

Argumentative essay on white lies

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



White Lies

It is common for individuals to lie especially if there is a need to protect one's self or perhaps, someone else. The varying degrees of lies determine eventually their consequences. Although, generally considered as a bad practice, lying, in some instances, may be necessary and acceptable. We may all agree, after all, that all of us have made some white lies in the past. A white lie is generally accepted as a minor lie and can benefit the individuals concerned in the long run. Although called a lie, a white lie is part truth and at the same time, masks something else. It intentionally consists of part truth so one could not be suspected of lying, and it hides something in order to steer clear of uncomfortable questions.

Many, if not all, governments around the world have not always been very forthright to their citizens. Some governments claim that it is regularly essential, even advantageous, for political leaders to hold back information from the public. Personally, I believe that it is reasonable for governments to withhold some information from their citizens, the operative word here is 'some'. However, I strongly believe that when it comes to information which will have a direct effect or impact on the on the well-being of the citizens, these information should be made available, albeit, the method of disclosure should be handled extremely well.

Some sensitive information, if exposed to the public, may cause negative effects such as putting communities in danger, so therefore, there is a need for some governments or institutions to conceal data, and I am inclined to think that for those who do it, there is a valid reason which will benefit majority of the population. There are times that telling the truth becomes

unhelpful. Of course it also depends on what the facts are and the recipient of the facts. On a personal level, this can be depicted on someone giving his or her contact details to a stranger who asked for them. You don't necessarily give out your contact details to a stranger, unless there is a valid reason for it. With governments, majority of information concerning the military and its strategy are classified, and on the need to know basis. This is also the case when it comes to travel plans of heads of states, since some heads of states have been targets of terrorist groups. In these situations, it is valid for the governments to conceal information from the public.

There are other times when government decides to withhold information from the public when in fact, the information is necessary for the well being of the population. A good example is the case concerning Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in China. Between 2002 and 2003, SARS almost reach a pandemic state due to the fact that important information about the disease, were not disclosed appropriately, particularly by Chinese officials, to the public as well as to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Reports suggested that Chinese officials refused to give facts and statistics about the disease for fear of losing tourism. Unfortunately, many individuals have died before the diseases came to prominence and proper action taken to safeguard the rest of the population. In this particular case, vital information which have a major effect on the health and lives of the population were concealed by unscrupulous politicians for their own purpose and this resulted to devastating consequences not just for Chinese citizens but the whole world, as well.

A more recent event saw the US government, more specifically the

Department of Treasury, under fire from various watchdogs for misleading the public on how they used the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) money to help alleged healthy banks, which later turned out to be troubled banks (Thompson, “ Did the Government’s”). The fact that the Department of Treasury withheld information about the banks that they were helping out put the whole government bailout program in jeopardy which would have affected the economy and eventually making lives of millions of Americans more difficult.

Cases mentioned above make you question the integrity of the people behind them. Have they lost their integrity or are they just doing their job? In my belief, one has integrity, if one has strong moral principles. For me personally, simply lying would not result to a lost integrity. It is when individual or governments tell a lie putting the lives of many at risk, that’s when integrity is lost.

In the SARS case in China, officials knew what was happening in the communities, and they refused to alert the whole population, as well as WHO about the issue, putting all individuals at risk. They have consciously done that to protect their own intentions, their little white lie, has in fact became, a major health issue which caused the deaths of many, therefore, for me, they have fully lost their integrity. The same issue with the Department of Treasury: they have put the whole country at risk because of their white lie and therefore, they have lost their integrity and credibility.

Whether it is justifiable for governments to withhold information from their citizens entirely depend on the kind of information they want to conceal. I accept that there are information that are vital to be on the need to know

basis, but I also believe that the public has the right to know any information which will have a direct effect or impact on their lives and therefore governments have no right to withhold any such information.

Works Cited

Thompson, Derek. “ Did the Government’s White Lies Endanger the Bailout?”
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