

Values and ethics

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Values and Ethics: Above All Else Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss my personal values, compare and contrast those values against the NASW Code of Ethics, discuss the selection of a specific values clarification vignette, including reason for choosing, personal feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions, level of comfort regarding the client(s) involved, and actions to be taken to resolve conflicting personal values, and discuss the selection of a particular ethical dilemma, including ethical responsibilities and principles in conflict with dilemma, reasons for choosing, available options to address the concerns, the pros and cons of each option, guidelines and resources available to assist with resolving this dilemma and deciding on appropriate course of action, and what course of action is chosen. Values and Ethics: Above All Else

Three of my personal values include the following: honesty and integrity, never settling for less than one's best through commitment to improving oneself, and to be accepting of other people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or culture. My family heavily influenced my personal values as they always taught me to be a free-thinker, open-minded, and to try to put myself in other's shoes. They pushed me to be the best I could be at whatever I was doing, even when I thought I was already doing my best. They encouraged me to have friendships with people from all walks of life. I have friends of all ages, races, genders, and sexual orientation. I don't limit myself to one particular group. My parents set examples for me in these values instead of just stating them. In other words, their words mirrored their actions.

My personal values conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics on the following levels: 1) Honest and integrity---As an individual who is devoted to building and maintaining a client's trust in my professional knowledge and dependability, this value conflicts due to the fact agency policies, legal procedures, etc will inevitably place limitations on how I am able to provide services to my client. The ability to remain dedicated and loyal to my client while adhering to particular agency, state, and federal government laws will be a balancing act. There will be times when I have to choose laws over clients in cases where abiding by the law will betray my client and possibly destroy what trust he/she has placed in me.

It is my desire if/when this should ever happen, betraying my client due to requirement to adhere to the law will ultimately benefit the client more than maintaining complete confidentiality. According to the NASW Code of Ethics, "...social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised" (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2008, 1. 01 Commitment To Clients). An example of this would be informing the law about child neglect or abuse during a counseling session with a client who tells me her child is being abused.

Additionally, "...the client's right to confidentiality may be less compelling than the rights of other people who could be severely harmed or damaged by actions planned by the client and confided to the practitioner" (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Gottfriend, & Larsen, 2006). 2) Never settling for less than one's best: The hardest challenge for me is accepting my clients " where they are" because I am always wanting my clients to achieve the highest

level of functioning and well-being as possible. If the client's current stage or state in life is "where they are supposed to be", then I have to ask the question, "Why are they being referred to me for assistance?" In my personal life, I both desire and am always encouraging my friends and family to succeed in whatever they are doing.

It is difficult to see them struggle when I think there is a better life for them. I have to stop and remind myself what I think is better or best for them is not always appropriate nor what they want. To me, this is the hardest to accept. I have to be very mindful I don't impose my own wishes and desires on my client while maintaining an encouraging and positive client/worker helping relationship, (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2008, 1. 02 Self Determination); 3) Accepting of other people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or culture: It is difficult for me to work with a client who is unwilling to accept help from someone based on race, gender, or culture: i. e. client refusing to work with an African-American social worker, a female social worker, a homosexual social worker, etc. In dealing with the geriatric population, I have encountered quite a bit of racism from my clients as most of them were raised during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement. They have the mindset and use terminology that is very offensive to me. I have had clients tell me they don't like the people who live in their neighborhood simply because they are not Caucasian. I also have clients who have told me they don't think I can help them, and refer to me as "that little girl" (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 1. 05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity).

My personal values compare with the NASW Code of Ethics on the following levels: 1) Honesty and Integrity: I am committed to representing the social work profession in an ethical, professional manner to the best of my ability. I am committed to remaining honest with my clients, my employers, and my colleagues. I embrace integrity by taking responsibility for my actions and providing my clients with the highest level of service available. Integrity, for all people, holds a variety of meanings and is enacted on different levels. For me, integrity means operating in ethical and highly conscientious levels even when no one is watching and no recognition is given. Social work is one of the professions where expectations from both clients and employers are high, financial compensation is low, and gratitude and appreciation is rarely given.

The professional must find their own avenue of appreciation through the realization that their actions can ultimately have a positive impact on the lives of those clients and their families long after the social worker has terminated their relationship (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 6. 01 Social Welfare). 2) Never settling for one's best: As previously stated, I am always wanting better for my friends, family, and especially my clients. This motivates me to carefully examine every avenue for every possible resource available and utilize them to best facilitate my client's ability to achieve their pre-determined goals. It can be said social workers often serve in the creative capacity when it comes to helping their client succeed. As economic times get harder and federal and state budgets get tighter, social workers will have the increasingly daunting task of providing maximum services on a minimal budget.

I have a strong drive for my clients to succeed which serves as a catalyst in finding avenues of assistance. 3) Accepting of other people: We, as a nation, are known as the “ Melting Pot of the World”. Thus, social workers will have clients from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Having this acceptance and being open-minded towards people whose sexual orientation, lifestyle, religious and ethnic beliefs do not fit one particular mold will be extremely beneficial to me as I continue to grow in my professional career. I will be better able to serve my clients to the best of my ability and limit the possibility of any biases I may have, both realized and unrealized, to effect the working/helping relationship between me and my client.

The vignette I chose to examine my personal and professional values against is vignette #1 concerning a home study with gay males that are interested in adoption. My reason behind choosing this vignette is the increase in media coverage of homosexual couples that are interested in adopting and the reactions from the public in regard. As stated by the NASW, “ social workers’ social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice” (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 Value: Social Injustice). I would want to help this couple more than a heterosexual couple due to the discrimination that gay couples experience. I want to help oppressed individuals more and this makes me feel prideful to do so.

However, the NASW also states that “ social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people” (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 Value: Social Injustice). Due to

this conflict, I would make every effort that every client receives equal service and I perform my job as professionally as I can. I have difficulty understanding other's prejudices, and for this reason, I feel the need to over-compensate for those that have been discriminated against. I immediately felt sorry for this gay couple even though I had not met them yet.

As a human being and in accordance to the NASW Code of Ethics, it is my duty to respect the inherent dignity and worth of this client as a person (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 Value: Dignity and Worth of the Person). This value is further emphasized in Direct Social Work Practice: Theory and Skills with the following passage: " All human beings deserve access to the resources they need to deal with life's problems and to develop their potentialities" (Hepworth et. al, 2006). Additionally, the authors seek to advise the social worker to remain vigilant in terms of not allowing his or her personal biases to affect the helping relationship.

My preconceived beliefs include the thought that this gay couple had been discriminated against multiple times and would expect me to do the same. I also assumed this gay couple would fit best with a female child, thinking some homosexual males relate well with females. However, they are males, so would they relate better with a male child? These assumptions are just that: assumptions. Social workers should base practice on recognized knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 4. 01c Competence). I am quick to extinguish any assumptions once they have run their course in my mind. I rarely embrace them; they are just merely a notion that passes through my brain.

I am uncomfortable with every client when I do the first home visit. I know the correct body language to show, verbal and nonverbal, so I am able to hide my uneasiness and build a rapport quickly. Once a relationship has started to develop with a client, I am more at ease in their presence and able to provide quality level of services for them. After establishing their needs and goals, I would seek any resources that could assist the couple with all needs identified and the process of adoption. Throughout the course of helping this couple, I would remind myself that they are not my only clients, and all of my clients need to be serviced equally.

The vignette I chose to discuss my ethical and principle conflicts is ethical dilemma #1 regarding the formation of a youth group in a state correctional facility. I chose this vignette because I have quite a bit of experience with youth and I am most comfortable with younger clients. Working with clients in a correctional facility is very appealing to me so this vignette caught my attention before the other ones had a chance. In this situation, I could share all information I learn in the group, share nothing I learn in the group, or disclose in the beginning the nature of confidentiality and decide if any references made in group need to be reported.

In deciding if any references in group should be reported, I would use the professional knowledge of my superiors and equals to assist me in this judgment. By sharing all information I learn in the youth group, I would not miss any important information pertaining to my clients. Due to confidentiality concerns, I would only share the information with those the client had consented and those I had to share with. This course of action would demonstrate loyalty to my company as well as profession. The cons of

the following options are as follows: 1) Having a meeting between intern and agency supervisor may cause feelings of resentment, confusion, and distrust.

The intern may feel the agency supervisor thinks they are inexperienced and incapable of handling the job; 2) Having a meeting between the intern and the field instructor may cause the intern to feel he/she is unsuccessful in conflict resolution and may also cause them to feel the field instructor cannot trust them to perform their job duties; 3) Coordinating a meeting among the field instructor, the student intern, and the agency supervisor may cause to promote feelings of animosity, biases, etc for each party involved. The agency supervisor may feel threatened especially when regarding his/her agency's policies and their stance on them. The field instructor may feel that the agency is being unrealistic in terms of its expectations and requirements for student interns.

The student intern may feel caught in the middle and that he/she is unable to demonstrate their capacity for effective conflict resolution. 4) By requesting a transfer to another department, the student may not be able to experience what the field instructor had originally intended. 5) In the event that the parties are not able to come to a reasonable solution, then the student must find an alternative placement to complete field. This may leave the student intern confused, doubting their professional abilities, and the unwillingness to speak up if similar problems arise at their new location of internship. The resources that exist to help me resolve this ethical dilemma include my field instructor, my agency supervisor, the NASW Code of Ethics, and my own personal convictions.

The NASW Code of Ethics states, “ Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients are routinely informed when services are being provided by students”. Additionally, the Code of Ethics refers to the fact reasonable accommodations should be taken by each party to ensure that this occurs: “ Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment for which they are responsible is consistent with and encourages compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics” (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 3. 02 Education and Training). The responsibility of the student intern being able to operate professionally within an organization and to exhibit their learned skill set belongs to both the administrator of the desired agency as well as the field instructor.

The student intern has a responsibility to ensure the agency supervisor is aware of the intern’s obligations to the NASW COE. Furthermore, he/she is responsible for ensuring agency practices do not hinder or interfere with their obligations in accordance to it (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2008 3. 09 Commitment to Employers). It would be my choice to utilize the Code of Ethics, hold consultations with my agency supervisor and field instructor, and my own professional experience to make an informed decision as to remain with the agency or not. It would also be my desire the agency, my field instructor, and I could work to an agreeable solution and avoid having to seek alternative placement elsewhere.

If we are unable to achieve this, I would exit the agency on a positive note and seek to apply my skill set and gain additional experience at a different agency. Above all, I would always present and interact on a professional

manner as well as remember to always have a second plan in place.

Hepworth, D. H, Rooney, R. H. Rooney, G. D, Gottfried-Strom, K. , Larsen, J. A. (2006). *Direct Social Work Practice: Theory and Skills* (7th) Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education. 54, 55, 57, 69.

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