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**AUTHOR:** Major Benjamin Shean, United States Army

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** The Formative Experience's Influence on Strategic Leadership Development.

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**Thesis:** Military leaders must understand the formative experience's impact on skill acquirement to develop their subordinates into elite level leaders.

**Discussion:** The experimental learning theory exemplifies the development to elite level success of abilities like playing the violin, sports, technological development, business, and leadership. The learning process of the experimental learning theory begins with experience. From the experience, the individual applies reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which begins the continuous loop anew. In the process, the initial formative experiences are the benchmark for which an individual bases all future development. Therefore, the level of ability achievement from lifelong development is all-dependent on the influence of the initial experience. Although, genetic mutations can advantage athletes, the empirical data collected through multiple sport science research demonstrate the superiority of formative experience in comparison to solely physical ability to achieve elite status. Likewise, leadership ability through the experimental learning process develops from the formative experience and the individual's capacity to reflect, conceptualize, and experiment. Senior leader's ability to discern their subordinates' formative experience and current development determines the effectiveness of their capacity to develop their subordinate's leadership potential.

**Conclusion:** Today's leaders must acknowledge the significance of the formative experience in order to capitalize on the ability to develop junior leaders. The formative experience particularly with the "IGeneration" has been significantly impacted using technology. The changing culture through technology has affected the next generation of military leaders and senior mentors must incorporate this to succeed in the leadership development of their junior leaders.

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## *Preface*

This academic journey started as a means to research the coincidence of strategic military genius early military service. The classic examples are Helmuth von Moltke, military service at the age of nine, and Napoléon Bonaparte, military service at the age of 15. I thought that if a theory exists templating their success then mentors then could apply the theory today in order to develop more capable strategic military leaders. My assumption, along with Larry Rosen, was that the IGeneration would be better multitaskers because of their youthful attachment to technology. The Military could harness that skill to benefit tactical leaders and that multitasking would make them better strategic leaders. I believe that my discovery is much more useful and powerful than my hypothesis. The background research for this paper comprised heavily of elite skill attainment through athletics because the effects of youthful training are much more heavily researched and quantifiable in the athletic field.

Along the way, I have received substantial assistance particularly from my mentor, Dr. Richard DiNardo; my subject matter expert, COL James Mis; Research staff, Mackenzie Duffield; and Stace Wells at the Leadership Communication Skills Center. My wife and family have endured my absence and contributed to my success particularly my son's motivation through production of a research paper on wolves coinciding with my MMS and his contributions though the discussion of hockey (his favorite sport) into my paper. My brother's assistance in grammar far exceeded my own capabilities. Moreover, my parents, for their critical influence on my development through the formative experiences they provided.

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As a people-centric organization, the Army is dependent on quality leadership. According to Army Doctrine, leadership is the most essential component of combat power.<sup>1</sup> In order to ensure quality leaders, the Army depends on senior leaders to develop their subordinates. The original philosophers of leadership – Confucius, Aristotle, Plato, and Machiavelli – taught that leadership development was a long, hard process. The Army’s Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development* states that, “leader development is achieved through the lifelong synthesis of the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained through the training and education opportunities...”<sup>2</sup> The lifelong synthesis starts with the individual’s formative experiences from which he or she frame the formal education of leadership.

The Army’s Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development* also advises, “Development involves experiential learning.”<sup>3</sup> The application of experiential learning theory through deliberate practice has proven to develop elite level abilities needed to master complex activities such as playing an instrument or chess. The learning process of the experiential learning theory begins with experience. From the experience, the individual applies reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which begins the continuous loop anew. In the process, the initial formative experiences are the benchmark which an individual bases all future development. Therefore, the level of ability achieved from lifelong development is all-dependent on the influence of the initial or formative experience. Military leaders must understand the formative experience’s impact on skill acquirement to develop their subordinates into elite level leaders.

There are three essential theories of leadership: the “great man” theory that believes that great leaders are born, the trait theory believing that leadership is intrinsic or learned characteristics, and the behavioral theory believing that leadership is the application of leadership traits through a leader’s style.<sup>4</sup> The fundamental differences in the theories are the identification of leadership skill as a genetically gifted ability or skill development. The “great man” theory is the most reliant on genetic abilities, and behavioral theory is the most reliant on leadership skill as a learned behavior.

Behavioral scientists, athletic trainers, and psychologists have conducted extensive research of athletes and their performance to determine elite skill acquirement. Although the studies of athletic performance have shown a direct correlation in genetic advantage and athletes achieving elite level performance, the correct skill development has proven to defeat genetic capability. The greatest example of skill development over natural ability is the high jumpers Stefan Holm and Donald Thomas.

Stefan Holm started high jumping when he was four years old and accumulated approximately Twenty-six years of development prior to the 2007 world championships, where Donald Thomas, with eight months training, defeated Holm.<sup>5</sup> Seemingly, the genetic advantage of Donald Thomas easily defeated Holm’s lifelong quest to be an elite high jumper. However, Holm who is 5’11” has a personal best of 240 cm, whereas Thomas only has a personal best of 235 cm despite his three-inch height advantage over Holm.<sup>6</sup> In addition to Thomas’s height advantage, a further study found he had the genetic advantage of an abnormally long Achilles tendon, which further enhanced his high jumping ability. Although the natural ability of Thomas is notable, the achievement of Holm to overcome Thomas’s height and genetic advantage through practice attests to the significant advantage of skill development over genetic ability.

The formative experience is the experience that develops an individual's experiential learning process. Kolb's experiential learning theory is the best representative of learning leadership as a skill because it accounts for the learner's lifelong syntheses of leadership development. Kolb describes, "[Experiential learning] is the process of learning from experience that shapes and actualizes developmental potentialities."<sup>7</sup> In this regard, an individual's leadership potential depends on the quality of his or her experiential learning process.

In order to learn from experience, according to Kolb's Experiential learning theory, the individual must have concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities.<sup>8</sup> Essentially, individuals must reflect on their experiences to determine how to better themselves from what they have experienced. From their analysis, they then test themselves to become better. Figure 1 from Kolb's *Experiential Learning* shows similarities among "the experiential learning cycle in the center circle and a model of the scientific inquiry process in the outer circle, with models of the problem-solving process, the decision-making process, and the creative process in between."<sup>9</sup> The formulation of an individual's ability to do the experimental process is his or her cognitive ability to complete each step. According to Jean Piaget's theory on cognitive growth, the cognitive development to enable hypothetical deductive reasoning, which an individual requires for abstract conceptualization, occurs "with the onset of adolescence (12-15 years old)."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the ability for an individual to complete one turn of the experiential learning process is not complete until he or she reaches adolescence. In addition, because the level of deductive reasoning developed in adolescence is the result of the cognitive development in the previous three stages, the experiences of one's youth will anchor his or her future development.

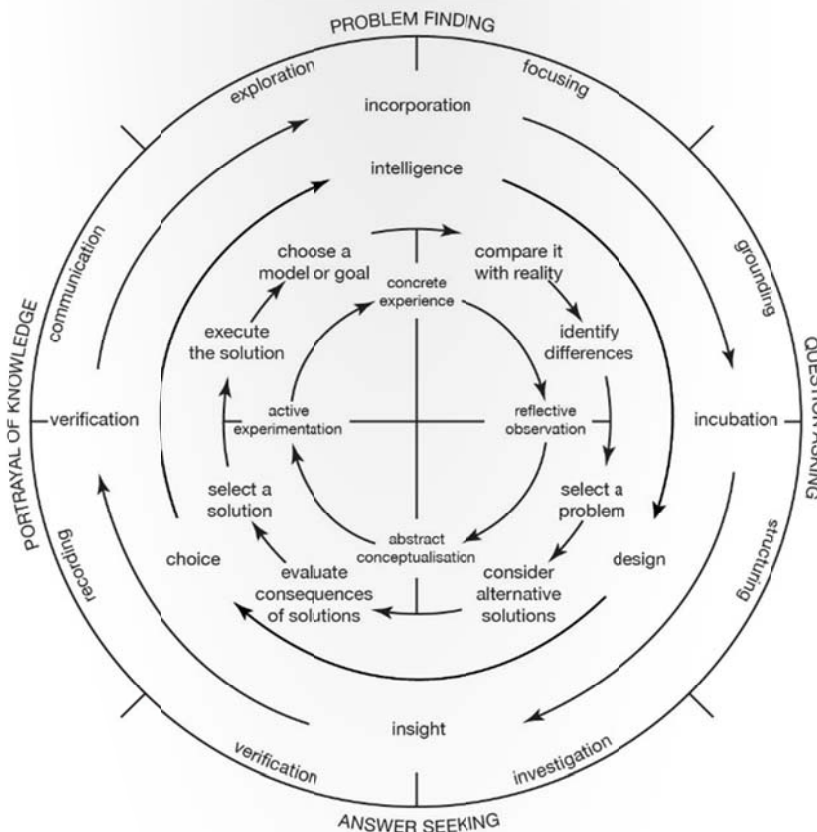
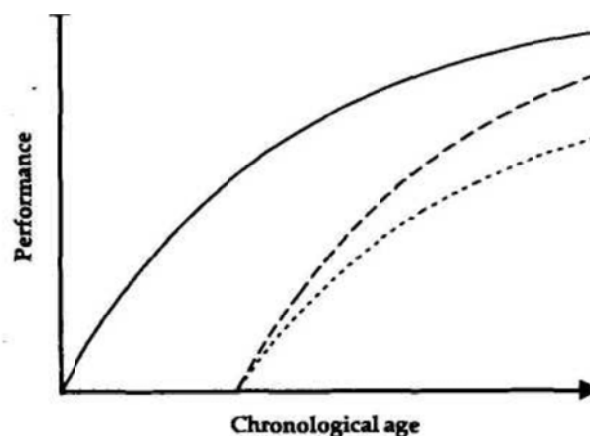


Figure 1- Experimental Learning Process Compared to Other Discovery Processes

In K. Anders Ericsson and two colleagues' study, "*The Role of Deliberate Practice in the acquisition of Expert Performance*" the researchers identified a way to capitalize on the experiential learning process and increase skill acquisition through purposefully selecting experiences. From this study, Ericsson sought to prove that acquiring knowledge and skill through deliberate practice is the determinant factor in the attainment of expert performance. Ericsson's study defines deliberate practice as "a highly structured activity, the explicit goal of which is to improve performance. Specific tasks are invented [that the individual can engage in between meetings with the teacher] to overcome weaknesses and performance is carefully monitored to provide cues for ways to improve further."<sup>11</sup> In terms of the experiential learning theory, deliberate practice targets the performer's ability gaps by identifying the necessary tasks

for the performer to experience, reflect, and conceptualize how to perform the task better, and then attempt a better result.

In terms of formative deliberate practice, or formative experiences, Ericsson's study found a determining factor of elite performance to be the number of hours of deliberate practice prior to age eighteen. Generally, the number of hours a performer practices, prior to age eighteen, determined level of success in attaining elite performance. Supporting his hypothesis, "an individual starting at an earlier age would have accumulated more deliberate practice and thus have acquired a higher level of performance."<sup>12</sup> A troubling difference for the Ericsson study is the variation of the age of an individual at the start of his or her elite skill. He found that individuals starting at a later age, although all elite performers started younger than age fifteen, would initially increase their level of performance at a faster rate. Relating back to the experiential learning theory, the increase of performance is most likely due to the individual's enhanced abstract conceptualization abilities. Their enhanced abstract conceptualization abilities are not only due to their cognitive development at an older age, but also the growth of varied experiences achieved by not specializing as early. As seen in Figure 2,<sup>13</sup> by starting their specialization at a later age, the individuals' understanding of themselves and causal relationships enhances their ability to learn the skill.



*Figure 2- Three schematic relations between chronological age and performance. (The Solid line shows the performance associated with an early starting age and a high level of practice. The line with long dashes shows performance for an equally high level of practice. The line with long dashes shows performance for an equally high level of practice but with a later starting age. Finally, the dotted line shows the performance associated with the same late starting age and lower level of practice.)*

The best example of early deliberate practice to reach an elite level of performance in athletics is Wayne Gretzky. Elite hockey players are typically born in January, February, and March. Their birthdays are important because they determine the hockey player's ability group; the separation between ability groups is the calendar year. Players born in the beginning of the year are a couple of months older, which makes them bigger and naturally better than players born later in the same calendar year. This gets the slightly older boys selected for higher-level teams within their year-of-birth ability group, which comes with better coaching and a more competitive game experience. The formative experience for these players is the better coaching and a higher quality experience in games. Because of the better formative experience, they achieve a higher level of skill attainment through the experimental learning process.<sup>14</sup> Better coaching leads to better experience, better learning, and better skill development.

This is not an absolute. There are professional Canadian hockey players born throughout the year. However, the preponderance of January through March birthdays is undisputable. The month of birth is not the only factor of success. For example, even though Wayne Gretzky was

born in January his birth month did not contribute to making him the “greatest hockey player of all time.” Wayne Gretzky started skating at two years old and continually practiced hockey skills on a back yard rink his father made. Additionally, his father provided coaching to ensure his early and continual development. As Gretzky progressed through the ability groups, he was an exception. He was playing in age groups much higher than his birthday would have typically allowed. At the age of six, he was playing in a ten-year-old league. Gretzky continually attributes his success as a hockey player to the skills instilled in him during the formative experience in the back yard.<sup>15</sup> The backyard rink continued to provide him the deliberate practice he needed to target his weaknesses, which developed him to achieve greatness.

Similar to athletic skill’s dependence on formative experience and the experiential learning process through deliberate practice, a leader begins developing his or her skills from birth. The following studies will demonstrate how leadership development of catholic priest is tied to childhood experiences, the significant impact of formative experience on the success of military leaders, as well as the critical nature of experience on strategic level leadership from Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great*.

The Catholic Church does not formally teach or develop priests to become leaders of their parishes. In order to understand the role of experiential learning in leadership development, Ellen F. Goldman targeted this population because they have no formal leadership training from seminary. To learn how to be a leader of the parish, they depend on “on-the-job” training or “learn as you go.” Key administrators of the archdiocese selected ten priests based on their exemplary leadership of their parishes for her study. The ten priests ranged in age from 49-69 and had been leaders of a parish from 10-25 years. Goldman conducted three interviews with them where she sought to discover what they identified as exemplary leadership and defining

experiences of leadership development. Of the ten priests she worked with to complete her study, only one priest did not identify the impact of family or youthful experience as a critical component of their development. Although this group is subject to the law of small numbers, because sample size is too small to make a definitive conclusion, it is also substantive to note that two of the ten were genetically prone to be successful leaders. One priest's father was a graduate of the United States Military Academy, and another's was a state police Barracks Commander. Additionally, one priest had some leadership experience while attending a military high school.

The service academies utilized a Whole Candidate Score as a numerical way to identify academic ability, leadership potential, and physical aptitude. To assess leadership potential the application process assesses the candidate's formative experience by quantifying the candidate's participation in athletic activities, extracurricular activities, and faculty appraisal.

In order to quantify a candidate's formative leadership experience from athletic activities and extracurricular activities, the process assigns values based on the potential for leadership experience. The value increases as potential for leadership experience increases. For example, to quantify the potential leadership experience from athletics, the experience ranges from being on a team which receives 300 or 400 points, the potential leadership experience of being a team captain which is 600 points, to the potential leadership experience of being on an All American, or team winning regional's/state championship is 800 points.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, the application process values formative leadership experience of extracurricular activities by a similar scale. The application process awards 300 points for being a member of an activity. The process quantifies a candidate as an elected leader of the

organization by awarding 500 points, 600 points for eagle scouts or gold award, and 800 points to a candidate that belongs to four or more organizations and earns awards in each organization.<sup>17</sup>

The admissions generate the faculty appraisal score by analyzing the teacher's response to twelve statements. The teacher's responses focus on their observations of successful leadership traits which the candidate exhibited in the classroom and how the teacher expects the candidate will perform at the college level. The twelve statements are as follows:

1. Show interest and concern for the welfare of others
2. Work effectively with others toward group goals
3. Influence others in a positive manner
4. Communicate effectively in face-to-face discussion
5. Communicate effectively in written work
6. Set an example of good conduct for others
7. Set high standards for own performance in a number of activities
8. Maintain composure and perform effectively under pressure
9. Adjust to demanding schedule of activities without neglecting schoolwork
10. Seek academic challenge beyond that required by normal course work
11. Reach sound, logical conclusions based on analysis of facts
12. Accept full responsibility for own actions<sup>18</sup>

The Rand Corporation in a study for the Department of Defense detailed the significance of the Whole Candidate Score and the quantitative representation of potential leadership experience. In their study, they found that these representative calculations were an accurate assessment for the candidates' potential to successfully graduate. More importantly for the purpose of this study, they also discovered that the higher the score for leadership potential i.e. higher quality formidable leadership experience the more successful their military career, which was measured by their promotion to O-5.<sup>19</sup> Of the quantified leadership experiences, the importance of the faculty appraisal score rose in comparison to the others. The rise in importance

of the faculty appraisal score is a result that the score is not calculated off of how many activities the candidate participated or what the candidate achieved in his or her activities; rather, the faculty appraisal score more qualitatively interprets how participating in sports or extracurricular activities impacted the candidate's leadership ability in everyday life.

The Rand Corporation's study correlated the importance of the formative experience in military leadership. In their study, the better or more formative experiences a candidate had prior to entering the formal leadership education the more a successful his career. Candidates who earned an admission to the academy but did not graduate are most likely a result of regression to the mean. Regression to the mean implied that at the time of their application they were performing at a leadership potential that they were not able to sustain. The academies select candidates who perform far above the public norm for leadership potential. A top performing candidate for an academy may have the numbers to get in because for a short period he or she was performing at a higher level. Although because the higher level of performance is not the average of society, after some period of time his or her performance will regress to the mean or possibly less than the mean in response to the individual's exceptional period of performance.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, this study fails to account for the success that an individual may achieve through the different career paths a candidate takes upon graduation.

A dissertation conducted by John Hancock, a Naval Academy graduate, sought to determine the role of commissioning source, visibility, and performance on promotion success, thus for the criteria of this study a successful military career. The commissioning sources Hancock included were the United States Naval Academy (USNA), Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC), Officer Candidate School (OCS), Aviation Officer Candidate School (AOCS), Navel Enlisted Scientific Educational Program (NESEP), and Naval Flight Officer

Program (NFO). In his study, he defined visibility as the ability to achieve a job with high interaction with senior officers through position or location. Hancock utilized performance evaluation grades as a measure of performance.

The results of Hancock's findings are not surprising given the previously mentioned study. The Rand Corporation study found that a better military leader had a better formative experience. Therefore, if the better candidates or candidates with the required formative experience by large enter into the USNA, then the USNA would produce leaders that are more successful. By large the USNA outperformed the other commissioning sources; however, commissioning from USNA was not the highest predictor of military success. There is one formative experience that is far better than the number of athletic teams and extracurricular activities – prior enlisted service. Prior enlisted service more than doubled the probability for promotion to O-4 than a USNA graduate.<sup>21</sup> Prior enlisted Service is an equally important role in probability of promotion to O-5, although the reduction in the pool of officers with prior service at the O-5 level due to the addition of retirement for officers with prior enlisted service skews the data.<sup>22</sup>

Two similar studies conducted by Naval Postgraduate School found the same results. Levent Ergun, a Turkish officer whose hypothesis was that the length of time in formal education was a determining factor in how well officers performed in the United States Marine Corps, conducted the first study. His study proved the hypothesis wrong. The truth, as his study revealed, was that prior enlisted service served as the most predictive factor of successful leadership. The second most important factor was USNA, and thus the strength of formidable experience as a youth.

Darby Wiler and Nicholas Hurndon conducted the second study. Their study focused on success at the Marine Corps Basic School and if success at the Basic School predicted the success of officers. Correspondingly, their study found the perpetual trend that prior enlisted service surpassed any of the formal education as a predictor in success. Again, the developmental experience of prior service was determined to be a critical indicator in these marines' leadership success.

Likewise, in Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*, he identifies that "great" companies have "level 5 leaders." In order to be a great company, the company had to beat the market, other companies in the same field, and maintain greatness over fifteen years. In order to identify the distinction of leaders that could make companies go from good to great, the researchers found a unique phenomenon of leadership, which they coined "level 5 leaders." One predominant trait of the level 5 leader is that that individual came from within the company versus an outsider brought in to "save the day." Out of the eleven good to great companies, ten of them promoted their level 5 leader from within the organization.<sup>23</sup> This trend follows the trend of prior enlisted service officers having higher leadership success and thus furthers the importance of the formative experience.

As demonstrated through these studies, the formative experience is the critical indicator of successful leadership. The youthful experiences of catholic priests' family life were a critical developer in their success as leaders. A higher quality and variety of formative experiences is a direct predictor for leadership success. Given that the formative experience develops skill, military leaders must consider it when developing their leadership development program. In acknowledgement of the critical component of formative experience, the Army's leadership

development should transition to a greater emphasis on the individual and less on unit development.

The Army's leadership development programs, as identified in Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development*, follow the experiential learning theory. The outline of leader development programs, as described in the field manual, follow the steps understand, visualize, plan, and execute parallel the components of experiential learning theory. The step of understand is gathering the information from assessments to identify strengths and developmental needs, which encompass the same principles from experience in the experiential learning theory. The visualizing step is comparable to reflective observation where the learner identifies goals to achieve. Planning, like conceptualization, is developing how to achieve the goals. In addition, during execution, the leaders, like the learners in the experiential learning theory, conduct their training in an attempt to better themselves.<sup>24</sup>

Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development* identifies that leaders need to know their subordinates in order to develop them.<sup>25</sup> However, the manual spends more text cautioning against an inappropriate relationship with a subordinate than to the true importance of why understanding of the individual is important. It does not acknowledge the importance of understanding the subordinate's previous development or the importance of formative experience in the explanation of a leader knowing his or her subordinates. The manual simply states that knowing subordinates will increase the level of trust between mentor and mentee and that a trustful relationship is important. Overall, the manual fails to account for the fact that leadership development started before the subordinate's entrance into the military.

Given the critical nature of the formative experience on leadership development, it becomes critical for leaders to understand fully their subordinate's formative experience in order to develop, with their subordinates, an individual development plan (IDP). The current process for developing an individual's IDP does not account for that individual's formative experience, yet FM 6-22 tasks leaders to help subordinates in designing an IDP.<sup>26</sup> The Army should place a greater emphasis on the knowledge of subordinates as well as the development of the IDP on the formative experience of subordinates in order to develop them effectively into elite leaders. Additionally, the Army should expand the IDP to encompass a more detailed actionable development plan to enable the subordinate to exercise the principles of deliberate practice. In order for the subordinate to exercise the principles of deliberate practice, the leader must identify experiences for the subordinate in which the subordinate will test their leadership shortfalls. With a more cohesive IDP, individuals can effectively continue their development on their own initiative. Additionally, through a greater understanding of the subordinates' formative experience leaders can identify character flaws and begin mitigation training in an attempt to curve unethical strategic leaders.

Furthermore, given the personal nature of the formative experience, the Army should give more time to leaders and subordinates to develop their relationship or knowledge of each other, to conduct reflection on their experiences, and provide feedback. The Army can achieve this through the cutting back of collective programs like NCO, warrant officer, and officer professional development and leader development seminars. Addressing large groups will not give subordinates the level of interaction or detail to be able to conduct deliberate practice. The Army should allocate the training time achieved through elimination of these collective programs to the leader-subordinate team's developmental program.

Although the formative experience is a personal experience, there are some marked differences in the formative experience of the next generational leaders, which leaders must incorporate in their development. The IGeneration or Generation Z has two polarizing events that characterize their lives. One is technology, the generation defined by access to an internet-linked device since birth. The other is global uncertainty earmarked by the attacks of 9/11. The effect of technology on this generation has changed the way they have formatively developed and the uncertain future has influenced their views. Given the importance of the formative experience in leadership development, senior leaders must incorporate the shift of culture and personality traits to enhance the IGeneration's leadership development.

Barbara Kellerman details the effect of the current culture on leadership in her book, *The END of Leadership*. Kellerman's preface of her book identifies the shift of power from the leader to the follower because of social changes from the acceleration of technology. She claims that technology essentially eliminates the cultural separation between leaders and followers. Technology drives the change according to Kellerman by giving followers an immediate news source emphasizing their leaders' weaknesses and faults. With this same line of reasoning, she believes that leaders have lost their privacy. Everything they do or post on social media is available for their followers to see. In order to continue to lead in the informational environment, Kellerman suggests that leaders must make a greater effort to appeal to the follower and be capable of influencing the follower to accomplish the desired task.<sup>27</sup> In order to influence or develop this generation, leaders must first understand what influences them.

Larry Rosen identified twelve principles of the IGeneration in his book *Rewired*. In his assessment, the IGeneration is use to continuous praise or instant feedback, seeing online identities separate from real-life, connected to internet 24/7, highly social online, immersed in

virtual worlds, forced to multi-task, collaborative, optimistic, and open to change.<sup>28</sup> Rosen later discounts, however, the IGeneration's ability to multi-task in his following book *IDisorder*. Chloe Combi conducted a separate study and found similar attributes notably associated with technology, social capabilities online, and collaboration.

The combination of the IGeneration's attributes creates a very powerful opportunity for the Army to develop these individuals into elite leaders. Because of the formative experiences of the IGeneration, they are prone to accept change, take responsibility for their future, and have a strong desire to improve. The IGeneration's greatest shortfall is their overreliance on technology, which the IGeneration and the Army must overcome to be successful at the tactical level given current threats to America's cybersecurity and satellite communication infrastructure.

The most important aspect of development leaders need to understand for the IGeneration or Generation Z is the need for timely and frequent feedback. The experience of growing up with technology has programmed them to be receptive on feedback in development through social media, 24/7 connection with technology, and the instantaneous nature of the internet. Additional aspects of the generation's development have primed them to desire to be better. They desire to develop quickly and achieve momentous results. They believe they can develop as successfully as Steve Jobs (apple), Michael Dubin (dollar shave club), and Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg (PewDiePie –number one most subscribed to YouTube channel). These individuals seem to develop overnight, out of nowhere, although the truth is the successes of these icons took much longer than the IGeneration's perception. Regardless, it motivates the generation to be prone to constant improvement and willingness to develop.

The Army manual for leadership development, FM 6-22, currently recognizes the importance of feedback. It states, “A leader’s ability to provide feedback to subordinates will significantly contribute to their development.”<sup>29</sup> The manual also recognizes a failure in leaders to plan for and protect the time necessary to observe, conduct assessments, and provide feedback necessary for adequate leadership development.

The need for frequent, immediate feedback is a drastic culture change for the Army leadership development. Although the leadership development program has always emphasized frequent formal and informal counseling, the Army as a whole does not do it, especially for individuals in leadership positions. FM 6-22 even calls out that many leaders do not engage in developmental counseling of their subordinates.<sup>30</sup> The Army has recognized the shortfall of counseling subordinates in leadership development and established several programs to engage leaders and individuals. These programs include the 360-degree Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF). The MSAF is an annual requirement for officers that they receive anonymous feedback from subordinates, peers, and superiors. At the completion of the MSAF, the officer can seek out coaching and personnel development through the MSAF program. The problem with the Army initiated programs in respect to the IGeneration is the mandatory feedback loop is too long. It is up to the individual mentor to engage at a more frequent basis. The frequency of engagement is an essential aspect to the next generation of leaders.

In order to correct the current deficiencies in the Army’s leadership development program and develop the IGeneration’s leadership skill, leaders must modernize their ability to provide feedback in accordance with the guidance of Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development*. The Army recently updated Field Manual 6-22 *Leader Development*. The updates include guidance on feedback. According to the manual, feedback should be an informal, day-to-day,

two way communication. Additionally, the manual provides a guide in providing feedback in sixty seconds or less by improving the leader's observations for patterns of behavior. The field manual recommends taking notes in the situation, observation, associate and assess, and reinforce and recommend (SOAR) format in order to conduct an effective feedback session.<sup>31</sup> An example of a SOAR feedback notes from FM 6-22 is included in Appendix A. The field manual also provides significant guidance on methods and timing for providing feedback, which if followed, will capitalize on the developmental potential of the IGeneration's desire for improvement and willingness to change.

The experience of technology and highly social atmosphere of the internet increased the IGeneration's collaborative nature. The collaborative social nature of the IGeneration should be encouraged and promoted by senior leaders during their development. Military leadership networking sites, such as platoonleader.net and the "Company Command Forum" will most likely expand. The use of these formats for leadership development will build on the experience of online networking, socializing, and collaborating as well as greatly increase their abstract conceptualization abilities. The increase in abstract conceptualization capabilities is the increase in their understanding of how the Army and military leadership works through the experience of other lieutenants or captains. To be able to encourage and promote these type forums, senior leaders must become familiar with them so that they may engage with their subordinates as to whether the information they are receiving through forums is accurate and assisting the mentee in interpreting the applicability of the information.

The Army has adopted the modernization of information particularly with the publication of Field Manual 6-22 *Leadership Development*. The Army has designated this manual as living doctrine. By designating the manual as living doctrine the Army produces an "interactive [App]

version which integrates video, audio, and interactivity to enhance the overall learning and reading experience.”<sup>32</sup> There are several Army Apps currently available to include other Army and Joint doctrine.

The IGeneration’s formative experience has two particular short falls, which senior leaders need to be cautious of and incorporate into their leadership development. The first short fall is a perception that the IGeneration can multitask. Larry Rosen’s inaccurate prediction that the generation is better at multitasking demonstrates the misperception. Larry Rosen based his original prediction on the IGeneration’s ability to operate several mediums of information simultaneously. For example, he believed that through the influence of constant interaction with technology the IGeneration developed an ability to watch television and text simultaneously. Rosen developed this perception through observations that the IGeneration would do two or more things at once, similar to how most people listen to music while working out. However, his later studies prove his perception false. The IGeneration’s ability to multitask has not increased. The IGeneration can process information from a technical medium such as a web site faster than other generations and may be faster at texting. The IGeneration, however, experiences the same mental lag from transitioning between tasks.<sup>33</sup> Failing to recognize this false perception in particular could cause a senior leader to over task his or her subordinate. Additionally, their subordinate may also have the inaccurate perception and need developing experiences where they could learn to compartmentalize activities in order to achieve better productivity.

The IGeneration’s second significant shortfall from their formative experience is their over reliance on technology. In Chloe Combi’s interviews of IGeneration members from the United Kingdom for her book, *Generation Z*, one girl stated that she believed she would die if she woke up and there was no internet while others seemed surprised that the internet had not

always existed.<sup>34</sup> Although these views are quite extreme and not the norm, they do demonstrate the IGeneration's gravitation to technology as a resource and a tool. Given the intentions and capabilities of the United States' adversaries to strike American space communication infrastructure, the overreliance on technology is a potential vulnerability for the IGeneration. The Army and its leaders should emphasize and construct training experiences for the IGeneration to develop the skills to operate in a technology blackout.

The IGeneration's overreliance on technology, specifically the internet, perpetuates a belief that information on the internet is infallible. IGeneration regards web-based sources as more truthful than they may actually be and rely on the internet for information that an individual should find through a more official source. The best examples of these two fallacies are the dependence on Google and Wikipedia for research and WebMD for medical advice. Formal education should correct these errors in development; however, given the societal perpetuation of these beliefs, it is important for leaders to understand and caution subordinates in these dangers of the internet.

Today's military leaders must understand the significance of the formative experience in order to capitalize on the IGeneration's ability to develop into elite strategic leaders. Through understanding of the formative experience, leaders can identify knowledge gaps and plan developmental experiences for their subordinates. The formative experience particularly with the "IGeneration" has been significantly impacted using technology. The changing culture with technology and global uncertainty has increased potentiality for development with timely feedback and use of social networking. Senior mentors must incorporate this to succeed in the leadership development of their subordinates.

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<sup>1</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations (ADRP 3-0)* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 3–1.

<sup>2</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Leader Development (FM 6-22)* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2015), 1–1.

<sup>3</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> “Leadership Theories - In Chronological Order,” accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.leadership-central.com/leadership-theories.html#axzz44j8MOYdZ>.

<sup>5</sup> David J. Epstein, *The Sports Gene: Inside the Science of Extraordinary Athletic Performance* (New York: Current, 2013), 23–31.

<sup>6</sup> “Stefan Holm | Profile | IAAF.org,” accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.iaaf.org/athletes/sweden/stefan-holm-20596>; “Donald Thomas | Profile | IAAF.org,” accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.iaaf.org/athletes/bahamas/donald-thomas-221630>.

<sup>7</sup> David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 133., 133.

<sup>8</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 24.

<sup>11</sup> K Ericsson, Ralf Th. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Romer, “The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance,” *Psychological Review* 100, no. 3 (July 1, 1993): 368., 368.

<sup>12</sup> Ericsson, Deliberate Practice, 388.

<sup>13</sup> Ericsson, Deliberate Practice, 387.

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, 1st ed (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2008),

<sup>15</sup> Ken Rappoport, *Sports Great Wayne Gretzky*, Sports Great Books (Springfield, N.J: Enslow, 1996), 12.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence M. Hanser and Mustafa Oguz, *United States Service Academy Admissions: Selecting for Success at the Military Academy/West Point and as an Officer* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, 2015), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Hanser, *Academy Admissions*, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Hanser, *Academy Admissions*, 11

<sup>19</sup> Hanser, *Academy Admissions*, 25

<sup>20</sup> *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Random House Audio, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> John Hancock, “Officer Performance: Do the Service Academies Make a Difference? An Examination of the United States Navy.” (George Mason, 1999), 224, EBSCOhost.

<sup>22</sup> Hancock, Officer Performance, 250, 272.

<sup>23</sup> James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't*, 1st ed (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 2-4-2-6; Kolb, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 3-6.

<sup>26</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 3-6.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Kellerman, *The End of Leadership*, 1st ed (New York: Harper Business, An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Larry D. Rosen, “REWired: Understanding the iGeneration and the Way They Learn,” *The Education Digest* 75, no. 9 (May 2010): 20; Rosie Sheldrake and Neal Watkin,

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*Teaching History* 150 (2013): 31.

<sup>29</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 3-8.

<sup>30</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 3-11.

<sup>31</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 3-9.

<sup>32</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, v.

<sup>33</sup> Larry D. Rosen, *iDisorder: Understanding Our Obsession with Technology and Overcoming Its Hold on Us* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 106–121.

<sup>34</sup> Talks at Google, *Chloe Combi: “Generation Z”* / *Talks at Google*, accessed April 3, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhntR9LwfME>.

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# Appendix A

<p>Background:</p> <p><i>At FOB Bender, an observer is paired with SFC Olson, who is about to lead a 9 vehicle convoy to an assembly area 12 km away. SFC Olson's mission is to successfully deliver all 9 vehicles to the assembly area. He leads 5 subordinate NCOs and 8 junior enlisted Soldiers.</i></p>	
<p>Situation: (Describe behavior and impact on mission and or Soldiers)</p> <p><i>1900 14MAR-FOB Bender SFC Olson leads convoy of 9 vehicles 9 drivers and 13 other troops (5 NCOs and 8 junior enlisted) High morale and enthusiasm among the section</i></p>	
<p>Observation: (Describe behavior and impact on mission and or soldiers)</p> <p><i>Provided initial guidance and followed-up; ensured everyone understood objective and requirements and kept in contact</i></p> <p><i>Promoted optimistic expectations and attitudes among troops</i></p> <p><i>Ensured PCI were completed by all drivers Improperly wore kneepads around ankles</i></p> <p><i>Missed opportunities to delegate leadership responsibility to subordinates during this task</i></p> <p><i>Mission completed</i></p>	<p>Associate &amp; Assess: (Identify competency - attribute and assess proficiency)</p> <p><i>Communicates +</i></p> <p><i>Creates Pos. Environment ✓</i></p> <p><i>Leads Others ✓</i></p> <p><i>Leads by Example (DN)</i></p> <p><i>Develops Leaders (DN)</i></p> <p><i>Gets Results ✓</i></p> <p>[Assess: + Strength; ✓ Standard; (DN) Need]</p>
<p>Reinforce &amp; Recommend: (Note appropriate feedback, praise, or correction, and recommendations for action to sustain/improve leader behavior)</p> <p><i>Reinforce- Troops and drivers were prepared, well informed, and motivated</i></p> <p><i>Recommend- (Leads by Example) Several junior enlisted Soldiers wore kneepads around ankles violating the standard</i></p> <p><i>Reinforce - Mission completed successfully but missed opportunities to delegate/develop subordinate leaders</i></p>	

Example of SOAR feedback notes