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LEADERSHIP SELF-DEVELOPMENT:
THE KEY TO PREPARATION FOR SQUADRON COMMAND

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the US Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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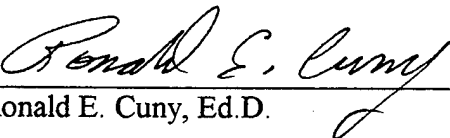
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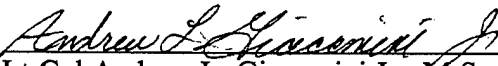
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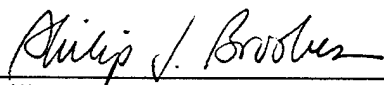
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ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP SELF-DEVELOPMENT: THE KEY TO PREPARATION FOR SQUADRON COMMAND by MAJ William H. Mott V, USAF, 85 pages.

This research project investigated the power of leadership self-development in the US Air Force. Current operational assignment policies and formal training were evaluated for their value in developing leadership and preparing rated officers for squadron command. The research sought to determine the leadership development center of gravity, or if the three means of leadership development work together equally. Limitations to the current system of leadership self-development were reviewed, with specific attention to the mentoring and professional reading programs. The research concluded that self-development is not the most critical aspect of leadership preparation for US Air Force rated officers, but rather is the means to maximize the effect of formal education and the rated assignment system. Recommendations include the development of US Air Force leadership doctrine and a leadership self-development program.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

All men who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own training.¹

Sir Walter Scott

Command of a US Air Force flying squadron is a significant responsibility. It is usually the culmination of 16 to 17 years of training, service, and experience. It is a tremendous vote of confidence and respect for the fortunate lieutenant colonel who grabs the guidon and says "Sir, I assume command." But what training has a flyer had in leadership? Will it be enough? How can a flyer that covets the chance to utter those words really know that he has effectively prepared to command a group of highly motivated flyers and equally proficient maintenance and administrative personnel?

This research project analyzed the methods that US Air Force officers use to learn leadership skills and focus on the role of the individual in that process. Nearly all will acknowledge that the attributes of good leadership can be taught; applying and using them is another matter. This research hypothesized that individual self-development is the key behind the growth of an aspiring US Air Force leader, and attempted to determine whether this is true. In so doing, it brings to light the need for midlevel officer leadership self-development.

Research Importance

Effective and competent leadership is vital to the US Air Force. To quote Major General Perry Smith, US Air Force, retired:

My fundamental premise is that leaders count that people at the top can--should--make a difference. By setting standards, goals, and priorities, by establishing and nurturing a network of communications, a leader can make a difference in the

daily performance of an organization. A leader can permanently affect an organization by establishing a strategic vision and setting long term goals. ²

The flying squadron is the center of operations in the US Air Force, whether it is equipped with fighters, bombers, transports, or trainers. The squadron commander's role is to set the squadron in the right direction, to give it vision, to establish a positive command climate. Says former US Air Force Chief of Staff General Ronald Fogleman: "The point that I want to stress is that a *single individual* in a position of leadership can make the difference between a unit's success or failure."³

If one adheres to the notion that leaders can be taught versus born, then the US Air Force must ensure that its leaders are trained to the highest level. In today's fast-moving US Air Force, the new commander does not have time for on-the-job training. He must be ready to command and lead and drive his squadron towards its mission from day one. For this reason, leadership preparation before assuming command is critical. Consider this introduction to the responsibility of the position from General Ronald Fogleman:

I firmly believe that it [command] is one of the greatest honors the Air Force bestows on its officers and represents a sacred trust. With this honor, however, comes an awesome responsibility for the actions, careers, and lives of those that you lead. There is no greater challenge. Simply stated, you are responsible for *everything* your unit does. At the same time, command makes it possible for you to take care of our most precious resource--our people....As a commander, your duties and responsibilities will change your life. You will immerse yourself totally in the business of your unit, the problems of its people, and the challenges of its mission. In no other position do those three elements blend so innately, and so directly. You determine how your unit's mission is accomplished and whether operations succeed or fail. You will live under the constant eyes of your subordinates and your superiors. To be successful, you must lead and follow by example.⁴

Background to the Problem

The first step to tackling the need for effective leadership at the squadron level is an understanding of the leadership training resources available to the US Air Force officer. The training easily breaks down into three categories: formal training, operational assignments, and self-development.

In the US Air Force formal training prior to squadron command begins with the commissioning source, such as the US Air Force Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, or Officer Training School. It continues with Squadron Officers School, Intermediate Service School (such as Air Command and Staff College) and a Major Command directed Squadron Command Preparatory Course. Operational assignments become the sum total of an individual's exposure to leadership and followership during his career. The officer's role gradually changes from student, to follower, to observer, then to commander at the small group level. In concert with the resources of formal education and operational assignments, the officer develops an understanding of leadership. Either he unconsciously becomes a product of his environment and education, or he intellectually and purposely investigates leadership as a means of supplementing the other two categories. It is in this third category that the research focused.

Thesis Question

The thesis question stated: Is Leadership Self-development the Most Critical Aspect in the Development of Squadron Commander Skills? Like most human endeavors, activities usually work in concert to promote the overall desired effect. In some cases, one activity is equally important as another. Considering the example of the

US Strategic Nuclear Triad, each leg has disadvantages that are offset by another's advantage. In other cases, one activity is seen as the dominant effort, the center of gravity within the system. Air superiority might be considered the dominant mission of airpower that allows the execution of all others. The thesis question seeks to determine the relative weight of the three activities that build squadron command leadership skills and to determine whether individual self-development is the most critical.

Related Subquestions

An answer to the thesis question and a positive step towards defining the US Air Force officer leadership development program will not be gained without further detailed analysis of the question. The subquestions that were addressed by this research are:

1. What is the current US Air Force program for professional leadership development?
2. What is the US Air Force policy towards leadership self-development?
3. What are the historical facts behind an Air Force's leadership self-development program?
4. Do limitations exist in US Air Force professional leadership development?
5. If so, then how are they countered?
6. What roles do experience and past assignments play?

Thesis Relationship to the Problem

In Commanding an Air Force Squadron, Colonel Timothy T. Timmons writes that "...SQUADRON COMMAND has special meaning to the US Air Force because it is normally the first time in an officer's career that he or she gets the opportunity to exercise command authority in the true sense of the word."⁵ Because of this, the three aspects of

leadership development must have prepared the individual prior to command. Any inadequacy could foretell mediocre performance or worse yet, failure.

It is here that this research is important to the problem. Instead of determining changes to professional military leadership curricula or changes to the assignment system in order to yield broad exposure to leadership, this research presented insight into the dimension of self-development. The aspiring officer should have the insight to recognize his own leadership potential or shortfalls, and then extract from this research a plan, or at least a method, for tackling the problem of leadership instruction through self-development. But what options for study are available? What sources are available to the officer? What would be a possible avenue of approach towards the self-study of leadership as it pertains to a future squadron commander? The answer to the thesis question will begin to offer answers to these pressing questions.

Topic Limits

Because of the broad nature of leadership, any attempt to research leadership must be limited and focused. The research's focus was to define three avenues employed by the US Air Force for leadership development with enough detail so as determine if there is a center of gravity. The key to this research is that recommendations or improvements to professional leadership development and individual experience will not be made. The reason for this is to limit the research to leadership self-development. The thesis hypothesizes that self-development is the leadership center of gravity, and that a program of meaningful self-development will enhance leadership at the squadron level.

¹“Quotable Quotes,” Readers Digest (Pleasantville: Readers Digest Association Inc., Sept 1997), 61.

²Perry M. Smith, Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press Publications, 1987), xvii.

³Ronald R. Fogleman, “The Leadership-Integrity Link” AU-24 Concepts for Air Force Leadership, (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1996), 32.

⁴US Air Force Air University, AU-2, Guidelines for Command (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1995), ix.

⁵Timothy T. Timmons, Commanding an Air Force Squadron (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1993), xvii.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Boundless literature is available on leadership because of leadership's human nature. There are many opinions regarding its definition, development, and measure of effectiveness. The preponderance of leadership literature list and define the attributes of leadership, or define leadership principles through a case study of a famous historical leader. Others attempt to provide the answers to detailed questions about specific leadership situations. An even smaller number research how leaders learn to be leaders.

The literature review was centered on the thesis subquestions. The literature review's goal was to lay the background for detailed research into the thesis and subordinate questions. The literature review divided the six thesis subquestions when needed into specific research questions. The organization of the literature review is as follows:

1. What is the current US Air Force program for professional leadership development?
 - a. What is written about leader attributes and leadership principles?
 - b. What are some of the problems in teaching leadership?
 - c. Can leadership be taught?
 - d. What methods are used to teach leadership?
2. What is the US Air Force policy towards leadership self-development?
3. What are the historical facts behind an Air Force's leadership self-development program?
 - a. What is contained in historical case studies of leadership?

- b. What has been written about leadership self-development?
4. Do limitations exist in US Air Force professional leadership development?
5. If so, then how are they countered?
6. What roles do experience and past assignments play?

What is the current US Air Force program for professional leadership development?

This question was divided into research into leader attributes and principles, teaching problems and teaching methods. While there are numerous works on leadership development, few are written by or about US Air Force specific command. And, while they spend a great deal of time defining what a leader has, they spend little time in development, even less on self-development.

What is written about leader attributes and leadership principles?

Nearly all published books on leadership define leadership by the characteristics or values that makeup a leader, and by defining a leader by what he does within an organization. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge found that all ninety of their studied leaders embodied four areas of competency:

1. Strategy I: attention through vision.
2. Strategy II: meaning through communication.
3. Strategy III: trust through positioning.
4. Strategy IV: the deployment of self through (1) positive self-regard and (2) the Walenda factor.¹

All of the above can be readily interpreted, except for the “Walenda Factor.” This is a reference to the great tightrope walker Karl Walenda, who eventually fell to his death in Puerto Rico. Explains Bennis and Nanus: “From what we learned from the interviews

with successful leaders, it became increasingly clear that when Karl Walenda poured his energies into *not falling* rather than walking the tightrope, he was virtually destined to fail.”²

In a later work On Becoming a Leader, Warren Bennis writes about how people become leaders, how they lead, and how organizations encourage or stifle potential elders.³ Bennis makes the assumption that leaders know who they are, they know what they want, they know how to achieve their goals.⁴ He writes that the leaders he researched all had the following “ingredients”: guiding vision, passion, integrity, trust, curiosity and daring.⁵ Finally, he says that the next generation of leaders will have the following ten “things” in common:

1. Broad education.
2. Boundless curiosity.
3. Boundless enthusiasm.
4. Belief in people and teamwork.
5. Willingness to take risks.
6. Devotion to long-term growth rather than short term profit.
7. Commitment to excellence.
8. Readiness.
9. Virtue.
10. Vision.⁶

Another author, John Gardner, focused on defining leadership, the need for leaders, and then the need to create an environment that cultivates leaders. In his book On Leadership, he lists the nine tasks of leadership. Only one of the nine, renewing, focuses on leadership development.⁷ In addition, he lists the attributes of leaders:

1. Physical vitality and stamina.
2. Intelligence and judgement-in-action.
3. Willingness (eagerness) to accept responsibilities.
4. Task competence.
5. Understanding followers/constituents and their needs.
6. Skill in dealing with people.
7. Need to achieve.

8. Capacity to motivate.
9. Courage, resolution, steadiness.
10. Capacity to win and hold trust.
11. Capacity to manage, decide, set priorities.
12. Confidence.
13. Ascendance, dominance, assertiveness.
14. Adaptability, flexibility of approach.⁸

An interim observation regarding leadership literature can be formed from these two authors. It becomes readily apparent that written works about leadership can easily define what leadership is, but have a limited ability to describe how to get it.

In the book Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence, by Robert Taylor and William Rosenbach, the authors use the written words of past military leaders to present leadership ideas. They start by saying that there is no burning bush of leadership knowledge:

There is a continuous quest for a single text that reduces leadership to a set of learnable skills. We continue to believe that no such book exists. Because leadership is a process of human interactions involving an infinite variety of individual personalities and specific situations, there is no one pattern or formula that will assure effectiveness; there is no one right answer.⁹

Even though Taylor and Rosenbach's contributors list leadership attributes, the authors caveat the information they provide after a review of historical American leadership attributes: "All in all it is a much mixed gallery. If we were to pass it in review and then inspect it carefully, it would still be impossible to say: 'This is the composite of character. This is the prototype of military success. Model upon it and you have the pinnacle within reach.'"¹⁰

Within the collection of works, S. L. A. Marshall contributes his list of leadership attributes:

1. Quiet resolution.
2. Hardihood to take risks.

3. The will to take full responsibility for decision.
4. The readiness to share its rewards with subordinates.
5. An equal readiness to take the blame when things go adversely.
6. The nerve to survive storm and disappointment and to face toward each new day with the scoresheet wiped clean, neither dwelling on one's successes nor accepting discouragement from one's failures.

In these things lie a great part of the essence of leadership, for they are the constituents of that kind of moral courage that has enabled one man to draw many others to him in any age.¹¹

While different from pure leadership attributes or principles, General Mathew B. Ridgeway offers his ingredients for leadership. The first two bullets begin to define the importance of leadership self-development through the comments regarding reading and study:

Read widely and wisely all the history and biography possible. Soak up all the personal experiences you can of battle-tested brother officers. This broadens your understanding of an art which you can never hope to know all.

Study thoughtfully the records of past successful leaders and adapt their methods to yours.

Work hard to keep fit. That little extra stamina may some day pull you out of some deep holes.

Work hard, in your own way, at being tops at your job.

Keep the three C's—character, courage, and competence—always before your mind, and with faith in God, be yourself.

Remember there are many others on your team, and be inwardly humble. Every man's life is equally precious, although all are at the disposal of our country, and the contribution each makes in battle is of equal potential value.¹²

In The Challenge of Military Leadership, Lloyd Mathews and Dale Brown organize their discussion on the following themes of particular relevance:

1. Identifying and developing the strengths of character essential to successful leaders of American soldiers.
2. The crucial role of intellect.
3. The need to build and coach a staff.
4. The difficulty of evaluating, selecting, and developing leaders.
5. A key conceptual challenge--the need for conceptual integration of operations and leadership doctrines.¹³

The authors' lists of attributes or principles demonstrate that leadership "skills" and "activities" cannot be distilled into basic, universal components. Rather, the lists vary from author to author and differing leadership environments. To summarize them is to remove the human element of leadership and oversimplify it. A set of attributes that include character, intelligence, and fitness could be the "essence" of a military leader or a football player. Perhaps the key to a successful application of the various authors' lists is to skillfully select pieces of them to apply to the individual's specific environment.

From this review of leader attributes and principles, it is apparent that leadership can be and has been recognized and described once the leader examined is in a leadership position. The difficulty lies in recognizing and developing leaders before they are placed in a position of leadership. The next question investigates the problems facing leadership development before determining the means by which leadership can be taught.

What are some of the problems in teaching leadership?

Problems with teaching leadership vary from the simple to the complex age we live in. Thomas E. Cronin, a contributor to Taylor and Rosenbach's Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence, lists ten reasons that make leadership training difficult, such as "leadership strikes many people (and with some justification) as an elusive, hazy, and almost mysterious commodity."¹⁴

In like fashion, John Gardner in On Leadership, lists obstacles to leadership development:

1. Creeping crises.
2. Size and complexity.
3. Specialization.
4. The anti-leadership vaccine.
5. The rigors of public life.¹⁵

These authors, taken together, present a convincing set of hurdles to leadership development, and especially self-development. Perhaps this is why US Air Force leadership development is organized into three different and supporting strategies.

Additionally, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge define the problems for the leadership environment as lack of commitment, complexity, and credibility.¹⁶ Also, there are a number of paradigm shifts that define the 1990's and affect the training focus of leadership development:

<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Industrial Society	Informational Society
Forced Technology	High Tech/High Touch
National Economy	World Economy
Short Term	Long Term
Centralization	Decentralization
Institutional Help	Self-help
Representative Democracy	Participatory Democracy
Hierarchies	Networking
North	South
Either/Or	Multiple Option ¹⁷

The reason why these changes affect leadership training is that the environment that leaders operate in is changing at an ever-increasing rate. What was true for a leader of the 1980's has already been eclipsed by the cultural, technological and geopolitical events of the 1990's. But like most problems, they are more hindrances to leadership development than inhibitors.

Can Leadership be taught?

Overcoming the hindrances of good leadership is what the various authors purport to do in their books. Every author attacks the question, "Can leaders be taught or are leaders born not made?" Their responses are remarkably similar. Says John Gardner:

The answer to the question "Can leadership be taught?" is an emphatic but qualified "Yes"--emphatic because most of the ingredients of leadership can be

taught, qualified because the ingredients that cannot be taught may be quite important. The notion that all the attributes of a leader are innate is demonstrably false. No doubt certain characteristics are genetically determined--level of energy, for example. But the individual's hereditary gifts, however notable, leave the issue of future leadership performance undecided, to be settled by later events and influences.¹⁸

William A. Dimma in Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence states:

Can you learn leadership? Let me put it this way. There are some people who will never be leaders; fortunately for both them and us, most of these people do not aspire to leadership. Similarly, there are some who do seem truly born to lead. Many great leaders, like many great baseball players or opera singers, are naturals. They will lead whether training or not. But for most of us, training can help. Learning on the job and growing through experience can help even more. As the leadership component of the jobs we hold becomes larger and tougher, some of us will grow to match the expanding need. Others of us will illustrate the ubiquitous Peter Principle.¹⁹

Thomas Cronin in Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence varies slightly:

My own belief is that students cannot usually be taught to be leaders. But students, and anyone else for that matter, can profitably be exposed to leadership, discussions of leadership skills and styles, and leadership strategies and theories. Individuals can learn in their own minds the strengths as well as limitations of leadership. People can learn about the paradoxes and contradictions and ironies of leadership, which, however puzzling, are central to appreciating the diversity and the dilemmas of problem-solving and getting organizations and nations to function.²⁰

From this literature, leadership development can be concluded to have value to a future leader. It does not seem to guarantee positive results, but it builds and influences the basic human attributes of the individual. The extent of the value of leadership training is difficult to measure, and depends on the individual's learning of the material he is taught. Hence, an officer's attitude towards learning, his "self-development" becomes a critical factor during formal training and operational assignments.

What methods are used to teach leadership?

Undoubtedly, numerous methods are used to teach leadership. Jay Conger in his research project entitled Learning to Lead: The Art of Transforming Managers into Leaders, aimed to make sense of this “mess” by examining actual training programs and the results they produce.²¹ The methods that Conger analyzed were leadership training through personal growth (outdoor adventure activities), leadership development through conceptual understanding, leadership development through feedback, and leadership development through skill building. His ideas are introduced followed by others that fit this leadership training model.

Conger defines leadership training through personal growth to be based, generally, on the assumption that leaders are individuals who are deeply in touch with their personal dreams and talents and who will act to fulfill them. Profoundly influenced by the ideas of the humanistic psychology’s of the 1960s and the 1970s, these programs argue that most managers are ignoring an inner call to realize their potential to become leaders.²² Next, he defines leadership development through conceptual understanding:

Conceptual training, then, serves the function of expanding participants’ perceptions of the process and of what it requires as well as generating interest in becoming a leader. Ultimately, however, the responsibility still rests with the individual and his or her organization to create leadership experiences afterward.²³

Conger defines leadership development through feedback as: “Through effective feedback processes, we can learn about our strengths and weaknesses in a number of leadership skills.”²⁴ Finally, leadership development through skill building is defined as: “The approach of these skill-building programs is relatively straight forward. Program

designers identify what they perceive to be key leadership skills that can be taught.

These are formulated into modules and introduced to participants.”²⁵

Conger explores each of the programs through firsthand experience and summarizes his findings regarding effectiveness. He concludes that the various programs for leadership development do not work in isolation, and that a program that combines all would yield the optimum results. Taken together, his research supports the US Air Force’s three tier approach to leadership development:

1. Formal Training equates to Conceptual Approaches
2. Operational Assignments equate to Skill Building
3. Self-development equates to personal Growth and Feedback

Conger concludes:

The ideal program would begin with a conceptual overview, then provide feedback on where participants stand relative to the skills associated with the conceptual model of leadership. This would be followed by skill building, for skills are teachable. The skills that are more complex (and therefore less amenable to being taught) would be the focus of awareness building, with the idea that participants could find long-term opportunities to develop these skills back at the office. Feedback would reappear after preliminary skill building to assess how well individuals have learned and understood the skills, and this would be followed by more skill building. Personal growth experiences would be used along the way as powerful opportunities for reflection on two levels: to help managers determine their own desires to lead, and to free participants of ineffective behaviors. This, of course, would be ideal.²⁶

Going beyond Conger’s four leadership development categories (personal growth programs, conceptual programs, feedback approaches, and skill-building approaches), the literature review noted numerous works that teach leadership via a handbook. This method for teaching leadership can be considered under the conceptual understanding category of leadership development. Leadership handbooks are designed to impart leadership knowledge with regards to a specific organization, whether that be Scouting, US Army company command, command of a US Air Force flying squadron, etc.

Edward Flanagan's book Before the Battle: A Commonsense Guide to Leadership and Management, is a leadership work in the handbook style, covering details of leadership execution from an Army officer's perspective:

Leadership can be learned from A through Z--or in this case Administration through Wives....Start at the beginning, Administration, and proceed to the forty-three commandments in the Summary. Apply these lessons and you will succeed before the battle.²⁷

In another handbook Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders by Perry M. Smith, the ideas begin with the immediate assumption of command. It is a compendium of anecdotes and advice for the new commander. It offers a wealth of advice for situations that any military leader will encounter. There are twenty chapters and the most important ones seem to be:

1. Establishing standards: personal and institutional integrity.
2. Looking at yourself: the importance of introspection.
3. Creating a strategic vision: the role of planning.
4. Organizing priorities: the mission, the mission, the mission.
5. Taking care of your people: sponsorship, not cronyism.
6. Teaching: leadership essential.²⁸

Smith's book shares a common organization theme with many books on leadership. The goal is to define the leader's attributes, to give a guide for what to do as a leader. But nothing is said about how to prepare to be a leader. The reader is expected to enhance his leadership skills and potential by having a better conceptual understanding of leadership skills.

Another excellent handbook about leadership is Lead On! by Rear Admiral Dave Oliver. This book is similar in content to Smith's, in that it approaches leadership from assuming command through relinquishing command. But the anecdotes and focus are on naval submariners. Another example is Timothy Timmons' Commanding an Air Force

Squadron, written by a squadron commander for new squadron commanders. Timmons wrote the book while a student at the National War College, and he states his purpose is:

...to help a new squadron commander get acquainted with the roles and responsibilities that go along with the job....Another purpose is to give a unit commander a single source from which to gather ideas on many topics related to squadron command. A final purpose is to give anyone who desires it the opportunity to read how many junior colonels and senior lieutenant colonels view this challenging assignment.²⁹

The US Air Force ultimately took the research and turned it into a textbook or official product for the US Air Force on squadron leadership. This, along with AU-24, Concepts of Air Force Leadership, form the core of what the US Air Force teaches about squadron command. The table of contents for AU-2: Guidelines for Command. A Handbook on the Leadership of People for Air Force Commanders and Supervisors, rapidly communicates the subject matter:

1. Taking command.
2. Leadership in changing times.
3. People leadership programs-military.
4. People leadership programs-civilian.
5. Base agencies.
6. Quality and the commander.
7. The commander and the information age.
8. Deployment and the commander.
9. Sensitive issues.
10. Joint warfighting.³⁰

Handbooks become a single source document for a position's required conceptual skill and knowledge. The research indicates that an aspiring leader should "find the handbook" for the job and read it. This is a direct application of self-development to leadership development.

Another avenue for teaching leadership that has been well researched is that of skill building. Researchers determine what it is that effective leaders do, and convert it

into a set of learnable skills. In his Naval Postgraduate School thesis, Jason Phillips applied Steven Covey's ideas from The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and Principle Centered Leadership to fill the needs of Marine leadership. The author writes that "the 21st century will bring forth multiple challenges to not only our organization (US Marines), but also to our traditional hierarchy, which is currently in place. As a result, these needs, listed below, result from the dynamic changes in warfare and the interdependent demands that flow forth."³¹ He states that the Marines of the twenty-first century will:

1. Marines will have to be proactive.
2. Marines will have to be able to understand the "big picture" of the broadening spectrum of conflict.
3. Marines will have to be effective managers.
4. Marines will have to be cooperative.
5. Marines will have to be effective communicators.
6. Marines will have to be team-builders.
7. Marines will have to be dedicated to constant improvement.³²

In this case, knowing what an organization "needs to do" translates into a plan for tracking the skills necessary for the organization's leaders. A key point to note from works that focus on skill building is the need to make self-development a part of what leaders do. From Steven Covey's work, the seven habits of highly effective people include "sharpening the saw":

Sharpen the saw: This is the principle of self-renewal. The Total Quality movement called for continuous improvement, which sought to continually revisit all aspects of the organization. Here, we daily revisit the six habits to further our understanding and commitment. In the end, we create self-mastery in our lives that builds confidence.³³

The literature review indicated that the methods of teaching or learning leadership are divided into the methods of personal growth, conceptual approaches, feedback approaches, skill-building approaches, and handbooks. This research's perspective is that

conceptual approaches are most widespread, skill-building approaches provide valuable details, and both should be complemented by personal growth and feedback methods. Handbooks fill a developmental niche by providing detailed information, and that leadership self-development is a part of each method.

What is the US Air Force policy towards leadership self-development?

Numerous documents were discovered from the US Air Force that detail leadership and leadership development programs. The information contained represents policy and goals for the US Air Force. In addition, US Army leadership development documents were reviewed as a means of comparing US Air Force products.

The Air Force Instruction 36-2302 Professional Development is a personnel instruction (US Air Force version of a military regulation) defines and guides the US Air Force professional development programs. It details requirements and responsibilities for identifying, approving, and managing graduate-level and profession continuing education requirements.³⁴ The instruction provides the guidelines for selecting and managing officers that elect to attend formal graduate education programs at the Air Force Institute of Technology or civilian universities.

The Air Force Instruction 36-2611, Officer Professional Development, contains information on professional military education, the officer assignment system, career broadening assignments, the officer promotion system, and active duty service commitments.³⁵ The instruction states that “the goal of professional development is to develop a well-rounded, professionally competent officer corps to meet current and future mission requirements.”³⁶ The role of the individual, commander, and the needs of the US

Air Force are all related to the professional development and career path options of the officer.

The Air Force Pamphlet 36-2630 Officer Professional Development Guide, speaks to the officer corps regarding specific career or assignments paths. It is designed to inform officers of the impact of assignment choices on the attainment of career goals. It defines what the US Air Force considers the normal sequence of training and assignments for officers in specific career fields, or crewmembers of major weapons systems. The career tracks for US Air Force flyers are fly, staff, operations, and leadership.³⁷ Of concern to the research are the operations and leadership tracks:

The operations track is characterized by those who have a solid flying background and staff experience, then return to the cockpit as a field grade officer in a squadron leadership position....The leadership track produces our senior pilot leaders. It includes officers from the staff or operations track who have had at least one below the promotion zone promotion or attended professional military education intermediate service school or senior service school in-residence.³⁸

Finally, AFP 36-2630 makes a telling statement regarding leadership development within the US Air Force: "Opportunity to lead starts as early in your career as aircraft commander or flight lead and continues with flight commander and above. Remember, Air Force promotions are based on future potential."³⁹

Previously mentioned, AU-2, Guidelines for Command, can best be considered the US Air Force's handbook for commanders. It covers in plain English subjects from leadership principles to court-martial charges to joint warfighting. It is a document that is edited and designed by the Air University's Air Command and Staff College. It begins with advice and a checklist for the new commander, then moves into the conceptual background for Air Force leadership. The leadership qualities listed are grouped into the categories of attitude, values, character, and credibility.⁴⁰ Additional topics include the

need for vision, empowerment of subordinates, learning environment, and followership, and dealing with change.⁴¹ But in terms of this research, this text is primarily concerned with providing detailed information that a commander in the US Air Force needs, vice leadership development.

The text that complements the details of AU-2 with the theory of US Air Force leadership is AU-24, Concepts for Air Force Leadership. This huge (460 plus pages) work is a collection of articles on leadership from US Air Force leaders about the needs of leadership within the service. The work is organized to look at leadership from the perspectives of professionalism, organizations, and interpersonal skills. Finally, the perspectives of past and present Air Force leaders are offered.⁴²

The AU-24 is primarily a conceptual leadership book; it describes US Air Force leader attributes and defines their actions. It is full of historical references and comparisons. But in terms of stating “this is how you develop into a leader,” the book is light. Like literature already reviewed, it is possible to find quotes regarding leadership self-development. But the same ideas are presented: work hard, seek the challenges, read, look to what the great captains of the Air Force did to develop, and so on.

The US Air Force Academy publishes a Leadership Development Manual that applies to all four classes at the Academy and is designed to provide a five-step, continuous leadership development process that will produce better trained and more qualified officers for the United States Air Force.⁴³ The text has a focus on behavior modification to achieve the desired effects of leadership in human relations. The manual starts with the need for mutual respect, then defines and expands on the five steps needed to establish mutual respect between superior and subordinate; the steps are expectations,

skills, feedback, consequences, and growth.⁴⁴ A final point that is made about the Academy's leadership development program is that it is not a situational process:

The same principles for training that LDM talks about can be found in studying Dr. B. F. Skinner's classic works in behavioral psychology; or Dr. James Dobson's best-selling book on child rearing entitled Dare to Discipline; or Dr. Blanchard's best-seller on managerial skills entitled The One-Minute Manager; or the coaching methods spelled out by "Bear" Bryant, the most successful coach in the history of football; or quotes from successful military generals.⁴⁵

The review of US Air Force leadership literature indicates the presence of Instructions regarding officer formal training and assignments, handbook for squadron commanders, a book of concepts for US Air Force leaders, and a manual for behavior modification for precommissioning. Significant is the lack of an Air Force Instruction for self-development and US Air Force Leadership Doctrine. With this in mind, the US Army's leadership development literature was reviewed as a means of comparison.

The FM 22-100, Army Leadership, defines the US Army's leadership doctrine. It provides a conceptual understanding of the US Army's definitions of leadership from junior to senior levels.⁴⁶ The doctrine is specific, seeking to define what a leader must "be," what he must "know," and what he must "do."⁴⁷ The FM begins with the need for a need for a leader of character and organizes its content around this:

The leader of character understands the Army values, follows them, and leads others to do the same (Chapter 3). The Army values provide a basis for ethical understanding and behavior (Chapter 4). The leader of character possesses certain mental, physical, and emotional attributes (Chapter 5). He continually works on self-improvement by developing interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical skills (Chapter 6).⁴⁸

The Army defines character as that which is made up of skills, values and attributes.⁴⁹ The Army's values are honor, integrity, courage, respect, duty, loyalty, and

selfless-service.⁵⁰ The Army's leadership attributes are divided into mental, physical, and emotional qualities:

Mental: Will, self-discipline, initiative & judgement, confidence, intelligence, cultural sensitivity.

Physical: Health fitness, physical fitness, military bearing, professional bearing.

Emotional: Self-control, balance, stability.⁵¹

The Army's skills are divided into interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical skills.⁵² Finally, FM 22-100 discusses what it is that leaders in the Army "do":

Influencing via communicating, decision making, and motivating.

Operating via planning, executing, and assessing.

Improving via developing, building, and learning.⁵³

Finally, the FM says that learning is a continuous process and the opportunities to learn present themselves before, during, and after events occur. Moreover, that there are three learning concepts or disciplines: self-mastery (self-development), team learning (experimental), and formal (institutional).⁵⁴

A document that complements the US Army's FM 22-100 is Department of the Army Pamphlet 350-58, Leader Development for America's Army. This document states that the Army's program of leadership development is organized along the lines, or pillars, of institutional training and education, operational assignments, and self-development. It goes on to self-development responsibilities and the officer, warrant, noncommissioned officer, and civilian leader development programs.⁵⁵

The pamphlet states that the pillars are dynamic and interconnected.⁵⁶ Much is said about leadership self-development:

The concept is more than fixing weaknesses or reinforcing strengths. Self-development is a continuous process--taking place during institutional training and education, and during operational assignments--that should also stretch and broaden the individual beyond the job or training. It is a joint effort involving commanders, leaders, supervisors, and subordinates. The individual and his

leader structure self-development actions to meet specific individual goals and needs. Initial self-development is generally narrow in scope. The focus broadens as individuals learn their strengths and weaknesses, determine needs, and become more independent. Leaders prepare developmental action plans to map self-development efforts and set priorities for improving performance and achieving maximum potential. Self-development actions may include self-study, reading programs, and civilian education courses that support developmental goals.⁵⁷

The pamphlet continues by listing the tenets of self-development as: self-assessment, self-study, professional organizations, professional reading and writing.⁵⁸ Some self-development responsibilities include: establish goals, seek challenging, high responsibility assignments, and analyze current events.⁵⁹ The bottom line is that the US Army has a crafted and well-thought-out plan that stresses leadership self-development. And the implementation for the program rests both on the shoulders of the individual and the command.

The US Army document that goes further than DA Pamphlet 350-58 is STP 21-III-MOSS Military Qualifications Standard III, Leader Development Manual for Majors and Lieutenant Colonels. In discussing the US Army leadership development pillars, the manual states, “while all pillars are crucial, the self-development pillar poses the greatest challenge, since the Army MQS system places final responsibility for development on the officer’s shoulders.”⁶⁰ It equates self-development to “filling in the gaps” in institutional training and assignments.⁶¹

The MOS III Leader Development Manual is structured to describe major and lieutenant colonel areas of knowledge, the reading program, and the self-assessment program.⁶² In keeping with the need for field grade officers to broaden their experience, the manual defines extensive areas of knowledge that apply to field grade officers: combat operations, joint and combined operations, military history, profession of arms,

theory of war, national security policy and process, national military strategy, joint and combined planning, doctrine, and operations, providing military capability, and force integration. The reading program focuses on: spectrum of conflict, influencing a changing environment, soldier and society, leadership, and the experience of war.⁶³

A central tenet of self-development for the US Army is the value of self-assessment. The Army takes the position that just as leadership style varies with increasing rank from direct leadership to indirect leadership, so too does the leadership development assessment process change from cadre or faculty assessment to self-assessment.⁶⁴ The ultimate road to leadership development, at least at senior levels, rests with increased self-awareness:

Therefore, self-development for field grade officers must be based on your self-awareness with respect to your frame of reference. Self-awareness will be your primary component to lifelong learning and self-development. Through self-awareness you can more effectively process information you already have in relation to your frame of reference--information about thoughts, feelings, etc. By perceiving data through the senses, you can better assign meaning to the data when you are aware of it. Interpreting the sensed data, regardless of whether it is in the affective domain (emotions/feeling) or in the cognitive domain (thoughts/actions), becomes more accurate awareness and yields better quality interpretations, conclusions, and decisions. The end result is leader development.⁶⁵

The manual contains two of the US Army's leadership assessment forms and lists other available self-assessment forms.

Finally, STP 21-III-MQS defines developmental action plans. Like a reading program and a self-assessment program, a leadership self-development program needs a specific guide to ensure that short-term and long-term developmental goals are met. The eight steps in an Army developmental action plan are:

1. Chose a US Army doctrinal leadership skill (FM 22-100).

2. List positive and negative implications for improving or not improving this competency.
3. Select the strength of commitment as low, medium, or high based on your desire, attitude, and motivation to improve.
4. List all examples that substantiate your need to become more competent in this area.
5. List both short and long term goals for improving this competency
6. Make a plan.
7. List sources of help.
8. List specific actions (self and others) that will prove you have become more competent.⁶⁶

Of interest in the US Army's developmental action plan is the placement of Army leadership doctrine at the forefront and the identification of sources for help in achieving developmental goals.

What are the historical facts behind a US Air Force leadership self-development program?

This section was divided into the pursuit of information regarding case studies and written specifics on leadership self-development.

What is contained in historical case studies of leadership?

The historical case studies of great figures in leadership are popular methods for teaching leadership, perhaps primarily for their historical and biographical value. Usually, the research examines the individual, his growth, his leadership environment, the situations he influences and then draws a conclusion regarding leadership attributes and principles manifested. Says one author: "The study of great captains and classical writers on war will always be necessary in the development of military leaders for wars will always be won by men."⁶⁷ This is often called the "great man" approach to leadership study. It can play a large role in leadership self-development and formal training. Major Michael J. Mastromichalis wrote in his Air Command and Staff College research report:

Entire books, studies, and military courses are devoted entirely to the examination of military leadership....For example, nearly 40 percent of the Squadron Officers School curriculum is devoted exclusively to teaching leadership. Checklist are posted on walls, lists of what it takes to be effective leaders are memorized, and books about famous leaders are read and later briefed to all student officers in the hope that they will discover what leadership is and become leaders.⁶⁸

In his research report entitled Billy Mitchell's Concept of Command Leadership and the Relevance for Air Force Officers, Mastromichalis determined that the general exhibited the traits of discipline, technical expertise, loyalty to his men, and courage.⁶⁹

Another historical examination of leadership that is important to the research is 19 Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership by Edgar Puryear. In attempting to capture the elusive qualities that make some men succeed in persuading officers and men to do even more than they believe they can perform, he proposed to choose four great leaders in the Second World War and to ask hundreds of their former associates what had made these men excel in a field where many of their fellows failed to make their mark.⁷⁰

Puryear examines the leadership of Patton, Marshall, Eisenhower, and MacArthur. In the beginning a cogent statement is made about the impact of the historical study of leadership versus leadership training for the present day:

In comparing the leadership of these officers, it became clear that there are certain qualities that were essential elements of their success. The author does not contend that a study of these qualities will guarantee to the reader the same greatness achieved by these four generals; however, it will certainly, at a minimum, make the average man better. It is a great mistake to make no conscious effort at leadership training. Or should not be byproduct of other forms of training. Services of all nations publish materials listing rules of thumb on how to lead men, but listing rules is not enough. The qualities for successful leadership need to be given life and meaning.⁷¹

Puryear's historical analysis yielded multiple leadership traits possessed by the generals studied. But the one that he chose to focus on was that of character. He believed that this was the essence of leadership:

These generals were also asked, "What role does character play in American military leadership?" In reply there were statements such as, "Without character there is no true leadership;"...."Character is the base on which leadership is built;".... "the keystone,"...."the major role,"...."decisive," "dominant,"....and, as General Eisenhower summed it up, "everything."....While the word character is difficult to define, if one were forced to decide on a definition, or a description, there is no better way to express either than to cite the historic motto of West Point--Duty, Honor, Country.⁷²

What has been written about leadership self-development?

The research and books on leadership self-development range from a focus on personal development to skill development. Nearly all start by saying that leadership development must be an inward development. Puryear's research into four great generals showed clearly that a dedication to one's career--a willingness to work, study, and prepare--is an essential to success.⁷³ He found that all of these generals were men who worked at their profession. They never stopped learning; they continued to grow throughout their careers. Finally, Puryear writes, "Some officers want to wait for the big challenge before they produce."⁷⁴

In a similar vein, Warren Bennis in On Becoming a Leader found that under the concept of knowing yourself, there were four lessons of self-knowledgement:

1. You are your own best teacher.
2. Accept responsibility. Blame no one.
3. You can learn anything you want to learn.
4. True understanding comes from reflecting on your experience.⁷⁵

Additionally, Robert Taylor and William Rosenbach found that, "Above all, students of leadership can make an appointment with themselves and begin to appreciate their own strengths and deficiencies. Personal mastery is important."⁷⁶

While some works point to the role of individual effort, others openly claim to be a self-development guidebook. They provide guidelines for personal growth, details to

enhance conceptual knowledge, and even “universal” leadership skill descriptions. The key here is that these styles of leadership books go beyond the leadership handbook.

Roger Nye’s The Challenge of Command states that “Three kinds of learning go on simultaneously--specialization, professionalization, and human growth.”⁷⁷ He focuses on leadership self-development or “human growth.” Nye organizes his book to analyze issues that future leaders need to consider:

1. Give an overview of the command phenomenon.
2. Analyze the field into manageable topical chapters.
3. Suggest major problems and trends in each topic.
4. Highlight some of the best books on each topic, based on readability, substance, and availability.
5. Raise questions for reflection and discussion.
6. Include a detailed bibliography for ease in locating books that have been given an abbreviated cite in the text.⁷⁸

What is interesting about this organization is that it can serve as guide for a program of leadership self-development that focuses on reading and demands critical analysis.

A key question that rises to the forefront of leadership self-development is, “What is its effectiveness?” Writes Nye:

And what did our visions do for us? In many cases, they kept us in the military service for a full career. For many, they gave our lives more meaning and lifted us beyond our day-to-day jobs. They put many of us on a quest for new knowledge, helped us to grow, and made us more adept at creating new things. They gave us inspiration to reach for excellence, to lift ourselves into professional status, and to earn respect from others.⁷⁹

Whereas Nye’s The Challenge of Command was a purposeful self-development book, James Kouzes and Barry Posner’s work was an attempt to learn about leadership in total. The role of self-development was simply a part of the individual’s total development. In The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations, the authors identify five attributes of leaders and then determine

that "If we are to become leaders, we must believe that we, too, can be a positive force in the world. Leadership *does* have everything to do with what we think of ourselves."⁸⁰

Posner and Kouzes rank order the events that train or instill leadership in the order of importance: trial and error, observation of others, and education.⁸¹ They acknowledge that leaders are always learning and emphasize the need for personal and inward growth:

We do know for certain that effective leaders are constantly learning. They see *all* experiences as *learning* experiences not just those in a formal classroom or workshop. They're constantly looking for ways to improve themselves and their organizations.⁸²

Posner and Kouzes focus on the inward side of self-development as the keystone of leadership development, a necessary complement to experience. They finalize the role of inward reflection by offering a series of questions or self-examination on the individual's motivations for leadership:

Wanting to lead and believing that you can lead are the departure points on the path to leadership. Leadership is an art--a performing art--and the instrument is the self. The mastery of the art of leadership comes with the mastery of the self. Ultimately, leadership development is a process of self-development....As you begin this quest, you must wrestle with some difficult questions:

How much do I understand about what's going on in the organization and the world in which it operates?

How prepared am I to handle the complex problems that now confront my organization?

Where do I think the organization ought to be headed over the next ten years?

What are my beliefs about how people ought to conduct the affairs of my organization?

How strong is my own conviction for stated vision and values?

What are my strengths and weaknesses?

What do I need to do to improve my abilities to move the organization forward?

How solid is my relationship with my constituents?

Am I the right one to be leading at this moment?⁸³

The TRADOC Analysis Center in Leader Competencies: Implication for Force

XXI. FY 95 Mobile Strike Force Battle Command Experiment, attempted to determine

what leadership competencies were needed in the “digitized and technology-based” force of the future. The research identified desired competencies in leaders, sources of learning those competencies, and the difficulty in learning those competencies.⁸⁴ In examining the leadership competencies, the research focused on the Army’s three leadership development pillars:

1. **Institutional Training:** Formal education and training all officers receive in preparation for service as leaders with operational units.
2. **Operational Assignments:** Actual leadership positions to build upon the skills learned during formal education.
3. **Self-development:** Self-improvement aimed at filling the professional gaps left from the institutional training and operational assignments.⁸⁵

The TRADOC research yielded information regarding the priority of leadership skills, where people said they learned those skills, and which were difficult to assimilate:

1. **Importance of Competencies:** Professional Ethics, Communications, Technical and tactical proficiency, Decision making, Supervision, Teaching and counseling, Soldier team development, Planning, and Use of available systems.⁸⁶
2. **Contribution of Pillars:** Although both groups [control and test] were equally convinced that operational assignments were most influential in developing leader competencies, neither group could convincingly point to any one of the other two pillars, institutional training or self-development, as a strong secondary contributor. In fact, an average across all the competencies shows graphically the equality of the secondary pillars. The exception was professional ethics, which was primarily developed by the individual.⁸⁷
3. **Difficulty in learning competencies:** The research further indicated that the highest difficulty traits to acquire for the leaders were Decision making, Technical and tactical proficiency, Communications, and Professional ethics.⁸⁸

Do limitations exist in US Air Force professional leadership development and

If so, how are they countered?

This research project is concerned with the importance of leadership self-development for rated US Air Force officers in preparation for squadron command. In that light, the literature review found three other research projects that have been

conducted with analysis and conclusions focusing on leadership development and gains from changes in assignments and formal education. The research projects tie limitations and counters hand-in-hand.

Michael King, in his research entitled USAF Rated Officers: When do We Learn Leadership? interviewed the officers in the 1981 Air Command and Staff College class and compared the leadership experience of rated versus non-rated officers. The overall conclusion was:

Rated officers are found to be less experienced as supervisors. Implications of this deficiency include narrow organizational perspective, less sensitivity to personnel problems, and difficulty in selecting leaders for senior positions.⁸⁹

King further states:

Additionally, most experts in the field state that leaders/managers are self-made. That is, the individual is largely responsible for his or her own development. Leaders/managers are not "manufactured", implying external pressure; more properly they are "grown", suggesting self-organized change occurring in a proper environment. In this sense it is the organization's job to ensure a fertile environment, providing proper stimulants as necessary.⁹⁰

The conclusion to King's research is that development programs do not yield as effective results as the practical environment. He sites numerous reports and finally concludes that:

Of the human, conceptual, and technical types of skill, two are agreed by experts to be operant behavior. This means that they are analogous to physical skills like riding a bike or skating, and are essentially learned by doing. In order to develop human and conceptual skill, practice is necessary. Of the three, only technical skill can be mastered in an academic situation.⁹¹

King references Colonel Wales S. Dixon's 1976 Air War College research paper entitled Leadership/Command Opportunities in Tactical Aviation. Dixon discusses the critical nature of US Air Force Squadron command:

In fact, a strong case could be made that no officer was ever totally prepared for his first command. We learn principally from experience. Unfortunately in tactical (as well as other) aviation the first command is at such a high level, in terms of numbers of personnel, dollar resources in equipment and material, and complexities of mission, that the effect of a poor commander can be catastrophic⁹²

The researcher's final recommendation: One way to provide more leadership positions to rated officers in the first fifteen years of service, is placing them in charge of maintenance personnel and missions associated with their own aircraft.⁹³

The second research work into US Air Force leadership development focused on the formal education aspects of officer leadership training. Robert Place in The Commander: Enhanced Leadership Effectiveness through Education and Training begins by stating:

While the value of education and training to leadership and management setting is unquestionable, the USAF is not providing the squadron/detachment commanders with an appropriate developmental program which will enable them to be more effective in the discharge of their duties.⁹⁴

He goes on to say:

Leadership is situational in nature in that no one style of leadership is effective in all situations. Effective leadership involves individual treatment of both the situation and those persons interacting in the situation. Additionally, the most crucial factors in the establishment of a leadership style is an individual's personality and behavior patterns. Further, most of the theorists postulate that leadership can be taught, while a minimum number indicate that to change the leadership style would require major behavioral modification and that to engineer the job to fit the leader would ensure a greater probability to success. Lastly, almost all the literature reviewed revealed that although each individual has a distinct and personal leadership style a leader's repertoire of styles could be expanded, through training, to enhance the probability of success.⁹⁵

Next, the author investigates leadership and management development theory. He states that there is no "Holy Grail" when it comes to the perfect training program.⁹⁶ In terms of self-development, he states that a training program "should emphasize the creation of a relationship within which 'the individual can take responsibility for

developing his own potentialities, plan for himself, and learn from putting his own plan into action.”⁹⁷ He goes on to say that the program must have senior management support,⁹⁸ a system of selection,⁹⁹ and provide in-house continuation training for the entire managerial force.¹⁰⁰

The third research into the phenomena of US Air Force squadron command was a research project conducted by students in the 1996 Air Command and Staff College entitled Leadership Development in the Objective Squadron.¹⁰¹ The work analyzes the command environment within current fighter squadrons through the use of a survey and then makes recommendations for improvements to US Air Force leadership development. The research was the most recent accomplished and was used extensively to answer this research’s questions. Because of this, its findings are presented in detail in chapter four.

What roles do experience and past assignments play?

The source for what the US Air Force writes about the role of experience and past assignments was obtained from the Air Force Personnel Command Internet homepage. Via this electronic media the US Air Force presents typical career paths and criteria for advancement to higher rank or command positions. In general, the US Air Force determines a need for future commanders to attend Intermediate Service School in residence or be selected for promotion below the zone.

Because the US Air Force’s statements about the impact of operational assignments are critical to the support of the thesis, the details and analysis of the findings are also included in chapter four.

Conclusions to the Literature Review

The literature on leadership indicates that it is easier to define leadership attributes and principles than it is to teach and acquire them. Yet while there are inhibitors to teaching leaders, leadership can be taught. The training approaches of conceptual understanding, personal growth, feedback approaches, and skill building all play a role in leadership development. Historical studies of leaders play a large role in leadership development at both the formal and self-development level. The researchers are able to define the attributes and guiding principles, but the path to leadership development is often simply presented. This implies that as a guide for leadership development, historical studies leave room or require the reader to interpret the training implications for the individual. Finally, nearly all of the literature discussed the importance of self-development, either as an aside from the conceptual understanding or stating that the self is the center of the learning of leadership.

The literature review yielded a wealth of information regarding leadership actions, that which leaders do, and a fair amount of detail regarding how leaders learn. The groundwork is now complete so as to allow the real work, that of determining what the US Air Force and US Armed Forces say about leadership development.

¹Warren Bennis, and Burt Nanus, Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 27.

²Ibid., 70.

³Warren Bennis, On Becoming a Leader (Reading MA: Addison Wesley Publishing Co, 1989), 2.

⁴Ibid., 3.

⁵Ibid., 39.

⁶Ibid., 202.

⁷John Gardner, On Leadership (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 11 and 21.

⁸Ibid., 48.

⁹Robert Taylor, and William Rosenbach, Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1992), xiii.

¹⁰Ibid., 33.

¹¹Ibid., 38.

¹²Ibid., 52.

¹³Lloyd J. Mathews and Dale E. Brown, The Challenge of Military Leadership (Washington DC: Pergamon-Barassey's, 1989), xii.

¹⁴Taylor and Rosenbach, 61.

¹⁵Gardner, 158.

¹⁶Bennis and Nanus, 6.

¹⁷Ibid., 14.

¹⁸Gardner, 157.

¹⁹Taylor and Rosenbach, 54.

²⁰Ibid., 76.

²¹Jay A. Conger, Learning to Lead: The Art of Transforming Managers into Leaders (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), xii.

²²Ibid., 46.

²³Ibid., 49.

²⁴Ibid., 50.

²⁵Ibid., 51.

²⁶Ibid., 53.

²⁷Edward M. Flanagan, Before the Battle: A Commonsense Guide to Leadership and Management (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), ix.

²⁸Perry M. Smith, Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), ix.

²⁹Timmons T. Timothy, Commanding an Air Force Squadron (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, 1993), xx.

³⁰U.S., Department of the Air Force, AU-2, Guidelines for Command: A Handbook on the Leadership of People for Air Force Commanders and Supervisors (Maxwell AFB, Al: Air University Press, 1995), iii.

³¹Jason F. Phillips, "Developing Highly Effective Marine Leaders" (Monterey, CA: Naval Post Graduate School, 1995), 11.

³²Ibid., 11 to 13.

³³Ibid., 22.

³⁴U.S., Department of the Air Force, US Air Force Instruction 36-2302, Professional Development (Washington DC: HQ USAF, 1994), 1.

³⁵U.S., Department of the Air Force, US Air Force Instruction 36-2611, Officer Professional Development (Washington DC: HQ USAF, 1996), 1.

³⁶Ibid., paragraph 1.2.

³⁷U.S., Department of the Air Force, US Air Force Pamphlet 36-2630, Officer Professional Development Guide (Washington DC: HQ USAF, 1995), 6.

³⁸Ibid., 6.

³⁹Ibid., 7.

⁴⁰U.S., Department of the Air Force, AU-2 Guidelines for Command, (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1995), 18.

⁴¹Ibid., 20 to 33.

⁴²U.S., Department of the Air Force, AU-24 Concepts for Air Force Leaders, (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1996), xix.

⁴³Michael Rosebush, Leadership Development Manual (Colorado Springs: US Air Force Academy, 1992), 1.

⁴⁴Ibid., iii-5.

⁴⁵Ibid., 6-5.

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⁴⁹Ibid., 3-2.

⁵⁰Ibid., 4-3.

⁵¹Ibid., 5-1.

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⁵⁴Ibid., 10-37.

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⁵⁶Ibid., 6.

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⁵⁸Ibid., 13.

⁵⁹Ibid., 33.

⁶⁰U.S., Department of the Army, STP 21-III-MOSS Military Qualifications Standard III, Leader Development Manual for Majors and Lieutenant Colonels, (Washington DC: HQ USA, 1993), 1.

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⁶²Ibid., 7.

⁶³Ibid., 9, 19, and 23.

⁶⁴Ibid., 50.

⁶⁵Ibid., 51.

⁶⁶Ibid., 54.

⁶⁷Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., 19 Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992), xiii.

⁶⁸Michael J. Mastromichalis, Billy Mitchell's Concept of Command Leadership and the Relevance for Air Force Officers (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 1986), 11.

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⁷⁰Puryear, v.

⁷¹Ibid., xv.

⁷²Ibid., 346 and 349.

⁷³Ibid., 395.

⁷⁴Ibid., 385.

⁷⁵Bennis, 56.

⁷⁶Taylor and Rosenbach, 77.

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⁸⁶Ibid., 7.

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⁸⁹Michael King, USAF Rated Officers: When do We Learn Leadership? (Maxwell AFB, Al: Air Command and Staff College, 1981), Abstract.

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⁹¹Ibid., 14.

⁹²Ibid., 50.

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⁹⁶Ibid., 17.

⁹⁷Ibid., 18.

⁹⁸Ibid., 18.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Thesis Question: Is Leadership Self-development the Most Critical Aspect in the Development of Squadron Commander Skills?

The research focused on the personal side of US Air Force leadership development. To that end, the thesis research began with the literature review and then made personal contact within the US Air Force to determine answers to the questions posed in chapter one. The research methodology used a historical approach to analyze the data. Specifically, the data collected was reviewed for its internal evidence, then critiqued as to what it says about leadership self-development for the developing squadron commander. The data was evaluated against the information regarding leadership self-development determined in the literature review. The US Air Force data was compared to data from the other services and the civilian world. The thesis subquestions guided the research.

The first subquestion tackled by the research was, What is the current US Air Force program for Professional Leadership Development? A search of USAF publications and Internet homepages yielded sources from distinct locations regarding the current US Air Force program for officer leadership development. This question was answered by contacting the course directors at the US Air Force Academy, Squadron Officers School, and Air Command and Staff College. The information sought was the syllabus used for the unit's instruction on leadership. Electronic mail and telephone calls were the primary means of contact. The research yielded a concise summary of the material that is currently presented to USAF officer candidates and officers in formal leadership courses.

The research's next step investigated US Air Force officer leadership self-development policy. Was there one? What is the curriculum and what role does it play in leadership development? What were the historical facts behind an Air Force's leadership self-development program or guidance? What were the limitations and recommendations to the program? The thesis sub-questions were used to evaluate and determine answers to these types of questions. The Internet sources and US Air Force publications were again the primary resources.

Finally, the research investigated what the US Air Force says about rated officer assignments versus leadership development. Since operational assignments and experience are thought to contribute to leadership-development, the research contacted Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center via their Internet homepage to determine current assignment policy.

Once sufficient data had been collected to paint an accurate picture of current US Air Force officer leadership development programs, then limitations to these programs were analyzed. Specifically, if problems exist in US Air Force professional leadership development, how are they countered? The research located professional opinion from within the US Air Force regarding this aspect of the research. Sources within the US Air Force Air University were the key to this aspect of the research.

In summary, the research determined the US Air Force program for leadership development from the aspects of formal education, self-development, and operational assignments. It searched for limitations to the program, and offered comparison to other programs, but only in the category of self-development.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The research analysis was conducted using the thesis subquestions. This chapter presents the findings regarding each question, along with an analysis of the information discovered. The implications for the thesis question will be discussed within each subquestion. The research yielded a large amount of information, and this chapter condenses the results and focuses on the thesis question.

What is the current US Air Force program for professional leadership development?

The US Air Force Academy's leadership development program was selected as representative of US Air Force precommissioning leadership development programs. While the sources of ROTC, OTS, and direct acquisition have slightly different programs, for this research the US Air Force Academy program was investigated for two reasons. First, a military academy was assumed to offer a leadership development program with the greatest amount of student contact time. Hence, the US Air Force Academy's program was likely to equate or exceed those of ROTC, OTS, or direct acquisition. Second, all of the US Air Force precommissioning schools have agreed to a commissioning education memorandum of understanding (CEMU) that details subject areas and associated curriculum goals that form the foundation of commissioning education and training in the US Air Force.¹ Under the CEMU, the curriculum areas are professional knowledge, leadership and management studies, defense studies, and communication skills. Within leadership and management studies, the desired learning goals are:

1. Comprehend selected concepts, principles, and theories of leadership and management as applied to the Quality Air Force.

2. Apply selected individual leadership skills and personal strengths in a Quality Air Force environment.
3. Comprehend selected Air Force officer's duties and responsibilities of followership.
4. Apply group/team dynamics and processes as the leader and group member.²

The US Air Force Academy has been likened to a "leadership laboratory," in that all phases of cadet training nurture the development of leadership skills within the corps of cadets. The system is designed to produce a solid leader for the US Air Force.³ At the US Air Force Academy, cadet leadership instruction is provided directly by the commandant via his forty air officer commanders (AOC). Each of the forty cadet squadrons is assigned an AOC. In addition, the Commandant has three departments that manage all aspects of cadet training: Director of Character Development, Operations Group Commander, and Training Group Commander. The Dean's traditional undergraduate academic program rounds out the cadet leadership development program which ultimately is made up of academic courses, military training, character development, and athletics.⁴

The US Air Force Academy is structured to allow increasing responsibility to the cadets during their four years of study. Under the four-year military training system, the commandant and the director of character development conduct formal training. The leadership courses for the first-year students are assertive followership and the Leadership Development Manual (discussed in the literature review). In the sophomore year the courses are: leadership development review, effective listening, supervision, counseling, mentorship, and the supervisor challenge. Juniors increase their time with leadership topics: character-based leadership development, traditions of leadership, Lincoln's leadership philosophy, air force leadership, delegation, and NCO's on

Leadership. The final year's program discusses professional development and taking care of the troops.⁵

In addition to the academic classes that the commandant provides, cadets that fill leadership positions within the cadet wing are provided extra instruction. This takes the form of a three-week training and strategic planning program for the wing, group, and squadron commanders prior to their senior year.⁶ This additional leadership training is given to 45 cadets out a class of roughly 900.

The next formal leadership education that a US Air Force officer receives is at Squadron Officers School (SOS) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Captains with four to seven years of service are sent to Squadron Officers School with the goal being to improve the professional competence of company grade officers and inspire their dedication to the profession of arms.⁷

The seven-week course is divided into four phases: officership values, officership application, leadership tools, and air and space power. The leadership instruction is divided into the phases of leadership theory, supervisory tools, SOS writing program, and SOS briefing program. The leadership theory phase has eighteen student contact hours, while the supervisory tools section has eleven hours of contact time. The leadership theory topics and brief descriptions are:

1. Military roots of quality. (The basic concepts of Quality Air Force philosophy and how it relates to military leadership)
2. Group process, behavior, and problem solving. (Group theory, development, dynamics, roles, and understanding of a six step problem solving technique)
3. Basic tools and metrics. (Understand the process and significance of customer/supplier relationships)
4. Flight personnel allocation, planning process, and planning application, and design process. (Practical application of theories to generate goals, methods of achievement, and evaluation)

5. Situational leadership. (Presentation of Dr. Kenneth Blanchard's situational leadership model)
6. Motivational applications. (Individual and group motivational techniques and how to use them in building a successful team)
7. Interpersonal relations. (How interpersonal relations and listening skills improve leadership, followership, and productivity)
8. Process review and field campaign process review. (Apply appropriate metrics to assess the effectiveness of the operations you've developed to reach your goals)⁸

The supervisory tools phase at Squadron Officers School deals with instruction regarding specific supervisory situations and tools that a commander needs. The topics are:

1. Counseling and feedback.
2. Suicide prevention.
3. Substance abuse awareness.
4. Case studies in military justice.
5. Enlisted performance appraisal.
6. Enlisted evaluation system.
7. Officer force management process.
8. Promotion board.
9. Officer performance appraisal.
10. Media in the military.⁹

The final level of formal education for US Air Force officers prior to the opportunity for field grade command is the Air Command and Staff Course at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The course provides the US Air Force's intermediate-level professional education:

Air Command and Staff College (ACSC)...prepares field grade officers (primarily majors and major selects) and US civilians to assume positions of higher responsibility within the military and government arenas. Geared toward teaching the skills necessary for command, ACSC focuses on shaping and molding tomorrow's squadron commanders.¹⁰

The yearlong course is divided into the following instructional areas. Note that leadership development is only a small portion of the overall instruction that leads to officer professional development:

1. War and conflict.
2. War theory.
3. Strategic environment.
4. Operational structures.
5. War and conflict resolution.
6. Joint operations and campaign concepts.
7. Air power and campaign planning.
8. Joint warrior.
9. Leadership and command.
10. Force 2025.
11. Research elective program.¹¹

The leadership and command phase focuses on the situational aspects of command and leadership:

...interdisciplinary in nature and designed to enhance the students' understanding of their own notion of leadership, and then apply that understanding in the development of their approach to leadership and command. Using the premise that leadership is a relationship between the leader, followers, and situation (command), the course breaks down into an interactive examination of these various components. In addition the commandant's leadership speaker series provides the opportunity for students to hear from distinguished speakers on important leadership concepts and then discuss these concepts in a follow-on seminar mentorship session.¹²

The Air Command and Staff Course for leadership is organized around the three phases of the leader, the followers, and the situation (command): The course begins with 360-degree leadership assessments on each individual with subsequent, predominately seminar discussion, lessons on each area of assessment. After examining leadership topics to include ethics, accountability, decision-making, diversity, and joint and multinational leadership challenges, the course progresses onto the followers. This phase examines the officer, enlisted, and civilian aspects from the leader/commander point of view. The concluding phase is an examination of the command environment and issues through lecture and case study application.¹³

Of interest is that the course presents conceptual knowledge, specific leadership tools, and shared operational experience in the form of guest lectures. Unlike the precommissioning course, personal leadership development is not a focus of Air Command and Staff College. The course summary depicted below is useful in that it

summarizes the range and order of subjects in the US Air Force intermediate level formal leadership training program:

ACSC Leadership and Command Course, AY 98, Course Summary

Leadership and Command Introduction

PHASE I – The Leader

Personal Leadership Challenge

Learning Leader

Creative and Innovative leadership

Assessing Leadership Effectiveness

Heritage, Traditions, and Standards

Leader and the Organization

Images of Military Leadership

Values Examination: A Comparison

Military Ethics

Making Decisions and Accountability

Interpersonal Relations

Leadership and Cultural Diversity

Leadership in the Joint and Multinational Environment

Personal Leadership Guide

PHASE II – The Follower

Sister Service Evaluation Systems

Enlisted Personnel Issues

Civilian Personnel Issues

Counseling and Feedback

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

PHASE III – The Situation (Command)

Media Symposium

Taking Command

First Sergeant

Security Forces and OSI

Commander/Leader Issues Seminar #1

Law – Judicial Issues

Discipline and Responsibility

Contracting Issues

Civil Engineering and Environmental Issues

Squadron Financial Planning

Command/Leader Seminar #2

Medical Services

Family and Individual Support

Chaplain

Social Actions
LC 545 – Simuworld Briefings
Leadership in Deployed Commander Environment
Commander Perspectives¹⁴

Finally, the Air Command and Staff College Leadership Course uses a list of ten leadership concepts used for lecture and discussion purposes: character, values, accountability, wisdom, creative and critical thinking, learning, resiliency, vision, relationships, and culture.¹⁵ While there is no published US Air Force leadership doctrine, because these concepts are endorsed by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and taught at Maxwell Air Force Base, it can be reasonably concluded that they form the nucleus of what the US Air Force thinks about leadership attributes and qualities.

The analysis of the US Air Force program for professional leadership development yields the following conclusions:

1. Precommissioning instruction lays a broad and life-long foundation for leadership development. The program is conceptual and skills based.
2. The mid-level course at Squadron Officers School is relatively light in leadership instruction. The focus is on group dynamics and interplay, the US Air Force specific tools of commanders, and briefing and writing skills.
3. Air Command and Staff College is the last institution that provides leadership instruction to officers prior to being eligible for squadron command. The course is detailed and thorough. A further supposition is that the US Air Force compensates for a pilot's limited command opportunities with a large academic injection of leadership knowledge at Air Command and Staff College. This, coupled with a top-off at MAJCOM precommand course, is the apex of US Air Force formal training for command.

The analysis of US Air Force formal education reveals a focus on leadership. The professional military education courses offer detail and depth in the precommissioning phase, maintenance at the mid-level point, and further theoretical details to field grade officers before given the opportunity to command. But formal leadership education does not appear to be the most critical event in the development of US Air Force leadership. Professionalism within the officer corps is the focus, of which leadership is only a part.

Leadership courses throughout an officer's career comprise only a small part of his education. If precommissioning bachelor's programs, initial flight training, advanced flight training, master's programs, Squadron Officers School and Air Command and Staff College are considered in total, then the time spent on leadership development in the classroom is too small to allow the conclusion that it is "the most important part of leadership development." For if it were, then colleges, and not courses, would be devoted towards its pursuit. The center of gravity for US Air Force Leadership development must lie within operational assignments or leadership self-development.

What is the US Air Force policy towards leadership self-development?

The research into this question yielded information from numerous sources. US Air Force policy is contained in Air Force Instructions, the US Air Force Chief of Staff Professional Reading Program, and policy for the mentoring of officers. Overall, the research indicates a lack of focus on leadership self-development in the US Air Force. As a result, the findings of a 1996 Air Command and Staff College research project and a summary of US Army leadership development doctrine are included in the answer to this subquestion.

The US Air Force has numerous regulations that pertain to professional development, but few words regarding leadership self-development. As was detailed in the literature review, the following Air Force Instructions detail policy on US Air Force development programs: Air Force Instruction 36-2302 Professional Development Programs, Air Force Instruction 36-2611 Officer Professional Development, and Air Force Pamphlet 36-2630 Officer Professional Development Guide. The focus of these documents is on the management of graduate-level academic programs and likely career paths for US Air Force officers. The career path discussions address the need for officers to develop technical experience, staff experience, and to have operational leadership opportunities in order to compete for squadron command and higher positions. They present the relationship between various rated and nonrated assignments and how they fall into three professional development categories.

The term that the US Air Force likes to use is professional development, the continuation of academic education to build upon the solid foundation of officership laid during precommissioning.¹⁶ The focus of these regulations is to define the goal of US Air Force professional military education through three basic elements:

- Assignments that provide depth and breadth.
- Training and education that support a specific career path.
- Counseling that provides feedback on performance, training, and assignment.¹⁷

The key to all this is that leadership self-development is not an area that is specifically addressed in US Air Force instructions. Professional development is the focus, and the individual definitely has a responsibility to make an effort in the area of professional self-development. Writes the US Air Force Personnel Center professional military education homepage on the Internet, self-study is a foundation for leadership development:

Professional preparation encompasses far more than completing PME. The development of leadership skills requires a firm foundation based on professional reading, study of doctrine and employment of air and space power across the spectrum of conflict, and an understanding of national military strategy. Advanced education, most of it pursued at the appropriate point through off-duty methods, should enhance duty performance and technical competence.¹⁸

The next program of interest to this subquestion is that of the US Air Force Chief of Staff's Professional Reading Program. General Ronald Fogleman instituted this program in January 1997. He said, "We must be able to describe what air and space power bring to the (Joint) table. Avidly pursuing a professional reading program is one means of contributing to this objective."¹⁹ The program in a large part is about airpower, leadership self-development being an adjunct:

The CSAF Professional Reading Program complements initiatives that came out of our long--range planning effort to foster the growth of a unifying air and space culture throughout our service. Together, they will help produce knowledgeable service members who more effectively can employ air and space forces in independent, joint, or coalition operations. When these Air Force operators serve in joint billets, they will be able to advise their superiors on the Joint Staff, in unified command headquarters, in the Department of Defense, and in other agencies on how best to employ air and space power to achieve US security objectives. Ultimately, our initiatives will help prepare current and future Air Force leaders to deal effectively with the challenges they surely will face in a post--cold--war world of austere defense budgets, diverse regional threats, and continued high--operations tempo for our units.²⁰

The US Air Force Chief of Staff Professional Reading Program is designed to lay the foundation of reading for officers that will serve as the foundation of the US Air Force's overall professional development program. But, the key is that the program is designed to provide a focus on airpower, not leadership.

Just as leadership development is an adjunct to professional development, the same can be said about the US Air Force mentoring program. While the personnel regulations have little to say about self-development, one regulation accounts for this by

presenting the policy for Air Force Mentoring. AFI 36-3401 is a mandatory regulation that implements the Air Force mentoring program. It is meant to be a cultural change in the way we view professional development for company grade officers.²¹ The program introduces the need for subordinates to read air and space power literature such as US Air Force doctrine and operational warfighting publications, including the US Air Force Chief of Staff Professional Reading Program.²² The Mentoring Program has a broad list of subject areas, with leadership development being only a part of the whole:

Air Force mentoring covers a wide range of areas, such as career guidance, technical and professional development, leadership, Air Force history and heritage, air and space power doctrine, strategic vision, and contribution to joint warfighting. It also includes knowledge of the ethics of our military profession and understanding of the Air Force's core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.²³

One of the keys to mentoring in the US Air Force is to provide feedback to the subordinate. The focus of the mentor's and individual's efforts should be toward obtaining an assignment that enhances professional development while meeting US Air Force needs without necessarily keying on a specific position or location.²⁴

The research's overall analysis of what the US Air Force says about leadership development is that there is not a focus on leadership development or self-development. This is not a new finding, and both a 1995 Air War College Research Report and a 1996 Air Command and Staff College Research Report indicate a lack of, and a need for US Air Force Leadership Doctrine. The April 1995 Air War College research report entitled, What Is and Where Is The United States Air Force Leadership Doctrine? concluded:

Continuing to tiptoe around the responsibility to publish hard-hitting leadership doctrine and getting it internalized in the Service's future leaders is, to use General Lorber's words, "something we are doing wrong that needs to be corrected." We need to develop, publish, distribute, teach, and practice leadership doctrine.²⁵

The 1996 Air Command and General Staff Research Report entitled Leadership Development in the Objective Squadron concluded, "the absence of written doctrine is a symptom of the problem, not an oversight."²⁶

In its call for development of US Air Force Leadership Doctrine, the 1996 Air Command and Staff College report defined doctrine as answering three questions about US Air Force leadership and offered general suggestions regarding US Air Force leadership doctrine content:

1. What is "it?" Doctrine defines roles and missions.
2. How is "it" used? Doctrine defines the who, when, where, why, and how regarding the role or mission.
3. How is "it" developed? What are the resources and processes (education and training) by which one acquires the capability to perform the roles described by the doctrine?²⁷

Ultimately, doctrine that answers these questions would recognize the uniqueness of leadership requirements within the US Air Force. It would, in effect, answer the thesis question regarding leadership development. While this might simplify the research's task, its inescapable value would be to define the airman's position on leadership. This would allow study, acknowledgement, or debate. All of which, taken together, would improve the US Air Force.

The analysis of US Air Force program for leadership self-development yields the following conclusions:

1. Leadership self-development exists in the USAF only as a part of professional development.
2. Professional development includes formal military education, advanced academic degrees, professional reading topics and mentoring.

3. The US Air Force Chief of Staff professional reading program is focused on airmanship, not leadership.

4. The lack of a US Air Force leadership doctrine is a significant detriment to the US Air Force's self-development program and perhaps indicative of the US Air Force lack of focus on leadership self-development in particular.

The relationship of this analysis to the thesis question is debatable. One might conclude that since the US Air Force does not have a defined leadership self-development program, then self-development must not be the most significant part of leadership development. Matching that to the assertion that formal training is not the most significant part, then leadership experience gained from operational assignments must be the true center of gravity for leadership development. This possibility will be addressed in another subquestion.

Another more probable conclusion from the research is that the US Air Force is aware of the need for leadership self-development, but it does not know the value of self-development programs or know what the objective of the training should be. The US Air Force mentoring program and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Reading Program point to recognition of the power of self-development. But the lack of US Air Force doctrine indicates confusion as to what the program "should do."

The conclusions that can be gleaned from the research so far are that:

1. Operational assignments could be the most critical.
2. Self-development could be, but the US Air Force simply does a poor job of it.
3. All three leadership learning methods are equal.

So what does the US Army have to say? This research concluded that the US Air Force has limited doctrine on leadership and leadership development. Hence, the leadership development program for the US Army was reviewed for its content and the transferability of ideas from one service to another.

The US Army's approach to leadership development is contained in FM 22-100, DA Pamphlet 350-58, and STP 21-III-MOSS Military Qualifications Standard III, Leader Development Manual for Majors and Lieutenant Colonels. The US Army has a working definition of leadership and defines how to improve leadership skills. As was presented in the literature review, the emphasis for leader development is placed evenly on the pillars of institutional training and education, operational assignments, and self-development.²⁸

The US Army's doctrine and training programs, on the other hand, hold leadership self-development as an equal to operational experience and formal training. If leadership self-development is then assumed to be at least the equal to US Air Force formal programs, then the research can only lead to the conclusion that the US Air Force leadership self-development programs must be improved and elevated in stature.

In summary, if the US Army model for leadership development is taken to be a true means of teaching leaders, then formal training must be on par with self-development. If this is taken as a result of the analysis, then the US Air Force needs to improve the quality of its self-development programs.

What are the historical facts behind an Air Force's Leadership Self-Development program?

Research into this sub-question failed to find any old or out of date documents that would shed light on the historical methods used for US Air Force officer professional

development. The formal schools have been present in their current form since the late 1970's, and no program that has been modified or discontinued was found.

However, the US Air Force has used correspondence and a professional reading list for some time to augment the formal educational program and encourage self-instruction.²⁹ While the correspondence course matches the in-residence courses, the Professional Reading Program has had a varied history:

The initial reading list was titled "A Guide for Professional reading by Air Force Officers," unpublished but circulated in June 1947. It became a formal Air Force pamphlet (variously numbered), ultimately covering 12 major subject areas and having over 300 titles by the early 1960s. In 1963 the AU Historical Division assumed management of the list. It languished there until 1972, when the AU curriculum office reduced it to a small handout with 25 titles. Now titled the *Air University Suggested Professional Reading Guide* (Maxwell AFB Al: Air University, 1990), it is still in use, updated every other year or so.³⁰

The program in its current form is called the US Air Force Chief of Staff Professional Reading Program.

In an article in *Airpower Journal*, the assistant dean at Air University's School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS) took a bead at the professional development of US Air Force officers. The Air University's School of Advanced Airpower Studies is the US Air Force graduate school for airpower and spacepower strategists with a goal of producing tomorrow's senior military leaders who are experts in the employment of air and space forces.³¹ Says Professor Drew:

They can skillfully talk with their hands about air tactics but are ill prepared to think with their heads about air strategy....These officers are products of an Air Force system that does not reward personal professional development, promotes irrelevant academic education, and thus places an insupportable burden on the formal professional military education (PME) system.³²

In the area of self-development, whether under the guise of professional or leadership development, Professor Drew slights the US Air Force program because self-development is neither measured nor rewarded:

Air Force efforts to promote informal, personal, career-long professional development have been very limited and largely ineffective. There are no carrots, no special rewards or recognition for officers who independently pursue professional knowledge. Officer evaluation forms provide no block to check and no rating standard for officers who have read a good professional book. Promotion recommendation forms provide no recognition, nor does the Air Force give any special consideration to officers who have taken it upon themselves to study the art of war³³

Because of the lack of a rigorous self-development program in the US Air Force, Professor Drew concludes that the formal PME programs are overworked and inadequate to the task. He proposes a change to the officer self-development program in three steps:

1. Promote relevant graduate academic education.
2. Reemphasize career-long, personal professional development.
3. Upgrade PME.³⁴

The goal of the research into this question was to determine if the US Air Force ever experimented with leadership self-development and then discarded or changed it. Unfortunately, the historical aspects of the research failed to find anything. The current programs are Mentoring and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Professional Reading Program; what they replaced is undetermined. The research did not indicate for certain, but the lack of US Air Force leadership doctrine, and the author's own experience, could imply that there was no program for leadership self-development in the US Air Force's immediate past. What this means to the thesis is that no conclusions about the importance of leadership self-development can be formed from this incomplete analysis of US Air Force history.

Do limitations exist in US Air Force Professional Leadership Development?

An Air Command and Staff College research project into leadership in US Air Force combat fighter squadrons (referred to as objective squadron in the research project) yielded startling results in the areas of leadership and leadership development. The eighteen question survey targeted officers serving or had served as a squadron commander, operations officer, or squadron maintenance officer in an objective squadron after 1991. The sample consisted of 73 officers, and claimed an 85 to 92% accuracy for the total population with a 10% variance.³⁵ The research results indicated a significant problem with the US Air Force professional leadership development programs. With regards to objective squadron commander preparation, sixty percent replied that they were not adequately prepared, 31 percent were prepared, and nine percent had neutral feelings.³⁶

The results of the survey were broken into fifteen categories that reflect outright deficiencies or areas that spell out specific problems for the US Air Force's squadron commanders. The six categories that specifically apply to this thesis are listed below:

- Insufficient enlisted supervisory experience
- Limited understanding of supporting agencies
- Poor Air Force leadership development
- Mentorship
- No effective leadership training program
- Command preparation is random³⁷

The analysis of previous sub-questions identified deficiencies in USAF leadership self-development. The research into this sub-question details the "so-what", the impact of incomplete US Air Force leadership and development doctrine. Because of this, the details of the 1996 Air Command and Staff College survey's results are included in this analysis. They paint a grim picture of leadership development and reinforce the earlier

determination that there is a problem with leadership development. Information pertinent to the thesis are summarized:

Insufficient Enlisted Supervisory Experience

As they move up to mid-captain, there are few real opportunities to personally be in charge of anyone--especially enlisted personnel. At the mid- to senior-captain level they may become a flight commander. This entails supervising five to ten other rated officers and provides excellent leadership training and a requirement to write performance reports on three to six other officers. A major typically attends intermediate service school and then moves to a staff job. At the staff, officers learn new skills and become more rounded, but they do not normally get experience supervising enlisted personnel. Following the staff job, our prospective squadron commander finds himself returning to an operational flying assignment. Most future commanders fill the position of squadron operations officer for at least one year before being offered the opportunity of squadron command." At no point in the typical career flow does the officer gain experience beyond leading other rated officers....As a result, the majority of commanders felt overwhelmed leading 300 or more enlisted maintainers. Another commander stated, "It is impossible to know, expect, or plan for the amount of time it takes to take care of people . . . pilots miss the leadership track when it comes to preparedness for command."³⁸

Limited Understanding of Supporting Agencies

Many commanders felt that not only did they lack development in the necessary leadership skills, but they also had a limited practical understanding of many important support agencies and processes.³⁹

Poor Air Force Leadership Development

Over 70 percent of the commanders interviewed felt that the Air Force does a poor job developing leaders....Another common comment was that the Air Force does a great job developing managers, but a terrible job developing leaders. A significant number of commanders remarked that other US military services do a much better job developing leaders.⁴⁰

Mentorship

A majority of those interviewed cited a weak to non-existent mentor program as a significant deficiency in the Air Force's leadership development....The survey found a few examples of effective mentorship.⁴¹

No Effective Leadership Training Program

Nearly all of the commanders felt that, in addition to providing inadequate practical experience, the Air Force lacks effective leadership training programs. Most felt their training occurred primarily on-the-job.⁴²

Command Preparation is Random

Whether or not a commander believed the Air Force prepared him for command, the wide variety of circumstances behind each commander's personal leadership development strongly supports the conclusion that leadership development in the Air Force is essentially a random process.⁴³

Initially the research indicated that limitations in US Air Force professional leadership development would be hard to quantify. The US Air Force has leaders, and the US Air Force does not openly fail in the area of command. More importantly, the US Air Force does have a leadership development program. It is not as defined as the US Army's, for example, but it is a program nonetheless. But the result of the 1996 Air Command and Staff College Research Project indicates that the leaders at the squadron command level "feel" that there is a deficiency in their performance. And it does not take much of a leap of the imagination to infer a failure in certain aspects of US Air Force combat flying squadrons as a result of this "feeling."⁴⁴

The research's significance regarding leadership development limitations is in the direct relationship to the thesis. The foregoing limitations and concerns demonstrate that leadership development, and specifically squadron command preparation, is deficient in the US Air Force. One can conclude that these areas still remain critical nodes for development, and that the US Air Force is simply doing a poor job. Or, more realistically, that leadership development opportunities are limited in these two areas within the US Air Force. And if there are limitations imposed by the service in these two areas, and they are not corrected, then leadership self-development must move to the forefront as the most significant node within the US Air Force.

If the limitations to leadership development are real, then programs are needed to improve US Air Force performance in the areas of operational experience, formal training, and self-development.

If so, then how are they countered?

In recent years, the US Air Force has increased emphasis on professional development through the expansion and formalizing of the Mentoring and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Professional Reading Programs. This is an attempt to counter leadership development limitations by involving commanders and imbuing officers with conceptual knowledge of airmanship. In addition, the 1996 Air Command and Staff College Research Report provides further recommendations to counter US Air Force leadership development deficiencies. In general, the Air Command and Staff report provides individual and institutional recommendations that combine to make leadership development a part of an officer's development from lieutenant to colonel. The research report's idea is that that leadership development ideas should not only be the realm of senior leaders, but a part of the officer professional development if smaller amounts earlier in the start of the career.

The Air Command and Staff Report specifically recommended improvements in mentoring, and exploiting broad leadership opportunities. The first area for improvement offered specific tools to enhance mentoring programs:

Relevant self-study.

Encourage reading on military history, biographies, leadership, counseling, psychology and related topics. For officers beginning master's degree programs, encourage study in fields which are relevant to the Air Force and leadership. Guide discussions of ideas and their practical application to the squadron.

Shadow programs.

Rated officers can learn about maintenance processes by "shadowing" key maintenance personnel for a day or two. Shadowing includes following them, doing what they do, taking notes, and providing temporary assistance as required.

Senior level meetings.

Group and wing level staff meeting meetings provide insight into issues at and above the squadron command level.

Counseling sessions.

A universal problem area for new commanders was Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and personnel issues. Permitting junior rated officers to observe UCMJ and other types of counseling sessions (within legal constraints) would expose them to real-world problems and the proper means to deal with them. On the positive side, include junior officers in good situations such as awards presentation, career counseling, and "Stripes for Exceptional Performers" promotions.

Acting commander and other temporary jobs.

When the squadron commander or operations officer are on leave or TDY, designate an alternate and empower him to do the whole job while the senior leadership is absent. Avoid "holding onto the leash" by calling in or working issues from long distance, but designate a "watchdog" to insure the acting officer is not overwhelmed. Give the acting commander the keys to the office and all of the responsibilities that go with them. Hold a debriefing upon resumption of command.

Commander's calls.

Involve junior officers in the planning and presentation of appropriate topics to the assembled squadron and to field questions.⁴⁵

The conclusion drawn from these recommendations is that leadership self-development is more than book study. It includes counseling, short-term tasks that develop responsibility, and at least a grandstand view of senior leader actions.

Under the area of exploiting broad leadership opportunities, the Air Command and Staff College report recommends:

- Special assignments
- Additional duty selection
- Integrate specific squadron functions
- Professional development opportunities⁴⁶

Finally, the report recommends institutional changes to improve education and training, identify command career paths and enforce tenure, functionally integrate the squadron, and develop US Air Force leadership doctrine; the most relevant to the thesis being the development of US Air Force leadership doctrine.⁴⁷

These improvements to US Air Force leadership development limitations apply to formal training, operational assignments, and self-development. In summary, formal education is called on to “improve,” operational assignments to include tasks that support leadership development, and self-development in the form of mentoring and structured programs. Over all of this, the development of US Air Force leadership doctrine is called for. These recommendations cover the entire spectrum of leadership development, but where is, or should be, the focus? The answer to this is heart of the thesis question.

So far the analysis points towards the conclusion that there are problems with leadership development, that leadership self-development is a growing but not highly regarded within the US Air Force, and that formal training is not the most significant part of the overall development. Therefore, the final piece towards analysis of the thesis lies in the analysis of the impact of operational assignments.

What roles do experience and past assignments play?

US Air Force Pamphlet 36-2630, Officer Professional Development Guide is the US Air Force document that addresses the role of experience and assignments and relates it to leadership development. It emphasizes that there is no one path to a successful career, but rather presents general advice about officer assignments and promotion.

With regards to the rated officer career path, the guide presents four major categories for pilot's to follow: fly, staff, operations, and leadership.⁴⁸ The fly track is

flying assignments only, staff is flying and then staff or other non-operational assignments, operations is fly, then staff, then return to operational flying as a field grade officer in a squadron leadership position. The leadership track is the same as staff or operations with the addition of a below the zone promotion or attendance at professional military education Intermediate Service School or Senior Service School in-residence.⁴⁹

The career path guide defines successful preparation for command and/or increased rank to be a function of a “three legged stool”, made up of leadership opportunities, technical expertise, and staff experience.⁵⁰ It lists the components of each:

Leadership opportunities: Flight lead, aircraft commander, instructor, flight commander, operations Officer.

Technical Expertise: Wing staff, Squadron Officers School complete, evaluator, overseas experience, safety school, Fighter Weapons School, special undergraduate pilot training/follow-on training unit instructor, and air liaison officer.

Staff Experience: Masters, joint tour, Intermediate Service School complete, above wing level, Professional Military Education in residence.⁵¹

In the areas of leadership opportunity, the Air Force Instruction’s emphasis is that leadership training begins with aircraft commander or flight lead, continues with flight commander and above, and that Air Force promotions are based on future potential.⁵² But, it is a staff tour that is equally important for leadership development in the US Air Force:

The level of staff is important; Numbered Air Force (NAF), MAJCOM, Headquarters Air Force (HAF), joint. Joint combat operations are the key to success in battle and demand the best officers to provide the Air Force expertise in the joint arena. The increased job responsibility is also key in developing areas of expertise that will enhance your decision making and leadership skills.⁵³

Little is written about how US Air Force staff work prepares one for leadership. Most works simply refer to staff work as career broadening for rated officers. But one

Airpower Journal article addressed the transferability of staff work to development of leadership attributes:

Mastering the art of success as a staff officer is very much a part of the process of mastering the art of leadership that will propel you into positions of increasing challenge and responsibility in all aspects of your profession. This fact is well recognized and accounted for in the process of selecting individuals for promotion to general officer. The key factors in that decision process are that the individual's career provide evidence of weapon (and/or support) system competence, command competence, *and* staff competence. Each type of competence is essential, and all are interrelated by that common denominator for success--effective leadership!⁵⁴

General Shaud's article focused on the leadership attributes of intelligence, compassion, and energy. He makes the assertion that success in operational command begins with the transferability of staff work to leadership. He compared these attributes in an operational assignment and a staff assignment. His words represent the few written words regarding the connection between staff work and leadership development. The US Air Force considers staff assignments as critical assignments that develop leadership.

Notice the detail that is supplied to the guidance for a staff officer's energy:

US Air Force Leadership Skills

Intelligence for the commander at wing level ...is the ability to quickly ascertain exactly what the mission entails and to articulate that understanding to subordinates in a way they will clearly grasp.

Compassion at the wing level means a sensitive caring for, and understanding of, the people in your command.

Energy, at every level, means "making it happen." It means doing all those things to see that the mission is accomplished.⁵⁵

US Air Force Staff Skills

Intelligence at the staff level still means a clear understanding of the mission. It also means understanding what it will take, on a personal level, to succeed at accomplishing this mission.... Therefore, you must understand not only a particular issue, but also the structure of the staff organization--how it works. Likewise, intelligence includes the ability to speak cogently and to write clearly.

Compassion at the staff level assumes many forms. In today's Air Force, it is particularly important to be sensitive to how people are affected by structural reorganization....Every level of the staff organization must be sensitive to the effects of restructuring.

Energy at the staff level means just what it meant at the wing level. Understand what must be done and then do it. Make it happen. Learn the organizational structure. Become adept at the drill of staff work. Don't avoid the tough coordination. Don't take the easy way out. Find out what the other players are thinking and doing. Learn what your boss and other key players need and, importantly, when each one needs it. Providing information without allowing sufficient time for your leader to assimilate it is not useful. That would be like briefing new targets after departing the initial point. Work out at the base gym or the Pentagon Officers' Athletic Club. Take care of yourself. No one else will. Crew-rest rules are permanently waived. Make time for your family if you happen to have one. They need you to survive in northern Virginia, and you need them for your survival. Unfortunately, Patton's comment about the typical staff officer does have a certain truth to it. Staff work, especially at the Pentagon, can be impersonal. Because you are part of such a large enterprise, it is difficult--but not impossible--to see the results of your labor and thereby derive much feedback and personal satisfaction. Worry about your appearance. Don't look tacky by wearing uniforms you would have discarded years ago if they were part of your civilian attire. Lead from your strengths. Do those things that worked for you when you were a leader on the flight line. Keep your self-confidence up. However, don't be too proud to learn and use new insights you will observe at the Pentagon--a real plus resulting from a tour there. Do your job with enthusiasm, and you will soon be a staff leader--and might even get to go back to the field early. Pentagon bosses also return to the field and remember people who were the most helpful.⁵⁶

The inferences from the answer to this question are clear. In the US Air Force, leadership development for rated officers begins with flying assignments and culminates with a staff assignment. From Air Force Instructions dealing with officer career paths, the US Air Force expects its officers to achieve certain milestones in the early part of their career, such as instructor pilot and flight commander. Then, it is expected that leadership skills will be given their final polishing in a staff assignment.

But the results of the 1996 Air Command and Staff College leadership survey indicate significant problems with this program. A conclusion from the survey is that

flying assignments and staff work do not adequately prepare officers for command of a flying squadron. While the US Air Force and common wisdom may think that experience is the best teacher for leadership, results seem to indicate otherwise.

If experience fails to be the long pole in the tent, then formal schooling or self-development must compensate. The research indicated that the US Air Force formal schools, particularly Air Command and Staff College, have increased their focus on leadership training. And leadership self-development has improved with US Air Force mentoring and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Professional Reading Program. The key lesson from the answer to this sub-question is that operational assignments do not make up the lion's share of value in the US Air Force leadership development program. This is the nature of the US Air Force's organization and the training that it wants its rated officers to accomplish.

Analysis Summary

The goal of the analysis was to distill and present the research with an eye towards focusing on the thesis question. A great deal of information was obtained regarding the US Air Force's formal training and operational experience doctrine regarding leadership development. Also, the research supported the supposition that leadership development is critical to effective leadership and that US Air Force leadership doctrine is lacking. The significance of the research to the problem was determined, and various possible solutions offered in previous works. But the findings are limited with regards to self-development.

The research revealed that the focus of self-development is professional officership development versus leadership development. The Chief of Staff of the Air

Force Professional Reading List focuses on airpower and airpower history knowledge, while the Air Force Instructions on mentoring focus on the career paths and opportunities for officers. But, the research indicates a gap in leadership self-development within the US Air Force. Even the lack of any formal US Air Force Leadership Doctrine indicates a deep-rooted problem within the service. The information in this research will go a long way to fill this gap.

¹Jerome V. Martin, "US Air Force Commissioning Education Memorandum of Understanding, Subject Officership, Signed OPRs are HQ USAF/DPPE, AU/XO, OTS/CV, ANG PMEC/AMS, SOS/EDC, HQ USAFA/CWI, and HQ AFROTC/DOE, No date available" [Online] Available MartinJV.34EDG.USAFA@usafa.af.mil, 22 Oct 1997, 1.

²Ibid., 3.

³Jerome V. Martin, [Online] Available MartinJV.34EDG.USAFA@usafa.af.mil, on 22 Oct, 97.

⁴Jerome V. Martin, "US Air Force Academy Leadership Development Powerpoint Slide Presentation" [Online] Available MartinJV.34EDG.USAFA@usafa.af.mil, on 22 Oct, 97.

⁵Jerome V. Martin, "Outline of PME System at USAFA" [Online] Available MartinJV.34EDG.USAFA@usafa.af.mil, on 22 Oct, 97.

⁶Jerome V. Martin, [Online] Available MartinJV.34EDG.USAFA@usafa.af.mil, on 22 Oct, 97.

⁷U.S. Department of the Air Force, Squadron Officers School Homepage, [Online] Available <http://www.au.af.mil/au/sos>, March 1998

⁸Mark Jordan, [Online] Available Mjordan@max1.au.af.mil, on 8 Oct 97.

⁹Brent Browning, [Online] Available brbrowning@max1.au.af.mil, on 12 Nov 97.

¹⁰U.S. Department of the Air Force, USAF Air Command and Staff College Homepage, [Online] Available <http://wwwacsc.au.af.mil/acsc/index.html>, March 1998.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Mark Jordan, [Online] Available Mjordan@max1.au.af.mil, on 8 Oct 97.

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¹⁶U.S. Department of the Air Force, "AFI 36-2611, Officer Professional Development," [Online] Available <http://www.afpubs.af.mil>, March 1998, Paragraph 2.1.

¹⁷Ibid., Paragraph 1.4.

¹⁸U.S. Department of the Air Force, "AFPC Officer Career Path Guide," [Online] Available <http://www.afpc.af.mil>, March 1998, paragraph 1.1.3.

¹⁹U.S. Department of the Air Force, "Chief of Staff of the Air Force Professional Reading Program," [Online] Available www.af.mil/lib/csafbook/csafread.html, March 1998.

²⁰Ronald R. Fogleman, "CSAF Professional Reading Program," Airpower Journal (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, Spring 1997), 1.

²¹U.S. Department of the Air Force, "AFI 36-4301, Air Force Mentoring, 1 July 1997," [Online] Available <http://www.afpubs.af.mil>, March 1998, 1.

²²Ibid., 2.

²³Ibid., 2.

²⁴Ibid., 4.

²⁵James D. Dodson, Gerber, Melvin, Swanson, Wanner, Dorner, Gonzales, Sneath, Tucker, and Ward, Leadership Development in the Objective Squadron (Maxwell AFB, AL: The Air Command and Staff College, 1996), 99.

²⁶Ibid., 97.

²⁷Ibid., 98.

²⁸U.S., Department of the Army, STP 21-III-MOSS Military Qualifications Standard III, Leader Development Manual for Majors and Lieutenant Colonels, (Washington DC: HQ USA, 1993), 6.

²⁹Richard L. Davis and Frank P. Donini, Professional Military Education for Air Force Officers: Comments and Criticisms, (Maxwell AFB, Al: Air University Press, 1991), 3.

³⁰Ibid., 11.

³¹U.S. Department of the Air Force, "Air University Homepage," [Online] Available www.au.af.mil/au/saas, March 1998.

³²Dennis M. Drew, "Educating Air Force Officers: Observations after 20 years at Air University," Airpower Journal (Maxwell AFB, Al: Air University, Summer 97), 38.

³³Ibid., 39.

³⁴Ibid., 43.

³⁵Dodson, et al., 22.

³⁶Ibid., 45

³⁷Ibid., 46, 48, 50, 51, 55, 57.

³⁸Ibid., 46.

³⁹Ibid., 48.

⁴⁰Ibid., 50.

⁴¹Ibid., 51.

⁴²Ibid., 55.

⁴³Ibid., 57.

⁴⁴Ibid., 58.

⁴⁵Ibid., 65.

⁴⁶Ibid., 69, 70, 71, 73.

⁴⁷Ibid., 76.

⁴⁸U.S. Department of the Air Force, "AFPAM 36-2630, Officer Professional Development Guide, 5 May 1995," [Online] Available at <http://www.afpubs.hq.af.mil>, March 1998, paragraphs 1.1.3 to 1.1.3.3.

⁴⁹Ibid., paragraphs 1.1.3 to 1.1.3.3.

⁵⁰Ibid., figure 1.7 and paragraphs 1.1.4 and 1.1.5.2.

⁵¹Ibid., figure 1.8.

⁵²Ibid., paragraph 1.1.4.3.

⁵³Ibid., paragraph 1.1.4.2.

⁵⁴John A. Shaud, "The "Staff Experience" and Leadership Development", Airpower Journal (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, Spring 1993), 4.

⁵⁵Ibid., 4.

⁵⁶Ibid., 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Is leadership self-development the most critical aspect in the development of squadron commander skills? My research examined this question by evaluating the three tiers of the US Air Force leadership development model. The three tiers were self-development, formal training, and operational assignments.

Formal Training. The US Air Force has a long and well-rounded program. It is tailored to developing the officer who proceeds towards the opportunity to command. The training provides guidance for life-long growth to officer candidates, practical skills for mid-level captains, and details, theory and apriori knowledge to field grade officers. But the literature review about the conceptual learning of leadership tenets indicates that formal training alone does not have the power to be the single most critical part of the developmental triad. Leadership is not a simply a matter of assessing a problem and determining its solution in a leadership “look-up table.” It is a fusion of the many skills, attributes and knowledge that together make up a leader. In other words, there is a need for “practical experience.”

Operational Assignments. It is here that the US Air Force faces its greatest challenge for leadership development. The research indicates that operational assignments in the US Air Force cannot be the single most critical part of rated US Air Force officer leadership development. This is due to the nature of the rated force, the demands to be a pilot or crewmember first and the limited troop commanding experiences available prior to squadron level command. The US Air Force provides a list of formal positions that officers must hold before being considered for command. The

US Air Force also expects flight leadership, staff positions and formal training to give officers good preparation for leadership positions. All of the limitations to command preparation identified in the analysis of leadership development (chapter four) indicate a real problem with the leadership training that rated officers get from operational assignments. The research determined a number of actions to take to improve the leadership training opportunities within operational assignments, but suggests that nothing short of a radical change to the US Air Force's rated officer career path management will improve the overall leadership training gained in operational assignments. In contrast, the US Army gives its officers the opportunity via company command to be a leader at a young age for hundreds of troops. Indeed, the US Army's approach suggests that operational assignments are the most critical of the triad in general. But this does not appear true in the US Air Force operational environment.

These conclusions to the analysis of formal training and operational assignments are significant. While the US Air Force does a particularly good job with formal training, the evidence suggests it is not the leadership development center of gravity. While operational assignments are extremely important to leadership development, the nature of the mission and organization of the US Air Force suggests operational assignments are not adequately preparing officers for squadron command. These weaknesses suggest that the third pillar, leadership self-development, may be the key to preparing officers for command.

Self-development. The literature review revealed the power of self-development. A leader is required to interact with others on such a broad front, that the study

opportunities and the ability to equip oneself with skills, attributes, and knowledge are boundless. Effective self-development was revealed as incorporating the following steps:

1. Perform a personal self-assessment and set goals.
2. Obtain commander's involvement via feedback, counseling, or mentoring.
3. Maintain physical and mental toughness.
4. Develop detailed knowledge of service doctrine and unit tactics, techniques, and procedures.
5. Read and write books and articles of professional relevance.
6. Sustain and grow within your value system.

The analysis of leadership self-development within the US Air Force indicates that self-development could be a significant factor for leadership development within the US Air Force to resolve the deficiencies in formal training and operational assignments. But the research does not yield the conclusion that leadership self-development is a panacea, a "single critical aspect" for leadership development.

But it can be supported that a strong and effective leadership self-development program can be used to make up for the other area's deficiencies. Or it might be equally worthwhile to improve the other areas of leadership development. The research also indicates that if all three tiers of leadership development act in concert or with a semblance of equality, then the disparity between the current US Air Force level of effort in each speaks to the need to improve self-development in order to equal that of the other two.

Leadership self-development becomes a critical aspect for the training of US Air Force officers only if formal training and operational assignments are identified as broken or poor. Unfortunately, the research does not clearly indicate that this is so; self-development is not the long pole in the tent. To resolve this problem, the research

indicates that the three aspects of leadership development must act together, and self-development is the means to maximize the effect of the other two.

But is there proof that an improved leadership self-development program will yield positive results without changes to the other components of leadership development? Only in the sense of character development and on-the-job-training. Ultimately, the inescapable conclusion from the research analysis is that leadership theory is of little value until tested in a leadership or command position. In other words, leadership self-development will only yield a shorter time of "breaking-in" for the new commander. Perhaps that is all that the US Air Force can hope to really gain from an investment in leadership self-development.

The research concludes that formal training cannot be the most critical developmental factor. Further, operational assignments leading towards junior officer leadership experience could be tailored, but the cost on operations as a whole would be excessive. Crewmembers fly, that is their job and why they joined the US Air Force. Removing them from rated positions for the purpose of leadership development could be costly to operational readiness, morale, and retention.

What then, of self-development? The research indicated value in investigating and refining formal training and operational assignments to ensure the highest possible degree of leadership development. But leadership self-development must not be overlooked, especially for the US Air Force. While leadership self-development may not be the critical aspect of squadron commander preparation, in light of the limitations to operational assignments, it is certainly an approach needing further consideration.

Mentoring and the Chief of Staff Professional Reading Program are a step in the right direction. But what else can be done?

Recommendations

The US Air Force needs doctrine, it needs a vision for what is unique about US Air Force leadership and leadership development. Yes, the US Air Force has good leaders, and yes, flight leadership has direct implications to squadron leadership. But the operational environment, the career development paths of rated officers is different than the other services and needs to be acknowledged. Leadership is a subjective and broad subject. The simple act of preparing and defending a single book stating US Air Force leadership doctrine could not help but to improve the overall leadership development picture.

With a doctrine, self-development becomes easy. By “easy,” the research implies that an officer can readily determine what to “do” to develop his leadership skills. Consider the US Air Force’s Ten Propositions for Leadership. A simple lesson plan and reading list could be developed around each of the propositions and this would form the core of a leadership self-development plan. By injecting this into the US Air Force, each officer has an idea of what “to do” regarding leadership development. Officers know now what to read regarding the history of Airpower, and they know to seek mentorship from commanders regarding professional development and assignments. But it is within leadership self-development that a void exists that can be readily filled.

Two avenues of further research into this topic are warranted. The first would be a comparison survey of US Army battalion commanders and US Navy squadron commanders in order to determine if the US Air Force’s perceptions regarding leadership

are unique. Second, the means of validating self-development, of proving that a certain amount of effort begets a certain amount of reward, should be measured. And finally, a researched and organized US Air Force leadership self-development program should be added to the US Air Force's professional development lexicon.

The research indicated a vast amount of knowledge regarding what former leaders, especially the famous and successful ones, had to say about leadership. And US Air Force officers are hungry for this knowledge. This knowledge can readily form the self-development component of leadership development if only a plan as focused as the sale of airpower was available. With the knowledge of the value of leadership self-development within the US Air Force, the next step is to develop that plan.

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