methodology presented in the preceding chapter. The study examined Post 9/11 Army veterans' lived leader development experience while serving in the armed forces. A purposive sample of ten Army veterans who met a series of predetermined criteria were selected for participation in the study. Each participant completed a 20-question autobiography online that addressed pre-military leadership development experiences as well as demographical information. After completion, face to face interviews were scheduled. Interviews were conducted to develop an understanding of each veteran's leader development experience while serving in the US Army. Data was transcribed and coded in NVivo 9 to identify themes related to Army leader development. Four primary themes emerged that present the lived Army leader development experience of the participants: (a) *consistent first Army experiences*, (b) *observed leadership*, (c) *performing is essential*, and (d) *we are all leaders despite not understanding the process*. Chapter four presents the collection and analysis process, and the themes that materialized.

Participant Profiles

Six males and four females who all served at least one year on active duty participated in the study. The group was comprised of four White males, two African-American males, an Asian-American male, three White females, and one Hispanic female. Participating veterans represented five of the ten job categories identified by the Army: combat, intelligence and combat, administrative support, legal and law enforcement, and mechanic. Additionally, none of the participants completed the Army's first formalized leader development programs—Warrior Leadership Course or WLC—though two achieved the rank of sergeant during their time of service. Nine of the ten participants enlisted within the last ten years, while the final participant

enlisted in 2002. While one participant was exited prematurely from the Army due to medical issues, all ten received an honorable discharge. Each participant enlisted after September, 2001 and served on active duty for at least one year. In addition, participants enlisted within five years of earning a high school or equivalent diploma and completed their term of service within the last five years.

Four of the ten participants believed they were a leader to some extent prior to enlisting, even though only two identified participating in any form of a leadership development program. Family and friends were not rated as significant influencers in the majority of participant's leadership development, though family was influential in six veteran's decision to enlist. All participants held at least one job prior to enlisting though, once again, the positions were not regarded as particularly influential in the veterans' leadership development prior to serving. A detailed profile for each research participant follows. Pseudonyms are used and all other identifying information has been changed to ensure the privacy of participants. The following profiles describe demographical information as well as leadership experiences prior to enlisting in the U.S. Army.

Participant One— Mike is an Asian-American male and was one of three participants who were at least 21 years old upon enlisting in the Army in 2009. His decision to join was impacted by his father's and grandfather's prior military service; however, Mike was the only participant to highlight a particular time period that led to his enlistment. On Christmas Day in 2008, Mike's dad, brother, and brother's wife "ganged up" on him, claiming he was wasting his parent's time living at home. He also noted his love of America though his brother (and brother's wife) ganging up on him was the final push for him to enlist. Mike was also the only participate who experienced college prior to enlisting, having earned a bachelor's degree in-between graduating

high school and enlisting in the military. The only prior leadership experience Mike claimed to have had prior to enlisting was assigning photo assignments. Mike spent three years on active duty and exited as a specialist after serving in the combat job category—one of four participants to have filled the combat distinction.

Participant Two—Dennis is an African-American male and was 19-20 years old when he enlisted in the Army in 2009. He credits his mother and teachers for pushing him toward the military because, though he did not consider himself a disruption in the classroom, his teachers argued otherwise. As a result, he was forced to join the junior ROTC organization at his school which became something he enjoyed. Dennis identified himself as a leader prior to serving and worked multiple jobs. He was also captain of his high school basketball team. Dennis spent four years on active duty, along with a one-year deployment. Both his father and grandfather were influence on his leadership development, even though were not credited as always being great leaders who made good decisions. Dennis was a corporal upon leaving the Army and served in the combat job category.

Participant Three—Chris is a White male who was between 19 and 20 years old upon enlisting in the U.S. Army in 2009. Chris joined because he felt he was not going anywhere; he worked multiple jobs but never felt he was a leader. Additionally, there was no prior leadership development experience for him to speak of during the interview process, even though he was also involved in football and baseball. Chris was a self-described "average student" in high school—one of only three who claimed to have been an average student. He also had two siblings when he enlisted. Chris spent three years on active duty, including a one-year deployment. His grandmother was a contributor to his leader development—one of three

participants to identify a particular family member as an influence on their leadership development. Chris attained the rank of specialist and served in a combat job category.

Participant Four— Brian is a White male and of the ten participants, enlisted at the youngest age (17-18) and earliest year (2002) of the ten participants. Brian also spent the most time in the Army of the participants, having served for nine years. He described his uncle and grandfather as influences on his decision to enlist, while noting school "didn't work out." Prior to enlisting, his leadership experience was limited to being the dungeon master for the game, *Dungeons and Dragons* and he did not consider himself a leader. Brian also discussed having 14 different jobs prior to enlisting though could identify only one individual—a best friend—as being influential in his leadership development. The friend, a Pizza Hut manager, showed Brian that "being a leader didn't mean being the oldest person in the group." Brian spent nine years on active duty including more than three years overseas. He exited the Army as a specialist and worked in the legal and law enforcement job category.

Participant Five—Leo is an African-American male and was the second of three participants to be at least 21 years old when he enlisted in the Army in 2008. He enlisted in the Army because it was seen as a rite of passage in his family. Leo considered himself a leader prior to enlisting—the second of four participants who believed so—and attributed his development to multiple leadership roles within the Youth NAACP and his high school basketball teams. In addition, Leo worked several jobs serving as a cashier, stocker, and grocery store bagger. Leo served four years of active duty, including a one-year deployment. Personal relationships were also influential as his friends and brother contributed to his development. Leo attained the rank of corporal and served in the intelligence and combat job category.

Participant Six— Andrea is a Hispanic female and was 19-20 years old when she enlisted in the Army in 2011. Unlike the other participants, Andrea was focused on starting her career and believed the military was a "fast start." She is the third of the four participants who believed she was a leader prior to enlisting. Her family, friends, and coworkers were all influential in her leadership development before enlisting. She was singled out in her family as a leader and felt everyone looked up to her. As a friend, she served as a leader on high school sports teams and as an employee, she credits observing other leaders to her leadership style today. Andrea served three years on active duty and, similar to the other three female participants, did not deploy. Andrea attained the rank of specialist and served in the intelligence and combat job category.

Participant Seven— Rachel is a White female who enlisted in the Army at the age of 19-20 in 2010. She highlighted multiple reasons for enlisting to include "wasn't really going anywhere", siblings in the Army, and "living in my car for a long time." Rachel was the most adamant participant who believed she was not a leader before enlistment, claiming, "I didn't have much of an idea of what I was doing with my own life. There was no way I could lead others." She held at least six jobs prior to enlisting, to include cashiering, bagging, a bakery clerk, hostess, hotel room cleaner, and grocery department employee. Rachel was on active duty for the shortest time of the ten participants, having served for the one-year minimum requirement of the study. Over the year, she attained the rank of private second class before being medically discharged and served in the administrative support job category.

Participant Eight— Mark is a White male and enlisted at the age of 21 in 2006. Mark joined to "go see the world" but also because of personal issues. He had been working with his girlfriend until they broke up and Mark decided he needed to get away. Though unsure of whether his was a leader prior to joining, he mentioned setting up routes for a friend's trucking company as

something that leaders do. Mark's family taught him the importance of hard work and leading through example—factors that contributed to his pre-military leadership development. Mark spend the second-longest amount of time in the service, having served six years on active duty while spending 27 months deployed overseas. He left the Army as a sergeant, falling under the combat job category.

Participant Nine— Jan is a White female and enlisted at the age of 19-20 in 2006—tied for the second-earliest enlistment year of the ten participants. Jan attributed her reason for joining to wanting to do something better with her life. After growing up in a small town in northern Wisconsin, she described having few career opportunities and knowing that if she did not leave then, she would be "working at fricking gas stations and hotels for the rest of [her] life." Though she was the last of four participants who claimed to have been a leader prior to serving, she struggled to identify a situation or leadership position held. Instead, Jan discussed being a person who could take control due to her father's leadership style. Jan served four years on active duty—all stateside—and was a specialist serving under the mechanic job category.

Participant Ten— Carol is a White female and enlisted at the age of 19-20 in 2011. She joined at the persuasion of her cousin, though admitted to being selfish prior to joining and a desire to participate in something bigger than herself. Prior to the military, she "had no leadership experiences." Though her family never talked about leadership, she had friends she considered to be leaders because she "interpreted their success as a leadership quality." She spent three years on active duty but did not deploy overseas. Carol exited active duty as a sergeant and served in the intelligence and combat job category.

The following diagram outlines the key demographical information and leadership exposure experiences by veterans prior to enlisting in the US Army. The diagram also outlines time of service, MOS, and job category for each veteran.

Pre-Military Leadership Development

Pseudonym	Believe a leader pre-military?	Pre-military LD	Siblings	Enlistment Age	Year of Enlistment	Active Duty Years	Time Deployed	Military Occupation Specialty (MOS)	Highest Rank Attained	Job Category
Dennis	Yes	JROTC	5+	19-20	2009	4	One year	11B	Corporal	Combat
Chris	No	None	2	19-20	2009	3	One year	11B	Specialist	Combat
Andrea	Yes	None	2	19-20	2011	3	None	92R	Specialist	Intel & Combat
Rachel	No	None	5+	19-20	2010	1	None	42A	PV2	Admin Support
Mike	No	None	1	21+	2009	3	11months	11B	Specialist	Combat
Brian	No	None	2	19-20	2002	9	Three years	91B	Specialist	Legal & Law
Mark	Yes/No	None	1	21+	2006	6	27months	13B	Sergeant	Combat
Jan	Yes	None	2	19-20	2006	4	None	91B	Specialist	Mechanic
Carol	No	None	1	19-20	2011	4	None	35F	Sergeant	Intel & Combat
Leo	Yes	Youth NAACP	5+	21+	2008	4	One year	74D	Corporal	Intel & Combat

Themes

Ten Army veterans shared their pre-military leadership involvement and experience with Army leader development through an online leadership autobiography and face to face interviews. Upon completion, the data was transcribed and imported into NVivo 9 qualitative analysis software. During the coding and analysis process, the researcher continuously reflected on the study's research question. Restated, this study sought to understand: "*How do Post 9/11 Army veterans describe their lived leader development experience while serving in the armed forces?*

A phenomenological study was selected and the factors identified by veterans as significant in their leader development provided direction for the study. The findings and developing categories provided a foundation to assess overarching themes. Four themes were ultimately revealed and detail how participating veterans experienced leader development.

Themes are loosely defined as units derived from patterns within data. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested themes naturally present the fundamental concepts researchers are attempting to describe. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and report themes from the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Prescribed codes were clustered into categories and further generalized to overarching themes. Through the analysis, themes developed contributed to the researcher's understanding of Army leader development. Combined together, the themes describe a general process ten soldiers experienced with Army leader development.

Theme One: Consistent First Army Experiences

The first emergent theme was that regardless of background and pre-military leadership, each soldier enters the Army on an equal platform. Eight of the ten participants stated they did not participate in a leadership development program prior to enlisting, even though all ten were employed at least once prior to enlisting. At the same time, four of the ten believed they were leaders before their enlistment while seven of the participants admitted to being below average students. The following excerpts highlight the diversity of leadership experiences prior to enlisting. Brian contributed, "as a DM [Dungeon Master] for my AD&D [Dungeons and Dragons] experiences I would plan adventures for my group and keep the group from going of track." Jan added, "It was actually few and far between because there weren't a lot of situations which allowed me to take a leadership position."

Leo said:

> In my early teens I served as the Vice President [for my local Youth NAACP] branch. I would later spend the years from 14-18 in various group homes and youth shelters where I was often times appointed to represent the other youth's interest and concerns. During my high school career I served as the captain of junior varsity and co-captain of the varsity basketball teams at [my school]. Before joining the Army, I was the marketing and sales director for [my brother's company].

While one other veteran shared similar beliefs about their leadership with Brian, Jan, and Leo, four others more-closely aligned with Carol. Carol provided, "No, I did not consider myself a leader. I was a very shy, introverted person who was often afraid to stand-up for the things I believed in and lacked the initiative to take charge."

Rachel exclaimed:

> I didn't have much of an idea of what I was doing with my own life. There was no way I could lead others. I wasn't leading anyone. I led a lot of shenanigans. The whole room would kind of light when I walked in, made everyone laugh, but I wasn't going anywhere.

In total, the participants also suggested each of the following: they were forced to be leaders, not a leader at all, led by example, and received little instruction. The diversity in personal prior leadership beliefs reflected the broad impact family and friends played on participants' leadership development before enlisting.

The impact family and friends had on veterans' perceptions of leadership ranged from highly-influential to zero influence at all. Jan, representing one end of the spectrum noted, "my friends were always more on the submissive side and I had taken advantage of that all too often so I was always led to believe that as long as I took the role of being dominant, I would be able

to be in complete control." Andrea added, "I would consider myself a leader prior to enlisting in the US Army because of my leadership role within my family and peers. How they looked up to me, their expectations and confidence they gave me."

Dennis noted:

> I don't think my friends truly impacted any idea I had of leadership pre-military. I can say that coworkers did. I guess that isn't entire true since my friends in JROTC taught me a great deal about leadership as they were all my superiors while I was in high school. I will say that I have never really associated myself with anyone that I didn't think would make an effective leader themselves. That is to say all of my closest friends would have made as good if not better leaders than [me]. I am drawn to people's natural ability to lead and I think one thing that surprised me was my ability to get all these natural leaders to follow me. I guess that is truly the first time I realized that I could be a good leader. People seemed to listen to me even when they were in fact my leader.

While five others believed friends played a role, four veterans did not. Responses ranged from, "not very much" and "no influence at all," to "my friends didn't take many leadership roles but they did support anyone who stepped up and took charge." The wide range from being highly-influential to not at all suggests that the participating veterans did not share a common pre-military leadership development experience.

When asked about their first leadership experience while serving, eight veterans referenced their time in basic training. Mark described, "Everyone gets put into a squad leader or a platoon sergeant role in basic training, everyone gets cycled through it, and it's just part of the gig."

Rachel contributed:

They made me the platoon head person, I don't know why, but they did and I actually was really good at it. I just kind of told everyone to get in formation, keep it down, all of the other stuff. Took people to chow. There was always something going on, so sometimes we would just go platoon by platoon, towards the end, and then when I was the head person for the HR/PR people, I was in charge of that, so I actually found out that I was pretty good at leading people, people actually liked me.

Andrea added:

I would say it was through basic training because that's where you could earn your stripes with your peers, it was how you would take things said to you and different types of punishments that are given. I guess I can go off of when I got promoted in basic training. I guess you can say it would probably be my first official feeling as a leader, so I guess that would probably feel the first time I was acting as a leader because I was the only female that got promoted and then I was 1 of 3 over a little over 100 of us, 1 of 3 or 4, but I was the only female that got promoted in basic training. That made me feel like I did this, so it made me feel really good and it made me feel like whatever I've been doing, just basically keep it up and now everyone is watching you so you kind of got to walk a little straighter.

Dennis went on to detail a particular experience in basic training:

Probably some time when we were getting jacked up within the first couple days. I have a couple different memories of getting fucked up but let’s say we had to go get some stones or some rocks, something like that and people were coming back with these little pebbles, and I was like, “dog, don’t do that, we’re going to have to, get screwed up and get rocks like the size of this fucking house. Go get a real rock, suck it up, let’s do this shit.” There

was other times, pretty much the first time I can remember were times we fucked up, they were about to do something stupid with us, and I'd be like, "dog, chill out with that shit. Get done with it. Drive through it. That's what they're here to do. We gotta work together, I would say.

These experiences and stories demonstrate the impact basic training had on soldiers, even though the primary purpose of boot camp is to prepare civilians to be soldiers. Stories of veterans' basic training experiences have long been told and are not quickly forgotten. Still, the memories of these veterans about feeling like a leader for the first time during basic training supports the Army's prescription to leader development of all early on.

Drill sergeants were the first leader seven study participants described being exposed to and each played a contributing role in their leader development. These first Army leaders work long hours and spend a great deal of time with soldiers in basic training. They are tasked with developing civilians into soldiers in a rapid timeframe—usually consisting of an eight- to nine-week period. Over the duration of basic training, soldiers witness some of the most intensive forms of leadership they will ever be exposed to. Yelling, intimidation tactics, and authoritative direction are common themes throughout the first few weeks of training. At the same time, the newly-developing soldiers were processing how their drill sergeants spoke and acted. The high number of participants who responded with drill sergeants being their first Army leader further supports the similarity in early development experiences.

Carol began: My first Army leader was my drill instructor in basic, and I feel like that's the same for everyone though. But I looked up to her specifically as being a leader because I know a lot of the drill sergeants put her down because they didn't like her, but she didn't care what the other people thought of her. She still continued to do her job.

She was a very headstrong woman and I admire that because I hadn't had a lot of strong female roles in my life…She is the best Army leader I have been around. I still am in contact with her because I feel like I can always go to her when it comes to situations and she will always do her best to improve my leadership abilities.

Mark added:

The first leader I seen was the drill sergeant and that was interesting. Completely in your face, no bullshit. Being out of the Army now, I understand why they did that, I understand the break down process to build you back up. At the time I didn't know what the fuck was going on. Obviously, I just was wow, why is this guy screaming at me so much for?

Though drill sergeants were often identified as veterans' first Army leader, they were rarely well-liked. Perhaps due to the speed at which the Army is required to develop soldier capacities, drill sergeants rarely spend time getting to know the personnel. Additionally, they often push people to their limits and breaking points. At the same time, the veterans understand why drill sergeants act in the manner they do.

Chris described:

I probably say my first leader was, kind of a drill sergeant. Drill Sergeant Bob S and I hated this guy so much. He would smoke us non-stop, yell at us, the meanest mother I've ever met and towards the end, I'm still thinking I hate this guy and cannot wait to get out of here. And the last time we go out, the last time we get together to do the parade, he's like, "good luck you guys. Wish you luck. Bye." That was pretty much it and I'm like, "I still hate you." Just always yelling at us, smoking us to death. Everything and then once I got to my unit, that's when I started realizing, "woah, there's a reason this guy pushed us

so hard. Why he made our lives such a living hell every day." And it made me really appreciate it, made me a stronger individual, pushed me where I never thought I could even go. And it kind of made me grow up. He pushed me and pushed me. I mean indirectly, he maybe only talked to me once but he had a huge impact on my life and think, to go beyond that a little bit, he actually was killed in Afghanistan in 2011 and he was actually, he died jumping on top of soldiers while they were getting mortared. And he survived for like another month in a German hospital. That was my first experience was this guy who was the meanest guy I ever met but there was a reason behind it. Cause he didn't want us to die. He wanted us to succeed and live and fully accomplish what we set out to do and that was my first experience.

Mike noted:

It was basic training when the drill sergeants came out screaming. Normally I…I didn't know how well I would take it if someone is staring straight at me and standing an inch away from my face and yelling but I felt ok with it to tell you the truth. With my dad being a drill sergeant growing up, he did that all the time and I got so pissed off at him for that and when they came out those doors I was actually ok with that. They obviously had to be leaders, less yelling. But you only got to know their drill sergeant side throughout basic training and then you got to your unit and realized not everybody is like a drill sergeant so I guess I can't really compare in that sense. I only got to know one side of them.

This diverse group of individuals, who enlisted in the Army coming from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, beliefs, and influences, experienced their first Army leader development early and in a consistent manner. While it would be particularly rare for new

employees to lead trainings during an orientation session, basic training immediately serves as an initial investment made by the Army toward developing soldiers into leaders. Similarly, the drill sergeants who often are not well-liked and challenge soldiers to perform at a very high level, are readily-recognized as the first Army leader these veterans were exposed to. Though particular instances and roles varied, participants identified basic training and drill sergeants as the key initial contributors on their leader development.

Theme Two: Observed Leadership

The second theme outlined the role observing leadership played on veterans' leader development. The Army does not include observing leaders as a key component of leader development, in much the same way corporate America largely ignores the contribution; however, the consistency with which veterans detailed their experiences with individual leaders suggests observation is important. Each of the ten participating veterans spoke directly and indirectly about observing leaders of all ranks and levels of effectiveness. The veterans' best leaders were influential to their development, but it was their most ineffective leaders they most clearly remembered and described. Observing leadership contributed to the participants' beliefs about the role leader's play on subordinates as well as how to demonstrate good leadership while serving and after transitioning.

Chris described:

> Watching my leaders, the way they acted, the way they did everything. I think that's where you learn a lot. I mean, you're supposed to E5 [sergeant], supposed to know their stuff. That's where institutional comes from but everyone's different so you learn all these different types of leadership by different people. Like my team leader, one of my first, he was way out there. He was a yeller. But you were to get with him one-on-one,

just he was there for you but on the outside, he would scream at everybody; smoke everybody all the time but you get one-on-one, a good guy who just did whatever it took to help you succeed. Was there for you and stuff like that. I mean, even for training-wise when you go do a field problem, that's when you really get to see them in action where they can control their group, know where to put them, sectors of fire, everything. That's when you really get to see who they really are cause if you just got a guy who stands there and ah "go over there, go over there", that's where you get to kind of learn everything.

Brian noted:

I think the Army has contributed to me, mostly through how I see, how I've observed others. Exactly how they do their development with the teaching below and above and everything so as I learned from my leader, my multiple leaders, you kind of get a large sampling of how some leaders act and you begin to pick and choose those parts on what you want to be a leader yourself and hopefully show or become a good leader. Where others are choosing some of the tactics you do compared to deciding not to be like you. So I think they've put me into good teams to where I was able to draw from the leaders I've had.

Leo added:

I would like to think that my leadership experiences prior to the military gave me the confidence, but my leadership that I had observed and obtained in the service really made me effective in those positions. I think I would have had those positions based on my confidence but I don't know how well I would have did without seeing some of the individuals that I met, drill sergeants and my peers that I met in basic and the ones that I

had the opportunity of meeting and learning from the five weeks prior before I went and got those positions in AIT.

Mike described one particular leader he observed:

SSG Greg [S]. He knew everything down to the T with just about everything that could go on, he didn't hesitate. He was like, he was by far, he might have been really hard and kind of an asshole but he had his reasons and he knew his shit and he excelled in rank real quick because of that because he knew exactly what to do and he didn't hesitate and that's why I respected him a lot. No hesitation. He knew how to run things and if you screwed up, he came up with reasonable punishments that weren't over the top where someone would feel like they're dying because they're so tired or whatever. Just make things inconvenient.

The differences between effective and ineffective leaders appeared to be a strong contributor to veterans' leader development. Participants were readily able to distinguish between those they felt were good leaders with representatives who they considered to be ineffective or simply terrible. When asked to discuss their worst leader while serving, most participants became visibly upset and included colorful language while describing the individuals. Perhaps not surprising, veterans described taking on some of the traits their best leaders held while disregarding attributes of those they identified as their worst Army leaders.

Carol began:

She was the first person that I looked at and I guess I was really lucky because she was a good leader, so instead of taking all of the bad things from a bad leader and not doing those things, I looked at all the things she did and used that to develop my leadership skills.

Andrea noted:

There were a couple of best Army leaders that I think I had, but I would say the one that I most looked up to, they were the same to the effect of how much they cared and not to the effect of how much they got the job done, but they were polar opposites as far as compassion. They both had compassion, but the other one was lot more soft and the other one was a whole lot more rough. That's how I would compare them. They were both really, really good and I looked up to both as far as my first and then probably the best Army leader. I feel like in a way, and they probably didn't know it, but I kind of looked up them and I would listen to this E6 a whole lot more than this other E6 that's above this E6. I would compare them as the same in some categories but polar opposites in others.

She went further and noted:

I wouldn't compare them. The worst Army leader, he just had no comparison, he was just horrible. He was really goofy and really unrealistic and would get upset over petty things, like extremely upset, to the point where we're doing pushups for literally no reason, but yet serious things were just, that was fine. I couldn't compare them. It would probably be offensive.

Leo contributed:

He showed me that leaders make mistakes and that it's not a good idea or it's frowned upon to lead from the rear, and you've got to get your hands dirty sometimes and you don't have to be brutal or harsh. I can't count more than three times I heard the man raise his voice in my basic training. It just wasn't part of his leadership style, and you don't have to, for lack of a better term, you don't have to whip anybody to get them to do what

you want them to do. You give people confidence and you let people believe that they can accomplish things and that is possible and those things he showed me that leadership didn't have to be mean. It had to be strong, but it didn't have to be mean.

The worst leader veterans experienced while serving elicited strong feedback. All ten participants readily-identified their worst leader and shared detailed accounts supporting their beliefs. In this unique finding considering veterans are prescribed leaders, the participants acknowledged that there are many very bad leaders in the service. These ineffective and disliked leaders were often ridiculed by participants and periodically, sheer hate for them was expressed. Still, even the worst Army leaders contributed to the participant's beliefs about leadership.

Mike began:

Oh, Clint Samson. Piece of shit. He's the biggest hypocrite and biggest blue falcon in history. He'd tell us one thing and all of the sudden the XO or the CO would come around and say, "what are you guys doing" and we told 'em and our XO would yell at us and Sergeant Samson would say, "I told you guys to do this, why didn't you listen." And during a bounding exercise, we exactly listened to what he said, we even said, "I don't think we're supposed to do it this way", and he said, "I'm in charge." And then we got chewed out by our squad leader and he didn't say anything. In reality our squad leader knew better and he took him out of our platoon because he was a piece of shit. We never failed at doing any simple field exercise until he came around and became in charge of one of the squads so at least our squad leader knew better. He just yelled at us for listening to him, basically.

Rachel went on to describe her worst leader:

She was the one that I said the penis envy thing. She was shorter than me. She just didn't care. She didn't care what you thought about her. She would just go up to you and scream at you and make you feel like crap because she was pissed off or she was having a bad day and she made everything personal. If she was having a bad day, she would come out and scream at us and lecture about it and tell us, I'm not having a good day because of this, this and this so I don't want to deal with any of your effing bullshit and all this other stuff. If you asked for help, it was, are you a fucking idiot? I was like you're not helping anyone. That's not even constructive criticism. You're just being a jerk to be a jerk. She was one of those people that wore her rank on her forehead.

Carol added:

I don't even really consider my worst leader a leader, which is saying a lot I guess. I felt like she would always come up with excuses or she would always give her work to other people and instead of helping you she would just keep sending you back or if you had personal problems, she really didn't care. She told you to leave them at the door and don't even think about them. She really wasn't focused on developing any skills, she was just there to improve her career I felt like and I felt that was very frustrating and I know other people I worked with felt the same way about her…I definitely learned what not to do when leading people because of her. I constantly remind myself how I felt when she treated me a certain way she did so I try to avoid those situations because I know the person who is in the position that I was in is probably going to feel the same way and I personally don't feel like you need to make people feel like crap if they are under you.

Jan summarized with:

> Staff Sergeant Marks, he was the worst. Staff Sergeant Marks, everything I have complained about, all in one. He was like I used to be. Telling people what to do, how they need to do it, when they need to do it, why they need to do it. Not caring. He wasn't compassionate. Being a single mom, I was the only one in my platoon that was a single mom. Everyone else had at least someone to take care of their child, you know, the other parent, so when we had to stay late, this is what really pissed me off, we would stay late and not do anything. We would just sit around. So I would go to my squad leader and say why are we here, I'm not doing anything, I need to go get my child. I need to spend time with my child, and the Army always says, family first, bullshit, because they didn't give a rat's ass, and they would take it to Staff Sergeant Marks, and he would say no, you're in this platoon with the rest of us, you've got to say here.

Observing leaders interact with subordinates and veterans themselves directly impacted the perception participants had toward effective leadership. As opposed to attributing yelling and tough leaders to military culture, the participants demonstrated a clear, thought-out process for distinguishing effective leaders with those they would not follow again. At the same time, veterans acknowledged gaining invaluable skills and knowledge from individuals they claim were guiding forces toward their own development as leaders. Through demonstration of caring for and protecting soldiers; through competence, and maintaining a presence; to include leading from the front, the best leaders were key to these veterans' Army leader development.

Theme Three: Performing is Essential

For the veterans who participated in the study, performing as a leader was critical to becoming one. The Army's leader development process was rarely clear but much like the Army describes in their doctrine, leaders empowered their subordinates to lead, and accept that

mistakes are part of the learning process. Army soldiers are empowered to lead early and often with each presenting scenarios where they felt they performed as a leader. In those situations, they described taking ownership, protecting subordinates, and feeling a sense of responsibility. The ten veterans added leading others was an opportunity to learn about themselves and about leadership, and enhanced their confidence as a leader.

Carol described:

> I guess it must have been when I did my first exercise with the Army which was when I was still a private. I was in charge of one of the shifts, or I was second in charge, but I guess that's where I had my first opportunity to lead other people. I noticed I was not afraid to do things and I knew what I was doing, so I was just going above and beyond where in the past I never would have done that. I felt confident and that is something prior to the Army I never felt.

Rachel noted:

> I'm more hands on, so the operational stuff was better for me. I paid attention more, I definitely wanted to learn more from my leaders in the hands on stuff, and then when I was a leader, I had more fun with it and I felt like I could contribute more to that than I did when I had to do the classroom stuff where I was just reading stuff. It was awful.

Brian provided:

> I would say it's almost trial by fire sometimes. You get promoted, you get your five [E5], and then you're thrown into a team leader position right away whether they, sometimes they're ready for it, maybe they'd been an E4 team leader…well in that case they'd already be in a leadership position. I think that it works well as in an E1 [Private], E2 [Private E2], wherever you kind of end up learning everybody else's job at the time so

you, if your leader goes down, you're able to take that role and get the mission done still. Would you do it as well as your leader? Well hopefully but you know more than likely you're gonna be stressed from having to take that role and losing somebody. But I like the whole teach your job to others and then learn from the person above you. I think that, I tried to do that whenever I go to, whenever I get a job, granted I'm going to nursing so I guess I'm gonna have to learn doctor's roles, which you kind of do but then you kind of teach down to the CNAs exactly. Now legally they can't really do some of the stuff you do but at least they learn from you the same. I like that leadership development for your teaching, you're still learning from others.

For the participating soldiers, performing as a leader taught them skills and attributes needed in both the military and traditional workforce.

According to Mark:

Definitely talking in front of people. I gave briefs to commanders and sergeant majors and stuff like that so if I couldn't talk to anybody I wouldn't get shit. Definitely reading people. Just taking a quick picture of people and scanning them and reading them and you can kind of tell if people are agitated or pissed off. I can read people a lot better. The awareness of your surroundings is so much higher, mine are, and just that attention to detail. Everything has to be right.

Carol stated:

Yes. I got to meet a lot of higher ranked people because I was so confident throughout the entire exercise. I don't think I ever had people trust me like that before. It was a lot of responsibility to be in charge of a section and then have other people rely on your intelligence. I don't like the whole micromanagement thing because I know that was big

in the Army where the people were always constantly checking up on you. I gave people who I was above more trust and leeway and I think that made them more comfortable and that's what enabled them to succeed more because when they were more comfortable, they were able to grow more...It definitely contributed to interacting with people for sure. Before that, I had never seen anyone ranked above an E5 or an E6 and after that I was interacting with officers, I was interacting with civilians who were our counterparts. I got different kinds of experience from that because you get experience from all of these different types of people, where in the school house and the institutional side, it's only people in the military that are teaching you how to do your job, or enlisted personnel. There is a lot more that you take in.

Brian added:

Ok. It's not to kind of judge everybody but sort of almost what it's doing is that you just, when you observe others and watching, everybody has their own strengths and weaknesses and being able to identify what those are for everybody, you're able to work towards their strengths or away from their weaknesses to better the whole group… Being able to recognize, to recognize the biggest influence for me becoming a leader or something I would say maybe that being aware of others and yourself. Kind of knowing you, you know when you go and get the observing others, well you kind of observe yourself too and you notice those weaknesses that you have as well as the strengths that you have and being able to recognize those and decide exactly how to go about leading from there. Self-awareness is probably one of the best things I've been able to get from being a leader.

Jan concluded with:

> I'm going to help people instead of just expecting them to know what to do. This has made me into a really good leader apparently. I've always been a creative person but I think I've learned more when it comes to training people how to be creative in those training ways. So instead of PowerPoint, I've learned how to interact with people. I've always been really shy. I don't like getting up in front of people and talking, that was always a big issue of mine, and now it's not so bad. Because I've learned how to interact with people by just seeing that you really shouldn't do PowerPoint. That's the skill that I have gained.

Through performing as leaders, these individuals grew confident leading others. They sensed an increased level of awareness for their surroundings, admitted to learning about how to lead, and provided details for how they lead today that they may not have without having served as a leader previously. Unlike performing as a leader, the classroom and to a more-general extent—the institutional domain—was considered insignificant in their development.

The classroom was argued to be a waste of time by seven participants. Though the Army leader development model suggests the institutional domain is one of the three pillars that most contribute to a soldier's leadership, the participating veterans were mostly adamant that their time could have been spent more wisely. Though less than half the participants claimed the classroom training was effective, the veteran's acknowledged everyone learns in their own way—even if, as Mike noted he had, "never known a single person in the Army that benefitted from the in the classroom type stuff." Interestingly, the word "death" was used eight times over the ten interviews—six times related to veterans' experience in the classroom. Five times, "death by PowerPoint" was referenced.

Mike continued:

With classroom stuff, it was a waste of time, nobody pays attention, at least when you're in the infantry so like it didn't really affect any of us. I mean like all the classroom stuff was like, "hey we need to kill time" so I felt like they were just dicking around with their time that's how we all felt. How did that affect me? I felt like they just needed to kill time constantly. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

Jan was particularly harsh on her classroom experience:

Death by PowerPoint. That is honestly what they did the most. All of the classes we had to take on like sexual assault and all of those types of classes, it was all PowerPoint and it was awful. Everybody had a hard time not falling asleep. And it was always two hours long. It was so bad. That's how I would describe that. It has made me realize that nobody likes PowerPoints and that if I'm ever giving training, do not do PowerPoints. I'm sure you've probably gotten that answer a lot. Which is really sad. That's how it has contributed to me as a leader.

Andrea highlighted an important concern:

I would describe the institutional domain as, I don't think as far as the training that we got, kind of like within the classroom training, I don't think it was the best training because it's hard to teach a room full of people and see if they understand it all, especially when there are 25 plus and there are two instructors. I don't think it was the best, especially when you see your peers not understanding it or getting a different understanding from it. So I would say it wasn't as effective, because I wouldn't want to be on the battlefield with someone like that.

Dennis provided:

A shit show is the easiest way to say it. I don't want to say it that way because there are some places that are good but overall it's a shit show. It's the most ridiculous way to advance somebody's career. It seems like you're grasping at straws, doing the classroom shit. I must have, before I deployed, I must have gone to no less than 15 (40) hour classes just to get this knowledge or something like that. It's not it's not a fault of the program because the program sort of gives you the information that you need but it's a crash course and then all that shit is supposed to go to your leadership development in the form of an ERP. It doesn't. It's constant and that's bullshit. Why the hell do you send me to this class? Most of the class I don't even need. I'm not gonna use the shit so now you're wasting my time in learning my actual job.

Dennis went on to discuss the classroom upon exiting the service:

They'd be better off not doing anything than doing what they are right now. They do a lot of classes. Quote unquote professional development when you get out. It's something like 80 mandatory hours now when I was going through ACAP of classroom time, resume building, stuff like that. And it's a great thought but you're dealing with soldiers, veterans. Veterans who've been killed by death by PowerPoint for how many years. They don't want to sit through death by PowerPoint; not for 40 hours and that's how long it is. Every day—eight hours for a week. It sucks. You don't retain anything. You just do exactly what you have to do to get by.

The concern these veterans demonstrated for their time in the classroom offers insight into an under-performing pillar in the Army's leader development model. The operational domain clearly is influential though the institutional (i.e. sitting and listening training component of the Army), is not offering a similar contribution. Participants noted a significant number of

training hours are spent in the classroom, yet, the perceived impact was not there. Still, three of the participants held a favorable view of the classroom with Leo being the strongest supporter.

He noted:

> I thought it was really awesome. They attacked it from different avenues, different approaches, so you got the civilian version of it, you got the veteran version of it, you got the troop version of it and you stirred it all together and I had the luxury of having those experiences in all of my military training classroom trainings through my MOS. I can't speak for other MOSs, but when it was really thorough and I still got all the booklets and stuff even to this day because it is something that I thought was really awesome.

After reflecting on her original comment about the classroom, Andrea re-considered her response:

> It has contributed to my leader development kind of mild actually. Well, no, actually I'm going the polar opposite now that I think of it some more because I did a lot of training. I would say pretty heavy, now that I think about it some more. I did a lot of training, there were a lot of soldiers, or just troops, Marines, Air Force, like all in the same room and we're all trying to learn something within a certain timeframe and it's not going to you, it doesn't work that way. So I think it contributed to my development pretty heavy. I caught onto it pretty quick so it wasn't as bad for me, but I understood things for the most part. It contributed a great deal during my military career and my leadership development.

The institutional domain, most commonly-identified as 'training that occurs in the classroom', was not considered an influential factor in participant's leader development. Even while recognizing all soldiers and people learn differently, the participants claimed their own

leader style did not match the classroom instruction strategy. Still, perception by the majority of these veterans that their time in the classroom was a waste may suggest the current process needs to be revised. At a minimum, the institutional domain does not appear to be of equivalent value as the operational domain.

Self-development is the third domain presented in the Army leader development model. Seven of the study participants did not attribute self-development as an influence on their Army leader development. The three participants that believed self-development was impactful shared respective experiences in college, through reading books, and reviewing field manuals. While self-development was underutilized, eight acknowledged its importance. Whereas the institutional and operational domains are integral components of day to day training, self-development is primarily the responsibility of the soldier. The Army encourages self-development; however, veterans in this study revealed a lack of interest and/or desire to continue developing at the end of their workday. Mark was the most outspoken against the impact self-development had on his leader development claiming, “it [self-development] didn’t at all; not a bit.”

Mark continued:

> You live and breathe that shit every day, so your free time is your free time, so a lot of guys were like fuck that, I'm not doing that. That's how I feel like a lot of younger enlisted guys were and then once you get upper enlisted, they got so much other shit going on. There is always something else going on, so I feel like the self-development isn't as crucial.

Chris added:

> Yeah, for me personally, it's through the actual training, it's going out and doing things and me just as a person looking at how I feel about something and applying it to helping my soldiers and helping myself, and helping the mission, helping others.

Andrea admitted she did not take advantage of the self-development opportunities:

> I didn't do that much, which is something that I look back on and I'm like I should have done more of that. I didn't do that much because it wasn't really taught to us and I didn't really think on my own to do that. The little bit that I did was I probably read a couple of books maybe, a couple like self-development books or I might look something up. But as far as within my military career, as far as self-development, I didn't take the time out to do that, just cause it wasn't really taught so much and necessarily weren't counselled or nothing like that, it was just basically do your job, do what you're asked to do and don't get into trouble. That's something that I regret, but the little bit that I did was just try to get myself into different classes but even then I didn't really expand on that.

The participating veterans did not engage in a significant amount of self-development during their service; however, they did consider it an important element of leader development. Though comments about self-reflection, personal assessment, and "watch and learn" were suggested as types of self-development, the Army's definition is more-exclusive to actual training offered by, for example, a college or training center. Still, the discussion revealed participants believe in the value of self-development.

Brian mentioned:

> You don't want to be comfortable where you're at; you always want to try to get better to show, to shine, and be the one that gets promoted before others, perhaps. It's kind of that

way here, you try to find the resume builders, and you take a seminar over somebody else just to be able to put that on your resume. I think that's like the same with self-development with you know, ok I have some college I'm working towards, a bachelor's here compared to me where I was busy too much with other things to do much of that free college; well it's free now but free then too. But yeah, that's mostly just bettering yourself so that.

Chris added:

You can take classes, here you can take leadership courses, you can go to those all day but that doesn't make you a good leader. It can teach you ways to do things but unless you change as an individual, it's not going to really do anything. That's more looking inward, family, background, the way you were raised. That's how I kind of see that. In the Army, people come from all sorts of different backgrounds so you actually get to, get to see the way these people are born and raised and how they kind of change throughout if that makes any sense.

Carol concisely stated:

I think self-development is taking that extra step to develop yourself outside of what the Army has to offer. I think taking college classes and taking classes in general, because I feel like the Army can only offer you so much when it comes to developing leadership skills.

While the findings from this study suggest self-development is not as strong a factor in a soldier's leader development as performing or observing, veterans believed there was value in developing oneself outside of solely what is offered by the Army. Long hours, age, and minimal exposure all may factor into the nominal self-development that occurred for these veterans. Still,

through observing leadership and performing as leaders, each participant was confident in their ability to lead today. Further, they admitted to calling themselves, "leaders."

Theme Four: We are all leaders despite not understanding the process

The fourth and final theme identified through this study was that veterans, as a result of their service in the Army, believe they are leaders capable of leading others, including civilians. Army doctrine argues all soldiers need to be leaders, regardless of position (Department of the Army, 2012a). Soldiers are expected to learn the role of their superiors and teach their job to subordinates. By observing leadership and performing as leaders, the participants believed they had grown in their ability to lead others. While roughly half were forthcoming that they did not currently hold a prescribed leadership role, they were all confident in their ability to lead when called upon.

Interestingly, the participating veterans struggled to articulate how the Army approaches leader development. The Army describes their approach to leader development through the Army leader development model and in doctrine but has not devoted adequate time toward educating personnel about the methodology. Whether an oversight or intentional, none of the participants could clearly articulate how the Army claims they develop leadership capacities. Participant responses included long pauses, inquiries about what the question meant, and even frustration from one veteran who believed he had already addressed the topic. In total, eight of the ten were unable to provide a clear answer. As Mike noted, "These questions are a little complicated. Like apparently I'm not answering correctly because you keep asking different ways. Let's see. Component with leaders…the leaders did just fine I guess."

Andrea suggested the Army's leader development program was "rough":

I would describe their approach to leader development as rough. I think I was in an easier situation than most people, but I've had different friends from different places or there are different aspects in the Army. I think their approach can start off rough. I think the system is a little flawed, not all systems are perfect, but sometimes like for the board, I remember just memorizing stuff, stuff that I never ever used but I had to know it I guess to know it to help me to a point where I could get a higher rank to "make me a leader," and I say that because just because you have the rank doesn't make you a leader. So that was one of my problems in the Army is having NCOs that weren't really leaders, they just were able to make the point, were able to memorize flashcards and to do a PT test and to qualify, but they may not have that what makes them a leader kind of thing, that charisma and that thing that people would follow. So I didn't care I guess for the Army's approach to develop a leader to how they would develop a leader because some of my leaders, a lot of them, were just horrible, but they were leaders just because they had stripes.

Chris' belief about Army leader development was similarly cloudy:

I really don't know how I would explain the overall Army's approach, I could just only talk about my own personal experience but, from what I've seen, it's sometimes still a good ole boys club. It's helping out your friends and stuff like that even though those friends shouldn't be where they're supposed to be. Some of them turn out to be good but just because you like someone doesn't mean they should be in some of those positions. When I was getting out, I got dropped from my team leader spot, because I was getting out, and I wasn't a big talker so our platoon sergeant at the time was like, "hey, well this guy doesn't yell and scream like I want him to. I don't want him as a team leader, even though my soldiers are on time and they're doing everything they need to do but because

I wasn't screaming all the time or smoking their dicks off for nothing, that's not how he wanted it, but for my old platoon sergeant, he was like, "wow, this guy got what he needs done, got his soldiers right place, right time, right uniform, passing their PT tests, they're good. They're doing what they need to do and a lot of that is individuals, how they see leadership to themselves. You got the screamers you got the not-screamers, the hypocrites. I really don't think there's a straight forward approach because it changes throughout. One leader might, like my drill sergeant, his leadership was different from another one of our drill sergeants. I don't think there's really an approach. I think it's more, you need, pretty much it's just do whatever it takes to complete the mission. Just whatever it takes to complete the mission, you do it. That's probably the clearest thing I can think of is to just complete the mission.

Dennis went as far as stating the Army does not develop soldiers into leaders:

They suck at it. It's amazing that the Army is the way it is. It's amazing that our Army is as powerful as it is because they suck at leader development. The Army doesn't really have a fundamental doctrine, or a functional doctrine for leadership development. It's basically this gigantic crash course, learn as you go along how to be an effective leader and hope to god you're doing it right by the time you get to the top and by the time you get four stars on your shoulder or eight stripes on your shoulder you look back and reflect and say if I did it right and then spend the rest of your time wondering if you did it right. That is the Army's leadership training period. And I can say this because I can't tell you how many times shit-ass fucking Joe went to the board before me and turned to a shitass NCO. They don't care about leaders. They don't care about leadership development. They really don't. They care about you listening and they care about you not talking back

and thinking for yourself. That's how the Army trains you to be a leader. Don't think for yourself. That's not how it should go. So as far as learning leadership, I learned a ton of leadership from it but as far as the Army's model and structure for it, it's basically nonexistent.

Participants also struggled to describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities they gained as a result of serving. The participants were asked to discuss the knowledge that has persisted since leaving the military. From there, one question about skills and a third about abilities was asked. Brian's response from the knowledge question was about "the book side of things" while Jan shared her knowledge gained was to never make someone sit through a PowerPoint presentation and to not assume people know something because they have gone through a school. These responses were typical but became even cloudier when participants were asked to share the skills and abilities gained. Mark, for example, offered, "pretty much all the stuff I just said for skills and knowledge and stuff, all just wrapped in one." Carol and Dennis thought knowledge was distinct but combined skills and abilities. Carol shared, "I feel like abilities and skills are the same thing, but I think knowledge is definitely something else." Mike became frustrated with the questions, "Not to dick around. I also know respect level. Jesus Christ. These are the same, Mike [interviewer]." In total, eight of the ten participants struggled to make distinctions between each of the terms.

Rachel expanded:

I feel that's whole list of skills thing too. They all kind of jumble together. The skills and abilities. My knowledge of working with higher ranking people and knowledge that they pass onto me, and even the lower rank people that shared their experiences with me, I was able to turn that into having better skills to communicate with others, so when I

worked with other people or when new people were coming off the bus and there are a whole new bunch of people, I kind of found, okay this person is kind of like the person I just talked to, this worked better with them.

Dennis felt there was a difference but could not articulate:

I guess I already said mostly abilities. Adaptability is a skill I think you can learn. Through enough shit going wrong you can learn to adapt or die. It's your choice. Darwinism will win out of that one. But I'm trying to think if there's a difference between them. Cause in my mind I can think there's a difference but if you're talking about like hard skills, I don't think the infantry is a place that you learn hard skills that are relatable to the outside world, just because everything that we're taught is survival and killing.

Brian concluded with:

I would say that some of the abilities would be, those abilities and skills, they just seem to really…I know they're different though. Like the VA has those three separate things when you're looking for jobs. Maybe the ability to…abilities and skills are the same thing. Come back to that one.

Though they were unclear on how the Army develops soldiers into leaders as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained, all ten participants, when asked, claimed they were capable leaders today as a result of their service. This number included the four who believed they were leaders prior to enlistment. Whether acknowledging they do not currently fill a formal leadership position or not, they all expressed a belief in their ability to lead if called upon. The beliefs were subsequently supported through discussions about the impact military service has had on their lives as well as the role they tend to play in group activities in the classroom. Seven

of the ten went further and described particular instances that made them feel comfortable in their ability to lead. This continues to support the Army's claim that all soldiers, regardless of rank, are expected to be leaders.

Mark noted:

> I'm still pretty shy and not outgoing until I get to know someone, but definitely it's made me progress and be willing to take that extra step, extra leap to develop myself and kind of take that extra step to step forward and take charge of stuff in everything so far lately. Parts of my life, right now I'm in school, so one of my groups, I usually try to take it to front stage on a lot of stuff. Just kind of take charge, but I always take a step back and see what everyone else is doing first.

Jan echoed a similar statement:

> I would say so because in my classes I do a lot of the talking, especially in the first few when people don't really want to talk. I've been told that I make people very comfortable and that's a good quality to have. I always seem to step up and kind of take that position, the motherly position, if you will, with the students. I think if given the opportunity, I could become a great leader.

Carol explained:

> I think I am. I feel I am. I've noticed it when I interact with other people I definitely stand out from a crowd. Interacting with civilians compared to interacting with people while I was in is definitely a different experience but it's a good different experience. I feel like people are more willing to follow me because of how I was in the military. I have way more confidence. I'm not afraid to create new experiences for myself or be

confident or try new things, and I think people notice that and they are more drawn to that then to the person that I was before I joined the military.

Mike was similarly as confident in his development as a leader:

Shit yes. Really good. That's how [laughs]. I haven't had the opportunity to really lead anybody yet so that's kind of a vague question. I know I would base people on their skills and their strengths on doing certain things. That's how I would do it. Like a room clearing procedure, you don't put certain people in spots that you know they can't do. You put the strongest person at the front where they know exactly where to go and the followers at the back and train them so it's kind of like that formation.

Chris encapsulated the belief each participant had about Army leader development:

I want to say excellent because even though I've really trashed it kind of a lot, it really does teach you how to, I guess this sounds a little sexist but it teaches you to 'man up'. It makes you more assertive, teaches you to speak up, take control, take control of the people around you to accomplish something. I mean even though I'm kind of back tracking again, I've been trashing it a little bit about the way it is but, all those guys out there [points to veteran's social lounge] could easily be a leader of anything. Any of 'em. And I think that's what it does. It instills confidence in you to be able to make the tough decisions, it enables you to be more personal with people, helps you motivate them to want them, helps them want to succeed. I think that's what the military does, it gives you confidence to do things that nothing else can give you.

The Army has not taken the time to teach their soldiers about the leader development process they implement but, based on findings from this study, they have executed a form of leader development that has resonated strongly with each participant. Participants repeatedly

discussed their confidence, ability to make decisions, qualities possessed, and feelings of being qualified, capable leaders. The findings were consistent regardless of age, sex, time in service, and job. The diverse sample and strong similarity in responses suggest a consistent approach has been taken, regardless of background, demographic category, or military occupation to developing Army veterans into leaders.

Summary

This chapter reported four themes that emerged from leadership autobiographies and interviews completed by ten Post 9/11 Army veterans who served on active duty for a period of at least one year. This qualitative, phenomenological study enabled the researcher to inquire about the leader development process implemented by the Army for enlisted soldiers, prior to their being exposed to the first formalized leader development program—the Warrior Leadership Course. Based on data collected, four primary themes emerged: (a) consistent first Army experiences, (b) impact of observing, (c) performing is essential, and (d) we are all leaders despite not understanding the process. Chapter five summarizes the findings, presents implications and future research opportunities, and offers concluding remarks.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This phenomenological study sought to understand the lived leader development experience of Post 9/11 Army veterans. Through qualitative inquiry using an online leadership autobiography and face to face interviews, four themes emerged. The themes outlined a general process veterans experience upon enlistment until completing their term of service in the US Army. The four themes were (a) *consistent first Army experiences*, (b) *observed leadership*, (c) *performing is essential*, and (d) *we are all leaders despite not understanding the process*. These consistencies were demonstrated throughout the interview process and both support and challenge the Army's leader development model. This chapter presents a discussion about the findings; resulting implications for employers, the Army, and veterans; and recommends future research opportunities.

Discussion of Findings

The themes identified in this study highlight an embedded leader development program within the institution's structure. Soldiers, regardless of their background prior to enlisting, are treated in a similar manner. They arrive to their barracks on the first day of basic training in cattle trucks and are exposed to yelling drill sergeants. Boot camp is a demanding experience for many soldiers but the training is identical for all, including shared leader development exposure. Over the course of military service, the participating veterans identified two key leader development influences: the leaders they observed and the exposure they had with leading others. Whether effective or ineffective leaders, the veterans gained valuable insight from observing those in leadership positions. Further, being empowered to lead others early and with regularity throughout military service was invaluable toward their development. Upon transitioning out, each of the ten veterans felt confident in their leadership abilities and willingly

identified themselves as leaders. The following discussion considers influences and implications for the findings.

Theme One: Consistent First Army Experiences

Participants in the study came from a full spectrum of backgrounds and experiences. Four of the participants were female and four were people of color. While they all held at least one job prior to enlisting, the work place was not regarded as significant in their leadership development. Beyond a shared work experience, few similarities were presented. They ranged in age from 17 and 18 to over 21 years old. Their families ranged widely in size and there was no relationship between leadership beliefs, interactions with others, or demographical backgrounds. Considering the broadness of experiences, it is no wonder the Army begins developing civilians into soldiers while concurrently exposing them to leadership influences in basic training. As described by the Department of the Army (2012a), all soldiers, regardless of rank, are expected to be leaders. This differs from traditional workforces where individual employees are often identified as being 'high potential'. The array of individuals who enlist in the Army presents a unique challenge the Army has historically been able to overcome through offering a consistent, highly-structured orientation program that treats all equally.

The participating veterans spoke heavily about the influence basic training played on their development. The majority spoke about serving in a leadership role during boot camp as their first time feeling like a leader. This particular finding highlights a key difference from the traditional workforce. Whereas many of the new soldiers in basic training are rotated through leadership positions, the traditional workforce rarely, if ever, empowers new employees to lead components of orientations. Further, employees who are orienting in a new company are often moving from another organization and have already developed a base of leadership skills. Thus,

traditional orientation programs are possibly stifling one significant opportunity to incorporate leadership development.

An integrated leader development program beginning early would be beneficial for today's employers already concerned about their leadership pipeline. Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) argued it can take ten years or more for employees to develop expert competence. This because leadership is inherently an interpersonal and relational phenomenon (2009). Over the extended period of time, employees have the opportunity to simultaneously develop as leaders. Empowering employees to lead early would contribute toward shorting the time it takes for employers to have a strong pipeline of leaders while also establishing a committed culture of organizational leadership development.

Seven of the ten participants spoke about the influence drill sergeants played on leadership beliefs and how effective leaders establish buy-in. Basic training lasts up to nine weeks but the impact a drill sergeant had on veterans in the study was evident. Drill sergeants taught these veterans how to be soldiers, while also presenting qualities that made them successful leaders. During the interviews, participants spoke about the confidence, competence, and care their drill sergeants had for them—even if they were some of the harshest leaders in the military. Perhaps similar to training provided in orientations, the first leader new employees are exposed to likely impact the perception that employee has on the organization's culture and effective leadership.

Theme Two: Observed Leadership

As the veterans proceeded through basic training and their military careers, they spoke about the impact observing leaders played on their own development. Veterans described their best and worst Army leaders with little difficulty, often attributing their leadership style today to

the impact military leaders played on their development. This is consistent with Kempster's (2009) research on observing leadership. Similar to the impact of drill sergeants, observing other leaders over the course of their careers enabled the veterans to see, feel, and critique effective leadership methods. Kempster (2009) noted the relationship social structures play in shaping leadership. Leadership learning is associated with an understanding that leadership evolves through engagement with notable others within particular contexts (2009). The military is hierarchical meaning many soldiers find themselves in a leadership position. Through this structure, service members are constantly exposed to leaders.

Leaders described as the 'best' were individuals that made soldiers feel like they were being protected and cared for. 'Protection' and 'care' are perceived as being soft--attributes not ascribed to a stereotypical military leader. Still, veterans claimed to understand leaders who yelled and were especially tough were generally trying to keep them safe. Effective Army leaders ensure the needs of their soldiers are being addressed, including their safety. In turn, veterans demonstrated a desire to reciprocate the efforts with lower-ranking soldiers. As opposed to the 'dog-eat-dog' approach often held in corporate America, the military appears to strive to be a more collectivist organization.

The worst leaders that veterans were exposed to shared traits common to ineffective leaders in the traditional workforce. Through their research, McCall and Lombardo (1983) identified the following traits of ineffective leaders: intimidating and bullying subordinates, laziness, an inability to think critically, and insufficient management skills. Five years later, incompetent leaders demonstrated an inability to build a cohesive team; were overtly emotional, demanding, unsupportive, and insensitive; and maintained poor relations with staff (Lombardo,

Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988). Each of these traits were discussed during the interview process, suggesting veterans and non-veterans alike, share similar beliefs about ineffective leaders.

Though Kempster (2009) is one of few to research the influence of observing leadership as a component of leadership development, the findings are consistent and reflect military and non-military leaders alike directly influence the leadership pipeline within an organization. Considering the lack of faith in future pipelines, this finding is consistent with the shortage of effective leaders in today's workforce. To successfully develop leadership, organizations need to provide a supportive environment conducive to growing positive leadership (Shamas-ur-Rehman & Ogunlana, 2009). Embracing a culture of leadership development can resonate for employees who can grow leadership competencies as a cohesive unit. By increasing the leadership capacity of all, employees will further be shaped by witnessing effective leaders on a consistent basis.

Theme Three: Performing is Essential

Being empowered to lead early and often during their term of service was a key contributor to the veteran's development as a leader. The Army's leader development model suggests soldiers develop as leaders through consistent exposure to Army-led training, performing, and self-development. The Army's admission that the operational domain (performing) is the primary means for leader development was supported by participants in the study. While the classroom was considered an opportunity for learning and self-development deemed important, albeit underutilized, the resounding theme surrounded performing as a leader. Being a leader, regardless of the amount of responsibility, provided an opportunity to grow confidence and deepen understanding of effective leadership practices. The Army's intentional decision to empower soldiers to lead is also supported through prior research.

As described by Ford and Fottler (1995), empowering leadership involves a transfer of power from top management to workers, providing opportunities to take initiative and make decisions. Leaders develop soldiers' capacity by matching leadership abilities with appropriate growth opportunities at the right place and at the right time (Department of the Army, 2013a). The process enables leaders to develop their subordinates by creating continuous development opportunities. Empowering leadership has been argued to be a more-effective contributor to leadership development than more-commonly known theories, including directive, transactional, and transformational (Lui, Lepak, Takeuchi, & Sims, 2003). The approach enables individuals to make decisions, learn from mistakes, and gain confidence in their ability to lead in future situations. Though individuals learn over different timelines, all soldiers learn to lead and can contribute over their time in service (Department of the Army, 2013a). Through this approach, the entire spectrum of leadership continues to be developed and ensures long-term health of the organization (2013a).

Self-development was not considered an integral component to the veterans' leader development. Long training hours were a factor in minimal time spent with self-development. Additionally, participants in the study did not talk about Army leaders actively supporting self-development efforts. McCollum (1999) described self-development as an important element of leadership development but acknowledged the need for research. Based on the findings, Army leaders did not allocate time to assess the veteran's personal goals and interests and instead emphasized the institution's needs. The approach may be considered a negative of the consistent focus toward the Army's mission and team but may serve as an indicator as to why many veterans struggle upon transitioning out—a belief supported and discussed by the majority of participants but beyond the scope of this study.

Time spent in the classroom was considered a waste. The five "death by PowerPoint" references were adamantly supported in the member checking process as four of the five participants were able to quickly acknowledge the relationship between 'classroom' and 'death'. Knowles' (1984) third principle suggested that adult learners are most interested in subjects that have immediate relevance and impact. This principle was supported based on the feedback provided. The many hours spent in class staring at a PowerPoint slide caused multiple participants to claim that as a leader today, they will never offer boring, lengthy presentations. Knowles' first principle that adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of instruction serves as a reminder that learners will not engage if they are constantly talked to without being a part of the learning process.

Theme Four: We are all leaders despite not understanding the process

Each of the ten participating veterans in the study described themselves as stronger leaders today because of their military service. Of the four participants who believed they were leaders prior to enlisting, each attributed military service as the most impactful aspect of their leadership development to date. The majority of participating veterans did not see themselves as currently filling a formal leadership role but rather described their influence on family, friends, and in the classroom. Additionally, the participants described confidence in their ability to lead when offered the opportunity. Though they struggled to distinguish their learning, these veterans detailed the leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities they gained as a result of serving and the subsequent self-confidence. The finding is a reflection on the Army's holistic approach to leader development.

The Army outlines a structured leader development program, embedded in training and day-to-day operations. As noted by the Department of the Army (2013a), the means for

successful leader development are will, time, people, and adequate funding. Of the four, 'will' and 'time' are considered the most essential (2013a). The on-going development process differs from commonly-used single interventions (Day & Halpin, 2001) and requires substantial time and a continuous, focused investment. Organizations that successfully develop a dynamic group of leaders at all levels of the organization experience fewer and smaller problems (Asher & Sarah, 2010). The result is an Army prepared to lead through the challenges of tomorrow (Department of the Army, 2013a).

The veterans were quick to support that their military service resulted in a significant expansion of leadership capacities, though not all experiences were positive. In fact, each participant had negative stories to share about their time in service. Some veterans described their disappointment in leadership during deployments while others gave examples where they felt like a failure. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory supports the on-going leader development process as experienced by veterans. Though an identifiable process was not needed for veterans to admit they learned to be leaders, they discussed particular experiences (stage one), observation of and reflection on experiences (stage two), formation of concepts for how they wanted to lead (stage three), and tests of these approaches in a variety of situations (stage four). The range of experiences encapsulate the influence life experience can have in leadership development.

Perhaps most surprising, veterans were challenged when asked to explain the Army leader development process. Comments such as "rough", "nonexistent", and "a shit show" highlighted the issue these former service members held toward Army leader development. A common theme in adult learning is the need for adults to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction (Knowles, 1984). This revelation suggests the Army does little to

involve and describe to soldiers the importance of developing their leadership through the current model. At the same time, the Army may intentionally be avoiding an explanation to soldiers about the significance of leader development. Though an assumption, there may be added value for the Army not to disclose to its soldiers that they are continuously being developed into leaders. By integrating development into daily training and subconsciously developing the leadership capacities of all soldiers through an on-going basis, an intentional, normalized culture may result.

Veterans also struggled to address questions related to their knowledge, skills, and abilities gained after serving in the U.S. Army. Their responses rarely included specific, one- or two-word responses that highlighted attributes often associated with leaders. Instead, extended comments or responses about a particular activity they could be performed were provided. For veterans transitioning out of the service, their inability to concisely articulate gains from military service is concerning. Veterans transitioning out of the military have had years of professional experience and regularly are prescribed to possess a series of knowledge, skills, and abilities sought by employers. The fact many veterans struggle in their transition out of the military and back to a civilian lifestyle is supported by their inability to describe what they have learned.

Integrated leader development in all activities may or may not be to the benefit of soldiers. People intentionally striving to develop their leadership capacities may improve efficacy at a faster rate than those who engage in leader development activities without knowing. Day et al. (2009) argued practice involved not only repeating a particular behavior, but also implicit and explicit feedback that contributes to the development process. Veterans in this study did not disclose having received valuable feedback from superiors or other soldiers regarding their leadership abilities. The lack of feedback, combined with an inability to describe the

Army's approach to leader development, challenges how the Army has been successful quickly developing soldiers into leaders.

Conclusions

Findings from this study suggest the Army has not taken the necessary steps to educate soldiers about the knowledge, skills, and abilities they have acquired through service; however, this conclusion does not argue the Army has that responsibility. Though the veterans who participated in the study all believed they were leaders today after having served, their inability to describe the leader development process was apparent. The sacrifices made, combined with the challenges faced upon transitioning out, suggest the Army may wish to consider adding this training component to current reintegration programs. Veterans are disciplined, dependable team members who maintain an on-going commitment to the mission. They are also proficient trainers because of their experience educating new and subordinate soldiers about job responsibilities, military culture, and overarching Army training. The integration of knowledge, skill, and ability classes into training may ease the burden faced by transitioning veterans.

Veterans can also take responsibility for learning how to articulate the contribution military service has had on their development. Former service members who are prepared to address the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained after having served are likely to have an easier time transitioning between workforces. Many Army jobs are not perfect compliments to civilian workforce positions. This does not suggest that the training received does not contribute toward the development of an ideal employee. By learning to adequately demonstrate how military service is a unique career which provides essential tools for successful future employees, veterans can enhance their own status in the community.

Employers may wish to support the proposed initiative as they will ultimately benefit from making informed hiring decisions. To date, the traditional workforce expresses unwavering support for members of the armed forces but has not been a significant contributor in helping veterans through the adjustment. Similar to a prior learning assessment used by colleges which awards college credits for completed military coursework, employers could establish a similar mechanism. This proposed system would guide employer decision making when introduced to a veteran interested in employment.

Implications for Traditional Workforce

This research sought to understand the Post 9/11 veteran Army leader development experience and offer clarity in the military's ability to develop soldiers into leaders. Whereas companies in the traditional workforce often identify time and resources as significant barriers to their leadership development programming (Society for Human Resource Management, 2008), training and development are core components of Army service. Whether in the field or traditional classroom, active duty soldiers participate in constant training while concurrently developing their leadership competencies. These trainings appear to be invaluable as part of soldier readiness and contribute greatly to their acculturalization in the Army.

Examining veterans' experience with Army leader development offers perspective for how they grew from civilian to soldier and a capable leader in the workforce. The participants spoke about their exposure to leadership and leader development early in their training. These individuals were still learning how to be soldiers and yet also thrust into leadership roles. This process continued throughout their service as new and expanded responsibilities were offered. Leader development was a part of the training process regardless of how long the service member had served. Employers may benefit from scrutinizing their core training and

development processes. By empowering the majority of employees in an organization to lead projects, trainings, and teams, there may be a positive correlation toward the development of a stronger leadership pipeline.

Though the Army as an organization has a distinct mission, its approach to developing leaders and elements of training provided, including action-based learning and empowerment of subordinates to lead, are transferable across industries. Literature from the traditional workforce and Army demonstrates the immense role leaders have on the success of their organization (see Department of the Army, 2013a; Development Dimensions International, 2014). The leaders that were observed and described during the interview process suggest observation of practicing leaders is critical to development. As such, employers who identify a shortage of leaders within their company are unlikely to see significant improvement in the near future.

Implications for Army Leader Development

The Army can use this study's findings to consider if the feedback provided by veterans aligns with intended goals, by comparing the leader development model with perceived actual influences, and by addressing the effect bad leaders have on service members. Each of the identified implications may significantly alter the Army's leader development program while possibly redirecting resources into the classroom and self-development arenas and creating a more-holistic approach.

Army leadership can assess findings from this study to consider if its leader development program is working in the intended manner. According to the research participants, the classroom is not contributing toward leader development. In actuality, they argued learning was minimal because of their constant exposure to ineffective presentations. This finding seems to suggest an opportunity to revamp classroom training and make it more expansive and applicable

to the learner. The Army may also consider the relationship between hours spent in the classroom versus time in the field.

The Army should consider the harsh responses provided by veterans about the ineffective leaders they were exposed to and subsequent long-term impact. Though participants readily identified 'great' leaders, they also discussed favoritism and terrible soldiers being promoted to become terrible leaders. Although ineffective leaders are present in all organizations, the impact of empowering bad leaders in dangerous situations becomes unsafe for all. Even though the participants of this study believed they were leaders, the ease at which they identified ineffective leaders suggested a problem. The methods used by the Army to select and promote soldiers, placing them into formal leadership roles, should also be reviewed.

Transition programs have been improved over the years, yet veterans leave with an inability to describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities they have gained. For Army officials, training soldiers about the qualities they possess after serving would be a beneficial addition. The transition is stressful enough, as veterans move from a highly-structured to an unstructured environment. At the same time, veterans often lose their support network and are forced to simply reintegrate to the civilian lifestyle. Classroom sessions detailing why veterans have been successful in the traditional workforce may begin to ease the transition process.

Implication for Veterans

An unintentional but no less important outcome of this research may be that it serves to contribute positively to veterans' transition out of the armed forces by providing introductory information about military training. The United States' largest military branch consisted of over 500,000 active, reserve, and National Guard members, though personnel reductions in the Army will increase the number of veterans transitioning back to the traditional workforce (Alexander &

Shalal, 2014). These trained individuals often struggle when reintegrating into a civilian lifestyle. Their challenges include unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, suicide, combating stereotypes, overall mental health, and a general lack of knowledge from employers about the training and value veterans can bring to the workforce (Goldberg & Prois, 2013). A heightened understanding of Army training may enhance the value and employability of veterans in the traditional workforce.

Even with hiring initiatives, Post 9/11 veterans still experience rates of unemployment higher than non-veteran populations (7.2% and 5.4% respectively) (Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2014). Employers are challenged with identifying where they can access employable veterans while former service members struggle to navigate a new, unfamiliar system. A 2012 study conducted by Prudential Financial Inc. titled, "Veteran Employment Challenges" suggested there were approximately 783,000 unemployed veterans from all generations. Though these numbers have since improved, many veterans struggle to find employment because of an inability to articulate their experiences and skills.

Mutual Benefit for Employers and Veterans

Research currently suggests that veterans have a positive financial impact in the traditional workforce. On average, veterans outperform their civilian counterparts by a 4% margin (Kropp, 2013). This seemingly small number can translate to significant profits as well as organizational savings. Companies that designate 25% of new openings for veterans earn on average an additional 1.5 million dollars annually and experience 3% less turnover (Kropp, 2013; Meyer, 2014). These same companies experience cost savings on new hires of $325,000 per year and overall annual savings of 1.3 million (Kropp, 2013; Meyer, 2014). This research is limited and future studies are necessary to substantiate the findings; however, the preliminary

results are interesting. Harrell and Berglass' (2012) research found that 68 of 69 participating employers who seek veterans for hire admitted the former service member's leadership skills directly affect their hiring decisions. This study initiates the education process and offers executives and human resource leader's support in their construction of leadership development programming, which may lead to increased productivity and output of non-veteran employees while at the same time supporting veterans.

The U.S. Army is widely regarded as one of the most powerful and well-trained organizations in the world yet few civilians know anything about military service (Bender, 2014; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, n.d.). While employers acknowledge hiring veterans is the right thing to do, most will only do so when it directly benefits the business (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Meyer (2014) adds that many employers feel a moral obligation to take care of veterans but argue that hiring veterans is not always a simple task. Military service is rarely a job qualification and establishes a barrier between veteran and employer, before the application is submitted. Without knowledge about the leader development experience of service members, employers will continue to question veterans' capabilities when considering the former service members for positions within their organizations. As it stands, veterans struggle with their transition between workforces while having been trained to possess an assortment of skills and knowledge already valued in the traditional employment arena.

Since 2001, more than 2.5 million service members from all branches have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan (Adams, 2013). The Army has provided more than half that number—1.5 million (Baiocchi, 2013) with more than 70% of all active-duty soldiers having at least one deployment. Veterans have historically shown to be major contributors to the civilian sector after completing their term of service and yet the need to understand their experiences and training

remains prevalent. Troop reductions have also led to a mass exodus. At least 200,000 service members transitioned from the military each of the last several years—a number that has increased to upwards of 250,000 per year more recently (Office of the Chairman, 2014). Each soldier leaves the military with countless hours of professional development training that employers pay billions of dollars for annually. As part of the training, military culture emphasizes leadership and demands each soldier develop their identity as a leader. Employers can benefit from learning about the leadership training experienced by veterans when hiring and integrating former service members into their organization.

Employers have their own fears about hiring veterans further complicating veterans' transitions to the traditional workforce. The transferability or mismatch of skills, negative stereotypes, possible future deployment, and ability to acclimate in a new environment are commonly-cited concerns for employers (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Research by The Mission Continues and Bad Robot also found 53% of civilians believe the majority of veterans have post-traumatic stress (The Mission Continues, 2012). The list of barriers blocking veterans from being readily welcomed into the workforce is prevalent. For some companies, the hiring of veterans may be more public relations-oriented as opposed to the genuine interest in employing those with military service because of their training and skills (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). The key to closing the knowledge gap between the military and civilian sectors begins with examining the training veterans receive and identification of the beneficial qualities retained after transitioning out of the service (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, n.d.).

Future Research

Findings from the research serve as a platform for future studies. Post 9/11 enlisted Army veterans participated in this study though interviews with former officers and warrant officers

would further contribute towards a holistic understanding of Army leader development. In addition, the leader development of other enlisted personnel across service branches is necessary. This study examined enlisted Army veterans; however, employers do not distinguish service members of various branches when hiring—this includes members of the National Guard and Reserves. Participants from this study were not surprised by the consistency in the findings, regardless of active duty time or deployment. They attributed their interactions with military leaders and opportunities to perform as impactful and did not anticipate a change if members of the Reserves or National Guard were interviewed. In sum, even with the hundreds of jobs available spanning the five branches, employers are not identifying a particular subgroup as more-effective leaders; a belief corroborated with the study's participants.

The overgeneralization may simply be a knowledge gap—an additional research opportunity. Between the many stereotypes and stigmas that exist around veterans, it seems likely employers know little about the training provided to soldiers, seamen, and airmen. While employers make claims about why they do and do not hire veterans, they have not been asked about their understanding of military training, including leader development. It seems plausible unsubstantiated assumptions are made about who veterans are as a result. Through qualitative inquiry, scholars, job recruiters, and job coaches may be able to begin contributing to a meaningful education program about military service for civilians.

The questions asked of participating veterans could also be presented to those currently serving in the Army. Strategic Army leaders may benefit from learning about the most-impactful practices on an enlisted soldier's leader development. Current research is only examining the leader development of sergeants through colonels but neglects those with a rank below sergeant. Army doctrine guides the leader development of soldiers, though based on this study's findings,

the three domains in the model are clearly not the only factor. The influence poor leaders had on veterans who participated in this research present one of the many contributing Army leader development factors. Added emphasis on the impact ineffective leaders have on the organization may further contribute to the Army's understanding of leader development.

The veterans who participated in this study were unable to describe the Army's process for developing soldiers into leaders, even while claiming they were leaders after having served. This dichotomy suggests that participants do not need to know they are engaged in a formal leadership development program to grow leader competencies. Traditional development programs include a starting point where employees are provided information about what they will learn. While this study's participants struggled to list their leadership qualities, they also were unable to outline a program the Army uses for developing leaders. Research on the impact of informing employees of their participation in leadership development programs may reveal a negligible or even negative effect on learning.

The purpose of this research was to understand the Army leader development experience for possible application to the traditional workforce. Though the identified themes could theoretically be applied, an examination of the implementation, execution, cost, and impact needs to transpire. The Army invests significant resources into soldier and leader development, likely at a higher rate than non-military organizations. At the same time, much of the Army's leader development program is embedded in training through observing leaders and empowering subordinates to lead both early and often. Though the Army argues a more-complex process is in place, the primary factors of observing and performing emerged in the findings. As such, the on-going cost to organizations may in fact be lower than what is currently being spent while at the same time present a new method of developing employees into capable leaders.

This phenomenological study was limited to ten Post 9/11 Army veterans who never attained a rank above sergeant and did not complete WLC. Between the small sample size and strict criteria, there is a clear need for future research. The immense, consistent, and professional training experienced by service members, coupled with troop drawdowns, offers an ideal opportunity to further examine Army leader development. Subsequent qualitative and quantitative research based on findings from this study can give credence to the themes presented.

Summary

This chapter expanded on each of the study's four themes: (a) *consistent first Army experiences*, (b) *observed leadership*, (c) *performing is essential*, and (d) *we are all leaders despite not understanding the process* and were supported through validity checking. The discussion presented implications for the traditional workforce, Army leader development, and veterans, while addressing the mutual benefit research on the topic has for both employers and former service members. The findings suggest leader development is possible, regardless of industry or participant. However, this study's primary intention was to provide a foundation for subsequent studies to build from. Future research opportunities were also presented for scholars and organizations invested in leadership development.

United States Army soldiers participate in perhaps the most extensive leader development programming of any organization in the world. Their leader development experience begins early and lasts throughout military service. This aspect of military training has been overlooked in the traditional workforce, even with acknowledgement from employers that veterans are leaders (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Research on the experience is needed to enhance the understanding human resource managers have about military service and the leader development

program currently in place. Through this study, veterans identified a uniform process of growing as leaders, from basic training through completion of service.

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Appendix One

Request to Participate in Research

Hello Army Veteran,

My name is Mike Kirchner and I am conducting a research study on the lived leader development experience of Army veterans, who enlisted and served after 2001. A representative sample of one Army veteran from each of the ten job categories prescribed by the Army is sought. Participants will complete a short Qualtrics survey about their leadership experiences prior to enlisting in the Army, followed by a 60-90-minute face to face interview. The face to face interview will be about your time serving in the U.S. Army specifically related to leader development. After interviews have been completed, participants will be asked to participate in a focus group to discuss preliminary findings. The leadership autobiography, interview, and focus group are expected to take approximately four hours to complete in total.

Purpose: This study is being conducted to understand the experience Army veterans have had with leader development while serving in the armed forces. Findings may offer clarity in the Army's approach to developing soldiers into capable leaders while presenting human resource managers with leader development practices used in the military.

Risk: This research exposes subjects to minimal risks, meaning that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine examinations or tests in educational settings. No aspects of this research project are anticipated or designed to cause discomfort, inconvenience, or physical danger to the subjects. There are no known long-term risks to subjects.

Direct benefits: Participants will receive $40 in cash after the study is complete for writing the leadership autobiography and participating in the face to face interview. Participating veterans will be paid in cash. This research may also benefit members of the veteran community by educating both employers and fellow veterans about the perceived leader development process of those who have served in the U.S. Army. Through the education, employers may be more-likely to initiate veteran-specific hiring initiatives.

Indirect benefits: This research will also benefit the field of human resource development as learning about the training and goals of Army leader development programming may contribute toward improved leadership development programming in the traditional workforce.

Eligibility: To be eligible to participate in this study, candidates must have joined and served in the United States Army after 2001. Participants will also have enlisted within three years of completing high school to reduce the amount of leadership development they may have been exposed to pre-military. Completion of basic training, Military Occupational Specialty School, and initial service term are required. All participants will be screened and eliminated if receiving a less-than-honorable discharge. Veterans must have served on active duty for a term of at least twelve months, though deployment to a combat zone is not a requirement. A high school diploma or equivalent is required. Respondents will also be required to have been discharged

within the last five years to minimize the external effects on their leadership and leader development perspectives. Participating veterans must have served as enlisted soldiers, thus eliminating officers and warrant officers from consideration.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if the decision is made to participate, you can withdraw at any time. You are free to skip any questions asked. If you do not complete the leadership autobiography and face to face interview, any information previously provided will be discarded from the study and deleted. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives available to participating in this research study other than taking part in the completion of a leadership autobiography and participating to a face to face interview.

For more information or to submit a request to participate, please contact me at kirchne3@uwm.edu or by phone at (414) 229-7211.

Appendix B

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Veteran as Leader: The Lived Experience with Army Leader Development

Person Responsible for Research: Michael Kirchner

Study Description: The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the lived experience Army veterans had with leader development while serving in the U.S. military. Examining the Army veteran lived experience with leader development may reveal impactful instances or trainings that most contributed to the former soldier's development. Ten subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a short online leadership autobiography. Upon completion of the leadership autobiography, you will be asked participate in a 60-90-minute interview where you will be asked to answer questions related to your leader development experience in the U.S. Army. Interviews will be scheduled at least two days in advance and interview questions will be provided prior to the interview for your review. Participants will also be asked to participate in a focus group where the researcher will present preliminary findings and request feedback.

Risks / Benefits: Risks of participating in this study are considered minimal, though discussion of past Army experiences may inadvertently cause discomfort when reflecting on potentially difficult situations. There are no costs for participating. All participants who complete the leadership autobiography and face to face interview will receive $40 in cash upon completion and publication of the study. While there are no other direct benefits, indirect and long-term benefits of participating include providing education to both employers and fellow veterans about the lived leadership development of former U.S. Army soldiers.

Confidentiality: Identifying information such as your name, age, Army rank, military and college education, and time in service will be collected for research purposes to assist in the researcher's understanding of your leader development experience. Your responses will be treated as confidential and all reasonable efforts will be made so that no individual participant will be identified with his or her answers. The researcher will remove your identifying information after analyzing and transcribing the data, and all study results will be reported without identifying information so that no one viewing the results will ever be able to match you with your responses. Only group results will be reported in publications resulting from this study. Additionally, all data included with the subsequent focus group, as part of the study's quality control procedures, will be de-identified. Data from this study will be saved on a password-protected computer in a locked office for three years and then destroyed. Only Michael Kirchner will have access to your information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if the decision is made to participate, you can withdraw at any time.

You are free to skip any questions asked. You are free to skip any questions asked. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives available to participating in this research study other than not taking part in the writing of a leadership autobiography and partaking in a face to face interview.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Michael Kirchner, the primary investigator, at kirchne3@uwm.edu or (414) 229-7211 or Dr. Barbara Daley at bdaley@uwm.edu or by phone (414) 229-4311.

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB Manager, Melissa Spadanuda, at 414-229-3173 or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

_____

Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

_____ _____

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative Date

Appendix C

Data Collection for Leadership Autobiography

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research and the following brief leadership autobiography. Please answer questions thoroughly. The final document should be between five and seven pages.

1. How old were you when you enlisted?

2. How many siblings did you have prior to enlisting?

3. Had you participated in a structured leadership development program prior to enlisting?

4. What year did you enlist in the U.S. Army?

5. How many years did you serve?

6. How many years were on active duty?

7. Did you deploy overseas? If so, for how many total months?

8. What was your military occupational specialty?

9. What was the highest rank you achieved in the Army?

10. What unit were you with?

11. How would you describe your experience as a leader, prior to enlisting in the U.S. Army?

12. Would you consider yourself someone who was a leader prior to enlisting? Why or why not?

13. How did family impact your beliefs or perceptions of leadership, pre-military?

14. How did friends impact your beliefs or perceptions of leadership, pre-military?

15. Were you ever employed before enlisting in the Army and, if so, what was your position(s) and the company you worked for?

16. If you answered “no” to question 15, skip to question 17. If you answered “yes” to question 15, how did serving as an employee contribute to your leadership development?

17. Were you someone who earned good grades in high school?

18. How would you describe your involvement in after school activities? Were you involved in multiple clubs or sports? Why or why not?

20. Were there any additional influences in your life, prior to enlistment that contributed to who you are as a leader today?

Appendix D

Interview Guide

Interview #_____

Date_____

Checklist immediately prior to interview:

- **Confirm room availability 30 minutes prior to interview**
- **Confirm room layout/lighting/seating**
- **Test audio recorder**
- **Bring extra batteries**
- **Bring two writing utensils**
- **Print two copies of interview questions**
- **Bring water for participant**

During the Interview:
I will audio record entire interview and take brief notes.

Script: Thank you for participating in this research study and for completing the leadership autobiography. Today's interview will consist of questions about your lived leader development experience while serving in the United States Army. The interview will consist of the 28 questions I provided prior to the interview and may include follow-up questions for added clarity or depth. Your responses will remain confidential and you are free to end the interview at any time. I would like your permission to tape record the interview to ensure I accurately document your responses. If at any time, you wish to take a break or stop the tape recording, please let me know. Although the research findings from this interview may be published, no identifier information will be included to connect you with the findings.

Participants who complete both the leadership autobiography and face to face interview will receive $40 cash in compensation for their assistance. Your responses will also contribute toward educating employers and civilians about the lived leader development experience of Army veterans. Additionally, your participation and responses may help guide the refinement of future leadership development programs.

Please know that your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort and your responses and participation will remain confidential. At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the investigator and we both have signed and dated the consent to participate forms, certifying that we agree to continue this interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to end the interview or withdraw participation at any time. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

PRESS PLAY ON AUDIO RECORDING DEVICE!

Interview Questions:

1. Can we get started with you telling me about why you decided to join the military?

2. What was your experience with leading others prior to joining the military?

3. How would you describe your experience with leaders prior to joining the military?

4. Tell me about the first experience you remember with an Army leader and how you felt.

5. How did that first leader contribute to your beliefs about leadership?

6. Tell me about the first time you felt you were acting as a leader while serving in the Army. Why did that instance make you feel like a leader?

7. Was there ever an instance while you were serving that you thought you were being a great leader? What factors contributed to that belief?

8. Was there ever an instance while you were serving that you thought you were failing as a leader? What factors contributed to that belief?

9. Army doctrine argues Army leaders develop soldiers through three domains: institutional or Army-created structured training, often in classrooms; operational or training while performing the job; and self-development or additional training sought by Army soldiers outside of the military. How would you describe the institutional domain?

10. How has the institutional domain contributed to your leader development?

11. How would you describe the operational domain—or performing your job as part of your development?

12. How has the operational domain contributed to your leader development?

13. Lastly, how would you describe the self-development domain?

14. How did the self-development domain contribute to your overall lived Army leader development?

15. Describe the interactions between each domain and how they relate?

16. How would you describe the Army's approach to leader development?

17. Leaders are found at all three levels of leadership currently identified by the Army: direct, organizational, and strategic, and assume progressively broader responsibilities. Direct level leaders are the first-line leaders and are representative of the direct leadership of others. The positions are filled by junior leaders learning how to plan tasks and activities, understand organizational constructs, and how to interact with others. Please describe direct level leadership from your experience.

18. The Army offers additional leadership levels. How would you distinguish the difference between direct level leadership and higher or more-advanced levels of leadership?

19. How has the Army contributed to your development as a leader?

20. Please describe the knowledge you have gained that has contributed to your development as a leader.

21. Please describe the skills you have gained that have contributed to your development as a leader.

22. Please describe the abilities you have gained that have contributed to your development as a leader.

23. Reflecting back to the first memorable Army leader, how would you compare that individual with the best Army leader you have been around?

24. Similarly, how would you compare the first memorable Army leader with the worst Army leader you have been around?

25. Are there other contributors to your leader development experience that have not been discussed thus far in the interview?

26. Would you consider yourself a leader after having served in the U.S. Army?

27. How would you rate the Army's program for developing soldiers into leaders for when they transition out of the Army into civilian work force? (i.e. poor, fair, good, excellent) Can you explain why this ranking?

28. Any questions for me?

Concluding the Interview:

Script: Thank you for your participation and willingness to speak about Army leader development. As stated, your comments and participation will remain confidential and may help

improve employer knowledge about the training Army veterans have received as well as aid the improvement of future leadership development programs.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions related to this study. I can be reached by phone (414) 229-7211 or email kirchne3@uwm.edu. As this research is part my dissertation, if you have overarching concerns, my advisor, Dr. Daley, can be reached at (414-229-4311 or bdaley@uwm.edu.

At this time, I have no further questions; however, if additional questions arise, can I contact you? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and feel free to contact me if you have future questions or comments you'd like to add to the study.

CURRICULUM VITAE

MICHAEL KIRCHNER

Assistant Professor

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Aspiring assistant professor with eight years of professional experience, including six years of providing structured education to adults. Published author and significant experience presenting at regional and national conferences. Passion for research and teaching courses about leadership, leadership development, higher education, and adult learning.

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- Doctor of Urban Education - 3.91 G.P.A. April 2016
  - Dissertation title, *"Veteran as Leader: The Lived Experience with Army Leader Development"*
- Master of Arts in Administrative Leadership - 3.98 G.P.A. 2012
- Bachelor of Arts in Educational Studies 2008
- UW System Leadership Development Program 2015-2016

HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Military and Veterans Resource Center (MAVRC) - Milwaukee, WI

Director July 2013-Present

Led the establishment and development of the first Military and Veterans Resource Center on the UWM Campus. Responsibilities include the formation and ongoing management of daily operations; hiring, training, and managing a structured staff; budget management; and campus and community outreach, education, and marketing.

Achievements

- Establish the center as the first point of contact for UWM's more than 1,200 military and student veterans with over 10,000 documented MAVRC visits thus far (7,400 in 2015).
- Manage annual operating budget of $220,000, including monitoring expenditures and alternative revenues.
- Develop new employee orientation and training program for MAVRC staff.
- Initiate campus and community partnerships, leading to over $50,000 raised for programming and services.
- Develop and propose MAVRC three-year budget projections.
- Create and implement MAVRC's three-year assessment plan.
- Provided outsight and guidance for MAVRC expansion project over winter 2014-15.
- Collaborate with community leaders to establish and lead creation of the MAVRC Board of Directors.
- Manage Pat Tillman Partner University collaboration; UWM is one of 17 partners in the country.
- Assist with community outreach and recruitment of potential UW-Milwaukee student veterans.
- Market the MAVRC on-campus and in the community through community events and focused promotions.

- Supervise planning, implementation, and marketing of Veterans Week, veteran's graduation ceremony, veteran orientations, Milwaukee Student Veterans Ball, and a Miller Park tailgate for student veterans and their guests.

YouthBuild - Milwaukee, WI
Director November 2012-July 2013

- Provided operations oversight including the recruitment, hiring, and supervision of staff and program members.
- Refocused program objectives for improved assessment and evaluation of program members and staff.
- Maintained program budget in coordination with the executive director.
- Co-authored more than ten grants, resulting in $1,000,000 total awarded funds.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (2015). Supporting student veteran transition to college and academic success. *Adult Learning, 26*(3), 116-123.

- **Kirchner, M. J.**, Coryell, L., & Yelich Biniecki, S. (2014). Promising practices for engaging student veterans. *Quality in Higher Education Journal, 5*(1), 12-18.

- **Kirchner, M. J.**, & Akdere, M. (2014). Examining leadership development in the U. S. Army within the human resource development context: Implications for security and defense strategies. *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis, 26*(3), 351-369.

- **Kirchner, M. J.**, & Akdere, M. (2014). Leadership development programs: An integrated review of literature. *The Journal of Knowledge Economy and Knowledge Management, IX*, 137-146.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, PANELS, AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (February 2016). *Large General Session: Doh! Looking back at three years of false assumptions and mistakes.* Presented at 2016 NASPA Symposium on military-connected students. Orlando, FL.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** & Akdere, M. (February 2016). *Applying the U.S. Army leader development system in the contemporary organizations: Implications for technology & innovation.* Presented at AHRD International Conference in the Americas, Jacksonville, FL.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (November 2015). *Veterans Day Parade* (Keynote Speaker). Milwaukee County War Memorial. Milwaukee, WI.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** & Peck, C. (September 2015). *Growing active membership best practices,* Presented at Southeast Wisconsin Military Veteran Employee Resource Group Summit, Milwaukee, WI.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (June 2015). *Memorial Day Celebration* (Keynote Speaker). Wisconsin Memorial Park, Brookfield, WI.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (February 2015). *Overcoming the unforeseen obstacles of veterans' community partnerships,* Presented at NASPA Veterans Conference, Louisville, KY.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** & Akdere, M. (February 2015). *Leader development versus leadership development in the U.S. Army: Implications for HRD,* Presented at AHRD International Conference in the Americas, St. Louis, MO.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (April 2014). *Student perspectives of veteran services on college campuses,* Panel discussion at UW System-wide Committee on Veterans Issues, Madison, WI.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** & Akdere, M. (February 2014). *Leadership development programs: An integrated review of literature,* Paper presented at AHRD International Conference in the Americas, Houston, TX.

- **Kirchner, M. J.**, & Akdere, M. (February 2014). *Examining leadership development in the U.S. Army: The role of HRD,* Paper presented at AHRD International Conference in the Americas, Houston, TX.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (December 2013). *Military and Veteran Students,* Presented at MapWorks Conference, Milwaukee, WI.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (December 2013). *The challenges and support systems for UW-Milwaukee student veterans,* Presented to Waukesha Rotary Club, Waukesha, WI.

- **Kirchner, M. J.** (November 2013). *Dropping out and re-enlisting: The reasons behind student veterans not graduating,* Session presentation at American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, Lexington, KY.

- **Kirchner, M. J.**, & Yelich Biniecki, S. (November 2012). *Promising practices for engaging student veterans: Lessons learned from the front lines of an urban university,* Session presentation at American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

- **Kirchner, M. J**. (April 2012). *Panel discussion: Challenges for veterans seeking employment,* Presentation at Lumen Christi Veterans Employment Network, Mequon, WI.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Military and Veterans Resource Center (MAVRC) – Milwaukee, WI
Director July 2013-Present

- Develop, implement, provide, and oversee training of nearly 400 faculty and campus staff on veteran-related issues.
- Create and provide oversight for comprehensive orientation program for all new student veterans—over 100 since 2014.
- Present on-going training to community leaders and corporate partners about service member transitions from military to college to career.

YouthBuild - Milwaukee, WI
Education and Career Coordinator October 2011-November 2012

- Collaborated with neighboring agencies to provide career development and cultural awareness training to program members.
- Taught basic skills education classes to racially and economically diverse populations of adults, including those with special needs.
- Interviewed, trained, and supervised tutors in education department.

Journey House - Milwaukee, WI
Adult Education Assistant January 2010-October 2011

- Taught adult education classes to over 300 racially and economically diverse adults per year.
- Facilitated student-focused, service-oriented environment vital to maximizing satisfaction and retention.
- Recruited and conducted program orientations and basic skills proficiency testing.

Waukesha County Juvenile Center – Waukesha, WI
Juvenile Corrections Officer December 2007-March 2010

- Provided tutoring of secondary education topics, ranging from English to math, writing, and history for up to fifteen young adults at a given time.
- Established structured environment incorporating team-development, improvement of communication skills, and critical thinking.
- Oversaw day-to-day operations within unit, including processing intakes, daily logs, and out-processing of center residents.
- Served as tutor and mentor while providing security for young males ranging widely in socioeconomic status, race, age, and education level.

CAMPUS COMMITTEES AND SERVICE

Chair/Co-Chair

Student Affairs Staff Development Committee	February 2016-Present
Mental Health Campus and Community Connections Workgroup	October 2015-Present
Veterans Advisory Committee to the Chancellor	August 2015-Present

President

Milwaukee Veterans Ball Committee	April 2014-Present

Co-Founder and Co-President

Student Veterans of America: UW-Milwaukee Chapter	November 2011-2013

Advisor

Air Force ROTC Student Organization	October 2014-Present
Army ROTC Student Organization	May 2014-Present
Student Veterans of America: UW-Milwaukee Chapter	January 2013-Present

Member

Student Affairs Staff Development Committee	August 2015-Present
Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Mental Health	October 2013-Present
Transfer and Adult Student Orientation Leadership Team	September 2013-Present
Military and Veterans Living Learning Community Stakeholders Team	July 2013-Present
Veterans Advisory Committee	February 2012-July 2015

PROFESSIONAL AFFLIATIONS AND SERVICE

Member

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6498	June 2015-Present
Milwaukee County Veterans Board of Directors	June 2015-Present
American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Veterans SIG	March 2015-Present
University of Wisconsin System-wide Committee on Veterans Issues (SCOVI)	April 2014-Present

Armed Forces Challenge Planning Committee	December 2013-Present
Academy of Human Resource Development	February 2013-Present
American Society of Training and Development	October 2012-2014
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education	July 2012-Present

Presentation Proposal Reviewer

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education	April 2016
NASPA Annual Conference 2016	September 2015
AHRD International Conference in the Americas	September 2015
American Association for Adult and Continuing Education	April 2015
NASPA Annual Conference 2015	September 2014

Paper Reviewer

Psychiatric Services Journal	March 2016
Defence Studies Journal	January 2016
Academy of Human Resource Development: Asia Conference	September 2014

RECOGNITIONS

- Certificate of Recognition—Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs 2015
- Chancellor's Award Recipient-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012 and 2014
- Chancellor's Award Nominee-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012-2014
- Kuehneisen & Eiserlo Scholarship Recipient-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2013
- Singer Scholarship Recipient-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012
- Outstanding Student Organization Award-Student Veterans of America 2012 and 2013
- Outstanding Student Leader Award-Student Veterans of America 2012
- Soldier of the Year- Bravo Battery 1-126 Field Artillery 2004-2005

MILITARY SERVICE

Army National Guard - Oak Creek, WI 2000-2006

Specialist

- Lead activities and event planner for unit through duration of one-year deployment.
- Facilitated more than two dozen training sessions to over 100 soldiers, including first-aid, physical training, paladin operations, preventative maintenance checks and services, and weapons operations.