Ethics and Code of Conduct

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# Importance in Future Career Choice

The study of ethics concerns itself with notions and ideas about what is held to be good or bad. Ethical conduct is central to a law enforcement career, as the profession involves the use of coercion and force to uphold the law; hence, a greater degree of personal responsibility is needed to ensure no abuse of authority especially when exercising discretion (Miller, Blackler, & Alexandra, 2006). A closely related value is integrity, which refers to an uncompromising adherence to certain values and codes such as avoidance of deception, and uprightness, even in the absence of everyone. It is important in particular because those who are accustomed to smaller deviant acts can easily become prone to engaging in deviant acts of more serious nature, taking a series of steps towards corruption. Therefore to maintain impartiality, and engage in exemplary conduct while committing one’s self to the highest standards, is critical in order to maintain the public’s trust to preserve the community’s dependency on its law enforcement agencies.

# Aspects in which ethics, morality, and law differ

Although the term morals and ethics are used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference between the two. Morals are more concerned with social, religious or cultural values, beliefs, or principles that set up societal rules to determine what is right or wrong; whereas ethics relate to rightful or wrongful conduct in certain situations. A situation where a particular officer is hired or designated because of being a relative of the interviewer is unethical conduct. Laws, on the other hand, deal with managing an individual’s behavior in society by enforcing ethical and moral conduct (The Ethics Center, 2016). Law enforcement officials are bound to act legally in various situations they may not find morally acceptable at a personal level. For instance, an officer cannot discriminate against people who engage in same-sex relations in enforcing the law despite not agreeing with the act on a personal level. Moreover, the motivation behind the officers’ decision also concerns itself with ethics, as doing the right thing for the wrong reason cannot be said to be ethical.

# Using morality, ethics and codes in personal and professional lives

For law enforcement officers, it is essential to be cautious about their own personal conduct as it is to uphold their professional ethical codes. They are required to embrace moral and ethical conduct in their public goings and comings, as well as in private. Any conduct that is unbecoming of an officer on-duty is equally out of bounds when they are off-duty (Klein, 2012). The higher standard of conduct is not solely because of the badge they wear but because they have to exemplify standards that promote harmony, security, and mutual respect within society. Therefore, even in their private lives, they are required to be constantly mindful of other’s welfare, maintain calm in dangerous situations, develop self-restraint and avoid scorn and ridicule and demonstrate exemplary behavior in obeying and upholding laws and regulations. Moreover, any personal prejudices, feelings, friendships, or animosities must not influence decisions while exercising authority, while ensuring an unrelenting drive towards prosecuting criminals without compromise.

# Important aspects of the code

Police officers are expected to act in a manner which preserves the consideration and confidence that their duties require of them. Among the most important aspects of an officer’s code deal with integrity. Any demonstration of unethical behavior by an individual officer can make the entire department or agency lose public trust, and impact the officers that are upholding the code (Souryal, 2015). There are many occasions where officers were found to be lying to hide their wrong acts, and the resulting outcome was a greater hatred towards the entire department. A police officer must take care of his responsibilities, they must also try to be careful about using abusive language, or on refusal to reveal their police identity upon request. They must avoid using excessive force than what is reasonable, or making threats, harassment, or detaining any person illegally. Integrity must be the core focus of a police officer while performing their duties and must not damage or destroy any person’s property.

# References

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