

ASSIGNMENT TWO: Critical Analysis of the book *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy* by Kenneth P. Ruscio.

Summary of ethical theories &/or practices presented, their value and their relationship (if any) to the Sinclair/Kohlberg paradigm:

Overall, I am not clear that one specific ethical theory was presented. However, there is discussion of principles, practices and related points. Key among them are the need for leaders to:

- *pursue public interest in favour of self-interests;*
- *balance the constraints on individual autonomy and private interests with the collective interest of society;*
- *have virtue – sympathy, impartiality and tolerance;*
- *Balance power with democracy;*
- *Work within the limits on power by the constraints imposed by the public institutions (legislative, executive, judiciary).*

Linkages to the Sinclair/Kohlberg paradigm can be found. For example, in the explanation of transactional vs. transformational leadership, Stage 3 characteristics align with the transactional leader, whereas the transformational leader is better aligned with Stage 6 characteristics. It is suggested that, “political leadership is about ends, purposes and values; and leaders must not become pre-occupied with means and short-term demands”. Again, the focus on “ends, purposes and values” is more in line with the post-conventional level of the paradigm.

Comparison with the content of Cowboy Values:

Again, there are linkages that can be made. In Cowboy Values, some of the Ten Principles to Live By are included. For comparison:

- **“Do what has to be done”**. Ruscio describes the challenge of the politician having to provide stability through the use of power. The use of power requires skills and tasks that are not always in harmony with other priorities (e.g. freedom, passion, altruism).
- **“Be tough, but fair”**. Similar to above, political choices that need to be made for the betterment of society will often leave winners and losers. To make the right choice for society, the outcomes may end up being difficult for those who don’t get their way.
- **“Remember that some things aren’t for sale”**. There is much discussion in the text regarding the dissatisfaction with current political leaders. The pursuit of self-interests by the political leaders (e.g. selling out principles or values in order to achieve short term favour) is a significant reason for this dissatisfaction and lack of faith in the political system.
- **“Know where to draw the line”**. Setting limits and providing a balance (e.g. public vs. private interests, power vs. democracy/liberty) could also be considered as ‘knowing where to draw the line’.

Some of the core values described by Owen parallel the descriptions provided in ‘The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy’. **Courage** (accepting risk, willingness to make tough choices), **Honor** (being worthy of trust, acting with integrity), **Duty** (responsibility to something larger than one’s self, doing what has to be done) and **Heart** (recognizing our shared humanity) are all common values that can be attributed to successful political leaders.

Relevance of the book to any hands on applicability re both your professional & personal life:

What, if any, is the direct value of this book to those working in the field of public health?

There is a general benefit to those working in field of public health. It outlines the challenges faced by political leadership in guiding what is in the public interest. This provides a rationale for the difficulties the leaders face in trying to make bold changes or dramatic policy realignments for the betterment of society.

To be practical as a reference, it would benefit from some editing for clarity and brevity. Many thoughts and examples are provided on similar topics. Also, much of the focus is based on an American context. While common principles apply, using Canadian context would improve relevancy.

To what extent would you recommend this book to a young Environmental Health Officer?

I would not recommend this book to a new EHO. While a better understanding of the challenges faced by leaders (including political leaders) is of some benefit, the practicality to the new EHO is limited. Time and energies may be better spent in studying the Kohlberg theory of moral reasoning and how this can be used. Understanding the personal motivators of various individuals an EHO would encounter and how to use this understanding to his/her benefit would be a much more practical endeavour.

What might be the personal usefulness to similar people?

What “similar” people would find useful in this book is a subject of speculation. On a professional level, the practicality in the Environmental Health field is limited.

How does the book help address the various objectives of this course?

The objectives listed for this course include:

- to further enhance one’s ability to reason ethically in the moment of leadership crisis through conversation and questioning of diverse leadership representatives
- to assess potential curriculum aids/materials for prospective professionals in the field of public health
- to analyse role models and provide guidance to colleagues as to ways and means of improving the ethical performance of public health officials

I saw little value in the content of this book in regards to “enhancing my ability to reason ethically in the moment of leadership crisis”. While some principles and practices are discussed, the focus is too much on the political framework and becomes less relevant for the public health field.

This task did allow me to assess the book’s value as a curriculum aid. My assessment is noted above.

Finally, there is some applicability in the principles and practices mentioned in the book to use in providing guidance. Balancing power with democracy/liberty and pursuing public interest over private interests are common ideals that have application to the field.

Comment on the overall degree of readability and interest that the book possesses, aside from any direct applicability to this course &/or the public health field – for example, some assessment should include whether the book should be recommended to members of Parliament (including the Senate), members of provincial legislatures as well as senior public servants at both major levels, relevance to local community leaders (including those in *not-for-profit, community service, local corporate, political and professional training* roles).

Direct applicability to this course is limited. It provides some interesting discussion points regarding principles and desired practices, along with the historical examination of leadership evolution; however the book misses the mark in application to the public health field. In the narrow scope of Environmental Health, the regulatory basis for much of the work in this field is laid out by those in political leadership, as part of government. Environmental Health leadership may be able to interpret and adapt within the legislated mandate, but generally do not set the boundaries of that mandate. Some ethical principles can be extracted, but the focus of the book is too far removed from public health.

The book may be better suited to a target audience of those aspiring to become political or community leaders. It may be an interesting read for experienced federal, provincial or local government representatives, but my thought is that the experienced politicians are likely to already understand the key ideas and context.

References:

Owen, J. P. (2008). *Cowboy Values: Recapturing What America Once Stood For*. Guilford, CT: The Lyon Press.

Ruscio, K.P. (2004). *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Sinclair, G.W. (2014). *Sustaining Ethical Leadership: Good Idea – But Have We Got the Cart Before the Horse???* [Research Paper]. Retrieved from <http://www.e-sinclair.com/KohlbergSinclairPrism.pdf>