Chapter 9
How Military Schools Reconcile Compliance, Authority, and Authenticity in Adolescent Leadership:
Purpose, Environment, and Agency

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ABSTRACT

Adults and adolescents are different, as are adolescent girls and teenage boys, but it is unclear if or how these differences impact their ideas about leadership. Adults prioritize compliance, obedience, and conformity, while adolescents advocate autonomy, independence, and ingenuity. Adolescent girls prefer a relational, inclusive, collaborative leadership style with a spiritual generative culture that values consensus, while teenage boys prefer an action-oriented and hierarchical leadership style with an empowered dynamic culture that rewards initiative and innovation. Authentic leadership is effective at accommodating the expectations and needs of adults, adolescent girls, and teenage boys, and it generates its own unique empowered generative culture that benefits all constituencies. Military school objectives, adolescents' preferred leadership characteristics, and authentic leadership are quite congruent with one another, and this potent combination makes military schools particularly effective in their main purpose of developing effective authentic adolescent leaders.

INTRODUCTION

There is an old joke that goes something like this: A fellow goes to New York City to attend a concert but gets lost. He spots someone carrying a violin case and asks, "Can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?" The person responds by saying, "Practice, practice, practice." The joke highlights the confusion

that differing perspectives can cause: the visitor wants directions, while the responder provides advice, leaving neither satisfied.

A similar difference of perspectives exists within the realm of leadership, both between adults and adolescents, and also between adolescent girls and teenage boys. Regarding the age difference, adults may be likened to the visitor in the joke who simply wants directions, while adolescents are more like the responder giving advice. Extending the comparison in terms of gender, girls and boys want different kinds of advice for how to get to their desired destination.

This situation is common to many areas in society, but it is perhaps exacerbated in the military school environment. A famous quotation from the leader of one of America's most venerable military schools serves to highlight one of the main reasons for this occurrence. Colonel Robert S. Goss, Superintendent of New Mexico Military Institute, stated in 1891:

Let it be clearly understood that if this is not a military school it is nothing. By this is meant not only the outward forms and visible signs of military government – the drills and parade – its tinsel and glare, but what is of more importance, the indoor government – the inner, private life, manners and habits of the cadet, the close, constant, kindly supervision over the cadet in every respect – checking him here, urging him there – in the privacy of his room, at his meals, in recitation or at drill – on duty – off duty- at work or play – is the spirit and purpose of this military school. Obedience is but self-command and who commands himself is best learning to command others.

Goss' remarks make the point that for well over one hundred years, the American military school has evinced a duality of compliance and development. This dynamic combination is intended to make use of a structured system to heighten abilities and bring out the very best in each cadet, allowing for the realization of one's full potential. This objective enjoys a high level of consensus among instructors and students; however, and like many other complex processes, the manner in which it is accomplished is subject to far more disagreement.

Added to the neurological and psychological developmental differences that exist between adults and adolescents and the maturity differences between adolescent girls and teenage boys is the tremendous power differential within educational institutions using a military model. The resulting confusion regarding the best way to develop adolescent peer leaders in military schools is every bit as substantial as the level of confusion experienced by the visitor and respondent in the Carnegie Hall joke.

In their over 220 years existence, the overwhelming majority of military schools in America have been secondary institutions focused on educating adolescents. Over the course of several centuries, American military schools have thus developed a certain level of expertise in many areas of adolescent development, perhaps nowhere more so than in adolescent leadership development. Most of these institutions were founded largely on the overall premise of promoting compliance, obedience, and conformity – which happen to also be the mainstays of the adult perspective of effective adolescent leadership – but which in practice – based upon the preferences and actions of student leaders – end up developing adolescents leaders in ways that promote the adolescent view of leadership related to autonomy, independence, and ingenuity. It is this duality within military schools, so cleverly hinted at by Goss in the late-nineteenth century, that is so exacerbated in and by the military school environment.

The purpose of this article is to investigate this duality more completely than has been done previously to ascertain the extent of its existence between adults and adolescents, and also between adolescent girls and teenage boys, and to determine if there is a particular leadership approach that is conducive to

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