

Running Head: Inappropriate Relationships

Inappropriate Relationships within the Ranks

MSG Charles H. Williams

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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SGM Ronald Jamieson, M-12

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Ethics are the values or ideas of conduct which are most important to an individual, group, or organization; rules set to govern conduct of a person or group in a general or specific situation. AR 600-20 Army Command Policy regulates relationships between Soldiers of different ranks, but on many occasions it is seldom followed. The interpretation of this regulation seems to only become important when there is a documented case of an inappropriate relationship between Soldiers of different ranks, relationships between officers and noncommissioned officers and relationships which involve homosexuality.

Because no two people's ethics and morals are exactly the same, and what one person defines as wrong, another person may view as right, the military had to implement rules and regulations that govern relationships within its organizations. Inappropriate relationships within the ranks afford opportunities for other unethical situations to arise and it can also demoralize a unit and its members.

Many times within a Soldier's career they will find themselves on an assignment or in a situation where their values or ethical beliefs may be challenged. We are often called upon to either deploy or PCS to a location where there is little or no enforcement of the policy which governs relationships within our ranks. On some occasions, our leaders, the ones who should be the standard bearers for all Soldiers beneath them are the ones who are setting the wrong example or setting new standards for all to follow. This is not to say that all leaders are looking the other way when it comes to inappropriate relationships within the ranks, it simply means not all leaders are looking the right way when it comes to inappropriate relationships.

Inappropriate relationships or unethical relationships are not always relationships between Soldiers of different ranks, or between officers and NCOs.

In recent years inappropriate relationships between Soldiers of the same sex are on the rise. Because of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy, we sometimes tend to shy away from enforcing AR 600-20. On many occasions there are signs of homosexual relationships within our ranks, but because of the fear of violating our Soldiers’ rights we cannot or will not act as quickly as we would if it were a relationship between officers and NCOs or a relationship between leaders and Soldiers. Does our station of assignment or our environment affects our ethical beliefs and whether we identify and correct ethical violations? For example, in South Korea it is not unusual to see two male or two female Koreans holding hands or displaying affections in public, because it is their custom to do so. Korean Augmentees to the U.S. Army also known as KATUSAs are commonly seen holding hands and even lying in bed together because within their custom, this is a way that friends show affection and is not looked upon as homosexual acts or tendencies. Since it is a custom, is it then permissible for U.S. Soldiers to act out this custom? Homosexual perceptions are rampant within South Korea among U.S. female Soldiers. Female Soldiers are often seen holding hands with other female Soldiers and it appears that there is a relationship between them but it is rarely addressed and raises little attention. Married Soldiers who are geographically separated from their spouse often have relationships with Koreans or other Soldiers and nothing is ever said. Officers can be seen acting inappropriately with enlisted members and nothing is ever said because there is an unwritten rule that what happens in Korea stays in Korea. Is it ethical for us to look the other way simply because we are in a different country and because inappropriate relationships are the norm? Is it ok to allow violations of Army regulations because of our personal beliefs or our upbringing?

When ethical violations occur, the punishment for the crime should not be based on who the person is or what their position is. I have read newspaper articles where some Soldiers receive a punishment of confinement for committing adultery and other articles where some senior leaders are forced to retire because of the same violation. Is it ethical to impose lesser punishment to two different individuals for the same ethical violation?

Our approach to ethical thinking and our ethical beliefs are somewhat a state of mind and the subject of ethics will always be controversial. Each of us come from different cultures, have different backgrounds, and have a different way of thinking and for that reason our personal beliefs may clash with others. We must not try to force our beliefs and values on others. The military has set in place rules and regulations that reinforce some ethical beliefs and go against other beliefs and if we live by and enforce ethics according to the military we prevent imposing our cultural beliefs of right and wrong on others.

All officers, noncommissioned officers and Soldiers have the responsibility to follow the Army's Code of Ethics regardless of rank or position. From the time we enter the U.S. Army, we are taught what is right and wrong. However, a lack of loyalty and integrity sometimes guides us to doing wrong and unethical things. It is imperative that we understand that the code of ethics is one of the foundations of our organization and our personal ethical beliefs are the cornerstone of who we are. All Soldiers, whether seniors, subordinates, or peers should know and see that their leaders are true to their beliefs. Leaders have an inherited responsibility to set the example and provide a professional command climate. This climate must be based on trust.

Ethics have and will continue to play a very important part in our Army when it comes to making decisions about our Soldiers. Our ethics and morals should guide us as a people into doing the right thing. What kind of ethics do we display when we are separated from our families? How do we conduct ourselves in our day-to-day missions? Do we cause our integrity to be in question? We have the ability to build up or tear down the very foundation of one of the greatest organizations in existence simply by how we conduct ourselves. The U.S. Army is built upon many pillars, but by weakening just one of those pillars we can damage and bring shame to our entire military. The Army has and will continue to try to get its Soldiers to do the right thing, ethically and morally. At times it may look as though we are making very little progress to enforce ethical behavior in the Army. Bad publicity and heightened awareness of violations in the news media only creates an even greater concern for our Army.

Throughout history, situations have and will continue to arise that have no single right answer. Ethics require us to balance one set of good or bad consequences with another. The Army's policies which govern relationships are very similar to our cultural beliefs concerning relationships. Most people within society have a personal belief concerning adultery and homosexual relationships which makes it easy for Soldiers to abide by these rules, but society does not teach us or prepare us for rules that govern relationships between seniors and subordinates or officers and enlisted and this is where we as leaders must be standard bearers. We must uphold and enforce policies that govern inappropriate relationships regardless of rank or position. We must not turn the other way to avoid confronting situations that we know are wrong regardless of location or cultural customs. We must confront and address our seniors,

subordinates, and peers when we see relationships that are inappropriate because each time we do not enforce a standard we set a new standard.

## REFERENCES

Department of the Army (2006). Army Regulation 600-20: Army Command Policy.

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