

Running head: Ethics in the Army

Ethics in the Army

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ETHICS What are they? Where do they come from? Can they change? Will they change?

These are some of the questions I will attempt to answer in this thought paper on Ethics.

The great institution the Army is today can be directly linked to the personal ethics of leaders and soldiers alike. Values are the foundation for our organization When I think about ethics values and beliefs always seem to come to mind. I can clearly

remember my first ethical dilemma as a young lad. I had a 1972 Honda CT 70 dirt bike as a kid. My father was very adamant about me not letting no one ride it to include the kids in the neighborhood who where my friends. If they asked to ride the answer was NO.

So one sunny afternoon I was riding when a couple of my friends stopped by to see if I wanted to go play basketball. Naturally I said yes parked the bike and went inside to get some shorts. Johnny one of my friends wanted to ride it I had told him no as usual. While I was inside he jumped on and took of for a ride. I chased him but he would not stop. I was so mad I went back inside and got my dad's twenty two rifle came outside and fired a warning shot. It didn't help he kept on riding. Out of frustration, I drew a bead on him all I had to do was pull the trigger but I didn't. Why maybe it was because my dad was due home at anytime and I knew the consequences for having his gun outside of the house without his permission. Or maybe I was just scared. I reflect back on this now and I have come to the realization that I knew then the difference between right and wrong. It was the ethics instilled in me by my parents. If it had not been for them, I probably would not be here writing this thought paper on ethics today. Ironically neither would Johnny who recently retired from the Army.

Ethics are principles of right or wrong behavior. In the Army we define ethics as standards of conduct governing the members of a profession. I believe ethics are beliefs and values we learn over a lifetime; a set of rules so to speak to live by.

Like most I received my first set of ethics from my parents. For example, you had to eat all your food in our family before you could get your kool aid. Be home before the street lights come on, Don't talk back just listen; and the famous If you are going to live in my house it will be by my rules. Even in today's Army, we have personal values that we live by, the Army has a set of values that we as leaders, to include soldiers, must adhere to. These values spell the acronym LDRSHIP. The values are *Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honesty, Integrity, and Personal Courage*. These Army values help to guide our day-to-day actions. As individuals in the military we must not only understand these values but also believe and follow them. Ethics is the bridge that connects values and behaviors. All leaders must always educate their subordinates on ethics. By setting the example, we will give our soldiers the power to make sound ethical decisions. We base our ethics mainly on our principles and on what we believe.

Ethical dilemmas are conflicts that pull between the right and the wrong of an action. It is a popular notion that when you are in an ethical dilemma the wrong choice usually will have the better outcome and the right choice usually has the worst outcome. We sometimes want the better outcome to be the results of an action however, it is not usually right. We do not typically enjoy seeing someone suffer or hurt because they failed to do something or when they are in an unfavorable situation.

In conclusion, Where do they come from? Within they are instilled by our parents or a mentor. Can they change? Of course but the basic foundation is laid young. We have the ethical responsibility to be that role model of ethical behavior for our soldiers. We have the responsibility to develop our soldiers ethically, and to develop an ethical climate for our organization. Most soldiers mimic the actions of their leaders. When we do the right thing they in turn will do the right thing and vice-versa. When we as leaders are faced with an ethical decision or dilemma, it is imperative that we use the Army values of *Loyalty, Duty, Respect Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage* as our guide.