

**LS 710 Assignment 8**

**Essay on Ethics in Leadership Part 1**

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## ETHICS IN LEADERSHIP

The first chapter of *Ethical Leadership* by Mendonca and Kanungo starts with the quote: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main..." which I believe is an excellent metaphor to describe leadership. Leaders cannot function in a vacuum; leaders are responsible for control and moving followers toward the organization objectives, but it takes a collaborative team to be successful.

The definition of leadership implies that there are followers and each member of the team forms the whole; however, the authors make some statements in this chapter about ethics that I find puzzling. Early in the chapter, there's an argument that ethics and morality:

"are or ought to be the exclusive preserve of religious and, possibly, educational organizations. When morality intrudes into the business organization, it has the potential of diverting business leaders from the organization's primary objectives and, as a result, causing it to be inefficient and to deprive stockholders of their due returns"

What a horrible statement to assume that businesses cannot be efficient in meeting objectives while being ethical! Using the word "intrudes" implies that ethics do not belong in business and, with ethics, you cannot produce a profit. That's simply ridiculous.

Business, government, religious organizations, non-profit organizations, and especially educational institutions should all have ethics as one priority, if not their highest. The authors go on to state that "the primary duty and responsibility for providing

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the proper direction and the high standards of performance rest chiefly with the organization leader." In the next paragraph, the authors note that "it is the leader's moral principles and integrity that give legitimacy and credibility to the vision and sustain it." I think this is true to a certain extent and leaders should lead by example, but I also believe the integrity and ethical and moral character of the entire team reflect upon the organization.

The authors suggest that the responsibility to teach ethics falls upon the educational institution, yet the article states that some believe that those with more formal education are more likely to be involved in corporate criminal activity. Personally, I believe that you can teach (teach?) someone how to be ethical, but I do not think that makes someone practice ethical behavior. It is up to each individual to make a choice. It is also up to the leaders to change the makeup of a team when unethical behavior becomes a part of the team culture.

There is a lot of opportunity for unethical behavior in the realm of higher education, yet ethical behavior must be the foundation of the educational community as well as business communities. Each student, faculty and staff member should be practicing ethical behavior, yet higher education is plagued by unethical activity. From acts of academic dishonesty, to inappropriate student-teacher relationships, to privileged perks for student athletes, unethical behavior exists and should be dealt with when discovered and not just when publicly revealed. Such behavior reflects upon the entire institution.

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**Essay on Ethics in Leadership Part 2**

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In *Lives of Moral Leadership*, Coles shares some of his journey through the investigation of the moral leadership of some people who have shared moments of his life. "Here," he stated, "accordingly, are lives of moral leadership--incidents in them, moments of them, chronicles of their unfolding, the turns of fate, and chance and circumstance that visited particular persons, the responses they declared to make in the course of their time spent on this earth." Through his journey, we are encouraged to "hand one another along morally."

The incident shared in Chapter II involves a famous politician, Senator Robert Kennedy. Dr. Coles and some of colleagues were preparing to testify in support of legislation that would feed nutritious food to hungry children and their parents in the south. In meeting with Senator Kennedy, the doctors were urged to show their conviction, unity, assurance and moral energy. Kennedy was concerned about problems related to their findings about how the food was cooked, prepared and served, and some parents were not at all interested in nutritious food. They would actually turn away healthy fruits and vegetables.

It was evident that the families needed medical attention and an education about their eating habits. This was a weak point in their testimony in support of funding. Kennedy urged the doctors to simplify their message, but Dr. Seen was not convinced and did not want to follow Kennedy's advice. In good faith, he believed the matter could be fully explained to the public. Kennedy replied to the doctors by quoting from Shakespeare's *Henry V*: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother..." In time spent evaluating this quote and

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other Shakespearean leaders, Dr. Senn and Dr. Coles stood up for what they believed to be ethical and right.

In Chapter VIII, Coles tells us a story about his own leadership lessons learned in his military classes from an Air Force Colonel. I truly enjoyed reading this chapter as it made me think about the everyday leaders in my life, particularly my parents, leaders at my church and mentors in my career. Early in the chapter, Coles poignantly states:

"All the time, in the course of our ordinary lives, we ourselves experience leadership and exert it, but in either case we engage affirmatively with it. As husbands, wives, parents, members of a larger family, as residents in a particular workforce, we lead or have our say in who or what we follow, we indicate our approval, disapproval, insistence upon what we think to be right or wrong: we may go further, try to persuade one or another person that what we believe to be correct, or entirely out of order, ought to be taken to heart."

Coles' statement gets straight to the heart of the matter. We all have leadership opportunities in every aspect of our lives. How we choose to handle them is a product of our own personal morals and ethics. Coles relays his personal insights placed upon him as a young military doctor challenged to "act like a leader." The Colonel challenged each member of the class to think of leaders in their own lives which prompted several stories of moral conviction. I found the story by Professor Yale Kneeland, one of Coles' medical school professors to be one of the most compelling. Coles remembers Kneeland talking

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about the Members of the White Rose in Nazi Germany. The group was comprised of young medical students who chose to stand up to Hitler's "monstrous evil" to protest and resist Nazism any format. They were known by wearing a white rose as a badge of moral purpose. They wrote newsletters and pamphlets in an underground network and eventually were killed for their resistance. They wanted to "risk their all in order to stand apart from, stand up to, a Nazism that had gained control of colleges and universities as well as Germany as a nation."

I find this story interesting because of our previous mention of Hitler in our class. It's difficult to say that Hitler was not a leader because he did have followers, though definitely not for a moral purpose. The true leaders of this story are those who were morally disciplined and took a stand for their beliefs.

I don't think that leadership calls us all to be martyrs, but true leaders should not compromise. They should be focused on the common good of their organization whether it is family, career, church, community or other group. It takes moral discipline to make the proper choices and take the proper actions even when you are in the minority, or alone in your actions.

In closing the chapter, Coles leaves us with this: "We do, indeed, no matter who we are, what we do, hand one another long, give one another various reasons to be, to take a stand, to act..."

Citation: Coles, R. (2000). *Lives of Moral Leadership*. New York, NY: Random House.

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**Essay on Ethics in Leadership Part 3**

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## ETHICS IN LEADERSHIP

When students apply to attend college, they are required to disclose any prior attendance at another college or university. Students who do not disclose this information and provide appropriate transcripts are considered to have committed academic fraud. A few years ago, I served as a counselor in the Financial Aid Office at Marshall University. One day, I was surprised to see an old acquaintance of mine. Several years before, he had been a member of a youth group at my church.

I met with Shawn to discuss his financial aid options for attendance at Marshall. I noticed that he had been admitted as a freshman with a goal of eventually attending medical school. I thought I remembered hearing that he had attended college somewhere while enlisted in the military, but I was not certain. So, I waited. I waited until I received the results of his Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If he had received financial aid at another school, our report would reveal the truth. The report reflected that he had already utilized his entire undergraduate loan eligibility for an independent student, nearly \$46,000. With this proof in hand, I had to report my information to the Admissions Office who revoked his admission on the basis of academic fraud.

I can't say that this was a difficult decision because it wasn't. It was a case of justice ethics requiring that all students be treated equally and fairly. I knew that it was my job to report the information when I had proof of previous college attendance. The difficult part was in my personal disappointment with this young man that I had previously held in high regard. He later advised the Director of Admissions that he knew his poor grades would prohibit his future acceptance to medical school. I never talked to him directly, but the Admissions Office finally received a transcript and he was allowed

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to be admitted a year or two later. I feel quite certain that he will never be able to pursue a degree in medicine. It is a sad reminder that unethical behavior never pays off in the end.