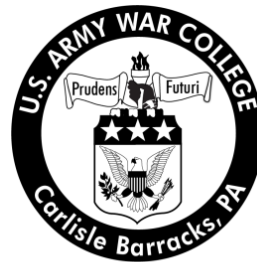# A Framework of Organizational Empowerment for Strategic Military Leaders

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

A FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT
FOR STRATEGIC MILITARY LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

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A FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOR STRATEGIC MILITARY LEADERS

Similar to the Interwar or Interbellum Period (1918–1939), today's United States Army finds itself in a period of transition as we terminate one war (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and disengage from a second war (Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan). Additionally, continued and rapid technological change challenges traditional concepts of warfare and leadership, much like that which challenged the German army of the 1930's. However, whereas the threat (enemy) in the 1930's was rather clear, the United States faces today a vague and morphing threat.

During our most recent interwar period, from 1991 through 2001 following Operation Desert Storm, the United States Government chose to reduce active duty forces and reorganize force structure, much as the Army is currently poised to do. Therefore, the Army would be wise to review the lessons identified by previous Chiefs of Staff of the Army, and then analyze what current Army senior leaders are saying with respect to the upcoming inter-war period.

General Dennis J. Reimer became Chief of Staff of the Army in 1995 as the Army leveled-off from post-Desert Storm force reductions. He led a garrison Army whose mission was to prepare for war. According to some, officers throughout the ranks adopted a zero-defect mentality, the antithesis of empowerment. Reimer's command philosophy clearly espoused a climate of empowerment[1] while he also clearly battled a disempowering officer corps, as indicated by his writing below.

> Positive leadership can eliminate micromanagement, careerism, integrity violations and the zero defects mind-set. These attitudes are an unfortunate side effect of the turmoil created by the downsizing of our

Army. These attitudes have appeared in the past – but we defeated them. We will do so again.

America's Army is unique in the world. Our advantage is the creativity, initiative, and ingenuity of our soldiers. To foster this advantage, we must be willing to underwrite honest mistakes, focus on soldiers and mentor the next generation of leaders.[2]

General Reimer clearly honored the virtue of empowering leadership, especially for a downsized force and a garrison Army, while his successor witnessed the completion of the Interwar Period and the start of our current wars.

In his seminal white paper titled <u>Concepts of the Objective Force</u>, Chief of Staff of the Army, General Eric K. Shinseki, detailed his vision for shaping the future force by describing "new ways and means of conducting military operations in the future."[3] Shinseki predicted that the speed of tactical operations and decision-making would greatly increase, a prediction substantiated in the past decade of war. He looked towards technology to overcome these challenges and wrote extensively on organizational structural and technological reforms. Shinseki also predicted "unprecedented opportunities for decentralized decisionmaking" but, unfortunately, wrote partially on the human dimension of warfare and did not provide the tools to capitalize on the opportunity.[4] Likewise, Shinseki talked of self-synchronizing forces without providing the authority to do so. Technology may provide the information to make decisions and self-synchronize at the lowest levels, but without the authority (the empowerment) to act, the benefits of enhanced decision-making at the lowest level are lost. While Reimer clearly talked empowerment, he perhaps did not have the time to implement fully training, education, and modeling systems to inculcate empowerment into the Army culture. Conversely, Shinseki implemented technological and

organizational systems that were potentially empowering, but did not explicitly advocate empowerment.

In 2003, under Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter J. Schoomaker, the Army implemented Mission Command, a potentially empowering model of command and control. However, as will be discussed later, the Army's practice of Mission Command focuses on the commander, not subordinates, and does not address shared decision-making, shared responsibility, or subordinate initiative.

In 2009, retired Lieutenant General James M. Dubik advocated that the nature of Army leadership was changing and that our doctrine was not keeping pace. In his article, Dubrik writes, "The nonhierarchical aspect of leadership was primarily the realm of senior leaders. That world has changed. Today junior leaders operate in a nonhierarchical leadership environment almost immediately. Our leadership doctrine is not fully capturing this reality."[5] In other words, subordinate leaders desire empowerment, but the Army has not adequately taught and reinforced senior leaders who empower.

For at least the past sixteen years, senior Army leaders have danced around the subject of empowerment without explicitly defining what it means to empower or be empowered and without providing the resources for implementation. Lieutenant General Theodore G. Stroub, former Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, said it best when he stated, "If we claim that we want to empower people to do what is right, encourage initiative and allow people to make honest mistakes, then we must do more than just state these values. We must act in a manner that communicates our values and assumptions to our people. Action, not just words, will change our culture."[6] As we

examine, question, and evaluate many aspects of the Army organization during this new interwar period and during a time of significant budget constraints, it seems an appropriate time for the Army to reexamine its concept of positive leadership with emphasis on empowerment.

This paper challenges the Industrial Age and mechanistic leadership model of command and control in favor of a model that embraces empowerment as a core tenet. Army culture and the leadership doctrine of Mission Command hold potential for empowerment. Senior leaders champion the need for empowered units, leadership books recommend that leaders should empower their subordinates, and there is a general sense that empowerment is a desired condition. However, in the hierarchical and patriarchal culture of the United States Army, how do leaders foster empowered organizations and how do we measure empowerment? As we move into a post-conflict transition period in the Army's history, strategic leaders will face the challenge of inspiring Soldiers in a garrison environment. Empowered organizations will help motivate Soldiers accustomed to high levels of responsibility in combat, help redistribute tasks and responsibility among a reduced force structure, and help retain our most capable leaders. This paper will offer a military definition of empowerment, make the case for increased empowerment in the military culture, propose a model for strategic leaders to use in developing empowered organizations, review concepts of measuring empowerment, and provide recommendations for change to specific Army practices.

Defining Empowerment

The popularity of empowerment ebbed and flowed for the past half century, moving through different disciplines and adopting different meaning. Though articulated by military professionals as an important tenet of leadership and a desired outcome in

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organizations, it was not until 2009 that a U.S. War College student defined empowerment in the military culture. After reviewing and considering the concept across time and disciplines, this paper will propose a definition tailored for military use.

Empowerment can be appraised at different levels, a concept critical to understand before defining and modeling empowerment. To understand best empowerment, one can view it in much the same way as we view levels of military command (tactical, operational, and strategic). Empowerment can be at the individual (or psychological) level, the social-structural level, the organizational level, the community level, and the national level.[7] While there is limited research of the community and national levels, there is extensive academic study of empowerment at the individual and organizational levels, and this paper will focus likewise.

Like levels, academics often analyze empowerment as both a process and an outcome. Ruth Alsop and Nina Heinsohn's definition of empowerment provides a framework useful for continuing the discussion of definition. Alsop and Heinsohn define empowerment as "enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes."[8] Their definition includes groups, and this is key to expanding the discussion of empowerment from direct leadership to indirect leadership at the higher levels of organizational structure. Additionally, Alsop's and Heinsohn's definition includes a footnote of significant value. Here they highlight that empowerment is both a process and an outcome. "The term empowerment is commonly used to indicate both a process (of empowering groups or individuals) and an outcome (a person or group is empowered)."[9] Upon detailed scrutiny, Army doctrine and senior leader discussion center near exclusively on the

"outcome" and not on the "process." Colloquially speaking, senior Army leaders say that empowerment is a great thing to have without making the case of its attributes and without detailing the process of how to create it. This paper aims to rectify this shortcoming.

Yehuda Baruch provides a colloquial definition to consider before moving on to definitions that are more academic. Baruch defines empowerment as "the delegation of power which enables people at lower organizations layers to make decisions, though empowerment means more than merely delegation. Empowerment is concerned with trust, motivation, decision making and basically, breaking the inner boundaries between management and employees as 'them' versus 'us'."[10] This definition introduces the concept of power, a concept that is essential to the discussion of empowerment and, therefore, will be reviewed briefly.

The classic work by social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven developed the idea of power in a leadership context by proposing five bases of power: Coercive, Reward, Legitimate, Referent, and Expert.[11] Coercive power is the ability to influence others through coercion. It focuses on the use of threats to gain strict compliance. Most regard coercive power as a negative leadership style. Reward power is the ability to give that which subordinates desire or remove what is undesired, thereby rewarding the employing with compliant behavior. This co-dependent relationship can develop into a *quid-pro-quo* situation. Rewards can be as simple as compliments or as significant as promotions. Legitimate power is authority obtained by virtue of position, a concept familiar to most military people. Because a leader holds a specific title or organizational position, subordinates comply based on the assumption or fact that the

leader can reward and punish. Referent power is the ability to influence others through personal charisma. This, too, is often associated with the military, and also politics, where subordinates view leaders as role models, selflessly and virtuously serving others. Lastly, expert power is the ability to instill trust in subordinates though the use of expert knowledge. Expert power is often associated with professionals like doctors and lawyers.[12] With a better understanding of power, the discussion on defining empowerment can continue.

Professor Gretchen Spreitzer is perhaps the leading expert tracing empowerment's evolution as a concept over the past 35 years. In writing with Jean Bartunek, Spreitzer and Bartunek explain, "This term [empowerment], which refers in its simplest, original sense to some type of sharing or enabling of power, appeared in the late 1960s within the discipline of religion and has since been adapted into and transformed by many social science disciplines, including management."[13] Bartunek and Spreitzer studied the use of the word empowerment through different disciplines over time and found three themes resonating across disciplines – sharing real power, fostering human welfare, and fostering productivity.[14] A review of their definitions will help develop a more holistic understanding of the term before proposing a military definition. The following are definitions from different disciplines as researched by Bartunek and Spreitzer:

Religion. "The emphasis...was largely on sharing real power, and the typical referents for this sharing were classes of people (e.g., the poor and the marginalized)."[15]

Sociology. "It was in this database that political participation, personal meaning, enabling others, and connectedness were introduced."[16] Furthermore, "Much of the

sociological literature on empowerment has focus on increasing the political power of underrepresented minorities."[17]

Education. "It was in education that control over destiny, increasing knowledge, participation in decision making, enabling others, providing resources, taking responsibility, and dignity and respect were introduced."[18] Additionally, "The education literature tends to focus more on individuals than large social groupings."[19]

Psychology. "The predominant meanings given to the term in psychology include increasing self-worth, strengthening the power of underrepresented, and control over destiny."[20]

Social Work. This discipline has "focused largely on empowerment as control over one's destiny, increasing knowledge, increasing self-worth, and increasing the power of the underrepresented."[21]

Management. "The primary definition emphasized in the management literature is participation in decision making (a distant second is increasing knowledge)."[22] Additionally, "The meaning...has also focused on increasing employees' knowledge, information, and resources to take more ownership of their work."[23] Furthermore, "The more or less explicit expectation in these domains is that empowerment will increase the productivity of workers and reduce the costs of supervision."[24]

In this managerial context, many view empowerment as a key component of organizational change, a germane topic for current Army leaders. In collaboration with David Doneson, Spreitzer writes, "Rather than forcing or pushing people to change, empowerment provides a way of attracting them to want to change because they have

ownership in the change process."[25] Also from the management and leadership

disciplines, Bennis and Goldsmith describe empowerment as follows:

> What we mean by empowerment of all involved really has to do with people sensing that they are at the center of things, rather than at the periphery, that everyone feels he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization.[26]

Such a definition gets to the heart of team building. Everyone does his or her job, seeks

out to do their job, and then goes beyond their normal responsibilities. Everyone not

only takes responsibility for his or her duties, but also takes responsibility for the mission

and vision of the organization.

Transitioning to a military definition of empowerment, the Army does not explicitly

define empowerment but rather discusses empowerment within the context of

leadership and Mission Command. Field Manual 6-22 *Army Leadership* dated October

12, 2006 describes aspects of empowerment as a component of team building and

organizational leadership rather than offering a distinct definition. Referencing previous

leadership doctrine, Field Manual 22-100 of August 1999 did define empowerment in

paragraph 5-33, at least according to the manual's index. That paragraph reads in part,

"You empower subordinates when you train them to do a job, give them the necessary

resources and authority, get out of their way, and let them work."[27] A near identical

"definition" appears in Field Manual 6-22 in paragraph 7-38 though not labeled as a

definition in the index. This paragraph reads in part, "Empower subordinates by training

them to do a job and providing them with necessary task strategies; give them the

necessary resources, authority and clear intent; and then step aside to let them

accomplish the mission."[28] Thus, the Army is consistent across doctrine as to its

description of empowerment. While not an academic definition, the description does

allude to processes by which to promote empowerment but does not describe desired outcomes.

In 2009, Colonel Robert M. Mundell provided a military definition of empowerment in his United States Army War College thesis, "Empowerment: A 21st Century Leaders Critical Core Competency." He writes, "Empowerment as it applies to Army leaders, is relinquishing or surrendering power by sharing authority with subordinates with respect to influencing outcomes while simultaneously retaining the inherent responsibility for the well being and welfare of a unit."[29] This definition addresses the patriarchal challenge of the Army; that is, the tradition and, in fact, regulatory requirement that commanders hold the responsibility of all that occurs and fails to occur in the unit.[30] However, this definition only speaks to individual empowerment and defines empowerment as only a process, thus discounting the group and the outcome aspects that characterize the empowerment literature.

Therefore, the following definition of empowerment for a military culture combines themes from various disciplines and expands on Mundell's:

> Empowerment is a tenet of military command and leadership whereby legitimate power is shared and enabled through the delegation of decision-making authority so as to increase an individual's or group's autonomy to make decisions and transform those choices into desired actions.

This definition addresses both process and outcome in an attempt to define clearly "what" the leader must do and "what" the intended outcome is. Additionally, the terms "individual" and "group" replace "subordinate" or "employee" in order to include not only subordinates, but also peers. This raises the definition from exclusively a tactical term to an operational term, accounting for indirect leadership. While the basic definition is

sufficient, discussion of military empowerment should expand the concept of desired outcomes and address command responsibility.

Drawing from the definitions of various fields, the empowering leader should expect additional outcomes beyond simply the individual's or group's autonomy to make decisions. Other outcomes desired include the following:

- Increased accountability by all in the organization

- Increased communication and feedback

- Increased knowledge of organizational mission

- Increased organizational agility to respond to challenges or opportunities

- Increased personal meaning or sense of purpose

- Increased sense of connectedness between subordinates and leader

- Increased representation of underrepresented (minorities)

- Increased productivity and/or efficiency.

These outcomes largely depend on the capability of individuals – for example, their knowledge, expertise, training, and intellect. The Army Field Manual definition alludes to this by stating how the leader must provide subordinates with training, strategies, and resources. While true the subordinate must possess the capacity to be empowered, the field manual reinforces the Army's patriarchal culture by indicating the leader is responsible for the subordinate's capacity, vice the subordinate sharing responsibility for their own psychological empowerment.

Though debatable who is responsible for the capability of subordinates, the Army is clear that commanders are responsible for the overall success or failure of an organization. As discussed earlier, Mundell includes this concept in his definition.

Because this is another reinforcement of a patriarchal culture, a dogma perhaps unsuited for the modern military culture, this paper's definition of empowerment does not include reference to command responsibility. Instead, command responsibility as dictated by Army regulation is acknowledged as a factor influencing the environment in which leaders must operate, but not a defining factor for empowerment.

The hope is that all leaders, both formal (commanders) and informal, tactical through strategic, adopt the definition of empowerment offered here as a clear characterization of the process and outcome of empowerment. As Bartunek and Spreitzer point out, "ambiguity in meaning may be particularly dangerous if organizations are implementing empowerment strategies and fail to define what they mean."[31] While senior leaders exhort the need for empowering leadership and empowered organizations, the failure to provide concrete meaning as it applies to the military is potentially disenfranchising. The concrete meaning provided here aims to resolve any misunderstanding.

The Value of Empowerment

So, why empowerment? Why should the military professional care about some ambiguous concept that is difficult to foster, much less measure? Why should they promote this concept when the Army is a hierarchal and patriarchal culture that has been relatively successful for over 237 years?

First, the Army is a learning institution that seeks continual improvement through reflection and positive change. As stated by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "it is imperative that we reflect on our experiences during the past 10 years to assess the impact and understand both our strengths and weaknesses...This will enable us to promote the knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that define us as a profession,

and develop our future leaders."[32] By reflecting on the successes and failures of our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army can assess if empowerment should have a greater role in leadership and decision-making; an idea promoted in this paper.

Second, senior Army and Joint leaders espouse the need for empowered Soldiers and units so as to be able to more quickly learn, adapt, and implement change in response to a more agile and complex enemy. In the *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations* of January 2009, Admiral Michael G. Mullen writes, "we will need to select, educate, train, equip and manage our people differently. We will need to envision and create new organizations."[33] The assumption is that the Chairman actually means new organizational <u>design</u>, vice more of the same design, and given this assumption, we should envision new models of leadership as well. Mullen continues, "To succeed, we need adaptive and thinking professionals who understand the capabilities their Service brings to joint operations and how to apply those capabilities in a flexible manner... Above all, we need professionals imbued with a sense of commitment and honor who will act decisively in the absence of specific guidance."[34] This is the heart of empowerment, the ability to act decisively in the absence of specific guidance.

Third, the future of warfare may be such that agility is most needed at the small unit and individual level. With what some describe as Industrial Age or Clausewitzian warfare, the goal was to destroy the enemy's forces using battalions (or higher) as the centerpiece formations of force-on-force engagement. Contrarily and as perhaps demonstrated in the past decade, some view future battles as limited, tactical engagements but with strategic consequences. As such, the centerpiece formation is the small unit – the platoon, squad, and even individual. In fact, former Chief of Staff of

the Army General Martin E. Dempsey led a dramatic institutional shift in focus, from the Brigade Combat Team to the Squad in order to build capability, doctrine, and training from the bottom up. As such, empowerment may be a tool to ensure individuals at all levels can manifest the best information and even act decisively within the commander's intent and without explicit direction.

Fourth, empowerment has a substantiated record of accomplishment in corporate and non-profit organizations. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask if empowerment could improve the military culture. Senior leaders seem to think so, and the purpose of this paper is to consider these assertions in the current military context.

As discussed in the introduction, the time is advantageous to assess, and perhaps implement, a new style of leadership. In history, the Army used the inter-war periods to reassess doctrine in preparation for future challenges, and in this light, the time is now to reassess the Army's tradition of hierarchal and patriarchal leadership. The Army culture provides sufficient and significant control mechanisms to influence the behavior of Soldiers. It does this through tradition, values, ethos, beliefs, visions, and regulations. However, what escapes most leadership doctrine is that individuals have their own traditions, values, beliefs, visions and self-regulating scripts. As aptly described by Charles C. Manz, "From an organizational perspective, recognizing and facilitating employee self-regulating systems pose a viable and more realistic view of control than views centered entirely on external influence."[35] Through empowerment, we release the potential of individual self-regulating systems and thereby potentially reduce the predominance of external control.

Another way to examine empowerment is to analyze how decisions are made and, in the context of this paper, how decisions are made in a military culture. The person with authoritative power may make unilateral decisions or involve participation by stakeholders. Victor Vroom from Yale University is a leading expert on decision-making, and in reviewing the work of Professor Paul Nutt, Vroom concluded that participative decision-making resulted in decisions that are more successful. "Some of the predictors of decision success pertained to deficiencies in the technical aspects of the decision process. Inadequate framing of the problems and premature closure on a solution are typical examples, but the best predictors of success or failure could be found not in cognitive processes but in social ones [emphasis added]. These included the degree of involvement and participation of key stakeholders in the development of the problem solution. Decisions that used participation to foster implementation succeeded more than 80 percent of the time."[36] Thus, decisions made in collaboration had better success than those made in isolation.

This is quite astounding, that social aspects of decision-making are more important than cognitive aspects. Vroom adds, "[Professor] Nutt's findings remind us that effective decision making is not merely a matter of decision quality but also of ensuring that the decision will have the necessary support and commitment for its effective implementation. In this sense, decision-making merges with issues of leadership, particularly the degree and manner in which a leader involves others in the decision-making process."[37] Vroom concedes that not all situations lend themselves to participative decision-making nor do all subordinates respond positively to participation. Participation can slow the decision-making process but, at higher levels, the timing of

decisions may be more important than speed. The benefits of participation include, (1) increasing human capital by serving as training of subordinates, (2) promoting team building and positive relationships, and (3) helping align individual with organizational goals.[38]

Another attribute of empowerment is that empowered individuals are more resilient and have higher morale when faced with workplace downsizing, an attribute strikingly applicable to the current Army. A decade of war and an uncertain future place significant stress on Soldiers and their families. Spreitzer concluded that empowerment fosters resilience to adversity and helps people to bounce back from extraordinary devastation and loss of human life.[39] Additionally, Spreitzer determined that empowerment is important to preserving the hope and attachment of survivors during times of organizational downsizing, a useful quality as the Army reduces force structure.[40] Therefore, as the military redeploys from combat and reduces size, empowerment may help Soldiers maintain their morale and emotional health.

Though endowed with substantiated benefits, empowerment may not be the most effective leadership model for all situations or the panacea for organizational change. Perkins and Zimmerman make clear in their warning, "Although empowerment does provide the field [community psychology] with a useful approach for working in communities and is a compelling construct clearly in need of further research, it is not the only approach nor is it a panacea."[41] Yehuda Baruch agrees, "There are quite a few possible obstacles to the implementation of empowerment, and the literature is beginning to reveal cases where applying empowerment failed to produce impact."[42] Therefore, the challenge for leaders is to determine when empowerment can enhance

individual or organizational effectiveness, and when it cannot. Models can assist leaders in understanding the components of empowerment and help in the application of empowerment – when to use and when not.

Models of Empowerment

One purpose of this paper is to expand the discussion of empowerment within the military culture, specifically by providing principles, definitions, and constructs so that leaders can better understand, and potentially implement, empowerment. However, in developing a more empirical understanding of empowerment, one should not conclude that empowerment is an all or nothing condition. Rather, like many social science concepts, it is more accurate to view empowerment as a state of varying degrees. As an example, Figure 1 is a model that depicts the continuum of individual (psychological) and team (social-structural) empowerment, from disempowered to fully empowered. Therefore, the intent of this discussion of models is to provide the leader with substantive constructs, some supported by empirical data, so that they may better understand and, when appropriate, implement empowerment.

CONTINUUM OF EMPOWERMENT AT INDIVIDUAL & TEAM LEVELS

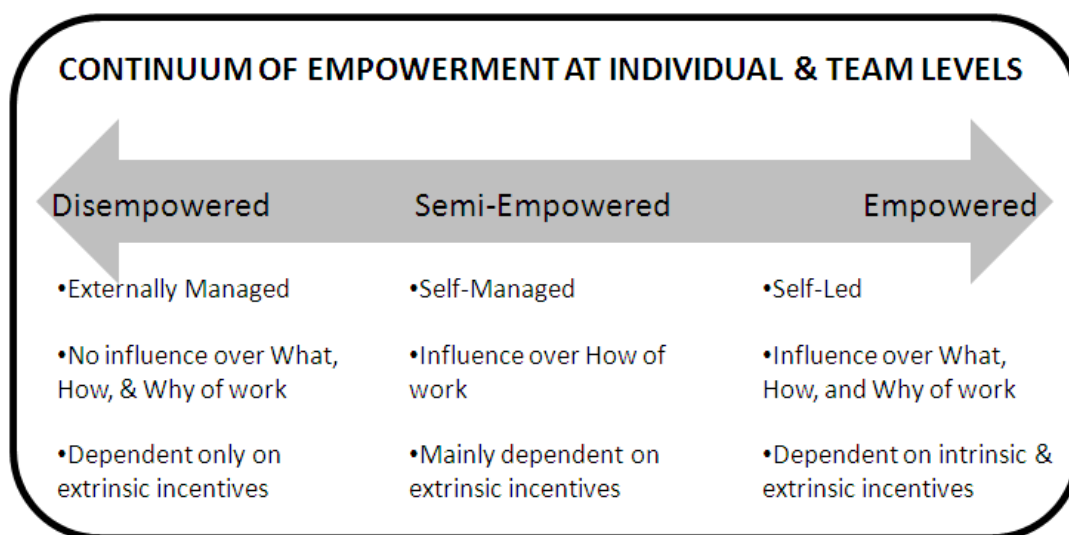| Disempowered	Semi-Empowered	Empowered
•Externally Managed	•Self-Managed	•Self-Led
•No influence over What, How, & Why of work	•Influence over How of work	•Influence over What, How, and Why of work
•Dependent only on extrinsic incentives	•Mainly dependent on extrinsic incentives	•Dependent on intrinsic & extrinsic incentives

Figure 1[43]

Before introducing the models, it is useful to consider some constructs to help understand modeling. Harking back to the discussion of definitions, Douglas D. Perkins and Marc A. Zimmerman state that "theories of empowerment include both process and outcomes... [and] a distinction between empowering processes and outcomes is critical in order to clearly define empowerment theory."[44] As an example, processes at the organizational level could include collective decision-making and shared leadership whereas outcomes at the organizational level could include organizational growth and policy leverage.[45]

The Army does not have a model dedicated to only empowerment, but instead includes empowerment as a component of its leadership model. Figure 2 is the Army's Leadership Requirements Model which some may argue is a set of principles rather than a model. The text itself reinforces this position, "The model's basic components center on what a leader is and what a leader does." Additionally, note how the text also refers to empowering the <u>leader</u> vice empowering the organization or subordinates. Rather than differentiating between empowerment as an outcome and a process, the Army's model is more a set of principles focused on empowering the leader, rather than a model a leader can use to empower others.

LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS MODEL

Attributes
What an Army Leader Is:

A Leader of Character
- *Army Values*
- *Empathy*
- *Warrior Ethos*

A Leader With Presence
- *Military bearing*
- *Physically fit*
- *Composed, confident*
- *Resilient*

A Leader With Intellectual Capacity
- *Mental agility*
- *Sound judgment*
- *Innovation*
- *Interpersonal tact*
- *Domain knowledge*

Core Leader Competencies
What an Army Leader Does:

Leads
- *Leads others*
- *Extends influence beyond the chain of command*
- *Leads by example*
- *Communicates*

Develops
- *Creates a positive environment*
- *Prepares self*
- *Develops others*

Achieves
- *Gets results*

Figure 2[46]

In 1987, Peter Block introduced to the business community a model of traditional

bureaucratic management and offered an alternative model of enlightened,

entrepreneurial leadership, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 1. Bureaucratic and Entrepreneurial Cycles.

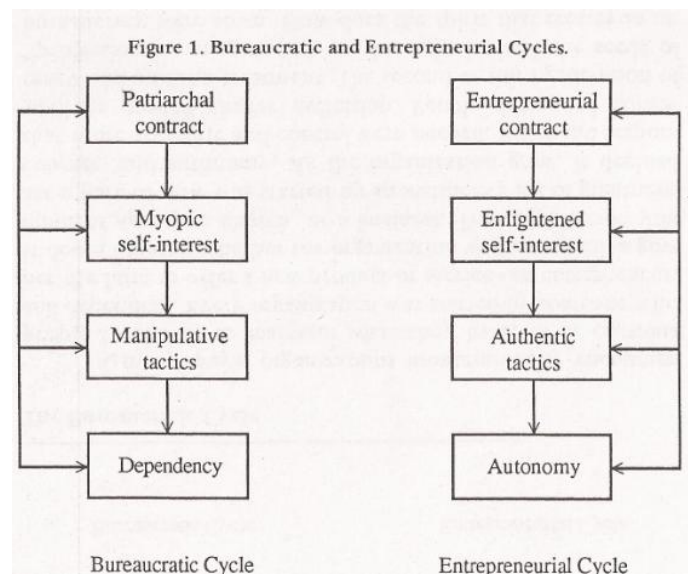| Bureaucratic Cycle	Entrepreneurial Cycle
Patriarchal contract	Entrepreneurial contract
Myopic self-interest	Enlightened self-interest
Manipulative tactics	Authentic tactics
Dependency	Autonomy

Figure 3[47]

The bureaucratic model sheds light on what many in the military culture would

find familiar, namely the Patriarchal Contract and Dependency. According to Block, the

Patriarchal Contract between a highly bureaucratic organization and the employee

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includes the following: "submission to authority, denial of self-expression, sacrifice for unnamed future rewards, belief that the above are just."[48] Those in the military would find this familiar as Block points-out himself, "The traditional contract is patriarchal in its emphasis on a top-down, high-control orientation. It stems from the success that the military and the church have historically had with centralized control and clarity of roles, levels of authority, and the need for discipline and self-control."[49] This basic contract ultimately leads to employee dependency, a significant barrier to empowerment.

On the other hand, the entrepreneurial model describes a process of empowerment that leads to employee autonomy, a desired outcome of the empowered organization. The process begins with an entrepreneurial contract between the organization and employee. The entrepreneurial contract recommended by Block includes the following: "be our own authority, encourage self-expression, make commitments, believe that the above are just." The basic premise of the entrepreneurial contract is that the employee ultimately decides success of a decision by his actions or inactions upon implementation. "This means that we as managers have to give up some of our control, deemphasize the power we have over people under us, and acknowledge that while the captain may choose direction, the engine room drives the ship."[50]

Enlightened self-interest is a realization that individual success "is inevitably linked and interdependent with the self-interest of the business and the other people around us."[51] This concept is in opposition to the bureaucratic model, where self-interest involves "the pursuit of safety, control, advancement, approval, and territory for its own sake."[52]

In the entrepreneurial leadership cycle, organizational members must act with authentic tactics. "Authentic acts are an antidote to the manipulative tactics outlined earlier" in the bureaucratic model.[53] Block provides four examples of authentic acts. They are, "say no when we mean no, share as much information as possible, use language that describes reality, avoid repositioning for the sake of acceptance."[54] While the first two examples are apparent, the last two examples deserve a brief explanation.

The basic premise of using language that describes reality is to use plain language vice pseudonyms. For example, instead of referring to "downsizing" or "creating efficiencies," leaders and subordinates should clearly admit that workers will be fired or laid-off as the organization reduces in size. Some leaders may say that they simply do not want to alarm or offend people, but Block contends that this is "organizational cruelty."[55] Others may say that it is simply intellectual honesty. Likewise, the last example is also an act of intellectual honesty.

The idea to avoid repositioning for the sake of acceptance means to honestly promote your ideas or decisions on their merits. Repositioning is a change in the way we talk about business, rather than truly changing the way we do business.[56] It is repackaging or marketing for a connection to the current trend, in an attempt to gain acceptance by riding the coattails of popular belief. This is intellectually dishonest and has no place in an empowered or entrepreneurial organization.

The result of an entrepreneurial contract combined with enlightened self-interest and authentic acts is autonomy. Autonomy, vice dependency, "is the essential condition for empowering ourselves and those around us."[57]

In contrast to this somewhat linear model of empowerment proposed by Block, Professor Charles C. Manz offers a multi-level model of organizational and self-control systems which impact the level of empowerment (Figure 4). Manz introduces the concept of self-regulation or, in his terms, self-leadership – "the influence organization members exert over themselves."[58] Manz develops the concepts of organizational control systems but contends that those systems do not directly influence the individual. This is similar to Block's assumption that ultimately the individual decides. Manz states, "the impact of organizational control mechanisms is determined by the way they influence, in intended as well as unintended ways, the self-control systems within organization members."[59]
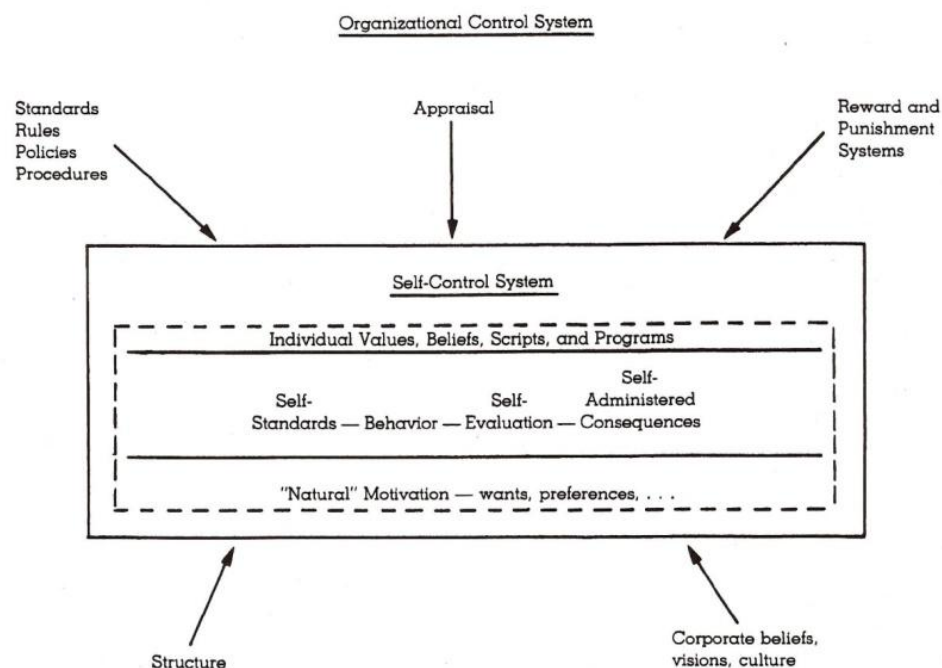

Figure 4[60]

While the specific aspects of both the organizational and individual self-control systems are rather apparent, the conclusion or "so what" is not readily apparent. Manz succinctly describes the conclusion,

From an organizational perspective, recognizing and facilitating employee self-regulating systems pose a viable and more realistic view of control than views centered entirely on external influence. In addition, overreliance on external controls can lead to a number of dysfunctional employee behaviors: 'rigid bureaucratic behavior,' (performance of only those behaviors that are rewarded by the control system), inputting of invalid information into management information systems, and so forth.[61]

Prompted by the Army's traditions and hierarchal culture, many leaders may default to external organizational controls by using policies, standards, appraisals, reward, and punishment. In Manz' opinion, the ability to influence the individual's self-regulating or self-leadership processes is better than imposing organizational control systems. This self-leadership of employees is synonymous with empowered employees. The implication or suggestion, therefore, is for leaders to institute organizational control systems that aim to empower subordinates.

Scott Seibert, Seth Silver, and W. Alan Randolph in 2004 offered a multi-dimensional model of empowerment incorporating both individual and group-level dynamics (Figure 5). In their research, they concluded, "empowerment climate was shown to be empirically distinct from psychological empowerment" and that "psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between empowerment climate and individual performance and job satisfaction."[62] In short, empowerment climate and individual empowerment are separate yet positively related.
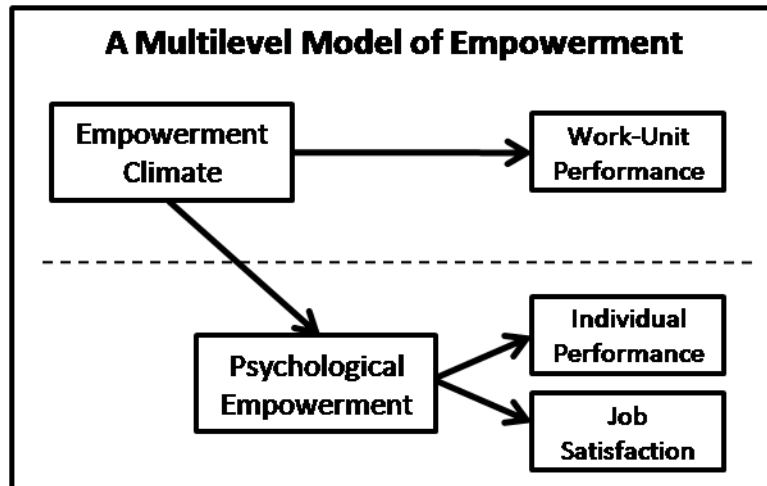
A Multilevel Model of Empowerment

Figure 5[63]

Seibert, Silver, and Randolph go on to define empowerment climate "as a shared perception regarding the extent to which an organization makes use of structures, policies, and practices supporting employee empowerment."[64] As shown in Figure 6, climate includes the following dimensions: (1) information sharing, (2) autonomy through boundaries, and (3) team accountability.

Likewise, using a Spreitzer definition, Seibert et al define psychological empowerment "as an individual's experience of intrinsic motivation that is based on cognitions about him- or herself in relation to his or her work role."[65] As shown in Figure 6, psychological empowerment contains four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The Seibert, Silver, and Randolph model, along with Manz' model (Figure 4), assist this discussion of empowerment at the organization and strategic level by connecting the group level of empowerment and the individual level.
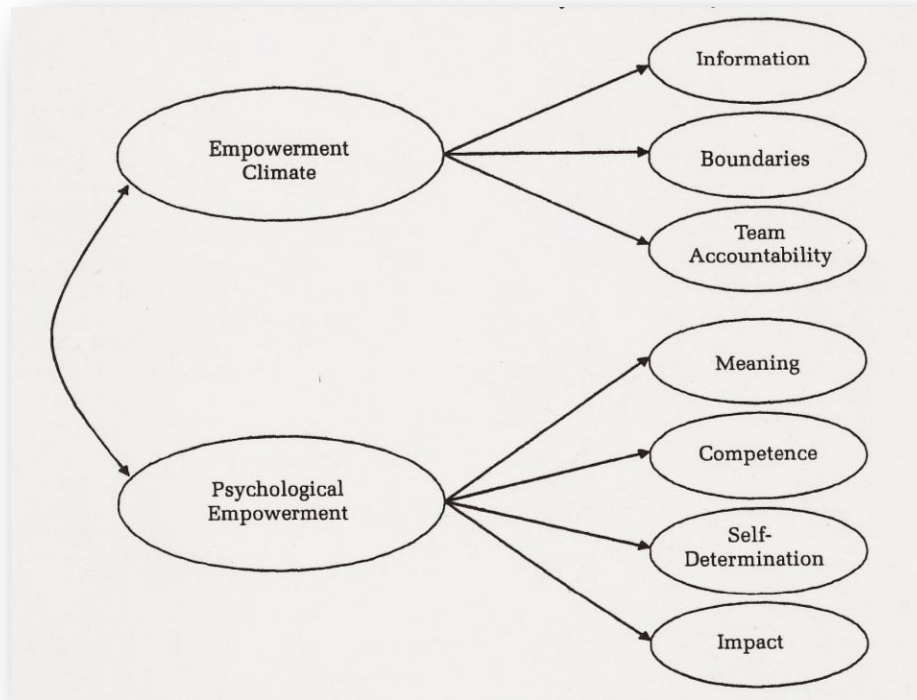
Figure 6[66]

Continuing with alternate models, Charles Manz and Henry Sims provide a

specific seven-step model of empowerment, as shown in Figure 7[67]. Manz and Sims use

the term "self-leadership" to describe those who are empowered and the term

"superleadership" to describe those leaders who develop the self-leadership that "dwells

within each person."[68] Without reiterating the work of Manz and Sims, the intent is to

provide an example of a more concrete and less esoteric model for use by

organizational leaders.

Likewise, Victor H. Vroom provides a constructive model for leaders to use in

deciding the level of participation in decision-making. He appropriately calls his

normative model "Deciding How to Decide," as shown in Figure 8. Again, avoiding a full

description of Vroom's model, it serves as another example of a useful tool for common

use at all levels of leadership and management. Additionally, as stated previously,

empowerment is not a panacea or appropriate for all situations, and Vroom's model

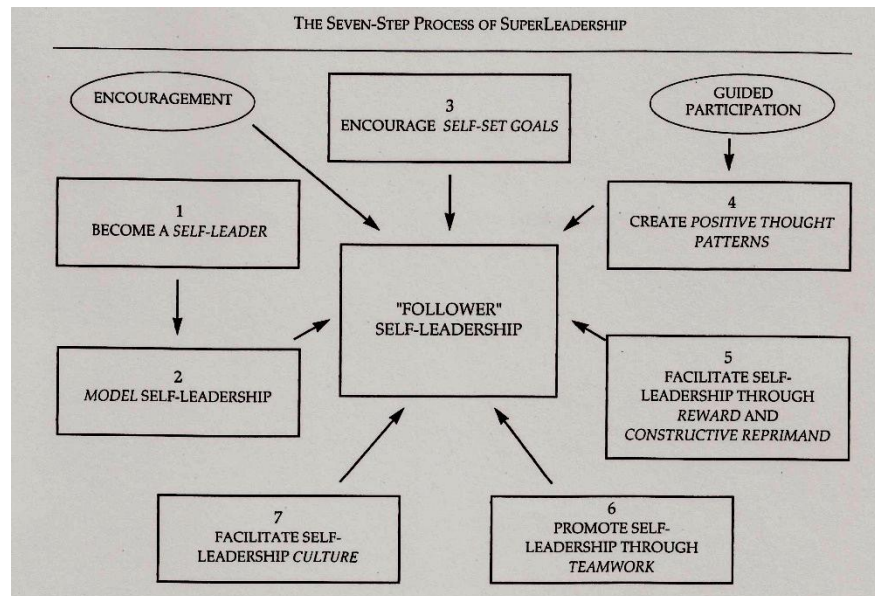helps to identify when leaders should restrict empowerment and make a unilateral
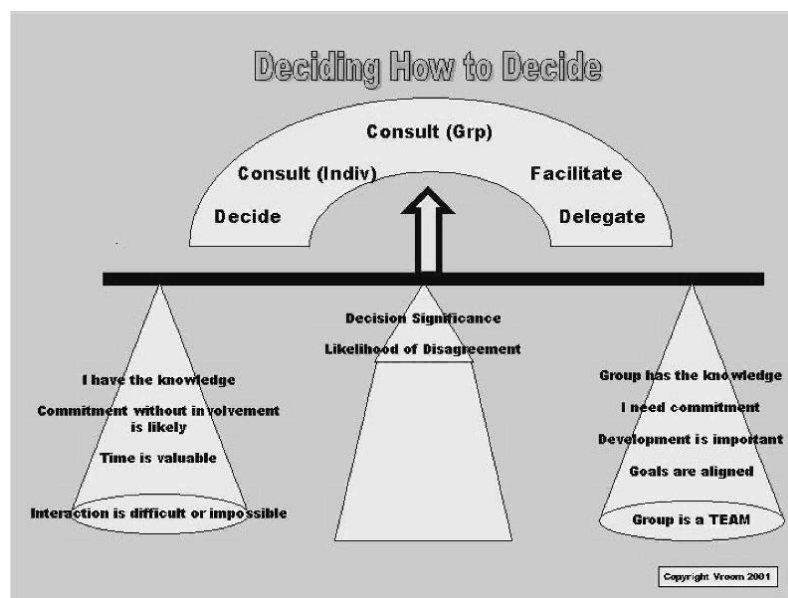
decision.

Figure 7[69]

Figure 8[70]

These various models, therefore, help describe empowerment as process and

outcome, those actions that foster (or impede) empowerment and those manifestations

that are expected from an empowered (or disempowered) subordinate. Figure 1 and Figure 8 are readily applicable to the military culture and could prove useful to leaders. Likewise, Figure 7 could easily apply to military leaders with minor modification or detailed explanation. Lastly, Professor Manz' model (Figure 4) is a holistic model that incorporates both organizational and individual empowerment and, therefore, speaks to both tactical and strategic leaders. Combining the military definition of empowerment with these models, military leaders may now better understand and, when appropriate, implement empowerment. The question now, how do we know when empowerment exists?

<u>Measuring Empowerment</u>

Though promoting empowerment, the Army provides no tools to measure either individual or group empowerment. The Command Climate Survey is a quantitative attempt to measure "climate factors" such as leadership, morale, and cohesion, but the survey targets the small unit (company) level and does not include a measure of empowerment. Measuring empowerment outcomes can serve to reinforce empowering processes or practices and help draw connections to other leadership concepts such as Mission Command. In general, there are two ways to measure empowerment – quantitatively and qualitatively.

The Army's Command Climate Survey is a type of quantitative measurement that seeks to provide commanders with feedback on the climate of their unit. The assumption is that "climate factors such as leadership, cohesion, morale, and the human relations environment have direct impact on the effectiveness of your unit."[71] The survey is easy to administer and provides rapid feedback. However, the survey is broad in scope, attempting to address such wide-ranging topics as leadership styles, training

readiness, equal opportunity, harassment, assault, quality of life, and stress. With only

twenty-four questions addressing such varied topics, it is hard to accept the survey's

statistical relevancy. In relation to empowerment, only four questions tangentially relate

and no conclusions with regard to empowerment are possible from this survey.

As an example of how to measure empowerment in an organization, Manuela

Pardo del Val and Bruce Lloyd validated a measuring tool of empowering climate. For

the purpose of statistical measurement, they defined empowerment as a management

style of collaborative decision-making, a definition in line with the military definition

proposed in this paper.[72] Their tool aimed to measure the following dimensions: (1) the

extent to which empowerment spreads through hierarchical levels (first-line workers,

supervisors, middle managers, and top management; (2) the formal or informal

character of involvement; (3) the direct or indirect way in which employee collaboration

takes place; and (4) the degree of influence of employees along the decision-making

process.[73] Figure 9 is their survey questionnaire, a rather concise set of questions.

Pardo del Val and Lloyd conclude,

> Considering decisions are made along certain stages, and that there are
> different types of decisions, we have developed a tool to quantify the
> degree of empowerment at any company, taking into account the
> hierarchical groups collaborating in the process as well as the way such
> collaboration takes place...[E]mpowerment is no more an ambiguous
> concept, but a specific aspect that can be measured.[74]

This is but one example of a validated quantitative measurement tool that could

apply to military use with simple modification. However, a focus on quantitative analysis

may miss important characteristics of empowerment. Marc Zimmerman states, "As long

as we continue to use primarily quantitative methods we will have a limited

understanding of the construct. Qualitative approaches such as in-depth case histories,

investigative reporting (Leving, 1980), and participant observation are useful starting

points for expanding our repertoire of research methods."[75]

Value from 1 to 5 the collaboration of the following groups:		Operational decision	Tactic decision	Strategic decision
1 – no collaboration 2 – very little collaboration 3 – some collaboration 4 – enough collaboration 5 – a lot of collaboration	First-line workers	P11_1	P11_5	P11_9
	Supervisors	P11_2	P11_6	P11_10
	Middle managers	P11_3	P11_7	P11_11
	Top management	P11_4	P11_8	P11_12
Write in each cell the group meant with the first number at each column that is superior to 1 (that is to say, the lowest hierarchical group that collaborates) From now on, just answer about the group written at each cell		P11_13	P11_14	P11_15
Mark the degree in which collaboration is more formal or informal.	Informal Formal	P11_16	P11_17	P11-18
Mark the degree in which collaboration is direct or indirect.	Indirect Direct	P11_19	P11_20	P11_21
Mark how could the collaboration be defined.	They are informed They are consulted They cooperate (consensus is achieved) That task is delegated to them	P11_22	P11_23	P11_24

Figure 9[76]

Qualitative measurement and analysis is much more time-consuming and

complex but provides context and elaboration to the quantitative measurements.

Researchers collect data for qualitative study by means of semi-structured interviews,

observation, or case studies. "The analysis of this data often relies to a certain extent on

interpretation and reflection. However, generating numbers from, or quantifying, the

qualitative outputs of participatory approaches and tools is possible and can help when

trying to combine the analysis with the data from the individual survey."[77] The

implication is that qualitative measurement requires not only more time, but also expert

analysis, compared to quantitative measurement.

Beyond the scientific methods just described, there is an innate sense that

recognizes empowerment both in individuals and in groups, a sense that senior leaders

can harness. As Wheatley writes, "Those leaders who have used participation and self-

organization have witnessed the inherent desire that most people have to contribute to

their organizations. The commitment and energy resident in people takes leaders by

surprise. But it's quite predictable. As leaders honor and trust the people who work with

them, they unleash startlingly high levels of contribution and creativity."[78] Those in the

military likely possess high levels of commitment and energy, but is this a result of an

empowering culture or something else?

Empowerment in the Army Culture

The Army is a patriarchal and hierarchal culture that fosters some aspects of

empowerment while hindering other aspects. Culture refers to the patterns of values

and learned behaviors that pass from generation to generation by the members of a

social group.[79] Though based on hierarchical and patriarchal tenets, the culture of the

United States Army has empowering tendencies that sometimes go unnoticed. Maya

Kalyanpur and Beth Harry provide an apt metaphor, "Like fish unaware of living in

water, people tend to be unaware of being totally enveloped by their culture."[80] As such,

perhaps those in the military fail to recognize their own empowering qualities. Margaret

Wheatley agrees that the Army demonstrates a form of empowerment leadership. She

writes:

> Most people associate command and control leadership with the military.
> Years ago, I worked for the U.S. Army chief of staff, General Gordon
> Sullivan. I, like most people, thought I'd see command-and-control
> leadership there. The great irony is that the military learned long ago that,
> if you want to win, you have to engage the intelligence of everyone
> involved in the battle. I've heard many military commanders state that 'if
> you have to order a soldier to do something, then you've failed as a
> leader'.[81]

As the definitions imply, empowerment is not about equal power; someone still

needs to be the boss. Empowerment is about the distribution of power, the sharing of

responsibility and decision-making. Generally, this would mean redistributing power to the lower part of the traditional hierarchy. In some respects, the Army is good at this by recruiting young adults, providing extensive training, and providing the opportunity for great responsibility. However, the Army's patriarchal tradition and regulations steer its leaders to be caretakers, parents, relationship counselors, financial advisors, and teachers for these adults. As Peter Block describes, "Patriarchy expresses the belief that it is those at the top who are responsible for the success of the organization and the well-being of its members."[82] Army Regulation 600-20 clearly enforces the concept of patriarchy by stating, "Commanders are responsible for everything their command does or fails to do."[83] In such a culture of patriarchy, responsibility will tend to remain at the top and empowerment encumbered. In this way, the Army culture sends a mixed message.

The After Action Review (AAR) process also highlights the Army's culture of learning and of empowerment. One goal of the AAR process is for leaders to receive feedback from subordinates on the execution of an operation. Yehuda Baruch noticed this with the Israeli Air Force and would arguably notice the same in the U.S. military. Baruch writes, "Whereas during the battle a direct combat ordering and command would be the case, the debriefing enables junior pilots to have a say, to point out problems and mistakes...Their input is appreciated and is taken into account."[84] Though challenged with patriarchy and bureaucracy, the Army's greatest potential for an empowering culture lies with the leadership philosophy of Mission Command.

In today's United States military, both the Marine Corps and Army use the command and control philosophy known as Mission Command. However, the services

define Mission Command with telling differences. The Army's definition is as follows:

> Mission Command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of full spectrum operations.[85]

The Army definition seems to restrict the use of Mission Command to only the commander. Further discussion of Mission Command throughout Field Manual (FM) 3-0 and FM 6-0 reinforces the role of commander as the focal point of Mission Command. Additionally, the Army definition restricts the application of Mission Command to the use of mission orders, as opposed to other influencing techniques. Though alluding to subordinate initiative and empowerment, the definition does not address shared decision-making as a desired outcome of Mission Command. Lastly, one may assume that Mission Command is for use only in full spectrum operations and not appropriate for other missions or the garrison environment.

In contrast, the Marine Corps definition appears much more empowering and universal in application. The Marines define Mission Command in the following way:

> Mission Command is the leadership philosophy that complements and supports the maneuver warfare philosophy of the Marine Corps...Mission Command is a cultivated leadership ethos that empowers decentralized leaders with decision authority and guides the character development of Marines in garrison and combat.[86]

By saying that Mission Command is a <u>leadership</u> philosophy and not only a command philosophy, the Marine definition opens the possibility of Mission Command to all Marines, not only commanders. Additionally, the Marine definition specifically asserts the authority of decentralized decision-making and allows for Mission Command in both garrison and combat (and with no regard to level of combat). Wheatley would likely support this shared decision-making; she writes,

Reflective leaders, including those in the military, have learned that the higher the risk, the more we need everyone's commitment and intelligence. In holding onto power and refusing to distribute decision making, leaders have created unwieldy, Byzantine systems that only increase risk and irresponsibility. We never effectively control people or situations with these systems, we only succeed in preventing intelligent work.87

The Marine Corps' version of Mission Command would seem more likely to inspire "intelligent work" through a high distribution of decision-making and represents a much more empowering description of Mission Command when compared to the Army.

The Army culture, therefore, is inconsistent with its message on empowerment. On one hand, the culture is highly dependent on hierarchy, bureaucracy, and patriarchy but, on the other hand, attempts to give great responsibility to junior members of the organization. Future organizational success in a changing international landscape demands that the military reconcile this apparent paradox.

Recommendations

As Marc Zimmerman points out in referencing the research of Chavis and Wandersman, "If our goal is to both empower the organization and enhance its empowering potential, then we may need to develop interventions specifically designed to address both issues. This means that our interventions would have to focus on decision-making structures and social climate, as well as organizations expansion and coalition building."88 As such, recommendations presented here will be based on a clear definition of empowerment and fall into these two broad categories, decision-making and organizational climate, followed by recommendations for further research.

Definition. The Army should adopt a clear definition of empowerment, one that is a stand-alone concept and addresses both process and outcome, like that offered in this paper. A definitive definition would make empowerment unambiguous and help

Soldiers, leaders and subordinates, understand how to recognize an empowered organization and what it means to be empowered. Additionally, senior leaders should use this definition as part of their strategic communication to reinforce the concept in the Army's culture. As the definition states, part of being empowered is the ability to share in decision-making.

Decision-making. The Army must fully adopt Mission Command according to the Marine Corps interpretation and truly empower Soldiers at all levels to make decisions with trust, risk protection, and accountability. This condition begins with focused training and education for both leaders <u>and</u> subordinates, for as the models indicate, empowerment is an amalgamation of leadership style, organizational culture, and individual capability. Vroom makes the following recommendation, "Educating managers to think intelligently about participation and its uses and pitfalls is critical to reducing the high failure rate in decision."[89] Likewise, subordinates must possess the capability to be empowered – the competence and commitment to make unilateral decisions.

Some leaders may view empowerment as a threat to their authority, arguing, as an example, that orders cannot be questioned. If Soldiers are questioning orders, there is a different problem, not empowerment. Most likely, the real issue is the leader's lack of confidence or a lack of trust between subordinate and leader. Peter Block addresses this apparent contradiction, "Partnership [empowerment] does not mean that you [the subordinate] always get what you want. It means you may lose your argument, but you never lose your voice."[90] When empowered, subordinates think, believe, and know that the leader values their opinion. Similarly, the leader who empowers subordinates gains the invaluable resource of insight by having the confidence to listen to contradictory

views and the confidence to make a well-informed decision.

As Block states, "If we wish to move our organizations in an entrepreneurial direction, we have no choice but to seriously confront our values and attitudes about maintaining control."[91] Military culture and regulation, perhaps unwittingly, encourage military leaders to maintain control through autocratic command – retaining all decision-making authority. Block adds, "We can take comfort in the fact that we are only giving up something that we never really had in the first place. We can't lose something that we don't have. Deemphasizing control and keeping it in its proper perspective is not giving up something real; it is only giving up the illusion, which isn't such a bad thing."[92]

Organizational climate. A key task for the strategic leader is to define an organizational climate and reinforce cultural priorities. Phrased differently, and as offered by Wheatley, the strategic leader's primary task is to make sure the organization knows itself.[93] For the Army, that means that leaders must acknowledge the patriarchy tendencies of the culture, challenge those tendencies, and unequivocally adopt an all-encompassing culture of empowerment. At all levels of the Army, leaders have the responsibility to foster an environment of empowerment.

To be truly inculcated into the Army culture, empowerment must be taught as a fundamental principle of Army leadership, taught at all schools to include Basic Training. According to Professor Byham, the immediate leader or supervisor has the most influence on empowerment, followed by other people around the worker. After that, the organization itself (payroll, benefits, suggestion systems, etc.) has the most influence on empowerment.[94]

Army policies should also reinforce an empowerment culture by delegating authority as much as possible and assuming trust, vice distrust. The time is optimal, as we transition to a garrison Army, for a review all policies for garrison operations and training to ensure we exhibit trust in our Soldiers. The Army's latest "Leadership Lessons at Division Level – 2010" supports this recommendation.[95]

Not all recommendations necessitate drastic change; some change can be subtle, requiring only the effort of coaching. Through coaching, strategic leaders can help empowered groups to gather information, to gain access to others, gain resources, gain trust, and ensure follow-through. "Leaders are necessary to foster experimentation, to help create connections across the organization, to feed the system with information from multiple sources – all while helping everyone stay clear on what we agreed we wanted to accomplish and who we wanted to be."[96] As Block recommends, fostering an empowering climate can be as subtle as asking simple questions. "There is nothing a manager can do to support an entrepreneurial [empowering] attitude with more impact than simply to ask people two questions: 'What do you want?' and 'How are you feeling?' These both respond to people's need to feel that their actions are critical to our success."[97]

Any cultural change is difficult to execute, especially with an organization as successful as the United States Army. However, this coming inter-war period provides a window of opportunity and, therefore, this author recommends that senior leaders review "Organizational Culture: Applying A Hybrid Model to the U.S. Army" by Stephen J. Gerras, Leonard Wong, and Charles D. Allen.[98] In this writing, the authors provide detailed description of the Army culture and process for change, with emphasis on the

use of embedding and reinforcing mechanisms for change. Thus, whether intending to change the Army culture to one that is more empowering (as is recommended in this paper) or seeking other cultural change, the work by Gerras, Wong, and Allen could help leaders develop a roadmap for change.

Lastly, as is often the case, this research inspired the need for further research. Most notably, it would be beneficial to analyze the success rate of military decisions using similar research design as Vroom and Nutt. This would provide military leaders with empirical data and measurable results so as to reinforce the use of specific decision-making styles.

Conclusion

As we examine, question, and evaluate many aspects of the Army organization during this new inter-war period and during a time of extreme budget constraints, the Army should also reexamine our concept of positive leadership with emphasis on empowerment. If the military downsizes as expected while decision-making timelines become ever compressed, Army leaders can no longer advocate empowerment without actually modeling, training, educating, and holding accountable empowerment concepts. As so aptly written in the Joint Operating Environment of 2010 by U.S. Joint Forces Command, "If we expect to develop and sustain a military that operates at a higher level of strategic and operational understanding, the time has come to address the recruiting, education, training, incentive, and promotion systems so that they are consistent with the intellectual requirements for the future Joint Force."[99]

Especially under the stress of change, behavior tends to resort to what is comfortable. If the Army is under the stress of forced reorganization in an environment

of volatility and uncertainty, then the Army should be cautious of resorting to archaic forms of leadership and command. As Margaret Wheatley writes, organizations often assume "that hierarchy and bureaucracy are the best forms of organizing. That efficiency is the premier measure of value. That people work best under controls and regulations."[100]

This paper has been an attempt to confront the assumption that hierarchy and bureaucracy (and patriarchy) are the best forms of organizing. Instead, an organizational model encompassing empowerment climate and psychological empowerment is the preferred form of organizing to foster a more adaptive force. For the Army's senior leaders, any organizational change starts from within, as eloquently described by Wheatley:

> The higher you are in the organization, the more change is required of you personally. Those who have led their organizations into new ways often say that the most important change was personal. Nothing would have changed in their organizations if they hadn't changed.[101]

The hope is that Army leaders finally, and fully, embrace the uncertainty that is empowerment, to help motivate Soldiers accustomed to high levels of responsibility in combat, help redistribute tasks and responsibility among a reduced force structure, and help retain our most capable leaders.

Endnotes

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⁵ James M. Dubrik, "Leadership Beyond the Chain of Command," *Army*, December 2009, 16.

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