

ETHICS REFERENCES

Cassuto Rothman, J. (1998). From the Front Lines, Student Cases in Social Work Ethics. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

(K1, K2, K3, K4)

About the study/citation-

The book discusses the elements in decision-making in ethical situations. The chapters also include chapters that are focused around one of the ethical standards of the NASW Code of Ethics. Also, some ethical theories are addressed.

Findings/content-

- Ethical theories are generally grounded in broader aspects. When exploring an ethical theory, it is important to consider three important questions:
 - The authoritative question- Where does the theory turn for validation of its basic premises?
 - The distributive question- Whose interests does the theory address?
 - The substantive question-What goals or actions are desirable ends within the theory?
- Ethical theories discussed include:
 - Alan Gewirth's Principles Hierarchy
 - Loewenberg and Dolgoff's Ethical Principles Screen
 - A Bioethics Perspective: the Medical Model
- It is the responsibility of the worker to reach for an understanding of client's values, so that they may be integrated into the decision-making process.
- In general, the worker must hold societal values as defined by the sixth area of the Ethical Standards.
- The ethical dimension of society, the client system, and the worker become vital part of the decision-making process. The ethical position of supervisors and colleagues can impact strongly as well.
- The subsections of the Code of Ethics are discussed, including:
 - Subsection addressing client self-determination
 - Subsection addressing the area of conflict of interest and dual relationships.
 - Professional guidelines regarding payment for service.
- Case presentations are included in the book and broken down by NASW ethical standards. Case presentations address different types of ethical dilemmas. Case presentation include:
 - Protecting the best interests of a client
 - When a colleague "defines" policy and you don't agree
 - Computerized record keeping: agency efficiency versus client privacy

Implications for CWS-

The worker needs to understand her ethical responsibilities per the NASW Code of Ethics and to recognize that ethical dilemmas can occur in several different situations. The worker should also be aware of the impact of her or his own experiences on decision-making.

Cluse-Tolar, T., Lambert, E.G., Ventura, L.A., & Pasupuleti, S. (2004). The Views of Social Work Students Toward Gay and Lesbian Persons: Are They Different from Other Undergraduate Students? *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*. 17(3), 59-85.

(K4)

About the study-

The study attempted to answer the question of whether the views of students majoring in social work and students majoring in other fields are significantly different in their attitudes towards gay and lesbian people and issues. In 2002, 12 undergraduate classes at a large public Midwestern university were chosen for administration of the survey. The selected course included a wide array of majors and included general education. In addition, six undergraduate social work classes were chosen. The response rate for the survey was about 95% for both general education and social work classes. A total of 406 surveys were used in the study. The majority of the students were female and white. The vast majority of students felt that religion had played either a great deal or a fair amount of significance in their lives. However, less than a third of the students attended religious services once or more a week. The students surveyed were asked 18 questions dealing with attitudes towards gay and lesbian people and issues.

Findings-

- The results showed that social work students had more positive attitudes towards gay and lesbian people, specifically that social work students had more positive attitudes towards gay/lesbian people and homosexuality, were more supportive of gay rights, and were more willing to socialize with gay and lesbian individuals.
- Social work students still differed in their attitudes even after controlling for other factors associated with homophobia found in the literature, such as gender, race, age, religion, political affiliation, etc.
- 63% of social work majors either agreed or strongly agreed that gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to marry, while only 35% of non-social work majors agreed.
- About 12% of social work students indicated that they were disgusted by homosexuality, while more than twice as many non-social work students (26%) indicated that they were disgusted by homosexuality.
- Limitations- college students being surveyed in only one university using convenience sampling, neither measure of religion measured the denomination of the respondent, and there was no measure asking whether the respondent was gay.

Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of how their own background and experiences can contribute to bias when working with gay/lesbian families or individuals. Bias can negatively impact a case and interfere in serving the best interest of the client.

Congress, E.P. *Social Work Values and Ethics: Identifying and Resolving Professional Dilemmas*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

(K1, K2, K3)

About the study/citation-

This book focuses on social work values and ethics as delineated in the Code of Ethics established by the NASW. The chapters focus on current ethical dilemmas in mental health, child welfare, health care and other areas. The Ethic Decision-Model and social work principles are discussed.

Findings/content-

- The current code sets forth six main purposes:
 - Identify core values on which social work's mission is based.
 - Summarize broad ethical principles and establish a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice.
 - Help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
 - Provide ethical standards to which the general public the social work professional accountable.
 - Socialize practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values and ethical standards.
 - Set standards that the social work professional can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct.
- The ETHIC decision-making model is as follows:
 - **E**-examine relevant personal, societal, agency, client and professional values.
 - **T**- think about what ethical standard of the NASW Code of Ethics applies to the situation, as well as about relevant laws and case decisions.
 - **H**- hypothesize about possible consequences of different decisions.
 - **I**- identify who will benefit and who will be harmed in view of social work's commitment to the most vulnerable.
 - **C**- consult with supervisor and colleagues about the most ethical choice.
- Perhaps the most fundamental value of social work is to provide service to those in need. The social worker must place service above self-interest. Another value of social work is to promote social justice. Social workers are also encouraged to volunteer professional and others services.
- The social worker faces ethical dilemmas at different stages of child welfare work:
 - 1) reporting child abuse and neglect- a social worker may find it easier to report child abuse when there is clear evidence. It is important that the social worker not let the economic circumstances of the client affect any decision about child abuse/neglect.
 - 2) protective services- Often the child welfare worker must make a difficult decision about whether to keep a foster care placement, use a kinship placement, or return the children to the birth mother.
 - 3) adoption- child welfare workers might deal with supporting the child to seek birth parents after they have been adopted.

Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of the ethical standards set forth by the NASW Code of Ethics and how this code affects many decisions in child welfare.

Finn, J.L. & Jacobson, M. (2003). *Just Practice, A Social Justice Approach to Social Work*. Peosta, IA: Eddie Bowers Publishing Co., Inc.

(K1, K2, K4)

About the study/citation-

This book discusses social work's expressed commitment to social justice at center stage. The book offers a framework for thinking about practicing social works that embraces the visions, hopes and challenges of building and living in a more just world. The book also examines the interplay of social work and social justice in historical and cross-national contexts, explores shifts in the professional orientation and value base over time, and compares diverse approaches of social work across a range of social and political contexts. The book also addresses values and ethics.

Findings/content-

- Values are learned through our experiences in families, communities and other social groups. Values are emergent and dynamic, both shaping and shaped by our beliefs and experiences in the world. We learn, internalize and question our values in historical, political and cultural contexts.
- The preamble to the NASW Code of Ethics states in part that the mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose:
 - Service
 - Social justice
 - Dignity and worth of the person
 - Importance of human relationships
 - Integrity
 - Competence
- The 1996 code provided a pronounced shift in attention to questions of poverty, oppression, and injustice. It calls on social workers to take social justice seriously and spells out social workers' responsibilities to the broader society.
- A set of universal principles for social workers who seek social and economic justice is proposed by Link. There are organized in three broad categories:
 - Widest perspective in assessment- which includes before acting, review personal values, history, and cultural bias; ask the question, "How am I influenced personally and professionally by this question or problem?"
 - Inclusion of the service user in dialogue and decisions, to include, acknowledge the "power" of the professional.
 - Joint evaluation, to include, did all members feel included and respected?

Implications for CWS-

The worker needs to be aware of the influence of personal experiences on decision-making, but all the influence of the history of social work and social justice on decision making practices.

Gambrill, E. & Pruger, R. (Eds). (1996). *Controversial Issues in Social Work Ethics, Values, & Obligations*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

(K2,K3)

About the study/citation-

The book has three major focuses: 1) to present different perspectives on a number of current ethical issues related to social work; 2) to demonstrate the value of presenting different positions concerning an issue in a debate format; 3) to demonstrate that controversy can be carried out in a constructive manner. A representative set of ethical issues was selected that concern a broad array of situations.

Findings/content-

- Debates included are debates about practice, about the use of coercion, about self-regulation of the profession, about professional education and training, and about special client populations. A couple of debated topics from the book are addressed below.
- Debate: Is it unethical for professional helpers to encourage or allow clients to become dependent on them?
 - Yes-The worker who encourages dependency places clients at risk to regress and lose adaptive coping functions they employed previously; exacerbates the power differential between client and worker; establishes a hierarchical relationship that may undermine client participation in treatment; and focuses more on clients' vulnerabilities than on their strengths.
 - No-The profession's bias against allowing for client dependency has prevented social workers from acknowledging differential needs for dependence in diverse client populations and from meeting those needs appropriately. As long as the dependency allowed or encouraged is focused on the needs of the client, it is ethical.
- Debate: Is the NASW Code of Ethics an effective guide for practitioners?
 - Yes- Social workers can and should discuss the values of the profession and debate the merits of our ethical duties and obligations, but the specific application of those values rests not with the Code but within the social worker. Therefore, with a substantive moral character and a commitment to ethical practice in place, the NASW Code of Ethics is a great articulation of the values of social work and an effective guide for the practitioner.
 - No- NASW's delegate assembly determined that the Code of Ethics should be revised because of the increase in the number of allegations of code violations, the general litigiousness of society, and the growing sophistication of consumers. If the Code is ever expected to serve as a sufficient guide for social work practitioners, it must clearly delineate its standards and define its terms.

Implications for CWS-

The worker needs to be aware of the pros and cons of the debated topics that propose ethical concern. The worker should consider the ethical guidelines in the Code when making ethical decisions in social work.

Hugman, R. (2005). *New Approaches in Ethics for the Caring Professions*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

(K1)

About the study/citation-

The purpose of this book is the conscious reflection on the moral values associated with those occupations that are referred to as “caring professions.” This book seeks to offer a response to significant developments in ethical thought and how these impact on the questions that concern to the caring professions. The realities of the professional practice are the main concern. The argument presented leads towards a certain way of thinking about and engaging with ethics in practice.

Findings/content-

- Ethics as guidance starts from the position that “truth” to be understood in context, so the role of ethics is to help the professional to make judgments about how much and in what way the truth might be told.
- The position of ethics as law, the starting point is that of the absolute imperative to tell the truth.
- Formal statements of ethics can be used by service users and others as a means of holding professionals accountable, both individually and collectively, for their actions. Thus, ethics can be a basis for the exercise of social power in ways that challenge abuse.
- Codes of conduct may be useful in that they enable practitioners to judge particular actions, but they cannot be a substitute for the engagement with values. Codes also cannot replace the importance of practitioners being able to think through, and take responsibility for, the values that are integrated into practice.

Implications for CWS-

The worker needs to understand that codes of ethics are to be used as guidance in decision-making, but ultimately, the worker is responsible for the choices made.

Linzer, N. (2004). An Ethical Dilemma in Elder Abuse. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*. 43(2/3), 165-173.

(K3)

About the study/citation-

The article discusses the ethical dilemmas social workers face when dealing with elder abuse, such as when an elderly victim reaches out to a social agency but then refuses services. This is when conflicts arise among social work values and ethical principles of autonomy and paternalism. A model of ethical justification for such cases is applied that explains the possible decisions in this case. Devised by Beauchamp and Childress (1994,2001), the model encompasses particular judgments, rules, principles and theories that are used to justify the decision. A case of “Mr. G” is used to demonstrate these ethical dilemmas.

Findings/content-

- It is common for victims of elder abuse to refuse intervention. Sensitivity to the client refusal of intervention, however, does not preclude professionals’ responsibility to intercede (Kryk, 1995).
- Honoring autonomy does not preclude probing for the values underlying a choice or helping to clarify the client’s anxiety or awareness of the issue.

- In the case of Mr. G, the social worker considers two conflicting rules: to require consent of the client before rendering services or prevent abuse even without the client's consent. In this case, the ethical principles were client's autonomy and social worker beneficence. Since the client was deemed competent, Mr. G's autonomy was respected, and the social worker did not implement her intervention plan immediately.
- Paternalism is the overriding of a person's wishes through coercion, deception, or to ensure the welfare of others. There are times when paternalism is justified.
- Abramson (1989) offers a model of paternalistic beneficence, defined as protective interventions that are made despite the client's objections and are intended to enhance the client's quality of life.
- In the case of Mr. G, the social worker's effort to engage the client by listening and accepting him were successful in obtaining a positive resolution for client and the ethical dilemma.

Implications for CWS-

Although this article discussed ethical dilemmas in elder abuse cases, many of the same ethical issues apply to child welfare. Therefore, the worker should be aware of what ethical issue might arise in child welfare cases and the options to dealing with such issues. Looking at a case through a strength-based perspective can address the client's issues and the ethical dilemma at the same time. The worker should be aware of the need to consult with a supervisor in such matters.

Mattison, M. (2000). Ethical Decision Making: The Person in the Process. *Social Work*, 45(3), 201-212.

(K4)

About the study/citation-

This article challenges social workers to view current ethical decisions as linked to other ethical decisions they have made in the past or will make in the future. An approach to developing greater insight into value patterning is presented. This article also attempts to apply the person-in-situation construct to ethical decision making.

Findings/content-

- The expectation that social workers become familiar with "specific ethical standards to guide social workers' conduct and to provide a basis for adjudication" (NASW, 1996, *Overview*), is a foundation for ethical practice.
- Although systematic guides for resolving ethical dilemmas offers social workers an approach to the decision-making process, to some extent, the use of discretionary judgments is inevitable.
- Two major groups of ethical theories have relevance to social workers in helping recognize and understand the principles on which ethical decisions are made:
 - Deontological thinking-attention to weighing the potential consequences of proposed actions.
 - Teleological thinking-fixed moral rules should dictate and define the rightness and wrongness of actions.
- A model for analyzing ethical dilemmas is presented.
 - Begins with social worker exploring case details and gathers info to understand holistically the client's circumstances.

- Social worker distinguishes practice aspects of the case from ethical considerations.
- Value tensions are identified.
- Identify principles in the Code of Ethics which bear on the case.
- Identify possible courses of action, i.e. benefits/costs, projected outcomes.
- Assess which priority/obligation to meet foremost and justify the choice of action.
- Arrive at a resolution.
- The social worker must learn more about his or her individual ethical stance. The challenge is to use ethical self-reflection to learn more about oneself as an ethical decision maker (diagram of cycle of reflection is included).
- Questions are provided which a social worker can use to see his/her pattern of responding and inform him/her about his/her individualized approaches to ethical dilemmas.

Implications for CWS-

The worker should develop an awareness of value preferences to better understand the effect of these values on the resolution of ethical dilemmas. Social worker can be aware of their preferences and can take steps to compensate for and balance the influence of value preferences in ethical decision-making.

Reamer, F.G. (1999). *Social Work Values and Ethics*. (2nd ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.

(K1, K2, K3, K4)

About the study/citation-

This book is designed to provide social workers with a comprehensive overview of the most critical and vital issues related to professional values and ethics: the nature of social work values; ethical dilemmas and decision making; and professional misconduct. The book acquaints readers with the core concepts they need to identify and investigate the wide range of compelling values and ethical issues facing current social workers.

Findings-content-

- The assumption is that practitioner's personal values exert great influence on their views of their clients, their intervention frameworks, and their definition of unsuccessful or successful outcome.
- There are several issues related to social work values that can be emphasized:
 - Social workers occasionally face tension between their own personal values and those held by clients, employers or social work profession itself.
 - With regard to clients, social workers sometimes encounter clients whose values and behaviors may seem immoral to the worker. How social workers react to this situation depends on the views about the role of their personal values.
 - Values conflict can also arise when a social worker is providing services to a client whose cultural or religious beliefs are counter to the worker's personal values.
- A number of key social work practice principles are derived from core values related to trust and distributive justice.

- The section of the current NASW code set forth principles related to social workers' conduct and to ethical responsibility to clients, colleagues, employers, social work profession and society. The code's principles re both prescriptive and proscriptive.
- In regards to ethical dilemmas and decision making, case examples are given in the book.
- The steps to take when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas are:
 - Identify the ethical issues, including social work values that conflict.
 - Identify groups and individuals who are likely to be affected by the ethical decision.
 - Identify all possible courses of actions and participants involved in each along with the benefits and risks.
 - Examine the reasons in favor of an opposed to each possible course of action.
 - Consult with colleagues and appropriate experts.
 - Make the decision and document the decision-making process
 - Monitor, evaluate and document the decision.
- Ethical dilemmas and case examples offered in the book include:
 - Confidentiality and privacy
 - Self-determination and paternalism
 - Professional boundaries
 - The allocation of limited resources
 - Whistle blowing
 - Delivery of services
 - The impaired social worker

Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of how to resolve conflicts between professional and personal values, what kind of ethical dilemmas they may encounter and how to potentially resolve these dilemmas while being guided by the Code of Ethics.

Robison, W. & Cherrey Reeser, L. (2000). Ethical Decision Making in Social Work. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

(K1, K2, K3)

About the study/citation-

The book discusses the personal ethics in decision-making in social work and offers case examples in the book. The book's chapters offers a method for tracking harms, ethical issues related to different kind of relationships, such as with colleagues and clients, and ethical issues about the social system itself is addressed.

Findings/content-

- The NASW Code of Ethics specifies as a standard of professional conduct that “social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional services, except for compelling professional reasons,” and also states, “social workers should not disclose confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be assured.

- Case scenarios regarding different ethical dilemmas are included in chapter 1, i.e., scenarios present situations that may be factually problematic and conceptually problematic.
- A synopsis of the guide to ethical decision making includes:
 - Try to understand why the participants are doing what they are doing by constructing arguments that would justify their acts.
 - Determine what goals the participants had and what means they thought would achieve those goals; then determine what goals ought to be achieved and determine what means are best for achieving those goals.
 - Determine what the harms are of various courses of action. To whom would they occur, what kinds are they, and what are their magnitudes?
 - Back off from the case and judge what is best to do. What will minimize harms?
- When faced with an ethical problem, we should proceed in a systematic way to understand what the problem is. This would include:
 - Getting the facts
 - Discounting our biases
 - Giving reasons for doing or not doing something
 - Finding true ethical premises
- The types of ethical issues discussed include dual relationships, conflicts of interest, difficulties among colleagues, lying about salaries, relations with other professionals, and internal and external ethical problems in agencies. These are accompanied with case examples.

Implications for CWS-

The worker needs to be aware of the methods for considering ethical issues in the decision-making process and what types of ethical issues can arise in different situations. The worker should understand that ethical issues can include coworkers and the agency for which he or she works.

WEBSITES

Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics

<http://www.socialworker.com/jswve/>

National Association of Social Workers, Code of Ethics (K2)

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>