

TOXIC LEADERSHIP: THE WAY AHEAD

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General Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

TOXIC LEADERSHIP: THE WAY AHEAD, by Major John A.C. Bayse, 95 pages.

The United States Army faces a future of a unique and complex operating environment transitioning counterinsurgency to larger-scale Unified Land Operations. Leaders must be equipped with every tool possible to ensure a healthy climate and high morale while developing leaders and its most indispensable asset—Soldiers. Leaders must understand how to stop counterproductive leadership at all levels.

This thesis seeks to discover what tools are available to mitigate toxic leadership and how to implement them. Army leadership doctrine does not give clear guidance for leaders to know how to implement mitigation measures. As studies have shown these destructive leadership traits can negatively affect readiness, it is imperative the Army rids its formations of toxic leaders and equips them with leaders capable of mitigating toxicity.

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ACRONYMS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
AR	Army Regulation
CAL	Center for Army Leadership
CPT	Captain
CASAL	Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership
CDR360	Commander 360 Program
LT	Lieutenant
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MAJ	Major
MSAF	Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback Program
OER	Officer Evaluation Report

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While effective leadership is a combat multiplier, toxic leadership is a threat to productivity, health, retention, satisfaction, ethics, commitment, and readiness.

— George E. Reed, *Tarnished*

Background

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding army leadership. The U.S. Army's leadership model is ever-changing, from the *BE, KNOW, DO* of the 1990s to the current leadership definition of purpose, direction, and motivation, the commitment to refining development for its leaders remains constant.¹ However, much headway is needed doctrinally to address toxic leadership and develop solutions. To conclude, the purpose of this research aims to build on existing leadership doctrine and identify upcoming leadership doctrine regarding toxic leadership.

Differing views exist on what toxic leadership is, what it is not, and the role it plays in the military. This study focuses on the U.S. Army's actions—and inactions—pertaining to toxic leadership. It examines toxic leaders, what led them to become toxic, and how they earned positions of leadership. This study will also examine if toxic leaders tend to be successful. This study also identifies various actions the Army takes to combat toxic leadership, evaluate these actions' effectiveness, and recommend solutions for more

¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Field Manual (FM) 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 1999), 1-6; Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 1.

effective ways and means to mitigate toxic leadership. It will also examine the effects of leaders have on command climate, the importance of a healthy command climate, how leaders gauge their command climate, and explore whether there are enough of these barometers available to commanders.

Statement of the Problem

Although the Army has made progress identifying toxic leaders, they remain within the ranks; and a doctrinal gap exists to deal with this problem. Although Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22 defines toxic leadership and its effects. This doctrine does not provide guidance on how toxic leaders can be identified or mitigated. Army leaders require doctrinal insight and direction to bridge this knowledge gap and sustain a healthy command climate Army-wide.

Research Questions

Primary question: How can the Army implement and leverage tools, and control measures to better identify toxic leaders?

Secondary questions:

1. Does the Army inadvertently develop leaders to be toxic?
2. What is the relationship between Army culture(s) and toxic leadership?
3. Should Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback Program (MSAF), command climate survey, and like assessment results be shared with commanders' raters and senior raters?

Key Terms

Toxic Leadership: Many definitions do exist with overlapping themes. ADP 6-22 defines toxic leadership as, “a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance.”² AR 600-20 echoes this definition and stratifies toxic leadership as a type of counterproductive leadership.³ Other definitions are much more loose and open to a wider interpretation. Reed describes toxic leaders as those who are “interpersonally challenged, lack self-awareness, treat others in ways that are is not (no what) in the long-term.”⁴ Ulmer states, “Toxic leaders are individuals whose behavior appears driven by self-centered careerism at the expense of their subordinates and unit, and whose style is characterized by abusive and dictatorial behavior that promotes an unhealthy organizational climate.”⁵

Conversely, David Lewis defines a toxic leader as one who demands employees work long hours in a results-driven workplace.⁶ Obviously, many workplaces fit this

² HQDA, FM 22-100, 3.

³ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Regulation (AR) 600-100, *Army Profession and Leadership Policy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2017), 8.

⁴ George E. Reed, *Tarnished* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Potomac Books, 2015), 26.

⁵ Walter J. Ulmer, “Toxic Leadership: What Are We Talking About?” *Army* (June 2012): 47.

⁶ Marsha Petrie Sue, *Toxic People* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2007), 132.

description and are void of toxic leaders. This demonstrates breadth the many perceptions of the term toxic leadership. Unfortunately, the term has become somewhat of a buzzword and borderline cliché, yet little is doctrinally available in an organization ~~who~~ that dedicates significant resources to improving leaders.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ): EQ is defined as “being aware that emotions can drive our behavior and impact people (positively and negatively), and learning how to manage those emotions, both our own and others, especially when we are under pressure.”⁷ Reed also concludes, “those who are emotionally intelligent are good at reading, understanding, and empathizing with others.”⁸

Toxic: The label of being “toxic” is still subjective. AR 600-100 describes toxic as displaying behaviors that are counterproductive, and “must be recurrent and have a deleterious impact on the organization’s performance or the welfare of subordinates.”⁹ This study examines if the Army is making an attempt to objectify or further indoctrinate the term toxic. This will be done by discovering if any emerging Army doctrine is under legislation.

Destructive Behavior: AR 600-100 defines destructive behavior as a leadership style that “can compromise organizational effectiveness and discourage subordinates

⁷ Peter Salavoy, John Mayer, and Dan Goleman, “What is Emotional Intelligence,” Institute for Health and Human Potential, accessed 8 November 2017, <http://www.ihhp.com/meaning-of-emotional-intelligence>.

⁸ Reed, 83.

⁹ HQDA, AR 600-100, 8.

from continuing their Army service.”¹⁰ It also defines these leadership styles as those that “undermine mutual trust and impede mission accomplishment.”¹¹

Climate: AR 600-20 defines climate, relating to command climate as “the state of morale and level of satisfaction of members of an organization.”¹² ADP 6-22 states climate is a component of leadership and is achieved “through open communications, trust, cohesion, and teamwork.”¹³

Culture. Culture is “the set of long-held values, beliefs, expectations, and practices shared by a group that signifies what is important and influences how an organization operates.” according to AR 600-100.¹⁴

This study will examine the culture of the Army, and if there is a relationship to toxic leadership. Is it innate in its to Army culture? The study will look at the OER, Noncommissioned Officer evaluation reports, and civilian evaluations as possible evidence of the Army being a results-driven organization.

This study also looks at the positive side and potential benefits of toxic leadership. In history, there are examples of leaders who arguably fit the bill of being toxic, but successfully led organizations in combat. For example, CPT Sobel, who led Easy Company of the 101st Airborne Division was known to be toxic.

¹⁰ HQDA, AR 600-100.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ HQDA, ADP 6-22, 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

CPT Sobel was often in conflict with his executive officer, Lieutenant (LT) Winters. As much as CPT Sobel's Soldiers hated him, LT Winters stated CPT Sobel "brought us together."¹⁵ "We had to survive Sobel."¹⁶ Although LT Winters led Easy Company into combat, LT Winters credits Sobel for preparing Easy Company for combat. LT Winters claimed CPT Sobel drove each of his Soldiers to become "an elite soldier capable of taking the war to Hitler's Germany."¹⁷

The U.S. Army develops its commanders to exercise mission command. Mission command is the art of command and the science of control to understand situations, make decisions, direct action, and lead forces toward mission accomplishment.¹⁸ In simpler terms, mission command has six principles:

1. Build cohesive teams through mutual trust
2. Create shared understanding
3. Provide a clear commander's intent
4. Exercise disciplined initiative
5. Use mission orders

¹⁵ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2017), 26.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dick Winters and Cole Kingseed, *Beyond Band of Brothers* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2006), 25.

¹⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), ii.

6. Accept prudent risk¹⁹

Mission command is also one of the Army's warfighting functions, and arguably the most important. This means mission command is an essential function of how the Army fights its wars. The first principle focuses on mutual trust from team building and cohesion. Therefore, mission command is simply not possible at the strategic, operational, or tactical level of war for organizations led by toxic leaders.

Being a good leader in the U.S. Army requires leaders to have a high emotional intelligence. Furthermore, a leader-focused training regimen attentive to introspection is worth exploring. It is important to examine how the Army develops its leaders. This includes examining if leaders have sufficient training and resources to effectively see themselves and make adjustments. There are tools available to increase self-awareness, such as the MSAF and CDR360. However, there are constraints on these current tools, which limit their potential effectiveness. This study examines those constraints and provides feedback with recommendations for change.

There is significant damage done by toxic leadership. Well-known cases of generals being relieved of command for incidences of toxic leadership have negative effects on the public's perception of the military, but are often perceived as the exception, rather than the norm. However, the instances of toxic mid-to-upper-level leaders may do more damage to the Army's reputation than the ones gaining media coverage.

Toxic leadership, its effects, and methods to mitigate toxicity is important to study because it has a significant impact on readiness and the Army's ability to fulfill its Title

¹⁹ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-1.

10 obligations. This is a dynamic problem with no clear solution, but requires a commitment and persistence to mitigate toxic leaders from leading the Army.

Assumptions

This study primarily focuses on toxic leadership within the Army. Although this study derives data from studies of within other military services, the general framework of analysis pertains to Army doctrine. There is plenty of empirical data to show toxic leadership exists in all groups. This study does not state or infer toxic leadership is more prevalent in the Army than the civilian sector.

This study assumes all Soldiers are deserving of productive leadership, and productive leadership is inherently non-toxic. Certainly, toxic leadership can produce very productive results for an organization or yield productive externalities. But this mainly occurs in the short-term. This thesis also examines studies on positive aspects of toxic leadership in organizations.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the subjectivity of toxic leadership. Army leaders prioritize ridding toxic leadership from the organizations, but it is difficult to quantify. Another limitation is the lack of collective knowledge of ways toxic leadership is mitigated, and available controls to identify and develop Army leaders to foster a health command climate of organizations. This includes limited or no doctrine, regulatory guidance and legal statutes pertaining to toxic leadership. Throughout all Army doctrine, approximately three paragraphs address toxic leadership. During research of this study, the author discovered a draft version of AR 600-100 from the Center for Army

Leadership (CAL), which is not permitted for public release. Lack of use limits the scope and depth of research.

Delimitations and Scope

The primary delimitation of this study is time. Research occurred throughout a span of six months. Research competed with other parallel professional commitments, but these commitments, overall, indirectly supported this study. This study does not purpose to define or redefine any key terms. The author does not seek to replace doctrine, but identify gaps and make recommendations. This study will not seek to interview leaders who have been identified as toxic and removed from leadership positions.

Importance of this Study

The Army's Strategic Planning Guidance provides priorities for commanders to plan Army-wide. The most recent guidance lists eliminating toxic leadership as a strategic priority.²⁰ Therefore, it is vital for Army leaders to develop effective strategies, methods, tools, and controls to mitigate and eliminate toxic leadership.

The Chief of Staff of the Army's initial message to the Army marks readiness as the Army's first priority.²¹ He then lists taking care of troops as the third priority.²² Toxic

²⁰ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *Army Strategic Planning Guidance* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 19.

²¹ Mark A. Milley, "39th Chief of Staff of the Army Initial Message to the Army," U.S. Army, accessed 16 December 2017, https://www.army.mil/e2/rv5_downloads/leaders/csa/Initial_Message_39th_CSA.pdf.

²² Ibid.

leadership is a problem that is capable of keeping the Army from achieving its strategic priorities.

The Army ensures leaders know how to mitigate or fix objective problems that can have devastating effects on a unit. Examples of such problems are suicide, sexual harassment, sexual assault, adultery, and substance abuse. These are well-defined problems with well-defined solutions. If these problems are ever left untreated or ignored, the effects could be catastrophic. There are systems and controls in place to mitigate these problems. Toxic leadership's effects can be equally detrimental to a unit. The Army should invest the same effort into mitigating the consequences of toxic leadership.

Summary

Leadership is paramount to the success of the U.S. Army as it faces an increasingly complex environment.²³ This study aims to identify, analyze, and combine solutions to toxic leadership, while providing recommendations. There is clearly a knowledge gap in combating toxic leadership and removing it from the U.S. Army. The next chapter reviews the books, case studies, and articles of toxic leadership. It also reviews toxic leadership in the institution and current institutional mitigation measures and reviews the literature of these measures. The next chapter links pertinent literature on toxic leadership to the primary and secondary research questions.

²³ HQDA, ADP 6-22, Foreword.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tarnished by Dr. George E. Reed identifies and defines leadership problems in the military and looks at potential solutions. The book has extensive research on toxic leadership within the Army, and its monetary costs and devastating effects to organizations. Reed also discusses commonality and habits among toxic leaders. He offers insight and strategies to mitigate toxic leadership.

The Allure of Toxic Leaders is a book by Jean Lipman-Blumen discusses why people tend to follow destructive bosses. She discusses toxic leader traits, including untrustworthy, insatiable ambition, egotistic, arrogant, and amoral.²⁴ Lipman-Blumen looks at why subordinates tolerate, prefer, and sometimes create leaders who are toxic.²⁵ She introduces the psychological factors of subordinates who enable toxicity which include needing reassuring authority to fill parents' shoes, need to feel secure or special, and fear of ostracism.²⁶ Lipman-Blumen states followers desperately need leaders who will "slay the dragons that beset us."²⁷ She cites the dangers of this desire because followers "cede personal responsibility for our own fates." and "lay extra burden upon

²⁴ Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 21-22.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

imperfect humans” which invites authoritarianism.²⁸ Lipman-Blumen states some positives of these leaders include learning how not to lead, bond with peers, and organize resistance.²⁹

“Leader Development for a Transforming Army” is a strategy research project completed by Colonel Stephen G. Yackley focusing on the significance of ethical organizational climate.³⁰ Yackley highlights the role of leaders, tools available to aid leaders in self-awareness, benefits of multi-rater assessments, and productive ways the Army can instill ethical leadership in the future.³¹ Yackley states multiple-sourced feedback assessments combined with self-awareness, and assessment yields an enhanced self-awareness.³² His research is significant to the author’s research body because it focuses on leader responsibilities as ways and means to mitigate toxic leadership.

“Leadership: The Decisive Factor in the Ethical Performance of Units,” is a strategy research project conducted by LTC David M. Miller discussing leader roles with relation to command climate.³³ He further explains the “relationship between culture,

²⁸ Lipman-Blumen, 89.

²⁹ Ibid., 186.

³⁰ Stephen G Yackley, “Leader Development for a Transforming Army” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2006), 5.

³¹ Yackley, 8.

³² Ibid., 9.

³³ David D. Miller, “Leadership: The Decisive Factor in the Ethical Performance of Units” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2006), 1.

climate, and individual behavior in organizations like the Army makes the commander/leaders' role in linking all three paramount.”³⁴ The study did not directly relate to the research questions, but provided useful doctrinal, and experienced-based context, and information on ethics, command climate, and leader roles and responsibilities.

“Beyond Words: Leader Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Skills,” is a strategy research project conducted by Colonel William H. Montgomery III. He firmly believes that self-awareness is critical in the development of a successful leader.³⁵ He examines and recommends various methods leaders can utilize to measure their own self-awareness and prevent characteristics of toxic leadership from developing.³⁶ He found the Command Team Transition during the pre-command course to be an extremely effective tool to increase his self-awareness during battalion command.³⁷ He also declares all command teams conduct these three-day self-awareness training event during the pre-command courses.³⁸ Montgomery also suggests including spouses in this training, which could benefit the organization through the Family Readiness Group.³⁹ By evaluating

³⁴ Miller, 7.

³⁵ William H. Montgomery III, “Beyond Words: Leader Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Skills” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2007), 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

current and previously recommended strategies, his work can provide insight towards determining tools available to mitigate toxic leadership-

“The Toxic Triangle: Destructive Leaders, Susceptible Followers, and Conducive Environments.” by Art Padilla, Robert Hogan, and Robert Kaiser examines the operating environment of destructive workplaces. The authors state destructive leadership can be mitigated through accountability by controls through oversight.⁴⁰ They also illustrate the relationship between destructive leaders, followers, and the conducive environment in the toxic triangle. The toxic triangle shows all three elements are related functions, contributing to toxicity and destructive leadership.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Art Padilla, Robert Hogan, and Robert Kaiser, “The Toxic Triangle: Destructive Leaders, Susceptible Followers, and Conducive Environments,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2007): 190.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

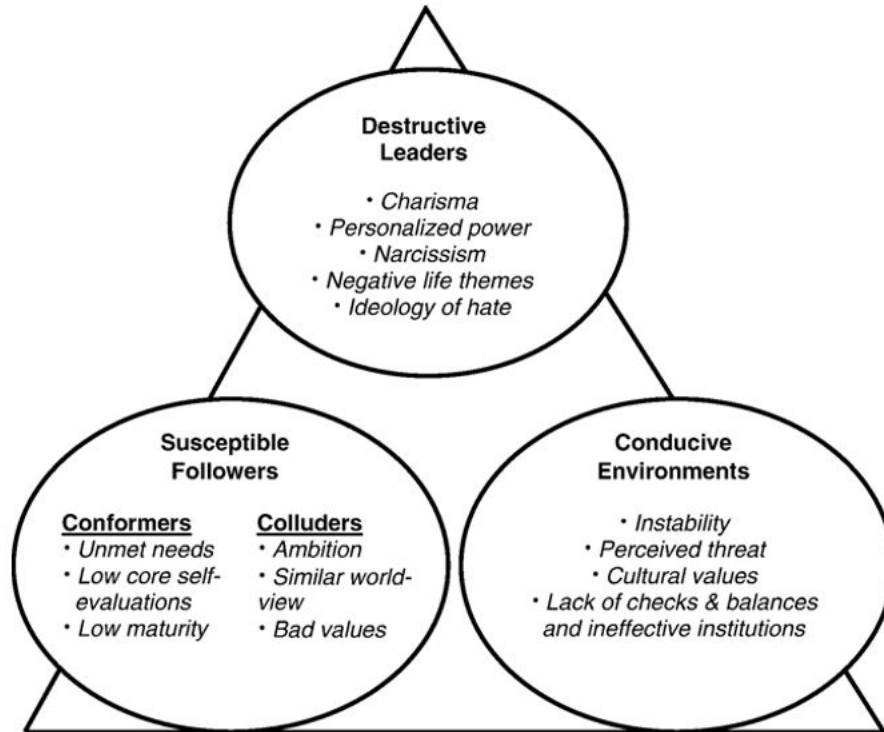


Figure 1. The Toxic Triangle

Source: Art Padilla, Robert Hogan, and Robert Kaiser, “The Toxic Triangle: Destructive Leaders, Susceptible Followers, and Conducive Environments,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2007): 190.

Working with Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman introduces the concept of emotional intelligence. Goleman asserts thorough understanding of one’s emotional intelligence is important for Army leaders and their development. Goleman argues business leaders with superior emotional intelligence, and average technical expertise tend to be more successful than those with low emotional intelligence and superior

technical expertise.⁴² The Army is rapidly implementing controls to increase emotional intelligence through self-awareness initiatives.

“Finding the Right Leaders for the Team,” a strategy research project compiled by LTC Caryn Suzanne Heard, notes leaders are expected to build an organization by thoroughly considering both positive and negative attributes of each member of the team to ensure positions are fulfilled in a well-balanced manner.⁴³ Such discernment is vital in the development of a successful organization. She lists an array of characteristics to look for and to be cognitive of while selecting subordinates.⁴⁴ Although this study did not contribute to answering the research questions, it provided important framework to understand the leader’s responsibility when selecting subordinate leaders who lead organizations.

“Empowerment: A 21st Century Critical Leader Core Competency.” a strategy research project, written by Colonel Robert M. Mundell, argues toxic leadership is a ramification of cultural norms within the Army.⁴⁵ Mundell argues toxic leaders are

⁴² Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam Books: New York, NY, 2007), 5.

⁴³ Caryn Suzanne Heard, “Finding the Right Leaders for the Team” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2008), 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Robert M. Mundell, “Empowerment: A 21st Century Critical Leader Core Competency,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2009), 6.

overwhelmed by the multitude of daily tasks, all of which they are directly responsible for, causing an over abundant amount of stress, which results in toxic leadership.⁴⁶

“Toxic Leadership: Part Deux” by Dr. George Reed and Dr. Richard Olsen is an article discussing the effects of toxic leadership in the military. Drs. Reed and Olsen review then-recent literature on destructive leadership styles and case study analysis.⁴⁷ They also report their findings of a survey of 167 U.S. Army majors, which found over 60 percent indicated they considered leaving the Army due to the treatment of a supervisor.⁴⁸ Additionally, nearly a quarter of respondents did not express desire to remain in service due to a toxic leader, which remains true, and as rank rises.⁴⁹ The article continues to discuss and analyze survey results, and comes to several conclusions and recommendations, all applicable to this study’s primary and secondary research questions.

John Steele’s technical report, *Antecedents and Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, discusses an in-depth analysis of toxic leadership in the Army and offers several mitigation methods.⁵⁰ He discusses the feasibility of de-

⁴⁶ Mundell, 7.

⁴⁷ George E. Reed and Richard A. Olsen, “Toxic Leadership: Part Deux,” *Military Review* (November-December 2010): 59-60.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 61.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 60-61.

⁵⁰ John Steele, Technical Report 2011-3, *Antecedents and Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Leadership, 2011), 28.

toxifying leaders and whether toxic leadership is innate or learned.⁵¹ Steele believes in a systematic approach to address toxic people who should be screened early as mitigating measures while changing personnel policies.⁵²

“Breaking the Toxic Leadership Paradigm in the U.S. Army,” a strategy research project, by COL Stephen A. Elle, identifies the high presence of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army. This study builds off much of Dr. Reed’s work, discussing the detriments of toxic leadership. COL Elle cited the findings of the 2009-2010 CASAL, “80 percent of Army Officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians surveyed, had directly observed a ‘toxic’ leader in the last year and that about 20 percent of the respondents said they had worked directly for one.”⁵³ COL Elle describes this “disturbing trend.” provides detailed examples and gives leaders ample suggestions on how to effectively detect a toxic leader and “root these negative leaders from the ranks.”⁵⁴ This study is vital to research as it is one of the early military comprehensive studies on toxic leadership giving context to terms and concepts for subsequent studies.

“The Effect of Toxic Leadership” is a strategy research project completed by LTC Darrell W. Aubrey. He argues, “culture is a key strategic factor in predicting behaviors

⁵¹ Steele, 29.

⁵² Ibid., 28.

⁵³ Greg Jaffe, “Army Worries About ‘Toxic Leaders’ in Ranks,” *The Washington Post*, 25 June 2011.

⁵⁴ Stephen A. Elle, “Breaking the Toxic Leadership Paradigm in the U.S. Army,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2012), 1, Abstract.

and outcomes. An organization's culture may have a moderating effect on the behavior of its members and may ultimately serve to promote toxic behavior."⁵⁵ Aubrey states toxicity thrives in these systems which act as enablers.⁵⁶ He also addresses the equivalence hypothesis that enabling harm is morally equivalent to allowing harm.⁵⁷ This strategy research contributes answering this study's secondary research questions.

"Developing Adaptive Junior Leaders in the Army Nurse Corps." a research thesis by Major (MAJ) Christopher A. VanFosson, looks at ridding toxic leadership within the Army Nurse Corps. He employs the Leadership Capabilities Map as a method to mitigate toxic leadership.⁵⁸ This map is a guided self-development counseling tool to help leaders see themselves. His study pertains to the Nurse Corps; however, the author is optimistic that it can be beneficial throughout the entire Army organization.⁵⁹ This thesis supports answering the second secondary research question.

"Toxic Leadership in the Military Profession" is a strategy research project compiled by COL John E. Box. Box informs readers that, "A survey of more than 22,630 leaders from the rank of E-5 through O-6 and Department of Defense (DoD) civilians

⁵⁵ Darrell W. Aubrey, "The Effects of Toxic Leadership," (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2012), 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Christopher A. VanFosson, "Developing Adaptive Junior Leaders in the Army Nursing Corps," (Master's Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2012), 78.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 126.

showed that roughly one in five sees his or her superior as toxic or unethical.”⁶⁰ COL Box goes on to describes characteristics of a toxic leader and emphasizes what a toxic leader is not.⁶¹ Box raises the concept that strong leaders who are firm and by-the-book are not toxic because of their strong moral ethic.⁶² COL Box provides strategies to eliminate toxic leadership, including reforming the culture of the Army that inadeptly breeds toxic leadership.⁶³

“Females and Toxic Leadership,” a research study by Major Naomi Carrington, brings attention to another facet of evaluating toxic leadership by considering if there is a gender component of toxic leadership.⁶⁴ MAJ Carrington argues that women with perceived masculine traits may be viewed as being toxic.⁶⁵ Such biased perceptions hold negative consequences to females who serve.⁶⁶ She considers the possibility of subordinates who dislike their leaders may complete assessments with the intentions of harming their leader’s career.⁶⁷ She also considers toxic leaders may entice only

⁶⁰ John E. Box, “Toxic Leadership in the Military Profession,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2012), 7.

⁶¹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁶² Ibid., 11.

⁶³ Ibid., 16-21.

⁶⁴ Naomi Carrington, “Females and Toxic Leadership,” (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2012), 41.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

colleagues who favor them to complete assessments.⁶⁸ MAJ Carrington’s research contributes to answering this study’s secondary questions.

“Developing a Climate of Trust,” a strategy research project by LTC Kenneth J. Mintz relates toxic leadership to organizational climate. He states integration of the MSAF Leader 360 assessment into the OER is a mitigating measure of toxic leadership and essential to build trust, which enables mission command.⁶⁹ LTC Mintz proposes transforming the Army’s training management as a strategy to build trust, which is done by decentralizing operations and empowering subordinate leaders.⁷⁰ He states the Army’s current system of centralizing training for deploying units marginalizes a traditional commander’s role of that deploying force.⁷¹ This research project gives excellent perspective on mission command, culture and mitigating measures of toxicity, which provides potential solutions to identifying toxic leaders.

“Negative Leadership,” a strategy research project led by COL David M. Oberlander takes on a devil’s advocate approach to toxic leadership. COL Oberlander provides examples of historically toxic leaders who were relieved of their positions, but suggests the term “toxic leader” is being used loosely.⁷² Many Soldiers report toxic

⁶⁸ Carrington.

⁶⁹ Kenneth J. Mintz, “Developing a Climate of Trust,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2013), 7.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13-15.

⁷¹ Ibid., 15-16.

⁷² David M. Oberlander, “Negative Leadership,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2013), 4, 12-13.

leadership. COL Oberlander, however, questions the accountability of such claims.⁷³ He states toxic “has been misused and attached to any form of negative or poor leadership. Any time a subordinate feels that they were unjustly criticized, then their leadership is toxic. It is a stigma that needs to be corrected to prevent leaders from being characterized as toxic when in fact it may be a leadership style that the superior selected to motivate the subordinate.”⁷⁴ Oberlander’s report provides a unique perspective to assist answering this study’s primary and secondary questions.

“U.S. Army Chaplains’ Mitigation of Negative (Toxic) Leadership” is a thesis written by Chaplain (MAJ) Lewis R. Messinger. He believes self-awareness evaluations are skewed, as it is difficult for leaders to be honest enough with themselves to self-identify as someone possessing attributes with such negative connotations.⁷⁵ Chaplain (MAJ) Messinger reverts to the chaplains’ regulations to exhibit a chaplain’s role in identifying, mitigating and rehabilitating negative leaders, while promoting the Army Values within an organization.⁷⁶ Chaplain (MAJ) Messinger’s recommendations contribute to potential mitigating measures of counterproductive and toxic leadership.

“Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: A Laissez Faire Approach” by COL Brian M. Michelson is a strategy research project focusing on character

⁷³ Oberlander, 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵ Lewis R. Messinger, “U.S. Army Chaplains’ Mitigation of Negative (Toxic) Leadership,” (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2013), 8.

⁷⁶ Messinger, 34.

development. COL Michelson states the Army sufficiently describes character development through doctrine, but does not provide guidance on how to implement it.⁷⁷ He provides data showing that as rank increases, criminal misconduct instances decrease.⁷⁸ He also cites leadership survey and CASAL results from 2007-2011 showing subordinates saw leaders “get results” more than leading by example, developing others or creates a positive environment.⁷⁹ COL Michelson also shows data stating the majority of Army leaders, from sergeant to colonel, believe toxic leadership is a problem.⁸⁰ He concludes by stating the Army needs to put more emphasis on the institution and leaders developing subordinates and reworking its character development model.⁸¹

A news report, “Toxic Leaders and The Social Environments That Breed Them,” by David Wilson, is based on study findings of David Matsuda. Matsuda’s assistance was requested by the Army to determine the cause of the inflation of suicide rates among soldiers in Iraq.⁸² Matsuda concluded that the influx of suicide rates of Soldiers was not

⁷⁷ Brian M. Michelson, “Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: A Laissez Faire Approach,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2013), 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁸¹ Ibid., 19-20.

⁸² David Wilson, “Toxic Leaders and the Social Environments that Breed Them,” *Forbes*, 10 January 2014, accessed 13 January 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/darwinatwork/2014/01/10/toxic-leaders-and-the-social-environments-that-breed-them/#73a0af6fdac5>.

only caused by mental illness or marital issues, but largely due to toxic leadership.⁸³

Matsuda analyzed social behaviors and determined toxic leaders form through an evolutionary process.⁸⁴ Matsuda's findings assist this research determine whether the Army inadvertently develops leaders to be toxic.

"Army implements new self-awareness program for commanders" is an article in 2014 by Bill Ackerly of the U.S. Army's Mission Command Center of Excellence discusses the (then) newly implemented CDR360 program.⁸⁵ Ackerly discusses the intent of the CDR360 is to give more interaction between raters and subordinates, designed for Command Select List colonels and lieutenant colonels. He also states the CDR360 results are not to be shared outside the rater and is purely a self-developmental program designed for lifelong learning.

The case study, "Great Results Through Bad Leaders: The Positive Effects of Toxic Leadership," by MAJ Kane D. Wright, is a critical study that challenges negative views of toxic leadership in an organization and asks if "toxic leadership can ever be a good thing?"⁸⁶ The author found positive results due to the actions of a toxic leader in the

⁸³ Wilson.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Bill Ackerly, "Army implements new self-awareness program for commanders," U.S. Army, accessed 18 March 2018, <https://www.army.mil/article/134580/>.

⁸⁶ Kane D. Wright, "Great Results Through Bad Leaders," *Military Review* 95, no. 3 (May-June 2015): 34.

Australian Army.⁸⁷ This included increase in shared tasks among subordinates, experience gained of those holding higher ranks, camaraderie and leader development within the organization.⁸⁸ This study provides this thesis with breadth by considering the positive effects of toxic leadership within an organization as toxic leadership is primarily associated with negative effects.

“Crossing the Line” is a study focused on toxic leadership in the Army by Teresa A. Daniel and Gary S. Metcalf.⁸⁹ The research is primarily based on data collection, analysis, and development of theory. The study presents additional characteristics of toxic leadership beyond Dr. Reed and COL Elle’s work. The authors also present recommendations for change within the Army, which is the aim of this thesis.

“Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army” is a strategy research project conducted by COL Denise F. Williams.⁹⁰ She identifies and defines eighteen personal characteristics of a toxic leader and eighteen definitive types of toxic leadership within the Army.⁹¹ COL Williams’ research is essential to this thesis because it further characterizes the different ways leaders can be considered toxic and builds upon COL Elle’s research.

⁸⁷ Wright, 38.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Teresa A. Daniel and Gary S. Metcalf, “Crossing the Line” (PhD diss., Sullivan University, Lexington, KY, 2015), IRB Reference Number 05212014-01.

⁹⁰ Denise F. Williams, “Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2015), 1.

⁹¹ Williams, 2, 6.

“A Comprehensive Review of Toxic Leadership.” by CDR Quincy L. Davis, briefly views all aspects of toxic leadership.⁹² He reviews definitions, behaviors, personalities, traits, causes and outcomes.⁹³ CDR Davis also creates a model demonstrating organizational decline in seven stages, from trust and cooperation to isolation and alienation.⁹⁴ Davis produces tabular data showing solutions based on the factors of leaders’ followers, environment, system and nature.⁹⁵

“Followership: An Essential Ingredient of Leadership,” a thesis by MAJ Corbin E. Copeland, expounds on the toxic triangle.⁹⁶ MAJ Copeland asserts the three components are equally responsible for toxicity within an organization.⁹⁷ The concept of the toxic triangle and his focus on susceptible followers assists developing a broader understanding of counterproductive enablers. This study does not focus on followership, but gives good context understanding followers’ potential enabling behavior.

The RAND Corporation conducted a study, per the request of congress in 2015 assessing the effectiveness of the Army’s assessments. The findings discussed in 360-

⁹² Quincy L. Davis, “A Comprehensive Review of Toxic Leadership,” (Research Report, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL, 2015).

⁹³ Ibid., 11.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁶ Corbin E. Copeland, “Followership: An Essential Ingredient of Leadership,” (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015), 3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 80.

Degree Assessments: Are They the Right Tool for the U.S. Military? by Charita M. Hardison, Mikhail Zaydman, Tobi A. Oluwatola, Anna Rosefsky Saavedra, Thomas Bush, Heather Peterson, and Susan G. Straus, refutes LTC Mintz’s recommendation of including 360 assessments as a toxic identifier.⁹⁸ The study concludes assessments are excellent developmental tools but are too resource intensive, induce survey fatigue and would misdirect the efforts of commanders.⁹⁹

“Ethics and Army Leadership: Climate Matters” is an article written by Charles D. Allen. Allen addresses the rise of unethical practices among senior leaders in the military.¹⁰⁰ He acknowledges, “the Army culture espouses commitment to the Seven Army Values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage).” however presumes, “the perception within the force is that not all members are faithful adherents.”¹⁰¹ Allen writes, “a 2005 Business Ethics Survey cited the following five factors most likely to compromise ethical behavior: 1. Pressure to meet unrealistic business objectives/deadlines 2. Desire to further one’s career 3. Desire to protect one’s livelihood 4. Working in an environment with cynicism or diminished

⁹⁸ Mintz, 7.

⁹⁹ Chaitra M. Hardison, Mikhail Zaydman, Tobi A. Oluwatola, Anna Rosefsky Saavedra, Thomas Bush, Heather Peterson, and Susan G. Straus, *360-Degree Assessments: Are They the Right Tool for the U.S. Military?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 62.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Allen, “Ethics and Army Leadership: Climate Matters,” *Parameters* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 69, accessed 14 January 2015, https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/Issues/Spring_2015/Parameters_Spring%202015%20v45n1.pdf.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

morale 5. Ignores that the act was unethical.”¹⁰² Allen quotes Ulmer’s suggestion that junior officers “expect and are prepared to support high ethical standards but are sometimes confused, frustrated, and disappointed by what they see as unethical behavior on the part of some of their seniors.”¹⁰³ Allen’s article supports this study towards determining the correlation between toxic leadership and climate.

In pursuit of answering this thesis’ first secondary question, MAJ Marcus White’s study, “The Persistence of Toxic Leadership,” provides valuable data on this subject. His study found the Army has a problem with toxic and unethical leadership.¹⁰⁴ White found this presents a problem for commanders’ ability to exercise mission command and states the problem stems from OERs and leader development.¹⁰⁵ White also recommends changes to the MSAF and the CDR360.¹⁰⁶

“Breaking the Bathsheba Syndrome: Building a Performance Evaluation System that Promotes Mission Command.” a monograph, by Curtis D. Taylor details possible solutions to toxic leadership. Taylor’s ideas stem from positive results in the private

¹⁰² Allen, 74.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰⁴ Marcus White, “The Persistence of Toxic and Unethical Leadership,” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015), 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 26.

sector.¹⁰⁷ Taylor expresses the importance of a multi-faceted approach to ensure accurate results while determining the strength of a given leader. Suggested additions to an OER include personality assessments, peer reviews, subordinate evaluations, and unbiased assessments at a testing facility.¹⁰⁸ The accumulation of various results would be presented at promotion boards.¹⁰⁹

“Toxic Followership: Who and What is it?” is an article written by MAJ Michael Boswell on toxic followership. He proposes that a toxic follower is, “highly functioning, a critical thinker, self-absorbed, manipulative and disruptive to the organizational greater goals.”¹¹⁰ While indulging deeper into toxic followership, MAJ Boswell presents Dr. Robert Kelly’s Diagram of Followership and outlines Dr. Kelly’s “five typologies that exist regarding followership.”¹¹¹ The five types of followership are; “Alienated, Passive, Exemplary, Conformist and Pragmatist.”¹¹² MAJ Boswell also states toxic followers can be more damaging than leaders because they affect both lateral and vertical rank structures.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Curtis D. Taylor, “Breaking the Bathsheba Syndrome: Building a Performance Evaluation System that Promotes Mission Command,” (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2015), 32.

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 31-35.

¹¹⁰ Michael Boswell, “Toxic Followership: Who & What is It?” *The Exceptional Release* (Summer 2015): 45.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 44.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Boswell, 44.

ADP 6-22 provides doctrinal insight on Army leadership, counterproductive and toxic leadership. As discussed earlier, there is a doctrinal gap of resources available to commanders and leaders to mitigate, self-identify and deal with toxic leadership. Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22 provides more in-depth doctrine on Army leadership and counterproductive leadership, it does not expound on toxic leadership. More is elaborated in ADP 6-22. It is surprising given the amount of emphasis Army strategic leaders have placed on eliminating toxic leadership. This supports the primary question: How can the Army implement and leverage tools and control measures to better identify toxic leaders?

Henry Rolon conducted a study identifying behaviors of toxic leaders and possible solutions.¹¹⁴ This recent research paper offers insightful information, drawing parallels to historical military leaders. Although Mr. Rolon is a member of the U.S. Border Patrol, his analysis is very pertinent to the leadership challenges the military faces. The author also offers recommendations to mitigate toxic behavior among leaders.

A group study, “Toxic Leadership: A Systemic Approach to Shift from Reactive to Proactive Solutions.” by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Fernandez de Bobadilla Lorenzo, Major Mathew Mansell, Major Troy Lane, and Captain Garway Thomas-Johnson, looks at the impacts of toxic leadership in the U.S. military.¹¹⁵ The authors identify current

¹¹⁴ Henry Rolon, “Changing Napoleonic Leadership in the Department of Homeland Security,” (Research Report, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2016).

¹¹⁵ Daniel Fernandez de Bobadilla Lorenzo, Mathew Mansell, Troy Lane, and Garway Thomas-Johnson, “Toxic Leadership: A Systemic Approach to Shift from Reactive to Proactive Solutions,” (Master’s Thesis, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2017).

resources available to leaders to mitigate toxic leadership and identify proactive solutions to combat toxic leadership. One solution is to expand viewership of CDR360 assessments to rater and senior raters. This group study builds on the Army’s implementation of the CDR360 as a method to further mitigate counterproductive behavior.

The U.S. Army conducts leadership surveys, known as “CASAL: Military Leader Findings.” which are published in a technical report.¹¹⁶ The studies apply to both military and Department of Army civilians. The most recent CASAL study in this research, conducted in 2015, shows many trends congruent with studies a decade prior regarding counterproductive leadership.¹¹⁷ This study will analyze results from these surveys.

“Identifying Toxic Leadership Behaviors and Tools to Facilitate Their Discovery” by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Michael Boger is a research project focusing on toxicity among leaders from various levels of leadership and command. Boger conducts a focus group of seven retired officers whom were toxic in their workplace.¹¹⁸ Boger categorizes leader toxicity into two categories: passive and aggressive.¹¹⁹ He focuses on identifying

¹¹⁶ The Center for Army Leadership, *Annual Leadership Survey Reports*, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, accessed 3 January 2018, <http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/mccoe/cal/ldrdevelopment>.

¹¹⁷ Ryan P. Riley, Katelyn J. Cavanaugh, John Fallesen, and Rachell L. Jones, *2015 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings*, Technical Report (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Leadership Research, Assessment and Doctrine Division, July 2016), 79.

¹¹⁸ Michael Boger, “Identifying Toxic Leadership Behaviors and Tools to Facilitate Their Discovery,” (Research Reports, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2017), 6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

these counterproductive traits prior to producing damaging results. This damage could result in mission failure, loss of equipment or readiness.¹²⁰ He recommends making Army assessments more transparent as a mitigation tool, such as modifying the 360-Degree Assessment.¹²¹ Boger recommends using results of 360 assessments to determine potential for service in significant leadership positions for both officers and NCOs.¹²²

Forsling presents an interesting profiling perspective, suggesting a “combination of selfishness and incompetence makes a toxic leader.”¹²³ He states not all selfish leaders are toxic, as selfishness coupled with competence can yield successful leaders who are self-confident.¹²⁴ Similarly, Forsling asserts that incompetent leaders are not necessarily toxic, as a capable staff can mask a leader with technical incompetence.¹²⁵ Forsling continues with recommendations for ways to mitigate toxic leadership.

“Moral Courage and Intelligent Disobedience” is an article by Ted Thomas and Ira Chaleff focusing on courage and followership. The authors argue moral courage is

¹²⁰ Boger, 26.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²³ Carl Forsling, “The Military Has a Toxic Leadership Problem,” *Task and Purpose*, 23 August 2017, accessed 3 January 2018, <http://taskandpurpose.com/military-toxic-leadership-problem/>.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

much more rare than physical courage and is vital to organizational success.¹²⁶ They also stress the importance of intelligent disobedience, which is knowing when “to disobey orders if the order is illegal.”¹²⁷ The authors explain there is a perception of the public believing the military is full of blind followers and Army Chief of Staff General Milley replied to this inaccurate generalization by stating the importance of intelligent disobedience.¹²⁸ They stated moral courage and intelligent disobedience could have prevented the scandals of Wells Fargo and Volkswagen.¹²⁹ This is important to research as it offers context and color to our study.

Summary

This chapter showed various literature on toxic leadership, research findings and identified recommendations for change from both military and civilian perspectives. It also briefly illustrated what toxic leadership looks like, toxic leadership in the U.S. Army and what current tools are available for leaders to mitigate toxic leadership. This review also shows how the military evolved from the Army identifying identification of toxic leadership, weighed positives and negatives, to find solutions. Although doctrine does not provide much guidance combating negative leadership traits, there is significant

¹²⁶ Ted Thomas, and Ira Chaleff, “Moral Courage and Intelligent Disobedience,” *Interagency Journal* 8 no. 1 (Winter 2017): 58, accessed 20 January 2018. <http://the-simonscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/IAJ-8-1-Winter2017-pg58-66.pdf>.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁸ Thomas and Chaleff, 61.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

investment to improve the organization. The next chapter outlines the research methodology in support of the research and secondary questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of conducting this study is to determine how the Army can implement and leverage tools and control measures to better identify toxic leaders. As instances of toxic leaders being relieved continue to show up in the media and stories of their destructive actions circulate military formations, this study looks at how this problem can be mitigated. The chapter discusses the research methodology used to address the problem statement, answer research questions, and draw conclusions. Furthermore, this study seeks to make recommendations and contribute to the body of knowledge on combating counterproductive and toxic leaders. The methodology and sub-methods were selected by the author to best determine if the Army has the capability to effectively mitigate toxic leaders.

Research Methodology

Michael Patton states qualitative research methods consist of “(1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents” as methods of collecting data.¹³⁰ This study employs the qualitative research methodology. It addresses Patton’s sub-methods of written documents through document analysis and addresses open-ended interviews through individual interviews. Although direct observation occurred from the author of this study, those observations will not be included in the

¹³⁰ Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1990), 10.

study. Although not including this data into the research may weaken this study's breadth according to Patton, it is not particularly relevant to answering the research question and would potentially detract from the overall research. The steps to determine the way ahead is evaluating the current tools and mitigation measures identified in chapter 2 and evidence found in individual interviews. The information will be evaluated and synthesized, providing a framework and draw real conclusions, solutions, recommendations, and consideration for further research.

The purpose of selecting qualitative methodology is to gain a deeper understanding of the literature and interview answers to determine if gaps exist while identifying the way ahead. Qualitative methodology was not selected because it would be an inefficient method given the parameters of this thesis. It is difficult to conduct quantitative research beyond what is already available through surveys already conducted by CAL.

The strength of using qualitative analysis for this thesis is leveraging individual interviews from subject-matter experts. The individual interviews assist the researcher to synthesize analysis of studies, research, and doctrine from those who conducted it and some which used quantitative methods, such as CASAL reports. This mitigates the constraint of time in this study.

The weakness of using qualitative analysis for this thesis is not gaining the perspective of finer details of organizational leadership problems. As this qualitative research gains a deeper understanding of trends and Army leader challenges, it misses important context qualitative research provides. This includes expressing Army leadership problems in numeric terms. Fortunately for this study, the Army conducts

frequent quantitative analysis of Army leaders and followers. This study can mitigate this weakness by analyzing this data in chapter 4.

Document Analysis

Toxic leadership's place in the U.S. Army is well documented and there are varying bodies of thought how to combat its existence. Document analysis methodology applied in this study compares different strategies combating and mitigating toxic leadership and draws conclusions based on evaluation criteria. As identified in chapter 2, there are many different studies giving different ideas on actions the Army should take, which must result in a healthy command climate.

The goal of document analysis is to find evidence towards answering the research questions and provide a way ahead for the Army to consider approaching toxic leadership. The study considers the control measures and doctrinal insight implemented by the Army since the inception of toxic leadership. For example, this includes control measures such as MSAF, leader doctrine and CASAL. In the example of analyzing CASAL reports, this supports answering research questions as the reports' results and findings provides a direct feedback line from the field. Although analysis already exists of some CASAL results, as outlined in chapter 2, this study seeks to connect all available CASAL findings in a qualitative methodology. This provides the opportunity to identify trends and analyze how Soldiers and Department of Army civilians perceive their leaders.

The author employed document analysis methodology-to examine what is underutilized and how tools can be maximized. To organize and synthesize data from chapter 2, word tables are used to separate and categorize current control measures, recommendations, and other findings from chapter 2. They are separated to address

research questions and provide clarity to evaluate. Criteria used will follow the Army's screening criteria of suitable, feasible and distinguishable to determine which tools, measures and recommendations fit within the parameters of the study to answer research questions.¹³¹

Individual Interviews Design

Interviews provide first-person perspective of toxic leadership and provide reliable data to evaluate and analyze. The questions are aimed to support answering research questions and gain insight from subject-matter experts on ways the Army mitigates toxic leadership. The interview questions also seek to find any upcoming doctrine or literature on the subject.

Interviewees were selected based on being subject matter experts in the field of Army Leadership. The thesis seeks input from experts whose expertise includes personnel developing leadership doctrine for the Army, retired Army officers, a recently retired Command Sergeant Major at the brigade combat team-level, a senior leader with the Department of Army Inspector General, a senior leader from Department of Army G-1 and a leadership author. Their expertise provides access to current information to assist answering the research questions.

Three interviewees were personnel from CAL, who develop Army leadership doctrine. The mission statement reads that CAL "conducts leadership and leader

¹³¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2014), 4-21.

development research, studies, analysis assessment and evaluation; provides the Army leadership and leader doctrine, products and services; develops and maintains the Army Leader Development Strategy and annexes, and manages the Army Leader Development program.”¹³² This study is fortunate to be in vicinity of CAL, which provided constant feedback to the author and assisted research. Additionally, an interviewee is a retired Army officer and renowned author on toxic leadership.

Interview Question Formulation

The goal of the interview questions is to address the problem statement, answer research questions and fill gaps identified during research. The questions aim to gain a deeper understanding of the topic from subject-matter experts who have access to the Army’s most current strategies and doctrine. The questions seek to best emulate research questions, while providing opportunity for more broad feedback. All interviewees were asked the same questions. The intent of having uniform questions is gain and understand a broad perspective from the various viewpoints of a problem many have experienced and/or studied in the military.

The interview questions used the following evaluation criteria of consideration while being formulated—clarity, brevity, biases, and relevance.¹³³ Although the questions are not survey questions, providing an opportunity to answer the question and

¹³² The Center for Army Leadership, “Center for Army Leadership (CAL) Mission Statement,” U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, accessed 3 January 2018, <https://usacac.army.mil/organizations/mccoe/cal/caloverview>.

¹³³ Lois A. Ritter and Valerie M. Sue, “Questions for Online Surveys,” *New Directions for Evaluation* 2007, no. 115 (2007): 29-31.

expound was also considered, while mitigating the potential for damages to the interviewees.

Here is a list of the interview questions:

1. Is there any emerging doctrine regarding toxic or counterproductive leadership?
 - 1a. If so, are there any tools or mitigation measures of toxic or unproductive leadership introduced?
 - 1b. If not, are there any plans to create any?
2. Are there any underutilized tools available to commanders to mitigate toxic leadership?
3. Are there any steps the U.S. Army can take to combat toxic or unproductive leadership and assist Army leaders to better see themselves?
4. Are OERs or Noncommissioned Officer evaluation reports effective ways to assess leaders in the U.S. Army and allow ratees to effectively see themselves? Why or why not?
5. What is getting commanders fired? Are there any trends?
6. Are there any plans to alter the MSAF or introduce any new self-assessment tools for leaders and or command teams?

Ethical Considerations and Recommendations

While forming interview questions, ethical considerations played a significant factor into their development. Risk mitigation was considered while forming the questions to minimize any potential damages to the interviewee. After the author completed the questions, they were submitted to the Command and General Staff Quality

Assurance Office for additional risk mitigation and screening. Not all questions proposed were used. Some were removed through the risk mitigation screening process to mitigate potential damages during the interview. Additionally, names were removed from this study to prevent any potential damages or risk to the U.S. government or individual reputation.

All interviewees were given their questions in advance of the interview to further mitigate risk and fully develop their thoughts prior to answering. Interviewees were given informed consent forms to advise them of their rights. Interviewees were briefed the purpose of the interview and what their answers would be used for. All interview responses were stored in an encrypted file with two-factor authentication.

Recommendations from the research are presented in chapter 5. The recommendations also follow the same evaluation criteria of suitable, feasible and distinguishable, discussed earlier in this chapter. The intent is to discern appropriate recommendations for the U.S. Army to implement based on the research.

Summary

This chapter framed the methodology and sub-methods employed throughout this research and a description of how the research is conducted. The methodology used seeks to draw conclusions that can be built upon, furthering the body of knowledge on toxic leadership and provide a way ahead. The next chapter will examine and analyze and synthesize the evidence researched throughout this study. It will further expound and build on the literature review and individual interviews to answer the research question and secondary questions to set conditions to determine solutions to the problem statement and make recommendations.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify tools and mitigation measures of toxic leadership. This study also looks to determine if there are underutilized tools and measures leaders can implement to foster a healthier command climate. Lastly, this study seeks to build upon existing studies of toxic leadership and set conditions for follow-on research. The aim is to advance the Army's leadership strategies, providing a way ahead for leaders to rid their formations of counterproductivity.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer all research questions. This chapter conducts qualitative analysis based off the framework identified in chapter 3. This chapter first displays results of the individual interviews and are organized by question. Then, this chapter lists primary and secondary research questions and their answers. The answers are based on qualitative analysis of literature listed in chapter 2 and results of the individual interviews. Through comparison of current Army doctrine with current research, the author can turn information into knowledge, which is used towards answering the primary and secondary research questions. This chapter concludes with a summary and set conditions for providing recommendations, conclusions, and future research.

Individual Interviews

As mentioned in chapter 3, the author of this study interviewed five individuals with extensive knowledge of Army leadership. The group has a combined experience in

the field of over 120 years. As mentioned in chapter 3, names have been omitted for the protection of the interviewees. All interviewees were asked the same questions, but not all gave answers to each question.

The first interview question asks: Is there any emerging doctrine regarding toxic or counterproductive leadership? If so, are there any tools or mitigation measures of toxic or unproductive leadership introduced? If not, are there any plans to create any? Answers to this interview question are in appendix 1. No specific emerging doctrine was identified from the respondents. However, during research with CAL, the author discovered a draft update to AR 600-100. Since it is in draft form, it cannot be used to support this study. Multiple respondents discussed the meaning of the term toxic leadership. One stated toxic is interchangeable with other terms, such as bully bosses and abusive situations. The respondent also stated doctrine is constantly emerging, affirming the Army's commitment to combating toxic leadership.

The second interview question asks: Are there any underutilized tools available to commanders to mitigate toxic leadership? One respondent stated the NCO Support Channel is an underutilized tool as well as the inspector general due to stigma. Others assert the MSAF was not developed properly, is underutilized and the assessments general officers use are better. One states there needs to be an option for junior and mid-grade leaders. Another says coaching is a highly effective tool and would be beneficial for military leaders to be coached by a civilian in a leadership-mentor capacity.

The third interview question asks: Are there any steps the U.S. Army can take to combat toxic or unproductive leadership? One reaffirms the importance of having coaching available to commanders and points to how overstretched general officers are as

senior raters to dedicate suitable and feasible mentoring to subordinates in that capacity. Another states nepotism is the greatest toxic enabler and is tolerated at high levels of leadership. The respondent says subordinate input and objective testable requirements should be input for selection or promotion boards.

The fourth interview question asks: Are OERs or NCOERs effective ways to assess leaders in the U.S. Army? Why-Why not? The respondents state yes and no regarding being effective. Two stated having a top-down single input into the evaluation reduces the integrity of the evaluation. Two others state the NCOER has evolved and become a much more effective way to assess leaders. One states the subjectivity of the evaluation system is detrimental. One claims the OER is an effective tool to identify and remove bad leaders or advance one's career expeditiously, but the Army knows the system is flawed and is working on more input data points.

The fifth interview question asks: What is getting commanders fired? Are there any trends? One stated commanders are getting fired for committing negative acts. Some did not answer with specifics. One stated the Army has made this a priority and we have seen tremendous progress within the armed forces over the past fifteen years. They later said commanders usually create a negative environment and commit another negative act. One declared toxic leaders are well-known for their toxicity among their peer cohorts.

The sixth interview question asks: Are there any plans to alter the MSAF or introduce any new assessment tools for leaders and or command teams? No new assessment tools were identified. One response does not point to a specific upcoming initiative but says the notion a leader who learns they have leadership deficiencies will change their behavior is inherently flawed.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question of this study is: How can the Army implement and leverage tools and control measures to better identify toxic leaders? Answering the primary research question requires first identifying toxic mitigation tools available. Then, exploring how the Army implements them and determine if and how the Army can better implement such measures and controls.

While conducting research it became evident there are many tools available to Army leaders to mitigate toxic leadership. Among the reviewed literature and interviews, CDR360, Unit360, Leader360, developmental counseling, OERs or NCOERs, command climate surveys and coaching-mentoring are identified as leader development tools designed to improve individuals and Army (and other services) organizations. Leaders may also leverage these developmental tools to mitigate toxic leadership when implemented by effective control measures. There are several other leader development tools not used in this study. One such tool is the Army Career Tracker, which is more focused on career progression. Another is requiring subordinate leaders to undergo a mental health evaluation.¹³⁴ These programs function outside of the scope of this study and are not suitable given the analysis rubric in table 1. For the sake of this study, the first seven programs are the toxic leadership mitigation tools identified by the author to be the centerpiece of this portion of research.

¹³⁴ Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense Instruction Number 6490.04, Subject: Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Military Services. Department of Defense, Washington, DC, March 2013, accessed 1 May 2018, www.jag.navy.mil/distrib/instructions/DODI6490.04_Mental_Health_Evals.pdf.

It is important to consider the effectiveness of these current toxic mitigation tools available to our forces. The Leader Assessment Matrix (table 1) lists these initiatives and which leaders have requirements in accordance with Army Regulations 600-20 and 600-100. On the right of the table 1, it shows who has visibility of the results of each respective program. The table shows leaders at all levels have plenty of leader development tools available to keep themselves self-aware and understand their unit's concerns. Additionally, if a leader identifies a subordinate leader who is toxic, the senior leader has the tools available to have them removed. There are nuances, though. Two percent of officers holding a CSL or CSL equivalent position were removed from their positions from 2012-2016.¹³⁵ The most common issue was failing to foster a healthy command climate. Similarly, 3 percent of Command Sergeant Majors at equal positions were removed with the most common issue being misconduct.¹³⁶ As misconduct points more towards a violation of Army Values, failing to foster a healthy command climate points toward toxic leadership. Although 3 percent does not seem like a high amount, for CSL positioned Command Sergeants Major it is 50 percent higher than their officer counterparts. Referencing table 1, it begs the question: Are senior NCOs given adequate values-based training?

¹³⁵ Leslie Smith, "Inspector General Brief" (Lecture, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, May 2018).

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Table 1. Leader Assessment Matrix

LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	REQUIRED FOR						
	Senior Officers	Mid-Grade Officers	Junior Officers	Senior NCOs	Feeds (NC)OER?	Rater Visibility	Senior Rater Vis.?
Commander 360	YES, CSL	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Leader 360	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Unit 360	Commanders	Commanders	No	No	No	If commander	If commander
Cmd. Climate Surv.	No	Co.-level cmdrs.	No	No	No	No	No
Dev. Counseling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
OER	Yes	Yes	Yes	No		Yes	Yes
NCOER	No	No	No	Yes		Yes	Yes
Mentor/Coaching	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Cmd. Inspections	No	Co.-level cmdrs.	No	No	No	No	No

Source: Created by author.

The leader development programs can be cumbersome and pointed, such as the Leader360, formerly known as MSAF. MSAF now encompasses Leader360, Unit360 and CDR360. The Leader360 is required for all leaders to conduct at a minimum of every thirty-six months or Permanent Change of Station.¹³⁷ Leaders conducting this MSAF initiative select whom they wish to be evaluated by. Completing the assessment, like the CDR360, takes approximately ten minutes to complete and survey requests are often not completed.¹³⁸ The results stay with the individual initiating the feedback request. Although ten minutes behind a computer seems innocuous, it is often difficult to find the time in an Army at war and constrained resources. Additionally, a toxic leader may choose willful ignorance and not request feedback from someone they know will assess them poorly.

Appendix 2 has several answers pointing in the same direction as an answer to the primary research question. Appendix 2c and 2d, suggest implementing current self-

¹³⁷ HQDA, AR 600-100, 20.

¹³⁸ Ackerly.

awareness tools for senior officers down to the mid-grade and junior-grade officers. The appendixes reference a peer evaluation as an effective tool to help one see themselves. This study did not identify peer evaluations being implemented as an Army initiative.

A tool that may be underutilized is coaching and mentoring. Figure 1 shows mentoring ranked as the third most effective leader development tool. One interviewee states coaching needs to be more integrated in the Army and even suggests the Army provide a civilian coach for upper-level officers who are not in the chain of command. Since mentoring is perceived as providing among the highest leader development in the active Army and may provide part of an answer for the primary research question, it is worth exploring as a course of action.

To assess the course of action of coaching, this research must identify benefits and associated risks, then identify applicable risk mitigating measures. Then, the course of action must be determined suitable, feasible and acceptable to be recommended.

Table 2. Coaching and Mentoring Matrix

Should coaches be assigned to upper-level officers?	
Benefits	Risks
Gives rated officer an additional mentor	Very resource intensive
Can potentially improve unit performance	Potentially confusing command structure
Reduces burden on raters and senior raters, allowing for quality mentorship	May experience conflicting mentorship guidance

Source: Created by author.

To properly analyze table 2, the risks must be addressed and mitigated within the confines and limitations of this study. The first identified risk is this course of action is very resource intensive. This would require additional personnel to be hired and assigned to identified officers. The fiscal cost can be mitigated by making it an additional duty for a DoD civilian. This would potentially conflict with the DoD civilians’ job description. If the DoD civilian was able to, it would significantly mitigate the fiscal strain. The second and third risks are related. Leadership fratricide could occur having two different mentors actively involved in the officer’s career with conflicting information. This could be mitigated by permitting one-way dialogue from the senior rater to the coach, who can express their command vision, expectations, and concerns. The coach in this instance would be in “receive mode.”

To determine if this course of action should be considered a useful recommendation for the Army, it must meet the suitable, feasible and acceptable as described in chapter 3. The bullets below explore the validity of this course of action.

Suitable. Assigning a coach would absolutely be suitable supporting the senior rater's guidance and support the mission so long as the time requirement is not extensive and detracts from the unit's mission.

Feasible. This course of action is too resource dependent, even factoring risk mitigation measures. There is simply not enough DoD civilians or funds to hire coaches for identified officers to receive the mentorship Army-wide. It is not impossible, but the prospect of stretching our DoD civilian workforce thin or hiring additional civilians when our DoD civilians already experience personnel shortages would potentially be damaging to the Army.

Acceptable. There is a mild amount of risk regarding providing conflicting mentorship to the rated officer. However, the benefits of posturing the coach to be an extension of the senior rater's guidance could yield significant benefits as mentoring ranks very highly among for leader development in figure 2.

This course of action is not able to be developed and recommended since it is not feasible based on the analysis above. Further research on coaching and mentoring could yield different results. Given the personnel shortages and high OPTEMPO the Army faces today with constrained resources, this course of action is not feasible, but certainly worthy of further research.

To conclude answering the primary research question, there is no simple solution to eradicate toxic leadership. No current tool available completely mitigates its existential threat to formations. There are plenty of tools available which have evolved over the past decade to treat this problem of toxicity. Army senior leaders must prioritize to their subordinate leaders to implement a strong and robust leader development program which

includes leader self-assessment. This means senior leaders placing leader development with specified directives aimed at increasing leader self-awareness measures as a high priority in annual and quarterly training guidance. Furthermore, steps should be taken to streamline assessment tools to make them less time consuming.

Secondary Research Question #1

The first secondary question is: Does the Army inadvertently develop leaders to be toxic? To answer this question research looks at the strategy and methods the Army develops its leaders. Analyzing and evaluating these methods, then identifying possible developmental gaps leads to answering this question.

The Army considers itself a values-based organization with its seven Army Values- Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. These are engrained into every Soldier, both officer and enlisted, who learn all must, “live them every day in everything they do—whether they’re on the job or off.”¹³⁹ Any violation of the Army Values can potentially lead to the end of a Soldier’s career. The most recent version of the Company Grade OER updated in November 2015 removes the seven yes/no block check Army Values section. Instead, there is a character block with room for narrative where officers are rated by their rater by, “adherence to Army Values, Empathy, and Warrior Ethos/Service Ethos and Discipline. Fully supports SHARP, EO, and EEO.”¹⁴⁰ During research no evidence was found regarding the impact of this

¹³⁹ U.S. Army, “The Army Values,” The Official Home Page of the United States Army, accessed 20 April 2018, <https://www.army.mil/values>.

¹⁴⁰ Department of Defense, DA Form 67-10-1, Officer Evaluation Report, November 2015, 1.

change, which would most likely take more years to quantify. Physically, the Army Values occupy less area on the newest OER and there is no longer an explicit box-check of the Army Values that could potentially end an officer's career. The rater still maintains the ability to evaluate the rated officer poorly based on character in a paragraph format. The change is very noticeable, though, and over time could potentially minimize the importance of values-based character as a measurement of performance and potential.

Appendixes 4a and 4b both state the Army's evaluation system is not effective mitigating toxic leadership. One interviewee states, "We observe that any system that relies on single pointed data and from a singular perspective is flawed. The single pointed data is the OER and singular point of perspective is that of the supervisor." (See appendix 4a.) Another interviewee mentions OERs are subjective and toxic leaders are rarely toxic to their superiors. These answers identify a potential problem in the evaluation system. A ratee may become consumed by the prospect of their raters' and senior raters' rating they will do anything to achieve the highest marks. This includes destructive leadership styles to subordinates they are expected to lead and develop.

According to CASAL reports, from 2009 to 2015 counterproductive leadership remains relatively low with less than four percent viewed as more counterproductive traits than productive.¹⁴¹ Simultaneously, though, career satisfaction waned from 82 percent to 73 percent among Army leaders from the ranks of sergeant to colonel.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Riley et al., ix.

¹⁴² Ibid., viii.

Additionally, morale throughout the active component has been stable throughout the same timeframe.

Table 3. Ratings of Immediate Superior Demonstration of Counterproductive Leadership Behaviors

AC Leader Perceptions of Their Immediate Superior’s Exhibition of Counterproductive Leadership Behaviors	% Agree/Strongly Agree			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
My immediate superior...				
Sets misplaced priorities that interfere with accomplishing goals	19%	20%	19%	20%
Does little to help his/her team be more cohesive	18%	19%	18%	20%
Blames other people to save himself/herself embarrassment	16%	16%	16%	17%
Berates subordinates for small mistakes	16%	15%	14%	16%

Source: Ryan P. Riley, Katelyn J. Cavanaugh, John Fallesen, and Rachell L. Jones, 2015 *Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings*, Technical Report (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Leadership Research, Assessment and Doctrine Division, July 2016), 76.

CASAL reports do not make a distinction between toxic and counterproductive leadership and state the perception among leaders is low.¹⁴³ Table 3 shows less than a fifth of the active component perceive their superiors exhibiting counterproductive behaviors. The CASAL report also states, “the presence of counterproductive leadership or negative leadership in the Army and its effects on Soldier and mission outcomes continues to be an important area of study and needed improvement.”¹⁴⁴

No evidence discovered during research yields an objective answer one way or the other. Using qualitative analysis of data researched there is evidence to support both

¹⁴³ Riley et al., 76.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 75.

yes and no. Judging by how positively subordinate leaders view their superiors and career satisfaction numbers demonstrates Organizations who do not prioritize leader development can absolutely develop leaders to be toxic.

Secondary Research Question #2

The second of three secondary research questions is: What is the relationship between Army culture(s) and toxic leadership? As mentioned in chapter 1, the Army defines culture as, “the set of long-held values, beliefs, expectations, and practices shared by a group that signifies what is important and influences how an organization operates.”¹⁴⁵ To answer this question, this thesis analyzes existing perspectives on Army Culture and if any links exist between culture and toxic leadership.

All Army organizations have distinct cultures, and even sub-cultures. This is neither inherently positive or negative, as organizations are diverse in mission, personnel, equipment, leadership styles and artifacts. For example, the culture of a garrison staff in Europe is significantly different than a brigade combat team of an airborne unit in the 82nd Airborne Division. Both organizations are susceptible to toxic leadership.

Allen’s study on Army Culture provides perspective on the relationship between competence and character. He acknowledges, “the Army culture espouses commitment to the Seven Army Values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage).” however presumes, “the perception within the force is that not all members are faithful adherents.”¹⁴⁶ Allen writes, “a 2005 Business Ethics Survey cited

¹⁴⁵ HQDA, AR 600-100, 8.

¹⁴⁶ Allen, 75.

the following five factors most likely to compromise ethical behavior: 1. Pressure to meet unrealistic business objectives/deadlines 2. Desire to further one's career 3. Desire to protect one's livelihood 4. Working in an environment with cynicism or diminished morale 5. Ignores that the act was unethical."¹⁴⁷ Allen quotes Ulmer's suggestion that, junior officers "expect and are prepared to support high ethical standards but are sometimes confused, frustrated, and disappointed by what they see as unethical behavior on the part of some of their seniors."¹⁴⁸ Ulmer's observation may be true in some circumstances, as there is evidence of toxic leadership. Conversely, 85 percent of subordinate leaders see their superiors as upholding ethical standards while only 5 percent disagree.¹⁴⁹

One study of Army Culture states a unit's culture is a predictor of leaders' behaviors and outcomes.¹⁵⁰ It argues organizations become toxic when leaders sacrifice their values for the values of the organization. This assertion presumes organizations have negative norms and lasting anchors, which can easily be altered from the top and adopted by everyone below.¹⁵¹ One indicator of this is a leader of an organization who permits bad behavior and will establish them as a toxic norm.¹⁵² It is difficult to stop a

¹⁴⁷ Allen, 74.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹⁴⁹ Riley et al., 77.

¹⁵⁰ Aubrey, 1.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵² Ibid., 8.

toxic leader in the Army's force structure. As commanders provide leadership through exercising mission command, middle-managers become task-focused, which translates to espousing results-driven values. It is important for middle-managers to check the pulse of their subordinate organizations to ensure they better understand the culture of the organization they run. It is easy to turn a blind eye when an organization keeps performing the best in every objective measurement to maintain its stellar reputation when it comes at the expense of the higher organization's core values. Championing this type of culture is unsustainable and will lead to significantly damaging results. Similarly, subordinates can equally perpetuate and promulgate toxicity, even at the lowest of levels. Needing to belong is natural behavior as "individuals will sacrifice a great deal to obtain and maintain membership in a group."¹⁵³ This can lead to glorifying leaders of an organization who achieve success, even if not in line with the Army Values.¹⁵⁴ The Army has done a good job recognizing this paradigm and has many tools and control measures to break its existence. For example, Army commanders have open door policies to allow subordinates to express concerns they are not comfortable addressing to their immediate supervisor. Similar resources are available, such as the inspectors general, chaplains, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Equal Opportunity representatives and chain of command.

Toxic cultures can run rampant through an organization from a leader who surrounds themselves with a staff of toxic enablers. One response from an interviewee

¹⁵³ Reed, 53.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 54.

states, “nepotism is the greatest enabler of toxic leadership. Toxic leaders are tolerated and allowed to attain high rank because of their connections to senior individuals.” (See appendix 3a.) The same school of thought can reign true in the private sector. Lipman-Blumen asserts some CEOs become drunk on success and surround themselves with subordinates who emulate this mantra.¹⁵⁵

A clear relationship of enabling behavior exists between Army Culture and toxicity. The Army is a hotbed of opportunities for leaders to develop and exhibit toxic leadership in an environment of warriors who embody the Warrior Creed and are mission focused. It is incumbent on the middle-managers, often field-grade officers, to maintain open communication with subordinate organizations to ensure the organization does not develop a culture of trading values for short-term gains.

Secondary Research Question #3

The final secondary research question is: Should MSAF, command climate survey and like assessments’ results be shared with commanders’ raters and senior raters? Answers to this question primarily come from analysis of CASAL studies and is a conglomeration of analyzing the answers to previous research questions. To answer this question, it is critical to gain an understanding of the scope of effectiveness of the assessment tools available to the Army. Figure 2, below, shows how Army leaders in the active component view the effectiveness of leader development tools available to them.

¹⁵⁵ Lipman-Blumen, 150.

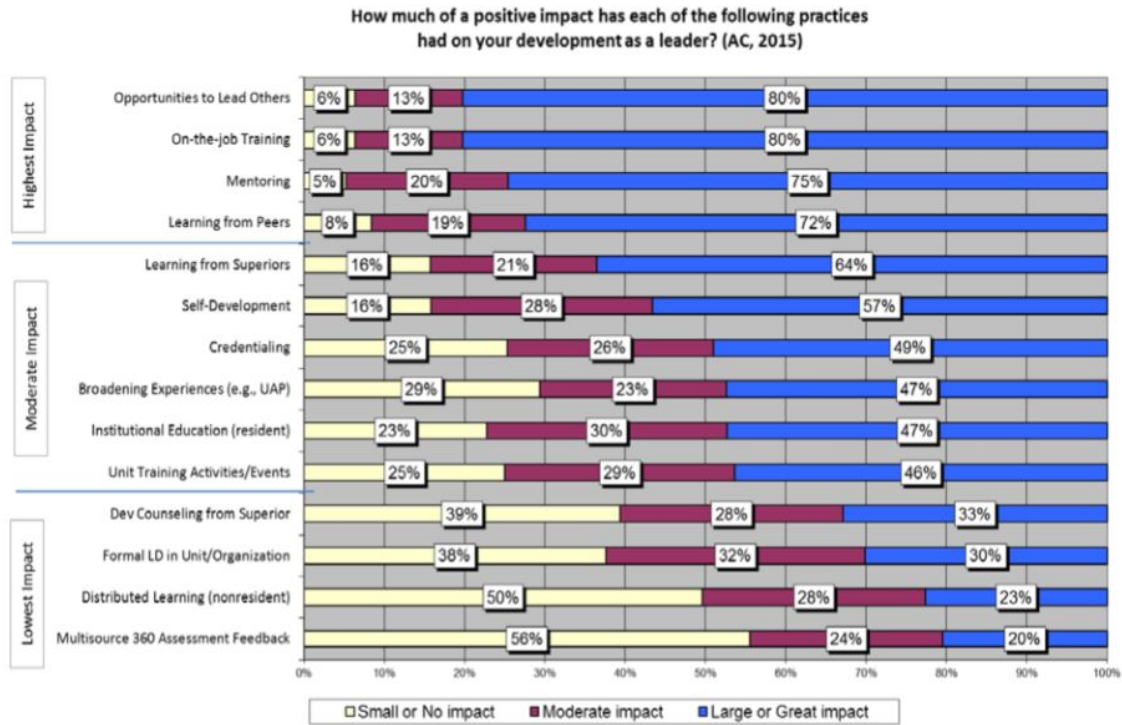


Figure 2. Leader Development Review

Source: Ryan P. Riley, Katelyn J. Cavanaugh, John Fallesen, and Rachell L. Jones, 2015 *Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings*, Technical Report (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Leadership Research, Assessment and Doctrine Division, July 2016), 108.

Not all of the practices listed apply to this study as they are subjective functions of leadership in the workplace. This does not insinuate on-the-job-training, for example, is not an effective way to develop leaders. Rather, the scope of this thesis focuses on bridging the doctrinal gap listed in the problem statement. In figure 2, the lowest scoring practice is MSAF for having a positive impact on leader development of leaders from sergeant to colonel. According to interviews, MSAF is an effective tool for leaders to effectively see themselves. If that is true, its implementation could be the problem. This provides direction towards answering this research question. If all MSAF results are

required to be visible to raters and senior raters, rated leaders might derive more utility from MSAF. If required, the rated leader would focus more on their leadership style and ensuring their subordinates are treated in accordance with the Army Values and they are fostering a healthy command climate. Table 4 (below) maps out the variables of implementing research question 3.

Table 4. MSAF Visibility Matrix

Should raters and senior raters have visibility of MSAF results?	
Benefits	Risks
Provides incentive to develop leader traits	Could lead to pandering to subordinates
Rated leader has an additional accountability mechanism	May place a burden on rater and senior rater
Rater and senior rater have a better snapshot of ratee; more accurate OER/NCOER	May enable toxicity and retribution to subordinates if given a negative assessment

Source: Created by author.

To analyze figure 4, mitigation measures must be accounted for regarding the three risks. Regarding the first risk, there are several preventive measures to address the potential of commander or leaders pandering to their subordinates, which would detract from the combat effectiveness of an organization. Requiring visibility but not requiring MSAF results to be reflected on the evaluation could mitigate pandering. If a leader knows their assessments' results are visible but not shared on the report, this may be a good balance to prevent pandering. For example, senior raters have visibility on APFT results, but are not required to share them on evaluations. The second risk, burden, can be

mitigated by requiring visibility, but not mandating the rater or senior rater actually review it. This means raters and senior raters have the option to consider viewing MSAF, based on their priorities and personal rubric of evaluation. The third risk of enabling toxicity already has a mitigating measure in place. If a member or members of an organization feels they are receiving retaliation, they can utilize the inspector general, open-door policy and/or chain of command as a resource.

Table 4 as a course of action must be suitable, feasible and acceptable as stated in chapter 3 to be considered usable. The data below considers the suitability, feasibility, and acceptability of MSAF visibility to raters and senior raters.

Suitable. According to the Army's strategic leaders based on guidance listed in chapter 2, providing raters and senior raters visibility of MSAF results of ratees is suitable. The Army's priorities continually include readiness and leader development. The aim of this course of action is to improve existing leader development tools by mitigating toxic leadership.

Feasible. Providing raters and senior raters visibility of MSAF results of ratees is absolutely feasible. It requires no change to evaluation reports and minimal changes to doctrine. It would require CAL to research and potentially create a pilot program, but is nothing resource-intensive, such as requiring a DOTMLPF solution.

Acceptable. There is little cost and risk to balance. The risks can be acceptably mitigated as listed in figure 4. Further development of this course of action may identify more benefits and risks.

Through analyzing this course of action, it is suitable, feasible and acceptable to implement as a mitigating measure of toxic leadership. According to Figure 2, we find

the current MSAF is not seen as an effective tool which the Army has invested significant resources towards improving. Currently, if a leader receives feedback through MSAF and they are given data stating they are a toxic leader, it is up to the individual to desire to change. According to appendix 6a, it is a mistake to assume one will change when given the data- especially if their bosses are pleased with their performance.

If a leader realizes a subordinate is toxic, they can simply relieve them from their position, or give a negative evaluation report which effectively ends their prospect of promotion which eventually ends service. According to interviewees, though, leaders are often unaware of subordinate leaders' toxicity. As of now, senior raters are not required to have any visibility of their ratee's self-assessment results. This leads one to consider if there is enough incentive for leaders to listen, internalize and change upon feedback from subordinates of their organization (or even external observers) their leadership style is counterproductive.

Appendix 4a states concern over pandering to subordinates and asserts, "we must take care not to turn it into a popularity contest and we must take care to avoid setting up an incentive system that encourages supervisors to pander to their subordinates. That's not particularly that effective of an approach and has some significant downsides to it." (See appendix 4a.) This makes sense in a pragmatic sense that leaders must meet mission requirements and make informed values-based decisions. These decisions may be unpopular, but commanders must have the latitude of making them without fear of pandering to subordinates, which may cloud decision-making.

A differing view is that leaders can create two separate realities for themselves—one for their superiors and one for subordinates.¹⁵⁶ This type of behavior is susceptible to the halo effect, where raters and senior raters have a cognitive bias towards their ratee who impresses well upon them and infers the ratee does well to their subordinates. The halo effect is a dangerous bias that could be a toxic enabler. One interviewee stated, “if you give somebody the data and if they look at the data, they (evaluated subject) will change their behavior as a result of that data. I think behavioral change is much more complicated than that and much more difficult without an accountability mechanism.” (See appendix 6a.)

The overwhelming evidence points to the notion that rated leaders in the Army need a better accountability mechanism for themselves to bridge the common operating picture of the organization (performance, climate, and culture) so an accurate evaluation or assessment can be given. If a leader has incentive to truly listen, internalize and change toxic leadership styles, organizations can improve at every level. There is needed balance not to pander and maintain the best ability to exercise mission command. It is also important not to overburden senior raters. One interviewee recalled a division commander was the senior rater for fifty-two subordinates. (See appendix 3a.) A battalion commander, for example, who knows his CDR360 results are available to his senior rater may become more aware of their behaviors and potentially mitigate toxic leadership.

¹⁵⁶ U.S. Government, U.S. Military, Department of Defense, Department of The Army, and Strategic Studies Institute, *Breaking the Bathsheba Syndrome: Building a Performance Evaluation System That Promotes Mission Command - Evaluating and Selecting Military Leaders, Army Leadership, Officer Evaluation, Interview* (Jerome, ID: Progressive Publishing, 2017), 13.

Summary

As mentioned in appendix 2a, there is constant emerging leadership doctrine and tools being implemented from CAL and other DoD-wide directives to improve the doctrinal strategies of Army leadership. As the problem of toxic leadership is well documented and researched, the Army made it a priority to correct this problem. The Army utilizes tools and implements control measures to improve its culture in an environment where toxicity can mask itself in many forms and have devastating results. Leaders can best mitigate toxic leadership in their organizations by making leader development a priority. The next chapter provides conclusions and recommendations for this research. The author interprets findings from chapter 4, gives meaning to the results and discusses unexpected findings. Chapter 5 concludes this thesis with recommendations for further studies and actions.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to determine how the Army can better implement tools and control measures to combat toxic leadership. The current problem is the Army has a leadership doctrine gap, which currently does not give guidance on how toxic leadership can be mitigated. Instead, doctrine only gives a definition and brief explanation of what toxic leadership is and its effects on organizations. Bridging this doctrine gap provides commanders and senior leaders a strategy to aid fostering a healthy command climate and rid its formations of toxic leaders.

Meaning of Findings and Recommendations

Research discovered extensive collective scholarly knowledge on toxic leadership exists. The Army has been diligent in understanding the scope of this complex leadership problem and made significant strides disseminating this phenomenon to inform commanders of the potential hazards within their formations. The result of this effort shaped many of the questions and findings of CASAL reports as well as contributed to changes to how the Army frames negative leadership in Army doctrine. The author found most research struggles to objectify toxic leadership into specific terms to enable decisive action to combat its existence. This study found the title “toxic” is not significant—be it *toxic*, *counterproductive*, or *destructive leadership*. The aforementioned terms are merely symptoms of a deeper problem, such as incompetence, poor time management, lack of concern for subordinates, or simply not living by the Army Values. If the Army is unable

to provide commanders with a specific strategy to combat toxic leadership, the term should be removed from doctrine and reclassified to something less nebulous and more attainably combatable.

The primary research question asks: How can the Army implement and leverage tools and control measures to better identify toxic leaders? To answer the primary research question, the author first identified which toxic leadership mitigation and leader development tools are currently available to the Army and how control measures are implemented. The author then analyzed how effective these tools are based on survey results, inspector general reports, and other data.

The study found the Army can better implement and leverage toxic mitigating and leader development tools by providing an incentive mechanism for leaders to develop themselves and pay attention to feedback. This mechanism provides motivation for leaders to be mindful of negative leadership attributes. Table 2 shows that the MSAF does not develop leaders as well as nearly every other leadership development tool the Army employs. In its current state, the MSAF is not an effective leader development tool.

Due to the ill-defined guidance on toxic and counterproductive leadership in Army doctrine discussed throughout this thesis the author recommends providing specific guidance to combat and mitigate these destructive leadership traits. The author specifically recommends ADRP 6-22 identify the resources available to commanders and senior leaders to alleviate toxic behavior in their formations. The author also recommends presenting applicable CASAL results in ADRP 6-22 showing which leader development tools are most effective in order for commanders and senior leaders to improve and maximize their leadership development program. If providing such guidance is not

possible, the author recommends not using the term “toxic” to describe negative leadership and use a term that can be better defined, objectified, and mitigated.

Results of all MSAF surveys and assessments should be available to both raters and senior raters. Rater and senior rater should not be required to review nor specifically cite or reference results. Results should be made available as a measure to provide seniors the most relevant possible information about the rated leader and their organization. There should not be a change to the OER/NCOER based on this study, nor require MSAF results be shared on the OER/NCOER. The benefit of this recommendation is rated leaders are given incentive to consider the effect of their leadership styles and will likely better develop themselves and subordinates. It also does not overly burden the rater and senior raters as they are given more information and no additional requirements. If the Army decides not to undertake this recommendation of rater and senior rater visibility of results, CAL should develop a replacement for the MSAF.

This thesis found no evidence the Army inherently develops leaders to be toxic. However, the Army could be a place where toxic leaders manifest themselves based on its unique mission, yet toxicity is relatively low. The Army has a unique mission, being available to deploy around the world at a moment’s notice to fight and win the nation’s wars. This results in a mission-first mentality. The toxic leadership brews from an evaluation system that is single-point sourced from the top-down. Fortunately, the Army is a values-based organization and has many leader development tools available to commanders. Toxicity can be mitigated by commanders making leader development a priority and the Army continuing to be innovative finding leader development tools and implementing effective control measures.

During interviews, it became apparent the respondents felt the OER is not effective. According to them, the top-down and single pointed data stream is too subjective and narrow to be an effective evaluation of performance. One interviewee stated the Army knows this is a problem but has not made effective changes yet. This study found no solutions to this perceived problem. This thesis does not make any recommendations to change the OER based on this issue.

While conducting research with CAL, the Inspector General, and Army G-1, the author discovered there are Army initiatives underway to combat toxic leadership. A new unit assessment program is being developed but is not ready for release. Additionally, a revised AR 600-100 is being drafted and has some doctrinal changes regarding toxic leadership. Although details of these changes and initiatives are not available for public release, it is important to recognize the limitations of this study, and its reinforcement of the Army's commitment to developing its leaders.

For Further Research

As the post-Goldwater Nichols Act military becomes more operationally joint, will OER/NCOER become joint? Further research needs to examine the tools and control measures other branches of service use to combat toxic leadership aside from MSAF, which is DoD-wide. Additionally, research doctrine of other services and whether leadership doctrine needs to be a more joint venture. If so, does the Army have the most extensive leadership doctrine, and how would services integrate leadership doctrine to mitigate counterproductive leadership and assess commanders, leaders, command climate, and organizations?

This study was unable to find implementing coaching a viable course of action based on the parameters of a recommendation from a subject matter expert on Army leadership. Due to the limitation of time and resources during the research, the course of action development itself was inherently limited. The recommendation of incorporating coaching into the Army's leader development regimen is absolutely worth researching. Coaching is worthwhile because mentorship was found to be among the most effective methods of leader development in the Army. This study recommends researching how the Army can better implement coaching and mentoring as means to develop leaders' EQ and leadership style.

This thesis recommends conducting research, surveys, and course of action development on the recommendation of the primary research question, which proposes granting rater and senior rater access to all MSAF results. As this study determined it to be a valid course of action, the author recommends CAL set up a pilot program to determine effectiveness of the course of action. The author recommends conducting a survey of military postgraduate schools' students to determine if such visibility has any negative effects not considered in this study.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTION #1 WITH RESPONSES

Question	Response
<p>1. Is there any emerging doctrine regarding toxic or counterproductive leadership?</p> <p>1.a. If so, are there any tools or mitigation measures of toxic or unproductive leadership introduced?</p> <p>1.b. If not, are there any plans to create any?</p>	<p>a) I have always been enamored with the work of Andrew Schmidt out of the University of Maryland who developed a toxic leadership scale. It is a reliable and valid instrument that measures the extent of toxic leadership in survey form. So, I think that's a good place to start. There have been other measures out there. I have used some of them. such as the Petty Tyranny Organization Scale. But I think the best one, developed to date, has been Schmidt's toxic leadership scale. In terms of emerging doctrine, it's emerging all the time. There is increasing research done across multiple fields that are providing us a greater insight into the impact of toxic leadership, the scope and nature of the phenomenon. We also must understand that it comes under many names, many key words, not just toxic leadership, but bullying in the work place, bully bosses, abusive situation, is a common word in the managerial leadership. There's abusive work places, destructive leadership. When one is researching this topic, the researchers should be alert to a variety of key words and topics that overlap in many respects depending on one's definition of toxic leadership.</p>
	<p>b) CAL has produced leadership doctrine that addresses "toxic" leadership, though often other terms such as "destructive" leadership are used instead. AR600-100 address and defines destructive leadership. The CDR360 program was intended to require BN and BDE commanders to receive 360-feedback and help ID toxic leaders. This tool was primarily for leader development, but would have given Division and BDE leadership visibility if their subordinates were displaying toxic traits.</p>
	<p>c) Back in 2004-2005, while at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, started using an evaluation questionnaire similar to now the 360-degree evaluation tool.</p>

Question	Response
	<p>d) There is no current doctrine that specifically tackles toxic or counterproductive leadership, but efforts to assist leaders with diversity and inclusion are being produced at the DoD level. I do not see where toxic leadership and counterproductive leadership will be addressed directly. The military industrial complex does not work that way. If these issues are addressed with true justice and equality at the core assisting Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians, what we know of the DoD would be seen almost as a religious organization. A greater amount of responsibility comes with being considered an organization of that stature.</p>

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTION #2 WITH RESPONSES

Question	Response
<p>2. Are there any underutilized tools available to commanders to mitigate toxic leadership?</p>	<p>a) My approach to this subject has been largely focused on convincing leaders that toxic leadership is a pernicious phenomenon that should be addressed and giving them permission, if you will, to address toxic leaders in their organizations. There's a lot of concern of due process, about giving people chances and second chances and all of that is right and good but in the end, toxic leaders frequently, when they are abusive, they don't change their spots. They should be addressed with intention and given an opportunity to change their behavior. But, I am in favor if a person cannot treat another with dignity and respect, if they humiliate and denigrate subordinates then they should be removed expeditiously. The tool is, in part, elimination with prejudice and I don't think anyone should feel guilty of that. Again, what I said was, you need to give them a chance and one tool that's under-utilized example is coaching. I think once military officers reach a certain level, they should be assigned a coach anyway. Someone who is not military, who is of a professional coach and I think every leader of a certain level needs a) a person they can talk to, whose not in their chain of command and b) a person that can look them in the eye and say do you understand that your people positively hate you and here's why. They need to be able to have that conversation and only a coach can do that. The chain of command is not equipped to perform that function and will not perform that function. In some cases when a person is pathological, those are extreme cases (needing a command-directed mental evaluation), but extreme cases do occur and they are something we need to pay attention to. A person could be a sociopath, a psychopath or narcissistic to the point of failure. They could be under exceptional stress in a way that is negatively affecting their personality. Psychological intervention should not be out of the question.</p> <p>b) The MSAF program has been poorly developed and utilized by the Army. General Officers are required to use more thorough 360 evaluations which should help mitigate toxic leadership in their ranks.</p>

Question	Response
	<p>c) The MSAF is a beneficial tool; however, it is only used at the senior level. Additionally, when it is sent out, it goes to who the individual wants feedback from. If Commanders really want an honest assessment, the assessment should be sent out by the leader's mentor.</p>
	<p>d) The Army needs to come up with an option for its junior and mid-grade leaders as well.</p>
	<p>e) The Inspector General's (IG) Office is a great program that is bound to be impartial when Soldiers, Family members and civilians request assistance, not complain. The misnomer about the Inspector General's office remains that it's a complaint office that gets leaders fired . . . very untrue. The IG is there for the leadership and the Soldiers, not just the command for which they are assigned. The biggest underutilized "tool" to combat and mitigate toxic leadership is the NCO Support Channel. Command Sergeant Majors, Sergeant Majors and First Sergeants have a duty to execute the mission directed by the commander. Missions fail when toxic leadership is ingrained within an organization. The aforementioned Senior NCOs have a duty to ensure mission is accomplished to the standard while taking care of Soldiers. Soldiers cannot be taken care of when toxicity reigns. Whether Senior NCOs must be honest with their commanders, platoon leaders or section leaders to point out those toxic leaders or root them out of the enlisted and NCO Corps, this underutilized group of leaders must be given this mission for we are the eyes, ears and lifeblood of every Army organization.</p>

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTION #3 WITH RESPONSES

Question	Response
<p>3. Are there any steps the U.S. Army can take to combat toxic or unproductive leadership?</p>	<p>a) I really do like the idea of coaching. I think the U.S. Army puts so much faith in the chain of command. We really want the chain of command to work and we want supervisors in the chain of command to be mothers, fathers, confessors, mentors, evaluators, and the truth is it is a pipe dream. It's asking too much. That kind of enlightened supervision that can cross the line between the evaluator and the mentor or, the coach, the advisor, the confidant almost never happens. When it does happen, it is exceptional and its wonderful, but it is too high a bar to expect of everyone especially when we have very wide spans of control. (Regarding) The average two-star (general officer) senior rater, look at how many people they senior rate. When I was a separate company commander in a division I believe the number was 52. There was no way the kind of discussions or contact we would like to have happen is going to happen. I think the chain of command, although it's a wonderful thing, has limitations and that needs to be augmented through other means. For the senior rater, it is a moving target. The frequency of interaction at the captain to major rank with senior raters is pretty sparse.</p>
	<p>b) Nepotism is the greatest enabler of toxic leadership. Toxic leaders are tolerated and allowed to attain high rank because of their connections to senior individuals. Requiring subordinate input to evaluations and objective (tests) requirements as input to boards for promotion or selection could help combat nepotism and toxic leadership.</p>
	<p>c) Leaders should be more proactive in addressing the challenges of toxic and unproductive leadership. With the current OPTEMPO of most units, it is easy for this subject to get put on the back burner until it has become an issue.</p>

Question	Response
	<p>d) Several steps are available to combat toxic and unproductive leadership. I will provide two. One step is to ensure all Soldiers who have been found to be substantiated with equal opportunity, Inspector General, SHARP or 15-6 investigations are held accountable to the highest standard . . . ALL Soldiers. The second step is to reorganize the Army promotion system. Many Soldiers base their success off making the next promotion. Character must be a more important trait considered when promoting Soldiers to leadership ranks. When enlisted Soldiers make Sergeant and officers make Captain, there is a different expectation for those Soldiers are directly responsible for the lives of Soldiers on and off the battlefield.</p> <p>e) I have had a few junior and senior NCOs that fell into the toxic leader arena. They were removed from their leadership position and placed in a staff assignment and mentored by a Senior NCO or peer. After a period of at least six months we would determine if they were ready to go back to leading subordinates. I did this at the BDE level with the support of my BN CSMs. The few instances in which we did this, it proved to be an effective tool.</p>

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTION #4 WITH RESPONSES

Question	Response
<p>4. Are OERs/NCOERs effective ways to assess leaders in the U.S. Army? Why/Why not?</p>	<p>a) To some degree they are effective. In the extreme cases these are very good or very bad. You can typically rely on the NCOER and OER system to weed out, or to identify for speedy advancement or assignment to key responsibilities. I am not a big critic of the NCOER system except when it comes to the topic of toxic leadership or destructive leadership. We observe that any system that relies on single pointed data and from a singular perspective is flawed. The single pointed data is the OER and singular point of perspective is that of the supervisor. The supervisor-centric evaluation process is insufficient and we've known that for a long time and I have seen progress in the Army coming up with other data points such as 360-degree (evaluation) feedback. For a long time general officers had been engaging in peer evaluation. General officers at a certain level, one and two-stars, get peer evaluations and I think that's insightful. I think that's useful. There is some subordinate evaluation that's beginning to take place and the thing about subordinate evaluations is that you have to ask them the right questions. We really shouldn't ask them to evaluate their supervisors as a top down evaluation system would do. We need to ask them if they are being cared for, if they are being trained well, if they are being treated with dignity and respect. If we ask the right questions then we will develop insights about the quality of leadership they have received. We must take care not to turn it into a popularity contest and we must take care to avoid setting up an incentive system that encourages supervisors to pander to their subordinates. That's not particularly that effective of an approach and has some significant downsides to it. I have faith most soldiers understand what good leadership looks like and they know when they are getting it and they know when they are not. Some of that could be out of their hands, or of their supervisor. Maybe they have insufficient resources to perform their mission, which can not be faulted to their supervisor. Again, if they are being humiliated or denigrated and they are not given respect as human beings, that is</p>

Question	Response
	discernable and we ought to take measures to determine if that is the case or not.
	b) They are not effective. OERs/NCOERs are top down, entirely subjective evaluations - grounded only in what supervisors think about their subordinates. Since toxic leaders are rarely toxic to their superiors, a top-down evaluation system cannot control them.
	c) As far as NCOERS are concerned, the recent change in NCO Reporting System is a good start. I believe this will provide a more accurate report card and forcing function on the writer to dig into the Soldier more effectively.
	d) Evaluations are an effective way to assess leaders. The evolution of NCO evaluations streamlined some of the inflation of evaluations to a degree, but Soldiers will always find a way to gain an edge with the comments and far exceeds excellence marks. With both officer and NCO evaluations, leaders must take time to think about the Soldier they are rating when it's time to write the evaluation. Evaluations are only one way to assess leaders only IF raters are directed to capture positive and negative events during that rating period. Assessing leaders through evaluations is effective and will continue to be effective. The honesty and integrity of our raters may be in question but not the evaluation.

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTION #5 WITH RESPONSES

Question	Response
<p>5. What is getting commanders fired? Are there any trends?</p>	<p>a) There has been movement on this. Understand that I've been looking at this topic since 2003. In 2003, when one raised the topic of toxic leadership, the response was crickets. There was just nobody talking about it and nobody concerned about it. Over a period of years now the subject has entered the Army lexicon. Not only the Army lexicon but other services. Now people can talk about it and now you can mention toxic leadership or abusive supervision or just destructive leadership and people will nod their head. It is now a thing and when it is a thing, then it becomes something to be avoided and other initiatives that will follow. The needle has moved a great deal. The question is has it moved enough and I can not answer that question. But if you had told me, but if you had told me, 10 to 15 years ago that a captain of a naval vessel at sea would be relieved, not because they ran aground, not because they performed some hideous act of seamanship, but merely because of the command climate that he had established on their ship, I would have been in disbelief. But it has happened and its happened more than once. So, there has been progress and in terms of trends I still believe it is the case that commanders are typically not relieved for creating a bad command climate. They typically create a bad climate and then do something else. It is in the course of the other thing, that investigation for whatever that in the course of looking at that, the inspectors determine that command climate is in the tank and then they determine the other behaviors in the leadership that may have put the command climate in the tank and that is how people get relieved. It's rarely command climate alone. It is rarely the behavior of the commander alone unless it is an illegal action or something similar. But once people start boring in and actually look at the organization, that is when all the worms crawl out and they say, "oh, this is a terrible command climate, we must do something."</p>

Question	Response
	<p>b) Not my area of expertise. I would say Commanders get fired if they commit criminal acts or negligence. The Army would be much better served if it was more transparent, like the Navy, with relief and accountability of commanders and senior officers.</p>
	<p>c) I cannot recall any incidents of Commanders being relieved for toxic leadership; outside of public news. I have had BDE CDRs who knew them personally and stated they were not surprised.</p>
	<p>d) Given that, reasons or trends would be that they believe they can conduct themselves in any manner they choose. Additionally, those commanders had a CSM that either didn't reel them back in, or the commander chose not to listen to advice when given.</p>
	<p>e) When I was a 1SG, I had one Battery Commander who was toxic. He did not get relieved, but he was one that did not follow my recommendations about how to treat his LTs. His conduct and influence ruined a couple of them.</p>
	<p>f) Commanders are getting fired because they are doing egregious things that embarrass their leadership or the Army. Commanders are given a tremendous amount of room to excel if they are favorably viewed by their leadership. If the leadership can see themselves in their commanders, the commander has more leverage to make mistakes. Are there any trends? Commanders who violate SHARP are being dismissed quickly.</p>

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW QUESTION #6 WITH RESPONSES

Question	Response
<p>6. Are there any plans to alter the MSAF or introduce any new assessment tools for leaders and/or command teams?</p>	<p>a) That’s out of my lane, but I will say that I believe that the Army specifically, and other services to some degree, that have embraced the 360 degree instruments have made one mistake. They have identified good school tools and they’ve made those tools available across the force and to some degree people are using them frequently. But the mistake they’ve made is the assumption that if you give somebody the data and if they look at the data, they (evaluated subject) will change their behavior as a result of that data. I think behavioral change is much more complicated than that and much more difficult without an accountability mechanism or someone looking at them and saying “how are you doing on that thing you said you were working on . . . you are doing it right now. It’s not helpful.” So, just throw in these good instruments and I believe many of them are good instruments throwing them out to the field saying here use these and assuming that they are going to change their behavior as a result of data they received back from them is a flawed approach.</p>
	<p>b) I am unaware of any changes to the current tools.</p>
	<p>c) To my knowledge, I have not heard of any plans to alter the MSAF. I have not heard of any new assessment tools that will assist leaders that do not already exist.</p>
	<p>d) Given that, reasons or trends would be that they believe they can conduct themselves in any manner they choose. Additionally, those commanders had a CSM that either didn’t reel them back in, or the commander chose not to listen to advice when given.</p>
	<p>e) When I was a 1SG, I had one Battery Commander who was toxic. He did not get relieved, but he was one that did not follow my recommendations about how to treat his LTs. His conduct and influence ruined a couple of them.</p>

Question	Response
	f) Commanders are getting fired because they are doing egregious things that embarrass their leadership or the Army. Commanders are given a tremendous amount of room to excel if they are favorably viewed by their leadership. If the leadership can see themselves in their commanders, the commander has more leverage to make mistakes. Are there any trends? Commanders who violate SHARP are being dismissed quickly.

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