

**History Essay**

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### The role of the Army Noncommissioned Officer

When it comes to Leadership the difference in Commissioned Officer and the Non-Commissioned Officers Role has changed significantly since the early creation of the Army and more so as we emerge through current conflicts changing what each one are more and more responsible for. The two appear to be so close in line with each other that sometimes it is hard to distinguish who is really leading the soldiers. As the Army National Guard has been receiving less and less officers in their ranks it has caused the non-commissioned officer to step up and perform the duties of platoon leaders and detachment commanders. In my opinion we have almost collided in our responsibilities that it is time to reconsider how we commission our officer ranks.

The non-commissioned officer has been afforded the ability to become a warrant officer, but only after becoming a staff sergeant and then completing the Warrior Leader Course. Some are given responsibilities like commissioned officers and others are given practically none while the non-commissioned officer still steps up to fill the void.

I feel commissioned officers should be required to spend two to three years as an enlisted Soldier prior to being commissioned. As units prepare to deploy, the Army's experienced Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) far exceeds the leadership role of inexperienced Commissioned Officers (Officers), causing the NCO to be establish and enforce Army policies along with creating the conditions which allow Officers to appear that they can effectively run their units and ensure Soldiers have the resources to do their jobs.

Based on Soldier – to – Soldier interaction, Soldier witness the strong commitment of leadership which comes from its corps of NCOs. NCOs walk through the ranking process from Private E-1 through Specialist E-4 gleaning from the personal experience and one on one contact with their peers and senior Soldiers. At the rank of Sergeant E-5, Soldiers find themselves taking on responsibilities with the possibility of being held accountable for the actions of subordinate Soldiers when an order fails to be carried out. In today's Army, the chain-of-command forces Soldiers to share grievances any issues which hinder their ability to perform duties with a clear conscience with their direct leaders, the NCOs.

Due to the direct contact Senior NCOs and subordinate Soldiers work together to build progressive learning plans to reach individual career goals. Lower to senior level NCOs are able to reprimand and correct soldier's prior to written action and harsh consequences without the consent of the commander. The close knit relationship of NCO to subordinate proves the pattern of NCO leadership exceeding the Officers ability to lead due to being able to form a bond working in the 'trenches' with fellow soldiers.

Across the globe, NCOs begin reciting their creed with the statement "No one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of soldiers" (NCOcorps.net, 2009, para 1). As the Army has evolved, Officers recognize the roll of the NCO has changed due their forced ability to interface with peer and subordinate soldiers as well as high ranking Officers. Having the ability to balance soldiers and tasks, NCOs have been given responsibilities that are equal to or greater than some Commissioned Officers. NCOs were once the last to receive mandates handed down from

higher command, now NCOs are heavily involved in the decision making processes of every command.

*The role of an Army Officer*

An Army Officer can be an individual who recently graduated from college with a Bachelors degree in any field, sent through Basic Training, and ends his or her primary military journey of learning in an Officer training school. Throughout this immediate transformation, the Officer may be thoroughly ready to tackle the task of leading a command; however, lacking interpersonal skills needed to assess the professional talents which cause Soldiers to work together as a team. As the role of the Army Officer is to support NCOs leadership, relying upon their integrity and professional expertise, Officers are aware that it is the combination of individual talents and professional expertise of the Army Soldier which causes the U.S. Army to be recognized and respected as one of the world's largest fighting forces.

Since 1775, Officers were distinguished as separates only by the commissioning of a prince or ruling council to raise that Army (GO Army, 2009). "Commissioned Officers are responsible for completing demanding missions while ensuring the welfare, morale, and professional development of the Soldiers entrusted to them" (GoArmy.com, 2009, para 2). Officers concentrate on collective training, which will enable the unit to accomplish its mission as well as unit effectiveness and unit readiness (GlobalSecurity, 2009, ch. 2). Throughout the planning and decision making phases of any unit, duties overlap as NCOs and Officers work together to promote morale welfare and safety.

*Argument A*

As Officers walk through the corridors of their units, they are given due respect: saluted outdoors and greeted indoors by the call to attention by Soldiers, followed by silence until the Soldier receives the command to “carry on.” As the Officer speaks to the Soldier, the Soldier awaits at attention until instructed to be “at ease” and given permission to speak. To serve under an Officer who has earned his or her rank is indeed an honor; however, the Officer may know the Soldier by name and rank, but no relationship with the Soldier. The Officer may speak to the Soldier admiring the Soldier’s clean and crisp and sharp uniform and perhaps mention his or her hearing news of a job well-done, followed by a personal thank you. The Soldier may be honored by the acknowledgement; however, lost in the ability to know the Officer for whom they serve.

An Officer could argue that their primary focus is on the mission as well as ensuring his or her units functions are performed to perfection. Ensuring that the unit is up to standards, its policies are followed to the letter, and that his or her image as an Officer is flawed by failure to meet Army standards; therefore, the Army Officer does not have time to “befriend” his or her Soldiers. Due to this missing link, Soldiers may have an us-versus-them (i.e.: enlisted versus Officer) mentality instead of a mindset of cohesion that his or her commander or leading officer supports their efforts.

*Argument B*

As an inexperienced Officer takes command of a unit, he or she may be quick to take a firm stand to gain power over the unit, sounding the trumpet to alert subordinate Soldiers that a “new sheriff” is on town. Excited and ready to take full control, the

Officer does not assess the strengths and weaknesses of the unit neither would he or she 'dive into the trenches' to assess the talents of individual Soldiers.

In the eyes of corporate America, a College education does not always equate to experience. As civilian seek employment, employers weigh the years of education along with years of experience to ensure finding the right candidate to work for their companies. If a position is supervisory, the employer seeks candidates with experience as a supervisor, able to motivate, lead, and mentor employees into completing assigned tasks. As Officers have college degrees and complete Officer Training School, the ability to lead, motivate, and mentor Soldiers requires interpersonal training and skills.

*Counter arguments and response*

The ability to lead, train, and mentor individuals can be a natural gift commanding the respect and admonition by followers. Since the role of the Army Officer calls his or her attention to support the NCOs and act as leaders and managers. Officers would agree that pondering the thought of taking responsibility for a unit's success or failure can be described as a pressure far beyond an NCOs understanding. Playing such a vital role in the Army's effectiveness on both American, along with being both skilled and effective, causes the Army Officer to resist any emotional ties or involvement with Soldiers so that his or her focus remains committed to successful completion of a mission.

As focusing on the units' mission is the top priority of an Army Officer, allowing NCOs to remain as frontline leaders, with the ability to interface, is alignment with military regulations. In following the regulations and reading the responsibilities of an Officer and an NCO the Officer may believe: whether or not an Officer is trained, has

spent any period of time as an enlisted member or an NCO, or naturally has interpersonal skills with ability to lead has nothing to do with ensuring the success of the mission.

### *Types of leadership*

To clearly deliver an understanding of the roles of NCOs and Officers in today's Army, it appears that Officers are known as transactional leaders, while NCOs are known as transformational leaders. The characteristics of NCO / transformational leaders are vision, charisma, and intellect. "Transformational leaders enjoy engaging others and implementing new ideas. They may adopt some of the characteristics from charismatic leaders in order to pull in supporters and gain the respect from others" (Setting goals101, 2009, para 4).

Army Officers may be taught to lead as transactional a leader who motivates Soldiers supporting rewards and punishments. "The transactional leader works through creating clear structures whereby it is clear what is required of their subordinates, and the rewards that they get for following orders" (Changingminds.org, 2009, para 1). Officers support the efforts of the transactional and chain-of-command theory, although the transformational leadership style operates as a continual catalyst for change which shifts and sways as the mission unfolds.

As the Officer walks through the personal transformation of obtaining a college degree, passes Basic Training and Officer School, he or she becomes governed by as set of rules. The Army rules and regulations do not factor-in the reality that Soldiers are people with emotions and facing challenges, not just American fighting machines.

Officers must become experienced in managing people, personalities, with the ability to

foster the same team cohesion, delivering the mental support Soldiers may need to be focused and effective frontline fighters. With the transactional leadership style, the Transactional leader allocates work to a subordinate; they are considered to be fully responsible for it, whether or not they have the resources or capability to carry it out. When things go wrong, then the subordinate is considered to be personally at fault, and is punished for their failure (just as they are rewarded for succeeding) (Changingminds.org, 2009).

In conclusion, maturity and experience of the NCOs by far outweighs the inexperience Officer who has never walked through the ranks as an enlisted member. An NCOs with years of honed experience can assess the units' readiness by cultivating the individual talents of each Soldier, while motivating Soldiers in a platoon to work as a team. A seasoned NCO is the fuel which causes the Army to thrive like a well-oiled machine. Officers would learn a great deal about the talents and expertise of their Soldiers by developing a personal rapport with each Soldier.



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