



Robert Sterling's article "What Are America's Best Business Schools?" (July/August) is wrong-headed. True, graduates of the service academies are often top leaders in business, and attending a service academy is not a bad thing. But it is wrong to attribute these leaders' success to the academies. Instead, their business accomplishments can be explained by two variables. First, many are exceptional young men and women to begin with. People of high ability tend to be successful regardless of where they go to college. Plus, the service academies do a good job of weeding out non-performers.

Second, service academy graduates receive a great deal of leadership experience. Military command develops and reinforces many good habits (as well as a few bad ones). But academy graduates perform no better in military command than those commissioned through ROTC or the regular route of Officer Training School (OTS). In addition, ROTC veterans actually tend to be more successful in civilian leadership positions than academy graduates.

Service academy graduates have a number of strengths. Sterling correctly focuses on character: honesty, integrity, and responsibility. But again, the best evidence shows academy graduates score no higher on these measures than their ROTC or OTS counterparts.

On the other hand, academy graduates do have two relative weaknesses. First, they are inept at matching decision style to circumstances. They know only one style of decision making, the hierarchical, and inappropriately rely on it twice as often as any other group of leaders. Second, academy graduates are even more isolated from mainstream social and political norms than their ROTC or

OTS counterparts, who themselves are significantly more Republican and conservative than civilians holding comparable leadership positions. It is likely that these qualities are not due to selection bias but are fostered by the service academies.

Service academies long ago outlived their usefulness. They reflect the defunct class and organizational biases of an industrial age. Better models for selecting and training of our military (and business) leaders would be the practices of today's Israelis or the Germans during the Weimar Republic.

Fred Thompson

Willamette University School of Management

Robert Sterling spoke the truth in his wonderful piece. As a vice president at two separate companies, both led by graduates of West Point, I have observed firsthand the virtues instilled by the academies.

Michael E. Connor

Dallas, Texas

One hiring manager mentioned in Robert Sterling's article "couldn't comprehend" why a talented person would spend "four or five years flying around in a jet" for the military. The short answer: So the hiring manager might sleep soundly in his bed and take his liberty for granted.

G.W. Schulz

San Antonio, Texas

Based on a couple of examples—notably Philadelphia's continued population losses and its bizarre attempts to imitate the suburbs—Fred Siegel writes that suburban sprawl is the wave of the future ("America's Startling New Urban Make-

up," July/August).

But for every example Siegel cites there is a counterexample.

While some of America's older "vertical cities" continue to lose population to their suburbs, others have rebounded. Of the five large American cities with over 10,000 persons per square mile, three (New York, Chicago, and San Francisco) all gained population from 1990-98. And while Philadelphia, according to Siegel, seeks to turn its deserted areas into auto-oriented imitation suburbs, other cities and their suburbs are revitalizing their urban neighborhoods; for instance, Denver's LoDo, Atlanta's Fairlie-Poplar and East Atlanta. Even a few suburbs are trying to imitate the walkable urban neighborhoods of the past—Kentlands in suburban Washington, for example.

Michael Lewyn

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Your blasts against Hillary Rodham Clinton (July/August) say a lot more about you and your authors' obsessions than they do about the First Lady.

Mrs. Clinton is neither a saint nor the amoral hardened criminal portrayed by your fire-breathers. I hope she wins her race just to spite you and keep you obsessed for at least another six years. Perhaps after that you can all get a life.

Charles S. Clark

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CORRECTION: In "What Are America's Best Business Schools?" (July/August), General Alexander Haig's alma mater is misidentified. He is a graduate of West Point.

