

AU/ACSC/0424/97-03

AIR FORCE CORE VALUES: AN ANALYSIS OF MID-LEVEL
CAREER OFFICERS' VALUES AND THEIR SUITABILITY TO
INSTILL THEM

A Research Paper

Presented To

The Research Department

Air Command and Staff College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements of ACSC

by

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March 1997

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved OMB No.
0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-03-1997	2. REPORT TYPE Thesis	3. DATES COVERED (FROM - TO) xx-xx-1997 to xx-xx-1997
---	--------------------------	--

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Air Force Core Values: An Analysis of Mid-Level Career Officers' Values and Their Suitability to Instill Them Unclassified	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S) Keith, Steven E. ;	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Air Command and Staff College Maxwell AFB, AL36112	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
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9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME AND ADDRESS ,	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
APUBLIC RELEASE

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
In the midst of shifting societal values, the Air Force has launched a core values campaign to assure the traditional core values, essential to the correct functioning of the Air Force, are integrated into its members. The new effort calls for Air Force leaders to be instrumental in instilling the values in subordinates. To these concerns, this research seeks to evaluate the level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officers, and their subsequent suitability to help instill the core values in subordinates. To provide an understanding of the context surrounding these issues, a review of American historical and constitutional core values is conducted; current societal shifts, from absolute values to relative values, and the subsequent threat to the Air Force is examined; the Air Force's new core values campaign, aimed at countering the negative impacts of encroaching relative values, is reviewed; and Air Force majors are evaluated to determine whether they have integrated the Air Force core values, rendering them fit to help instill them in others. The methodology used to conduct the research is a questionnaire with follow-up interviews. Integration of core values was measured by discerning consistency, level of commitment, and type of motivation driving the core values. Research findings point to a high level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officers. However, the research reveals the Air Force had very little to do with integrating values, as officers' core values are rooted primarily through God/religion and family influences. The author calls for a review of the current Air Force strategy which seeks to integrate the core values by secular means in exclusion of religious influences. The author recommends Air Force Chaplains be utilized to facilitate an integration strategy including God-centered influences.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Public Release	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 60	19. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Fenster, Lynn lfenster@dtic.mil
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a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER International Area Code Area Code Telephone Number 703767-9007 DSN 427-9007
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Preface

Shifting societal values challenge the Air Force's ability to maintain a force populated with individuals who hold to traditional core values. The Air Force's recent core values campaign seeks to address this issue. The Air Force is looking to its leadership to help instill the core values in subordinates. I believe it is paramount our leaders possess the bedrock, absolute core values of "integrity," "service before self," and "excellence" to be effective in this goal. Moreover, I believe it is essential that we identify and capitalize on the primary sources of an individual's values, to help that person establish bedrock, unwavering core values.

This project was accomplished with a lot of outstanding expertise from my Faculty Research Advisor, Major Bob Fant, whose positive spirit of enthusiasm for the research process was a perpetual encouragement. Moreover, I'd like to give special heartfelt thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Michael Conn for his invaluable expertise in directing the development of the survey instrument and his wisdom in helping to analyze the results. Additionally, special thanks to ACSC officers who participated in the survey and interview process, without whom this research would not have been possible. Finally, my wife Kathy has been a constant source of encouragement and joy, whose contributions cannot be measured.

Abstract

In the midst of shifting societal values, the Air Force has launched a core values campaign to assure the traditional core values, essential to the correct functioning of the Air Force, are integrated into its members. The new effort calls for Air Force leaders to be instrumental in instilling the values in subordinates. To these concerns, this research seeks to evaluate the level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officers, and their subsequent suitability to help instill the core values in subordinates.

To provide an understanding of the context surrounding these issues, a review of American historical and constitutional core values is conducted; current societal shifts, from absolute values to relative values, and the subsequent threat to the Air Force is examined; the Air Force's new core values campaign, aimed at countering the negative impacts of encroaching relative values, is reviewed; and Air Force majors are evaluated to determine whether they have integrated the Air Force core values, rendering them fit to help instill them in others.

The methodology used to conduct the research is a questionnaire with follow-up interviews. Integration of core values was measured by discerning consistency, level of commitment, and type of motivation driving the core values. Research findings point to a high level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officers. However, the research reveals the Air Force had very little to do with integrating values, as officers' core values are rooted primarily through God/religion and family influences.

The author calls for a review of the current Air Force strategy which seeks to integrate the core values by secular means in exclusion of religious influences. The author recommends Air Force Chaplains be utilized to facilitate an integration strategy including God-centered influences.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The bottom line is that our ongoing efforts in the area of core values are motivated by the desire to inculcate service values in our people via an organized and systematic process throughout their careers.

—General Ronald Fogleman

American society is experiencing a shift away from traditionally held core values. Traditional core values, once the norm, were built on the concept of absolute truth, right was right and wrong was wrong. The current shift in values is driven largely by a change in attitude about the relevance of truth. More and more people in American society are questioning whether anything can be absolutely true, black or white, right or wrong.¹ Current research reveals that 71 percent of the American population rejects the concept of absolute truth.²

Experts believe this shift in attitude concerning the nature of truth, from being absolute to relative, has resulted in a shift in core values and is largely responsible for increase in problems currently being experienced in American society.³ William Bennett in his book *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* addresses the downward spiral of problems in American society from 1960 to the present when he points out the 300 percent increase in crime, a 400 percent increase in illegitimate birth rates, a 50 percent increase in divorce, and the tripling of teen suicides.⁴

This shift away from traditional values is not only having a negative impact on American society at large but on the Air Force. To this concern, the Air Force has launched a new core values campaign.⁵ In March 1995, General Fogleman and senior leaders refined the previous six Air Force core values into three: “integrity first,” “service before self,” and “excellence in all we do.” Moreover, at the 1996 Corona Fall Conference, senior leaders chose to incorporate these three essential Air Force values in the strategic vision document, *Global Engagement*. Additionally, senior leaders approved a core values pamphlet disseminated to every Air Force member, military and civilian⁶. The pamphlet, published in January of 1997, entitled *United States Air Force Core Values* and nicknamed “The Little Blue Book,” is one of the Air Force’s lead weapons aimed at insuring the Air Force’s core values are indeed core to its members. Adherence to core values is understood to be absolutely essential to the proper and successful accomplishment of the Air Force mission.⁷

The newly published pamphlet promotes a “Core Values Strategy” to ensure core values are perpetually taught to all Air Force personnel. General Fogleman explains, “The bottom line is that our ongoing efforts in the area of core values are motivated by the desire to inculcate service values in our people via an organized and systematic process throughout their careers.”⁸ Special emphasis is placed on commanders and those individuals in leadership positions to teach the values at every opportunity, both through word and deed.⁹ Correspondingly, this places considerable weight on mid-level career officers to train and set the example. Considering this strategy, it is advantageous to consider the level to which Air Force core values presently exist in the lives of these officers.

To these concerns, the thesis of this paper is stated: In the midst of changing societal values, do mid-level career officers have Air Force core values integrated into their lives, rendering them suitable to help instill core values in subordinates? To answer this question, this paper will define core values, examine the historical foundations of American core values, explore the societal values shift that is subsequently threatening the Air Force mission, describe the Air Force's new core values campaign, evaluate the current level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officer's lives, and analyze the Air Force strategy to sustain a force with people who have integrated Air Force core values.

Notes

¹ Charles W. Colson, "A Question of Ethics," *Airpower Journal* 10 (Summer 1996): 6.

² George Barna, *The Barna Report 1994-95: Virtual America*, (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1994), 85

³ John F. MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994), 57.

⁴ William J. Bennett, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994):18-78.

⁵ William Matthews, "Soul Searching," *Air Force Times*, 24 February 1997, 12.

⁶ Ronald R. Fogleman, "Core Values Revisited," *Air Force Times*, 17 March 1997, 37.

⁷ Ronald R. Fogleman, "Profession of Arms," *Airpower Journal* 9(Fall 1995):4.

⁸ Ronald R. Fogleman, "Core Values Revisited," 37.

⁹ United States Air Force Core Values, 1 January 1997, 18-21.

Chapter 2

Definitions

Air Force Core Values are certain ideals, certain values that are the heart and soul of the military profession . . . that are absolutely essential for the correct functioning of the Air Force system

—Sheila Widnall, Secretary of the Air Force

In this paper we will be discussing three primary types of core values: institutional Air Force core values, personal core values, and national core values. It is important to distinguish between these types of values as we explore the integration of institutional Air Force core values into individual, personal lives.

Generally, a core value is defined as, “what is critically important to a person or organization.”¹ As we apply this general definition toward more specific definitions relating to the Air Force, individuals, and the nation, we will discover distinctive shades of meaning.

Air Force core values are defined by Secretary of the Air Force, Sheila Widnall, as “certain ideals, certain values that are at the heart and soul of the military profession...that absolutely essential for the correct functioning of the Air Force system.”²

Individual core values are defined as “what is critically important...and defines the purpose in life for that person.”³

National core values are defined as those beliefs and ideals that are considered to be critically important to the American people, embodied in our Constitution.⁴

Notes

¹ ACSC Distance Learning Lesson, CL504DL “Values, Ethics, and Actions,” Maxwell AFB, AL, 7 Mar 1995.

² Sheila Widnall (Secretary of the Air Force), “Core Values of the Military Profession,” Address to the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, n.p.; on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.usafa.af.mil/core-value/widnall.html>.

³ ACSC Distance Learning Lesson CL504DL.

⁴ Anthony Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 43.

Chapter 3

Historical Foundations of American Core Values

And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

—George Washington

In this chapter we will examine our national values as reflected in the Constitution and the concern the founding fathers had, that personal core values of the citizens be morally anchored. An understanding of this history will provide a framework to discern the present American shift to relative core values and the impending danger to the Air Force mission. Furthermore, it will highlight the need for the Air Force core values campaign to be morally supported by mid-level career officers.

The core values of the nation, are contained in the Constitution of the United States. This document, written to express the deepest desires and values of our forefathers, is what the military member swears to uphold and defend, against all enemies foreign and domestic. The Air Force member promises to defend the values of a representative democratic government, individual rights, the rule of law, religious liberty, and equality. Anthony Hartle summarizes it this way,

Evident in our national history and implicit in the provisions of the Constitution, which authorizes the rising of armed forces, is the firm belief

that these enabling values are worth fighting for and that the use of force in their defense is fully justified. That is the soldier's purpose. When a military member pledges to the support and defense of the Constitution, they commit themselves, by logical extension, to the principle and values that form the basis of its provisions.¹

Herein, the core values of our founding fathers laid the framework for that which the American people consider critically important. To this concern, thousands of American fighting men and women have given their lives to defend the principles of freedom and liberty summarized in the Constitution. From the Revolutionary War to the Gulf War, men and women of "integrity," "selflessness," and "excellence" have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend the Constitution against foreign enemies.

Furthermore, our founding fathers saw protection against domestic enemies no less important to the security of the Constitution. They realized the substance of the core values expressed in the Constitution rested largely in the moral prosperity of the American people. The founders understood the underlying structure of national values were supported and defended by the strong moral fabric of the American citizenry.

Religion and faith in God, viewed from various religious perspectives, were considered essential to the proper functioning of a nation pursuing such high ideals.. The founders had a clear vision of how the moral core values of the American people served to protect the core values of the Constitution. And, even though their religious perspectives fell into three distinct categories, Enlightenment Separationist, Political Centrists, and Pietistic Separationist, all agreed the nation could not stand without religious moral influence.²

The Enlightenment Separationists, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and to some measure James Madison, were deeply influenced by the French Enlightenment movement.³

Nevertheless, Thomas Paine in his publication, *Common Sense* (1776), emphasized the duty of government to protect all forms of religious profession.⁴ Thomas Jefferson in speaking of religion said, “I know of but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively.”⁵ And he declared religion the “best support...of good government.”⁶ Furthermore, James Madison declared,

We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.⁷

Political Centrists, the most predominate position of the founding fathers, may weigh heaviest in the core values expressed in the Constitution. Most of the founders fall into this category, including George Washington and John Adams. These men, “believed that religion was an essential cornerstone for morality, civic virtue, and democratic government.”⁸

George Washington, undoubtedly the most respected among the Centrists, believed, “religion and morality were the essential pillars of civil society.”⁹ While serving as the commander of the Continental Army, General Washington ordered soldiers to attend public worship services, prohibited profane cursing, and directed his regimental commanders to procure military chaplains.¹⁰ Moreover, General Washington on May 2, 1778, issued the following order to his troops at Valley Forge:

While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to laud the more distinguished Character of Christian.¹¹

Furthermore, John Adams said, “We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passion unbridled by morality and religion . . . Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government or any other.”¹²

Pietistic Separationist’s, Roger Williams and William Penn, promoted separation of state and church in an effort to protect the church from state influence. Nevertheless, the advocates of the Separationists position conceived of a government ruled by people of strong moral character and faith.¹³ To this concern William Penn wrote, “True Godliness doesn’t turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it.”¹⁴ And Roger Williams wrote, “A flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained...grounded upon gospel principles.”¹⁵

The founders represented a spectrum of views of how the government and church should interact. However, they all agreed that the republic could not service without religion’s moral influence. Consequently, they did not envision a secular society.¹⁶

Notes

¹ Anthony Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 43.

² Arlin M. Adams and Charles J. Emmerick, *A Nation Dedicated to Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ William J. Federer, *America’s God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations* (Coppell, Texas: Fame Publishing, Inc., 1994),333.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 334.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 411.

⁸ Adams, 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Federer, 643.

¹² Adams, 27.

Notes

¹³ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴ Federer, 500.

¹⁵ Ibid., 694.

¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

Chapter 4

America's Values Begin to Shift

We are well along the road to moral chaos...Analysis demonstrates that we continue slouching towards Gomorrah.

—Robert Bork

Even though the founding fathers built the framework for a nation, and the Constitution for a moral and religious people, and were convinced core values without moral and religious foundations would crumble, America is experiencing an erosion of its moral foundations.¹ This crumbling is negatively impacting the nation and subsequently the military.

To this issue, Col. Mal Wakin writes,

...reflections on societal trends are relevant to our considerations of ethics in the military profession because like the other professions, the military constituency is drawn from the present society...However much we may wish...military professionalism flourished in this country...(in) alienation of the military from civilian society, we cannot extend that alienation totally to our moral values.²

Furthermore, General Fogleman points out the Air Force recruits and commissions more than 35,000 individuals a year and generally relies on society to equip new personnel with moral values. Yet he points out, “Once they are with us, we must inculcate in our people the unique values of our service and the military profession. That is essential if we are going to safeguard the nation.”³

Nevertheless, Air Force senior leadership is concerned “a climate of corrosion” is taking a toll on the Air Force mission.⁴ In *The Little Blue Book*, familiar examples of recent scandals are presented to prove the point. The fallout ranges from NCO’s engaged in adulterous fraternization, to the tragic and senseless crash of the Ramstein CT-43 and the Fairchild B-52, to contractor fraud and cost overruns, to the shoot down of two Black Hawk helicopters over Iraq.⁵

A Shift from Absolute Values

The USAF Academy honor code—we will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does—is simply not acceptable by society as an appropriate standard.

—Maj Gen Jerry E. White USAFR

There is no doubt, the problem of deteriorating societal values has reached into the pool from which the Air Force recruits future officers. Representative H. Martin Lancaster of North Carolina, a member of the Air Force Academy Board of Visitors says, “while these (cadets) are the best of the best, they could be better.”⁶ Charlie Meier, academy class of 1959 and previous chairman of the Academy’s chemistry department says, “Today’s societal standards are different than the standards of 35 years ago . . . White collar crime is tolerated in society today. Our children learn from our behavior. They have different concepts of what is wrong.”⁷ Furthermore, Col. Terrence Moore, ethics director in the Academy’s Center for Character Development says, “Blame white-collar crime, broken families, MTV, whatever. But the result is the same, ‘we’re fighting trends of extreme individualism in the society as a whole.’”⁸ Colonel Moore goes on to say traditional core values that were once basic to American society are now redefined so

that the honor code, I will not lie, steal, or cheat, no longer means what it once did. He says, “The problem is, their (current cadets) definition of cheating and ours is different because their value system is different.”⁹ Finally, Brigadier General Patrick Gamble, the Commandant of Cadets says, “The raw material is not coming in the door with the same values that our grandparents and parents taught us 30 and 35 years ago.”¹⁰

A Shift Toward Relative Values

*It is hard these days to find a standard to which we can hold people.
Everything is relative.*

—Governor Richard Lamb

To discern the shift in societal values, one quickly realizes one of the key concerns is the uprooting of absolute moral standards and the shift away from the concept of absolute truth. American society is quickly trading the ideal of “absolutes” for ideals of “relativism.” “Absolutes” is defined as “unquestionable, fundamental, ultimate knowledge.”¹¹ And, “relativism” is defined as “a view that ethical truths depend on individuals and groups holding them.”¹² To this concern, Dr. Kevin Ryan, Director of The Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University School of Education says, “Moral standards have become so eroded that many children can no longer tell right from wrong . . . kids have no moral compass other than enlightened self interests.”¹³

Richard Lamb, former Governor of Colorado, explains the onset of the problematic societal shift in values when he writes, “In attempting to be tolerant, we have wiped out all the rules....It is hard these days to find a standard to which we can hold people. Everything is relative. Our moral compass gyrates wildly. There is no true north.”¹⁴ To

this issue, Chuck Colson points out the absence of an absolute standard makes it impossible to teach ethics, as the Greek word it is derived from, *ethos*, means stable, absolute, unchanging. He says no society is able to sustain itself without a set of absolute standards to measure right from wrong. As early as 16 centuries before Christ, the Babylonians lived by the Code of Hammarabi as means of survival and civility.¹⁵

Furthermore, Colson points out all of western civilization was traditionally governed by Judeo-Christian revelation. The Judeo-Christian scriptures, with the Ten Commandments as a centerpiece, eventually called “natural law,” provided an unwavering foundation to build moral codes governing several western nations over the past 2000 years, including the United States.¹⁶ Nevertheless, recent value shifts have moved the American populace from ideals grounded in transcendent standards to individual standards subject to the possibility of change depending on the situation.

American society, once a God fearing nation, now trumpets the need to avoid the topic of moral foundations, especially if based in belief in God or a set of religious writings. Dr. Stephen Carter, Professor of Law at Yale University writes,

We are one of the most religious nations on earth, in the sense that we have a deeply religious citizenry; but we are also perhaps the most zealous in guarding our public institutions against explicit religious influences. One result is that we often ask our citizens to split their public and private selves, telling them in effect that it is fine to be religious in private, but there is something askew when those private beliefs become the basis for public action And therein lies the trouble. In contemporary American culture, the religious are more and more treated as just passing beliefs - almost as fads, older, stuffier, less liberal versions of so called New Age - rather than the fundamentals upon which the devout build their lives.¹⁷

So, whether relativistic belief or belief that becomes inconsequential to public action, the results are largely the same, a society quickly becoming devoid of the absolute

standards which once formed the nations core value system. And, the shift directly affects the pool from which the military draws its constituency.

A Shift Threatening to the Air Force Mission

Most students...have been taught their heritage of freedom gives them plenty of 'rights' but few responsibilities. There are no causes they are willing to fight for, no great and noble truths they would die for.

—James Kennedy

No doubt, the permeating concepts of relativism are infecting American society and depleting the pool of individuals that hold to absolute values, from which the military must draw its members. How did a nation rooted in basic religious and moral absolutes drift into its present un-anchored position? How did we end up on the road which Robert H. Bork describes as a “road to moral chaos...slouching towards Gomorrah?”¹⁸

James Toner, points directly at the attitudes of materialism, which grew unabated following World War II. He contends materialism “gave rise to, or at least coexisted with a decline in moral, ethical, and spiritual values that were prevalent absolutes in the lives of Americans to that point in history.”¹⁹

To this concern, Allan Bloom points out, the one thing a college professor can be absolutely sure of is, most new students will believe truth is relative.²⁰ And he points out, the shift away from absolute values toward relativism is not without its advocates. He addresses the concepts held by those individuals who promote the “relative” view when he writes, “The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery,

xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather, it is not to think you are right at all.”²¹

James Kennedy writes, “The game plan of the liberal in the universities has been to eradicate the past and indoctrinate the young men and women of this nation with a new view of society....According to these theories, there are no absolutes, no sources of ultimate truth and meaning, and all ‘values’ are of equal importance...”²² Such philosophies of life run diametrically opposed to historical American core value systems which were based in ideals believed to be absolute and unchanging. Such relativistic philosophies run head long into the Air Forces’ need to be populated with individuals willing to give their lives in the line of duty. Kennedy says, “Most students...have been taught their heritage of freedom gives them plenty of ‘rights’ but few responsibilities. There are no causes they are willing to fight for, no great and noble truths they would die for.”²³

The result is a widening gulf between military members who believe the values stated in the Constitution are worth defending and a growing number of Americans who think nothing is worth dying for. James Toner states, “You who wear the uniform practice your profession among millions who do not know and do not care, and the ‘way of life’ in defense of which you are now ready to kill and die is under assault as never before in the history of our country. The people doing the assaulting...Americans themselves.”²⁴

Notes

¹ D. James Kennedy, *Character and Destiny* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 26.

² Malham M. Wakin, ed., *War, Morality, and the Military Profession* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 4.

Notes

³ Ronald R. Fogleman (Gen, USAF), "Core Values Revisited," *Air Force Times*, 17 March 1997, 37.

⁴ USAF Core Values, 1 January 1997, 14-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14

⁶ Jeff Thomas, "Values: How They Changed," *Air Force Times*, 4 March 1994, 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹ Henry Woolf, ed., *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G.& C. Merriam Co., 1974), 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 976.

¹³ Gen Jerry E. White, "Personal Ethics Versus Professional Ethics," *Airpower Journal* 10 (Summer 1996), 33.

¹⁴ Charles Colson, "A Question of Ethics," *Airpower Journal* 10 (Summer 1996), 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷ Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 8, 14.

¹⁸ Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (New York: Regan Books, 1993), 33.

¹⁹ James H. Toner, "Gallant Atavism: The Military Ethic in an Age of Nihilism," *Airpower Journal* 10 (Summer 1996), 15.

²⁰ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 25.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²² Kennedy, 27.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Toner, 14.

Chapter 5

The Air Force Confronts the Values Shift With a Core Values Campaign

Our military standards are higher than those in society at large....We expect all members to live by the highest standards implicit in our core values; integrity, service before self, and commitment to excellence

—General Ronald R. Fogleman

The Air Force seeks to confront the problem of shifting societal values and subsequent negative influences on the Air Force, by instituting a new core values campaign.¹ The forerunner of this effort is an Air Force pamphlet entitled *United States Air Force Core Values*. The pamphlet, nicknamed “The Little Blue Book,” is to be disseminated to all personnel. The ultimate goal of the campaign is aimed at inculcating the Air Force core values into all members, assuring a climate of ethical excellence prevails over corroding influences.² General Fogleman explains, “The approach is to weave our core values into the very fabric of our institution via education, training and the example of commanders and supervisors at all levels.”³ To this goal, Secretary of the Air Force, Sheila Widnall states, “Integrity, service, and excellence epitomize the core of the military profession and they are absolutely essential to the correct functioning of the Air Force system.”⁴

The Little Blue Book says, “Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. These are the Air Force Core Values.” In this chapter we will examine these three core values, discern the Air Force strategy of integrating them into its members’ lives, and discuss the need for the Air Force to openly address the primary basis for integrating core values.

Integrity First

The willingness to do what is right even when no one is looking

—Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall

The new Air Force core values emphasis calls for “integrity first.” This essential character trait is described as, “the willingness to do what is right even when no one is looking...the moral compass...the inner voice of self control...the basis for the trust imperative in today’s military.”⁵ The concept of “integrity,” is that which “holds together all the elements of a personality and enables a person to act on their convictions.”⁶ *The Little Blue Book* goes on to include eight other moral traits that are included in the concept of “integrity.” These subset values are “courage, honesty, responsibility, accountability, justice, openness, self-respect, and humility.”⁷ General Fogleman, in his address to USAF Academy cadets, remarked one of the “pass-fail items” of Air Force leaders is the requirement to have “absolute, bedrock integrity.”⁸ He believes “integrity” is essential to the Air Force successfully fighting and winning wars—the Air Force’s core mission. He believes “integrity” is critical because it provides the basis for “mutual trust,” “confidence,” and “esprit” vital to effective military operations.⁹

To expand on this, General Fogleman points out “integrity” is an essential ingredient in a profession that calls on its members to accept the “unlimited liability clause.” “Integrity assures your troops they will not be used in a frivolous or wasteful manner, and you sustain the trust of the American people who count on us to take good care of the nations most treasured resources - its sons and daughters.”¹⁰ Air Force senior leadership has identified the crumbling integrity of the American society and countered with the goal of instilling a bedrock core value of “integrity” in every Air Force member.

Service Before Self

Professional duties taking precedence over personal desires

—Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall

“Service before self” is described in *The Little Blue Book* as “professional duties taking precedence over personal desires.” This character trait is said to include at least four other moral subset characteristics to include, “rule following,” “respect for others,” “discipline and self control,” and “faith in the system.”¹¹ General Fogleman explains, “We are not engaged in just another job; we are practitioners of the profession of arms. We are entrusted with the security of our nation, the protection of our citizens, and the preservation of its way of life . . . this responsibility requires us to place the needs of our service and our country before personal concerns.”¹²

To this cause, General Fogleman makes clear that the essence of “service before self” is bound in the fact that military members are expected to willingly risk their lives to protect others. The basic fact is, the core value of “service before self” must support a military professional’s willingness to give his or her life in the line of duty.¹³ The “self

obsession” that destroys character, and is increasingly prevalent in American society, if left unchecked will also destroy the Air Force’s ability to protect the nation.¹⁴ Air Force senior leadership has identified this vulnerable center of gravity and countered with a quest to instill the core value of “service before self” into all its members.

Excellence in all we do

A sustained passion for improvement

—Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall

“Excellence in all we do” is the third core value the Air Force says is essential to our proper functioning as a service. It is defined as “a sustained passion for continuous improvement and innovation that will propel the Air Force into a long-term, upward spiral of accomplishment and performance.”¹⁵ *The Little Blue Book* addresses five subset values that flow out of “excellence,” to include, “product/service excellence,” “personal excellence,” “community excellence,” “resources excellence,” and “operational excellence.”¹⁶ General Fogleman states, “To excel is a moral obligation for members of a professional military force. The line between incompetence and immorality is a thinner line in the military than any other calling.”¹⁷

Military members by the nature of their profession and their goal of protecting the nation must do everything with an attitude and desire for “excellence” . The declining commitment to “excellence” in American society creates a vulnerable center of gravity for the Air Force. Herein, the Air Force is anxious to instill a desire for “excellence” in all its members.

The goal of establishing the three Air Force core values is to firmly establish “the price of admission to the Air Force...to point to what is universal and unchanging in the profession of arms...to help get a fix on the ethical climate of the organization...to serve as beacons vectoring back to the path of professional conduct...and to transform a climate of corrosion into a climate of ethical commitment.”¹⁸

Integration of Core Values Is the Strategic Goal

Our on going efforts in the area of core values are motivated by the desire to inculcate service values in our people

—General Ronald R. Fogleman

The Air Force profession insists members act with “integrity,” “selflessness,” and “excellence” not only on the job but off; not only in uniform but out; not only in the cockpit but the drivers seat; not only in the POW camp but in the hotel lobby; not only in public but private.¹⁹ The Air Force profession must be made up of people who have integrated the essential core values of the Air Force into their personal and professional lives. To this concern, one must recognize Air Force core values are core because of their essential importance to the Air Force mission. *The Little Blue Book* states, “All of us...must recognize their functional importance and accept them for that reason.”²⁰ Note however, the Air Force core values are institutional, organizational values.

Air Force core values then by definition are not the same as personal core values. Personal core values are those ideals which are of essential importance to the individual, while institutional core values are those ideals essential to the institution. The Air Force lays out a strategy in *The Little Blue Book* which seeks to wed the two. This indeed is a

goal aimed at integrating Air Force institutional values into the value system of individual lives.

The basic strategy of integrating Air Force institutional core values into individual lives of Air Force members is authoritarian in nature. *The Little Blue Book* makes implicitly clear that all members of the Air Force whether officer, enlisted, civil servant, or contractor are expected to “live by” and “cherish” the core values of the Air Force.²¹

Lewis Hunter tells us this is the most common way individuals build their value system from infancy. External authority of children, whether parents or teachers is used to build a set of beliefs to make value judgments. And he says, adults often rely on authoritative experts to form beliefs and make value judgments. Nevertheless, Hunter reminds us the faith of children is unconditional, while adults tend to be skeptical. Adults will respect the opinion of an expert, but at the same time be unlikely to exercise complete trust.²² Undoubtedly, “faith in the Air Force system” becomes an issue of concern as adults tend to be skeptical and unlikely to put unconditional faith into people or institutions. Nevertheless, “faith in the system” is presented as essential for integrating the Air Force Core Values into individual lives.²³

The second strategy of the new Air Force core values program is to integrate values into peoples lives based on “logic.” *The Little Blue Book* says , “The core values strategy attempts no explanation of the origin of the values except to say that all of us, regardless of our religious views, must recognize their functional importance and accept them for that reason. Infusing the core values is necessary for successful mission accomplishment.”²⁴ Logic explains the essential need for the three core values identified by senior Air Force leadership to be infused into Air Force member’s lives. Logic tells us

that without “integrity” the Air Force system would not hold together. Without placing “service before self” the oath of office would become meaningless. Without “excellence” people would die needlessly and the mission would fail.

Deductive logic rests on the premise that one values logic and therefore will rely on it to make value judgments.²⁵ The Air Force is counting on individuals to integrate the core values based on personal logic. The hope is, as individuals realize core values are essential to the proper functioning of the Air Force they will integrate them into their lives.²⁶

Additionally, the Air Force is counting on core values to be integrated through “experience.” *The Little Blue Book* calls on Air Force leaders to share their experiences and encourage others to discern the positive results of living with and by the Air Force core values. Lewis tells us experience is readily used by many to discern whether their faith is properly placed in an individual or institution.²⁷ To this concern, much weight is placed on mid-level career officers to help integrate the service’s values into subordinates lives. Therefore, it is incumbent to discern the level of core value integration in mid-level officers’ lives.

Notes

¹ William Matthews, “Soul Searching,” *Air Force Times*, 24 February 1997, 12.

² USAF Core Values, Jan. 1997,16.

³ Ronald R. Fogleman, (Gen USAF), “Core Values Revisited,” *Air Force Times* (17 March 1997), 37.

⁴ Sheila Widnall (Sec. of the Air Force), “Core Values of the Military Profession,” Address to the Joint Service Conference on Professional Ethics, On-line. Internet. Available from <http://www.usafa.af.mil/core-value/widnall.html>.

⁵ USAF Core Values, 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 3-5.

⁸ Ronald R. Fogleman (Gen, USAF), “Integrity,” *Air Force Magazine* 79 (February 96), 90.

⁹ Ibid.

Notes

- ¹⁰ Ibid., 91.
- ¹¹ USAF Core Values, 5-7.
- ¹² Ronald R. Fogleman (Gen, USAF), "Profession of Arms," *Airpower Journal* 9 (Fall 1995), 4.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Charles W. Colson, "A Question of Ethics," *Airpower Journal* 10 (Summer 1996), 7.
- ¹⁵ USAF Core Values, 8.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 8-10.
- ¹⁷ Air Force Handbook 90-502, *The Quality Approach*, 1 August 1996, 5.
- ¹⁸ USAF Core Values, 11-15.
- ¹⁹ James H. Toner, "Gallant Atavism: The Military Ethic in an Age of Nihilism," *Airpower Journal* 10 (Summer 1996), 15.
- ²⁰ USAF Core Values, 16.
- ²¹ Ibid., 1.
- ²² Hunter Lewis, *A Question of Values* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1990), 23.
- ²³ USAF Core Values, 7.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 16.
- ²⁵ Lewis, 43.
- ²⁶ USAF Core Values, 23-24.
- ²⁷ Lewis, 53.

Chapter 6

Evaluating the Level of Integration of Air Force Core Values in Mid-Level Career Officers

The Air Force's goal, to instill core values at every level, places significant weight on mid-level career officers. As leaders, they are expected to exemplify "integrity first," "service before self," and "excellence in all they do."¹ Moreover, they are called on to help integrate these values into subordinate's lives. This places majors attending ACSC right in the middle of the integration strategy. Therefore, it is advantageous to evaluate the level of integration of Air Force core values in the lives of these mid-level officers and future senior leaders.

Methodology

A core values questionnaire was developed and implemented in accordance with Campbell and Stanley. A "time series" approach was used, numerically weighting the questionnaire and following up with random interviews.² The purpose of the survey was to discern the level of integration of Air Force core values in the lives of majors attending Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB. The questionnaire was distributed on hard copy to 200 Air Force majors with 129 responding. The returned sampling is 25 percent of Air Force officers attending ACSC. Respondents were asked to give only their rank and years of service in the USAF, no names. The questions were formulated on a

scale from one to five, “Never” being low, and “Always” being high. The instrument, with tabulated results, is located at Appendix A.

The underlying assumption in formulating the questionnaire was, the integration of core values can be measured. Three areas of concern were applied as measures of integration: consistency of the core value, level of commitment to the core value, and type of motivation driving the core value.

To this goal, the author’s first objective was to discern the consistency of core values in officers’ professional and private lives. The underlying premise was, a core value will function in the same manner at all times, on or off the job if it is truly core. The second goal in formulating the questionnaire was to discern the commitment level of officers to the Air Force core values. The basic premise was, a core value must be held deeply within a person’s being to in fact be core. The third objective was to discern the type and level of motivation for practicing the core values. The supporting premise was, a commitment to Air Force core values would be reflected in motivation based on “functional importance to the Air Force,” as opposed to “personal success or failure.”

The questionnaire was divided into three categories corresponding to the three core values, “integrity,” “service before self,” and “excellence in all we do.” Within each category a series of questions were asked to discern whether or not the officer had indeed integrated the particular core value. The survey concluded with an opportunity to write in personal core values. The underlying premise of this fill in the blank was, matching personal core values with Air Force core values points to integration.

However, after several individuals of the original sampling of 63 officers wrote in God, religion, and faith, the author was prompted to add an additional question and take

a second sampling. The added question was responded to by 66 individuals. It asked officers to circle the primary basis for their core values—“Religion/God,” “Family,” “Education,” “Society,” or “Air Force.” The underlying premise in asking the question was to discern the percentage of officers that based their core values in those areas.

Evaluation of Results Relating to Integrity

Consistency of Integrity

In order to evaluate the consistency of “integrity” in officers’ lives they were asked two questions. Question one was, “How often do you do what is right on the job when no one is looking?” 63.0 percent said “Always” and 37.0 percent said “Most of the Time.” No other responses were recorded. The second question relating to consistency was, “How often do you do what is right in your personal life when no one is looking?” 31.2 percent said “Always;” 68 percent said “Most of the Time;” and 0.8 percent said “Almost Never.”

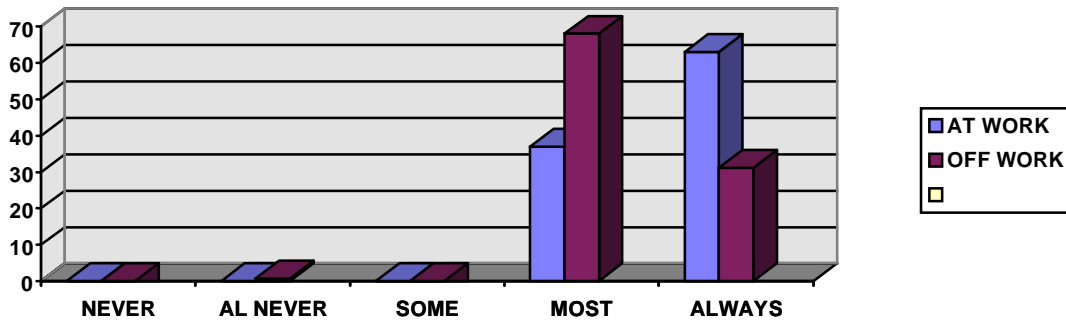


Figure 1. Consistency of Integrity

An analysis of these responses points to a group of officers which by their own testimony demonstrate an extremely high level of consistency in the area of “integrity” in

their professional and private lives. Yes, there is a margin for improvement in the lives of those who said “Most of the Time.” However, over 99 percent fall into the positive category in exercising “integrity” on and off the job. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that a higher percentage claim to “Always” do right on the job than off.

Commitment of Integrity

To evaluate the commitment of “integrity” in officers’ lives they were asked three questions. The first question was, “Is your motivation for ‘integrity’ on the job based in values rooted in your heart and soul?” 65.9 percent said “Always;” 31.8 percent said “Most of the Time;” 1.6 percent said “Sometimes;” and 0.8 percent said “Almost Never.” The second question corresponding to the first was “Is your motivation for ‘integrity’ in your personal life based in values rooted in your heart and soul?” 69 percent said “Always,” 27.9 percent said “Most of the Time,” and 3.1 percent said “Sometimes.” Finally, respondents were asked, “Would your value of ‘integrity’ support a decision to give your life in the line of duty?” 43.3 percent said “Always,” 37.8 percent said “Most of the Time,” 14.2 percent said “Sometimes,” 3.9 percent said “Almost Never,” and 0.8 percent said “Never.”

An analysis of these responses points to a group of officers which have a high level of commitment to the core value of “integrity.” They testify “integrity” is indeed “core” as it is rooted in their heart and soul, both in their professional and private lives. Moreover, the vast majority believe their value of “integrity” would uphold a decision to sacrifice their life for their country—the primary “conception” of all good military members.³ Still there is room for concern for those few majors who say their value of “integrity” is not rooted in

“heart and soul” and their “integrity” would not support a willingness to die in the line of duty.

Motivation for Integrity

To evaluate the type of motivation in officers’ lives, four questions were asked. The first two questions correspond to motivation that is Air Force driven. Question one was, “Is your motivation on the job based on functional importance to the Air Force?” 4 percent said “Always;” 27 percent said “Most of the Time;” 25.6 percent said “Sometimes;” 13.2 percent said “Almost Never;” and 30.2 percent said “Never.” The second question, corresponding to the first was, “Is your motivation for ‘integrity’ in your personal life based on importance to the Air Force?” 1.5 percent said “Always;” 12.0 percent said “Most of the Time;” 26.2 percent said “Sometimes;” 24.6 percent said “Almost Never;” and 35.7 percent said “Never.”

To analyze the results of these first two questions dealing with the type of motivation, it becomes clear the majority of officers are not motivated to integrate the core value of “integrity” based on its importance to the Air Force. To seek clarification to the results of this question, fifteen survey respondents were randomly interviewed. The interviews revealed that most officers who were not motivated by the Air Force were motivated by belief in God/religion or family to integrate the core value of “integrity.” Furthermore, individuals who responded that the Air Force was a factor in motivating “integrity,” when interviewed, noted the Air Force was actually a secondary motivation. The primary motivation for “integrity” was pointed out consistently to be God/religion and family. Several officers wanted to make it clear, that it was God and family which prompted them to have “integrity” both on and off the job, not the Air Force. And they made it certain,

that the Air Force did not instill their core values nor influence them. The consensus was that their core values were integrated before they came into the Air Force and paralleled Air Force expectations.

Responses to the above question and interviews which followed are what prompted a second sampling of 66 officers and adding the question, “What is the primary basis for your core values?” To which, 66.7 percent said “God/religion;” 30.3 percent said “family;” and 3 percent said “education.” No officer responded “society” or “Air Force.” Herein, the surveyed majors revealed their deepest motivations, core motivations, are not related to Air Force expectations or needs, but God/religion, family, and education.

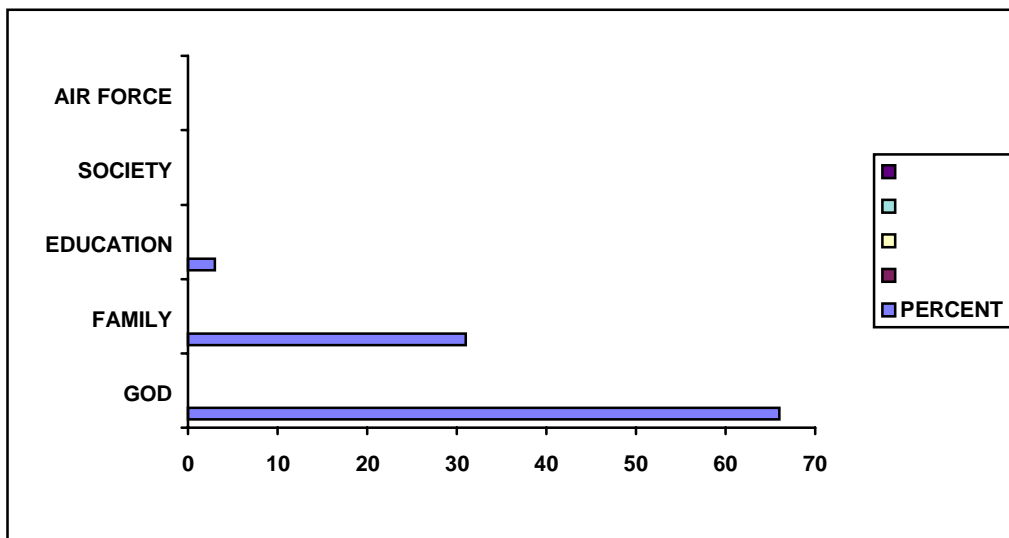


Figure 2. Basis for Core Values

The second two questions correspond to motivation that is driven by personal concerns. Question one was, “Is your motivation for ‘integrity’ on the job based on importance to personal success/failure?” 16.3 percent said “Always;” 18.6 percent said “Most of the Time;” 28.7 percent said “Sometimes;” 15.5 percent said “Almost Never;” and 20.9 percent said “Never.” To the corresponding question, “Is your motivation for

‘integrity’ in your personal life based on importance to success/failure?” 12.6 percent responded “Always;” 19.7 percent “Most of the Time;” 29 percent “Sometimes;” 13.4 percent “Almost Never;” and 24.4 percent “Never.”

Analysis of this question reveals a broad spectrum of concerns for personal success or failure as related to “integrity.” For clarification, a sampling of individuals were given follow-up interviews. These individuals said their motivation was not ultimately based in isolated self interest, but deeper concerns of pleasing God and family.

A final summation of questionnaire results points out the Air Force majors attending ACSC to be men and women of “integrity.” The core value of “integrity” is shown to be integrated into their professional and private lives. It is rooted in a deep level of commitment and would support a decision to give their lives in the line of duty. Finally, the basis for their “integrity” is revealed to be rooted in God/religion, family, and education, and primarily motivated through these factors. Motivations driven by personal success/failure or functional importance to the Air Force were seen to be secondary to underlying commitments to God/religion and family.

Evaluation of Results Relating to Service Before Self

Consistency of Service Before Self

In order to evaluate the consistency of “service before self” in officer’s lives, they were asked, “How often do you allow personal duties to take precedence over professional Air Force duties?” Responses were: 8.0 percent “Always;” 3.9 percent “Most of the Time;” 40.9 percent “Sometimes;” 46.5 percent “Almost Never;” and 7.9 percent “Never.”

Initial analysis of these results appears to reveal a weak link, as a high number of individuals said they “sometimes” place personal duties before professional Air Force duties. However, in follow-up interviews of a sampling of respondents, who said “Sometimes,” it was revealed that “pressing” personal obligations of life only temporarily take precedence over “non-pressing” Air Force duties. And, those interviewed also said, it was understood the Air Force has precedence when there is a pressing matter. Nevertheless, officers stated a need for clarification of this value, expressing concern for balance between personal and professional priorities.

Personal Duties Over Professional Duties?

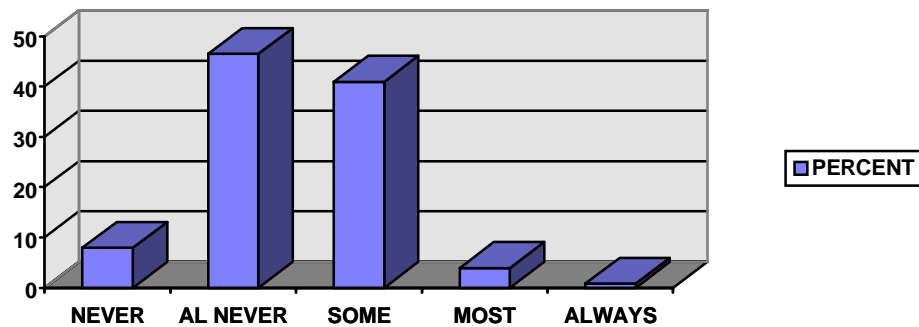


Figure 3. Consistency of Service Before Self

Commitment of Service Before Self

To evaluate the commitment of officers to the core value of “service before self,” three questions were asked. The first question was “Do you have faith in the Air Force System?” Responses were: 0.8 percent “Always;” 52.7 percent “Most of the Time;” 38.7 percent “Sometimes;” 6.2 percent “Almost Never;” and 1.6 percent “Never.”

Analysis of this core value reveals a moderate level of faith in the Air Force System. Only one respondent said he “Always” had faith in the system. Personal interviews revealed the core value of “service before self” was not rooted in faith in the Air Force system, but other sources, primarily faith in God. This is consistent with information obtained earlier, revealing 66 percent who view God as the primary basis for their core values.

The second question asked was, “Is your motivation for ‘service before self’ based in values rooted in your heart and soul?” Responses were: 25.2 percent “Always;” 53.5 percent “Most of the Time;” 17.3 percent “Sometimes;” 3.1 percent “Almost Never;” and 0.8 percent “Never.”

An analysis of these responses shows a fairly strong commitment to the core value. Personal follow-up interviews reveal some confusion regarding “exactly” what is meant by “service before self.” Some majors interviewed were more comfortable with the general value of “selflessness” than “service before self.”

The third question asked to discern the commitment level of officers was “Would your value of ‘service before self’ support a decision to give your life in the line of duty?” Responses were: 32.8 percent “Always;” 40.8 percent “Most of the Time;” 24 percent “Sometimes;” 1.6 percent “Almost Never;” and 0.8 percent “Never.”

Initial analysis of these responses reveals a moderate level of commitment to the core value of “service before self.” However, in follow-up interviews officers expressed confusion about the way this core value was stated and what exactly is meant by it. Some individuals indicated they felt the core value would not uphold a decision to die for the “Air Force Service.” Still others revealed they had not given a lot of thought to their core

values being a supporting force for upholding their “unlimited liability” contract as an Air Force officer. One F-15 pilot commented, he believed it would be his commitment to his buddies and squadron that would lead him to give his life in the line of duty if called on to do so.

Motivation for Service Before Self

In order to evaluate the motivation of “service before self” two questions were asked. The first question was, “Is your motivation for ‘service before self’ based on functional importance to the Air Force?” Responses were: 3.3 percent “Always;” 34 percent “Most of the Time;” 36.6 percent “Sometimes;” 17.1 percent “Almost Never;” and 8.1 percent “Never.”

Analysis of the question reveals a mixed response. Nevertheless, personal interviews again revealed that individuals which said “Never, Almost Never, or Sometimes” find their motivation for the core value of “service before self” outside the Air Force. Most individuals revealed their source to be either God, family, or both. Conversely, individuals which said they were motivated by the Air Force to have “service before self” as a core value, revealed in interviews that the motivation generated by the Air Force was secondary to deeper motivations of God and family.

The second question to discern motivation was, “Is your motivation for ‘service before self’ based on importance to personal success/failure? Responses were: 1.6 percent “Always;” 21.6 percent “Most of the Time;” 36.8 percent “Sometime;” 27.2 percent “Almost Never;” and 12.8 percent “Never.”

Analysis of the question reveals a mixed response. However, interviews revealed, most individuals who responded that they were motivated by “personal success or failure,”

were not ultimately driven by isolated selfishness. Rather, individuals claimed their deeper motivation was a desire to please God or family. Still, a few individuals said there definitely was an element of selfish interest to “get ahead” that motivated them to sacrifice for the Air Force.

An overall analysis of the integration of the core value, “service before self,” in officers lives is positive. The majors surveyed and interviewed revealed a relatively high level of consistency in placing professional Air Force duties before personal duties, especially when they saw a pressing need to do so. Additionally, officers demonstrate a relatively high level of commitment to the core value of “service before self.” Most individuals testify this core value would support a decision to die in the line of duty. However, it was also revealed, faith in the Air Force system is not the driving force for commitment to the core value, but rather faith in God and love for family. It is these motivations that have rooted the value of “service before self” in their hearts and souls.

Evaluation of Results Relating to Excellence In All We Do

Consistency to Excellence

To discern the consistency of “excellence” in officers lives two questions were asked. “Do you have passion for improvement in your Air Force profession?” Responses were: 26.8 percent “Always;” 62.2 percent “Most of the Time;” 7.9 percent “Sometimes;” 2.3 percent “Almost Never;” and 0.8 percent “Never.” And the corresponding question was asked, “Do you have passion for improvement in your personal life?” Responses were: 29.4 percent “Always;” 62.7 percent “Most of the Time;” 7.1 percent “Sometimes;” and 0.8 percent “Almost Never.”

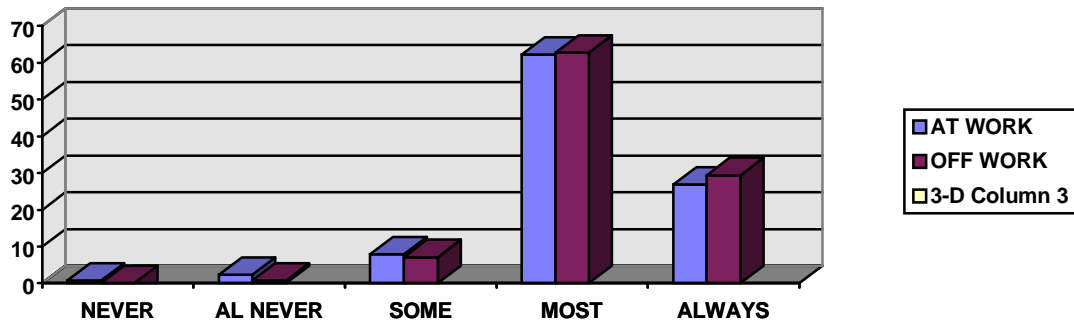


Figure 4. Consistency of Excellence

Analysis of these responses points to a strong consistent commitment to “*excellence*” by officers in their professional and personal lives. Additionally, interviews revealed some frustration with the way the core value is stated. The concern of officers was, “excellence in all we do,” is stated more like an ethical action than a core value.

Commitment to Excellence

To discern the level of commitment, three questions were posed. “Is your motivation for “excellence” on the job based in values rooted in your heart and soul?” Responses were: 43.3 percent “Always;” 48.0 percent “Most of the Time;” 7.1 percent “Sometimes;” and 1.6 percent “Almost Never.” And the corresponding question was asked, “Is your motivation for excellence in your personal life based in values rooted in your heart and soul?” Responses were: 44.1 percent “Always;” 48 percent “Most of the Time;” and 7.9 percent “Sometimes.”

Analysis of these responses reveals a bedrock commitment by officers to “excellence in all they do.” In follow-up interviews this high level of response to “excellence” was verified. One officer commented, “To do anything less than our very best would be immoral. There is too much at stake in defending the nation.”

One additional question was asked to discern the level of commitment of officers to “excellence” . “Would your value of ‘excellence in all you do’ support a decision to give your life in the line of duty?” Responses were: 25 percent “Always;” 34.0 percent “Most of the Time;” 28.2 percent “Sometimes;” 9.7 percent “Almost Never;” and 2.4 percent “Never.”

Analysis reveals these responses are low, especially when compared to the responses given for the same question in regards to “integrity” and “service before self.” In follow-up interviews, individuals who answered negatively did not feel the question was legitimate. One officer said, “I would never die for “excellence” . Several officers expressed frustration over the concept of this value, stating they “did not think it belonged” on the list of core values. Some individuals did not see the connection between “excellence” and being “willing to die.” Nevertheless, all individuals understood without “excellence” people would die needlessly.

Motivation for Excellence In All We Do

Two sets of questions were asked to discern types of motivation for “excellence” . The first set dealt with motivation driven by the Air Force. “Is your motivation for ‘excellence’ on the job based on functional importance to the Air Force?” Responses were 6.3 percent “Always;” 34.9 percent “Most of the Time;” 38.1 percent “Sometimes;” 12.7 percent “Almost Never;” and 7.9 percent “Never.” The corresponding question was also asked, “Is your motivation for excellence in your personal life based on importance to the Air Force?” Responses were 0.8 percent “Always;” 10.2 percent “Most of the Time;” 33.0 percent “Sometimes;” 37.8 percent “Almost Never;” and 18.1 percent “Never.”

These responses reveal the Air Force has a marginal role to play in motivating surveyed officers toward “excellence” . Again, when questioned about their underlying motivation, the vast majority interviewed responded God and family.

The second set of questions were asked to discern whether motivation for “excellence” is driven by concerns for personal success or failure. “Is your motivation for ‘excellence’ on the job based on importance to personal success or failure?” Responses were: 14.1 percent “Always;” 28.1 percent “Most of the Time;” 36.7 percent “Sometimes;” 14 percent “Almost Never;” and 7.0 percent “Never.” And the corresponding question was asked, “Is your motivation for ‘excellence’ in your personal life based on importance to personal success or failure?” Responses were: 14.3 percent “Always;” 39.7 percent “Most of Time;” 34.9 percent “Sometimes;” 5.5 percent “Almost Never;” and 5.5 percent “Never.”

Initial analysis reveals a moderate level of motivation driven by personal concerns of success or failure. Still, in personal interviews, individuals consistently pointed to deeper motivations of God and family, that were drawing them to personally succeed, rather than isolated self interest.

Evaluation Results Summarized

In summation, it can be said that officers surveyed have Air Force core values integrated into their lives. This is revealed through their consistent adherence to the values in their professional and personal lives, by the depth of their commitment to the values, and by their deep motivation stemming from God and family. Hereto, what may not be said is, Air Force majors have integrated the Air Force core values into their lives.

We have learned the core values, for surveyed officers, did not derive from Air Force authority or motivation, but stem rather from God and family. “Integrity,” “service before self,” and “excellence in all we do” are exemplified by Air Force mid-level career officers.

Notes

¹ USAF Core Values, 1 Jan. 1997, 18-21.

² Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), 37.

³ Sidney Axinn, *A Moral Military* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 4.

Chapter 7

Air Force Strategy to Integrate Core Values Revisited

Despite repeated proclamations that religion has lost its importance, most Americans insist that their religious faith is a compelling force in making moral decisions.

—Stephen Carter

As the Air Force looks ahead, the question remains, can the Air Force instill core values into its members on a grand scale over the next several years? It would seem the Air Force's capability to perform its mission is riding on the success of that very goal. An analysis of survey results prompt this author to encourage Air Force senior leadership to revisit the core values strategy. The factors that most often promote the instillation of core values in a person should not be ignored. The Air Force's current hope of instilling core values by secular means alone must not go unquestioned. Hereto, the high percentage of officers surveyed, who said God and religion are the basis for their integrated core values, should cause us to take a second look at the Air Force's strategy to instill core values.

Current Air Force Core Values Strategy

The core values strategy attempts no explanation of the origin of the Values except to say that all of us, regardless of our religious views, must recognize their functional importance and accept them for that reason

—USAF Core Values

Regarding the current Air Force approach, *The Little Blue Book* states, “The Core Values strategy exists independently of and does not compete with chapel programs. The Core Values strategy attempts no explanation of the origin of the values except to say that all of us, regardless of our religious views, must recognize their functional importance and accept them for that reason.”¹

This strategy is reflective of what may be titled the “naturalist” view. This current shift in society’s values rest primarily in a shift away from God as the source of truth, to the individual as the source of truth. This perspective sees the individual as the ultimate authority in deciding right and wrong.² A person who holds this view will build a set of values rooted in personal logic and experiences. This perspective is by nature relative to the individual’s personal estimations, and is able to shift and move as the individual gains new or different insights. Simply stated, the Air Force has opted to accept the “naturalist” person centered view as the basis for integrating core values. This position, though currently politically and legally acceptable, will not provide the Air Force individuals with absolute unchanging values that reach to the heart and soul. This strategy will produce individuals whose core values of “integrity,” “service before self,” and “excellence” are relative to the situation. Ultimately, people with core values based upon themselves will do what is “right in their own eyes.”³

Nevertheless, despite repeated proclamations that religion has lost its importance, most Americans insist that their religious faith is a compelling force in making moral decisions.⁴ A recent Gallup poll reveals over 92 percent of Americans believe in God. And 88 percent say religion plays an important part in their lives.⁵ From the earliest age, many Americans are taught to respect God as the central authority in their lives. These

individuals learn to make their value judgments based on their religious beliefs. This was evident, as the vast majority of Air Force majors surveyed said their values were not integrated through faith in the Air Force system and its authority, or even through logical deduction of the core value's functional importance to the Air Force, but through faith in God and respect for family.

To this regard, the Air Force should recognize and build upon the belief systems for those who choose to accept God as a provider of absolute truth. To simply ignore such personal and historical foundations is questionable, it ignores the common and powerful origins of core values for most Americans. To omit faith in God from the promoting and teaching of core values endangers the very nation we seek to protect.

Proposed Air Force Core Values Strategy

We need to help our people build an internal moral compass, utilizing the Chaplain corps for that purpose...to enable them to teach spiritual principles of ethical behavior - not just philosophy, but from the viewpoint of their religious beliefs.

—Major General Jerry White

First, we need to bring God back into the Air Force core values strategy. Our founding fathers tell us, ethics experts tell us, senior Air Force leadership tells us, and top Air Force majors tell us, the central basis for the integration of solid, absolute, core values must not be ignored—God and religion.

The military Chaplain is a logical and constitutional means of addressing God and religion in the Air Force culture. Major General Jerry E. White insists the Air Force should use the Air Force Chaplain corps to bring God back into the equation.⁶ General White points out the importance of bringing God into the core values strategy is, the true

depth of a value is rooted in a person's soul, and it is God who can transform the individual, rather than simply modify behavior.⁷ To this concern, we should bring the chaplains and God back into the core values strategy, and not run from the God in whom we trust. We should take a second look at how core values can be taught from a God-centered perspective without infringing on religious rights.

Second, we need a strategy to attract people to the Air Force that already have the core values the Air Force deems essential. Again, looking at the majors who were surveyed and interviewed, not one said the Air Force was the primary basis for their core values. Individuals interviewed revealed they had their core values before entering the Air Force. Often they were drawn to the Air Force because the Air Force was a place where their values would be appreciated and needed.

This is significant information for analyzing the need to develop a core values strategy, which not only seeks to teach core values from an absolutist perspective, but also draws people with personal values matching the Air Force's core values. Yes, the pool of individuals in American society who have the bedrock, absolute values needed by the Air Force is shrinking, but it is far from dry. It may be much easier to draw individuals into the Air Force who already have the values which are essential to the Air Force, than to try and infuse values that were not instilled in one's early character development years. A recruiting campaign to draw young people could read, "The Air Force is looking for individuals who have strong traditional core values of 'integrity,' 'selflessness,' and a desire for 'excellence.' If you fit this description, the Air Force needs you."

Notes

¹ USAF Core Values, 1 Jan. 1997, 16.

Notes

² Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 22.

³ Proverbs 21:2, King James Version Bible.

⁴ Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 20.

⁵ Lydia Saad, "America's Religious Commitment Affirmed," *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, no. 364 (January 1996), 21-23.

⁶ Jerry E. White (Gen, USAFR), "Personal Ethics versus Professional Ethics," *Airpower Journal* 10(Summer 96), 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This paper addressed the level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officer's lives and their suitability to instill them in subordinates. To accomplish this goal, this paper defined core values, examined the historical foundations of American core values, explored the societal values shift that is subsequently threatening the Air Force mission, described the Air Force's new core values campaign, evaluated the current level of integration of Air Force core values in mid-level career officer's lives, and analyzed the Air Force strategy to sustain a force with people who have integrated Air Force core values.

As we examined historical foundations for American core values we realized the Constitution embodies what Americans value most as a nation. And we learned, the founding fathers placed tremendous weight on religion and God, believing them to be the primary sources of personal core values, necessary to sustain the values of the Constitution. Then as we explored the current values shift in American society, we learned the concept of absolute truth is quickly being replaced by concepts of relative truth. We noted this leaves core values to be built on individual perceptions of right and wrong, rather than God-centered absolutes. Then we were brought to realize that the relative values of the societal shift are a threat to the Air Force mission.

At this point we evaluated the current level of integration of mid-level career officers and found a high level of integration of Air force core values in their lives. However, we also found the Air Force was not responsible for that integration, but influences of God and family. And, considering these findings, it was recommended, the Air Force should institute a new and improved two prong core values strategy. The improved strategy calls for the reintroduction of God into the core values program, using Air Force Chaplains to accomplish this goal. Second, the improved strategy calls for a new recruiting emphasis aimed at individuals who already possess the bedrock core values the Air Force needs to function successfully.

The Air Force core values campaign is an honorable effort to stop the negative affects of shifting societal values. Air Force majors stand ready to help instill core values into subordinates. Lets enhance their ability to do so by reintroducing God, the primary source of their core values back into the strategy.

Appendix A

Core Values Questionnaire

		Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
1	How often do you do what is right on your Air Force job even when no one is looking?	0	0	0	47	80
2	Is your motivation for integrity on the job based on functional importance to the Air Force?	39	17	33	25	5
3	Is your motivation for integrity on the job based on importance to personal success/failure?	27	20	37	24	21
4	Is your motivation for integrity on the job based in values rooted in your heart and soul	0	1	2	41	85
5	How often do you do what is right in your personal life when no one is looking?	0	1	0	87	40
6	Is your motivation for integrity in your personal life based on importance to the Air Force?	45	31	33	15	2
7	Is your motivation for integrity in your personal life based on importance to personal success/failure?	31	17	38	25	16
8	Is your motivation for integrity in your personal life based in values rooted in your heart and soul	0	0	4	36	89
9	Would your value of integrity support a decision to give your life in the line of duty?	1	5	18	48	55
10	How often do you allow personal duties to take precedence over professional Air Force duties	10	59	52	5	1
11	Do you have faith in the Air Force system?	2	8	50	68	1
12	Is your motivation for service before self based on functional importance to the Air Force?	10	21	45	43	4

13	Is your motivation for service before self based on importance to personal success/failure?	16	34	46	27	2
14	Is your motivation for service before self based in values rooted in your heart and soul?	1	4	22	68	32
15	Would your value of service before self support a decision to give your life in the line of duty?	1	2	30	51	41
16	Do you have passion for improvement in your Air Force profession?	1	3	10	79	34
17	Is your motivation for excellence on the job based on functional importance to the Air Force?	10	16	48	44	8
18	Is your motivation for excellence on the job based on importance to personal success/failure?	9	18	47	36	18
19	Is your motivation for excellence on the job based in values rooted in your heart and soul?	0	2	9	61	55
20	Do you have passion for improvement in your personal life?	0	1	9	79	37
21	Is your motivation for excellence in your personal life based on importance to the Air Force	23	48	42	13	1
22	Is your motivation for excellence in your personal life based on importance to personal success/failure?	7	7	44	50	18
23	Is your motivation for excellence in your personal life based in values rooted in your heart and soul?	0	0	10	61	56
24	Would your value of excellence in all you do support a decision to give your life in the line of duty?	3	12	35	43	31
		Religion/ God	Society	Education	Family	Air Force
25	What is the primary basis for your core values?	44	0	2	20	0

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