

Running Head: Ethics Thought Paper

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Leaders at every level must be personally involved in reinforcing the Army Values and Ethics. They must ensure that they are a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. Senior Non-Commissioned Officers are the role models for our Soldiers present and future. It is our ethics and moral values that will become part of the next generation of leaders. As such, we must ensure that we continually evaluate our ethics, values, what it is that makes us professionals, and what it is that we believe in.

In order to do this successfully, we must understand what the word “ethics” means. The Webster’s dictionary provides the following definition, “Ethics. 1. The study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others. 2. The rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession.”

The next step is to take this definition and break it down into two separate parts so we can have a clearer picture of what the definition means. Part one, “specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others.” As Senior Non-Commissioned Officers it is one of our primary duties to mentor our subordinates in the ways of the Army and its values. It is our responsibility to teach and live the Army Values and enable our Soldiers to make the right choices even when it might be easier to break the rules or take a short cut. Leading by example is the best way to show our Soldiers how to do the right thing.

As an analogy we can look at the old saying “If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around does it make a sound?” now we can change that to “If we do the right thing and no one is around will anyone know?” This is what ethics is all about; doing the right thing every time regardless if there is anyone around to notice.

Part two, “The rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession.”

What are the rules that govern military ethics? These are the rules and regulations that direct our conduct as we go about our daily duties. Some, if not all are written down, while there are others that are inherent standards, morals and values that are already ingrained into our personality and character.

Leaders should allow their subordinates to make mistakes. We should always emphasize that we need to do our best to avoid making mistakes. However, mistakes happen, and when they do, leaders should take this opportunity to assist their Soldiers in overcoming their mistake and ensuring that the Soldier has learned from the mistake so there will be no reoccurrence of the same mistake. This will instill confidence in our Soldiers and cultivate new leaders who are self assured and not afraid to try new things. This type of environment will allow the Soldiers we mentor to learn and excel.

Senior Non Commissioned Officers have all faced an ethical dilemma at one time or another in their career. The majority of us have observed our fellow Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers placed into situations where they have had to make hard choices. The decision, as well as how the decisions were made are a direct reflection upon themselves as well as on the leaders that mentored them.

This is a difficult time right now for the Army; we are at war, in a time of limited resources, and shrinking dollars. Every one of us is accountable and it is important that we do our part to reevaluate the attitudes of the past that were previously acceptable. Some examples of the things that are no longer tolerated is, the TDY trip which was unnecessary and could have been taken care of over the phone rather than in person saving the Army thousands of dollars that could have been spent elsewhere; booking a trip on a lower cost airline versus an airline that

would give you the most airline mileage for your personal use; when visiting troops in the field sleeping arrangements with the troops that are being visited should be requested instead of staying in a hotel downtown. These are all just a few examples of what was previously accepted but not necessarily ethical.

As Senior Non Commissioned Officers we sometimes lose site of the fact that being promoted into positions of leadership mandates that we lead from the front. We should always bear in mind that being a leader is a privilege. The first priority of a good leader is to lead and the second priority to manage. The example should be set by picking up the torch and moving to the front to lead. There are many who have risen to leadership positions and have been blinded by the successes of those that preceded them. Leaders are always under a microscope. We should remember that our actions are observed at all times by our peers, those that we lead and mentor, and by our leaders.

As we progress in our careers it becomes even more imperative that we take the time to contemplate the decisions we make as well as our actions before we commit ourselves to them. Once an action has been taken there is no turning back. We as well as our Soldiers will have to live with the outcome of our decisions and the actions we have chosen and be judged by them. It is important to take into account that it is not just the Soldiers we lead that will judge us by our actions but the public and media that because of the war is now scrutinizing our every move.

Due largely to the controversy surrounding the war, and the shrinking budget the public and the media seem to view us through a microscope. People are consistently rethinking and reevaluating every move and every decision. We are expected to act as professionals and to handle ourselves and the decisions we make in an ethical and moral fashion both on and off duty.

The Army cannot afford the perception that leaders at any level are willing to compromise their integrity and that of their Soldiers by reporting inaccurate facts or making decisions that go against the Army Values. Leaders must identify weaknesses in their units and work to correct them rather than hide them. This is especially important for deployable units as deficiencies must be reported and corrected before deficiencies are exposed on the battlefield when a Soldier's life could be at stake. The best way to accomplish this is to involve leaders at every level to live the Army Values and to ensure their subordinates understand and promote Army Ethics, Values, and Standards.

As leaders' it is our duty to teach our Soldiers discipline and instill in them the ethical and moral attitude necessary to enable them to be the future leaders of the Army. In order to successfully achieve this undertaking we must take an honest look within ourselves and determine whether or not our personal values and ethics meet the Army's standard. If we do not meet the standard, it is up to each individual to make the necessary changes to meet the standard.