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CHAPTER 2

What Leaders Should Know about Courage

Paul B. Lester and Cynthia Pury

On the morning of March 16, 1968, Warrant Officer One Hugh Thompson Jr. flew above the hamlet of Son My, near the village of My Lai in the Republic of Vietnam, in support of U.S. Army ground operations. His mission was dangerous but routine—provide reconnaissance for a battalion task force searching for enemy forces. What he saw and did that day, however, would irrevocably change his life.

The My Lai massacre is a well-documented stain on American military history: An infantry company led by Captain Ernest Medina, Lieutenant William Calley, and others entered Son My and systematically murdered hundreds of Vietnamese civilians. Villagers were raped, bodies mutilated, children summarily executed in front of their parents. Seeing the carnage below, Thompson and his crew—Specialist Glenn Andreotta and Specialist Lawrence Colburn—placed their helicopter between American forces and the villagers. Thompson dismounted from his pilot’s seat, then instructed his crew to cover him with machine-gun fire if the Americans began firing at the group of civilians he intended to help. He was aware that the order put him at risk of a court-martial or possible injury. Thompson coaxed several Vietnamese from a bunker and aboard evacuation helicopters and later evacuated a wounded young boy to a Vietnamese military hospital. Upon returning to base, he reported the massacre to his superiors, who immediately ordered an end to hostilities in Son My.

Commanders repeatedly tried to cover up the My Lai massacre. In a ploy to keep Thompson quiet, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions that day, though he later threw away the bogus citation because it stated his heroism was a result of withstanding “intense crossfire” between friendly and enemy forces. This of course was a lie.

Subsequent investigations by the military and the media found that the villagers were unarmed, so there could have been no crossfire.

Thompson made his official report—he had witnessed American soldiers kill unarmed Vietnamese civilians—and he stuck by it despite intense pressure to recant. He repeatedly told his story to investigators and testified before the House Armed Services Committee. Committee members lambasted him for his actions, and Chairman Mendal Rivers of South Carolina stated that Thompson was the only person involved in the event who should be held accountable because he had turned his weapons against fellow Americans. Rivers even tried to have Thompson court-martialed, to no avail. Nevertheless, the damage was done, and Thompson received hate mail and death threats. Thompson's story, however, did not end with the investigation. He continued to fly in Vietnam and was shot down several times. He spent many months recovering in a hospital after breaking his back in a crash, but even that could not stop him. Thompson was commissioned and continued to fly in the Army, retiring in 1983 as a major. The immediate years following My Lai had been tough for him. He was constantly shunned by fellow officers, who considered him a turncoat.

The public's perception of Thompson began to change in the decades following My Lai. A letter-writing campaign gained traction, and he and his crew were eventually awarded the Soldier's Medal—the highest award for valor not involving enemy forces and a more poignant replacement of the Distinguished Flying Cross he had received during the attempted cover-up. He received numerous civilian honors for his actions at My Lai, including the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award.

Thompson spoke of My Lai and battlefield ethics often and lectured at the United States Military, Naval, and Air Force Academies, though doing so took an emotional toll on him. Even after a diagnosis of terminal cancer, Thompson pressed on with his message: Common people can act with uncommon courage when necessary, and doing so can make a difference in the lives of many.

WHAT IS COURAGE?

Hugh Thompson's story is one of courage that went beyond placing himself between murderers and the civilians of My Lai. He not only placed himself in physical danger, but he later stood up for what was right, continuing to put forth his message even when doing so led to ostracism. Thompson acted courageously, but interestingly, he—like many people who exhibit courage—rarely if ever referred to his actions as courageous. Nevertheless, he acted, and we judge his actions to be courageous, but what exactly does it mean to be courageous?

In a series of carefully crafted studies of people's implicit theories, assumptions that people share about a topic, Christopher Rate and colleagues (Rate et al. 2007; Rate 2010) first looked at definitions of courage in a range of sources, including ancient philosophers, modern writers, psychologists, and others. They considered the commonalities and differences among the definitions and had a group of lay people and experts rate them based on shared features. They then incorporated these features into vignettes and found that people rated them as more courageous than others if they contained three features. First, the action must be freely chosen, that is, volitional. Second, the act must be in pursuit of a noble or worthwhile goal. Third, the actor must face significant personal risk from external circumstances. How does the presence or absence of each of these features change how courageous an action seems to be? Let's start with free choice.

Free Choice (Volition)

Volition is an act that is done willingly, voluntarily, deliberately, and freely (Rate et al. 2007). Unintentional actions do not qualify, and the possibility that an action was not intentional diminishes its courageousness. Hugh Thompson had multiple opportunities to choose an easier and less courageous path, such as continuing on his assigned mission, telling a different story about events, or letting his bogus citation stand.

The possibility that a person did not consciously decide to act can, conversely, reduce perceived courage. Marine sergeant Rafael Peralta was nominated for the Medal of Honor, the highest decoration in the U.S. military, following a firefight in Iraq in 2004. After being shot in the head, he pulled a live grenade toward himself, absorbing the fatal blast and saving six other Marines. Forensic scientists found that the bullet to his head likely led to instant brain damage, rendering Peralta incapable of intentional movements. Based in large part on this report, Peralta received a lesser, posthumous decoration (Zoepf 2010).

In one study, we asked participants to describe a time they had acted courageously, and then we followed up with multiple questions. The question "Why do you believe that your action was courageous?" was commonly (15 percent) answered by "the choice to take action." Unpublished data from the same study found that 243 of the 250 participants answered the question "How could you have responded to that situation in a NONcourageous manner?" by indicating that they could have taken a different action, (e.g., "I could have walked by and let the situation go on."). Thus, the vast majority of participants gave a clear description of an alternate and easier action open to them.

Most also indicated that the alternative action would have been easier than the action they actually took (Pury, Kowalski, and Spearman 2007).

Noble or Worthy Goal

For an action to be considered courageous, Rate and colleagues found that it must be taken in pursuit of a noble or otherwise worthwhile goal. If Hugh Thompson had taken his stand against the massacre to get discharged or to promote a book it would diminish our sense of his courage. Evel Knievel was largely perceived in the popular press as a fool after his failed attempt in 1974 to jump across the Snake River Canyon on a rocket-powered cycle. There was no noble goal, just high risk for money and more fame. Thus, pursuit of a worthwhile goal differentiates courage from risk-taking.

Evidence suggests people believe their own courageous actions are taken in pursuit of important goals. In a recent study Charles Starkey and colleagues asked 201 college students to describe a time when they had acted courageously, and then they followed up with an expanded and modified set of questions, including "What were you trying to accomplish with this action? What was your goal?" (Pury et al. 2009). Ninety-nine percent—all but two participants—provided a clearly articulated goal. Moreover, participants rated these goals as very strongly meaningful and important at the time. Indeed, on a scale of zero to ten, the most common answer to "How important was this goal to you at the time?" was ten.

Significant Personal Risk

Rate and colleagues (2007) also found that the action must take place despite threatening, dangerous, or other circumstances. Read most citations for courage and you will find extensive descriptions of risks faced by those decorated. Hugh Thompson's writing a report on My Lai can only be seen as courageous given the risks to his career. Steven Kurch was awarded his employer's Medal of Valor for stopping to help his colleagues climb up a steep hill. Under ordinary circumstances, this would likely seem to be courteous or collegial at most. Kurch and his fellow crew members, however, were working for the Los Angeles County Fire Department, extinguishing a hazardous brush fire in a dangerous, gas-filled canyon (County of Los Angeles Fire Department n.d.). That action alone, without the personal risk, would not be courageous.

Not all risks may be obvious to observers. Pury and colleagues describe personal courage, or the extent to which the action is courageous, as being in comparison to the actor's typical actions, not as compared to other people's action. Actions high in personal courage are those in which the person faces

unique and personalized risks, such as confronting a fear of public speaking or dealing with a limitation that only he or she knows about. These personalized risks might or might not be accessible to outsiders. On the other hand, general courage—the extent to which an action is courageous compared to other people’s typical actions—is related to more general risks (Pury, Kowalski, and Spearman 2007).

TYPES OF COURAGE

Although many different types of courage have been recognized, the most robust distinction is between physical courage and moral courage (Pury, Kowalski, and Spearman 2007). Physical courage typically involves taking a bodily risk, commonly to rescue others from that same risk, such as rescuing a drowning victim or saving a wounded comrade during a firefight. Moral courage, on the other hand, typically involves taking a social risk in support of one’s beliefs, such as confronting a superior about misdeeds or challenging an unfair policy. This distinction may have come about because certain types of risks are more likely to co-occur with certain types of goals. Other courageous actions blur the line between physical and moral courage. Civil rights protesters marching after others were killed for similar actions or a wartime military recruit motivated by a love of country do not fit neatly into a single category, but are nonetheless courageous.

Philosopher Daniel Putman (2004, 2010) has proposed that philosophers and psychologists consider psychological courage, the willingness to face emotional instability to obtain one’s goals, as a separate form of courageous action. Psychological courage is exemplified by the psychotherapy client who confronts internal demons to get well. It can also be seen in individuals who rock climb although they have a fear of heights or grieving family members who remain strong for others despite their own sadness (Pury, Kowalski, and Spearman 2007). A related construct, vital courage, involves mustering the strength needed to cope with physical illness or other impairments (Finfgeld 1999).

Is Fear a Necessary Part of Courage?

Obviously, being aware of personal risk might lead to fear. Many early psychological concepts of courage required the individual to feel fear. For example, Lord (1918) described courage as the sentiment of fear being overwhelmed by a more noble sentiment. More recently, Rachman (1990, 2010) described courage as experiencing the subjective or physiological components of fear

(increased heart rate, sweaty palms, and so on) while not avoiding or fleeing the cause. Norton and Weiss (2009) introduce their paper-and-pencil measure of courage by defining it as "persistence or perseverance despite having fear. It takes courage to engage and persist in a terrifying activity. By definition, fear is necessary for someone to display courage" (p. 214). According to these definitions, one must have an emotional experience of fear to be considered courageous. Alternatively, it may be that courage requires awareness of risk rather than fear *per se*. For many people, awareness of personal risk leads quickly and directly to fear, but this may not be true for everyone.

If fear is a required element of courage, then many individuals and actions we might like to characterize as courageous fall short. Rachman asked decorated bomb disposal operators and other soldiers in a control group to discriminate between two different audio tones while hooked up to devices to measure their heart rate and skin conductance (to see how sweaty their palms became). An incorrect answer led to an electric shock. The tones became increasingly similar until they were identical. The decorated soldiers had lower subjective and physiological levels of fear than the non-decorated soldiers. Thus, if fear is a necessary part of courage, perhaps the group that was decorated for valor is better described as fearless rather than courageous (Rachman 1990, 2010; Cox et al. 1983; O'Connor, Hallam, and Rachman 1985).

Observers who view fear as integral to courage suggest that courage is a stepping-stone to fearlessness (Rachman 1990, 2010), or at the group level, to becoming a highly functional "quantum" organization (Kilmann, O'Hara, and Strauss 2010). One likely scenario is that fear may be part of courage as a process, that is, the way in which an individual goes about taking a (possibly) courageous action (Pury and Starkey 2010). The greater the subjective sense of risk and fear, the less likely the person is to take the action. Some people may have a higher threshold for experiencing fear, and thus may be more likely to perform well in extremely risky situations (Rachman 1990, 2010). Viewing oneself as someone who does not give in to fear may also lead to more courageous behavior (Norton and Weiss 2009).

Fear does not, however, seem to be a typical part of accolades for courage or the process by which observers perceive an action as more or less courageous. Those who thrive in dangerous working environments are typically seen as courageous by the civilian population, but research suggests that they have a lower than average level of fear (Rachman 1990, 2010). Citations for courage do not typically describe the fear experienced by the individual taking the action (Pury and Starkey 2010), but rather focus on the good that the person did and the risks he or she took to do it.

SUBJECTIVITY AND JUDGMENTS OF COURAGEOUSNESS

Two parts of courage—nobility of the goal and risk to the actor—are frequently subjective. That is not to say that there are not universals: Current research into the evolution of morality suggests that aiding others is likely to be seen as nearly universally noble (de Waal, Macedo, and Ober 2006). Simple physiology and mortality statistics tell us that physical danger should be seen as universally risky, while research into the history of humans as social animals suggests that we should all view the loss of social status as a threat (Nesse 1990). Other goals and risks might not be as universal.

This subjective quality can also be seen in a goal's value. Draft dodgers are seen as having more courage than soldiers by those with strong anti-war sentiments (O'Brian 1998). In a controlled empirical study, the perceived courageousness of pro-choice and anti-abortion protesters depended on the observer's opinion of both abortion and free speech (Pury and Starkey 2010). Certainly the House Armed Services Committee interviewing Hugh Thompson did not consider him courageous at the time. Such subjectivity means that an objective standard of courage for everyone and all actions is unlikely. Within an organization, shared norms based on mission, expertise, and social factors are likely to influence the perceived risk of specific actions and the perceived value of goals. Those working in physically dangerous environments will face elevated physical risks on the job compared to most other people. They also have the training, experience, and resources to handle such situations. Thus, taking on a certain level of risk to fulfill unit missions is expected rather than exceptional. As one police officer put it, if he disarms a criminal, that's just doing his job, but if an unarmed civilian disarms a criminal, that person is likely to be hailed as a hero.

Saying an action is courageous also implies the speaker agrees with the goal of the action (Breznican 2002; Pury and Starkey 2010). At a more basic level, citations for courage commonly make the case for the goodness of the action taken. Individuals involved in risky actions that cannot be publicly endorsed or perhaps even acknowledged thus might not be easily cited for valor.

GOAL ATTAINMENT AND JUDGMENTS OF COURAGE

The extent to which an action is successful can also influence its perceived courageousness. The Carnegie Hero Medal is most commonly awarded to individuals who saved the lives of others, not to those who merely attempted to save a life (Pury and Starkey 2010). When asked to describe a courageous

action they have either performed or witnessed, the overwhelming majority of participants list an action that made the situation a good deal better and not at all worse, and, when asked to rate the courageousness of both successful and failed actions, participants rated successful actions as significantly more courageous than failed ones. This was true even when it was clear that the failure had nothing to do with the individual's action or limitations (Pury and Hensel 2010). Thus, when the goal of an action is not attained, people may discount the courage it took to make the attempt.

LEADERS: WHY BEING COURAGEOUS MATTERS

If you are reading this book, then you are likely a leader or someone who wants to become a leader, and the contexts in which you lead will, at times, be dangerous. Courage is that quality that allows someone to pursue valuable goals despite risks. Both the goals and the risks might be quite apparent in some contexts, for example, civilian and military rescues. They may be less obvious in the courage it takes to lead with integrity despite social and organizational pressure to do the wrong thing or in the courage it takes to admit that one needs counseling following a traumatic event. It also is a label applied after an action if it is seen as good and the dangers significant.

Given the complexities of leading in dangerous contexts, opportunities to act courageously will likely emerge. You may have the opportunity to save the baby from a burning building; you may uncover unethical behavior and blow the whistle; you may be wounded but choose to stay with your unit. In any event, most leaders find themselves orchestrating events toward mission completion. Stated another way, you—the leader—cannot be everywhere during a ground combat mission, during a four-alarm fire, or while executing a high-risk warrant on a fugitive. You must, therefore, rely on your followers to do what is required. Thus, a pressing question emerges: Are your followers prepared to act courageously in your absence? Even more pressing: What have you done to prepare your followers to act courageously?

Organizational Culture and Context

Preparing followers to be courageous starts with a leader's behavior and is reinforced by the organization. Organizational values and mission statements assist leaders in developing followers' courage. For example, courage is one of the seven values of the U.S. Army and a common value in other public safety or military organizations (Lester et al. 2010). These organizations publicly state that courage is "part of the job." From a practitioner perspective, a platoon

leader or police sergeant may be able to leverage organizational culture to bolster courageous behavior in many ways. For example, he or she may recognize and reward a follower's physical courage during physical training or while performing drills, a subordinate leader's moral courage to stand up and support the best interest of soldiers or patrolmen, or a follower's psychological courage to seek help for stress symptoms.

Simply including courage as an organizational value, however, will not always result in courageous behavior. Acting courageously is a complex process, but including courage as a value is a signal of what is expected of members of the organization. Such signals can be an effective form of pressure that results in courageous behavior.

LEADER ACTIONS FOR FOSTERING COURAGE

Though history plays an important role in establishing organizational culture, leaders also help shape culture and set standards of behavior. At the individual and group levels, transformational leadership theory (Bass 1985) and authentic leadership theory (Avolio and Luthans 2006) both suggest leaders serve as role models and are emulated by followers. Additionally, Lester and colleagues (2010) have suggested that courage can be developed through a variety of structured approaches, one being mentorship relationships focused on courage development and discussion. Likewise, they point out that deliberate, repeated, challenging, and realistic training in military, police, firefighter, and other public service sectors results in behavior that observers would call courage. There are a number of ways leaders can promote courage.

Serve as a Role Model

Research on social learning and social cognitive theories has repeatedly shown that people learn by behavioral observation (Bandura 1977). These theories proffer three key concepts affecting courage development: learning behaviors through observational methods; learning that involves attention, retention, reproduction, and motivational processes; and learning through practice—or enactive mastery—role modeling, vicarious learning, social pressure and persuasion, and arousal.

Promote Learning through Observation. Bandura's (1977) research on social learning suggests that several pathways are required for effective observational learning. First, a stimulus must hold an individual's attention long enough for processing to occur and then to learn from it. Stated another way, simple exposure to an event may not be enough for learning to occur if

the individual does not consider the event important or interesting. Second, individual differences matter greatly in social learning. In specific, people must be able to retain what they learn, suggesting the importance of factors such as intelligence matter. Likewise, they must be able to reproduce what they learn, indicating that individual skill sets or physical abilities may matter and that they must have the cognitive ability to transfer what they observe to their own behavior. Finally, individuals must be motivated to reproduce the observed behavior based on extrinsic rewards (e.g., money, recognition) or intrinsic rewards (e.g., personal satisfaction, such as knowing that the behavior was “the right thing to do”). Given these pathways, learning courage may be seen as the responsibility of the individual. While this may be true, leaders can enact other deliberate approaches for developing courage in followers.

Practice Being Courageous

Repeated practice, or mastery experiences, may lead to courage development. Indeed, research has consistently shown that past performance is one of the best predictors and enhancers of future performance (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1991). Here, it is proposed that a leader can deliberately create training environments that require courageous action and then provide trainees (followers) with structured feedback to assist with meaning making and to drive home the necessity of courage in certain contexts.

Promote Hands-On Practice. There are two forms of mastery—guided mastery and cognitive mastery modeling (Bandura 2000a, 2000b). Guided mastery consists of instructive modeling to transfer skills and knowledge (e.g., teaching), guided perfection of those skills (e.g., coaching and mentoring), and use of the skills and knowledge in a particular context (e.g., application). Leaders can leverage guided mastery pathways toward courage by providing resources followers need to be courageous (Hannah, Sweeney, and Lester 2007), reinforcing those resources with coaching or mentorship, and providing positive feedback. This drives home the necessity of deliberate (Lester et al. 2010), tough, and realistic training scenarios. As one would expect, research in high-stress contexts has shown that such practical training leads to more successful outcomes (Zohar and Luria 2003), possibly by reducing perceptions of risk or increasing the skills needed to perform despite risks.

Promote Mental Practice. While training event participation is ideal, time or resource constraints may make it impossible. When this is the case, cognitive mastery modeling serves as mental rehearsal, allowing individuals to think through behaviors prior to actual performance (Bandura 1996). Key

to cognitive mastery is that an individual actually visualizes performance of a given task after observing a model performing the task. This type of cognitive rehearsal is common in a variety of contexts, such as sports and public speaking, because doing so helps establish scripts to be called upon during performance. Likewise, cognitive mastery modeling has direct application in contexts requiring courage. Hannah, Sweeney, and Lester (2007) propose that cognitive modeling can bolster a courageous mind-set by reducing fear when individuals are exposed to risk. Take, for example, a mountain climber about to begin a technically difficult climb involving out-of-reach handholds that will require explosive leaps. Simulating these moves, while possible, usually would not provide enough realism because the height, distance of the leap, and unique shape of the handhold cannot be fully replicated. Given this, the climber watches videos of other climbers successfully negotiating the section, and while doing so, the climber envisions himself doing the same thing. When the climber actually confronts that difficult section of the mountain, his fear is decreased because he cognitively rehearsed it, and he almost feels as though he has already climbed the section several times. Thus, realistic training is likely to reduce perception of risk and boost efficacy.

Promote Vicarious Learning. Similar to cognitive mastery modeling, vicarious learning is another method that a leader may employ to develop courage in followers. Although similar to informal role modeling, vicarious learning situations are deliberately constructed so that learners observe a role model performing the task and then replicate the task without rehearsal (Bandura 1997). Research by Bandura (1996, 1997) and Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) suggests that a similarity of task-specific attributes and context must exist between the observer and the role model performing the task, and portrayal of the task must be of high fidelity. Likewise, Bandura (1977) found that the role model must be credible, trustworthy, and important to the observer in order for the task to be salient enough for replication.

In dangerous contexts, leaders must be willing to put themselves at risk if they expect followers to do the same. This is not to say that leaders should unnecessarily place themselves or their followers at risk in a vain attempt to appear to be courageous. On the contrary, such behavior is foolhardy, or what Pury and Starkey (2010) refer to as foolish courage because the associated risk is too costly. Rather, the adage “be willing to do what you expect your followers to do” comes to mind. Though leaders must carefully balance placing themselves at risk to prove to followers that they can be courageous and serve in their particular role during a mission, leaders can still actively model physical and moral courage in training and operational environments.

For example, it is common practice for a Special Forces A Team leader to be the first man out of the aircraft on a high altitude–low opening (HALO) jump. Such behavior drives home the “follow me” attitude endemic in organizations that routinely place members at risk (Kolditz 2007; Lester et al. 2010). Conversely, a leader’s failure to take such risk can have a debilitating effect on mission accomplishment. Imagine the A Team described here about to execute a high-risk HALO jump into a combat zone. As the aircraft ramp drops, the team leader moves to the edge, freezes up, and says “You know, I don’t think I’m going to jump today . . . too dangerous!” If the team leader scratches the jump, he has set the new standard for unit member behavior (barring of course legitimate reasons for scratching). In other words, he transmitted a powerful message to his followers: It is OK to buckle under fear. What do you think might happen the next time the unit must jump in a high-risk setting and the leader isn’t there? Will the leader’s failure to act courageously in the past influence the group’s future behavior?

The type of courage leaders are expected to show might depend on echelon or specific training. For example, senior strategic leaders in the Army must show moral courage, but they will never be found defusing a bomb, even if there are bomb disposal specialists in his division. A leader without the requisite skills to complete a particularly risky task safely will appear foolhardy rather than courageous. A worthwhile question to ask yourself if you are considering leading by vicarious learning is “Am I more qualified—or at least as qualified—as my followers to do X?” If the answer is no, you might not be modeling courage but rather modeling foolhardiness.

Use Social Persuasion and Feedback. Social persuasion, positive feedback, and other forms of coaching provide another route toward developing courage in followers. Verbal persuasion and feedback can lead to significant shifts in attitudes (Eagly and Chaiken 1993, 1998). As suggested in this chapter and by Lester and colleagues (2010), a systematic approach toward coaching and counseling that makes courage a central topic of discussion could increase self-efficacy and self-attributions toward courage. Here, the leader, serving as coach and counselor, has an opportunity to share experiences with the follower and discuss personal values as they relate to courage. Indeed, McGurk and Castro (2010) point out that the relationship between courage and values is not a new concept (e.g., Welton 1922), and researchers and philosophers alike believe that values play a central role in promoting courage by clarifying and aligning goals and effort (Lester et al. 2010; Goud 2005; Sandage and Hill 2001; Shepela et al. 1999).

Peer pressure and social comparison bolster social persuasion's impact on courage development. While some researchers (Darley and Latane 1968; Latane and Darley 1970) have shown that individuals in a group tend not to place themselves at risk, this bystander effect decreases when the threat increases (Fischer et al. 2006). Thus, individuals will act courageously for the group if the risk is great enough. Likewise, peer pressure and social comparisons can be leveraged toward courageous behavior, especially in organizations where courage is considered a social norm. Research in this area goes back several decades. Festinger's (1954) research on social comparisons and Tesser's (1988) work on self-evaluation maintenance suggest that self-esteem increases and decreases based on how one behaves in accordance with role model behavior and organizational norms. Therefore, followers may feel compelled to act courageously if they serve in organizations where courage is the norm, and they fear being ostracized by the group (Lester et al. 2010). Although the actions taken due to social pressure might not meet the requirements for process courage, they would for accolade courage, as the person has performed the externally desired action despite risk (Pury and Starkey 2010). For example, it is not hard to imagine a firefighter who, although afraid, still runs into a burning building. The firefighter does so for a multitude of reasons, but most germane to the current discussion are the likely outcomes if he does not. At best, failure to enter the building would likely result in his peers calling him a coward and potentially losing his job. At worst, his peers and the people they are trying to save could die in the fire.

Here again, the role of leadership linking social persuasion and feedback to courage development is clear. Over and above establishing courage as a central organizational value and norm, leaders must also serve as meaning maker, coach, and counselor for followers, driving home what is expected in situations calling for courage. The leader should not shrug off follower concerns about fear, on the contrary, such instances serve as critical "teachable moments" where the leader-follower bond could be strengthened by the leader explaining how he or she experiences fear and the tools needed to overcome it. In situ, the leader can also provide immediate, positive feedback when the follower performs courageously, which serves to reinforce the behavior and increases the likelihood of future courageous behavior.

The leader can and should tap into formal institutional rewards (e.g., medals and commendations) to acknowledge courageous actions. One perspective is that organizations should nominate members for medals following heroic acts because its members should be rewarded for such behavior. There is certainly some truth to this perspective, and there are organizational implications for doing so as well. Organizations should recognize courage

because it sets a high standard that other members should strive to attain. Stated another way, it reinforces the value of an individual's behavior as a significant contribution toward mission completion, and the behavior should be emulated when the right context emerges.

Promote Positive and Optimal Stress. Most people who have played sports easily recognize the impact that physiological and emotional arousal can have on player performance: It's fourth down and twenty-five yards to the end zone with six seconds on the clock in the final football game of the season, before the state championship playoffs. You are the quarterback, and you can barely hear yourself think because every fan in the stadium is on their feet and screaming. You call the play and head to the line. The ball is snapped, you drop back, and you see two linebackers blitzing. Just as they pummel you, you spot your favorite wide receiver streaking toward the end zone. You reach back and let loose the strongest, tightest spiral pass of your career. Such performances are much more common than one might think.

Bandura (1997) and others have empirically shown a clear link between physiological and emotional arousal and increased performance. The psychology literature suggests that some people become energized by stress and subsequently perform better, but others crack under stress. Likewise, it is widely accepted that each person has an optimal stress limit that benefits performance. Crossing that limit may result in decreased performance, and such linkages have been made to courageous performance (Rachman 1983, 2010).

Use Referent Power and Inspirational Motivation

One final leader influence, beyond social learning theory, is that of inspirational motivation, where the follower has an emotional link to the leader. A leader's actions or words can spur courageous action by inciting followers to act. Martin Luther King's actions and speeches during the civil rights movement inspired an entire nation to change. An emotional link can also be a double-edged sword that could be abused. As suggested in attachment theory (Harms, in press; Bowlby 1982), individuals (followers) have a deep-seated desire to form strong bonds with attachment figures (leaders). Such a desire is often stronger when the attachment figure is charismatic (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993), and may serve to explain why followers are willing to engage in foolhardy and often deadly behavior that serves no greater good (Graham 1991). For example, Reverend Jim Jones' followers drank and made their children drink poisonous Kool-Aid at his urging, leading to the death of more than nine hundred people (Tabor and Gallagher 1997). With this in mind,

leaders must be mindful that physiological and emotional arousal can be taken too far, where behavior crosses from being courageous to being foolish.

CONCLUSION

Despite several thousand years of philosophical analysis, our understanding of courage and its development as a complex psychological phenomenon is only now emerging. As discussed in this chapter, there are three primary forms of courage recognized in the psychological literature—physical, moral, and psychological/vital—and how they function is as different as their conceptualizations. Where they conceptually converge, however, is that all three require deliberate risk taking toward some perceived noble cause, separating noble forms of courage from foolhardy behaviors and foolish courage (Pury and Starkey 2010). In line with Lester and coauthors, we propose in addition a social learning/social cognitive approach to developing courage in followers. We suggest that while leaders may be assisted in developing follower courage by the organization—after all, courage is a *raison d'être* of many public safety and military organizations—it is the leader who can and must intervene to shepherd the courage development process along.

KEY TAKE-AWAY POINTS

1. Provide tough, realistic training for the duties your followers will need to perform, along with feedback that helps them internalize the idea of themselves as competent, courageous actors.
2. Share experiences with followers and explicitly discuss their relation to courage.
3. Role model the kind of behaviors you want your followers to emulate. This goes for courageous behavior, too.
4. When one of your followers acts courageously, provide immediate positive feedback. If he or she is eligible for an organizational commendation based on the action, take the time to complete the nomination promptly.
5. Consider what types of courage are recognized in your unit. Do you recognize and reward moral or vital courage? Courage is often rare, so ensure that you recognize it regardless of its form.
6. Be aware that both the value of the goal and the risks endured to pursue the goal have a subjective component. In other words, there is some truth in believing that courage is in the eye of the beholder. By praising actions

as courageous or dismissing them as not, you are sending a message to your followers about the relative value and danger of those situations. Be sure that you are sending the message that you want to send.

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