Strategy Research Project

Building Leaders' Moral Courage to Defeat the King David Syndrome

by

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Building Leaders' Moral Courage
to Defeat the King David Syndrome

> It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world, and moral courage so rare.
>
> —Mark Twain[1]

The strategic consequences of a senior leader with faltering moral courage can be devastating. In the case of King David, the result was a marital affair with the wife of a loyal subordinate, an illegitimate child's birth and death, a national cover-up, a murder through military conspiracy, and ultimately, the enslavement of a nation to its enemies. The story of King David and Bathsheba is familiar in a variety of contexts and is reflected in the article, "The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders."[2] David is described as an immensely successful leader with a rapid rise to power, a charismatic personality, strong leadership skills, and great strategic vision.[3] And yet, David's prodigious success triggered failure because his focus regressed inward to personal accomplishments, pride, and ego. His great success caused King David to lose sight of his role as a steward leader.

Unfortunately, contemporary senior leaders remain vulnerable to "the King David Syndrome." Frequently, the cover stories of the Air Force, Army, and Navy Times newspapers read like gutter-press tabloids with military leaders being disgraced by their poor choices. The iconic strategic leader failures topping the headlines recently are General David Petraeus, Colonel David Hlatky, General Kip Ward, General Jeffrey Sinclair, and Admiral Chuck Gaouette.[4] Unfortunately, all too often new names join this list of disgraced senior leaders. While the circumstances in each headline are different, the common theme includes very successful, vetted leaders rising through ranks of power and prestige only to fail the test of moral courage. The impact of failures at the

strategic level is often far-reaching. Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall warned, “Examples of careerism and self-interest are present at every level, but they do the most damage when they are displayed by the leader…the mission suffers, and the ripple effects can be devastating.”[5]

It is important to understand that the offending senior leaders were not ignorant of the rules or their misbehavior. Their offenses are so basic in nature that they clearly knew their actions were out of line but still chose to act inappropriately. In regard to the numerous Navy Commanders being fired, a report from the Inspector General concluded that in “every case, the officers relieved for personal behavior clearly knew the rules,” and Navy Captain Mark Light’s follow-up interviews with the offending officers confirmed the same answer.[6] When facing an ethical dilemma with a clearly correct moral choice, a systemic deficiency contributed to each of these intensely vetted senior leaders failing to take the appropriate moral action. Their moral compass failed to guide their decisions.

For a compass to provide guidance, it must point to something outside itself. In the case of a compass used for navigation, the needle points toward Magnetic North. A traveler relying on a compass for navigation may picture himself in the center of the compass and the needle directs his orientation. In the case of the proverbial “moral compass,” the needle must also point toward something external to self in order to provide accurate guidance. Too often, the rapid rise to power and unimpeded achievement of our rising leaders causes their moral compass to become reversed. Their focus becomes egocentric. Their guiding needle points inward toward self as Figure 1 illustrates. Pride, ego, and self-centered focus are the result. Shunning

success or preventing the promotion of our best future leaders is not the antidote. We should recognize our best leaders and move them into positions of greater influence, but we must also nurture their moral courage in order to galvanize their steward leader qualities. We must impede the unhealthy side effects of success in our rising leaders while reinforcing an external focus on professional values.

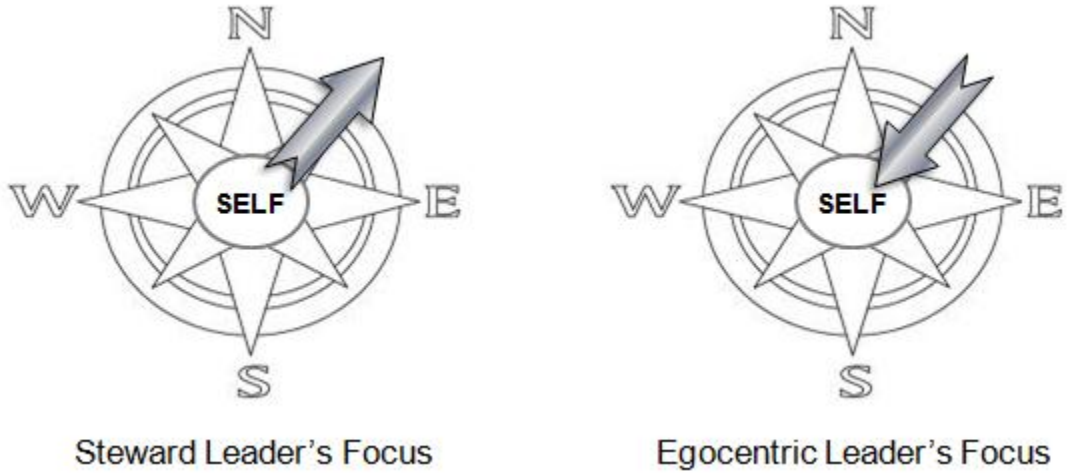

Figure 1: The Moral Compass

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the best practices of elite businesses in an effort to discover their successful approaches aimed at empowering the moral courage of their rising leaders, and to propose how these processes can be leveraged in the Air Force. By beginning early and continuing to fortify moral courage throughout an Airman's career, we can better equip our senior leaders to avoid the moral pitfalls and temptations of power that accompanies success.

Several industry-leading companies incorporate developmental practices to fortify the moral courage of their future leaders, practices that could benefit rising leaders in the Air Force. It is acknowledged that every organization, including the

companies selected in this research, is at times the focus of negative attention. But this does not negate the opportunity to learn from their successful leadership developmental practices. For my research I selected industry elites from across multiple business sectors such as Walmart, Chick-fil-A, Southwest Airlines, PepsiCo, Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR), Pfizer, and Disney.

Through my research I was eager to discover a revolutionary process for nurturing moral courage. Instead, I found that successful companies rely on proven, conventional practices aimed at encouraging their rising leaders to "do the right thing," practices such as:

- Corporate core values that are clearly defined and permeate the culture
- An inspiring organizational purpose that motivates altruistic, selfless behavior
- Character-based mentoring that is not performed by the direct supervisor
- Wise culture management via prudent hiring, evaluation, and culling

This paper describes the best practices that exist in industry elite companies and offers recommendations on how the Air Force should leverage these fundamentals of leadership to empower the moral courage of Airmen.

Moral Courage Verses Moral Cowardice

The term courage is often associated with placing one's self in physical peril. According to Captain "Eddie" Rickenbacker, "Courage is doing what you are afraid to do…"[7] Captain Rickenbacker, the leading American fighter ace of the First World War, was very familiar with physical courage as he engaged in open cockpit aerial combat, scoring twenty-six air-to-air victories. In fact, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his valor. Historically, triumphant warriors like Captain Rickenbacker have been known for

their acts of physical courage, and yet, the challenges of senior leadership demands Airmen that are prepared to act with physical, but more so, moral courage.

The need for morally courageous warriors applies to our professional and personal lives. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1 defines moral courage as "the ability to stand by the core values when confronted with difficult choices."[8] In other words, moral courage is "doing the right thing" even when you fear inconvenience, ridicule, punishment, blocked promotion, or even job loss. As already mentioned, another colossal challenge to moral courage involves the temptation of power and self-indulgence, as witnessed by the recent failures of notable military leaders. In these cases, the senior leaders act as if they are intoxicated by their power and influence.

Unfortunately, research demonstrates that even when we know the "right thing to do," we still don't always act accordingly. Geoffrey Lantos explains the difference between knowing and doing in this way, "Knowing what is ethical is not all that difficult…Doing what is ethical is another matter. One must have not only the knowledge but also the commitment to doing the right thing…Unfortunately, there is a wide gap between knowing and doing."[9] In order to better understand the struggle between arriving at the proper moral judgment and following through with the corresponding action, we should review the work of social psychologist James Rest.

Rest developed his Four Component Model to explain moral action.[10] The four components are depicted in Figure 2. Prior to Rest's model, ethics philosophy, research, and education assumed that the appropriate moral action always followed sound moral judgment. Therefore, philosophers, social psychologists, and ethics professors dedicated their efforts to properly evaluating a moral dilemma by improving

an individual's moral wisdom.[11] The goal was to identify morally relevant factors of the situation, identify appropriate options, and weigh desirable outcomes. Three

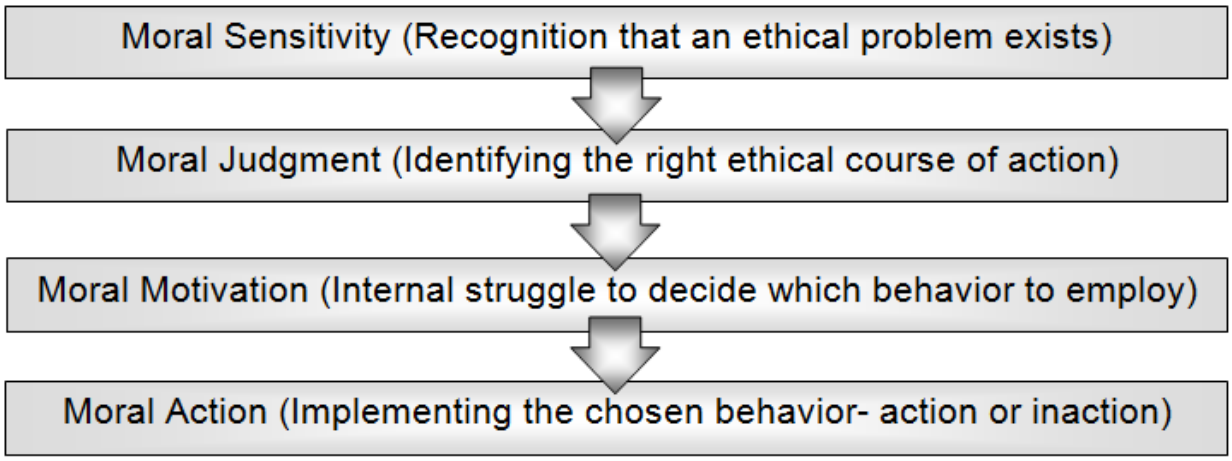

Figure 2: Rest's Four Component Model

methodologies or "lenses" are commonly used in the moral judgment stage.[12] The methodologies differ in their motivations: ends, ways, or means. Respectively, these moral judgment lenses are teleological ethics (ends - consequence based ethics where outcomes determine right), deontological ethics (ways - duty based ethics or "rule following"), and areteological ethics (means - virtue based ethics focused on traits of good character.)[13] The differences in these moral methodologies spur ethics debates on moral dilemmas such as, "Is it ethical to steal medicine for your sick child?" While academic debates on moral judgments are interesting, Rest recognized that proper moral judgments do not always result in moral action because the moral judgments we face in real life do not occur in a vacuum void of personal interests and motivations. Therefore, he introduced his third component of ethical decision making, moral motivation, also known as moral intention.[14]

According to Rest, after reaching a moral judgment or ethical conclusion about the proper course of action, the individual must possess the moral motivation to follow through with the moral behavior.[15] This moral motivation is also known as the individual's moral courage.[16] During the moral motivation stage, an internal struggle ensues between the individual's moral courage and moral cowardice. This is struggle is often depicted as an angel whispering in one ear and the devil arguing in the other. Moral courage is empowered by character traits and values nurtured over time such as honesty, selflessness, commitment to excellence, altruism, and humbleness. These noble values are focused away from self-interest, toward the needs of others and the benefit of the organization or profession. Meanwhile, the antagonist in this moral tug-of-war of the conscience is strengthened by ethical corrosion and vices that have gained a foothold over time such as pride, deceit, egoism, self-serving ambitions, and greed.[17] These unprincipled dispositions are focused inward toward self-gratification at the cost of other people, the team, or the profession.

Hence, as Figure 3 illustrates, the struggle over moral motivation commences with every ethical situation we face. Ultimately, this struggle determines if our behavior will be moral or immoral.[18] Moral courage and moral cowardice each tug at the moral judgment derived in Rest's second stage of moral reasoning. Each protagonist attempts to determine the moral decision and behavior. These combatants of the conscience are assisted by the equities matured from internalization of experiences and values. In the figure, these ingrained values are depicted as plate weights stacked on the balance beam of the moral decision. The figure illustrates a few examples of values assisting each aggressor as weights, but it is definitely not an exhaustive list. The goal is to have

many noble values empower our moral courage and to minimize the stack of unprincipled values assisting our moral cowardice. Over time our experiences and internalized beliefs constantly inform the number of weights and their mass on each side of the balance beam.

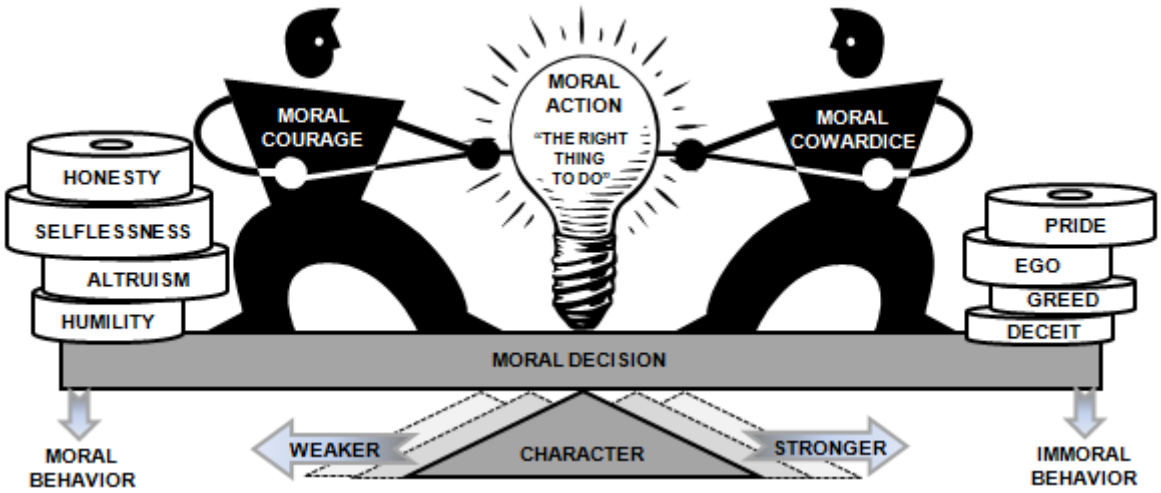

Figure 3: The Moral Motivation Struggle

The industry best-practices included in this paper such as core values, inspired purpose, character-based mentoring, and wise culture management stack more plate weights on the side of moral courage and minimize the weights strengthening moral cowardice. While these practices will not guarantee moral behavior from Airmen, they will undoubtedly encourage it.

As illustrated, the struggle for the moral action is balanced on the fulcrum of the individual's character. This fulcrum of character slowly grows stronger or weaker each time a moral decision is rendered and the resulting behavior is performed as illustrated in Figure 3. The magnitude of the character fortification or fade depends on the feedback, rewards, and consequences following the moral decision. If moral courage

wins the struggle and the resulting moral behavior is rewarded either externally or internally, our character fulcrum slightly progresses to the right, strengthening our moral character. Though small, this movement in character offers an advantage to moral courage in future struggles. Conversely, when moral cowardice is rewarded for an immoral behavior, character is weakened. The left creep in the fulcrum makes it more difficult for moral courage to triumph in future struggles. This process never ends, even for senior leaders. Character grows stronger or weaker with every moral decision. We must have processes in place to empower the moral courage of our rising leaders so their character does not fade.

The goal of this paper, thus, is to highlight practices that over time will empower and strengthen the moral courage of our future leaders. As Figure 3 depicts, we need to maximize the plate weights of noble values which empower moral courage in our rising leaders, and we need to minimize the mass of the unprincipled values which strengthen their moral cowardice. We want an unfair fight in Airmen's conflict of the conscience.

Leveraging Core Values That Permeate the Culture

Core values are foundational in any effort to develop moral courage. In the vernacular of pilots, our core values serve as a moral courage "boldface" checklist for making the correct ethical choice when stress is high and the moral choice is not easy.[19] A boldface checklist offers a list of key actions for a pilot to follow during a time-critical in-flight emergency such as a fire or engine failure.[20] Each boldface must be so infused with the pilot that no matter the stress level of the situation, the proper course of action is taken. Core values serve a similar function. Core values can be a powerful force to strengthen the moral courage of individuals despite the stress of the situation but only

when these values have been accepted by the individual and are supported by the larger culture of the organization.

In a recent letter to all Airmen, Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, General Larry Spencer emphasized that our core values of “Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do” serve as a moral compass that guides our judgment and actions.[21] General Spencer is reinforcing the concept in Figure 1 that a moral compass must point toward an external guiding principle, in this case toward core values. AFDD 1-1 cites four reasons the Air Force recognizes the core values as being fundamental to airmen:

- The core values tell us the price of admission to the Air Force itself
- They point to what is universal and unchanging in the profession of arms
- They help us get a fix on the ethical climate of an organization
- They serve as beacons vectoring us back to the path of professional conduct.[22]

With concerns regarding the Air Force’s ethical climate and the need for a beacon to vector us back to the path of professional conduct, Air Force leadership must now reinforce our core values. All future leaders must view Air Force core values as their moral boldface. “Integrity, Service, and Excellence” are the appropriate core values for Airmen.

Despite the fact that these core values are well known in the Air Force community, a deficiency exists in the application of our core values. One could argue that our core values are relegated to a few slides in a Power Point briefing during officer accession training and to the inscription on a marble wall at the Air Force Academy. As

the Core Values Strategy Panel reported in 1995, “Another wrinkled-poster-on-the-wall program will not be successful.”[23] General Michael Ryan implored that Airmen must frequently reflect on the core values in order to help each of us refocus on the person we should be and the example we should set.[24] But, how do we get Airmen to do such “frequent” reflection?

Core Values at Southwest Airlines and Chick-fil-A

In the civilian sector Southwest Airlines’ very successful core values program is highlighted in their “Principles of Living the Southwest Way,” shown in Table 1. The three core principles are to live with a Warrior Spirit, a Servant’s Heart, and a Fun-LUVing Attitude.[25] While the specific description of each core principle is not relevant

Table 1: Southwest Airlines’ Core Values

Warrior Spirit:	**A Servant’s Heart:**	**Fun-LUVing Attitude:**
- Work hard	- Follow “The Golden Rule”	- Have FUN
- Desire to be the best	- Treat others with respect	- Don’t take yourself too seriously
- Be courageous	- Put others first	- Maintain perspective (balance)
- Display a sense of urgency	- Proactive customer service	- Celebrate successes
- Persevere	- Embrace the Southwest Family	- Enjoy your work
- Innovate		- Be a compassionate team player

to my research, it is interesting to note that each principle has five or six specific, easily understood behaviors. According to Southwest Airline’s Bonnie Endicott, Senior Manager of People Development, these behaviors are often referenced during daily feedback and periodic evaluations.[26] For example, using these short descriptors, a supervisor or fellow worker can help an employee to reflect on whether their behavior is, or is not, consistent with “Living the Southwest Way.” According to Endicott, “Good, honest, direct, kind, and timely feedback that references our five descriptors of a

Servant's heart" is essential when correcting behavior that is driven by a self-centered attitude.[27]

In addition to the simple, but specific behaviors describing each core value, Southwest Airlines ensures their team members take personal ownership of the principles through consistent education and demonstration. "University for People" is one of the first touch points for a new employee that reinforces their core values.[28] A key component of the training is demonstrating how to "Live the Southwest Way." In addition to classroom education of the core values, facilitators and managers relate to new employees their own experiences with the Servant's Hearts, Warrior Spirits, and Fun-LUVing Attitudes. These real-life demonstrations and discussions allow more broad reflection on the internalization of core values to moral courage. The principles of the company are further internalized through on-the-job feedback and annual appraisals. Southwest Airlines' clearly defined core values are an empowering force for the moral courage of their team members.

Chick-fil-A is another company that leverages their core values to strengthen the moral courage of their leaders. This industry-leading, quick-service restaurant with annual sales of more than $4 billion per year conveys their core values as "Excellence, Integrity, Loyalty, and Generosity."[29] To help employees internalize their essential principles, Chick-fil-A describes each of their core values using the following three graduated categories: skilled (*developed*), unskilled (*under-developed*), and overused (*over-developed*). The three graduated categories facilitate objective discussions of specific behaviors. In each of these categories, they use five to seven short phrases to describe the qualities as Table 2 illustrates:

Table 2: Chick-fil-A's Core Value "Integrity"[30]

Integrity	
Skilled	Is committed to doing the right thing, no matter what. Is honest and transparent in words, actions and motives. Acts in accordance with an appropriate set of values and beliefs. Practices what he/she preaches. Builds a foundation of trust with others. Admits mistakes and rights wrongs. Seeks the truth and positively faces the reality discovered.
Unskilled	Is not completely trusted. Avoids facing issues and problems. May hedge or not take a stand. Is inconsistent. Doesn't "walk the talk"—says one thing but does another. Has trouble keeping confidences. Makes promises he/she doesn't or can't keep. Hides mistakes or blames others for them. Sets his/her own rules. Values may be out of sync with those of others.
Overused	Pushes openness and honesty to the point of being disruptive or making people uncomfortable. Goes to battle based on beliefs and values when not appropriate. May be seen as stubborn and insensitive to the need for change and compromise. Makes decisions that are only "black or white." May be overly critical of those who do not hold the same values.

According to Chick-fil-A's Senior Manager of Talent Strategy, Lance Lanier, when a person is not taking all four values into proper consideration they may fall into the "overused/over-developed" category.[31] For example, a team member who has blind loyalty may not expect the proper level of excellence or integrity.[32] In conclusion, the short phrases that define Chick-fil-A's core values assist their employees and leadership to better understand the intent and expectation within each core value. In turn, the definitions help create a common language and understanding of Chick-fil-A's core values for all team members.

Following a two year pilot program, beginning in 2013 all of Chick-fil-A performance reviews and "development conversations" will include a specific assessment with each team member on how well they are exhibiting the four core values.[33] Lanier is very excited about incorporating the core value categories in these discussions because the pilot program demonstrated that "it prompts great discussions around our core values. It gives supervisors a forum to review the core values with each team member. And it often leads to a great opportunity to offer praise to team members for positive behaviors" that may be commonly overlooked as normal behavior.[34] Chick-

fil-A's process of clearly defining their core values and infusing them into leader growth feedback offers insights that would be very useful in fostering the moral courage of future Air Force leaders.

Recommendations for Air Force Core Values

The Air Force core values of "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do" accurately capture our foundational principles. However, we are not leveraging our core values in a manner that affects behavior and empowers moral courage. Three changes must occur to alleviate this systemic flaw. First, we need to define our core values in a way that Airmen can readily apply them. Next, the Air Force must seize every opportunity to inculcate the core values. And finally, our core values should be included in daily, mid-term, and annual feedback.

First, the Air Force should describe our core values in a set of clear, concise statements. We should benchmark the efforts of Southwest Airlines and Chick-fil-A by defining our core values in a few short, but high impact phrases. This would better enable Airmen to stand firmly on the core values when confronted with ethical dilemmas like a pilot spontaneously performs a "boldface" checklist when faced with a perilous in-flight emergency. On the contrary, AFDD 1-1 currently describes each core value using several paragraphs of academic fluff for each principle that is difficult to apply to personal development.[35] Much of this verbiage was lifted from the "Air Force Core Values Handbook" (also known as "The Little Blue Book.")[36] Like Chick-fil-A, the Air Force should define what skilled, unskilled, and overused behaviors in each core value look like. Table 3 describes the core value of "Excellence in All We Do" in a clear and tangible way that could be used for personal development or feedback.[37]

Table 3: Air Force Core Value "Excellence"

Excellence in All We Do: *"Constantly strives to perform at best level possible"*	
Skilled	☐ Committed to high standards and meets expectations: professionally, personally, physically, mentally, socially, and morally ☐ Searches for new and more effective ways to accomplish the mission ☐ Diligent to increase job skills, knowledge, and personal readiness ☐ Gives personal best everyday with positive attitude, energy, and drive ☐ Practices accountability – seeks and gives honest feedback
Unskilled	☐ Satisfied with achieving the minimum standard with minimum effort ☐ Mismanages human resources or material assets ☐ Fails to push hard enough to deliver on commitments by the deadline ☐ Does not put in effort to grow and develop, professionally or personally ☐ Does not practice accountability – avoids giving or receiving feedback
Overused	☐ Overconfident and arrogant – immune to feedback ☐ Overestimates personal performance abilities ☐ Creates stress for self and others by demanding unneeded perfection ☐ Sets goals that are unrealistic and unattainable

Secondly, the Air Force must seize every opportunity to inculcate our core values in Airmen. The "Air Force Core Values Handbook" describes several methods for incorporating core values training.[38] Additionally, the handbook warns, "Passive learning techniques alone are not acceptable (briefings and lectures are not sufficient by themselves.)"[39] Instead, active learning techniques such as case study reviews, simulations, and directed collaborative discussions must be used. The handbook further describes instilling the core values by making them an integral part of the way we conduct our daily business. This requires three coordinated efforts consisting of:

- Leaders implementing the core values into all aspects of their organizations
- Members of the organization highlighting areas in which they are regularly tempted to act in a manner inconsistent with the core values

- Dialogue within each organization on ways to best internalize the core values into the culture.[40]

The Air Force should re-energize efforts to inculcate our core values through a deliberate training program which involves the active learning techniques described in "The Little Blue Book."

Another effective method for embedding core values and empowering moral courage is "scripting."[41] Former Harvard Business School professor, Mary Gentile's research in this field is called "Giving Voice to Values." Gentile focuses on helping people "build the skills and the muscles to get the right thing done."[42] In short, the program has participants role-play their response, their *script*, to moral dilemmas that are common to their career field. Her research supports that individuals are more likely to act on their values when they have practiced their moral response in a controlled setting.[43] Scripting should begin at Air Force officer accession sources, and it must be refreshed throughout a leader's career such as during Professional Military Education (PME). Again, just like a boldface checklist prepares a pilot for an in-flight emergency, scripting would prepare Airmen for an unexpected moral dilemma. The Air Force should resurrect a core value training plan that relies on the active learning techniques described in "The Little Blue Book" as well as scripting techniques.

Thirdly, and last, the Air Force must overtly include core values in all forms of feedback: daily, mid-term, and annual. The aforementioned short, clearly stated descriptions of our core values would foster more daily interactions between superiors and subordinates concerning these principles. For example, Southwest Airlines prominently displays their "Principles of Living the Southwest Way" throughout their

work centers to facilitate daily feedback rooted in company core values.[44] Additionally, our core values must be included in mid-term and annual feedback. Currently, none of our mid-term feedback forms even mention core values.[45] Similarly, none of our annual evaluation forms refer to our core values.[46] Are they really our core values if we don't include them in our feedback and evaluations? Chick-fil-A's two-year pilot program found that including their core values in feedback and evaluations prompted "great discussions on the topic of the values."[47] Additionally, it gave supervisors a forum to review, discuss, and reinforce their core values with each team member.[48] If these principles are truly the core of our values, they should definitely be included in our feedback and evaluations.

In summary, core values can be a very powerful asset in affecting moral behavior. Currently, the Air Force has some systemic flaws in our application of core values that can readily be corrected. In order to leverage our core values to strengthen the moral courage of our leaders, we must make these three changes: more clearly define the values; seize every opportunity to inculcate the values; and include the values in all forms of feedback.

Leveraging an Organizational Purpose That Inspires

An inspiring purpose is another powerful, yet often overlooked, method of strengthening the moral courage of our team members. In other words, Airmen that are inspired by our cause are more likely to remain loyal to our organizational values. This is true in business as well as in the armed forces. Malham Wakin explains that "the military leader who views his or her oath of office as merely a contractual arrangement with his government sets the stage for a style of leadership critically different from the leader who views that oath as his or her pledge to contribute to the common good of his

or her society."[49] When encountering a moral dilemma, the contracted leader is much more likely to act in ways to satisfy ego and self-centered values. Whereas the leader inspired by a grand, larger-than-self purpose will likely behave in an altruistic, selfless manner.

Simon Sinek of the RAND Corporation proposes that organizations and leaders who truly inspire are "the ones that start with *Why*."[50] He describes human motivation in terms of "The Golden Circle" as illustrated in Figure 4.[51] We are genuinely inspired when we identify with the *Why*, not the *What* or *How*. Sinek proposes a concept that applies to customers and employees, "People don't buy *What* you do; people buy *Why* you do it."[52]

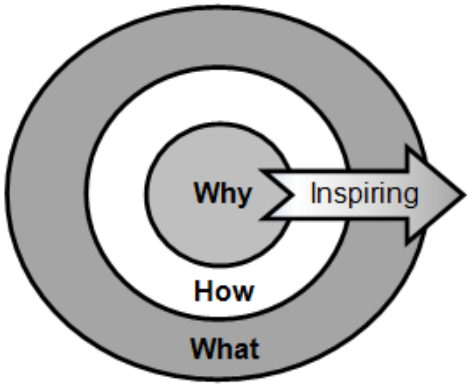

Figure 4: The Golden Circle

In other words, every team member knows *What* they do. This is the tangible result of their work. And most know *How* they do it: the actions to be performed and the values to live by. The powerfully inspiring core of the Golden Circle is *Why*: the purpose, cause, or belief that serves as the unifying and driving force.[53] When leaders and team members are inspired by our purpose, they are much more likely to live by our values even when they encounter a difficult ethical dilemma.

The Inspirational Purpose Leveraged at Walmart and Chick-fil-A

Walmart is known for their low prices and gigantic super stores stocked full of everyday use products. With sales of approximately $444 billion per year, it is Walmart's inspirational purpose that seeks to empower the moral courage of their 2.2 million associates worldwide.[54] The mission statement of Walmart is to "save people money so they can live better."[55] That is *What* they do. The *How* they keep prices low is a combination of many factors such as minimizing expenses with low profit margins and large volume.[56] As expected, the *What* and *How* are interesting, but not inspiring. Instead it is Walmart's purpose, their *Why*, that is leveraged to inspire the moral courage of their decision makers and team members.

James Cameron, the Vice President of Global Talent Development at Walmart, shared the inspirational central purpose behind the world's largest retailer:

> We provide the customer, whom we always refer to as "she," with the lowest possible price. Because that is what she needs to keep her family together and to feed her children. She is not from the wealthy rungs of society. She earns very little and struggles day-by-day to get by. Our central purpose is to get her the lowest possible price with small margins...And that purpose drives our behavior.[57]

At the Walmart Leadership Academy and throughout their culture, they emphasize that any behavior that drives up costs will harm her, the customer. As an example, if a Walmart buyer is negotiating with an unethical supplier and is tempted to take a bribe for agreeing to pay more than he should for the product, then he is essentially stealing from the customer and her children who are already struggling to get by.[58] His selfish actions will drive up prices. In fact, Walmart buyers will not accept anything from a supplier; not even a bottle of water.[59]

Walmart's inspiring purpose is not just a heart-warming narrative; from the beginning, company leadership has modeled the company's grand purpose. As a way to minimize company expenses and keep prices low for the customer, Walmart's founder, Sam Walton, continued to share budget-hotel rooms with colleagues on business trips and drive an old pickup truck, even after the retail stores made him very rich.[60] Additionally, the Walmart Foundation regularly demonstrates the company's inspired purpose by helping single mothers. For example, they recently teamed with Goodwill to fund a new program that "empowers single mothers with all the tools they need to find employment, succeed in the workplace and support their families."[61] Through Sam Walton's example and the charitable work of their foundation, Walmart's inspiring purpose is leveraged to empower the moral courage of company leaders and team members.

Another company founder who models an inspirational purpose for employees is S. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A. His 2002 book is titled, "Eat Mor Chikin: Inspire More People."[62] This title combines the attention-grabbing advertising phrase of his famous black and white cows with Cathy's focus on people and principles. Undoubtedly, Chick-fil-A is a company that makes their *Why* very clear to employees. Chick-fil-A's inspirational purpose serves as a unifying and driving force in team members from the teenager behind the counter that responds cheerfully with "It's my pleasure!" to the generosity of the company's founderj. Chick-fil-A's corporate purpose is, "To glorify God by being a Faithful Steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a Positive Influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A."[63]

The two declarations in Chick-fil-A's corporate purpose demonstrate that an effective *Why* statement should inspire a charge greater than self-edification. Their moral compass is not pointed inward towards self. If an organization wants their purpose to encourage noble values and empower moral courage, then the focus must be outside the organization. Both statements in Chick-fil-A's corporate purpose do just that. The first implores a duty to glorify God, and the second appeals to the social principle of being sensitive to the needs of others.

As a way of helping team members embrace the inspirational purpose of Chick-fil-A, the company created a two-minute video titled, "Every life has a story…if we only bother to read it."[64] This short video blasts through the outer layers of the Golden Circle and hits the bulls eye of Chick-fil-A's powerfully inspiring core purpose. The theme of the video is that every customer in a Chick-fil-A restaurant is dealing with life's challenges. The chicken sandwich at the start of the video is their *What* and the smiling team members behind the counter and at the drive through window are the *How*. Chick-fil-A's inspiring purpose of having a positive influence on others is the *Why* and is highlighted throughout the video. Dan Cathy, Chick-fil-A's president and Chief Operation Officer, explains that the video was "created to remind us that everyone we interact with is a chance to create a remarkable experience."[65] When Chick-fil-A team members and leadership truly appreciate the company's inspired purpose, their behavior will be changed; their moral courage will be empowered.

Recommendations for an Inspiring Purpose for Airmen

What are the likely responses that Airmen would provide to the following hypothetical question: "What is the core purpose of the Air Force?" After a long pause and with puzzled looks on their faces, some of the likely responses would include the

Air Force mission phrase “Fly, Fight, and Win…in Air, Space, and Cyberspace.”[66] This response is the outer ring of Sinek’s Golden Circle, the *What*. Airmen readily express what they do: “I fly Vipers,” “I’m an intel officer,” or “I work in personnel.” Or the reply to the purpose question might include the Air Force core competencies: develop Airmen, bring technology to war fighting, and integrate operations.”[67] These core competencies segmented into our six distinctive capabilities (Air and Space Superiority, Global Attack, Rapid Global Mobility, etc.) are Sinek’s second ring, the *How*. While Airmen are very familiar with the *What* and *How* of the Air Force, the *Why* or core purpose of the Air Force is not often part of our vernacular, nor is it leveraged to affect our behavior.

The Air Force indeed has an inspiring purpose that would encourage stewardship and moral courage if we would only leverage it. While our purpose may be expressed in the form of a short phrase or motto, it must be much more than just a platitude or a video of jets dropping bombs with “I’m proud to be an American” playing in the background.[68] To be effective, the Air Force’s grand purpose must convey our call to service - a calling that is worthy of both daily sacrifice and possibly the ultimate sacrifice. It must convey the inspired cause beating in the hearts of Airmen who enlist in the time of war for the sake of freedom. It must be a grand idea expressed with a few words that will empower moral courage and affect behavior. The Vice Chief of Staff, General Larry Spencer, recently wrote an Air Force Times article that touched on the core purpose of America’s military. He implored Airmen to relentlessly pursue perfection, “The nation demands it and the American people deserve nothing less because we are charged with defending the home front and protecting security interests abroad.”[69] In the honorable service of our nation, our purpose as Airmen is to sacrifice

our personal desires and to protect the needs of others so that they may live in freedom. We accept this responsibility from the men and women that have served and sacrificed before us, and we are obligated to fulfill it for the children of our great nation and the generations that will come after us. For example, the Air Force purpose could be expressed in a short phrase such as, “To serve honorably and sacrificially, that others may live in freedom.” Once more, I must emphasize that I am not suggesting that simply writing a motto or phrase will affect behavior. It will not. And yet, an inspiring purpose that is embraced in the hearts of our Airmen will affect behavior. When expressed in a concise manner, a grand purpose that inspires Airmen to think and act outside their personal, self-centered interests and egos will empower their moral courage.

Leveraging Character-based Mentoring

Airmen need mentoring relationships. The hasty rebuttal to this supposition might be, “The Air Force has a mentoring program.” I propose that accurately stated, “The Air Force has a mentoring regulation.” Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-3401, Air Force Mentoring, is the instruction that implements the Air Force Mentoring Program.[70] The fact that we have an AFI directing supervisors to mentor subordinates does not mean that Airmen are now benefiting from mentoring relationships. A clear indictment of our mentoring program’s anemic state is illustrated in the last date AFI 36-3401 was reviewed and updated, 1 June 2000. This AFI is twice as old as Apple’s iPhone and the website YouTube![71]

While I use the revision date of the AFI to demonstrate the condition of Air Force mentoring, I am not suggesting that a simple update of AFI 36-3401 is the solution. Our future leaders need long-term, character-based mentoring relationships from commissioning to retirement. As the great National Football League (NFL) coach Tony

Dungy asserts, mentoring relationships should focus "on building people up, building significance into their lives, and building leaders for the next generation."[72]

According to AFI 36-3401 a mentor is "a trusted counselor or guide."[73] The AFI further explains that mentoring is a relationship in which a person of greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally.[74] The mentor is described in the AFI as "trusted" because the mentee must be comfortable sharing struggles and shortcomings without the fear of this candidness impacting their professional development. Without trust, our mentoring efforts will suffer from the condition known as "skimming the surface" which is described as mentoring that is "1000 miles wide but one half inch deep."[75] This superficial mentoring may have career advancement value, but it will have little impact on our future leaders' character or moral courage.

Insightfully, the AFI cautions, "Mentoring is not a promotion enhancement program."[76] And yet, much of the AFI is allocated to educating supervisors (the mentors) and subordinates (the mentees) on tools that are beneficial for career advancement such as "Promotion Selection," "Evaluation," and "Recognition, Awards, and Decorations."[77] While I concur that supervisors should *coach* their subordinates on these professional topics and provide career guidance, this is not the role of "a trusted counselor or guide." For this reason and others, the supervisor should not be designated as the primary mentor. Instead, a mentor should address character development, both as a person and as a professional. A significant problem with Air Force mentoring is that it is generally superficial and focused predominantly on career advancement. Junior officers correspond with their "mentor" in hopes that the senior

officer will make a few phone calls to get the protégé a promotable job or next assignment. Based on a qualitative survey of Air Force lieutenant colonel and colonel students at the US Army War College, the majority say they do not have a mentor and the respondents that have a mentor spend the majority of their conversations discussing career related issues. Air Force mentoring must be more than "skimming the surface" and cronyism if we hope to leverage it in the struggle for moral courage.

Effective Mentoring at PepsiCo, Disney, and JGR

"The mentoring program at PepsiCo is voluntary and the employees who choose to participate find the relationships very fulfilling," according to Leslie Teichgraeber, the Vice President of PepsiCo University.[78] Teichgraeber asserts that PepsiCo supervisors are coaches, but direct supervisors should not serve as the primary mentor for their direct reporting employees.[79] The mentee will never feel comfortable sharing real issues with a mentor if they feel the information could have a negative impact on their performance evaluations. At PepsiCo, employees are encouraged to find mentors other than their supervisor. Additionally, Ernesto Sanchez, Senior Director of PepsiCo University highlights the use of a computer matching system that assists in pairing mentor with mentee based on common interests.[80] The program is voluntary, but the participants have been very pleased with their mentoring relationships in addition to their personal and professional growth.[81]

Confidentiality is another key aspect of a mentoring relationship that ventures deeper than just skimming the surface. Confidential mentoring is a core aspect of management growth at Walt Disney. Walt Disney Studios Chairman and Disney Channels Worldwide President, Rich Ross, explained that he is a firm believer in the role mentoring plays in executive development.[82] Ross believes a key aspect of

mentoring is the trust that comes through confidentiality, “We all need confidential places to be able to go through challenges and opportunities.”[83] He explains that mentees need a mentor who will offer personal feedback in addition to professional coaching. This type of deep relationship focused on future leader development requires confidentiality and demands a time commitment from executives with busy schedules.

Even though mentoring takes time and executives are very busy, mentoring is a key responsibility of leaders. Joe Gibbs’ investment in mentoring proves that you should never consider yourself too busy, important, or successful to invest in the lives of others as a mentor. “The Coach,” as he is known around JGR, is a very busy and very successful man. He is a three-time Super Bowl winner with the Washington Redskins and was recently inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame. Additionally, he built a National Association of Stock Car Racing (NASCAR) team that has amassed 174 NASCAR race victories and won three NASCAR Sprint Cup Championships.[84] While these dominating accomplishments in two professional sports are quite remarkable, they do not tell the measure of this man. Coach Gibbs often explains his drive for mentoring, “When we leave this earth, the only thing that matters is the influence that we’ve had on the lives of others.”[85] His moral compass is pointed out toward something other than self. Through character-based mentoring he invests in many people including his previous football players, his current team members at Joe Gibbs Racing, and prison inmates across the country. He recounts his introduction to mentoring prison inmates, “I’ll never forget his [Chuck Colson’s] invitation to me, just after the Redskins had won Super Bowl XXII, to go with him to the Lorton Prison in northern Virginia to visit prisoners…We soon found ourselves with the prisoners on death row.”[86] I can imagine the perplexed looks at the

media interview following the Super Bowl win, “Coach Gibbs, you just won the Super Bowl…what’s next? I’m going to death row to mentor prisoners!” What about “I’m going to Disney World” to enjoy the rewards of my victory? For Coach Gibbs, investing in the lives of others is a way of life no matter how successful or busy he is.

Likewise, Super Bowl XLI winning coach Tony Dungy is no stranger to prisons either. Even though Coach Dungy’s schedule is stretched thin, he is deeply involved in mentoring inmates because he believes “part of our purpose in life is to build a legacy…a consistent pattern of building into the lives of others with wisdom, experience, and loyalty that can be passed on to succeeding generations.”[87] He attributes many of the character issues of today’s young men and women to a lack of mentoring. If fact, one of his inmate mentees was Michael Vick, the tarnished NFL quarterback who was incarcerated for his involvement in a dog-fighting ring. Coach Dungy explained his rational for mentoring Vick in 2009, “My primary goal is to build into his life so that he, in turn, can have a positive impact on other young men. Nothing would please me more than to see him become a mentor to other people in his own sphere of influence.”[88] And in 2011, after Vick was restored as a star NFL quarterback, he began mentoring prison inmates with Coach Dungy.[89] Coach Gibbs and Dungy are exemplars of extremely successful men who invest the time and energy in others through character-based mentoring. Their time spent mentoring empowers the moral courage of their protégés.

Recommendations for Air Force Character-Based Mentoring

The Air Force must revise our approach toward mentoring if we hope to leverage its powerful benefits to strengthen the moral courage of our leaders. Air Force Colonel Harrison Smith, Deputy Director of Force Development, acknowledged our shortfalls, “Our mentoring program has existed on paper for many years, but without the right tools

to exercise the program, it has remained dormant."[90] In order to transition Air Force mentoring from a dormant thirteen-year-old AFI to a meaningful program we should start by making three fundamental changes:

- Senior leaders actively encourage Airmen to participate in mentoring relationships as both mentors and mentees
- Assist mentor pairing other than supervisor with subordinate
- Provide the tools that emphasize mentoring relationships focused on character development instead of career advancement

First, if mentoring is not a priority with senior leaders, then it will not be a priority with Airmen. The most effective way for a mentoring program to succeed is for senior leadership to promote the benefits and to model participation in mentoring relationships. Joe Gibbs and Tony Dungy demonstrate that successful leaders should prioritize mentoring even though their schedules are undoubtedly packed full. Pouring into the personal and professional lives of others should be a priority for leaders. Commanders at all levels, from generals to captains, should encourage their subordinates' participation in mentoring relationships and model the behavior. Airmen are more likely to participate in a mentoring relationship if they see the value added. Leaders at all levels should express and demonstrate the benefits of "paying it forward" as a mentor or seeking the wisdom of another as a mentee.

Another key to transitioning the Air Force mentoring program from dormancy to vitality is the basic process of helping to connect mentors and mentees in a relationship. Supervisors are a great resource for recommending a possible mentor for subordinates.

The supervisor is most likely aware of the Airman's interests, personality, strengths, and areas for improvement. This information is valuable in suggesting possible mentors.

A more formal opportunity for establishing mentoring relationships is during PME programs. For example, Squadron Officer School (SOS) students could be paired with Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) students. Likewise, ACSC students could be paired with Air War College (AWC) students, and this time spent mentoring should be allocated in the curriculum. The benefit of establishing mentoring relationships during PME would be that some of these character-developing relationships would continue after the students graduated from their PME program.

Another formal method of establishing mentoring relationships is via an electronic biography database. PepsiCo has found great success in this method of matching mentors with mentees.[91] In fact, a successful web-based mentor-pairing program is already in use at Hanscom Air Force Base at the Electronic Systems Center (ESC).[92] The web site uses SharePoint to allow prospective mentors to indicate their interests and post a short biography. Those seeking a mentor browse the list of interested advisors and pick the one they feel best suits them. If the mentor agrees, the two of them can define the parameters of their partnership. ESC's Director of Personnel states that mentoring is not new to ESC, but their web based matching system helps to facilitate and formalize mentoring relationships.[93] The web site also serves as a cache of best practices and tools gleaned from successful mentoring programs and resources.

Providing best practices and tools that emphasize character-based mentoring in lieu of career advancing sponsorship is another fundamental change required if the Air Force expects to leverage the benefits of mentoring to empower the moral courage of

Airmen. Admittedly, the task of providing the necessary tools and training for participants in a mentoring relationship may seem overwhelming, but remember that under the current AFI, “The immediate supervisor or rater is designated as the primary mentor (coach, guide, role model, etc.) for each of his or her subordinates.”[94] Therefore, the current assumption is that supervisors and raters already possess the skills required for mentoring, coaching, guiding, and role modeling. Air Force PME programs could reinforce the mentoring skills, and an online toolbox could provide mentoring best practices and suggestions. By providing examples of best practices and helpful tools, mentoring could be a powerful enabler for moral courage.

Currently, mentoring is an untapped resource in the Air Force. Admittedly, casual mentoring takes place in the workplace, but mentoring can be leveraged for powerful character enhancement. We must eliminate the notion that a “mentor” is a power-wielding colonel or general who is to be contacted when you need help getting your next career-enhancing job or assignment. Instead, we need mentors who are trusted counselors and guides that empower the moral courage of Airmen to do the right thing, no matter the cost to self.

Wise Management of Culture

“You [Airmen] are what makes our Air Force the best the world has ever known!”[95] These are the encouraging words of General Mark Welsh, the 20th Chief of Staff of the Air Force. As shown by General Welsh’s comments, our ability to fly, fight, and win does not hinge on the machines we operate. We are the best Air Force the world has ever known because of our people…our Airmen. The strength of our Airmen is rooted in their education, training, and experience, but the most vital quality of our Airmen is their honorable character. As Figure 3 depicts, character is the fulcrum upon

which all moral decisions and actions are made. And our character is affected by each moral or immoral decision we make. Choosing to do the right thing today causes a strengthening of your character, which assists your moral courage to win tomorrow's struggles.

Another factor that affects the outcome of our moral motivation is the culture of our organization. An organization's culture is quite simply the anthology of individual members' accepted behaviors and practices over time. These behaviors and practices tend to predict the group's conduct in the future. Our culture is what we do as a group repeatedly, and culture also affects individual behavior. When we observe members of our organization benefiting from immoral behaviors, then it empowers our moral cowardice. Conversely, when ethical behaviors we observe in the group receive positive feedback, individual moral courage is strengthened. Therefore, prudent maintenance of organizational culture is critical to the health of the team. And since culture is the collection of individual members' accepted behaviors and practices, the businesses that I researched are diligent to exercise wise human resource management in the following areas:

- Hiring employees of character that espouse their organizational values
- Providing timely developmental feedback
- Culling employees whose actions are corrosive to the culture

Hiring Employees of Character Protects the Culture

"Chick-fil-A does not take on 'projects' when we hire new employees," explains Lance Lanier, Senior Manager of Talent Strategy at Chick-fil-A.[96] This helps to protect

the company's culture and family. He clarifies the basis of this selection and hiring philosophy by explaining the emphasis on strong character and core values:

> We are not staffed to manage people closely. When you bring a new employee on-board, they need to be someone that not only has high initiative and is a self-starter, but above all, they have got to have strong character. In the absence of direct leadership, you want their internal compass to be strong. You want to increase the likelihood they will make moral decisions, when left to their own devices. We go to great lengths when selecting candidates to ensure this person is coming in with a great foundation of character. They must be someone who shares our four core values of excellence, loyalty, integrity, and generosity.[97]

The interview and hiring process for a restaurant operator position at Chick-fil-A can often be at least a six-month process according to Mark Meadows, who has been in leadership with the company for over thirty years.[98] He explains, "It is like a marriage…it is intended to be a relationship for life. So, you really want to make sure the person has good moral character on the front end of the relationship."[99] This practice of protecting the company culture by attracting, selecting, and hiring employees of character not only applies to leadership positions. In fact, Meadows explains that he will interview a teenager several times, including a meeting with a parent, before he hires a part-time employee for his restaurants. He does this to ensure they have the character qualities that are compatible with the culture of his business.[100] The philosophy of hiring employees of honorable character is a core principle of the company's founder, S. Truett Cathy, "Among the twenty-five attributes companies look for in an executive, not one of them deals with experience. Character traits are most important. Everything else can be learned."[101]

The central hiring philosophy at JGR is also character driven. Ivan Beach, the Director of Aviation at JGR and retired U.S. Army colonel, describes the importance of hiring employees with character:

> We strongly believe that moral courage and ethical behavior are as essential in the corporate world as they are in the military. We hired three new pilots this year, and the guidance I gave our Chief Pilot was to make sure they were good people that would do the right thing. We can teach someone how to fly our aircraft, but if they lack moral values, that is very difficult to correct.[102]

Colonel Beach explains that hiring a pilot who has strong character but lacks experience in JGR's Saab or Challenger aircraft may save the company thousands of dollars in the end.[103] He explains that, "Paying for a type rating in our aircraft may cost the company thousands of dollars up front, but a new hire lacking character could cost hundreds of thousands before you get rid of them."[104] He also explains that the team suffers while leadership and other employees focus attention on the delinquent employee's behavior. Ultimately, hiring employees with character facilitates the moral courage of individual employees because it protects the organization's culture.

Providing Timely Developmental Feedback Protects the Culture

In addition to selecting employees on the basis of character, providing timely developmental feedback is a key aspect of wise management of the culture. Feedback empowers moral courage to do the right thing when faced with an ethical dilemma. Three critical phases of developmental feedback emphasized during my research are:

- Daily, task-related feedback
- Mid-term and annual appraisals
- Multi-rater or 360-degree feedback

Providing daily, task-related feedback seems like common sense in leadership, but the application of this critical leadership tool varies. Pfizer Pharmaceuticals Production Manager, Sean Hunt asserts that one of his mentors taught him, "Great leaders give great feedback."[105] He explains that feedback should be "immediate,

honest, focused, and recognizes the good as well as behaviors that need improving."[106] Employees of high character love feedback because they want to improve daily even at the cost of a slightly bruised ego. At JGR, Ivan Beach asserts, "You can't beat around the bush; people want and deserve honest feedback. And sometimes that is not pleasant."[107]

This principle of candidness applies to intermediate and annual appraisals, as well as daily feedback. Beach believes that annual reviews should be a "non-event" because your direct reports will not be surprised by their evaluation when you provide honest, timely feedback throughout the year.[108] Additionally, the annual feedback process should be used as a developmental opportunity, not simply a promotion evaluation. It is a great opportunity to review the accomplishment of previous goals and to establish new growth objectives. The practice of intermediate and annual appraisals focusing on individual developmental plans was observed across the gamut of companies that are included in my research.

Multi-rater feedback, commonly referred to as "360-degree feedback," is another developmental tool that is practically universal in business although the utilization of the feedback varies. In fact, forty percent of American companies used 360-degree feedback in 1995; by 2000 this number had jumped to sixty-five percent. By 2002, 90% of Fortune 500 companies were using multi-rater performance reviews.[109] Some researchers believe the results of 360-degree feedback are best for employee-only consumption as a developmental tool. This argument is based on the idea that developmental-only purposes increase the likelihood of an individual "being able to hear" disconfirming information about himself from the vertical feedback originating with

subordinates.[110] Other scholars believe the information should be used for "developmental-plus" purposes. They believe the research supports using the feedback for employee self-development in addition to facilitating the supervisor's involvement in the developmental process.[111] These researchers contend that the developmental-only approach is a waste of money because without the supervisor's involvement most employees find the feedback curious but do not follow through with developmental plans to change behavior.[112] Additionally, the feedback provided by peers and subordinates is often more accurate than the perceptions of the supervisor alone. Multi-rater feedback can improve the supervisor's blind spots concerning subordinates and the culture. These blind spots may mask the toxic behaviors of ego-driven, rising leaders or the altruistic behaviors of the humble star performer. PepsiCo values the developmental-plus process for their executives and people managers.[113] They use a short, twelve-question survey annually and a more involved 360-degree survey on alternating years. These tools are debriefed with the recipient by their supervisor to ensure alignment between the employee's behavior and the company's values. In addition to discussing strengths and areas for improvement with the employee, a written action plan for development is established. Ultimately, feedback should focus on developing team members and protecting the culture. In doing so, feedback strengthens moral courage because it reinforces praiseworthy behavior and offers correction to unacceptable behavior.

Culling Employees Whose Actions are Corrosive to the Culture

When constructive feedback is ineffective and behavior remains misaligned with the organizational values, the employee must be culled in a timely manner to protect the organization's culture. While the prospect of terminating an employee is uncomfortable,

the alternative can be devastating to the moral courage of every other employee. Other team members are aware of the endorsed organizational values, and they are often very cognizant of the deviant behavior even before the supervisor is aware. Inaction by leadership results in a corrosion of the culture and cynicism among the team members.

Ernesto Sanchez, Senior Director at PepsiCo University stresses that task failures are understandable and are learning opportunities. However, when a PepsiCo employee violates the code of conduct or company values, the response must be black and white. The employee will be released.[114] The other employees will learn from this immediate response. Their moral courage will be empowered and the culture will be protected.

Recommendations for Wise Management of Air Force Culture

The Air Force should make changes in our hiring, feedback, and culling processes in order to wisely manage our professional culture. First, in the area of hiring our future senior leaders, the Air Force needs to emphasize that the first two years of the Air Force Academy and Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) are a "probationary period." This is a perfect opportunity to filter our new hires. Through my experience as an Air Officer Commanding at the Air Force Academy, it was clear that cadets were very aware that they could choose to leave whenever they wanted during the first two years. On the other hand, for a number of reasons, some overt and others not so apparent, it was nearly impossible to release certain cadets even when their behavior was not aligned with our Air Force values. The Air Force chose to "hire" these cadets as leaders even though they did not embrace our core values. I am not proposing a one-mistake Academy or AFROTC where there is zero tolerance error. Instead, I am suggesting that a bad cadet seldom becomes a good officer. In essence,

eliminating a noncompliant cadet protects the Active Duty from hiring a “project” lieutenant. In addition, promptly dis-enrolling bad cadets will protect the culture of the accession source. When the institution chooses to tolerate poor behavior and performance by not enforcing policy and upholding values, cynicism is the result. The Air Force must exercise wisdom in hiring only those officer candidates who espouse and live by our principles and values. As stewards of our nation’s freedom, we cannot afford to hire leaders that are “projects.”

On the other hand, a fundamental strength of the Air Force is the willingness to give and receive candid task-related feedback. For example, in a fighter squadron, we have an adage that “rank comes off in the flight debrief” because we value direct, honest feedback from any flight member without regard to their rank. Likewise, Air Force supervisors across the Air Force offer immediate, candid feedback on daily tasks.

While our task-related feedback is timely and forthright, the implementation of mid-term and annual appraisals is a major weakness in the Air Force that is corrosive to our culture. For example, the mid-term feedback date annotated on performance reports is often “pencil whipped” (back-dated) because a formal feedback session did not occur during the middle of the appraisal period as directed. Also, the annual performance reports are commonly delivered to the subordinate via email with a courtesy note such as, “Your performance report is attached; see me if you have questions.” At an absolute minimum, we need supervisors to take the time necessary to explain the annual performance report to the subordinate in person. This one-on-one conversation is essential for the subordinate to understand how to develop and improve. Ideally, performance reports would include a developmental section that describes the goals

and performance objectives for the next year. Needless to say, our performance reports are often hyperbolic. The problem of embellished performance reporting is beyond the scope of this paper, but the impact of this cultural behavior undoubtedly empowers the egocentric and narcissistic dispositions in many of our rising leaders. The Air Force needs to change our mid-term and annual performance appraisals if we expect to leverage these powerful tools to empower the moral courage of our future leaders.

Another successful instrument that we must incorporate is an annual developmental-plus 360-degree feedback. This would greatly improve officer growth, and it will help supervisors understand their blind spots. I am not proposing that an Airman's performance report should be directly affected by the comments in a 360-degree feedback. The supervisor should continue to assume total control of the performance report. I am suggesting that the supervisor would be better informed to evaluate performance with input from the individual's peers and subordinates. This information would be invaluable in addressing a number of poor leadership traits such as toxic behavior and egoism. Our future senior leaders should begin receiving multi-rater feedback as early in their career as possible. This could start at the officer accession programs but should definitely begin when an Airman has enough peers or subordinates to ensure anonymity. When they have at least four peers, they should receive peer feedback. When they have at least four subordinates, they should receive subordinate feedback. This ensures anonymity of the responses while providing behavior-changing comments.

Also, the feedback survey must be laser focused and efficient. We cannot afford a program that consumes any unnecessary time from Airmen. It should be administered

online, using an off-the-shelf database program and include no more than approximately fifteen questions. We do not need hundreds of data points, like many multi-rater feedback tools provide. PepsiCo completes their annual multi-rater feedback tool with twelve questions.[115] The questions simply need to address the big picture, "What are the individual's strengths and weaknesses in leadership, job performance, and in each core value?" The survey should also include an option for commanders to add a couple questions customized to the organization or the specific career field.

Developmental-plus multi-rater feedback can be applied in such a manner as to inform the individual and their supervisor, while also easing the individual's concern about subordinates having a direct impact on their annual performance report. In order to detach the multi-rater feedback results from the annual performance report, the feedback could occur in the mid-point of the annual appraisal cycle. As the mid-term feedback date approaches, the supervisor initiates the multi-rater feedback tool by selecting four peers and four subordinates of the individual to participate in the process. These individuals provide anonymous input online by scoring quantitative ratings and offering comments whenever possible. Once the all comments are received, the supervisor conducts the mid-term feedback session with the Airman. A developmental action plan is established. After the feedback meeting is accomplished, the supervisor's boss receives a courtesy copy of the completed mid-term feedback paperwork. This ensures that the feedback session was completed in a professional manner, and the upper levels of leadership will be better informed about the Airmen in the organization. Behavior changes would likely be immediate. Developmental-plus, multi-rater feedback encourages the values that empower moral courage.

In addition to 360-degree feedback, another key aspect of wise culture management is a clear policy of terminating Airmen who are corrosive to our culture, regardless of their rank. When an Airman is not behaving in accordance with our core values and feedback has failed to correct the behavior, we need to release the Airman back to civilian life. Too often, we give rising leaders another chance after they have clearly demonstrated a refusal to live according to our core values. I mean all of our core values, not just “Integrity First.” If “Service before Self” is truly a core principle in the Air Force, then we need to correct self-centered behavior directly. Egoism is annoying in lieutenants and captains, but it becomes caustic to entire organizations in our field grade and flag officers. Unfortunately, misbehavior is not usually self-correcting. When left unchecked, it is corrosive to our culture and often leads to incidents reported in the Air Force Times that read like a tabloid. While swiftly terminating a corrupt Airman may be unpleasant at the time, this action will empower the moral courage of others to do the right thing in the face of a moral dilemma. Choosing to not cull the Airman harms the entire culture of an organization and may strengthen the moral cowardice in every individual.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the business practices of elite companies to discover the successful processes they use to empower the moral courage of their rising leaders and to propose how these techniques could be leveraged in the Air Force. I was hoping to discover a revolutionary leader development practice that would practically guarantee our Airmen would do the right thing when faced with a moral dilemma. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Instead, I discovered that companies

such as Walmart, Southwest Airlines, Chick-fil-A, PepsiCo, JGR, Pfizer, and Disney rely on established leadership principles to fortify the moral courage of their rising leaders.

My findings suggest that while a revolutionary panacea does not exist, there are proven leadership practices that can be very effective at empowering the moral courage of Airmen. Quite notably, the primary pitfall facing rising leaders is their own success. Their success can lead to egoism and narcissism, which bolsters their moral cowardice. In contrast, the practices suggested in this paper will serve to strengthen moral courage and help future Air Force leaders remain good stewards of their leadership positions as they rise in responsibility and authority.

This study suggests that while the Air Force may already employ some of the developmental techniques highlighted in these successful companies, with a few critical adaptations, we can leverage them much more effectively. The Air Force should make changes to better define and internalize our core values and our inspiring purpose. We must incorporate character-based mentoring and wisely manage our culture through hiring officers of the highest character, providing quality developmental feedback, and promptly culling Airmen who do not embrace our values. With these critical changes in policy and emphasis, the moral courage of our Airmen would be empowered. They would be exemplary stewards of the authority bestowed up them. These changes would build our leaders' moral courage and help them to avoid the pain and devastation of "the King David Syndrome." We must have Airmen with strong moral courage to lead the Air Force through the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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1) Zoom (if at low altitude)
2) Stores – Jettison (if required)
3) Throttle – OFF, then Midrange
4) Airspeed – As Required 400 KIAS

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