**Introduction**

This lesson consists of:

1. The Ethical Dimension of Leadership

2. Case Study

3. Student Journal Entry

**Assignment**

1. **Read the Course Guide**

2. When you solve a case study or act as a leader in your organization:

I. ***Identify*** the Areas of Interest.

II. ***Analyze*** the situation regarding the Ethical Dimension of Leadership Theory.

A. ***Identify*** theguidelines for ethical behavior and determine whether they are clear or ambiguous.

B. ***Identify*** the consequences (i.e., rewards and punishments) for ethical and unethical behavior.

C. ***Classify*** the levels of competition and stress in the organization as functional or dysfunctional.

D. ***Classify*** the level of comfort experienced by organizational members about reporting unethical behavior.

III. ***Explain*** an Area of Interest in terms of how the ethical climate influences the behavior and/or attitudes of organizational members and how this affects the organization's throughput processes and outputs as an Open System Model.

IV. ***Select*** the most appropriate leader behavior(s) to shape an ethical climate in the organization.

V. ***Apply*** concepts of the ethical dimension of leadership to increase the likelihood of ethical behavior among organizational members in the form of a specific leadership plan.

VI. ***Assess***, evaluate, and revise your plan.

3. **Complete a Student Journal entry** using the Ethical Dimension of Leadership Theory.

Think about your current work group. How is the ethical climate causing undesirable behavior and/or attitudes on the part of the organizational members? What is the effect of that behavior and/or attitude on the individual, the group, the leader(s), and the organization in terms of being able to achieve the organization’s goals? Is there any dysfunctional stress and/or competition in your current work group? What is the effect of the dysfunctional stress and/or competition? What concepts of leadership can be applied to decrease the dysfunctional stress and/or competition among your work group members?

What specific steps would you include in a leadership plan? Have you ever rewarded an employee’s behavior specifically because it was ethical? What was the outcome and feedback after your leadership action?

**Or**

If you are not a formal leader in your work group, are you aware of a leader in your work unit rewarding an employee’s behavior specifically because it was ethical? What was the outcome and feedback after the leader’s action?

Please reflect on your past policing career. What leadership behaviors have you exemplified that contributed to establishing and maintaining a good ethical climate?

**The Ethical Dimension of Leadership**

**Ethical Climate and Organizational Behavior**

The Ethical Dimension of Leadership is the final formal lesson in this course. Hopefully, the previous lessons in this curriculum have positively influenced your present and future development as a leader. Without proper ethics, none of the theories, none of the concepts, and no part of leadership will function. Without ethics, the leader has no credibility, and the followers will not trust the leader. Establishing and daily pursuit of ethical conduct is central to every lesson in this program because it is fundamental to being a leader.

Moral, proper, exemplary personal behavior is at the core of a leader’s ethical responsibilities. Employees will notice, criticize, or worse yet, emulate the moral failures of their superior officers. World history is filled with examples of how otherwise competent leaders failed the ethical evaluation and experienced disastrous results from ancient to modern times. But even if we resist personal temptation, how do we affect what our employees and peers do?

An organization's ethical climate profoundly influences its members' behavior and attitudes. When leaders fail to establish a strong ethical foundation, employees may develop attitudes of cynicism, distrust, or moral disengagement. This can manifest as undesirable behaviors, such as dishonesty, misconduct, or a lack of accountability. The consequences of an unethical climate ripple across multiple levels:

* **Individuals** may experience moral distress, job dissatisfaction, or internal conflict when ethical standards are unclear or inconsistently enforced.
* **Groups** can suffer from dysfunction, lack of trust, and increased competition, which fosters unethical shortcuts or a toxic workplace.
* **Leaders** lose credibility when ethical inconsistencies are tolerated, weakening their influence and ability to drive positive change.
* **The Organization** risks reputational damage, legal consequences, and a decrease in overall efficiency, ultimately impeding its ability to fulfill its mission.

Leaders play a crucial role in shaping the ethical environment and mitigating the potential for ethical decline. Failure to do so results in a culture where unethical behavior becomes normalized, leading to widespread consequences for employees and the organization.

**Dysfunctional Stress and Competition**

Dysfunctional stress and competition within a workgroup can significantly undermine an organization's ethical foundation. When employees are placed under extreme pressure to meet unrealistic goals, moral shortcuts may become tempting. Overly competitive environments can lead to cutthroat behaviors, concealment of mistakes, and unethical decision-making in pursuit of individual or departmental success.

The effects of this dysfunction include:

* Increased burnout and disengagement among employees.
* Higher levels of workplace conflict and reduced cooperation.
* A culture of fear, where employees hesitate to report unethical behavior.
* A decline in morale, productivity, and long-term organizational success.

Leaders must recognize these stressors and implement strategies to reduce harmful competition while fostering collaboration, transparency, and shared accountability.

**Leadership Plan for Ethical Development**

To cultivate and maintain an ethical workplace, leaders should implement a structured leadership plan that integrates ethical principles into everyday decision-making. Key steps include:

1. **Conduct an Ethical Climate Assessment** – Identify gaps in the organization’s ethical culture through surveys, feedback, and observation.
2. **Develop and Communicate Ethical Standards** – Establish a clear code of conduct and ensure employees understand its significance.
3. **Implement Ethical Leadership Training** – Equip managers and supervisors with the skills to effectively model ethical behavior and manage ethical dilemmas.
4. **Create Safe Channels for Ethical Reporting** – Encourage whistleblower protections and anonymous reporting systems to identify ethical concerns without fear of retaliation.
5. **Align Organizational Policies with Ethical Principles** – Ensure performance evaluations, promotions, and incentives are structured to encourage ethical behavior rather than purely performance-driven metrics.
6. **Encourage Open Dialogue on Ethics** – Foster a culture where ethical discussions are normalized rather than seen as compliance measures.

**Rewarding Ethical Behavior: The Impact of Positive Reinforcement**

Ethical behavior in the workplace should not be taken for granted—it must be acknowledged and rewarded. Leaders who recognize employees for their ethical decision-making convey that integrity is valued as much as productivity.

* **Impact on Employees:** Employees who receive recognition for ethical behavior experience increased morale, a stronger commitment to the organization, and greater intrinsic motivation to uphold integrity.
* **Impact on the Workgroup:** Recognizing ethical behavior fosters a culture of trust and psychological safety, where employees feel empowered to uphold ethical standards.
* **Impact on the Organization:** Organizations prioritizing ethics through positive reinforcement experience higher levels of employee engagement, lower misconduct rates, and stronger public trust.

When employees see that ethical behavior leads to recognition and success, they are more likely to model these behaviors, creating a cycle of ethical reinforcement throughout the organization.

**The Ethical Responsibility of the Leader**

Scholars of organizational leadership have long emphasized the critical role of ethics in effective leadership. Chester Barnard, a renowned management theorist, not only underscored the necessity of moral behavior among organizational leaders but also identified their responsibility in shaping the moral conduct of others as the defining characteristic of leadership.

A key aspect of leadership effectiveness is the ability to influence followers, often through persuasion. Research on interpersonal influence highlights that a leader’s credibility is essential for persuasive communication. Credibility stems from aligning a leader’s words and actions—an intrinsic part of ethical leadership. Ralph Stogdill’s seminal leadership literature review also identifies personal integrity as a fundamental leadership trait.

In law enforcement, leadership theorists emphasize establishing and maintaining ethical standards as a core leadership function. A leader's ability to shape the moral behavior of employees is particularly pronounced at higher levels of command, where top executives serve as primary sources of ethical guidance for mid-level leadership.

**Organizational Leaders and Trust**

Beyond influencing the ethical conduct of others, leaders also bear a profound responsibility that stems from the trust placed in them by those who appoint them. In the private sector, corporate executives are entrusted with safeguarding investors’ financial assets, while in the public sector, law enforcement leaders are entrusted not only with financial resources but also with the safety and well-being of society.

Leaders in law enforcement—whether appointed or elected—are expected to uphold the highest moral standards. Their authority is granted under the condition of trust, which remains intact until it is broken or revoked. This trust extends across various sectors; corporate officers, attorneys, and academic faculty members all hold significant decision-making responsibilities. However, no role carries the same ethical and moral weight as that of a police leader, who must make life-and-death decisions while upholding justice and safeguarding societal values.

The legitimacy of law enforcement as an institution is rooted in its moral obligation to protect and preserve society's freedoms and values. The ethical weight of policing is particularly profound because it involves the sanctioned use of force—taking a life or restricting personal liberty when necessary. While corporate leaders may justify their decisions based on financial success, law enforcement leaders operate under a unique ethical imperative: ensuring their actions align with society’s core values without compromising justice and fairness.

The voluntary nature of their commitment further amplifies the gravity of a police leader’s ethical responsibility. In his philosophical analysis of military ethics, Colonel Malham Wakin, USAF, highlights that taking an oath of office creates an unbreakable moral obligation because it is freely given. Police officers swear this oath without hesitation or mental reservation, reinforcing their duty to uphold the law with integrity. Wakin warns that leaders who disregard their solemn promises may still perform their duties but will never command true respect or loyalty. As Sir Thomas More poignantly stated in *A Man for All Seasons*, *“When a man takes an oath… he’s holding his self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers, he needn’t hope to find himself again.”*

**The Ethic of the Organization**

If leaders are expected to act with moral integrity, where do they find guidance in distinguishing right from wrong within an organizational setting? This question has challenged scholars in leadership, ethics, and organizational behavior for generations.

A study conducted by the U.S. Army underscores the complexity of defining ethical behavior within an organization, noting that while extreme cases of moral or immoral conduct are easily identified, a vast gray area remains. However, the study offers a working definition of organizational ethics:

**Ethics in an organizational context consists of a set of behavioral standards—expressed as norms, principles, procedural guides, or rules—defining what is considered right or wrong. These standards, grounded in values and moral principles, are widely understood and accepted as legitimate personal and professional conduct guidelines. Ethical behavior is maintained either through internalization, reinforced by individual conscience and guilt, or through external enforcement via sanctions and disciplinary measures. Any violation of these standards constitutes unethical behavior.**

This definition reinforces that ethical standards are not arbitrary but essential guidelines for effective leadership and decision-making. Adherence to these ethical principles is a professional and societal obligation in law enforcement. Police leaders are entrusted with shaping the ethical climate of their organizations, ensuring that officers operate with integrity, fairness, and respect for the communities they serve.

Ultimately, ethical leadership is about enforcing rules and embodying values that inspire trust, accountability, and moral courage. Police leaders, more than most, must uphold these principles to maintain legitimacy, command respect, and fulfill the profound moral responsibility of their role.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) adopted the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics in 1957 and updated it in 2024 to reflect the evolving responsibilities of contemporary policing. ​

**Policing Code of Ethics**

As a sworn officer, my fundamental duty is to serve the community by safeguarding lives and property against threats that could take advantage of or harm members of my community or otherwise impact peace and order. I will uphold the Constitution and honor the rights of all to life, liberty, equality, and justice. I will never employ unnecessary force. I will respect the privacy of the people and communities I serve and fully obey the laws I am sworn to enforce.​

I will live by example, remembering that my character and conduct, on-duty and off, directly influence the legitimacy of the policing profession. I will exercise self-restraint, maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, and ridicule, and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others and my well-being.​

I will never act officiously or permit bias or personal gain to influence my decisions. I will strive to protect the vulnerable from harm. If this fails, I will seek to identify and apprehend offenders, professionally and appropriately, holding them to account. I will not solicit or accept any gifts, bribes, or anything of value from any person or entity that may create a perception of benefit or influence my performance as a public servant.​

I recognize my shield of office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of police service. I will not engage in or condone acts of corruption, take advantage of circumstances for personal gain, or accept gratuities. I promise to intervene when met with any unjustifiable acts by members of my profession. I will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives to pursue justice.​

I alone am responsible for my professional performance and conduct and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve my knowledge and competence. I will constantly strive to achieve these principles, dedicating myself to my chosen profession: policing.

Two key factors shape the formation of an organization’s ethical framework. The first is a broad set of values and moral principles from contemporary society, reflecting its needs, beliefs, and norms. These societal influences were previously discussed in the lesson on organizational leadership and the environment.

The second set of influences is specific to the organization’s function. In the case of law enforcement, this means understanding the ethical responsibilities inherent in policing.

A functional imperative that fundamentally drives a police organization is to protect and serve, ensuring that citizens can pursue a high quality of life free from fear, with democratic values applied equally to all. Every action taken by a police agency must be rooted in this commitment to public service. Police leadership, therefore, carries a moral and legal obligation to guide the organization in fulfilling this mission.

This dedication to service legitimizes the organization’s structure, training, and actions—even when those actions involve the use of force or the restriction of personal freedom. Without this foundation of service to society, the authority and legitimacy of policing itself would be called into question.

**The Ethics of Policing**

Police officers are members of their respective departments and part of a broader professional community defined by expertise, responsibility to society, and a collective ethical standard. At its core, policing is a profession centered on managing force to protect life and property, wielding the immense power to take both life and freedom when necessary. Because of this unique authority, the policing profession is ultimately accountable to society, which provides the resources, personnel, and legitimacy for its mission.

Police leadership operates within a structured hierarchy, where rank and uniform symbolize authority and responsibility. Entry into leadership is regulated through formal education, specialized training, and promotion, reinforcing the profession’s corporate character. This shared professional ethic is sustained through self-discipline, internal accountability, and a commitment to ethical leadership.

**Loyalty, Obedience, and Ethical Dilemmas**

Like the military, policing requires a structured chain of command where obedience and loyalty are essential virtues. Effective service depends on officers following lawful orders, as their role is to uphold societal order, sometimes at great personal risk. However, the ethical challenge arises when orders conflict with moral principles. While obedience is fundamental in law enforcement, it is not absolute—officers must refuse illegal or unethical commands. True professionalism does not demand blind obedience but rather moral discernment in service to justice.

Historical examples, including war crimes trials and cases of police misconduct, have shown that following orders is not always a sufficient defense. Ethical leadership demands critical thinking, self-reflection, and the courage to challenge unethical directives. Police officers are, first and foremost, human beings, and their professional obligations must align with fundamental moral responsibilities such as honesty, fairness, and the protection of human rights.

**Obedience and Authority: Lessons from Psychological Research**

Studies on obedience, such as Stanley Milgram’s famous experiments, reveal the powerful influence of authority on human behavior. In his study, participants believed they were administering increasingly severe electric shocks to another person, but they continued to do so despite visible distress simply because an authoritative figure instructed them. The results were unsettling, demonstrating that otherwise ethical individuals can be compelled to act against their moral instincts under perceived authority.

Milgram’s findings serve as a stark reminder of the dangers of unquestioning obedience in policing. Officers must recognize that their duty extends beyond compliance with authority, requiring a commitment to ethical decision-making and moral courage. When orders violate fundamental rights or ethical standards, police professionals must be prepared to act according to their conscience and the law.

**The Role of Ethical Leadership in Policing**

Ultimately, police leaders are responsible for upholding and enforcing the ethical foundation of the profession. Officers' moral behavior is shaped by individual integrity and the culture set by leadership. While loyalty and obedience remain key virtues, they must be balanced with accountability, ethical reasoning, and the willingness to challenge unjust practices.

In a profession where decisions can mean the difference between life and death, ethical leadership is not optional—it is essential. The legitimacy of policing depends on leaders who inspire trust, foster a culture of integrity, and ensure that their officers serve not just with authority but with justice and moral responsibility.

**Organizational Influences on Ethical Behavior in Policing**

In policing, ethical behavior is shaped by personal values, professional standards, and the organizational environment. Police officers rarely act in isolation; their decisions and actions are influenced by leadership, policies, norms, and the pressures of the job.

**The Leader as an Ethical Role Model**

One of the most powerful influences on an officer’s moral behavior is the example set by leadership. Leaders establish the ethical tone of the organization through their own actions, more so than through written policies or verbal directives. Officers look to their superiors for cues on appropriate behavior, making it crucial for police leaders to demonstrate integrity and fairness. When modeled at the top, ethical behavior fosters a culture of accountability throughout the department.

**Rewards, Punishments, and Ethical Accountability**

Police leaders have the authority to reinforce ethical standards through rewards and disciplinary actions. Failing to address misconduct, particularly among leadership, can create a perception that unethical behavior is tolerated. While unethical conduct often draws more attention, recognizing and reinforcing ethical behavior is equally important. A strong system of accountability—where ethical behavior is encouraged and violations are addressed consistently—helps maintain trust within the department and the community.

**Communication, Expectations, and Organizational Climate**

Clear communication of ethical expectations is critical in shaping behavior, particularly for new officers. However, stated policies must align with the organization's actual culture. When officers perceive conflicting messages—such as an emphasis on integrity in training but tolerance of misconduct in practice—they may become cynical about ethical expectations. Leaders must continuously reinforce ethical standards and ensure alignment between stated values and day-to-day operations.

Organizational climate also influences ethical decision-making. High-stress environments, excessive workloads, and unrealistic expectations can pressure officers to cut corners or make compromised decisions. Similarly, intense competition within or between departments can create an environment where performance demands overshadow ethical considerations.

**The Impact of Group Norms**

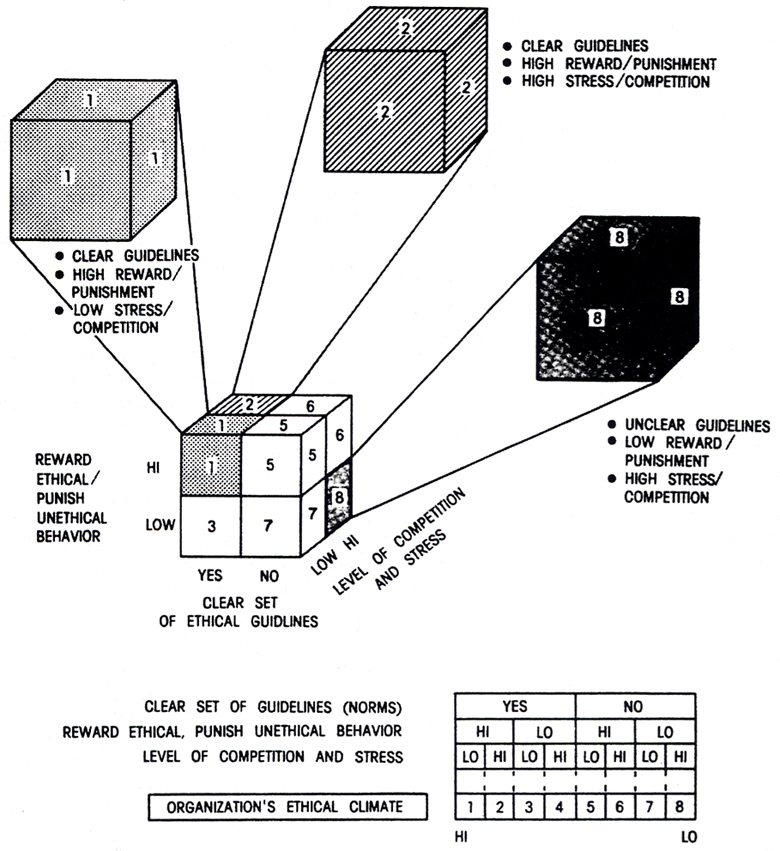
Every police department develops formal and informal norms that shape behavior. While official policies outline expected conduct, peer influence and department culture can have an even stronger impact. If unethical behaviors become normalized within a department, they can override formal ethical guidelines. Leaders play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining an ethical climate by reinforcing positive norms and addressing toxic cultural influences.

**Creating a Strong Ethical Climate**

To foster an ethical policing environment, departments should:

1. **Establish Clear Ethical Guidelines** – Ensure officers understand ethical and unethical behavior.
2. **Reinforce Ethical Behavior Through Rewards and Accountability** – Recognize integrity while addressing misconduct consistently.
3. **Manage Stress and Competition** – Provide resources and support to help officers navigate high-pressure situations without compromising ethics.

Studies have shown that organizations with clear ethical expectations, strong leadership accountability, and a culture of integrity experience fewer ethical violations and greater officer engagement. In policing, where decisions impact lives and community trust, maintaining a strong ethical foundation is not just important—it is essential.



The Consequences of Moral Behavior

**Individual Consequences**

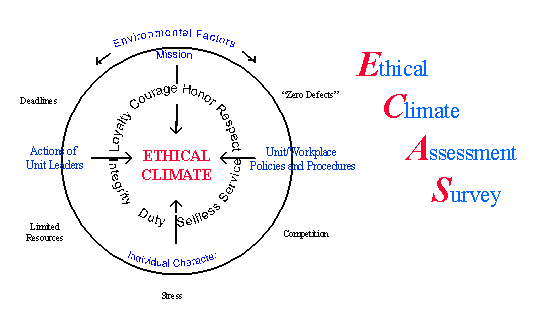
Engaging in unethical behavior can have profound personal repercussions for police officers. Feelings of guilt and shame often accompany such actions, potentially leading to mental health issues like self-doubt and depression. In severe cases, this internal turmoil can result in self-destructive behaviors, including suicide. Conversely, maintaining ethical conduct fosters mental well-being, self-respect, and trust from colleagues and the community.​

**Organizational Consequences**

Individual officers' ethical behavior significantly impacts their departments' reputation and effectiveness. Officers uphold high moral standards and enhance public trust, leading to more excellent community support and cooperation. However, leaders' or numerous members' unethical actions can rapidly erode public confidence. This loss of trust may result in reduced department autonomy, increased external oversight, and diminished resources. In extreme cases, persistent unethical behavior can lead to the department's dissolution, compromising its ability to serve and protect society effectively.​

Therefore, individual officers and law enforcement agencies must adhere to ethical standards, ensuring they meet societal expectations and maintain the integrity essential for effective policing.

**Ethical Climate Assessment Survey**



A positive **Ethical Climate** is one in which the department’s values are routinely articulated, supported, practiced, and respected. Various factors, including the individual character of unit members, the policies and practices within the organization, the actions of unit leaders, and various environmental and mission factors determine the Ethical Climate of an organization. Leaders should periodically assess their organization’s Ethical Climate and take appropriate actions, as necessary, to maintain the high ethical standards expected of public service organizations. This survey will assist you in making periodic assessments and in identifying the actions required to maintain a healthy Ethical Climate.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Answer the questions in this survey according to how you currently perceive your work group or organization and your leader's actions. DO NOT answer these questions according to how you would prefer them to be or how you think they should be. This information is for your use, not your chain of command’s, to determine if you need to take action to improve the Ethical Climate in your organization. Use the following scale for all questions in Sections I and II.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Disagree **1** | Disagree **2** | Neither Agree nor Disagree **3** | Agree **4** | Strongly Agree **5** |

**I. Individual Character – “Who are we?”** This section focuses on how committed the members of your organization are to department values. Please answer the following questions based on your observations of the ethical commitment in your assignment unit.

1. In general, the members of my unit demonstrate a commitment to department values (honor, selfless service, integrity, loyalty, courage, duty, and respect). **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. The members of my unit typically accomplish a goal or an objective by doing the right thing rather than compromising department values. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. I understand and am committed to the department’s values as outlined in the department’s written directives. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Section I Total \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**II. Unit/Workplace Policies & Practices – “What do we do?”** This section focuses on what you and the leaders who report to you do to maintain an ethical climate in your workplace. (This does not mean your supervisors. Their actions will be addressed in Section IV.

1. We provide clear instructions that help prevent unethical behavior. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. We promote an environment in which followers can learn from their mistakes. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. We maintain appropriate, not dysfunctional, stress levels and competition in our unit. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. We discuss ethical behavior and issues during regular counseling sessions. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. We maintain an organizational motto, philosophy, and mission that is consistent with department values. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
6. We submit unit reports that reflect accurate information. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
7. We ensure unit members are aware of and are comfortable using the various channels available to report unethical behavior. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
8. We treat those individuals in our unit who report unethical behavior fairly. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
9. We hold accountable (i.e., report and/or punish) members of our organization who behave unethically. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Section II Total \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

\*Use the following scale for all questions in Section III.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Never **1** | Hardly Ever **2** | Sometimes **3** | Almost Always **4** | Always **5** |

**III. Unit Leader Actions – “What do I do?”** This section focuses on what you do as the leader of your organization to encourage an ethical climate.

1. I discuss department values in orientation programs when I welcome new members to my organization. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. I routinely assess the Ethical Climate of my unit (i.e., sensing sessions, climate surveys, etc.). **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. I communicate my expectations regarding ethical behavior to my unit and require employees to perform tasks ethically. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. I encourage discussions of ethical issues in After Action Reviews, training meetings, seminars, and workshops. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. I encourage unit members to raise ethical questions and concerns to the chain of command or other appropriate individuals if needed. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
6. I consider ethical behavior in performance evaluations, award and promotion recommendations, and adverse personnel actions. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
7. I include maintaining a strong Ethical Climate as one of my unit’s goals and objectives. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Section III Total** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Use the following scale for all questions in Section IV. \*\*\*Note: The scale is reversed for this section (Strongly Agree is scored as a “1”, not a “5”)\*\*\*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree **1** | Agree **2** | Neither Agree nor Disagree **3** | Disagree **4** | Strongly Disagree **5** |

**IV. Environmental/Mission Factors – “What surrounds us?”** This section focuses on the external environment surrounding your organization. Answer the following questions to assess those factors' impact on your organization's ethical behavior.

1. My unit is currently under excessive stress (i.e., inspections, limited resources, training events, deadlines, etc.). **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. My higher unit leaders foster a ”zero defects” outlook on performance and do not tolerate mistakes. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. My higher unit leaders overemphasize competition between units. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. My higher unit leaders appear unconcerned with unethical behavior as long as the goal, objective, or mission is accomplished. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. I do not feel comfortable bringing up ethical issues with my superiors. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
6. My peers in my unit do not seem to take ethical behavior very seriously. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Section IV Total \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Place the total score for each section in the spaces below.

(A score of 1 or 2 on any question requires immediate leader action.)

Section I Individual Character Total Score \_\_\_\_\_\_

Section II Leader Action Total Score \_\_\_\_\_\_

Section III Unit Policies and Procedures Total Score \_\_\_\_\_\_

Section IV Environmental/Mission Factors Total Score \_\_\_\_\_\_

**ECAS TOTAL SCORE (I + II + III + IV) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **25 – 75** | **76 – 100** | **101 – 125** |
| **Action** | Take *Immediate* Action to Improve Ethical Climate | Take Action to Improve the Ethical Climate | Maintain a Healthy Ethical Climate |

Summary

While leaders play a pivotal role in shaping and maintaining an organization's ethical climate, it's essential to recognize that individuals enter the organization with pre-existing personal value systems and ethics. These personal ethics influence their behavior and can impact others, especially when the individual holds a leadership position. Over time, however, the organization significantly influences its members' moral behavior and values.​

Theories of moral development, particularly Social Learning Theory, shed light on how individuals evolve morally and how leaders can affect this progression. By observing role models, such as leaders, individuals learn what constitutes moral behavior and the consequences of ethical and unethical actions.​

Beyond serving as role models, leaders influence their organizations by controlling rewards and punishments and communicating ethical and performance standards and expectations. They also shape organizational socialization processes, imparting the attitudes, beliefs, and values expected of members. Managing stress and competition effectively is crucial to maintaining a desired ethical climate.​

In the realm of policing, leaders bear a profound ethical obligation. As agents of governing bodies, they commit both legally and morally to uphold ethical conduct. The policing profession's ethos centers on serving the community, state, or nation by ensuring the absence of crime, fear, and disorder. Upholding high moral standards is vital to maintaining public trust and confidence.​

Core values in policing include loyalty, obedience, truthfulness, promise-keeping, respect for others, adherence to constitutional principles, and preserving human life. However, leaders often face conflicts between these values or moral obligations. Notably, the bureaucratic nature of modern policing can sometimes clash with the profession's ethical standards, presenting challenges that leaders must adeptly navigate.

**Shaping the Ethical Climate of an Organization**

A leader's ethical responsibilities extend beyond personal conduct to fostering an environment that promotes ethical behavior among all members of a police organization. To achieve this, leaders can employ several strategies:​

* **Role Modeling:** Leaders should exemplify integrity, fairness, and accountability and serve as ethical role models for officers and staff.​
* **Clear Policies and Accountability:** Implementing explicit ethical guidelines and establishing transparent accountability mechanisms ensures that ethical standards are upheld.​
* **Open Communication:** Encouraging open dialogue about ethical dilemmas fosters a culture of openly discussing and addressing ethical considerations.​

By integrating these strategies, leaders can effectively shape and maintain a healthy ethical climate within their organizations.

**Leadership Strategies for Ethical Adaptation**

To address these ethical challenges, leaders must actively shape the ethical climate of their organizations through strategic interventions. This requires implementing structured leadership approaches that prioritize integrity and accountability.

1. **Set Clear Ethical Guidelines and Reinforce Them Regularly**
   * Leaders must articulate a clear ethical vision, ensuring employees understand behavioral expectations.
   * Ethical guidelines should not only exist in policy documents but should also be demonstrated through leadership actions.
   * Regular reinforcement through training, open discussions, and role modeling ensures that ethical values remain prioritized.
2. **Monitor and Mitigate Stress and Dysfunctional Competition**
   * Leaders must recognize signs of ethical strain, such as employees expressing moral dilemmas, reluctance to report misconduct, or emotional exhaustion.
   * Providing support mechanisms such as wellness programs, conflict resolution training, and reasonable performance expectations can alleviate stress before it compromises ethics.
   * Encouraging healthy collaboration over excessive individual competition fosters an environment where ethics take precedence over performance at any cost.
3. **Reward Ethical Behavior and Hold Employees Accountable for Unethical Actions**
   * Leaders must actively recognize and reward ethical decision-making to reinforce positive behavior.
   * Ethical breaches must be swiftly addressed to prevent the normalization of misconduct.
   * Consistency in accountability ensures employees see that ethical violations have consequences, regardless of rank or status.

These strategies—guidelines, Stress management, and Rewards (GSR)—serve as a straightforward yet effective framework for leaders to fulfill their ethical responsibilities and shape a positive ethical climate within their organizations.

**Building an Ethical Culture Through Leadership**

Leaders must actively create and reinforce an ethical culture within their organizations. While individuals bring personal values into the workplace, the organization profoundly influences ethical behavior. Leaders must intentionally foster a culture where integrity, accountability, and moral decision-making are the foundation of the organization’s identity.

By establishing clear ethical guidelines, addressing stress and competition, and ensuring consistent reinforcement of ethical behavior, leaders can create an environment where employees feel empowered to make moral choices. Ethical leadership is not a passive responsibility—it requires continuous effort, vigilance, and commitment to upholding principles even when inconvenient or unpopular.

The legacy of an ethical leader extends beyond policies and procedures; it is reflected in the trust, respect, and integrity of the organization they leads.

**Case Study**

You have served as a lieutenant overseeing the Field Enforcement Section (FES) within the Narcotics Group for six months. The city has faced significant fiscal challenges, as highlighted in multiple local newspaper articles. In response to budget constraints and a shift toward Community Policing, the department has undergone a reorganization to optimize resource allocation. This restructuring has resulted in significant personnel transfers to patrol duties, including losing five detectives and two trainees from FES.

Despite these changes, you remain convinced that the narcotics field section is an excellent assignment. You take great pride in your team, which is composed of dedicated and hardworking professionals who consistently produce substantial narcotics arrests and investigations. However, the challenges continue to mount. Reports from department leadership indicate that further reductions in narcotics deployment are being considered. While no final decisions have been made, and even the chief is uncertain about the extent of the cuts, speculation has created widespread anxiety and frustration among your personnel.

Adding to these concerns, the Commanding Officer of the Narcotics Group has taken a firm stance on productivity. It is widely known that several detectives from the Major Violators Section have been reassigned due to their prolonged investigations yielding minimal drug seizures, which reflected poorly on the unit. In a recent meeting, the commander clarified that the FES would be expected to take on additional responsibilities with fewer personnel while maintaining the high volume of arrests, confiscations, and forfeitures that have become the unit's standard.

The escalating uncertainty and increasing demands have begun to take a toll on morale. Disillusionment is growing within the squad rooms, yet your team members continue to perform their duties professionally and diligently. You can't help but wish that city officials and the public understood your unit's pressures.

Recalling lessons from leadership training, you recognize that moments of crisis present an opportunity for strong sub-unit leadership to influence positive change. With this in mind, you propose a strategy to your squad leaders: increasing asset forfeitures. The unit can demonstrate its value and justify its continued operation by significantly boosting the number of money and property seizures.

To implement this plan, you convene a meeting with your team and emphasize the urgency of making as many cases as possible. You stress that their jobs may depend on it. Motivated by this directive, your squads compete fiercely, each striving to secure high-profile cases. Within days, you are impressed with their initiative. They have intensified efforts to extract valuable intelligence from informants, leading to multiple successful operations. The results are substantial—fifteen kilos of cocaine, significant quantities of heroin and methamphetamine, three late-model luxury vehicles, and an upscale townhouse have all been seized through search warrants.

At the peak of this aggressive push, following a major drug bust, you observe one of your assistant squad leaders, Detective II Ray Heimlich, leaving the scene alone. Knowing that this was Heimlich's case, you find it odd that he is driving in the opposite direction of the station. You assume he is meeting his informant to provide a final payment using Secret Service funds before returning to complete his reports. However, you also recall that department policy strictly prohibits detectives from meeting informants alone.

Concerned about potential misconduct allegations, you follow Heimlich to provide backup. His informant, a young blonde woman known for her methamphetamine habit and distinctive motorcycle tattoos, is already waiting in a vacant lot when he arrives. You watch Heimlich speak with her from a distance, then hand her a manila envelope containing the Secret Service funds allocated earlier that morning. To your shock, he also hands her a plastic grocery bag filled with what appears to be a substantial amount of cash—rolled and rubber-banded like the money seized during the earlier search warrant.

Unnerved by what you are witnessing, you approach Heimlich for an explanation. Immediately realizing he has been caught, Heimlich pleads for a moment to explain. He pulls you aside and insists that the department's Secret Service funds are insufficient to secure quality informants, who prefer working with agencies offering higher payouts. To bridge this gap, he admits to skimming small amounts from each cash seizure to supplement informant payments. Heimlich assures you he has never kept any money for personal gain and attributes his squad's increased productivity to this practice.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, you order Heimlich to remain at the location and refrain from discussing the matter with anyone. You advised him to obtain an employee representative, as a formal investigation would follow upon returning to the station. Seizing the illicit cash, you question the informant while wondering if other detectives have engaged in similar misconduct. How did things spiral out of control? Did your directives or leadership inadvertently contribute to this behavior? More importantly, what direction is the department headed in from here?

***Identify*** the **Areas of Interest**.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

(If necessary, continue listing **Areas of Interest** on another page.)

II. ***Analyze*** the situation using the Ethical Dimension of Leadership Theory.

What is the relationship among the Areas of Interest listed above? More specifically, is there a chronological order or **logical chain of events** that helps you make sense of the facts you have? If so, outline the time sequence of events.

Are there clear guidelines as to what is ethical and what is unethical? Are any clear guidelines being regularly reinforced?

How are rewards and punishments for ethical behavior used?

Are there dysfunctional levels of competition and stress present in the organization?

What are the consequences of dysfunctional levels of competition and stress in the organization?

Do members of the organization feel comfortable reporting unethical behavior?

III. ***Explain*** how the ethical climate influences the organizational members' behavior and/or attitudes. How are the throughput processes being affected? What are the outputs of the organization?

Do the facts of the case and your explanation form a pattern that allows you to identify a fundamental or **root cause** (i.e., is there something in the case information that suggests it is the underlying cause of all or most of the Areas of Interest)?

IV. ***Select*** an appropriate theoretical leader strategy(or strategies) that would be effective in this situation. What is the most suitable leader behavior(s) for shaping an organization's ethical climate?

Which strategy(or strategies) should the leader use?

V. ***Apply*** the theoretical leader strategy(ies) to the situation through a specific leader plan that addresses all Areas of Interest. Address all Areas of Interest you have identified and translate the theoretical leader strategies into specific actions you would take and communications you would send to the employee(s) of interest. What will you do and say to whom, when, and how? What do the theoretical leader's actions look like in practice?

VI. ***Assess*** the effectiveness of your leader plan and revise as needed.

What are the organization’s desirable outputs? What measures are you going to use to evaluate your leader's actions? In this step, leaders must ask, “What information do I need to tell whether or not my leadership is having the desired effects? How will I obtain the information I need? How can it be generated? Who can help me get what I need? How often should I collect data and in what form?”

Name:

**Complete a Student Journal entry** for the Ethical Dimension of Leadership Theory.

Think about your current work group. How is the ethical climate causing desirable or undesirable behavior and/or attitudes on the part of the organizational members? How does that behavior and/or attitude affect the individual, the group, the leader(s), and the organization in terms of achieving the organization’s goals? Is there any dysfunctional stress and/or competition in your current work group? What are the consequences of dysfunctional levels of competition and stress in the organization?

What leadership concepts can be applied to decrease the dysfunctional stress and/or competition among your work group members?

What specific steps would you include in a leadership plan? Have you ever rewarded an employee’s behavior specifically because it was ethical? What was the outcome and feedback after your leadership action?

**Or**

If you are not a formal leader in your work group, are you aware of a leader in your work unit rewarding an employee’s behavior specifically because it was ethical? What was the outcome and feedback after the leader’s action?

Please reflect on your past policing career. What leadership behaviors have you exemplified that contributed to establishing and maintaining a good ethical climate?

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