Ethics and leadership

Groups

A. Compare and contrast transformational and transactional leadership models in terms of their alignment with deontological and consequentialist ethical principles. Which model more strongly promotes ethical behavior in organizational decision-making, and why?

B. In what ways does servant leadership challenge traditional power dynamics in leadership structures, and how does this model integrate principles of ethical care and responsibility toward followers? Provide real-life examples to support your analysis.

C. Evaluate the ethical implications of authentic leadership in environments of high organizational pressure and ambiguity. How can leaders maintain authenticity while navigating ethically complex situations that may demand compromise or strategic concealment?

D. Using Northouse (2021) as a foundation, analyze how each of the four leadership models—transformational, transactional, servant, and authentic—addresses ethical dilemmas related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership practices. Which model offers the most ethically sustainable approach, and under what conditions?

E. Critically evaluate Kidder's ethical decision-making framework in the context of leadership dilemmas involving competing values (e.g., justice vs. mercy). How effective is this model in guiding leaders through morally ambiguous situations where no clear right or wrong exists?

F. How can leaders systematically apply ethical decision-making models to resolve conflicts between organizational objectives and stakeholder interests without compromising ethical integrity? Support your answer with practical examples.

G. Compare Kidder's model of ethical decision-making with other major ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism and deontology. In what ways do these models complement or contradict one another in guiding ethical leadership practices?

H. Using the concepts presented in *How Good People Make Tough Choices*, analyze a real-world case in which a leader faced a significant ethical dilemma. How might the outcome have differed if Kidder's principles had been consciously applied throughout the decision-making process?

I. Drawing from French and Raven's (1959) five bases of social power, critically examine the ethical risks and benefits associated with each power base. Which type of power is most susceptible to unethical use in organizational leadership, and why?

J. How can leaders ethically balance the use of influence tactics with the need to achieve strategic goals, especially in situations where followers may lack full access to information or alternatives? Discuss with reference to real or hypothetical leadership scenarios.

K. Analyze the intersection of personal values and institutional expectations in the exercise of power and influence. How do leaders navigate ethical dilemmas when organizational pressures conflict with moral convictions, and what frameworks can support ethical decision-making in such contexts?

L. In light of Treviño and Nelson's analysis of ethical culture systems, how can a leader effectively balance formal organizational systems (such as codes of conduct,

performance management systems, and decision-making processes) with informal

cultural elements (such as language, norms, and heroes) to prevent ethical lapses?

Consider the potential consequences when these systems are misaligned, and

critically evaluate how a leader's ethical or unethical behavior can amplify or suppress

the organization's overall ethical climate.

M.   Given the complexities surrounding whistleblowing, to what extent should leaders

institutionalize safe channels for ethical dissent without creating a culture of distrust

or surveillance? Analyze the psychological, professional, and cultural risks faced by

whistleblowers, and argue whether leaders bear an ethical obligation not just to

protect them, but to actively reward and integrate whistleblowing as part of

organizational learning and accountability mechanisms.

N.   Drawing on Treviño and Nelson's distinction between ethical leadership and ethical

management, how might a leader strategically shape ethical decision-making in

environments that are driven by high performance pressures, market competition, and

short-term gains? Evaluate the potential ethical trade-offs leaders face in such

contexts, and discuss whether cultivating moral courage and ethical mindfulness in

teams can realistically overcome systemic pressures that incentivize unethical

practices.

O.   In the context of Ferdman's exploration of diversity as a dynamic process within

organizations, how can ethical leaders reconcile the tension between promoting

meritocracy and ensuring equity in systems historically structured by implicit bias

and systemic exclusion? Critically analyze how organizational efforts toward

inclusion can unintentionally reinforce existing power imbalances if ethical leadership does not actively interrogate and reform structural inequities.

P.   Considering Ferdman's emphasis on inclusion as a practice that goes beyond representation, to what extent should leaders ethically redefine organizational norms, language, and success metrics to accommodate diverse worldviews without compromising organizational cohesion or performance expectations? Evaluate whether inclusion can coexist with standardization in leadership culture or if ethical leadership must inherently disrupt traditional paradigms to be genuinely inclusive.

Q.   How does the ethical responsibility of a leader extend to addressing intersectional identities—such as race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation—in organizational spaces where diversity policies often default to single-axis frameworks? Drawing on Ferdman's analysis, discuss the risks of superficial inclusion efforts and propose ethically grounded strategies leaders should adopt to ensure authentic belonging for those at the margins of multiple social categories.

R.   Based on the argument that inclusive leadership involves systemic accountability rather than individual benevolence, to what extent should ethical leaders be held responsible for the failures of diversity initiatives, especially when resistance arises from deeply embedded organizational cultures? Examine the moral implications of "opt-in" inclusion efforts versus mandatory structural changes, and critically discuss the ethical limits of persuasion versus enforcement in promoting justice and equity in the workplace.

S.   Drawing on Donaldson's framework of ethical relativism versus ethical absolutism, how should global leaders navigate the moral ambiguity inherent in operating across cultures where local norms may condone practices—such as child labor, gender discrimination, or bribery—that conflict with global ethical standards? Critically evaluate the viability of Donaldson's proposed "core human values" approach as a middle ground, and discuss how leaders can apply this framework without imposing cultural imperialism or undermining local sovereignty.

T.   In the context of multinational enterprises operating in culturally diverse environments, how can ethical leaders distinguish between practices that are ethically tolerable adaptations to local norms and those that violate universal principles of justice and human dignity? Using Donaldson's arguments, assess the role of ethical reasoning in determining when "when in Rome" is a pragmatic necessity versus a moral abdication, and reflect on the leader's responsibility when such judgments are contested both internally and externally.

U.   Donaldson argues for an integrative approach to global ethics that respects cultural variation while maintaining a baseline of moral decency. How should global leaders operationalize this philosophy in high-stakes decisions involving supply chains, labor conditions, or political entanglements, particularly in countries with weak legal institutions or authoritarian regimes? Critique the potential limitations of ethical pluralism in such contexts and explore whether ethical leadership can ever be truly global without creating moral double standards.

V.   Drawing on Kouzes and Posner's emphasis on values-based leadership, how can a leader ensure their personal code of ethics remains consistent over time in the face of evolving organizational roles, external pressures, and ethical ambiguity? Critically analyze the tension between personal integrity and situational adaptability, and discuss the long-term implications this tension may have on the authenticity and credibility of a leader's legacy.

W.   Kouzes and Posner argue that a leadership legacy is not about self-preservation but about impact—how then should leaders ethically navigate the desire to leave a meaningful legacy without allowing ego, personal ambition, or moral paternalism to distort their service to others? Examine how a leader's reflection on mortality, legacy, and contribution can shape ethical behavior in the present, and whether an overemphasis on legacy might compromise collective progress in favor of individual recognition.

X.   In the process of crafting a personal leadership and ethics statement, how can a leader critically integrate core values, life experiences, and future aspirations into a coherent ethical narrative that guides both private conduct and public decision-making? Explore the risks of disconnection between espoused values and enacted behaviors, and evaluate how this gap can erode a leader's legacy if not intentionally aligned through sustained ethical self-leadership and feedback mechanisms.