

**Analyzing the “Dark Side:” Can “Dark Side” Trait Theory Prove Helpful in
Leader Development?**

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 18-05-2018		2. REPORT TYPE FINAL		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Analyzing the "Dark Side": Can "Dark Side" Trait Theory Prove Helpful in Leadership Development?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) LCDR Matthew B. Kohlmann, USN Paper Advisors: Professor Ivan Luke and Lt Col Jennifer Stokes				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited. Reference: DOD Directive 5230.24					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.					
14. ABSTRACT "Dark side" trait theory is a leadership theory that postulates people possess certain personality traits that can impair individual and organizational performance if left unmanaged. Proper management of these traits involves self-awareness and self-regulation. This paper applies "dark side" trait theory to two different operational commanders who served during the War in the Pacific, namely Admirals Raymond Spruance and William Halsey, to show the value of this theory in leader development. It explains "dark side" traits specific to each leader, their level of ability in regulating these traits, and how their ability in regulating these traits affected their operational performance. In the end, this paper concludes that "dark side" trait theory can be useful to leader development and therefore should be considered for inclusion in future versions of the Chief of Naval Operation's Navy Leader Development Framework.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Leadership, Spruance, Halsey, "Dark Side" Trait Theory, Leader Development					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			Chairman, JMO Dept
				21	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-3556

CONTENTS

PAPER ABSTRACT	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
“DARK SIDE” TRAIT THEORY	2
SPRUANCE MANAGING HIS “DARK SIDE”	5
THE “DARK SIDE” OF HALSEY	11
CONCLUSION.....	18
APPENDIX-1	19
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	20

PAPER ABSTRACT

“Dark side” trait theory is a leadership theory that postulates people possess certain personality traits that can impair individual and organizational performance if left unmanaged. Proper management of these traits involves self-awareness and self-regulation. This paper applies “dark side” trait theory to two different operational commanders who served during the War in the Pacific, Admirals Raymond Spruance and William Halsey, to show the value of this theory in leader development. It explains “dark side” traits specific to each leader, their level of ability in regulating these traits, and how their ability in regulating these traits affected their operational performance. In the end, this paper concludes that “dark side” trait theory can be useful to leader development and therefore should be considered for inclusion in future versions of the Chief of Naval Operation’s Navy Leader Development Framework.

INTRODUCTION

In his recently released “Navy Leader Development Framework, Version 2.0,” (NLDF) current Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral John Richards, cites self-guided learning as an integral part of leader development and says it can be accomplished through various means, including writing, reading books, “taking college courses...; attending or listening to lectures; joining professional societies; or participating in innovation opportunities.”¹ Essentially, the Framework limits self-guided learning to inputs of experience or knowledge one can take in from “outside” one’s self. This perspective, however, neglects research indicating effective leadership development also involves self-transformation “inside” one’s self. One concept that has emerged from such research is “dark side” trait theory, which maintains that certain self-management techniques can prevent destructive personality traits from impairing individual and organizational performance. Research postulates these techniques prove helpful in developing valuable leadership skills and preventing gross errors in judgment. Since “dark side” trait theory incorporates a form of self-development that, according to leadership researchers, contributes to effective leadership, the inclusion of this theory in the CNO’s concept of self-guided learning would broaden the focus of the NLDF to include development techniques that involve transformation from the “inside.” Therefore, the CNO should consider including “dark side” trait theory and its implications in future versions of the NLDF.

In support of this argument, this paper will apply “dark side” trait theory to a historical case study, namely the leadership performance of Admirals Raymond Spruance and William Halsey during the Pacific War. Spruance and Halsey were two admirals who had many similar operational experiences, even alternating command of the same fleet during the latter part of the

¹ ADM John M. Richardson, *Navy Leader Development Framework: Version 2.0* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Navy, April 2018), 7.

war.² Their performance records during their time as operational leaders, however, proved to be considerably different. Spruance, on one hand, led the U.S. Navy to victory in four major battles: Midway, Philippine Sea, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Historian John B. Lundstrom, who wrote several books on the War in the Pacific, sums up Spruance's tenure this way: "The constant was that every time Admiral Raymond A. Spruance commanded an operation against the Japanese, they lost."³ Halsey, on the other hand, while starting out strong as an operational commander, saw a steady decline in operational performance starting with his controversial pursuit of Ozawa's decoy force at the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Towards the end of the war, in the words of naval historian Clark G. Reynolds, "between his mistakes and his antics, he became something of an embarrassment, sadly tarnishing his otherwise outstanding war record."⁴ Applying "dark side" trait theory to these two leaders will show that Spruance was able to self-regulate his "dark side" traits, leading to his effectiveness as a commander, and that Halsey was less able to do so, which contributed to his errors in judgment towards the end of the war.

"DARK SIDE" TRAIT THEORY

"Dark side" trait theory originated in investigating incidents of pervasive managerial failure, namely when managers who are normally successful begin to experience individual or corporate dysfunction. Research into such incidents, termed "derailment" by leadership researchers, revealed that these events occur primarily because of "overriding personality defects." Further research led some to classify these potential "defects" and term them as

² Elmer B. Potter, "Halsey and Spruance: A Study in Contrasts," *Naval History* 30, no. 2 (2016): 24, <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1770839021?accountid=322>.

³ John B. Lundstrom, introduction to *Quiet Warrior*, by Thomas B. Buell (1974; repr., Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), xvii.

⁴ Clark G. Reynolds, "William F. Halsey, Jr.: The Bull (1882-1959)," in *The Great Admirals: Command at Sea, 1587-1945*, ed. Jack Sweetman (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 501.

“dark side” traits.⁵ A research team led by leadership expert Robert Kaiser compiled a comprehensive list of these traits, which is displayed in Appendix-1 and includes traits such as “excitable” and “mischievous.”⁶

At its most basic, “dark side” trait theory says that while everyone has certain personality traits that can be advantageous to an individual or organization, everyone also has related traits that can be liabilities if not managed properly. These latter traits, or “dark side” traits, often lead to relational strife and errors in judgment.⁷ These problems arise because individuals fail to see that “dark side” traits are, in fact, problematic. The Kaiser team explains:

Dark-side tendencies originate in efforts to get along and get ahead but rest on flawed assumptions about how one expects to be treated or how best to serve one’s personal interests. These strategies...lead to self-defeating behavior that may secure minor short-term benefits but at the expense of significant long-term costs.⁸

In other words, “dark side” traits are harmful, but are often seen as strengths because the short-term-benefits they garner mislead individuals into thinking they are effectively coping with difficult circumstances. For example, someone who is “reserved” may experience affirmation that they are a leader who is composed under pressure, but, over time, their infrequent personal exchanges may confuse or alienate subordinates due to unannounced expectations.

Conceptually, “dark side” traits are best viewed as a continuum. On one side they merge with the “bright side” aspects of personality that form the bedrock of someone’s ability to succeed in a career or organization. On the other side, they reveal their fully-wrought destructive tendencies. The classification model in Appendix-1 captures this continuum by

⁵ Robert B. Kaiser, James M. LeBreton, and Joyce Hogan, “The Dark Side of Personality and Extreme Leader Behavior,” *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 64, no. 1 (2015): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12024>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 60, 62.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

describing the “strengths” and “weaknesses” of “dark side” traits, each corresponding to short-term benefits and long-term costs, respectively.⁹ The broad nature of “dark side” traits makes them susceptible to being erroneously viewed as outright strengths, and, because they do merge with “bright side” traits, eliminating them indiscriminately is considered counterproductive.¹⁰

Extensive research into “dark side” traits reveals some enlightening trends. Some studies show that no one is immune to the “dark side,” with almost everyone possessing at least three of the traits, and 40% being at risk of some form of work-related derailment.¹¹ Other studies peg this risk percentage in the 90th-percentile, leading some to believe that virtually all upper-level managers are at risk.¹² Further research has also revealed that “dark side” traits typically manifest as “weaknesses” when people become complacent, such as “when they are stressed, tired or otherwise less vigilant about how they are being perceived,” to use the words of the Kaiser research team.¹³ An individual’s ability to alleviate the onset of stress and fatigue often leads to less complications associated with extreme “dark side” behavior.

Given the concerning nature of “dark side” traits, and the probability that everyone possesses at least a few of them, researchers have sought to identify remedies that could prevent these traits from ruining an individual career or organization. One method prescribed by the Kaiser team involves a form of self-development and can be boiled down to three factors: self-awareness, situation recognition, and self-regulation. Self-awareness is seeking and receiving feedback about what specific traits are part of one’s personality. Once those

⁹ Kaiser, “The Dark Side of Personality and Extreme Leader Behavior,” 59-62.

¹⁰ Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, “Could Your Personality Derail Your Career?” *Harvard Business Review* (September-October 2017), 140.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Kaiser, “The Dark Side of Personality and Extreme Leader Behavior,” 84.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

traits are identified, leaders are encouraged to recognize those specific situations when their “dark side” traits are most likely to manifest themselves and to realize that, in the end, they are not helpful. The last step, self-regulation, is recognized as the most difficult step. According to Robert Kaiser, this means leaders must learn “self-regulatory strategies to manage their dark side.”¹⁴ He explains that self-regulation can prove difficult because many behaviors are developed as forms of self-protection and “were learned in stressful circumstances and reinforced through habitual use.”¹⁵ Efforts at self-regulation, therefore, require sufficient will-power and patience to modify harmful behaviors that have been developed over years, or even a lifetime.¹⁶ This paper will show that, on some level, Spruance was able to practice this self-development process, and that Halsey was less able, thus affecting their performance.

SPRUANCE MANAGING HIS “DARK SIDE”

“Dark side” trait theory is helpful in understanding the consistent, successful performance of Spruance during the Pacific Campaign because it shows his ability to manage his “diligent”¹⁷ and perfectionistic tendencies. Throughout his life, Spruance approached problems from the perspective of an intellectual, seeking all the information he could gather about a subject before proceeding with a decision.¹⁸ As a testament to his technical focus, in the early parts of his career Spruance served in six separate engineering tours, three at sea and three at various shipyards and engineering facilities.¹⁹ Later, as a ship commanding officer,

¹⁴ Kaiser, “The Dark Side of Personality and Extreme Leader Behavior,” 85.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See Appendix-1 for associated “diligent” descriptors and “weaknesses.”

¹⁸ Walter Lord, *Midway: The Incredible Victory* (1967; repr., Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000), 59-60.

¹⁹ Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., “Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution: Raymond Ames Spruance (1886-1969),” *Naval War College Review* 62, no. 4 (2009): 122, <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/205940041?accountid=322>.

his men regarded him as “exacting yet tolerant”²⁰ and a captain who “watched the chief signalman like a hawk.”²¹ Confessing his diligence, Spruance himself once said, “I believe that making war is a game that requires cold and careful calculation. Each operation is different and has to be analyzed and studied in order to prepare the most suitable plans for it.”²² While Spruance’s “diligent” trait was seen as a strength by many, especially during his time as a planner,²³ others thought it made him too possessive, and even tentative, as an operational commander.²⁴

One incident when Spruance took his diligent trait to the extreme was when, as an operational commander, he took tactical command of Task Force 58 from Vice Admiral Mark Mitscher during a show of force mission to Truk lagoon. Captain Charles Moore, at that time his Chief of Staff, was furious that Spruance had retained tactical command during the short battle, as two torpedoes almost struck their battleship. His concern stemmed partly from the fact that Spruance was out of practice in battleship tactics and felt Spruance was unduly putting ships at risk.²⁵ This incident, however, was not consistent with Spruance’s known habit of giving tactical command to his subordinate senior officer,²⁶ but does show his proclivity towards micromanagement.

The first example of how Spruance learned to manage his “diligent” trait is his decision during the Battle of Midway to launch his planes from the USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6) at 0700 on 4 June 1942, a decision he made amidst great uncertainty. When Spruance rendezvoused with Rear Admiral Jack Fletcher at “Point Luck” on 2 June, he waited on intelligence

²⁰ Thomas B. Buell, *The Quiet Warrior* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974), 78.

²¹ Hughes, “Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution,” 123.

²² Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 53.

²³ Hughes, “Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution, 117.

²⁴ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 266-280.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

indicating that friendly scouts had sighted the Japanese invasion force, and, more importantly, enemy aircraft carriers.²⁷ Spruance's plan from the beginning was to surprise the Japanese by launching all of his planes before the Japanese located his task force. Over the next few days, however, this plan was befuddled by inconclusive information, resulting in mounting confusion throughout the task force. Rear Admiral Jack Fletcher, Spruance's immediate superior during the battle, described the situation leading up to the battle: "People talk a lot about how the decisions were methodically reached, but actually there's always a hell of a lot of groping around."²⁸

Amid all the tumult, however, Spruance was able to make a firm decision at 0700 to launch his planes, a decision that eventually resulted in the ensuing rout of the incoming Japanese carrier force. He made that decision using vague information and an incomplete picture of the situation, seen in three ways. First, not all the enemy carriers had been located. Second, his plan to launch all his planes in one attack left his task force vulnerable to submarine attack because not enough planes were left for anti-submarine patrols. Third, his decision to launch at 0700 put many of his planes at risk of crashing into the water because they were being launched near their maximum attack range.²⁹ How was a man with such a penchant for perfection able to make such a bold decision?

One key factor in this decision, according to many historians, was the advice of Captain Miles Browning, his Chief of Staff, and it is arguable that he tipped the scales for Spruance in terms of making a decision to launch.³⁰ If Spruance's "dark side" tendency in stressful

²⁷ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 129.

²⁸ Walter Lord, *Incredible Victory*, 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁰ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 137; Hughes, "Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution," 118; Edwin P. Hoyt, *How They Won the War in the Pacific: Nimitz and His Admirals* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970): 99.

situations was to micromanage or demand exact information,³¹ he was able to deflect it by relying on the expertise of his staff. As an aviator, Browning knew aviator tactics, and was able to talk Spruance into the 0700 launch.³² The overriding point in this argument is not that Spruance made the right decision, per se, rather, when his “dark side” called for analysis, precision, and delay, he was able to sufficiently self-manage so that he could objectively make a sound decision. In this case, Spruance’s need for precise information during a time of uncertainty was supplemented by the advice and expertise of those around him. This approach was apparently adopted by Spruance prior to Midway when he took over command of Task Force 16 from Halsey, as Spruance’s biographer, Thomas Buell, observes:

When he had commanded his cruiser division, he had...participated in everything that went on. Although he never had interfered with his staff, he had watched them closely. Yet on *Enterprise* he remained in the background, allowing Browning and the staff to direct the activities of the force. It was an unusual sight to Oliver [Spruance’s flag lieutenant].³³

In fact, from the time he assumed command of TF 16 until the end of the Pacific Campaign, Spruance prided himself on his ability to delegate and keep his mind free of distractions in order to make effective decisions.³⁴

Furthermore, as an operational commander Spruance made it a priority to include his staff in all his deliberations. In the words of author and historian H. P. Willmott, Spruance never thought “that the staff was merely chorus, there to make up the numbers,” rather “the staff consisted of *dramatis personae*, individuals with genuine roles” who helped him struggle through the questions he invariably faced as a commander.³⁵ As mentioned earlier, Spruance’s

³¹ See Appendix-1 for “diligent” trait description.

³² A dispute exists among historians as to the exact advice Browning gave to Spruance. For further reading, see John B. Lundstrom’s Introduction to *Quiet Warrior*, cited in the bibliography.

³³ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 127.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 166; Hughes, “Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution,” 127.

³⁵ H. P. Willmott, *The Battle of Leyte Gulf: The Last Fleet Action* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005): 247.

“diligent” trait was seen as a strength in planning. His willingness to empower his staff, however, prevented his diligence from turning into overweening micromanagement, a testament to his ability to manage this “dark side” trait. Perhaps Spruance recognized that the behavioral habits of shrewd oversight he had formed earlier in his career were no longer effective as an operational commander. He seemed to have managed his “dark side” trait of diligence to that end.

Another example of how “dark side” trait theory helps to explain the successful performance of Spruance is how he adapted to his “reserved” trait and learned to effectively communicate as a leader. Spruance’s most recognizable trait was most certainly his quiet and remote demeanor. His Naval Academy yearbook dubbed him “a shy young thing with a rather sober, earnest face and the innocent disposition of an ingénue...Would never hurt...anybody except in the line of duty.”³⁶ Later as a commanding officer, his men noticed that he kept to himself and never talked about his personal life.³⁷ When Spruance took over command of Task Force 16 before the Battle of Midway, the officers on the USS Enterprise noticed that he rarely left his cabin or the flag bridge to mingle with his staff. He was often found sitting in a chair alone, reading.³⁸ On account of these traits, Spruance was often misunderstood by those who didn’t know him personally, and his subordinates initially felt alienated by his remote nature.³⁹ But even though Spruance was “reserved,” he was rarely silent.⁴⁰ This can be seen in many ways, and his practiced, personal style of communicating proved to be immensely effective.

³⁶ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁹ Walter Lord, *Incredible Victory*, 59-60.

⁴⁰ Hughes, “Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution,” 123.

One effective method Spruance learned in order to adapt to his “reserved” tendencies was to use direct speech when addressing people. When Spruance first came aboard the USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6) after taking over TF 16 from Halsey, the new staff immediately became wary of the new admiral. They had no idea what to expect of Spruance, and could only wonder based on stories they had heard. When they all sat down for their first meal, the officers awkwardly sat in silence. Slowly, Spruance started talking, and after a few words, he said: “Gentlemen, I want you to know that I do not have the slightest concern about any of you. If you were not good, Bill Halsey would not have you.” The words stunned the mess, and Spruance’s words dispelled any fear in their minds of who Spruance was as a leader.⁴¹ Spruance’s direct way with subordinates also paid huge dividends throughout the Pacific Campaign and led many officers to appreciate his effective means of communicating his desires and intentions.⁴² Admiral Arthur Radford, a subordinate to Spruance, once remarked: “When Admiral Spruance was in command, you knew precisely what he was going to do.”⁴³ Spruance was convincingly able to manage his “dark side” trait of “reserved” through direct communication.

Another effective method Spruance employed to manage his “reserved” nature was to, quite literally, corner subordinates into one-on-one conversations. This kept Spruance out of the spotlight while still allowing him direct communication with those under his command. While on the USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6), for example, Spruance insisted on brewing two cups of his own coffee every morning from green beans he brought on board himself. In an effort to get to know his new staff, he routinely offered the second cup of coffee to unwary staff

⁴¹ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 126-127.

⁴² Elmer B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976): 352.

⁴³ Hoyt, *How They Won the War in the Pacific*, 489.

officers.⁴⁴ Although unconventional, Spruance was known for conferring with young officers so he could use them as “sounding boards” in thinking through tough decisions or to pick their brains of knowledge he desperately needed but didn’t have.⁴⁵ After the battle of Midway, for example, Spruance would routinely walk the deck of the USS Enterprise with young aviators to learn aviation tactics.⁴⁶ These conversations led to one of the most pivotal concepts of the whole war: the pilot rotation plan that brought fresh aviators out to the theater to relieve those worsted by fatigue and battle stress.⁴⁷

Revealingly, the methods Spruance used to manage his “reserved” nature, direct communication and one-on-one communication, resemble the recommendations of Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, a professor of psychology and CEO of Hogan Assessments, in managing the “reserved” trait. “If you are highly *reserved*, which often leaves others wondering what you think, commit to speaking up once in each meeting, use e-mail [sic] to communicate thoughts on critical issues, or convey your feedback through others.”⁴⁸ Spruance’s ability to manage his “reserved” nature, especially in the latter case of one-on-one communication, proved to be immensely important to the war effort.

THE “DARK SIDE” OF HALSEY

“Dark side” trait theory is also helpful in understanding the inconsistent performance of Halsey during the Pacific Campaign because it shows how he was unable to manage his “bold” and aggressive tendencies. Halsey, since the beginning of his career, was known for his fighting spirit and aggressive approach to fighting war. Referring to his views on war, Halsey once wrote: “If I have any principle of warfare burned within my brain it is that the best

⁴⁴ Walter Lord, *Incredible Victory*, 60.

⁴⁵ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 116, 270.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴⁷ Potter, *Nimitz*, 229.

⁴⁸ Chamorro-Premuzic, “Could Your Personality Derail Your Career?” 141.

defense is a strong offense. Lord Nelson expressed this very well: ‘No captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.’”⁴⁹ When U.S. forces reached an impasse during the Guadalcanal Campaign and it was surmised that Vice Admiral Robert Ghormley’s risk-averse leadership was at fault, Nimitz replaced Ghormley with Halsey precisely because of Halsey’s aggressive tendencies.⁵⁰ Ultimately, Halsey’s aggressive nature was viewed favorably by many in the Navy and arguably led to his success at Guadalcanal and the Solomons.⁵¹ Even Spruance viewed Halsey’s boldness favorably. Spruance, writing to his wife, said Halsey is “a splendid seaman [who] will smack them hard every time he gets a chance.”⁵² Most of the men under his command saw him in a similar light.⁵³ This paper argues, however, that Halsey’s aggressive nature can be seen as the equivalent of the “dark side” trait “bold” because, in the extreme, it corrupted his judgement during critical decision points at the Battle of Leyte Gulf and an encounter with a typhoon when he was in command of Third Fleet.

The first example of how Halsey was unable to manage his “bold”⁵⁴ trait is his decision to pursue Ozawa’s Northern Force at the Battle of Leyte Gulf.⁵⁵ Ultimately, it can be seen that Halsey developed an overly aggressive mindset towards a decisive engagement against the Japanese fleet, which eventually corrupted Halsey’s judgment in the decision to pursue Ozawa. This mindset can be seen in Halsey’s thoughts and actions prior to the battle. In a letter to Nimitz, written before the battle, Halsey unabashedly declared his personal goal “to annihilate

⁴⁹ Clark G. Reynolds, “William F. Halsey, Jr.: The Bull (1882-1959),” 487.

⁵⁰ Potter, *Nimitz*, 197.

⁵¹ Clark G. Reynolds, “William F. Halsey, Jr.: The Bull (1882-1959),” 501.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 486.

⁵³ Buell, *Quiet Warrior*, 49.

⁵⁴ See Appendix-1 for “bold” trait descriptors.

⁵⁵ For further reading on the Battle of Leyte Gulf, see Potter, *Nimitz*, 321-345.

the [Japanese] fleet if the opportunity offers....”⁵⁶ This letter echoes his disapproval of Spruance’s decision mere months before of restraining Mitscher from pursuing Ozawa’s carrier force when it was in reach during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Several historians argue that, due to Spruance’s “failure,” Halsey had it in his mind to relentlessly pursue and engage Japanese carrier forces.⁵⁷ This is demonstrated in his actions thereafter. In raids on Okinawa, Luzon, and Formosa just prior to Leyte, for example, Halsey hatched a plan to use damaged cruisers to lure the Japanese fleet into a decisive encounter, but Japanese scouts sighted Halsey’s undamaged carriers before they completely took the bait. Also, when the Leyte invasion began and Halsey despaired of not encountering the Japanese fleet, he broke radio silence to inquire if Surigao Strait and San Bernardino Strait were clear of mines because he had ideas of proceeding west of Leyte himself in pursuit of a possible fleet action.⁵⁸ While both of these attempts to attack the Japanese never materialized, they point to the uncompromising mindset Halsey harbored regarding the destruction of the Japanese fleet.

Halsey’s inability to self-manage this “bold” mindset towards the Japanese fleet arguably corrupted his judgment in the decision to pursue Ozawa. This can be seen in many ways. First, when the decision was made, *three* of Halsey’s task force commanders were stupefied by the decision, and two of them, Admiral Bogan and Admiral Lee, voiced their concerns to Halsey’s staff to no avail. The responses to these protestations were, “Yes, yes, we have that information,” and “Roger,”⁵⁹ respectively, indicating that despite outright challenge, Halsey’s mind, and his staff’s, was made up. Second, Halsey’s deliberation with his staff regarding the decision to pursue Ozawa was short and incomplete. Carl Solberg, a lieutenant

⁵⁶ Hoyt, *How They Won the War in the Pacific*, 425.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 424; Potter, *Nimitz*, 327; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Leyte: June 1944-January 1945*, vol. 12 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (1947-1962; repr., University of Illinois Press, 2002): 59.

⁵⁸ Potter, *Nimitz*, 328, 331.

⁵⁹ Morison, *Leyte: June 1944-January 1945*, 195.

and air combat intelligence officer under Halsey, noted that “no one in this swift consultation [seemed] to have posed options.”⁶⁰ When Halsey decided to pursue Ozawa, the members of his staff either agreed with him or ended up missing the deliberations because they were so short in duration. Alternatives were neither suggested nor considered,⁶¹ again suggesting that Halsey’s mind was firmly decided.

Third, despite his massive force of 65 ships, 13 of which were carriers,⁶² Halsey decided to leave the San Bernardino Strait *completely unguarded*, save for the presence of a few “jeep” carriers steaming off the coast of Samar.⁶³ The *reported* strength of Ozawa’s Northern Force, based on scouting intelligence, was two fast carriers and one light carrier, along with associated screening vessels.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Halsey left the strait unguarded with intelligence showing that Kurita’s Center Force had turned around to re-enter the strait.⁶⁵ Halsey’s only other hope for coverage of the strait in his absence was Admiral Kinkaid to the south, who had been indirectly informed of plans mere hours earlier of Halsey putting together “Task Force 34” to cover the strait. This plan had never been verbally rescinded, and Kinkaid assumed it was in effect when Halsey decided to pursue Ozawa with “three groups.”⁶⁶ It is therefore clear that Halsey wanted as much firepower as he could muster to ensure he attained his goal of completely annihilating the Japanese fleet, and some historians argue that the force he gathered was excessively large considering San Bernardino Strait remained unguarded.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Carl Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 118.

⁶¹ Solberg, *Decision and Dissent*, 118.

⁶² Morison, *Leyte: June 1944-January 1945*, 196, 424-428. Halsey’s TF less McCain’s TG 38.1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁶⁴ Solberg, *Decision and Dissent*, 116.

⁶⁵ Morison, *Leyte: June 1944-January 1945*, 195.

⁶⁶ Potter, *Nimitz*, 335.

⁶⁷ Morison, *Leyte: June 1944-January 1945*, 196, 318-319.

In summary, Halsey's aggressiveness in wanting to destroy the Japanese fleet led to three consequences. First, it blinded him from constructive criticism of his plan from his own subordinates, indicating some level of arrogance. Second, it created a stale environment within his staff whereby few or no alternatives were considered, displaying a sense of entitlement. Third, Halsey's "bold" trait caused him to fail to consider the implications of not splitting up his force to pursue Ozawa, showing he overestimated his ability to defeat Ozawa *and* guard the strait. Arrogance, entitlement, and overestimation of abilities are trademarks of the "bold" trait in the extreme. Therefore, it can be argued that "dark side" trait theory can help explain why Halsey made his fateful decision to pursue Ozawa's decoy force, thus leaving MacArthur's landing force vulnerable to attack from Kurita's Center Force.

Some have argued, however, that Halsey's decision was driven primarily by the conflicting objectives given to Halsey by Nimitz. In Op Plan 8-44, Halsey was directed to "cover and support" the landing of MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces, but this plan also included an unlabeled and somewhat veiled directive to destroy the Japanese fleet: "In case opportunity for destruction of major portion of enemy fleet...can be created, such destruction becomes the primary task."⁶⁸ This argument fails to account for one very important factor: it was never the intention of Nimitz that Halsey pursue the destruction of the Japanese fleet *at the expense of the landing operation*. When Halsey broke radio silence to inquire of the status of mining in the Surigao and San Bernardino Straits, mentioned earlier, Nimitz intercepted this message and sent a reply reminding Halsey of Op Plan 8-44, namely that it required him to be in a position to protect MacArthur's landing force.⁶⁹ Furthermore, when Halsey informed Nimitz that he was heading north with "three groups" to pursue Ozawa, Nimitz, back at his

⁶⁸ Potter, *Nimitz*, 325.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 331.

headquarters, *assumed* TF 34 had been formed to protect the San Bernardino Strait.⁷⁰ When Nimitz discovered later that this was, indeed, not the case, he sent a message, against his usual protocols of not interfering with tactical commanders, inquiring of the status of TF 34.⁷¹ These messages convincingly demonstrate that Nimitz's intention was never to pursue the destruction of the Japanese fleet at the expense of the landing operation. Because Halsey was reminded in the former message of Nimitz's true intentions before he decided to pursue Ozawa, one can see the likelihood that it was Halsey's uncontrolled bold "dark side" trait that blinded his judgment, and not conflicting orders.

Another example of Halsey's inability to manage his bold "dark side" trait occurred when a task force he commanded ran into a typhoon in December 1944, resulting in the loss of three ships, 186 planes, and nearly 800 sailors.⁷² A court of inquiry convened after the typhoon held Halsey ultimately responsible.⁷³ Two causes for the typhoon encounter, according to the conclusions of the inquiry, were "maneuvering the fleet unknowingly into or near the path of a typhoon under a false sense of security, and a belief that danger did not exist until it was too late."⁷⁴ Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations during World War II, in an endorsement of the court's findings, also stated, "The mistakes made were errors in judgement resulting from insufficient information, committed under stress of war operations, and stemmed from the firm determination to meet military commitments."⁷⁵ Both observations reveal manifestations of bold "dark side" trait behavior. First, as mentioned earlier, "dark side" traits are difficult to manage under stressful circumstances, impeding one's ability to make sound decisions. King captures this idea in stating that Halsey's mistakes were

⁷⁰ Potter, *Nimitz*, 335.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 337, 339.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 349.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁷⁴ C. Raymond Calhoun, *Typhoon: The Other Enemy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1981): 164.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 168-169.

partly due to the “stress of war operations.” Second, Halsey was routinely governed by a “firm determination to meet military commitments,” a benevolent interpretation of Halsey’s aggressive tendencies. Third, the inquiry findings listed above both indicate an overestimation of capabilities, namely Halsey’s operation of his task force “under a false sense of security, and a belief that danger did not exist until it was too late.” Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Halsey’s “firm determination to meet military commitments” led him to operate his task force “under a false sense of security” leading to “errors in judgment.” To put it in terms of “dark side” trait theory: Halsey’s inability to manage his bold “dark side” trait, on account of the stress of wartime operations, caused him to overestimate his capability to circumnavigate a typhoon *and* meet operational commitments, which led to a deficient navigation solution.

King’s conclusion that “insufficient information” led to errors in judgment leaves open the possibility that insufficient weather reporting was a leading cause in the typhoon encounter. This conclusion is consistent with the recommendation of the inquiry that weather forecasting be improved to prevent future encounters with typhoons.⁷⁶ In this particular incident, however, enough information on the existence of the typhoon existed for Halsey to make a competent decision to maneuver his fleet away from the center of the typhoon, but this information was ignored by Halsey. Captain (Ret.) Charles Calhoun, II, former destroyer squadron commander and professor at the National War College, explains:

The local indications of impending disaster were not heeded at the top level of command....Recognition of the local warning signs of a typhoon did not require the advice of a postgraduate aerologist. The capacity to read the weather is one of the basic requirements of any competent seaman...Preoccupation with combat operations appears to have been the culprit.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Calhoun, *Typhoon: The Other Enemy*, 165.

⁷⁷ Calhoun, *Typhoon: The Other Enemy*, 176.

Despite King's admission that "insufficient information" contributed to the typhoon encounter, it was not an overriding factor in Halsey's inability to avoid the storm. As Calhoun contends, Halsey's objective of completing operational demands took precedence, again indicating his "bold" trait incapacitated his ability to make a sound decision.

CONCLUSION

"Dark side" trait theory is a leadership theory that postulates people possess certain personality traits that can impair individual and organizational performance if left unmanaged. These personality traits are called "dark side" traits. Applying "dark side" trait theory to the operational commanders Spruance and Halsey during World War II reveals that Spruance was able to manage his "dark side" traits of "diligent" and "reserved," and that Halsey was less able to manage his "bold" "dark side" trait. Spruance was effective in managing his "diligent" trait through a commitment to delegation and empowering his subordinates. He also proved effective in managing his "reserved" trait through direct and clear communication and consistent one-on-one communication with his subordinates. Halsey's inability to fully manage his "bold" trait resulted in errors in judgment towards the end of his time as an operational commander. In the end, applying "dark side" trait theory to Spruance and Halsey reveals that self-awareness and self-regulation can be helpful in developing valuable leadership skills and preventing gross errors in judgment. Since the CNO's NLDF includes neither self-awareness nor self-regulation as part of its concept of self-guided learning, future versions of the NLDF should include "dark side" trait theory to capture these elements. Further research into methods of achieving self-awareness and managing various "dark side" traits will also provide more clarity into how this theory can be applied in leader development programs.

APPENDIX-1

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Dark Side” Traits			
TRAIT⁷⁸	DESCRIPTION⁷⁹	STRENGTHS⁸⁰	WEAKNESSES⁸¹
Excitable	Moody; intense but short-lived enthusiasm for people, projects, and things; hard to please	Passion and enthusiasm	Outbursts and volatility
Cautious	Reluctant to take risks for fear of being rejected or negatively evaluated	Careful and precise	Indecisiveness and risk-averse
Skeptical	Cynical, distrustful, and doubtful of others’ true intentions	Politically astute and hard to fool	Mistrustful and quarrelsome
Reserved	Alloof, and uncommunicative; lacking awareness and care for others’ feelings	Stoic and calm under pressure	Uncommunicative and insensitive
Leisurely	Casual; ignoring people’s requests and becoming irritated or excusive if they persist	Relaxed and easy going	Indirect and noncommittal
Bold	Extraordinarily self-confident; grandiosity and entitlement; over-estimation of capabilities	Confidence and charisma	Arrogance and entitlement
Mischievous	Enjoy taking risks and testing limits; manipulative, deceitful, cunning, and exploitive	Risk tolerant and persuasive	Impulsive and manipulative
Colorful	Expressive, animated, and dramatic; wanting to be noticed and the center of attention	Entertaining and engaging	Melodramatic and attention-seeking
Imaginative	Acting and thinking in creative but sometimes odd or unusual ways	Creative and visionary	Eccentric and fanciful thinking
Diligent	Meticulous, precise, and perfectionistic; inflexible about rules and procedures	Hard working and high standards	Perfectionistic and micromanaging
Dutiful	Eager to please; dependent on the support and approval of others; reluctant to disagree with others	Compliant and deferential	Submissive and conflict avoidant

⁷⁸ Kaiser, “The Dark Side of Personality and Extreme Leader Behavior,” 62.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 62.

⁸¹ Ibid.

- Buell, Thomas B. *The Quiet Warrior*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974.
- Calhoun, C. Raymond. *Typhoon: The Other Enemy*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1981.
- Chamorro-Premuzic, Tomas. "Could Your Personality Derail Your Career? Don't Take these Traits to the Extreme." *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 2017, 138-141.
- Hoyt, Edwin P. *How They Won the War in the Pacific: Nimitz and His Admirals*. New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970.
- Hughes, Wayne P, Jr. "Clear Purpose, Comprehensive Execution: Raymond Ames Spruance (1886-1969)," *Naval War College Review* 62, no. 4 (2009). <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/205940041?accountid=322>
- Kaiser, Robert B., James M. LeBreton, and Joyce Hogan. "The Dark Side of Personality and Extreme Leader Behavior." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 64, no. 1 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12024>
- Lord, Walter. *Midway: The Incredible Victory*. 1967. Reprint, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000.
- Lundstrom, John B. Introduction to *Quiet Warrior*, by Thomas B. Buell, vii-xviii. 1974. Reprint, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Leyte: June 1944-January 1945*, vol. 12 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*. 1947-1962. Reprint, University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- Potter, Elmer B. "Halsey and Spruance: A Study in Contrasts." *Naval History* 30, no. 2 (2016). <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1770839021?accountid=322>
- Potter, Elmer B. *Nimitz*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976.
- Reynolds, Clark G. "William F. Halsey, Jr.: The Bull (1882-1959)." In *The Great Admirals: Command at Sea, 1587-1945*, edited by Jack Sweetman, 482-505. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997.
- Solberg, Carl. *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995.
- Willmott, H. P. *The Battle of Leyte Gulf: The Last Fleet Action*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.