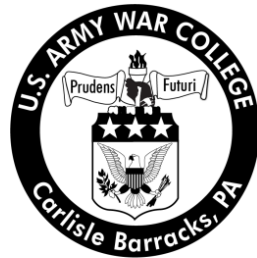# Promoting Transformational Leadership Through Air Force Culture

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Promoting Transformational Leadership Through Air Force Culture

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A recent Army War College study found that 57% of senior service school students considered leaving the service at some time due to the destructive leadership of a superior. Empirical studies reveal that transformational leadership improves organizational performance in a variety of environments, including the military. The United States Air Force (USAF) needs to change its culture to better promote transformational leadership which maximizes performance. To change the culture, the USAF must select commanders who utilize transformational leadership, require raters to set clear expectations that subordinates use transformational leadership and better document leadership style on performance reports. In addition, Unit Climate Assessments should be utilized better to evaluate leadership performance. Finally, a robust communications campaign should be used to ensure all Airmen understand that transformational leadership is critical to ensuring the USAF remains the world's dominant air force.

Promoting Transformational Leadership Through Air Force Culture

> Today, more than ever, our Air Force can take pride that our service
> culture promotes and benefits from the know-how, determination and
> commitment of a diverse group of men and women who embody our core
> values – integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do –
> while pursuing adaptive and innovative solutions for our nation's security.

> —Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley
> September 17, 2012[1]

United States Air Force (USAF) culture needs to emphasize and better promote the use of transformational leadership styles. Transformational leaders lead through social exchange, help followers grow, and empower their organization by aligning goals and objectives of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization.[2] While recent surveys have shown United States military services generally produce and reward leadership that can be considered transformational, surveys also reveal a significant number of leaders use a leadership style that subordinates view as destructive.[3]

Leadership and culture are inherently synchronized, therefore, culture must be considered when evaluating leadership quality.[4] Cultural norms will determine how leadership will be defined, who will get promoted, and what message followers will receive about organizational values.[5] Simultaneously, it is argued that the main role of strategic leaders is to create and manage organizational structure, to reward behavior that improves organizational performance and to modify culture that is counterproductive.[6]

While the current situation with declining defense spending presents a change to the USAF, it also presents opportunity. While spending on national defense in 2012 was equal to 4.6% of the gross domestic product (GDP), one of the Congressional Budget

Office's estimates predict that it could fall to as little as 1.6% of GDP by 2035.[7] Other estimates are more optimistic, but the current administration is only planning to grow the defense budget slightly below inflation which would result in a real cut of 8% by 2020.[8] In addition, although the budget is declining in real terms, the latest strategic guidance does not have meaningful decreases in assigned missions to the U.S. military.[9] The only way to meet our country's national defense requirements with a declining budget is to change the culture and ensure everyone in uniform is empowered and inspired to contribute to their fullest ability. Transformational leadership will truly allow the USAF to do more with less, as it improves productivity.

This paper examines leadership styles and whether or not Air Force culture has adopted transformational leadership. In doing so, the following questions will be addressed: How do leadership styles relate to organizational effectiveness? Does the current USAF culture effectively promote transformational leadership? How can organizational culture be changed? Are USAF doctrine, training, education, and policy that effects promotion encouraging transformational leadership? What can Air Force senior leadership do to effectively change culture to better promote transformational leadership?

<center>Transformational Leadership</center>

For analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of various leadership styles, the transformational leadership theory is quickly becoming a choice approach.[10] James MacGregor, one of the leading scholars of transformational leadership theory, conceptualized leadership as either transformational or transactional.[11] Transformational leadership inspires followers with encouragement, charisma, persuasion, and meaning to make the follower intellectually challenged and inspired.[12] On the other hand,

<center>2</center>

transactional leadership focuses on financial incentives to reward performance and productivity.[13] Leaders can use both transformational and transactional leadership but may focus primarily on one or the other.

The key factors that differentiate transformational leadership from transactional is that the former operates on the premise that leaders can, through their interactions with employees, elevate them to a higher performance level in multiple areas: emotionally, intellectually, physically, or performance-based.[14] It can be argued that these factors also make transformational leadership the most moral leadership style as it raises the level of human conduct of both the follower and the leader.[15] On the other hand, transactional leadership focuses more on the traditional "carrots and sticks." Unfortunately, when one focuses on rewards for compliance, followers often end up feeling devalued.[16] Transformational leadership however deals more with colleagues and followers, rather than simple exchanges.[17] It focuses on inspiring and empowering subordinates and is promoted by many different well-known authors.

Jim Collins, in *Good to Great,* provides excellent examples of the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Collins conducted an in-depth study of 28 companies that turned from average to exceptional performance and maintained exceptional profits for 15 years.[18] What is especially interesting about the findings of the study is that the chief executive officers (CEOs) of the companies that turned themselves around were not necessarily the flashy and extraverted leaders one would expect. In fact, Collins found most of the leaders to be, "self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy – these are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They are more like Lincoln and Socrates than Patton or Caesar."[19] However, while they preferred not to be in the

spotlight and were typically happy working quietly towards excellence, they were very driven. Collins uses the term "Level-5 Leader" to describe the CEOs who were able to make a dramatic change and turn companies around. The primary traits of the Level-5 Leaders consisted of being unusually driven, very humble, and willing to put their organization and people before themselves.[20]

Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, in their book, *Primal Leadership, Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence*, takes another view of leadership which is also clearly in the realm of transformational leadership. Specifically, they propose that perhaps the most critical task of any leader is to create positive feelings in those they lead.[21] Creating these positive emotions within the teams is defined as leading with "emotional intelligence" and will result in superior performance. In addition, because emotional intelligence has not historically been measured, it also has not typically been sought after in the hiring process. Therefore, a leader can really set himself/herself apart from his/her peers by leading with emotional intelligence.[22, 23]

Steve Farber, in his book *The Radical Leap: A Personal Lesson in Extreme Leadership,* asserts that leaders should focus on four main concepts: energy, audacity proof, and love.[24] First, leaders must constantly develop and spread energy, as they occupy the most influential position in the organization. Second, leaders must push their limits and take risks; they must display audacity to gain the confidence of their subordinates. Third, leaders must show proof of their commitment to their people and organization. Finally, love of followers is a critical component of leadership. While some may scoff at the term "love" being used in the organizational concept, it is useful when discussing transformational leadership because inspiration is such a critical component

4

of this style. Utilizing "love" is very effective because it gets at the very core of ethical leadership.[25] By following these four concepts, Farber believes leaders will inspire and empower subordinates to achieve excellence.

Like Farber, leadership consultant Rodney J. Ferris defines the notion of "love" in the organizational setting as a pragmatic and effective method of bringing out the best in people.[26] Ferris claims that love, in an organizational context, is essential in developing a sense of admiration and respect for what followers are capable of and the value they add to the organization.[27] It means finding a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and fun in work, and helping others to find these qualities in their work as well.[28] When leaders and followers are able to develop those qualities and feeling in the workplace, they are inspired to excel.

John Maxwell is a popular author who has written several dozen books on leadership. One of his top-selling books, *360 Degree Leadership*, is a good sample of his work and it emphasizes themes that are congruent with transformational leadership. In it, Maxwell promotes the necessity for people at every level in an organization to view themselves as leaders.[29] In addition, the importance of selflessness and empowering subordinates is stressed. Maxwell also emphasizes that as the speed of change in the environment has increased over the last decade, the necessity of creating a team of leaders that can respond quickly to the changes has also proved critical.[30]

The Servant Leader, by James Autry, focuses on viewing the leader as a caretaker, servant, and provider. Autry uses five ways "of being" to describe how a leader should act: be authentic, be vulnerable, be accepting, be present and be useful.[31] Rather than being at the top of a pyramid, servant leaders envision themselves as being

on the apex of an upside down triangle, supporting and empowering their followers. While servant leaders focus on the positive and believe in their people, they do not look for easy ways out and understand that not everyone will produce and therefore there are times they will need to correct, discipline and even fire followers.

General William L. Creech, when he commanded the USAF Tactical Air Command (TAC), provides an exemplary example of transformational leadership in the military environment.[32] Creech utilized empowerment to reduce bureaucracy that had become prevalent in TAC. He raised morale by focusing on inspiring, instilling pride and enthusiasm, and creating a sense of ownership in his followers.[33]

While there are clearly numerous examples of leaders using transformational leadership to create impressive results, the essential question is whether or not there is empirical evidence showing that transformational leadership improves organizational performance by a statistically significant amount.

<div align="center">Empirical Data on Transformational Leadership</div>

One of the benefits of examining leadership styles as primarily either transformational or transactional is that many empirical studies utilize this nomenclature. These studies show that the former clearly makes a difference in terms of performance.[34] The studies utilized military, corporate and public service organizations when assessing the effectiveness of transformational leadership.

A 2002 Israeli Defense Forces School study examined the impact of transformational leadership on follower development and performance in the Israeli military. The sample included 54 military leaders, 90 direct followers, and 724 indirect followers.[35] The experiment group received transformational leadership training, while the control group received routine generic leadership training.[36] Performance was

measured based off five routine objective tests: light weapons written and practical

tests, physical fitness examination, obstacle course and marksmanship.[37] Platoons led

by leaders who had received the transformational leadership training outperformed the

control platoons in every performance measure.[38] The study confirmed an earlier

finding, "The positive impact of the transformational leaders on direct follower

development and on indirect follower performance confirms core causal propositions of

transformational leadership theory."[39]

A study of 296 employees of multinational corporations in Thailand examined the

correlation between leadership style, job satisfaction in subordinates, extra effort, and

performance.[40] The study found there is a positive relationship between transformational

leadership and subordinates' job satisfaction, extra effort on the job and perceptions of

leader effectiveness.[41] The researchers concluded that transformational leadership will

universally help leaders work more effectively with people to reach their needs and

achieve exceptional performance.[42] In addition, the study's literature review revealed

evidence that transformational leadership can be taught through training.[43] In essence,

this study revealed two key points critical to the USAF. First, transformational leadership

produces superior results so it should be encouraged. Second, transformational leaders

are not necessarily born that way; transformational leadership can be learned.[44]

In one 1999 study, 3,786 respondents provided data regarding leadership in the

corporate environment.[45] The employees worked in fourteen U.S. and foreign firms and

agencies.[46] The authors found that as organizations flattened their structures,

eliminating many middle-management positions, the need for more transformational

leadership at all levels was observed.[47] In addition, they found that transactional

leadership "simply does not go far enough in building the trust and developing the motivation to achieve the full potential of one's workforce." [48] However, the study determined that there is still a place for transactional leadership; it should be used to lay the framework for transformational leadership.[49] Once transactional methods provide the base, transformational leadership can provide a positive impact on motivation and raise overall performance.[50]

Transformational leadership has also proven effective in public service organizations. In 2010, Laurie Pearlberg, a Public Administration Professor, and Bob Livigna, a prior leader in the Government Accounting Office, published a paper measuring the impact of transformational leadership in the governmental sector. Their findings and recommendations are especially relevant to the military because the public service sector and the military, both being not-for-profit organizations, contain many similarities. For example, both the public service sector and the military expect leaders to put the welfare of both their subordinates and the American public before their own interests. Pearlberg and Livigna propose that the recent trend towards motivating governmental employees with transactional incentives, such as financial rewards, may have a negative impact on employee performance.[51] This observation is especially relevant to the Department of Defense as it is often proposed that the military should provide higher financial incentives if it wants world-class performance from its leadership. This study does not support the idea that better military leader performance is positively correlated with higher pay scales. Rather than attempting to buy military performance, the U.S. military and for purposes of this paper, the USAF specifically, should examine itself for promoting transformational leadership.

Given that transformational leadership is proven effective and because organizational culture determines which leadership styles are promoted, it is prudent to examine if the USAF organizational culture is adequately promoting transformational leadership.

<center>A USAF Culture Change is Required</center>

Organization culture can be defined as, "the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories, and definitions present in an organization."[52] An organization's culture will determine what leadership styles are viewed favorably (and therefore promoted) and what styles are viewed negatively (and therefore discouraged). In short, culture determines what people actually do and this includes their choice of leadership style. To determine if transformational leadership is adequately being encouraged by USAF culture it is most effective to examine a recent study completed on destructive leadership in the military.

A 2010 U.S. Army War College study utilizing Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels from all services revealed that destructive leadership remains somewhat prevalent in the U.S. military.[53] The study discovered that 57% of senior service school students considered leaving the service at some time due to the destructive leadership of a superior.[54] What was most concerning was that the reported events were not necessarily from their earlier years; 17% of those officers said the destructive leadership was experienced within 12 months previous to the survey.[55]

It is prudent to explore whether these surveyed officers were simply complaining, were overly-sensitive, or perhaps what the officers defined as "destructive leadership" was in reality simply strong leadership.[56] However that does not appear to be the case. Since the study was done at the Army War College, the sample population consisted of

<center>9</center>

officers (grade levels of O-5 and O-6) from all services who had been competitively

selected to attend senior service school. These officers typically had at least 20 years in

the military and had the experience to understand the difference between a strong

leader and a destructive leader. In addition, because the survey respondents had been

selected to attend this senior service school, it can be assumed that as a group, they

had done well in their perspective services and had been rewarded for their past

performance, capabilities, and future potential with a billet at this prestigious institution.[57]

As transformational leadership is so clearly linked to positive performance and because

the survey shows that reports of destructive leadership are clearly higher than optimal, it

is concluded that changing the cultures within the military services to more directly

encourage transformational leadership would be beneficial to organizational

performance. This paper focuses specifically on the recommendation for addressing this

culture issue within the USAF.

How to Change Organizational Culture

Changing organizational culture is not a simple task and because of the

importance of the topic, it is not surprising there is ample literature on how to change

culture. The following is some of the prevalent literature on organizational culture

change with an emphasis placed on concepts which could help promote

transformational leadership.

In *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide, Sense and Nonsense About Culture

Change*, Edgar Schein claims that the reason changing elements in an organization's

culture is so difficult is because it is inherently very stable.[58] In addition, Schein

describes culture as a complex concept, having three levels consisting of: artifacts,

espoused values and basic underlying assumptions.[59] He stresses the importance of understanding all three levels of culture when attempting to change it.[60]

"Artifacts" are what one can actually observe in the organization.[61] For example, the layout of office space, the level of formality of employees' clothing, and the manner in which meetings are conducted all prove to be artifacts of organizational culture, revealing substantial information. In the USAF the fact that an Airmen's rank is clearly displayed on his work uniform reveals a tradition of a hierarchically-focused culture. This generally indicates an emphasis on efficiency, consistency, quality and smooth operations rather than creativity.

Schein's second level is composed of the "espoused values" which the organization claims.[62] These could be contained in documents and training materials that teach employees the organization's claimed values, such as integrity, customer focus, and teamwork.[63] The espoused or core values of the USAF are: integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do.

The third level in Schein's model are the "basic underlying assumptions."[64] These are the unconscious beliefs and perceptions which ultimately guide an individual's behavior.[65] These assumptions tell employees how to "perceive, think about, and feel about things."[66] An example of this could be that in a given organization, the basic assumption is that people need lots of interaction and discussion to be productive. In such a workplace, one would expect to find a physically open work environment, more conversations typically taking place, and an individual who chooses to work quietly on the side might be viewed as less productive.

These assumptions may be in conflict with the other two levels of culture. For example, while an USAF espoused value is "service before self," a basic underlying belief might be that individuals are rewarded when they look out for themselves. If there were a conflict, the basic underlying beliefs would trump espoused values when individual behavior is being determined. Therefore, if the USAF has core values that promote transformational leadership, yet a basic underlying belief is that the way to succeed in the organization is to use the more authoritative transactional leadership style, the later will be most prevalent.

There are many change models available, but one of the most straight-forward models was designed by John Kotter and James Heskett. In the model, changes in three main areas drive the organizational culture. First, a leader must make changes to policies and procedures.[67] Second, leadership should communicate why the new behavior is needed.[68] Third, the criteria for promotion should be modified to implement the change.[69]

When a culture change is sought, Schein stresses that embedding and reinforcing mechanisms must be used to instill the new underlying assumptions in the organization and therefore allow the desired behavior to dominate.[70,71] The leader has the most powerful impact on culture based on what he pays attention to.[72] When the leader notices something, measures it, or discusses it he is showing its importance to the organization. An example of this embedding mechanism may be a wing commander who wants to emphasize the value of flying excellence and mission accomplishment and engrain these traits into his organization. To implement that desired cultural change, the wing commander could ask for a report each month showing the hours that

each of the flying squadron commanders flew that month. This single act alone would send an important message about the organizational value of flying competence. It shows that he expects even his busiest leaders to take time to keep proficient in the aircraft. To reinforce this change, the wing commander could have the flight hours shown on slides monthly, comment on them, and make it clear that he is using the flying data as one of the measures of the leadership performance of his commanders.

One of the quickest ways to embed a change in a component of organizational culture is to make it a part of the criteria for rewards and status.[73] Members learn very quickly what values are rewarded and punished during performance feedback and evaluation discussions with their supervisor.[74] What is actually rewarded, not the published or preached values, becomes the actual criteria for awards.[75] This has a powerful and quick impact on the culture. Not only is the individual who received the reward or punishment learning quickly, but he typically will share the experience with others who indirectly learn from the event. Likewise, a commander can quickly communicate what he views as important by publically presenting awards at Commander's Calls. This methodology is a reinforcement mechanism to promote his culture change.

According to Schein, it is critical when reinforcing a culture change, to ensure that the organizational systems and procedures are promoting the new value.[76] These systems and procedures are one of the most visible parts of daily organizational life.[77] Even though group members may not understand the origin or rational of the systems, these routines provide structure and routine to organizational life and therefore reduce

uncertainty and anxiety.[78] Failure to provide systems and procedures to reinforced desired culture creates a situation where inconsistency in behavior and values is likely.

Applicable Doctrine and Training

As the Air Force embraces transformational leadership and moves to change the culture, a prime example of Schein's reinforcement mechanisms is USAF training and doctrine. Specifically, training and doctrine are "organizational systems and procedures" and according to Schein must reinforce the desired culture to ensure the change is successful.[79]

The USAF core values are the most foundational institutional values and principals which provide the moral framework for military activities.[80] In 2004, the core values first appeared in *Leadership and Force Development*, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1 (AFDD 1-1).[81] "Integrity first" provides the moral compass for an Airmen's behavior and the willingness to do what is right even when no one is watching. Integrity is essential for the trust required for transformational leadership to flourish in an organization. "Service before self" requires selflessness and personal sacrifice to the extent that one must be willing to put his life at risk for the greater good of the country. If a leader is following the core value of "service before self," he will be meeting the selfless aspect of being a transformational leader. Finally, "excellence in all we do" means that every Airman is dedicated to meeting the high standards required by the complex and difficult mission and is also in congruence with the inspirational nature required of transformational leadership. Adherence to the core values is so essential for Air Force members that it is the price of admission to the organization itself.[82]

USAF leadership doctrine clearly promotes transformational leadership. When discussing operational leadership, AFDD 1-1 states, "Leading people through

developing and inspiring others, taking care of people, and taking advantage of the diversity in the ranks of followers is vital to this level of leadership."[83] Similarly, in Chapter 2 a discussion of leadership action states, "Leaders motivate and inspire people by creating a vision of a desirable end-state and keeping them moving in the right direction to achieve that vision. To do this, leaders tailor their behavior toward their fellow Airmen's need for motivation, achievement, and sense of belonging, recognition, self-esteem, and control over their lives."[84] AFDD 1-1 stresses the importance of leadership at all levels and that leadership should focus on positively influencing others.[85] By definition, this is transformational leadership.

While it is essential that doctrine promote transformational leadership, it is also crucial that it be taught in USAF leadership training curriculum. The USAF teaches leadership in a variety of venues including: the United States Air Force Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, Officer Training School and professional military education (PME) programs including Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and Air War College.

All of the USAF commissioning sources and PME programs are teaching transformational leadership. Specifically, the commissioning sources and Squadron Officer School are teaching the Full Spectrum Leadership Model which is essentially a method for teaching transformational leadership to junior officers.[86] Full spectrum leadership explains that transformational leadership is built upon a foundation of transactional leadership but raises performance beyond that which transactional leadership could reach.[87] In congruence with other writings, the curriculum proposes that because military officers lead individuals who may be asked to risk their lives, a

15

transformational leadership approach must be used; transactional leadership will not typically motivate people to go to these extremes.

Air Command and Staff College leadership education includes topics that support the transformational leadership theory as well. The importance of developing and inspiring subordinates, taking care of people, team building, and diversity are all discussed in the curriculum.[88]

Air War College emphasizes a leadership model known as the Right to Lead Model.[89] It focuses on a pyramid concept which is based on the foundation of basic legal authority (e.g., Title 10 of the U.S. Code) and builds with "obligations" and "requirements" as the next two levels. "Competence" and "character" are added to make one a better leader. Finally, "personality" and "relevance" (as the capstone) are added to truly make a difference. The model is very much in-line with transformational leadership principles with an emphasis on values, virtues, vision and emotional maturity to bring out the best in people.

Policy Changes Needed

Policies and factors affecting promotion are critical to driving cultural changes because promotions are a powerful motivator for officers interested in both transformational and transactional leadership styles. From a transformational perspective, a promotion to the next rank allows an individual to increase the influence and impact of his leadership. In other words, a higher rank results in more responsibility and influence, creating a cascading effect that impacts more people. This is why USAF policy makes it clear that promotion is not a reward for a job well done, but it is advancement to a higher grade based on past performance and future potential.[90]

However, from a theoretical perspective, promotions can also be seen as a reward in the transactional leadership model. There is clearly some transactional values to the USAF rank structure in that base pay and retirement pay increase as rank is increased. The use of transactional policies in an institution that favors transformational leadership is congruent with transformational leadership theory. Accordingly, transactional leadership techniques can build an effective base for transformational leadership to operate from and raise the individual and organization to new heights.

In order for transformational leadership to take hold, it needs to be embedded in the promotion system. The current procedures in the actual promotion process are congruent with transformational leadership. However, the inputs to the promotion process should be changed to better encourage transformational leadership. As was pointed out earlier, Schein states that one quickest ways to embed a change in culture is to make the desired behavior part of the criteria for rewards and status.

Officer promotion boards currently review only written officer performance reports (OPR), decorations, personal history (such as job titles and assignments) and the 9-line promotion recommendation form. The key to changing culture is to change the policies and systems that affect these inputs evaluated by the promotion board. The inputs that should be changed include adding more emphasis on leadership style evaluation during the selection processes for command as well as when completing the OPR and the performance Feedback Worksheet. In addition, the Unit Climate Assessment (UCA) procedures need to be modified.

Major Commands in the USAF use command selection boards to select the best qualified candidates for squadron and group command. These boards provide an

opportunity to influence leadership style and culture because it is difficult to make full colonel (O-6) without first being selected for and succeeding in squadron command. Similarly, it is difficult to be selected for brigadier general (O-7) without first succeeding at group or wing command as a full colonel.

Major commands manage their own boards to identify squadron commander candidates. At the squadron-commander (O-5) level boards, in addition to the review of official records, board members can discuss other relevant information such as the leadership style of the candidates. This enables not only a review of official written records but of additional personal knowledge that board members may have regarding an officer. This additional information can be considered for designating the candidate list as well as for matching candidates with assigned jobs.

O-6 (wing and group-level) command boards are slightly different as the Senior Leader Management Office in Washington, D.C., manages these boards for the entire Air Force. At this centrally managed board, officers are evaluated solely on their personnel record; personal knowledge of candidates is prohibited. However, the centralized command board produces a list of wing and group command candidates, not selects. If an officer comes out on the command list as a candidate for O-6 level command, the senior leadership at the major command headquarters vets the officer before being hired into a specific command job. Prior to the hiring decisions, there can be open discussion among leadership as to additional information regarding command candidates. This should include information on the candidates' leadership style.

To change the culture and better promote transformational leadership, there is no need to change the operation of either the O-5 or O-6 level command boards. However,

the command boards and senior leadership at the wing and major command levels should be reminded of the importance of selecting commanders who utilize transformational leadership. If the proposal to document leadership style on the OPR is enacted, future boards will find it easier to pick transformational leaders for these critical positions.

Supervisors must provide feedback to subordinates during the rating period (as directed in AFI 36-2406.) The Performance Feedback Worksheet should be used and the form has a leadership category which facilities candid feedback concerning the rate leadership performance. Verbiage should be added to AFI-2406 stressing the importance of supervisors providing detailed feedback on how well they utilized transformational leadership styles during the rating period.

Once an officer is selected for command, the UCA is an indispensable tool for assessing his ability to utilize transformational leadership. UCA are used to help measure the health of USAF organizations. Data used to complete a UCA is composed of surveys and interviews with organizational members. The primary purpose of the UCA is to assist unit commanders at all levels in assessing the human relations climate within the organization and to make recommendations on suggested improvements.[91] However, UCAs are useful tools relative to improving leadership because they provide an opportunity for subordinates to anonymously provide feedback on a variety of topics related to organizational climate. These areas include: cohesion and pride, motivation and morale, supervisory support, and discrimination.[92]

The UCA can be initiated from different levels. Currently, results are reported only to the commander who requests the survey. For example, a wing commander can

request the survey and the results will be reported to him and will be broken out for subordinate organizations. Currently, it is then up to the commander whether to share the results with subordinate commanders.

UCAs can help promote transformational leadership styles. If a commander is given the results of the survey, he can gain insight into how he is perceived by the majority of his organization. The commander can gain visibility into the culture that actually exists in his unit and compare it to the environment he is trying to create. There are several changes that should be made to the UCA process that would facilitate a culture change towards transformational leadership.

First, relevant portions of the final report should be given to commanders at all levels, not just the commander requesting the report. Requiring the applicable portions of the report to be given to subordinate commanders enables them to utilize the data in a variety of ways. Most importantly, this would include trying to improve any aired weaknesses in their leadership. In addition, it enables the intermediate commanders, i.e. the group level, to consider the UCA results when evaluating their squadron commanders. In addition, the UCA should also be provided to the requesting official's commander. This helps supervising commanders keep adequate awareness on what is happening relative to the leadership climate of their subordinate organization. This is not currently required.

Second, the Air Force instruction regulating UCAs should be updated to recommend that commanders consider appropriate use of the UCA results when evaluating their commanders. To change culture and promote transformational leadership, commanders must have access to all sources of information that will help

them identify how well subordinates utilize transformational leadership skills. While there could be a concern that false information may be included in the UCA that is a challenge that commanders can manage. Commanders must be cautioned that all information contained in the UCA may not be factual. Nonetheless, it is still appropriate that commanders consider the UCA reports during the evaluation process. While not perfect, the reports contain additional information that may be potentially beneficial for the rater during the subordinate evaluation process. In addition, the UCA results can help supervisors track the trends in his subordinates' organizations.

After making the changes recommended to the policies and procedures, Air Force senior leadership should communicate why transformational leadership is critical to the effectiveness of the USAF. The importance of clear and repetitive communication during a culture change cannot be overemphasized.[93] The Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) needs to commence a major communications campaign to ensure all Airmen understand transformational leadership and his expectations that it be used. The campaign that made Air Force core values a concept intimately familiar to every Airmen provides an excellent example of the scope of the effort required. CSAF needs to make it clear that embedding and reinforcing mechanisms will be required to ensure the success of the culture change. The topic should be covered at commander's calls, performance feedback sessions, professional development discussions and other appropriate venues. All forms of communication should be utilized, including social networking sites, television and streaming video. It should not become an emphasis item that goes out of vogue, but should be a term and concept that leaders at every level in the Air Force should understand and use whenever they get a chance to

communicate. Airmen should be as familiar with transformational leadership as they are with the Air Force Core Values.

Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

The Air Force is likely approaching an extended period when budgets and resources will be strained, yet mission requirements will likely remain relatively constant. In such an environment, the organization needs the full commitment and focus of every member of the team. However, as the aforementioned Army War College study revealed, destructive leadership is still relatively prevalent. Transformational leadership, which focuses on empowering and inspiring subordinates, is proven in empirical studies to improve follower and organizational performance. While USAF doctrine, training, and education promote transformational leadership, USAF leadership can better encourage transformational leadership through policy that impacts promotion opportunity.

Specifically, senior leadership at the wing and major command levels should be reminded of the importance of selecting commanders who utilize transformational leadership. The performance feedback process should be modified to require raters to set clear expectations relative to transformational leadership and then provide feedback on subordinates' ability to meet those expectations. In addition, when evaluating an officer's leadership performance on the OPR, rater's should make it clear how well the subordinate utilizes transformational leadership concepts. Moreover, commander selection boards should be reminded of the importance of selecting commanders who utilize transformational leadership. Furthermore, UCA final reports should be provided to relevant commanders at all levels (down and one up). Commanders should be reminded that the UCA, while it may contain inaccurate information, should be considered when evaluating subordinate commanders' leadership performance. While

UCAs may contain unsubstantiated comments, they still provide valuable situational awareness on what is occurring in subordinate units.

Finally, CSAF should use a robust communications campaign to pass the word that transformational leadership is critical to the USAF at this time and that he expects all Airmen to understand it and utilize it. In addition, commanders at all levels need to use embedding mechanism to ensure a culture change is made.

Transformational leadership for all Airmen is essential to the future of the USAF as the Department faces the challenge of being the world's premier air, space and cyber power during an era of fiscal austerity. Changing the Air Force culture to demand transformational leadership will ensure that Airmen are being provided the leadership they deserve. The Air Force must utilize a form of leadership that will insure its continued standing as the world's dominant air force.

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