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Assessing Executive Leadership Development: Leaders, Leadership Teams, and Command Agility

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Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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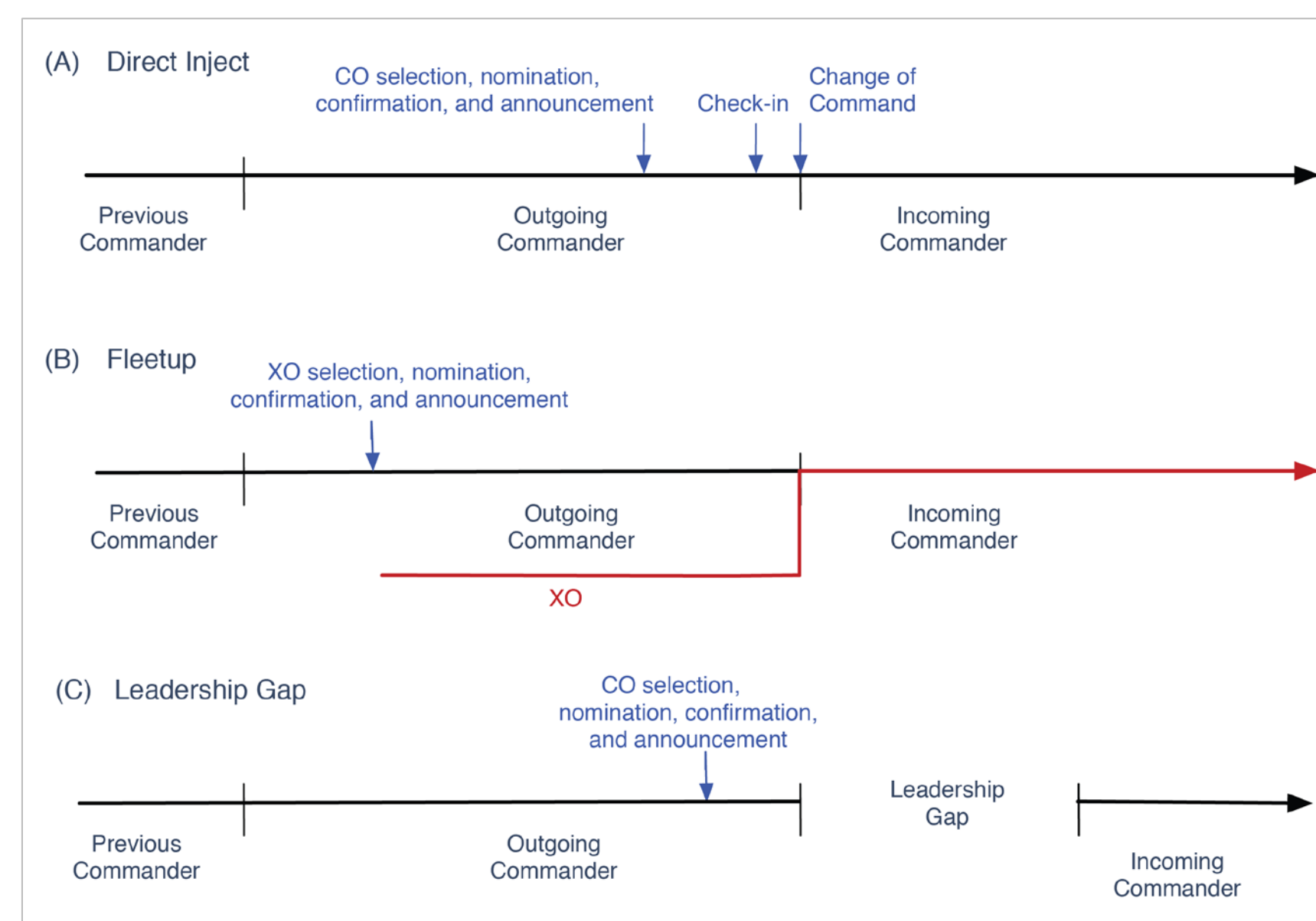
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Purpose of the Research

The research program is designed to identify factors that facilitate or impede the mission alignment and effectiveness in command transition processes; its final goal is a normative model for flag-level command transitions.

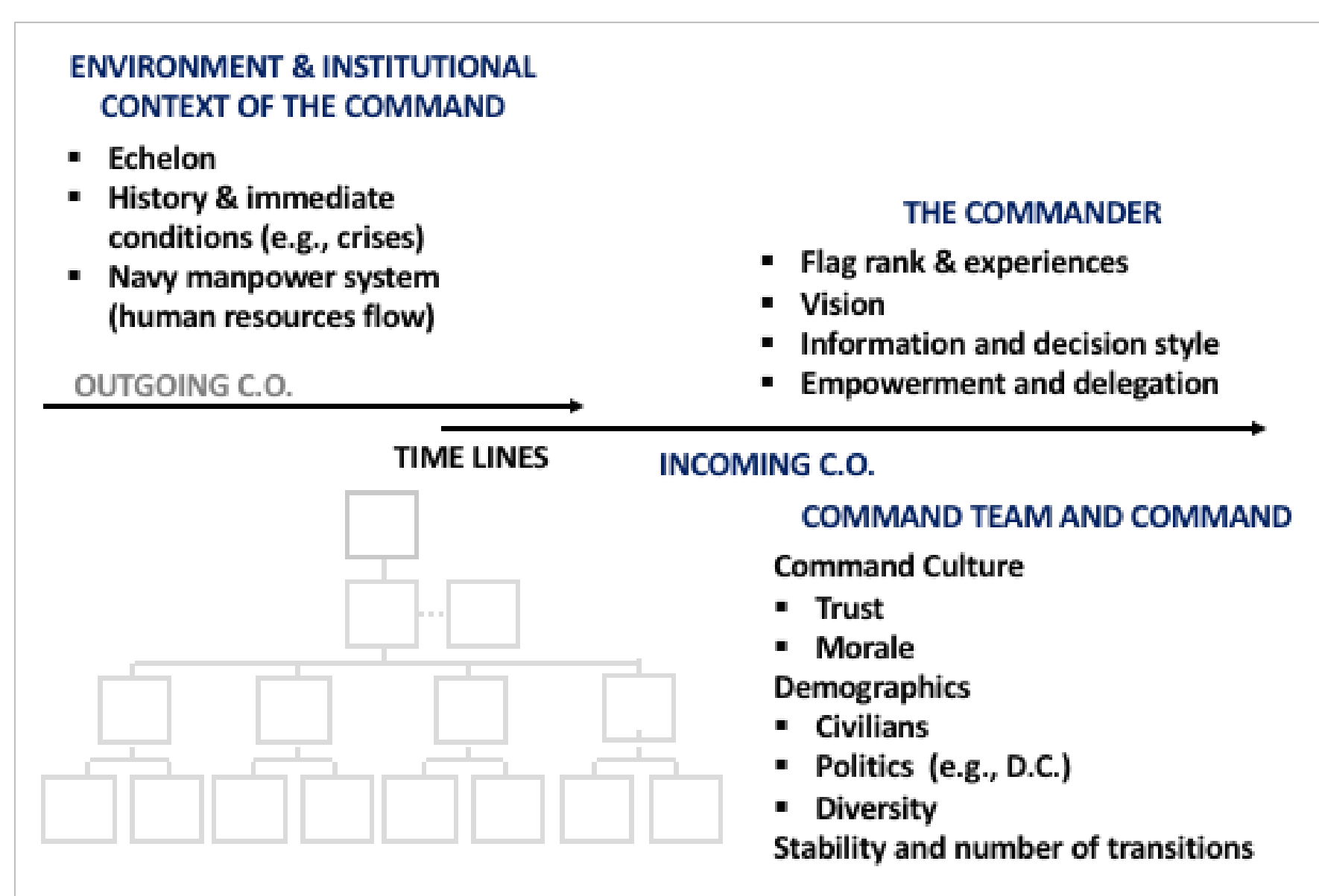


Three types of command transition described by interviewees

Methods

Qualitative methods were used to understand the individual and cultural impacts of command transitions

- Conducted interviews of 8 flag officers (admirals) ranging from O-7 through O-10, 3 flag staff members (2 captains and one commander), and 2 SES members in shore commands.
- Codes were applied to the transcriptions of the interviews to identify factors contributing to the success of a command transition.
- Content analysis of the interview revealed themes.



Themes relating to the effectiveness of a command transition

Findings: Emergent Themes

- Themes relating to the Institution, the Command Team and the Command, and the Commander were identified.
- Force Field analyses were applied to the themes to identify variables that contribute to or inhibit an effective command transition.

Further Research

Results of the force field analyses (examples below) indicate what future interviews are needed to construct a normative model to guide decisions and actions relevant to flag-level transitions across commands.

The Incoming Commander in the Transition Process		
Factor	Facilitators	Challenges &/or Barriers
Commander's preparedness and familiarity for the command	Career path and experience has prepared him/her with relevant understanding of communities and groups: tends to know what he/she doesn't know or knows how to find out.	Career path and experience has not prepared him/her with needed understanding; not aware of what he/she doesn't know and tends not to seek out knowledge (e.g., isolates self, depends on narrow inner circle)
Commander's styles: cognitive and communication	Advantages seem to accrue considered and reflective thinking that seek multiple points of view, are open, invite inputs, and communicate the vision. Agility to shift style.	Cautions are raised by habitual patterns that are rapid or fast, dogmatic, depend on an inner circle of similar people, and isolation with think or infrequent communication. Difficulties shifting styles.

The Command Team, the Command and the Command Transition Process		
Factor	Facilitators	Challenges &/or Barriers
Relationships based on trust	Openness, sharing, honesty and confidence and cohesiveness	Closed, guarded, lack of sharing, untruthful, development of cliques and isolates
Empowerment of Individuals	Command personnel have a sense of ownership, individual and team competence, of purpose and of autonomy	Command personnel lack identification with the organization and its purpose; lack a sense of maintaining good or high standards